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SENATE

RURAL AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS AND TRANSPORT REFERENCES COMMITTEE

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

THURSDAY, 23 JULY 2009

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SENATE RURAL AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS AND TRANSPORT

REFERENCES COMMITTEE

Thursday, 23 July 2009

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

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

Senators in attendance: Senators Ludlam, Nash, 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

f. best practice international examples of public passenger transport services and infrastructure.

WITNESSES

Committee met at 9.05 am

CHAIR (Senator Nash)—I declare open this public meeting of the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee. The committee is hearing evidence on the inquiry into the investment of Commonwealth and state funds in public passenger transport infrastructure and services. I welcome you all here today.

This is a public hearing and a Hansard transcript of the proceedings is being 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 and such action may be treated by the Senate as contempt. It is also 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, of course, also 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.

[9.06 am]

FEATHERSTON, Mr Barry James, Chief Executive Officer, Fleurieu Regional Development

WEBSTER, Ms Heather Louise, Consultant, Fleurieu Regional Development; Deputy Chair UITP Australia/New Zealand

CHAIR—I welcome Mr Barry Featherston and Ms Heather Webster of Fleurieu Regional Development.

Mr Featherston—Thank you for the opportunity to speak here. I am the CEO of Fleurieu Regional Development. I have with me Heather Webster, who is a consultant and a resident of the Fleurieu region. When we wrote the submission, she was the chair of the UITP for Australia and New Zealand and she is now the deputy chair of UITP Australia/New Zealand.

CHAIR—Thank you. You have lodged submission No. 47 with the committee. Do you wish to make any alterations or amendments?

Mr Featherston—There are a couple of grammatical errors there that we would probably like to clean up in hindsight. Other than that, no.

CHAIR—Would you like to make an opening statement before we move on to questions?

Mr Featherston—Yes, thank you. The Fleurieu region is the most highly visited area in South Australia by tourists outside Adelaide. It is an area to the south of Adelaide and takes in our local government areas of Alexandrina, Victor Harbour and Yankalilla. It comprises five of the eight fastest growing towns in South Australia. Most of these towns have been identified in the recently released state government plan for Greater Adelaide.

What concerns my organisation, Fleurieu Regional Development, and the board in particular is the poor mobility of people in our region in a growing area. We are also an ageing area. We are part of the sea change phenomenon and, as I have said in the submission, there is a tree change phenomenon in the hilly parts of our area, so we are attracting self-funded retirees and pensioners to our area. As well as that, we still have a relatively strong number of young people—probably people under 25, those seeking to better themselves through education. Because we have string development along the coast—there is a range of towns along the south coast, all with somewhere between 10 and 5,000 people—towns have not yet got to the city stage, where they would qualify for recognition by state government as being part of the metropolitan public transport system, so they are in limbo. The mobility of people who live in these towns to services and between towns is limited. They are restricted to cars. If I pick on Goolwa to Port Elliot, it would be 10 kilometres and another 15 kilometres to Victor Harbour, so you are talking about 25 kilometres to be traversed between these towns, which are effectively part of one community. The hospital, the schools and the major shopping facilities are in one of the towns, and the people of the communities need to interlink.

So we see this as being about the sustainability of our communities. We would like to see some local transport options for our local communities which deliver a new paradigm to the way we treat our towns and cities. It is about predominantly the internal mobility of our people. There are some people who will ring and say, 'We need to be able to get to the city on a more regular basis.' That is true. People do like to be able to do that. But for us it is that internal mobility that is important. And when I refer to internal mobility, I am not just talking about public transport; I am talking about bike paths, about people being able to walk on trails that do not go along major highways. It is links to key services such as education, health and shopping. I think we also need to recognise that rising cost of fuels is going to impact on those demographic groups that I talked about, the aged particularly and the young people. They are going to have more impact in regional areas than they do in the city because of the disparity of fuel prices in regional areas and the longer distances they need to travel to get to the services.

We would like to look at this concept of people centred transport. I read in the greater plan for Adelaide transport oriented development. We have actually mentioned that in our submission and UITP are very keen on that. I do not think that is just specific to big metropolitan areas, it is in particular specific to regional areas, where you do tend to have the industrial cluster in one area and services in another area and houses in a separate area. So they need to have this interconnectivity.

Why should the federal government invest in public transport? If we have a look at the federal government's investment in local roads, that is its total investment in our local communities, and it has been quite a good success by going straight from the federal government to the local roads program, in some ways

bypassing the state government, which has ignored most regional areas on public transport for a long time and probably roads to some degree. I think there should be direct funding to local and regional governments to fund a demonstration project in a region, and we would say our region, on how car dependency can be addressed in the future. When I say car dependency, I mean taking the dependency away from cars and making communities more mobile.

Ms Webster—The benefits of high mobility for communities are usually thought of in three ways. There are the economic ones, which Barry has alluded to, and that means not only training for children and increasing older age people to retrain for different careers but it also means the ability to get to and retain a job in an economic way. The benefits are also environmental. That is obvious, and it has been demonstrated in many forums. It is also extremely important in terms of social inclusion. Almost all surveys in regional Australia cite mobility as their first need. That is becoming increasingly important. We all know that the cost of fuel is temporarily at relatively moderate levels but that is unlikely to be sustained in the future. As fuel prices increase, the relative disadvantage to people in regional areas is significantly greater than any other areas because they travel further and generally because their incomes are lower. So there is a very disparate effect of increasing costs of mobility on people in regional areas. That is of course absolutely exacerbated in outer metropolitan areas as well as regional areas, as people need to travel longer distances. But I think the thing that is particularly new and pertinent to this inquiry the influence of, if you like, health and the way we travel on the health of our communities. We all know that obesity based on car dependency is one of the growing risks of all of our communities, so it is health not only in respect to environmental quality and air quality but it is particularly health in regard to the way people travel.

As Barry has outlined, the regional areas give an opportunity to think about the way we develop communities in a very different way in regard to the future. Australian cities historically have been extraordinarily car dependent, and that has provided a high degree of freedom which has been welcome under low fuel prices. We all know cars are less expensive, but if we look at the future the single thing that we need to change is that car dependency in the future, because it will consume greater and greater proportions of people's disposable income. Australians already spend more than their international counterparts from their disposable income on their own personal mobility, and we are talking significant amounts. So the more people spend on transport the less they have to spend on other things which are important in their lives. That may mean their housing and may mean any other aspect of their living. But at the moment Australians are spending about the same on transport as they are on their food bills. As the cost of fuel increases, that impediment is going to rise enormously, causing a great deal of hardship. So I think there are genuine reasons for the federal government to be involved in the mobility of citizens both in cities but also in regional areas, especially those that are growing regional areas, which is the case with the Fleurieu Peninsula. Those simple things of the future health impacts of mobility, the social exclusion which is created by lack of mobility and the inevitable rise in fuel prices do not paint a very successful future for healthy regional areas throughout Australia.

One of the great advantages we see in Fleurieu of the Commonwealth government investing in public transport in regional areas is indeed the ability to make significant improvements in areas which do not have all the structural impediments of our existing urban areas in the major capitals in Australia. Making changes to public transport priority or indeed use in Australia's capital carries a very high cost because of the current investment in urban structure and in fact the difficulties of change. The ability to develop model communities of accessibility in regional areas is significantly greater because of the control of local governments over urban design, which is a key factor in developing sustainable communities, and in land use and in lesser costs of the land associated with it. Particularly there is the ability to change attitudes in the communities towards looking at their communities differently. There is much contemporary work, especially in Germany, for example, and in Sweden, about the way they have been able to generate significant change in smaller communities away from car dependency. So this does offer a different paradigm to thinking about things outside the way in which we have addressed regional passenger transport in the past, especially from a federal government perspective.

In regard to the terms of reference of your committee, perhaps the most regressive taxation issue is that of fringe benefits taxation, which not only encourages car use but encourages greater kilometre use of cars. The federal government currently spends, to my understanding, something like $1.5 billion on fringe benefits taxation relief for increasing use of cars. That is a very large amount of money which represents, if you like, a subsidy for car use and works directly against the benefit of public transport in our cities.

A significant proportion of the diesel rebates, for example, which the federal government is involved in—which were designed to benefit regional communities—is expended on mining operations rather than in other regional developments. So I think that is a very important consideration. So, fundamental taxation issues

which operate in a subsidy form to limit the effectiveness of public transport are very important for your committee to consider in the future.

I know that UITP, which is the International Association of Public Transport, will be putting a submission to you about that in more detail from their Canberra office, but there has been a significant amount of work done, especially on fringe benefit taxation, which is very regressive with regard to moving our populations towards increased use of public transport. That is my five minutes; okay.

CHAIR—That was excellent. Thank you, both, very much.

Senator STERLE—In your opening statement, Ms Webster, you mentioned reducing car dependency in Germany.

Ms Webster—Yes.

Senator STERLE—Would you like to elaborate on what the Germans have done?

Ms Webster—There are a lot of measures internationally and I have an article here about an example of a smaller community which—and it sounds quite radical to Australian ears—decided that the only car parking would be at the ends of certain streets. In other words, it is the same as they have done in Portland in America. There is not a car-parking space associated with every house. There is car parking which is what we would think of as communal car parking in the regions and there is a high use of bicycles within the communities. The particular example in Germany shows that you then develop a community which is significantly safer, especially for children; which has significantly higher social interconnectivity; and which ensures that people have cars to operate for the longer distance journey but uses bikes and walking for the short-distance walking journeys. This means that the community benefits in very large series of ways. It is certainly possible.

In Australia we have got ourselves into a paradigm where cars equal freedom. I think we need to look to the future where we understand that cars equal a significant cost to the community. So there are international examples based around better urban design, which think about cars in fundamentally different ways, which are about car-sharing arrangements and community car ownership, which is extremely foreign at this moment to Australian ways of thinking. But I think Australians are also sensitive to hip-pocket nerves, and the reality is that if your car and its ability to transport you become increasingly expensive—which it already is in international terms; and will become significantly more so, because of the distances Australians travel—you will have to think about that differently.

I think the other interesting structural impediment to that sort of issue is that Australians have a great commitment to their own homes. So, when their job changes they never think of changing their house, because things like stamp tax and duties are so high. The cost of changing homes is significant. People in many European communities which have a higher rental component to their housing are more able to move when their jobs move. At the moment Australians stay and only work where they can travel economically from their own house. This has significant economic ramifications with regard to people moving and working in different places.

So there are quite a lot of international examples that can be used with regard to urban density but there are also many others—the work that Sweden is doing, for example, with regard to mandating ethanol and what California is doing with regard to bio fuels. There are many examples that we could draw on to look at the sustainability, the cost and the urban amenity which we can improve in Australian cities if we think ahead and do it before the real crunch comes.

Senator STERLE—I do not know about Germany but I have certainly visited the Netherlands. There is a bicycle culture in the Netherlands that has not just happened in the last couple of years. Is Germany similar in that they have always had always had pushbikes around?

Ms Webster—You are right: the culture in the Netherlands is that bikes come first and cars come second, which has been the case for many years. I think these things, especially in Adelaide, are particularly pertinent because we have ideal weather, ideal terrain and a genuine interest. Australian ownership of bikes is very high internationally; the use is very low. If you ask people why that is the case it is that often the use of cycleways on our roads is not particularly safe. We know the problems of safety for unprotected road users. The federal government has always invested in national highways. Investing in national cyclepaths could be a very interesting way to go in order to help not only mobility needs but road safety and also the health of the population.

Mr Featherston—Certainly in the Fleurieu Peninsula there is a willingness by elected members of councils to embrace bike paths, but, as you can imagine, the funding of that is beyond them. We have some pretty big distances to connect our regional communities. As Heather says, a lot of people own bikes and a lot of people have ideas and want to embrace it; it is just that the cost is so prohibitive to local government.

Senator STERLE—What has come out of this inquiry around the country is that there is a fair bit of talk about getting people out of cars and onto pushbikes. Good luck—that is all I can say because there are a lot of reasons why people do not want to ride pushbikes. I am not saying that we should not promote it, but there are a lot of reasons. One is flexibility. A mother has the children in the car, they are going to be at the shopping centre and they want to stay out of the weather—all sorts of stuff like that. You can put in the best bike paths in the country, but how do you convince people to get out of the motorcar and onto a pushbike or public transport?

Ms Webster—Dollars are always great motivators. I am sure you are aware that the rise in use of transport over the last year in Australia has been approximately 18 per cent for public transport and approximately one per cent for cars. Why is that happening? It is happening from a multitude of reasons, but it is particularly happening because of the cost. I think we are all concerned that as costs increase for motoring we will be unable to respond to that increasing demand because we simply have not invested in the capital to attain the capacity ahead of time. Already all public transport systems around Australia are struggling with capacity problems in peak periods. In Australia people's motivations for using public transport are always hip-pocket driven. We will not need to see terribly much change in the cost of car travel for people to actively seek alternative modes. I think the responsibility of governments is to allow them to do that safely and equitably. A lot of the issues that you raise about people not wishing to use bikes involve the fact that in many areas it is not particularly safe to do so because bikeways are not corralled from heavy vehicle traffic. The federal government's investment in the highway network means that there is also an opportunity for federal government investment in people-centred transport rather than vehicle-centred transport.

Mr Featherston—I agree, Senator, that bikes are not going to be for everybody—I take your point—but I guess you have to start somewhere. I just looked at the Eden Project in Cornwall, where they set up car parks and bus people from point A to point B. We do not do that; we want to park outside the place and walk straight in. But I think people might be inclined to walk to the hub and then get a bus to where they are going. Yes, the mother or father with the pram can walk some distance to a hub and then get on public transport. Mobility is not just about bikes; it is about community bus systems as well. It is creating those pathways—those car-free zones—so that people feel safe. They can ride a bike or walk and there may be public transport travelling alongside.

Senator STERLE—This is what has been coming out all through the inquiry. For people who may be reading the *Hansard* or listening, we must not forget that roads are not just for cars. Roads are freight routes and roads are there for public transport. There is a lot of emotion around the conversations. If some of our witnesses had their way, there would be no more rubber wheels on the road, full stop. In terms of your discussion around bike paths, have you done any costings with your council for your area?

Mr Featherston—There have been some costings done. For a path that is bituminised, a three-metre path, you could probably get that information quite easily. For a normal road, it is about $1 million a kilometre.

CHAIR—If you would like to take that on notice and come back to us, that would be fine.

Mr Featherston—I know we have done some costings of what they call non-bitumen paths—those gravel things. I would have to take that on notice.

CHAIR—If you do that and come back to the committee, that would be great.

Ms Webster—If we think about the costing of roads in a slightly different way, we currently pay at least $1 million a kilometre for a conventional road. Our parking policies in Australia mean that for a lot of the time we use that for parking, which in fact is a very significant investment of roadway infrastructure for a lesser used task. There is an opportunity for changing some of our use of roadway space in a more effective way to be able to devote that. The modelling which we do for congestion on roads, which is of course the other national challenge that we are all facing, is still done on vehicles, not people. In fact, we look at our modelling in a very interesting way. It is not about moving people or, indeed, moving freight; it is about moving vehicles.

Senator O'BRIEN—I have some questions particularly about public transport resources in the regional communities that you are interested in developing. I take it that it is privately provided?

Mr Featherston—There are bits and pieces. There are a lot of volunteer hours in driving private cars for people, particularly for people with aged needs who cannot drive themselves. There are schemes for which the state government will give subsidies. Both the federal government and the state government have some programs like that. There are a number of smaller communities that might own a little community bus. In my region we have a program called SCTS, which is the Southern Communities Transport Scheme. That has some minor funding to allow people with needs to travel between communities. I think my council would say: 'Instead of doing those little bits and pieces, let's put that together into a serious program with a partner.' In this case, we would hope that the federal government would be the partner. I am sure there are private operators who know that there could be some serious investment and would come onto that as a service provider.

Senator O'BRIEN—So there are no private operators in those communities?

Mr Featherston—There is one private operator who runs a bus service along the coastline. It is very spasmodic. I do not know whether you have seen the big Premier Roadlines buses. It is not very mobile. It runs perhaps once or twice a day into the city. It is very expensive. It is not very accessible for people with disabilities. For mums with babies it is practically impossible to get on. It is a big coach liner that runs up and down the coast and into the city. We do not see that as practical; we do not see that as a solution. That is yesterday's thinking.

Senator O'BRIEN—Is there a subsidy provided to that operator at all?

Ms Webster—Yes. The government does provide a subsidy for the concession fares that are offered to seniors and students. Those services are run as commercial concerns and they connect the broader areas, like Victor Harbour, to Adelaide. So they are essentially between-area services rather than within-region services, which is the focus in this presentation this morning.

Senator O'BRIEN—I suppose one of the questions that arises is: where people have chosen and councils have allowed them to disperse themselves away from the central location to a five-acre block as a sea change, is there really a community obligation to provide transport linkages for all of those communities? It is extraordinarily expensive to have any effective and frequent type of service for those sort communities.

Mr Featherston—That is a good point you make. That is not what we are talking about here; what we are talking about is creating developments within the town that is linked by public transport, so encouraging people to live in areas, as Heather has pointed out, that are less costly to live in. Yes, I agree with you. If you choose to live on a five-acre block on the outskirts of town, I think you wear the consequences of that. Indeed, some of the roads that connect those are probably bike friendly anyway. We are talking about the larger communities that are swelling because people are simply looking for an alternative way of life. We see a lot of people because of the global financial crisis moving to our area. In retrospect, it is a bit cheaper to live out in regional areas, so those towns are growing. We would like to see them grow in a way such that what they call transport oriented development, TOD, is just as relevant in regional areas as it is in the city. We would argue that a lot of people choose to live in outer suburbia, so why should they be subsidised?

Senator O'BRIEN—Some of those communities become centres for retiring couples and over time become much more dependent on the provision of transport services, be it a community car or some sort of bus service, to get from point A to point B. Possibly, given at certain points in people's lives their capacities to drive diminish, it is in the community interest for those sort of services to be provided. This committee would be interested in hearing how your community is focused on addressing those things. Clearly you have some focus on it now with the community car approach, which is a volunteer approach. But when you, say, pull all of that together to get funding for something else I would be interested to know what the solution is.

Mr Featherston—I guess what we would be arguing for is an integrated system. I do not have the answer. I am sure Heather probably has some ideas. But what we are saying is, 'Let's invest in developing a concept, and an area like the Fleurieu would be an ideal place to run a trial model about how you may have an integrated mobility program that includes use of public transport, use of bikes and use of cars, to some degree and maybe even use of some hybrid cars.' There are communities around Australia that are starting to say, 'You can only come in if you drive a car that is electric.' We might not want to go that far but we would like—

Senator O'BRIEN—I think that is the future, to be frank.

Mr Featherston—It probably is.

Senator O'BRIEN—I absolutely see in this country, with the developments in solar power, the future as electric cars in many communities and solar charging of them.

Mr Featherston—And that might be a very good thing. As I said, Heather has instigated that—car parking on the outside and no cars inside a community except perhaps electric cars. As you say, that is probably the way of the future. We have the chances as we are developing new growth areas to trial that, to have projects that can put up models for the rest of Australia. Cities, as Heather said, do not have that chance to do that because they are already inbuilt and are heavily reliant on train lines, big roads and lots of car parking. However, in a regional area where there is definitely a growing need that is identified in a state government plan—not funded but planned—there is a chance for a partnership between local government and federal government to really show what can be done. I do not have all the answers today though.

CHAIR—I was interested in your submission—and I live in the central west of New South Wales about 35 kilometres from a regional town so this is something I am particularly interested in—where you commented that there is no equity in public transport services between the city and regional taxpayers. I think that inequity between cities and regional areas when it comes to public transport is one of the things we find that is really resonating as we travel around with the committee.

Mr Featherston, initially were talking about federal funding going directly to local communities, and we have seen where it has worked properly. It is a state responsibility, and if we move to federal funding of the public transport needs in regional areas is not that just letting state governments off the hook for what actually is their responsibility? Is it not just saying: it is actually their responsibility and they should be doing it but because they are not and we know we cannot get them to do it we will move up a level?

Mr Featherston—That is a very political statement, Senator.

CHAIR—I actually mean that. We are moving from state to federal at the moment, and they are both Labor. I would have said that regardless of who was in government. I am talking about the roles of the different levels and Commonwealth-state responsibility regardless of who is in government.

Mr Featherston—Okay. I was not meaning to be rude.

CHAIR—That is quite all right.

Mr Featherston—As you are probably aware, the Senate did run an inquiry into cost shifting in its previous incarnation and, in relation to that issue about the cost shifting of services, it was predominantly found that there was a greater shifting of costs towards local government from state and possibly federal.

I guess what Heather has talked about is that perhaps we should forget some of the past and the paradigms of the past and say: what is the future? We are saying to the federal government—and I can be political here—there may not be a role for state governments in some of these programs in the future. We have heard politicians on both sides talking about the health industry and saying that maybe the state government should be excluded from that. Maybe that is going to be true for transport and other things as well.

There are communities out there that can deliver programs if they are properly resourced and funded, because they know their communities. And, Senator, as you live in one of those communities, you probably realise that the closer you get to the issue the easier it is to solve. As part of my community service—and I am an elected member of a council—I understand council's ability to make a decision quickly at local government and get the job done. I think that federal government have recognised that through their roads program and I would suggest that maybe they should be doing that for public transport as well as roads. After all, one has an effect on the other. If you fund a road, you may be taking away from public transport. In the city, federal government is just starting to invest in some major infrastructure programs, but we are not seeing that happening in regional areas.

CHAIR—You are absolutely right about local government being closest to those issues. Perhaps we should get rid of the state governments and just have stronger local governments.

Mr Featherston—I think that if you did a survey of that, you would probably find that a lot of people agreed—off the record of course!

CHAIR—I am a bit of a fan of that model, I must say.

Ms Webster—I can add a small comment to that. Australia is one of the few OECD countries that do not have a national public transport policy. If we look to a similarly structured system—Canada—Canada recently developed a national public transport policy. The way the federal government chose to implement that was to have a fuel levy and then to provide the proceeds from the fuel levy to regions to, if you like, use in the way that they felt best for their regional communities. I think that is a model which is very applicable to Australia,

because many of the problems that we face are very similar to Canada's. I think that there is a very interesting model there that needs to be looked at.

We are not going to go down the Singapore model where, in their recent transport plan for people, they have said that it is no longer an aspiration for all Singaporeans to own a car. They have stated that overtly. But in Canada the federal government's engagement in public transport has been though that higher level, if you like, hypothecated funding, which as I understand it has proved to be very popular at the regional level and it is very understood by the electorate.

CHAIR—One of the difficulties for local councils is that often in the regional areas that most need the financial assistance the local councils are least able to financially provide that assistance. I think that too much of the responsibility, particularly in community transport, is coming back onto local government itself.

Mr Featherston—That is one of the reasons why an organisation like mine, through our regional development, has been asked to do this, because they realise that a grouping of councils is better positioned to fund the system. As you are probably aware, with the creation by the federal government of Regional Development Australia it allows that link from the federal government straight to a regional body. That is one of the reasons why the federal government and local government are engaging in this process of a partnership to say: 'We can deliver programs; we probably can't do it at a local level but we can do it at a regional level.'

CHAIR—Ms Webster, you mentioned Sweden and the mandating of ethanol. Do I take it from that that you have the view is that what is happening in Sweden is not an appropriate view forward?

Ms Webster—No, I do not think it necessarily is for Australia, but issues about sustainability of fuel—both supply and quality—are crucial. Sweden has excellent domestic ethanol production. I think the frustrating part of the Australian federal government's role in fuel is in fact the taxation structure around biofuels. For example, if you mix any proportion of biofuel with diesel you are eligible for diesel-level taxation. That does not encourage the production of biofuels, which in fact increases our dependency on oil in the future. So the comment was really about the ability of the federal government to drive change. Sometimes it is mandated, as is very clear in Sweden and in California. But sometimes it is a case of unintended consequences. I cannot help but thinking that the taxation regime around diesel and biofuels drives unintended consequences—that is, to suppress the development of more sustainable fuels for the future rather than encourage it, even if that only applied to the public transport system.

CHAIR—Thank you both for your evidence.

[9.47 am]

MAITLAND, Councillor James Walter, Vice President (Country), Local Government Association of South Australia; and Mayor, Wakefield Regional Council

ROSENBERG, Councillor Lorraine, Mayor, City of Onkaparinga; and member of the Executive, Metropolitan Local Government Group

CHAIR—Welcome. Would you like to make opening statements?

Councillor Maitland—I represent the rural sector of the LGA, which has an organisation called SAROC, the South Australian Regional Organisation of Councils, which I am chairman of. So I am here representing regional local government in South Australia. We presume you have received the submission we sent in.

CHAIR—Yes, we have.

Councillor Maitland—There are a couple of points I would like to pick up on in there that perhaps need a small amount of expansion. One of the paragraphs there says that local government generally does not have a responsibility for direct provision of public transport within South Australia. That does not mean that we are not involved in it.

CHAIR—That was one of my questions.

Councillor Maitland—It is a de facto relationship and, certainly, in rural areas there is quite a lot of local government money going into providing public transport, which I will elaborate on later. The other point I would like to make is that in a paragraph towards the end it suggests that a lack of transport in rural communities prevents those that are economically and socially disadvantaged, and I would add in there 'transport disadvantaged from accessing federal agencies or any agencies anywhere but in particular the services in towns that they would like to access that are not in capital cities'. In most cases there is no public transport linking small rural communities with the provincial cities.

CHAIR—Mayor Rosenberg, would you like to add to those opening statements?

Councillor Rosenberg—Yes, my opening comment would be in relation to public transport and integrated systems and how we link those to state plans. We have state strategic plans looking at greatly increasing population growth in South Australia. Just released is a 30-year plan for Greater Adelaide, which looks at major population growth, particularly infill development growth. Just to back up what Mayor Maitland has said, you do not actually have to be rural and remote to find it difficult to access public transport. Public transport does have a major problem in terms of metropolitan Adelaide also in that it is quite often very much CBD centric. In terms of an integrated process, the integration is very difficult to find sometimes. I know examples of people who live in what we would call metropolitan Adelaide who cannot access public transport to get to work because of the times that they would start or finish work. I guess the issue for us is how, if we have a hugely-growing population, we make sure that integrated transport is part of the development of that program rather than having it as an add-on where after the population comes the infrastructure comes later. So from a local government perspective we are very strong on the requirement for infrastructure to match the population growth and to be delivered at the time the population grows.

CHAIR—Just before we move on, I welcome Senator Ludlam, who is joining us by phone today.

Senator LUDLAM—Good morning.

Senator O'BRIEN—Mayor Rosenberg, you made an interesting point, which we have heard in a number of places around the country, about the frequency and timeliness of public transport, particularly to some of the outskirts of cities and particularly for non-CBD direct traffic—in other words, getting across town or around town to someone else other than the CBD to get to work, particularly early in the morning or coming home late at night. What representations have your organisation made to the state government about that and what has been their response?

Councillor Rosenberg—The LGA's work has largely focussed heavily in terms of representations to the 30-year plan. I think in general we are quite happy that it reflects the LGA's requirement for much more infill development. The plan actually talks about a 70 per cent increase in population within the current bounds of metropolitan areas or areas that are already populated. We would support that because that then offers us an opportunity to build momentum for public transport in the areas that already exist in terms of housing. Certainly in terms of the style of development that the LGA has now taken on board as being appropriate

development, which is the transit orientated development, there is a very strong desire held by the local government association and particularly metropolitan councils for that to be seen as the form of development, because then we have an opportunity to access improved transport in the current corridors without a need for major new construction. So I think, along those lines, being a participant in the style of development that happens within South Australia has been the largest way that the LGA has participated.

I guess we also take a very strong view about being very proactive as an advocate on behalf of our communities. After all, other than community transport we are not really responsible for delivering public transport so our role is much more that of being an advocate in how we bring forward issues. We hear all of the issues about public transport. We always have to filter those out, and the really important issues that we need to pursue rise to the top. They are the ones that we use to make contact with the state.

We believe that the state has listened to the issues, because I think the 30-year plan does reflect a lot of the proposals that we have talked about. A lot of the work that the Commonwealth has done in terms of its infrastructure funding has been fantastic for South Australia. In my view, having been around the political arena for a long time, I think there is certainly an ear that is open now, particularly from the Commonwealth.

Senator O'BRIEN—In terms of the corridors into the cities where you do get a lot of traffic at particular times of the day, does your association foresee the need for dedicated bus lanes, for example, in some areas or bus rapid transit systems—or however you might describe them—in the future? Is there the capacity in the existing infrastructure to make that provision?

Councillor Rosenberg—I think the basic premise on which the answer to that question would come would be that public transport is never going to be successful. We probably have about a 10 per cent take-up of public transport in South Australia. It is never going to be successful if it cannot compete with the car. We saw at one stage when the price for fuel went up quite considerably that we experienced major problems with having enough parking around rail stations. So if you can raise the cost enough—and I think with peak oil, climate change and all of those happening then no doubt that will have an impact—there will be an impact. But the reality is that unless public transport is as effective and as efficient as the use of your own car to get from point A to point B then public transport is not going to be competitive. The only way that you can compete with the efficiency of cars is to either have good electric rail and efficient tram systems or dedicated lines where the buses can actually compete with the vehicles. Certainly our council has worked very strongly with the RAA in South Australia to lobby for that sort of infrastructure.

On the question of is there enough capacity within the current areas for that to happen, I do not think you can give a blanket answer across the whole of metropolitan Adelaide. In some areas there are. For instance, there is a major upgrade happening with the Victor Harbour and Main South Road interchange and there is capacity there. We are looking for a doubling of the expressway. We understand there is capacity there to double the expressway to the south. For areas like the Northern Expressway there was an ability there to have enough land. But if you are looking at inner Unley and whether you have enough room in the small, narrow streets to put in dedicated bus lanes, the answer is probably no—unless you completely change the character of those areas.

But there are other ways of looking at making appropriate transport connections. For instance, if you are looking at inner Unley then you probably do not need a B-double sized bus running down a street; you probably only need a very small bus. So I think there has to be more sensible thinking about the size of the transport offered and whether the greater use of community based transport to pick people up to take them to hubs is a much more efficient way of using funds than to run huge buses that are quite often empty.

Senator O'BRIEN—Thank you. Mayor Maitland, obviously one of the issues for regional centres is connection between regional centres and the capital. How would you describe, and this will be a generalisation but you may care to elaborate with specifics, the state of available public transport, privately or publicly provided, between those regional centres and between those centres and the capital?

Councillor Maitland—There is a reasonable amount of private transport available from provincial areas into metropolitan Adelaide. I think the major issue is that there is nothing across the provincial areas between each other. There are also state government subsidised public transport systems in most of the provincial cities in varying forms. That is a very recent innovation. Up until recently it was seriously subsidised by local government. I gather that the provincial cities in South Australia put their heads together and suggested to the government that it was not their role to provide that service, and they obviously won that argument. Now those internal public transport systems of those provincial cities are funded by the state government.

But, to answer your question, into the city the transport system is reasonable. It is not necessarily good, and the turnaround timings are always a problem. To do much in Adelaide while you are here in the way of going to medical appointments, social events or whatever the turnaround time you have in the city is not very long—unless you stay over, and I guess a lot of rural people do not have that capacity or any where to do that. So you have really only got two or three hours in the city. If you are talking about medical appointments then to fit any number of those into that period of time is all but impossible.

With the current plan that the state government have, particularly in the medical area, of building up the size of some of the provincial health facilities, their encouragement is that they do not want people coming into Adelaide to find those services. They would rather they go to Whyalla, Port Lincoln, Berri or Mt Gambier. But you cannot get there by public transport. If you have not got a car, there is basically no means by which to get there.

There is a network of 11 community passenger networks based right around South Australia, which I presume you may be aware of, which is funded in no particular formula by the federal government through HACC; the state government through the public transport division; and local government. That is where I say local government do contribute and do contribute quite substantially, in dollars and in kind, to the management and running of those services. They can provide that transport into the provincial areas from smaller outlying towns. It is not terribly economic for a car with one person to go on a 150-kilometre round trip to deliver somebody, say, to Port Augusta from Peterborough. I guess the problem is that the volume will not justify the system.

Senator O'BRIEN—And that is the problem with setting up a public transport system, I suppose; no-one is going to do it in the private sector because it is just go going to be a go-broke, no-guarantee system.

Councillor Maitland—One other comment I probably need to make is that the metropolitan public transport system is heavily subsidised by the state government. The rural one, to a large degree, is not very heavily subsidised, and I have an example which was given to me yesterday. It is the same bus company, not the same bus, that runs this. It costs $40 return to get from Murray Bridge into Adelaide on a bus. From Mt Barker, which is geographically about halfway, it costs $5 return. The difference there has to be subsidy. That is an example I would use as to where the disadvantage for rural areas is. Murray Bridge is not metropolitan yet, but within the reasonably near future probably will be regarded as metropolitan, and that may just—

Senator O'BRIEN—Can I test that. One thing that arises in my mind is that the number of passengers between Mt Barker and Adelaide might be greater than from Murray Bridge and therefore the per passenger subsidy might be the same but, to break even, the operator has to charge a lot more.

Councillor Maitland—You may be right, but I think there are far more services from Mt Barker, which are probably very well patronised. There are certainly nowhere near as many bus runs from Murray Bridge. It is not the same bus. It is the same company running both services but I gather there are just two or three runs a day from Murray Bridge, whereas there are probably 20 or 30 or 40 from Mt Barker. The passenger load per trip may be quite similar.

Senator O'BRIEN—The reason I ask the question is to test the hypothesis that that meant there was a greater subsidy per passenger from Mt Barker than there was from Murray Bridge.

Councillor Maitland—I do not have that answer.

Senator O'BRIEN—I do not know whether we know the answer to that. To extrapolate from the fare whether that is or is not the case might be difficult.

Councillor Maitland—Sure.

Senator O'BRIEN—I am not trying to undermine the argument. It is just that, on the face of it, you might be saying something that we could ascertain was not actually correct. The proposition I put to an earlier witness is that it seemed to me that people choose to live out of the regional centres—the tree changers, sea changers, who live on five- or 10-acre blocks et cetera—provide a much bigger challenge for the community to provide a transport service. By doing that, do they effectively place upon themselves, rather than the community, the obligation for transport?

Councillor Maitland—I would suspect in the instances you mentioned, probably; but I believe there is another category, that of people who are economically not as well off and need to buy cheap housing. Cheap housing tends to be in places where there are not a lot of services available, which then puts an impact onto the community. We are not talking about those that are tree changing or sea changing or whatever they are doing

there. This is people that would like to have a house to live in, whether they rent it or buy it, at a very low cost. The places they can find those houses tend to be in communities that are diminishing in size. The classic example in this state is probably a township of Peterborough, which was a very substantial railway town for a long time until the railways lines got realigned and changed. My understanding is that there are numerous houses up there that would almost be given away. Some people are taking them up at those very low prices. But of course they are then disadvantaged in themselves, putting that community under stress, and there is very little public transport to get them anywhere.

Councillor Rosenberg—I think a really important point is that, from a metropolitan perspective, it is the state government who is determining the urban growth boundaries; it is the state government who is determining the time of release of greenfields development for further development of the state; and effectively, therefore, one would assume it is the state government's responsibility to determine the delivery of the public transport service to those areas. If you are thinking about north and south of the city where the big growth areas are, and now towards Mt Barker, those areas are identified by state government as the new growth areas. The 30-year plan is now hopefully a way of developing the growth of population along with growth of infrastructure at the same time, rather than what we have seen in the past, where areas like Sellicks Beach down south developed 40 years ago and it was not until 1995 that we actually got a bus. I think there are two sides to this. This is not just about communities taking responsibility for themselves because they have chosen to locate at Sellicks Beach. This is also about a government who says, 'This is an appropriate place to have a new housing development.' They do not then say, 'The only affordable housing here is for people who have two cars and can drive to Adelaide to work.' That is where the question of what is affordable housing comes in. Affordable housing is not about cheap houses. Affordable housing is about how much it costs you to live in a cheap house at a great distance from Adelaide and then be able to afford the fuel to get you to town because there is no bus service. This fallacy of affordable housing needs to be really examined carefully, because the true cost of living in a community and the affordability of that house should be everything that is associated with it—the cost of having to travel—

Senator O'BRIEN—I think they are two different points that you make. Mayor Maitland is talking about areas where people might go because housing is extremely cheap, and those people may be on welfare benefit. I can think of one location in my state, Tasmania, where a tin mine closed and they sold the houses for a dollar each. There were people who were keen to buy a house for a dollar, because they were not going to work.

CHAIR—I have one quick question on the issue of the state planning and the greenfields site. It was a very interesting example that you gave, that it was not until 1995 that you got a bus run. What consultation is there between the state government and those local councils during that planning process?

Councillor Rosenberg—During the last 30-year plan?

CHAIR—Just in general. I am just trying to get an understanding for the committee, when we are talking about the state government responsibility over greenfields sites and where new developments are going to go, of what consultation there is with local councils in those areas to determine what the appropriate public transport mechanisms are going to be, those types of things, that should really be put in place at the same time. Or do they simply make the decisions unilaterally?

Councillor Rosenberg—I think there has been a slight change in the thinking over the last 18 months or so. Prior to that, largely the urban growth boundary was created in response to the need to house a future group of people. In terms of consultation I think it has varied. In some instances it has been quite good and in other instances it has not existed at all. In this last round for the 30-year plan, I think the current government has engaged local government, albeit at a very high level. It has usually been consultation with mayors, CEOs and planners. In saying that, I think the outcome has been listened to. I think the consultation there has been fine. The test for that will be whether a government, having developed a plan, can then encourage each of the infrastructure departments to provide its infrastructure in line with the plan.

In terms of consultation with local government, it varies according to which council it is and how much development is happening there. It is pretty much on an individual basis, council by council. You would argue that that is probably appropriate—except when you are looking at an integrated system. You then need to be negotiating at a much higher level. In a lot of cases, local governments have a huge responsibility in consulting with their own communities and then passing that information on. Governments sometimes look to local governments to provide that service. We are happy to do that if we feel confident that the outcome of that will be an integrated outcome and that we will see some evidence that we have been listened to.

Senator STERLE—You said that it goes council by council. If you have a greenfields site or a new area pops up or whatever, if the council is not proactive are you saying that the planning integration in terms of working alongside the state does not happen or does not happen as efficiently as it should do?

Councillor Rosenberg—It probably does not happen as efficiently as it could, because at the end of the day, in terms of the development process, you have an overall development plan for your region. That is signed off by the planning minister—whoever that happens to be at the time. There is an opportunity at that higher state level to look at that plan and ask: 'How does that fit with the overall plan that we have for the whole of metropolitan Adelaide? How do the areas where we are putting the schools in terms of the transport? How are the kids going to get to a train if they need to? Where do we put park and ride facilities?'

The thing that might be missing in that process is that overarching look at how a development plan for this section here fits with something over there and how they all integrate together. Ultimately, it is not each local government's responsibility to look to see what next door is doing. More and more, local governments are finding that they need to do that because the overarching control of that process seems to be missing. The new 30-year planning is now at least looking at the whole of greater Adelaide in an integrated process. That is a much better way of doing business.

Senator STERLE—Definitely. What we have found out in this inquiry in all states bar one is that it is fundamental for the state government to sit down with the local council and say, 'How are we going to do this?' before we start putting the roads in, putting bitumen on the roads and building the schools and shopping centres and everything. I find it a little bit strange that that is not the passage in South Australia.

Councillor Rosenberg—It is fundamental that both local and state governments sit down together in the whole planning process. The success or otherwise of that has varied according to what developments might be happening in various places. Councils have a very strong connection to their communities, and so they reflect very heavily—through the democratic process—what they are hearing in the supermarkets, the streets and the school car parks. It is not surprising sometimes that a local government might have a slightly difference view about the rate of development and the area of development than a state government does, which has a responsibility to look at things from a much higher umbrella level. It will not work if they do not sit down together, because you will have at the end of the day two groups of people trying to achieve different things for the same community.

Senator STERLE—How well does the state government promote public transport here in Adelaide? I am talking about the metropolitan area.

Councillor Rosenberg—They promote it extremely well. What they do at bus stops has improved over time, in terms of giving information at each stop. There is plenty of public literature out there to promote public transport. But at the end of the day I reflect back to what I said right at the beginning: you can advertise something as much as you like but if people are not in tune with that advertising and do not take in on board and react accordingly, they will not do it. But they will do it if the cost of alternate systems of transport rise dramatically or the public transport system becomes much more efficient and effective for them. Advertising and promoting public transport is one thing, but you have to a system that once promoted works for people. It is not much good advertising a headless chook if people are not in the market for a headless chook on the day.

Senator STERLE—This is the frustrating part. As I have said, we have been all round the country.

CHAIR—We could apply that to politics.

Senator STERLE—We could. I will just talk about Western Australia, which has a very good and well-integrated public transport system.

Councillor Rosenberg—I would absolutely agree with that.

Senator STERLE—The ticketing is superb. There have been a few hiccoughs, but it is brilliant. There is fantastic electric railway both ends, south and north, but it also has a very good freeway system in the north and the south. It is very frustrating when the Western Australians can provide a safe, efficient, sustainable, regular and integrated transport system and yet have some of the highest single passenger commuter figures going into and out of the city every day. I will take it one step further. There have been some suggestions around the country, but, given that you have all that in place, how do you encourage the commuter to get out of their private car and on to the public transport system?

Councillor Rosenberg—Our council just took a trip to Perth and had a look at the system there, because we are very supportive of an extension of a rail system in our area south of the city. We found the system in

Perth to be completely and absolutely effective and efficient. The system was clean and safe. Everything that you think would encourage everybody onto public transport, Perth does and does extremely well. Your argument is that it is still not used to the right capacity. We noticed in a lot of places that there were not huge amounts of park and ride facilities. Maybe that is the answer. I do not think that people want to break their trip, necessarily. If you have a trip from your home to a reasonably close park and ride facility and then you have one train trip to your destination, then that would be an effective system for you to choose. But if you have a long trip to get to a place that is convenient to park your car and then get onto public transport then once you are halfway there you are going to stay in your car and drive the whole way.

I am not a transport expert, and I do not know what makes people think, because I am a psychologist. But somewhere someone must be able to do appropriate research to find out what the factor is that will encourage that person. I have always leant back to the notion of having a really effective system. In South Australia, a large proportion of the issues at night are to do with lack of safety or a perceived lack of safety. And perception is reality. If people perceive that the rail systems are not safe enough for them then they will not use it, and it might not even be a valid argument. There are a whole range of things. There are a whole lot of people much more qualified to answer the question about what makes people make that decision than me.

Senator STERLE—Let us come back a step. I do not have the answer. I understand that there is are completely different reasons for using public transport during peak hours as compared to late at night. You have covered that: safety is the main thing. But it is frustrating, because Perth does have park and ride facilities. It is amazing where people can find a place to park a car; absolutely amazing—places that are not designated for car parking. But Perth has, certainly in the southern suburbs, a very efficient feeder service. You are right: people do not like to break up their journeys. But that is the frustrating part. I am talking about single car ventures in the morning and in the afternoon between eight and six. I use that feeder; it is not hard. A bus comes along about every eight or nine minutes—it is ridiculous how frequent it is. We have it all there, but we still cannot get people out of their cars and on to the bus. You hear people whinge about the price of parking. There have been some suggestions around the country about congestion taxes ala London. I was not setting you up for the big fall. We have not found that answer yet.

Councillor Rosenberg—I just wonder in terms of Perth—and we are probably straying a bit—whether you did a comparison of how effective it is in, say, Subiaco to much further out on the line. What struck me on the visit was that Subiaco is about equivalent to our Unley in distance from the CBD. If we had the intensity of ownership of property in, say, Unley of 15 houses on a hectare compared to four-acre blocks, my guess is that fewer people would own a car living in that style of development and therefore be more attuned to using public transport. Whereas, if you continue developments which are four-acre and further and further out from the city, every household will have three cars and so they will drive. I think part of it is about the style of development as well as whether we advertise public transport. It is about the style of development that people live in, which is attuned to either, 'I am a cycle or walk to the public transport person,' or 'I am living quite a way out from town in a recently opened development'—I think someone mentioned hobby farms and those kinds of things—'and so therefore the most efficient way to get to where I am going is in a car.'

I think the other side of it has to be recognised too. Public transport is a really expensive system to run and you cannot subsidise it for ever. Somewhere along the line people have to take some responsibility for paying for the service that is provided to them. You have to ask the question: how far down does patronage go before the reality is that it is not rational anymore? I think putting in a different style of development around transport hubs is going to make a difference to the attitude of people towards using public transport.

Senator STERLE—Because it is not a cost argument. The silly thing is that it is $6 from the southern suburbs into Perth and back. You cannot get parking for that, let alone run a car. Of course, Perth is very heavily subsidised. In terms of the free bus, you probably would have jumped on the red CAT or the blue CAT. The patronage is great, but that is because it is free, and it is only servicing the inner suburbs. I was hoping for the magic answer.

Councillor Rosenberg—Sorry!

Senator STERLE—We are looking for it.

Councillor Rosenberg—Maybe later today!

Senator LUDLAM—You mentioned earlier transit oriented developments. I know a lot of that language has got into the 30-year plan for greater Adelaide. I am just wondering to what degree that reality of transport oriented development design is actually reaching the ground. I know one example is the new Buckland Park

township. They want to put 15,000 or 30,000 people in. There is not going to be a bus services there until the early 2020s. From your experience, how much of the rhetoric and thinking of transport oriented development is actually hitting the ground in new developments in Adelaide?

Councillor Rosenberg—In terms of the 30-year plan, the areas that have been identified to develop for transport orientated development, such as Noarlunga Centre, are being designed either to meet the new infrastructure that is already planned or around current infrastructure. There is some scepticism around about it being quite a rhetorical statement, but I think the plan shows the thinking, which is that if you locate those where you already have infrastructure then you are going to have an opportunity to be more successful early. I think the first test for transit oriented developments in South Australia will be the pilot. It will be the big test. If it is not successful then I do not hold much hope for the remainder.

We as a council in our region have one major TOD planned—around the Noarlunga Centre. I recently held a forum of community people to see how they reacted to that. I think there are a lot of problems with the language that has been used. People see them as a highly intense ghettos. There is the possibility that they will not work because people will not want to live there. I think TODs are in test time in South Australia, and the outcome of that first one will make it or break it. I think it is more than rhetoric, quite frankly. But I think the real test will be the infrastructure that has to be associated with it. As well as transport there is a whole lot of other infrastructure that needs to be associated with those developments, and the real test will be whether those infrastructures promises are delivered.

Senator LUDLAM—It sounds as though it will be testing first in the infield areas, which I suppose is a little bit similar to what happened in Subiaco in WA. But what is the situation on the fringes of Adelaide? Is it still kind of business as usual, rolling out the suburban carpet, or is there some thinking around installing transit as these developments are going in?

CHAIR—Senator Ludlam, can I get you to repeat that for us. It is a bit difficult to understand what you are saying.

Senator LUDLAM—No worries. I was just asking about the urban fringe and what is going on at the edge of Adelaide as opposed to some of the infields you are describing.

Councillor Rosenberg—I understand that you said that you are interested in what is happening on the urban fringe. Do you mean in relation to transit orientated developments?

Senator LUDLAM—Yes. I want to know whether that thinking is being extended to the urban fringe of whether we are still rolling out the suburban carpet, as it were.

Councillor Rosenberg—The 30-year plan sets some areas of urban growth. It is as limited as it can be in that it is just a line on a map and so can be changed. But it does try to set a line that says, 'This is the urban growth boundary.' It sets those around certain townships. Our council is quite determined and we are in the process of developing a plan amendment report which identifies the areas of infield within our current populated areas. We are aiming for about 70 per cent infield compared to 30 per cent greenfield. The only way that we will do that is by having that style of development. They will not all be TODs. That would be impossible. But they will be that style of development around current infrastructure hubs. Our president, Felicity-Ann Lewis went overseas with the premier on a visit looking at Todd's overseas and has come back quite enthused. From a local government association's perspective, we totally support that style of development and the aim for 70 per cent of the population to be in infield. Does that answer your question?

Senator LUDLAM—Yes, that is good. Thank you.

CHAIR—You raised the issue before of subsidies, which I think is a very good issue to raise. I think, as a committee, we will do some work following up on the equity of the subsidy arrangements because it does certainly seem that, if public transport is going to be viewed as a public good and therefore subsidised, we need to make sure that there is equity between the regional and urban distribution of that. Thank you for raising it.

One thing I do not think we have really explored with you is the role of the Commonwealth. What is your view? Should there be a role for the Commonwealth? Should the states discharge their responsibilities with greater vigour? What is your actual view on whether or not the Commonwealth does have a role and should have a role?

Councillor Maitland—We had this conversation just before we came in, and we were hoping you might tell us what you thought the role was. We are not actually sure.

CHAIR—Neither are the guys on my right!

Councillor Maitland—I think that, as we are continually told by the state government, the federal government is the one with all the money. I do not know whether it is a matter of increasing the financial input into the public transport system from the federal level of whether it is about influencing state governments to become more effective in the way it is delivered. For me, there is in the whole state but particularly rural South Australia one totally underutilised resource that I believe could be used. They are the school buses that are, in the main, owned by the education department. Some of them are privately owned or leased by or run for the department. But for 10 weeks of the year these buses sit there doing nothing. They rarely or never do anything on a weekend., and they would be available from nine o'clock to three o'clock every day. Yet at the moment in this state my understanding is that they really cannot be used by anybody other than for education department related exercises.

CHAIR—Why is that? Is that a legislative requirement?

Councillor Maitland—It seems to be. It is either a legislatively that way or the department just do not want them to do anything else. I understand there is a safety factor in the fact that some of them have to remain on-site at a school location all the time, but certainly I would have thought it was possible that some of them could be used particularly for those 10 weeks of the year when school is not in.

CHAIR—Exactly. That is a very good issue you raise. That is a good point.

Councillor Maitland—I am not sure whether school buses are on your agenda but the current condition of some of these buses certainly is a big issue here in this state. They are not air-conditioned, as is mentioned in our submission. On the west coast Eyre Peninsula of South Australia the buses travel on a lot of open surface roads, they are not air-conditioned and quite a lot of them do not have seat belts. You would assume on a 45-degree day you would open the windows to get some air, but on open surface roads you do not do that because you just fill the bus with dust. That is really almost an unsafe scenario. They need to be upgraded. That is, again, a state government issue probably, so I hesitate to mention it, but it is something that really needs to be addressed.

CHAIR—I did notice that in your submission as well. That is something that we are going to certainly take on board. I cannot imagine any parent would be happy about their child travelling in a bus in those sorts of temperatures with no air-conditioning and no access to air.

Councillor Maitland—You have access to air but there is too much dirt in it.

CHAIR—Exactly. Thank you for raising it.

Senator STERLE—That is a huge issue. I am not sure of the South Australian system, but I know that the Western Australian school bus system is all privately under government contract. It is state-of-the-art and the buses are upgraded every so many years, they are air-conditioned and seat belts are now going into all the new ones. It is a very expensive exercise. But there are a host of other issues around school buses. I am not watering down your argument, but the Western Australian school buses are also used for a lot of interschool activities such as carnivals and sporting stuff. Please correct me if I am wrong, but there are labour issues as well because they are out in the rural areas. I do not know about South Australia but certainly in Western Australia the majority of the school buses operators have another life, which may be running the local service station, the tyre place or a farm. So there are a host of issues that surround it. It is not just a simple case of the buses sitting there with nothing to do. Please take that on board.

Councillor Maitland—I am not necessarily suggesting that the person who drives it as a school bus first thing in the morning and in the afternoon is the person who should drive it during the day, over the school holidays or at any other times. Obviously they have to be suitably accredited, licensed and everything else, but I would have thought somebody else could certainly drive that bus at those other times. Certainly they are used for interschool arrangements. It is just a booking system that needs to be addressed. I do not know the percentage of the buses in South Australia that are department owned and run but there are quite a lot. A reasonably high percentage of them are publicly owned by the department and driven by the people you suggest. I think it was pointed out quite recently that teachers in the schools should not drive those buses because it removes them from doing the duties that other teachers in the school have to do because they do not get there until nine o'clock and they leave at three o'clock. So it was taking them away from the pre-and post-school duties that are required of teachers half an hour or so before and after school.

CHAIR—We had this discussion yesterday about the workforce that becomes available after nine o'clock and before three o'clock after parents have dropped the kids off and before they pick them up, so maybe there is a bit of linkage in there somewhere.

Councillor Maitland—It is not a simple issue, but it is certainly an issue that has been raised, particularly in the more remote areas where there are maybe only two or three buses that come into the school and then just sit there.

Councillor Rosenberg—You opened the door for what the Commonwealth might do. From a local government perspective, one of the issues that we sometimes get a bit frustrated about is that when a Commonwealth piece of legislation is passed the rollout of that legislation can become a cost to local government. One of them that we mentioned in our submission was the Disability Discrimination Act. We in local government keep lovingly talking about the DDA because it is an amazingly resource-hungry process. There are not often very clear resources that come with the legislative changes. Maybe one of the things that needs to be looked at is responsibility levels for rolling out a whole range of things that become necessary after legislation changes.

That raises the broader question: if each of the three levels of government are going to have a bit of responsibility for something, is it more effective to look at who ultimately can deliver that service best—local, state or federal government—and resource that level of government to undertake that delivery and not have everybody having responsibility for a bit of it? The reason I raise that is that you have community buses running around with volunteers. It is a cost to local government to make sure they are trained adequately to meet Australian standards et cetera, and then you have state government providing a bit of a transport service. I am just wondering if it becomes a little bit of a mishmash and could be managed much more effectively if it was thought of in a much more rigorous fashion.

CHAIR—Mayor Maitland and Mayor Rosenberg, thank you very much for appearing today.

Proceedings suspended from 10.35 am to 10.50 am

AVRAMIS, Mr Stathis, Treasurer, People for Public Transport (SA) Inc

AVRAMIS, Mr Thanasis, President, People for Public Transport (SA) Inc

DINGLE, Mrs Margaret, Secretary, People for Public Transport (SA) Inc

CHAIR—Welcome. Would you like to make opening statements?

Mr T Avramis—In light of the fact that we have not put in a written submission we will need to speak for a few minutes to address some of the concerns that we have. Margaret will make some remarks firstly on some of the details of issues that concern us. I will then speak on some of the broader policy issues and some of the directions that we are concerned with. Stathis has some information about some specific areas he will refer to if we need to follow up on them. Mostly, you will hear from Margaret and me.

People for Public Transport is an advocacy group that has been going for a good 20 years now. It was started quite some time ago in circumstances where there was considerable disinvestment in public transport. Although some of the circumstances and the level of interest in public transport has improved we do think there is a long way to go yet. Perhaps this is where Margaret might like to make her comments.

Mrs Dingle—Adelaide has reasonably good radial transport in the inner suburbs—there are 15-minute buses from 7.30 to 6.30 pm and so on—but the outer suburban and cross-suburban transport is very poor. It is said that you can sometimes not get a bus go to a local place three kilometres away; it is easier to get into the city if you are in the inner suburbs. This is combined with the centralisation of services, so a lot of the public transport does not go where people want to go. Buses are less frequent in the outer suburbs and sometimes even in the inner-suburb Go Zones they have cases where there are not enough buses for the people wanting to catch them and they are left standing at the stop for an hour or so even though it is supposed to be a 15-minute service.

Train services are quite fast. The trains are old but they are going to upgrade and electrify all except the Belair line. The windows are often vandalised meaning that you cannot see out very well. They are generally not as frequent as the buses, although the high-frequency trains on the Gawler line come every 15 minutes during the day time. There is generally a mismatch between the stations and the people they are supposed to serve. For instance, Mawson Lakes is a nice new station in a town housing development but the town centre is 800 metres from the railway station and the University of South Australia campus is about one kilometre away. There are buses but they do not have Go Zone frequency. It is a reasonable walk but you can do it. Right next to the station they have a huge ground-level car park and not apartments, as I was hoping, and there is not much on the other side—there is no shopping near it.

Similarly, Elizabeth has quite a good station but it is on the edge of town, so to speak, and a lot of the railway stations are extremely poor—sort of bus shelters with no toilet, no shop, no nothing. Some of them are reasonable. They are planning to build TODs at some of them, in which case they will be upgraded.

Often trains do not have passenger attendants on them, which means that it is less safe—although you do have them at night.

The trams are quite good, but there have been problems with overcrowding and poor reliability. It is the same with the bus services. Often they say they are going to come every 15 minutes but they don't. There are a lack of bus lanes and bus priority lights. If they do extend the O-Bahn, which will in effect be a bus lane through the city, it will mean that there are fewer cases of buses being held up by traffic in the city. It often takes a long time for buses to travel through the city.

Outer suburban transport is very poor and a lot of places have become dormitory suburbs, in effect; they simply have very poor services. They are going to extend the train line to Seaford and, we hope, to Flinders Medical Centre, but that has not happened yet. The town of Gawler, which is effectively a suburb, has quite a good rail service and two railway stations. There are buses of sorts around the town but not a metro service. A lot of areas are expanding nearby and becoming, in effect, dormitory suburbs, but they are not serviced by good public transport. Those are all the comments I have at this stage.

Mr T Avramis—The importance of some of those comments from Margaret is that these are the sorts of details that users of public transport remember on a daily basis and, more to the point, nonusers also remember them. The issue about public transport is that, although we have a basis for people to use it, a considerable number of people do not use it because they do not like the frequency, they do not like where it goes and they do not like what they find when they get there and so on. We need to have that in the back of our minds as I

make some comments about the broader policy. We need to make a connection between some of those detailed issues and the specifics in which public transport is designed against some of the greater policy issues about how it is all funded and what arrangements are made. I am sure you have attempted to use public transport at some point and have come across some of the issues in your home towns and have heard similar comments.

I want to go to some of the greater matters of finance, to begin with, and the public investment in transport. I have a book here called *Back on Track*, written by Phillip Laird, Peter Newman, Mark Bachels and Jeff Kenworthy. They have some interesting figures on expenditure on land transport by the Commonwealth from 1974 to 1999. In that period $5.3 billion was spent on rail and an additional $1.5 billion was spent on urban public transport. So about $6.8 billion was spent on non-road modes of transport in that period. That was offset by revenue from the rail system of about $3.1 billion. Approximately $3.7 billion in that period was spent on non-road expenditure by the Commonwealth. In that same period $42.7 billion was spent on roads. So expenditure on roads was 91 per cent of transport expenditure. That is something that you might also expect from state expenditure on transport. The great majority of that expenditure would also have been on road transport.

Since 1999, although the balance will have shifted somewhat to other modes of transport like rail and trams, it will not have shifted by an enormous amount in most cities and regional areas. What can be said reasonably clearly is that in the 60 years since World War II, over 90 per cent of transport expenditure by all governments would have been for roads. For all that investment in roads, we still end up with congestion. The clear thing is that the state of equilibrium for roads is really to have stop-and-go traffic. What we have ended up with is a situation where it is not how many lanes of roads need to be built to ease congestion but how many lanes of congestion you would want. Do you favour four lanes of bumper-to-bumper traffic or 16 lanes of bumper-to-bumper traffic? An enormous amount of money has been spent for not necessarily much result.

Our recommendation would be that, with the exception of black spot and other safety measures, the Commonwealth at the very least should stop road funding for the next decade or two—arguably, if you are going to balance it, for the next six decades. If there is to be expenditure on roads, let this be solely a state government responsibility. You might say, 'Okay, if the funding of roads were to cease, what would the outcome be?' We can look at a couple of similar concerns in the US. There were two events I want to cite for your information. In New York the Westside Highway collapsed in 1973. A study by the department of transport in New York after that event showed that 93 per cent of the car trips lost through that highway collapse did not reappear elsewhere. People simply stopped driving. Similarly, in 1989 in San Francisco, the Embarcadero Freeway collapsed in an earthquake. Following that event, the citizens of San Francisco voted to remove the highway altogether, despite there being apocalyptic warnings from the traffic engineers. We do not necessarily see that there is a disaster caused by removing roads.

In his own submission to this inquiry, Dr Paul Mees indicated that Vancouver was the only Canadian city which has built no new major roads and has deliberately adopted a policy of allowing traffic congestion to worsen as a demand management measure. Our view is that, rather than advocating natural disasters as a planning tool—

CHAIR—Excellent!

Senator O'BRIEN—You can't mostly cause them by policy initiatives!

Mr T Avramis—Yes. We would take the view that we want to repair artificial disasters, like Adelaide's southern expressway, by rational tools like congestion charging. What we would like from the Commonwealth is to have the Commonwealth place both incentives or threats in front of state governments so that they adopt tools such as congestion charging. In combination with the cessation of road funding, we would like to see much of that money that has been available decade after decade for road funding be diverted to public transport use.

In a more positive manner, going back to 1991, the US congress passed what was called the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act. This act had a number of effects. It ceased to guarantee that transport funds would be used only for road transport. It required that local cities and regions evaluate options for use of transport funds before funds were assigned, including options which fulfilled clean air goals. As a result, quoting from the book *Back on Track*:

United States transportation policy changed from one that was engineering driven, top down, secretive, fiscally irresponsible and almost entirely focussed on highways to one that is planning based, locally controlled, open, fiscally constrained and intermodal.

From that comment alone, we probably have our view of what we think many elements of the current system are—that by funding primarily road transport we have a considerable number of inefficiencies.

How might we have something like this act in Australia? Perhaps we could achieve this by passing all transport funding via an organisation such as Infrastructure Australia or an equivalent body. This would include both state and Commonwealth funds for transport. We would like to see Infrastructure Australia or an equivalent body develop and publish local and regional infrastructure plans for all areas of Australia, and that these plans be developed only through a process which engages communities in each region.

The aim is to ensure that decisions taken on transport funding by Infrastructure Australia or its equivalent body are not taken solely through a political and bureaucratic process within Commonwealth and state governments, as there needs to be an engagement of the community in that process, which occurred in the US. The act in that was passed in 1991 by the US Congress followed advocacy by 500 public transport advocacy groups. Those groups then continued to be part of the planning process that occurred at local levels.

I will make some comments about how to encourage the use of public passenger transport. These comments do not directly relate to public transport as such but to the nature of cities. Transport both shapes the city and in turn is shaped by the city. Good public transport requires good urban planning policy. One of the things that we have seen in the recent state plan—about which we need to express our considerable disappointment—is that the state government continues to plan for further expansion at the urban boundaries. If there is one singular lesson from the last 50 years it is that urban sprawl will come at a cost to the community which will be greater than what might be saved in the short term. If the sprawl is dependent on cheap oil, the costs in the future will be considerable.

In more specific terms, we are quite concerned about how the state government is implementing policies for transit oriented development and for urban infill. I do not know how much we need to say about transit oriented development, because you would have seen the term used in some of the other papers that you have in front of you. We have a bit of information that we can present.

A concern on our part, as well as on the part of other commentators, is about the state government's lack of design rules for transit oriented developments. I will use the acronym 'TOD'. This lack has the potential to result in developments which diminish the reputation of transit oriented developments and to diminish the demand for housing in TODs, with a possible impact on the viability of such developments. We have seen a prototype of a TOD at the Newport Keys development at Port Adelaide. It was never established as a TOD but the development abuts two railway stations and it is central to an area which in all other respects would be considered to be entirely suitable for a TOD. But we find that this development has no design features which connect it to the railway stations or integrate those stations into the life of that community. Any such connections are left entirely to chance.

The developers excelled themselves by proposing to build some housing in which there would have been bedrooms without windows. The council put a stop to this, fortunately. But unfortunately we also have a state government which has developed a habit in recent years of overriding local council planning regulations, mostly with the effect of watering down good building and planning practices.

Moving away from TODs to urban infill, I will quote the *Adelaide Advertiser* from 18 July:

> Many of the urban consolidation projects that have occurred in Adelaide up to now have been of a very low urban design quality and so the public has adopted a very anti urban consolidation stance.

This is regrettable, both because of poor outcome for the city but also because the public resistance to urban consolidation could very easily spill over to opposition to transit oriented developments.

We have some recommendations in terms of TODs to promote the development of quality TOD sites and suburban infill projects. We would like the Commonwealth to develop and publish national design criteria for both transit oriented development and urban infill. Such criteria could allow for large or small retail developments, schools, kindergartens, childcare centres, offices and community spaces. We have a lot more detail about that matter which we can address.

CHAIR—I will pull you up there for just a moment. We only have 25 minutes, and I know that the senators are very keen to ask you some questions. Perhaps if you speak for another three or four minutes and make sure that you cover off those things. If there is further written information that you would like to submit after this morning, we are happy to include that as well. It is probably important that the senators get a good period of time in which to ask you some questions.

Mr T Avramis—That is fine. We would like to see urban design panels for TODs. That was suggested in one of the planning reviews in this state. But before investing Commonwealth funds in TODs—and this is not just South Australia but nationally—we would advise on insisting that decision-making powers for the design panels and the consequent tendering processes be independent of the state government. We would like to see some of those powers with the community, local councils and the Commonwealth jointly. Given the comments that we had from the previous party, local councils should also be well resourced to undertake some of the work involved with that. We have some overseas examples of TOD projects and the criteria under which they operate from Baltimore, Denver, Honolulu and Calgary. We have publications that we can provide on those.

We also want to see from the Commonwealth seeding funds for the purpose of promoting TODs. We have some good examples at Christie Walk here in the city in Sturt St. They are not near public transport, but the design principles of that development can be readily incorporated into the transit oriented developments.

The other matter is that until the 1980s the South Australian Housing Trust had the capacity to develop major infill projects, both for low-income housing and for the general housing market. Changes to Commonwealth funding arrangements for public housing in the 1980s eliminated this capacity on the part of the trust. We recommend direct Commonwealth funding for low-income funding within transit oriented developments.

In terms of the planning of TODs, there are tools—such as the housing and transportation affordability index, developed by the Brooking Institute in the US—that can be used. That is a tool that can be used to identify suitable areas for TODs to be established in. We can provide some information on that as well. Looking at another submission to this inquiry, the Planning Institute of Australia has suggested the use of direct funding, such as occurred under the States Grants (Urban Public Transport) Act 1974. We would like to see a return to something like that arrangement as well.

CHAIR—I might just haul you up there. If we have more time, we can go back to your statement at the end.

Senator STERLE—What is the good news?

Mr T Avramis—The good news is that for the first time in a long time we have had funding for new train and tramlines and a general improvement in services such as in the electrification here in South Australia, which has been a major bugbear for the train system at least, and some proposed increases in service frequencies. What we are now concerned about is not so much that direct investment, although we do want a lot more of it to occur of course; there has been a lot of deficiency over the last few decades that needs to be corrected. We need to move beyond a view that public transport is public transport. Rather, it is about urban planning as a whole. The role of the Commonwealth is to move all state governments and the community in general towards looking at what the shapes of cities need to be and what the role public transport plays within that is.

Mr S Avramis—The experience of transit oriented developments overseas has been that urban planning is an integral plan of the success of those projects. In Curitiba in Brazil, the same body that does all the transport planning, management, maintenance et cetera is the same body that does all the land zoning and land use regulations. It has a very large staff. All the areas in the US of similar character to Adelaide have long process of community involvement and planning before projects take place. This community process involves businesses as well—public-private partnerships, for instance. It is all about planning first. Then you have the development of the projects. Then you have success.

Senator STERLE—And that is the way it should go, too. I asked one of our previous witnesses how they thought South Australia's public transport system was. They said that it is very good and that on the whole the state government does well to promote it. But listening to Mrs Dingle's accounts of public transport in Adelaide I got a completely different view. Are people regularly left behind at the stops because of overcrowding?

Mrs Dingle—It depends. Especially in peak periods, buses are sometimes irregularly. Where I live, in Norwood, the public transport is quite good. I can get to the city quite easily. There are lots of buses. But if I lived in the outer suburbs it would certainly not be the same story—unless I happened to be near a railway station. Also, I have heard accounts of people on Main North Road and other roads who are, ostensibly, in a 15-minute bus service zone but, because there are not enough buses and people on the outer suburbs jump on them—which is good—they have to wait long periods of time in peak periods, or in the middle of the day, for a bus. So it is mixed. Some parts of the public transport system are quite good but some are very poor.

Senator STERLE—What we have heard around the country is that it could definitely be done better—there is no argument about that—as the population explodes and the demand for road areas increases. The chair has been very kind to pass to me first, because I think she saw my ears prick up when you talked about ceasing all road funding. It would be remiss of me, Mr Avramis, to let you get away with that unchallenged.

Senator O'BRIEN—Was it a serious submission? I took it as tongue in cheek. You would be cut to ribbons with that submission in any serious inquiry.

Mr T Avramis—The reason I made that comment is that we have had a preponderance of funding for road transport over a very long time. It is not going to be the case that we will uninvent road transport or uninvent the car. We have no intention of suggesting that. The point is that you do not have to divert an enormous amount of the money that is now going to road funding to actually repair the public transport system throughout the nation. The more traffic you get off urban roads or the more freight transport you get off highways the easier it will be to maintain the road system itself. There have been suggestions that all you have to do is move five per cent of the traffic off urban roads and you will substantially increase the level of amenity of those roads and the level of congestion will go down. There is a major deficiency: you actually need those rail lines and tram lines—and what I did not mention is a considerable number of new buses—to improve the efficiency of the road system. There are a lot of those up-front, high-end costs which may take 10 or 20 years to develop since we have not done it over the last 60 years. But, after that, once you have the basic public transport infrastructure in place, the level of expenditure on that will tail off. Maybe then you can go back to building more roads if you actually need them at that point.

Senator STERLE—This is where I have to challenge that statement. There are a lot of figures quoted. It suits at lot of people to raise certain parts of government spending, future and past, but, in my personal and humble view, there could be a lot more spent on Australia's road network to bring it up to scratch. I am very supportive of public transport—make no mistake about that. That is why I have attended all these hearings. During this global financial crisis that we have been hit with, there is only one industry that has powered on, if I can use that terminology, and that is the agricultural industry. The chair might want to add something or might disagree with me, but roads are not just about North Terrace, South Terrace and the Anzac Highway. If you were to go to Senator Nash's constituency and say that the roads were well and truly overfunded and no more should be spent, I do not think you would get out of the RSL, or wherever the meeting was held, in one piece.

Mr S Avramis—I would like to reply to that. To be more accurate, we were suggesting that road funding in metropolitan areas should essentially cease, because metropolitan areas are very well serviced with roads.

Senator STERLE—That was not explained very clearly when $42.7 billion was mentioned.

Mr S Avramis—If we need to continue with road expenditure, rural and regional areas certainly do need it, but the freeways, for instance, in metropolitan areas are not going to solve any problems.

CHAIR—Can I ask you a question about that, because it certainly raised an interesting point and got our attention. I think you said that the state government funding of roads would continue; it was just that you suggested that the Commonwealth capacity would be removed.

Mr T Avramis—Yes.

CHAIR—What then happens to the national highway?

Mr T Avramis—Going back to that point, there are going to be some developments on the national highway system but we have to spend an enormous amount of money on a national highway system. At the same time we have let the rail system fall into considerable disrepair. In many cases that national highway system is about the freight traffic that goes on it. The freight traffic is something that we are not particularly expert in and there would be other organisations that we have no doubt would have something to say about the modes by which freight is moved around the country. Our concern is about the mixture of funds—90 per cent being used for road transport alone. Even if you were to reduce that to 70 per cent, the difference would make a substantial improvement in some of the other modes of transport.

We have had year after year of expenditure on roads and all we are going to see if we stick with the current approach is year after year of expenditure on roads and it still will not necessarily solve the problem. We end up with congestion and that congestion will also occur on the national highway system, not just within the metropolitan areas.

CHAIR—Ms Dingle, did you want to add something?

Ms Dingle—Yes, I would like to say that certainly some freight is not suitable to go by rail but freight rail has been drastically under funded over the years. I am not opposed to making the highways safe for trucks and cars outside the city. I am a bit appalled, though, that sometimes you see a little side road being upgraded—Roads for Recovery, you know—by the Commonwealth. It seems a bit strange that they are funding a resurfacing of a small suburban street. Basically, I think we have to rebalance it and look at the needs. I think there is much too much spent on urban freeways where public transport would have been better. With the country roads and rail we just have to look at the priorities, but I think a lot more freight could go by rail.

Senator STERLE—This is my frustration. Just so you know: I come from the transport industry. All modes of transport have a role to play.

Ms Dingle—Yes, I agree.

Senator STERLE—There is absolutely no argument. Some do it far better than others and rail is very good at bulk commodities—no ifs or buts—and if you are talking about the greenhouse footprint it leaves, rail wins hands down or second to ships. But I must stress that the national highway is not a wonderful four-lane or six-lane highway all around this great country of ours.

Mr S Avramis—No; we are not suggesting it is.

Ms Dingle—We are not suggesting it is.

Senator STERLE—It is nowhere as it should be. And when we are talking about servicing our agricultural areas and our mining areas—and coming from WA I can tell you that they are two very important industries for us—and when you have road trains passing each other at 100 kilometres an hour with 30 centimetres between their mirrors on Highway 1, you can see that it is not as though the highway is getting everything thrown at it.

Ms Dingle—We are not opposed to making the highways safe. We were really stressing the overinvestment, particularly in urban freeways.

Senator STERLE—Yes, and you declared that. I just wanted to clarify that too.

Mr S Avramis—The other thing I would like to mention about all of this is that in the next 20, 30 or 40 years we are going to have trouble with oil supplies and the price of oil—I am sure other people have mentioned this as well—so the time to invest in alternatives is now, not when we are going to need it in an instant.

Senator STERLE—That is a very good point. Also, what a lot of people do not know is that by 2020 the transport freight task is going to double.

Ms Dingle—This is what worries me, because I have heard that it is going to increase faster than the GDP and I worry about what is going on here. Are they doing unnecessary transport of freight?

Senator STERLE—I do not see any transport of freight as unnecessary. It is a fact of life.

Ms Dingle—What I mean is that if you need something to go from A to B that is fine, but do not send it by an unnecessarily long route and do not swap the strawberries between states when both states grow them.

Mr T Avramis—There are a lot of economic modelling issues behind this. The state government has just produced its strategic plan for 2038, in which it sees another 500,000 people in the state over the next few years. To be honest we cannot quite see the validity of those projections unless there is a considerable degree of immigration to Australia over the next few years. We do not want to take those projections at face value, in part because it is government policy that drives that industry as well. It has been easy to move things. You keep building roads to make it easier to move things. Perhaps it is time to look at policies which are about not having ease of movement of freight, and develop approaches in the way industry works. This goes back to the planning issue: what do you do about the shape of the city and the economy within that city which can take away the need to do some of this freight transport? Some leadership from the Commonwealth in this area would be useful because we will get a national approach to this rather than a parochial state or regional approach to the development of cities and regions.

Mr S Avramis—The housing and transport affordability index has been a very good tool in the US for telling you how much it will cost for transport in any particular location. We have nothing similar in Australia. In the US it is used as a tool for planning where new development is going to happen and for finding gaps in transport where transport is particularly expensive. Back when they had the oil price shocks in the US it was a

very good way of finding out which neighbourhoods were extremely vulnerable to high petrol prices, for instance. We have nothing like that here that can tell us the best place to put transport, industry et cetera.

Senator O'BRIEN—You would have to say that your submission is more to do with the theory than the practice of the development of our nation. You agree, don't you, that there is no way we can cut back on road funding expenditure given the population and freight task outside metropolitan areas where most of the public transport expenditure needs to be spent. Is that a fair comment?

Mr T Avramis—Under the current assumptions there is certainly no way that will change. We have had 60 years of assumptions on a particular model of the world.

Senator O'BRIEN—I think we would all agree that past expenditure on rail has been efficient and that current and recent expenditure on rail has accelerated. It is interesting that the Australian Railtrack Corporation actually has its base here in Adelaide. It has briefed this committee—it is in the *Hansard* if you want to check estimates and other hearings—about very important improvements in our national rail network. So there is expenditure in that area. For example, container traffic across the Nullarbor is predominantly on rail because it is more economic.

Mr T Avramis—There are areas in which rail transport has worked very well; otherwise, the Commonwealth wouldn't have had revenue from it as well.

Senator O'BRIEN—And there is private rail development as well because, in some areas, with bulk commodities it is much more economic than anything else.

Mr T Avramis—I think the national highway system has diverted us from the discussion. We were mainly concerned about the metropolitan areas.

Senator O'BRIEN—That is why I am challenging your extrapolation of expenditure and saying that you cannot really make the proposition that you have made. You may say there has been disproportionate expenditure, but I do not think you can advance a proposition about diverting, and that is why I said you must have made it tongue-in-cheek.

Mr T Avramis—Indeed. I wanted to say it with some rhetorical excess to draw your attention to these issues. Much of that $42.7 million has been for the national highway system; it is not about urban transport. But certainly the mix within the urban arrangements over many decades has been 90 per cent road and we need to change that mix around.

Senator O'BRIEN—All the local government bodies—

Mr T Avramis—I would also say that cities drive economies as well; it is not entirely a rural issue. Yes, the agriculture areas need to move their produce and the mining industry moves its products, but a lot of the development also occurs within cities and the services industries develop within cities and in turn export their product. The nature of the city and the capacity to attract skilled people into good environments is also a key issue for urban development and for the development of the economy as a whole. We have to address the capacity of the cities to transport their contribution to the economy.

Senator O'BRIEN—Let's distil the argument down to the cities; let's ignore the rest for the purposes of your evidence today because that might get us a little further. One of the modes of public transport that we have received significant evidence on is bus rapid transit because of the economics of establishing it and the flexibility of that sort of system compared to the cost of establishing heavy rail. It would perhaps require diversion of some road expenditure to dedicated bus rapid transit roads, lanes or whatever.

Mr T Avramis—Our solution is not entirely about rail and trams. They have their particular place, but in fact the majority of public transport will be buses. One thing we do need to see is an investment in the bus system and the integration of that bus system with some of the other modes. We certainly want to see more direct investment in buses. It is not the big-ticket item: you do not go and open a new bus in the way that you open a new railway line or railway station, but it is actually going to carry the greater load of public transport for a long time.

In his work over recent years, Dr Paul Mees has spoken of the network effect, which is the result you get when you integrate the bus system appropriately and develop it to its proper potential. The basis of the network effect is that you can start anywhere in a city and go anywhere at any time. You can do that with a car at the moment, congestion aside. The point about having a much more elaborate and properly planned bus system is that you will be able to leave from any point in the city and go to any other point in the city without necessarily going 10 kilometres in one direction and then switching and going 10 kilometres towards your

destination. We want to see investment in the cost of urban routes and a lot more interchanges so that people can move from one route to another very quickly and not have to wait 30 to 45 minutes to make that interchange. Some of those interchanges are going to be not as elaborate as transit oriented developments but need to be established nonetheless, and we would like to see some criteria for the planning of those interchanges and some investment. If it takes the Commonwealth to do it, all well and good, but we want to move beyond seeing public transport as purely a rail or tram system, which seems to be the thing that catches most people's attention.

Mr S Avramis—If I could add to that—

Senator O'BRIEN—We have pretty limited time, unfortunately. I think Senator Ludlum, who is on the line, probably has questions, so I will pass over to him.

CHAIR—Senator Ludlum, do have some questions?

Senator LUDLAM—Can you guys hear me okay?

CHAIR—Could you repeat that?

Senator LUDLAM—I was checking to see if he could hear me.

Senator STERLE—You might have to put it on notice—we can't hear a thing.

CHAIR—Just try again, Scott. It is pretty tricky to hear. Ask your question and we will see if we can hear it.

Senator LUDLAM—I inquiring as to the state of public transport planning, maybe sticking with Adelaide in particular. Is there a master public transport plan either that the government has produced or that non-government organisations have produced that are guiding the way public transport develops in Adelaide?

Mr T Avramis—We have a recently released strategic plan up to 2038, some of which includes comments on public transport. But we found that it is a little light on in terms of the details. Some elements have already been publicly announced, like the transit oriented developments at 11 sites, the new rail extensions to Seaford. But when it comes to, say, the bus system we have no details as to what the bus system might look like in 20 years time and it is not clear to us how all the modes of public transport will in fact connect up with each other and what steps will be taken to connect all those modes.

Mrs Dingle—One of our members actually had a list of possible additional bus routes, which I have not got with me but is available if you want it. That is just his suggestions.

Senator LUDLAM—If it were to be the case that the Commonwealth started stepping up and funding public transport to a much greater degree, what institutional arrangements or what filtering processes should you do think should be in place to guide that spending?

Mr T Avramis—I did not quite catch that.

CHAIR—If there should be Commonwealth spending, what sort of filtering process should be in place to determine that spending. Is that right, Senator Ludlam?

Senator LUDLAM—Yes, essentially what kind of filtering or what sort of institutional arrangements should guide the spending.

Mr T Avramis—I made the comment earlier about Infrastructure Australia or an equivalent body which should develop and publish regional plans. I think that is probably the first step so that, not only in any one city but within the regions of Australia throughout the country, we have a cohesive plan which connects up our national highway system and national freight system with what occurs within the regions and also occurs within the urban areas. We need to take a year or two to develop some of these plans, and that would be your initial filtering process before we then look at the allocation of funds. I know that because of the global financial crisis there has been an immediate requirement in some cases to do some stimulus work, but I think any future expenditure should actually be predicated on some planning processes in the first instance.

Mrs Dingle—You could look at the number of people going to a certain place, including the car traffic, to indicate the possible demand.

CHAIR—Thank you very much to People for Public Transport for appearing today. We appreciate your evidence.

[11.39 am]

FIDOCK, Ms Alicia, Research Officer, Julia Farr Association

HALLAHAN, Dr Lorna Elizabeth Ellen, Chair, Board of Directors, Julia Farr Association

CHAIR—Welcome. You have lodged submission No 71 with the committee. Do you want to make any alterations or amendments?

Ms Fidock—No, thank you.

CHAIR—Would you like to make an opening statement before we move to questions?

Dr Hallahan—The Julia Farr Association has emerged within the last three years in its latest incarnation. We have a long history, however, reaching back, into providing services for people with disability and their families living in South Australia. Our current form is very committed to amplifying the voice of people with disability and their families, especially as they strive to become active and participating and contributing members of an inclusive community. Therefore you can see why transport would be a major concern for us and why we welcome this opportunity to both present the submission and then follow up with you in this forum. So thank you very much for inviting us.

When we think about transport, we really think not so much about access to transport, although that is the obvious interface between the passenger and whatever service it is that they are seeking, but we are really talking about access to destination. We are talking about making it possible for people with disability to penetrate every corner of our community and to engage with whatever it is that they seek to engage with. So any question of accessible transport is access to destination. Therefore we have tried to be a bit solution focused in our thinking. It is easy in disability just to talk about problems all the time, but we would like you to consider that any of the costs of the stuff that we are talking about are actually offset. We unfortunately do not have the resources to model this, but they are offset against what it might mean for the community to have up to 20 per cent of its population participating much more fully and making a contribution to community life and to the economy.

I would like to hand over to Alicia to take you through some of the stuff that we have been exploring that we think might be of interest to you.

Ms Fidock—Our submission was informed by qualitative research we conducted throughout the South Australian disability community. That involved over 800 people involved in surveys we have conducted as well as consultations. Also it has been informed by published research literature. Our submission focused on the experiences of people accessing four specific modes of transport. Those were taxis, planes, buses and trains. In our submission we identified a range of barriers that people experience accessing public passenger transport and we feel these are soundly evidence based from the research. I will not go into those but some of those might come up in our question time.

Our submission made 11 recommendations. The first two recommendations focused on taxis, recommendations 3-6 focused on planes, 7 and 8 focused on buses and 9-11 focused on trains. There was a range of recommendations which focused on specific ways or suggestions to change the infrastructure of public passenger transport. However, there was a really strong emphasis across all modes on the need to improve disability awareness at the interface between the traveller and the transport provider. This is what we would like to focus on in our introductory statement.

We feel that the extent that people can access public transport is very much influenced by the type of interaction they have with the staff and the level of information they are provided on access to destination Lorna was talking about. It is all about that journey, excuse the pun. We would like to convey a bit more about this to you this morning. We believe disability awareness training should be an integral part of any industry training undertaken within the transport industry. This should occur across all levels, not only the drivers and service providers as such but also the people who make the policy decisions about how transport is provided in the community. There is a range of things that could be focused on, but we feel there needs to be a great emphasis on treating people with the same respect and dignity than any other traveller is afforded; raising awareness about the different types of disabilities people live with and what needs they might have; focusing on the use of relevant assistive equipment, such as ramps and lifters to aid in accessing transport; and a focus on the diverse ways in which information can be conveyed to people. That is not only in regards to staff

interacting with people directly but also information that the transport provider provides to people living with disabilities.

We feel that however the training is provided, and education provided can vary from service provider to service provider, it is really important that people living with disability are involved in preparing and delivering this type of training. This will ensure that information provided is relevant and responsive to their needs. This training should be provided on a regular basis and people with disabilities should be involved in that also.

This also provides a way of monitoring. Through regular training, the staff and the services can monitor how they are progressing and performing when they involve people in the review of how they are delivering the service in the training context.

We believe that this focus on disability awareness education at the interface between the traveller and transport provider is essential in ensuring that people have full access to public passenger transport. We acknowledge that it is very important to access the modes of transport physically but it really is important that the delivery is also accessible and people are provided with the service you and I expect. That is our opening statement so thank you for having us here today.

Senator O'BRIEN—There are a variety of areas we could talk about. Let us start with air travel. That is a commonly used form of public transport—and increasingly so, with discount airfares. I am aware that there has been an issue abut the carriage of powered wheelchairs on aircraft, particularly on lower-cost carriers, and their preparedness to involve the loading of those, they say at their cost. Is that the issue that has been raised?

Ms Fidock—That was one of the issues that were raised in our consultation with the community. Our response was that we did not provide a recommendation on how to resolve that because we acknowledged that there is a whole range of issues regarding storage space. But, yes, it was one of those issues. I think that at the human rights consultation that was one of the key issues that were raised by one of the people attending in South Australia.

Senator O'BRIEN—Sporting bodies raised that because of the sporting groups who wanted to travel together. They were effectively being prevented or inhibited by the new policy that was implemented by certain airlines. What are the other issues that you would want to highlight?

Ms Fidock—With regards to air travel?

Senator O'BRIEN—Yes.

Ms Fidock—One of the issues that were raised by the disability community was the fact that if they were required to travel with an assistant—it also covers people with obesity—that they had to pay for an extra seat to accommodate their needs. That was disadvantaging them financially because, like you and me, they needed to travel but because they had to have someone come along with them—or because of their physical needs—they needed two seats. They felt that this was discriminatory—that they were being disadvantaged because of their disability. That was one of the issues they raised.

Since writing the submission we have looked into whether there had been solutions to this in other areas. There was a ruling in late 2008 by the Canadian transport authority—or an independent tribunal for the Canadian government—based upon a person complaining that they had to pay, that this should not be occurring: that the airline should be covering those costs, whether it be through levies or through charging airlines a percentage. I do not know the outcome from that ruling but they made a ruling that the airlines should not charge the person for the extra seat—that there should be one person, one fare. In other words, if that person is required to sit in two chairs because of their disability they should only be charged for one seat.

CHAIR—Has any consideration been given to having—rather than that type of scenario, which puts the responsibility onto the airline—a government subsidy for the second seat? Rather than putting the responsibility onto the operator of the airline, as a social justice measure should it not come back to government to assist the disability sector in paying for that second seat?

Ms Fidock—I would say that that is another possibility but I could not tell you if that as been explored elsewhere.

CHAIR—Just on that, have you got any figures—I am very happy for you to take this question on notice and come back to the committee with an answer—on how many disabled travellers, travelling domestically in an average year, would need a second seat?

Ms Fidock—We will take that on notice.

Senator O'BRIEN—What is the situation on the private buses? I am thinking particularly about the intercity or interstate private buses in relation to the same carer traveller situation?

Ms Fidock—Are you talking about private bus services?

Senator O'BRIEN—I will not name one but you know that there are a couple of major companies.

Ms Fidock—I am sorry; we did not delve into that in the scope of our submission. I am not sure about the charges or fees in that case.

Senator O'BRIEN—I was thinking as you said that that the airlines might say, 'Why should we do it if someone else in another travel mode is not so required?' I am also thinking that they would say, 'We can only do that by imposing a higher fare on every other traveller', which might be a solution, but that might discourage other people from travelling. They are the sorts of practical responses which we would get from industry if we were to make that suggestion a recommendation. I am keen to explore that from the point of view of you providing the views that you think we should express in response to that.

Ms Fidock—Okay. Thank you. We will take that on notice.

Senator O'BRIEN—In bus transport there are some very obvious issues that people are aware of, such as whether the bus is accessible to people who have limited mobility—kneeling buses and the like—and the accessibility of buses for wheelchair-bound people. Are those the sorts of issues that have been raised?

Ms Fidock—One of the issues that was raised with regard to buses is the fact that there were accessible buses around but there was no guarantee that if they had an accessible bus one way from A to B there would be one available from B to A. So there was no guarantee of always having an accessible bus. There are also barriers to getting into the accessible bus, because the kerb sides and the bus stops were not necessarily accessible. They are some of the issues raised about accessing buses. That is why we made a very general recommendation to improve bus accessibility and, of course, infrastructure surrounding that. I know that in South Australia there are over 500 accessible buses out of 800 or so, which is wonderful, and I think they are achieving their standards, but it is all to do with the routes and timetables and whether we can have them accessible one way or another. They are getting there, but it is still not responding to the needs of the community.

Senator O'BRIEN—I am not sure if you were here when the municipal association's witnesses talked about the concerns that they had that the Disability Discrimination Act would impose obligations on local government without a funding solution for those obligations.

Ms Fidock—No, I was not here for that.

Senator O'BRIEN—I would encourage you to have a look at the *Hansard*, and you may wish to give us your views on those as well.

Dr Hallahan—Did they talk about having to bear the cost of increasing access inside buses as well and possibly forgoing some passenger seats? Is that one of the issues they raised?

Senator O'BRIEN—No, they did not raise that. They were talking about the bus stop costs and things like that. But other issues more generally, I think, if I interpreted their answers correctly, were in their minds in the comment that was made. So that would be an interesting matter. What other particular areas would you care to draw to our attention?

Ms Fidock—One of the things we were excited about was put forward by one of the people we consulted in the community—the idea of having a service provided by the airport to enable people who enter the airport to access relevant airlines with the support they require. At the moment, the onus is on the airlines to provide that support for people to access the planes and the like, and because of that people are not getting the information conveyed to the relevant airlines and people are being left with staff who do not know how to support them or left without enough necessary equipment. We did further research on this and we identified that in Europe they recently introduced some legislation through the European Union that airports have to provide that service. They came up with various ways that that could occur, such as through levies—a similar concept to the seating. Basically, it is trying to create that continuity and consistency and also to ensure that the people providing the support have the necessary disability awareness training to support people to have fluid travel from entrance to the airport right through to arrival at the next destination.

CHAIR—So the responsibility would fall on the terminal operator?

Ms Fidock—Yes, that is what they are suggesting.

CHAIR—It is a sensible suggestion.

Ms Fidock—Yes. I have a reference I can give you.

Senator O'BRIEN—At some airports the airline owns the terminal, the airport owner owns the land but not the terminal and where the airport owner owns a terminal it is, in any case, the subject of a lease. Those are some of the legal niceties, but I understand what you are saying.

Ms Fidock—If there are 10 or so different airlines that have different policies, you can see the journey of a person with disabilities can be quite unpredictable. They may give a lot of notice and still not have their needs met. There is a suggestion in your legislation—'regulation' is the terminology I think they used—that people would have to give 48 hours notice and then that information from the airline would be conveyed to the service and the airport so that that level of communication would be maintained. It is a great idea and I think it should be explored.

Senator STERLE—On page 8 of your submission—and we are still talking about planes—at 7.1, dot point 2, it is very clear—I think it is fantastic in the way it has been put together; it has the references that we can go back to—where you say:

- Having no guarantee that mobility aids such as wheelchairs, will arrive at the same destination or be received in the same working order

We are obviously talking about the major airlines?

Ms Fidock—I am not sure whether they are talking about regional or—

Senator STERLE—I went down to footnote 17 where you mentioned that consultation was undertaken by your association. Could you take it on notice and provide the committee with examples.

Ms Fidock—Of the actual experiences?

Senator STERLE—Yes.

Ms Fidock—We can approach some of the people who gave us that feedback. We conducted a number of interviews and that was some of the feedback.

Senator STERLE—If it were at Paraburdoo Airport on a Sunday afternoon I would think, 'All right' but if we are talking about Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Brisbane and Perth it would be interesting to have those examples.

Ms Fidock—It might be metro, one of the main airports, but I cannot confirm that. I will get back to you.

CHAIR—That would be very useful. That is a good point.

Senator O'BRIEN—Is this a sort of a lost luggage—

Ms Fidock—We also did this in February as well. My understanding is that it is the electric wheelchair or the actual equipment that they need to get around which has been damaged in the process.

CHAIR—It probably has rather more of an impact than losing your toothbrush.

Ms Fidock—That is exactly right.

Dr Hallahan—As someone who has travelled in a wheelchair I know that it is quite tricky to hand your wheelchair over to put it into the luggage hold. You wonder which bits are going to arrive. I know that some people have—

Senator STERLE—That was the next part of my question. Are we talking about personal equipment or are we talking about airline-supplied equipment? Can you clear up that for us as well? I now go to dot point 4. I find this very interesting and it has a reference to a website. Perhaps you can enlighten us. You say:

- Being refused access to flights if other people living with disability are already on the flight despite giving prior notice of travel requirements—

Ms Fidock—Some of our references, as you can see, are taken from other research that has been undertaken. That was research undertaken by the Allen Consulting Group in response to the review. I am not sure where they got it from. That was one of the key things they highlighted in that short document.

Senator STERLE—As I said, I see there is a reference on the website.

Ms Fidock—It is quite an extensive review, and I think the final review of disability standards is presently being signed off by the minister for infrastructure.

CHAIR—Is that just indicating the limited capacity of airlines to cope with any number of people with disabilities?

Ms Fidock—Yes.

Dr Hallahan—My understanding, having negotiated that for myself, is that there are a number of obstacles that the airline might see and some of it is around capacity to store equipment, which Senator O'Brien mentioned earlier. But some of it is also about how many people they are prepared to assist, given that the disabled rely on the airline personnel to carry out the assistance. If you are travelling at a time when there are not a lot of people on the plane, they are less likely to allocate someone to facilitate access to the plane. So they will reduce the numbers at various times and it is very irritating.

CHAIR—I would imagine so.

Senator STERLE—I would imagine it would be. I note in your submission that there is a call for multipurpose taxis. In South Australia is there a significant fleet of purpose-built taxis to enable the disabled to get around?

Ms Fidock—From our research, about 83 out of 1,100 taxis were wheelchair accessible. It is not a big number. Research into the wheelchair dependent and taxis that was undertaken covers all the states and compares how each state is performing in regard to accessible taxis.

Senator STERLE—In your association's experience, is it fair to say that there is difficulty in getting cabs on a regular basis?

Ms Fidock—Yes. We did actually do specific research on people's experience of accessing wheelchair accessible taxis. We found that over 50 per cent of all people who responded experienced delays, of whom 67 per cent waited more than 30 minutes and up to two hours for their taxis. Some of them had to call three or four times before the taxi arrived. There are a lot of delays with that as well.

Senator STERLE—Is that because there are not enough and those 83 are always flat out or are they not always working?

Ms Fidock—I could not tell you that, I am sorry. I am not sure we could find that information either.

Senator STERLE—Please take it on notice, because I think it is a very important point.

Ms Fidock—I am aware that there definitely is a shortage of wheelchair accessible taxis at school pickup and drop-off times. A lot of people that we consulted stated that if, you want to make an appointment, do not make it between eight and 10 in the morning or two and four in the afternoon because all the taxis are designated to assist schools with transport needs.' Not all of them are but the majority of them are, so it is a very hard to travel on accessible transport during the those times.

Senator STERLE—I misled you, Chair, because I have some more questions.

CHAIR—That would not be the first time!

Senator STERLE—It's called payback!

CHAIR—I used to do it to him all the time.

Senator STERLE—That brings me to the state school bus system. Is there a dedicated school bus system for disabled children?

Ms Fidock—I could not answer that, I am sorry. That is outside my scope.

Dr Hallahan—My understanding is that some schools dedicate buses in the same way that, say, private schools might pick up all the kids from a suburb and take them, but generally that is not something that we would favour. We are, as you have probably picked up, very much interested in integrated transport options and not segregated transport options. I can make available to the committee some research which came out of the Melbourne University about 18 months ago showing that segregated transport increases segregation in other areas of people's lives, whereas integrated transport opens up possibilities for further community integration. That is why it would be a concern to have children travelling to school on segregated services.

Senator STERLE—I find this interesting. I would like to explore this a little bit further, because Western Australia does have a very efficient, safe and remarkable school bus industry. It is privately owned but it is government funded. It is only allowed to work for the government and no-one else. I cannot remember the numbers—I am racking my brain—but I think the sole purpose of close to around 40 or 50 of these buses is to run around and pick up children in wheelchairs and children with disabilities. It provides a very fundamental

service for today's children. Their minders travel on the buses with them. Not having that service is why taxis cannot be readily accessed here in Adelaide; it is because they are off taking children on school runs. You would know better than me, but I have spent a bit of time with those school bus operators and I think it is a wonderful service they deliver. The children themselves are with other children going to their same school. What are your thoughts?

Dr Hallahan—Once again, as a matter of principle, we could always seek to go for integrated options, although quite clearly getting children to their local school is absolutely essential. As I said, it is a matter of access to destination; it is not simply what the conveyance is. Very recently I heard about an example of a mother herself with a disability with three children living next door to a family with a child with a disability. Her children were going to the same school as this child. The bus came and picked up the disabled child but left the disabled mother to get her three children to school. It was not paying attention to who needs to get to school and how. The sole focus on picking up disabled children and putting them into certain sorts of buses can actually overlook a much wider community concern about how we make sure children and their families are actually connected properly to their school.

It might well be that there are some models that you can build out of the Western Australian model, which is that there is a door-to-door stores for people and that children at certain age groups might benefit from going down the street and picking up all of the kids and putting the disabled kids there with the others. I do not know. But, as I say, it is a matter of concern every time we see these group solutions. I can concede that the Western Australian model might deliver to their schools, but our concern would be that they often deliver them to segregated schools as well. That is, of course, a wider concern for us about the place of children in education.

CHAIR—It would certainly be the optimum arrangement, wouldn't it—you are talking about integration—the more there is integration for those children, particularly those with a disability, surely the less stigma ends up being attached down the track? The more they operate as every other child within the school community—this is sort of a question—the less chance there is of them being treated differently?

Dr Hallahan—Absolutely. There is a very clear link between segregation and congregation in the building up of stigma in people's lives. In this area of particularly how children gain access to the wider community, at every opportunity we need to be bringing children with disability into contact with their non-disabled peers. Travelling on the school bus, I gather, is quite a significant social event in the life of a child .

CHAIR—Oh, absolutely.

Dr Hallahan—Certainly my children find it that way.

CHAIR—Mine did too.

Dr Hallahan—If I were a parent in that situation, I would certainly be looking for options provided both by private providers and with government subsidy if necessary that put my child onto the bus with other children.

Senator STERLE—To paint the picture more clearly, if I could, Chair, these buses are purposely built and they usually only hold about eight or nine children.

Dr Hallahan—Yes.

Senator STERLE—Okay. That is interesting. Thank you.

Senator O'BRIEN—I am interested in that comment. I was thinking of experience in the city of New York with the Metropolitan Transport Authority and their bus system. I do not know if you are familiar with how that operates: the dedicated space for wheelchairs, the dedicated practice of priority loading of wheelchair based passengers, and the integration of the wheelchair with the whole bus, including loading platforms et cetera. I am not sure whether that is the optimum, because I am not an expert on it, but the experience I had was that it was, in a city with a fantastic public transport system, it was probably the main way that wheelchair bound people with a disability could travel, and also probably other disabilities because of stairs in subways et cetera.

Ms Fidock—I am not familiar with the New York example, but we could probably—

Senator O'BRIEN—I am not sure what is available on the web.

Dr Hallahan—In terms of principles, that is definitely where it would head. Alicia picked up some of the attitudinal barriers. That was that whole area about training people. But there are also the logistical things. Transport systems thrive on thinking about logistical issues. It sounds to me as though those sorts of solutions

are really desirable when you can solve who goes first, who loads first, how we ensure that people are safely secured within the bus so that they are not going to fly around and fall out of their chairs and all those things.

Senator O'BRIEN—The chairs in that circumstance are restrained physically within the bus—

Dr Hallahan—Yes, exactly.

Senator O'BRIEN—at a particular location, with a seat system that folds down, folds up, so it becomes normal seating in normal circumstances.

Dr Hallahan—Yes, it sounds like very, very sound sorts of arrangements. I know from being involved in discussions about buses over the years that that is the sort of stuff that people here would drive towards. But you can see why the attitudinal stuff and the training of those people to facilitate those embarkations and disembarkations really would need to be done very well, so that people could confidently trust that when they arrived and they needed that level of assistance it would happen effortlessly and respectfully.

Senator O'BRIEN—Yes, and that is in a system—some parts of the system were private at one stage—where it is all run by the City of New York. It is massively subsidised by the state and by the city. It does serve a massive population as well. That is the other issue that you have in trying to provide that service in a less densely populated environment—just talking about our cities, let alone getting outside of our cities. Given the principle that you are espousing, you would not want to dilute that for different areas. Can you see any obvious solutions to providing equality across metropolitan and regional South Australia.

Ms Fidock—Equality across all modes of transport or just an example?

Senator O'BRIEN—I am really asking you to step beyond principle for a moment and say, 'How do we get to principle? What steps do we need to take if we are not going to get there immediately? What are the most important steps to get there?' A lot of people travel on aeroplanes, but most of them travel on the big ones. Small ones are probably the most cost challenged. The more burdens we impose on them, the more likely they are that they will stop flying. It is probably the same for regional buses as well. The trains are generally publicly owned.

Ms Fidock—I think the key to any starting point in determining equality would be involving people with disabilities in that consultation as a key stakeholder in that. With their input there would be ways of looking at some of those issues and together finding a solution. Every situation would be quite different. You are talking about small airlines and large airlines with the resources available, as an example. But, definitely, that level of consultation involvement is the key, because then you would ensure that everything was put in place was responsive. Then there is the flow of services that are going to be provided. It is not going to be waiting—that is the experience at the moment; it is going to be a better transition in a journey from beginning to end. I do not know whether I have answered your question.

Senator O'BRIEN—I am happy for you to go away and come back, because it is a case of steps towards the aim in reality, although I know that you would present a policy position of what you think it should be. I understand that. Any suggestions that you want to make about stepping towards that. Senator Sterle is talking about what exists in Western Australia. I talked about what happened in another city, which might have addressed you need—what you were talking about with school buses, for example—but may not be as practical in the short term.

Dr Hallahan—It comes as no surprise that when we deal with these sorts of metropolitan-regional things in a country like Australia we are bedevilled by a number of really significant things—and then we throw into this seemingly small population of people with quite diverse but significant needs. One of the first areas that would need to happen is to analyse where subsidies currently exist. I suspect that there is probably a fair amount of health money going into transporting people at the moment. As people move to metropolitan areas to access health treatment, those people would often be people who are reliant upon the sort of support that we are talking about. Analysing how government already plays a role in trying to build up equity for regional residents against metropolitan residents would be an interesting area. I do not know whether it is in our scope to be able to look at it, but it seems to me as though this sits within some of those sorts of COAG arrangements, where we look very closely at who bears the costs of ensuring that all Australians have access to bare minimums and significantly enhanced minimums in order to be able to get around and do what they have to do. It would be interesting to see whether or not any of the data that it is being developed in those spaces would produce some information for you in this.

Senator O'BRIEN—I will leave it with you to come back to us if you think there is something you can add to the inquiry in that regard.

CHAIR—Can I ask your views on a couple of things just before we finish up. I think this issue about awareness, driver awareness—whether it is taxis or whatever—is a really good point that you raise. Do you see that actually being developed in such a form as the training would have to take part as, say, a licence requirement for a driver, say, in taxis? So if you are going to drive a disabled taxi that as part of the requirement for getting a license you have to take part in some sort of training that might even have some incentive attached to it. You might even get paid a certain amount of money to undertake that training. Has that sort of thing being considered? How would you see it actually being implemented?

Dr Hallahan—Those are possibilities. There is an example in the UK, in London, where all taxis are accessible. There is a very strong emphasis on the knowledge of the drivers. The extent of that knowledge would have to have a level regarding disability. It is more knowledge about all the lovely stuff in London. They cannot get their licence unless they have that training and awareness. A similar concept could be used to ensure that people take ownership of the need to do that. It is not just an add-on; it is incorporated. That could be a possibility.

CHAIR—It would seem that an incentive somehow tied into that would be quite useful. Senator O'Brian raised the issue of local government people, the DDA, and the requirement for funding that falling on to local government. I am interested in your view. Obviously, it would be great to have as much as possible complying with DDA requirements, but should it be a local government responsibility to fund that? Is that something that you have a view on? Should it be state government or should there be a Commonwealth capacity? Obviously, at the end of the day, in implementing those things, it just comes down to dollars and whose responsibility it should be to implement it, financially.

Dr Hallahan—I should say that I am the Deputy Chair of the National People with Disabilities and Carers Council, so I am very much involved at the moment with the development of the national disability strategy. The whole area of where local government sits in taking responsibility for building community infrastructure is really important. I think the Commonwealth has a major role to play in this in terms of policy settings and also in terms of directing funds to local government to invest in accessible infrastructure. That is no different from the current way in which the stimulus package is being spent by local governments. To influence that decision, to get accessible build there, was virtually impossible. At every point at which Commonwealth makes an investment in any of these things, the issue of accessibility should be front and centre. Given where local government sits and its capacity to levy its own funds and all those other things, there is a significant role for other levels of government to invest in this.

CHAIR—Thank you very much for appearing today and thank you for your excellent submission.

[12.18 pm]

BONHAM, Dr Jennifer Dawn, Private capacity

CHAIR—Welcome.

Dr Bonham—I am appearing as a private individual, but bear in mind that I am an academic who does research into the social and cultural aspects of mobility and, in particular, transport and travel.

CHAIR—Would you like to make an opening statement before we move to questions?

Dr Bonham—There are a couple of broad things that I would like to start with. I do not believe Australians have transport choice at the moment. I think that there is a widespread view, particularly in our state bureaucracies but probably also at the federal level, that all Australians want to drive motor vehicles. That marginalises and silences the vast number of Australians—probably almost all Australians—who want transport choice and do not want to use a motor vehicle for every journey they make. They do want to use their motor vehicle as one mode within a range of modes. That has been ignored largely within our current transport system. There is significant evidence that people want transport choice, and here in South Australia we see that in the increasing use of public transport, especially on routes that have high-quality transport such as our new tram infrastructure and services and our O-barn bus way. I also think that the increase in the number of people cycling over the last six years, between the two census periods—and we are seeing this as an ongoing trend through our surveys—is evidence that people want alternatives.

There are two other things that I think are important. Having the Commonwealth government involved in a national strategy on public transport is symbolically important, and that has to be followed up with funding. Unless there is a strong national commitment to public transport, I do not think it will be taken seriously at a state level. It is critical also to have directed and targeted funding from the national government to reiterate to state bureaucracies that public transport is important. I also think we need a new set of metrics—not simply measuring how many journeys people make and by what mode. We need to understand that public transport has fundamental health, environmental and social impacts. We need to have metrics that can take into account the broader costs and benefits according to the modes we use.

That is a general statement, but there are a number of detailed questions, including the ageing of the population, the health benefits of transport and the social and equity issues. I think there are important social benefits in providing public transport.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Senator O'BRIEN—Are you able to quantify the additional spend that is necessary, in a 20-year context, to achieve the necessary state of public transport in the metropolitan areas alone? I am not sure how easily you can extrapolate beyond that.

Dr Bonham—It is definitely in the billions of dollars. My expertise is in the social and cultural aspects of transport, so I do not get into the economics of the provision of transport infrastructure. Here in South Australia we have not invested in public transport for at least the last 40 years. We have made a couple of major infrastructure investments in public transport. We are in the process of spending $2 billion over the next 10 years on public transport, but basically we are just playing catch up. We are only just electrifying our train system, which should have been done in the 1940s. We are having to reinvest in our tramway infrastructure because we took it all out in the 1950s. So we need to put in a substantial amount of funding. A couple of billion dollars would be a useful start here in South Australia, given how far behind we have allowed our public transport system to get.

Senator O'BRIEN—Some of the submissions that we have had suggest that to varying degrees the transport between the outer metropolitan area and the city centre in some population hubs is quite good but travel between suburbs is probably less than ordinary, so there is a massive need for investment there to meet the aims that you suggest.

Dr Bonham—In South Australia I think we fall down on both counts. Our cross-suburban transport system has some routes that are operating well, such as between Modbury and Mawson Lakes. Some of those routes operate well. We do need more cross-suburban networks. I do not know how familiar you are with Adelaide, but from Happy Valley across to the coast at Christies Beach is about a 10- or 15-minute car ride and it takes a couple of hours by public transport. That is in our southern suburbs. In some parts we are starting to address those cross-suburban links—I think we still have a long way to go—but also our outer metropolitan links are

fairly poor. Our northern line here is working over capacity. We cannot run our trains to time. We have increasing numbers of people who not only need to but want to use public transport. We are not even catering to our outer metropolitan links. I know our government is going to invest in extending rail networks down to our southern suburbs, which is long overdue. That was first put forward back in the 1960s and we are finally going to see that now.

But, again, we actually need to think about how we are implementing that. If we simply have a park-and-ride system down at Seaford whereby everyone drives their car to the train station and then makes their way into the city, all we are doing with our rail network is allowing people to use their cars and the train. What we need to do is really think carefully about those rail extensions and make sure that people can access those rail extensions by walking and cycling. That means real transit oriented development, not park-and-ride developments. There are a couple of other issues about extending rail networks, but they have slipped my mind.

Senator O'BRIEN—Firstly, you need the corridors and, secondly, you need the capital. The corridors may be hard to find if they have not been laid down over many years and are a very expensive acquisition if they have not. What about linking with buses and trains, as happens in Perth?

Dr Bonham—I think linking buses and trains is essential. That goes without saying, but we also need to make sure that our road infrastructure that accesses the train stations is not going to get held up in the traffic, so we need priority for our buses that are going to access railway stations as well. I think that there is considerable scope for increasing densities around our rail nodes. I am sure you have many submissions that talk about transit oriented development and I do think that capturing the initial land value around railway stations through medium-density development, residential and mixed-use development, in the first instance is going to preclude us here in South Australia cutting into our valuable agricultural land in those northern and southern suburbs.

Senator O'BRIEN—So should state governments override local government and mandate that sort of development?

Dr Bonham—I think we have very willing local governments here. I know Onkaparinga—

Senator O'BRIEN—But, in the case of an unwilling local government/local community, should that be the mandate to override?

Dr Bonham—I do not think that it can be a mandate. If it is not going to happen collaboratively and if you cannot get the community on side in the first instance, I am not sure that it is going to succeed anyway.

Senator O'BRIEN—But isn't 'not in my backyard' a pretty strong philosophy in the Australian community?

Dr Bonham—I do not think that we give enough credit to communities when they are brought into the process early, when they are given good information about what is going on and what the rationale is for changing developments. In Australia, it is fairly obvious that with inner urban area development we are seeing a move towards people wanting diverse housing and diverse transport options. Over time, we are going to see a lot more people come on board and accept things like this. If they are taken along with the process, they are going to be quite happy to contemplate and negotiate around alternative transport and housing systems, such as transit oriented development.

Senator O'BRIEN—Can you give us some examples?

Dr Bonham—As I was saying before, down at Onkaparinga they have worked very closely with their community. It emerged from the community that people are concerned about transport. It has been a huge issue in that area for many years. Out of their community development strategy, they advocated for transit oriented development. Onkaparinga council has now brought that back to state government and is working with state government on that.

Senator O'BRIEN—This inquiry has been given contrary evidence that in some areas, although it is desirable to mandate higher density around stations, local government bodies have resisted that because the communities that occupy those areas resist it.

Dr Bonham—Yes. I am quite aware of those 'not in my backyard' attitudes. But I do not think that they are monolithic and I do not think that those attitudes necessarily will prevail. Good information and community consultations and discussions can address some of that resistance. We have a council here that strongly resists any form of urban consolidation. There are some urban consolidation measures—mixed use developments and

those kinds of things; things that are known to support public transport use, cycling and walking—that are not necessarily best exemplified in Australia. That is where some resistance might come from. There has to be some sort of certainty in the community that their nice streetscape is not going to be knocked over. You have to work with those communities. There is that nimbyism, but I do not think that should be responded to by simply ignoring the community's concerns and mandating.

Senator O'BRIEN—Would it be fairer to put the proposition that you pursue transport oriented development strategies which encompass extensive community consultation, with the understanding that the overriding needs of the greater community will prevail in the long run?

Dr Bonham—Yes.

Senator O'BRIEN—That may mean that you will override people. After you have gone through the process, you may have, in the interests of the community, no choice but to.

Dr Bonham—I suspect that you will bring the community along with you as you go down that path, and so I do not think that you are going to end up with fierce opposition.

Senator O'BRIEN—You do not think that we will need to. You are being optimistic.

Dr Bonham—Exactly.

Senator O'BRIEN—I am taking you to the point where your optimism has failed, because we know that it does. With the best will in the world, you might be able to convince a lot of reasonable people but you will deal with some who are not reasonable.

Dr Bonham—Ultimately, there are some people who are not reasonable, but I think in a community you will find that you will actually bring quite a lot of the community along with you that are not on board. There are always going to be some people here and there who do not want to go along with it, but I think ultimately you will bring them on board.

Senator O'BRIEN—That is not to say there are not some people who campaign politically for election to councils on the basis of opposing those strategies.

Dr Bonham—Yes, and we are witness to it here. But, by the same token, we have also got examples of councils working closely with community to make sure that higher density development, transoriented development, goes into appropriate places. So, yes, I think we can actually get to those sorts of positions.

Senator O'BRIEN—Yes. I do not think you have convinced me. I cannot speak for my colleagues, but—

Dr Bonham—That is fine.

Senator O'BRIEN—I understand your evidence and the proposition you put. My difficulty is: if the view of the committee was that we achieve the aims that you propose, only by doing that do we then have a conflict about how we achieve it. That is why I am exploring this. You are content with that difficulty, I take it.

Dr Bonham—We are going to differ. I have a lot more faith in community. I think that over time Australians will want a different lifestyle. It is no longer taken for granted that everyone wants their own house on their own a block of land somewhere. Community attitudes are changing, and that will go into the future.

Senator O'BRIEN—In terms of the other spend that we have not quantified but that you urged us to consider from the Commonwealth, how does the Commonwealth become more involved in what has been to date essentially a state government responsibility, particularly in urban areas?

Dr Bonham—I suppose I can only suggest a couple of possibilities. For public transport and transport options such as cycling, walking and those kind of modes to be taken seriously, the Commonwealth needs to provide a strategy and, also, something along the lines of a transport funding agreement—like the Commonwealth-state housing agreements we had. Whether we agreed with the actual Commonwealth-state housing agreements every time they were made, they have been a very effective way of getting states to work in line with Commonwealth government policies. I would probably prefer something along the lines of a Commonwealth-state agreement on transport, where there are requirements to spend a particular proportion of that funding on public transport, cycling and walking, over a more loosely based project approach where Commonwealth government provides money for particular projects, and those projects can be based on key performance indicators which look at the broader costs and benefits of different modes of transport.

Senator O'BRIEN—Tied funding.

Dr Bonham—Yes.

Senator O'BRIEN—So the Commonwealth should decide in which areas the states should expend money or the Commonwealth should have a requirement for achieving key performance indicators as a condition of the funding? I am just trying to understand you.

Dr Bonham—Yes, I think it has got to have flexibility within it so that projects put forward for funding should have to be prioritised and proven or they have to have key performance indicators before they will be funded. That has got to be around health, environment and social costs and benefits of the projects as well as the more straightforward transport measures that we normally use: who travels, how often, where and at what time of the day. That is only one small part of the problem that we tend to put most emphasis on these days.

Senator O'BRIEN—Would the Commonwealth have a somewhat subjective assessment of the performance of the states?

Dr Bonham—No, because it has got to be based on performance indicators, so you actually have to be able to measure the transport and the transport related health, environmental and social costs and benefits. It is not a matter of 'We like that project.' It is about having broader measures and the Commonwealth deciding whether or not to fund a project based on those measures.

Senator O'BRIEN—I am trying to think how you would aggregate the social outcomes to the transport expenditure without making some sort of subjective conclusions.

Dr Bonham—The fact that we measure how many people are in a vehicle is a subjective decision. It is a subjective decision that we will use that as an indicator of the efficiency of our transport system. That is just as subjective as asking what the equity issues are or what the costs are. For example, I have just written a paper looking at the north-south corridor here in South Australia and we could sit down we could work out performance indicators around the social costs of that particular piece of infrastructure. Then, as that road was upgraded, we could actually work out the social costs associated with parents having to drive their children to school rather than walking them to school, because they cannot get across a major road due to their being nothing in place to allow them to cross it. Or they may have to extend the time of the journey to walk their children to school because they may have to walk an extra kilometre out of their way to get the children to school. We can measure those kinds of social costs around that sort of infrastructure. It is just as subjective as deciding that the number of people travelling on a bus is a valid measure of transport. Basically, the stats are ultimately subjective.

Senator STERLE—You mentioned the park and ride station at Seaford.

Dr Bonham—The train line is being extended down to Seaford. There is some discussion about what the infrastructure should look like and how the area around that station may be developed in the future. Willunga centre is another one. There is a strong interest in putting park and ride facilities there rather than having a genuine trains oriented development.

Senator STERLE—Does Adelaide's public transport system have park and ride stations.

Dr Bonham—Yes, we do, out at Salisbury.

Senator STERLE—Is that the only one?

Dr Bonham—Salisbury and the O-Bahn out at Modbury are park and ride. We have a vast expanse of car parking that people have to traverse to get to the shops, which are about four or five hundred metres away from the bus depot.

Senator STERLE—Off the top of your head do you know how many cars the park and rides in Adelaide accommodate?

Dr Bonham—No.

Senator STERLE—Are there a lot?

Dr Bonham—Yes.

Senator STERLE—I take it they are chock-a-block.

Dr Bonham—Yes.

Senator STERLE—I picked up on your comments about walking and cycling to supplement getting to the station rather than using Park'n'Ride. I take it that you also mean feeder bus routes, not just cycling and all that.

Dr Bonham—Yes.

Senator STERLE—Is there any of that happening here in Adelaide? Are there feeder bus systems running to the Park'n'Rides, that you know of?

Dr Bonham—Yes, at Salisbury and the O-Bahn. I choose those because they are significant Park'n'Ride setups. Most of our train stations have some parking available at them but they are not substantial Park'n'Ride systems, but at Modbury and at Salisbury they also have significant bus connections into those transit stops.

Senator STERLE—Are those bus connections frequently used? Is there good patronage on them, to the best of your knowledge?

Dr Bonham—Yes; particularly on the O-Bahn because for many people they travel along the O-Bahn network for a certain distance and then the bus comes off the rails and goes through the suburbs.

Senator STERLE—It comes off the rails?

Dr Bonham—Yes, if comes off the O-Bahn infrastructure.

Senator STERLE—I see!

Dr Bonham—So for those people who are not lucky enough to be on the bus that then goes around the outer suburbs they can get off the bus and wait until their connection comes through. It is one of the best used systems.

Senator STERLE—So the O-Bahn has steel wheels and rubber wheels?

Dr Bonham—It has wheels that can go on both.

Senator STERLE—Something was mentioned earlier by one of our previous witnesses, because I asked a question—it is not a loaded question; I am trying to find the answer—and I used the example of Perth. Perth has an electrified railway line north and south. It is very popular at both ends. It also has a very good freeway at both ends, and the freeways are chock-a-block in peak hours with single-person journeys. Perth has very good—I will talk about the southern end—feeder systems. I asked, 'How can we have this wonderfully efficient, safe, clean public transport system but still cannot get people out of cars?' I would be interested in your view, through your expertise, about the comment by one of the previous witnesses that people do not like having to get on one form of public transport, get off that and get on another one. Would you agree with that?

Dr Bonham—I think that is part of the issue. I also think we are still largely encouraged to drive. Much of my work has actually looked at the historical development of the motor vehicle based transport system here in Australia. Largely, we have been encouraged, through a whole raft of mechanisms, to take up motorcar driving. It is about the priority that motorists are given in their use of street space and about the whole incitement for young people to get a drivers licence. There are cultural issues around how we as a society have marked or indicated this transition from the dependent child through to the independent adult, which has been characterised by the ability to get a drivers licence. There are those kinds of cultural issues embedded in there. So there are a number of straightforward, practical things we can do to make our public transport system a lot more viable but there are some deeper cultural issues in there as well that I think we also need to look at.

Senator STERLE—My frustration is that the state of Western Australia have spent $1.6 billion on their latest electric railway down to the south, put in Park'n'Rides to encourage people because, as you would appreciate, the railway line runs here but the suburbs are another 10 to 15 kilometres towards the coast. I remember talking to the previous transport minister who had done such a fine job but got bagged because the Park'n'Rides did not hold thousands of cars. There is this still this mental block for commuters who do not want to get on the bus to get to the railway station. You want to see some of the inventive places they find to park when they get to the Park'n'Ride!

Dr Bonham—I think Park'n'Rides have actually been useful in encouraging people not to take their car into town or not to take their car to a final destination. Ultimately though I think we have to make better use of the high-value land that is around train stations.

Senator STERLE—This is not an argument. I am just trying to find out how you get them to not bring their car to the Park'n'Ride. How do you get them to use the bus feeder services?

Dr Bonham—Basically we could actually prioritise those people who come by bus; we could actually prioritise buses on our streets; and we could actually make genuine bike lanes and bike paths, both on and off road bike paths, and those kinds of things.

Senator STERLE—I should help you out here. The example I am using is from Perth. There is a dedicated bus lane and if you are in that bus lane in your car from 6.30 am till 9 am or from 4 pm till 6 pm then you cop

a fine. So that is all being done. There are frequent buses there in South Street—I am talking about buses being eight minutes apart. I use that service when I go into the city. There is no excuse for commuters—unless they are living in a suburb that is miles away and they have to walk or there is a bit of a problem to link into the south and get on the bus to get to the railway station. But there is this mindset amongst commuters of, 'Okay we'll use the train. We'll do our bit. We'll save money and we'll lessen our carbon footprint and whatever, but we'll reserve the right to drive to the train station because we're not going to use a bus.'

Dr Bonham—The question is whether anyone has actually had a look at who those commuters are and what their before and after responsibilities are in terms of taking kids to school and those kinds of journeys—doing the shopping after work and those kinds of things—because they are also part of the issue. We do not have independent travel for our children. Lots of people do feel the need to actually drop their children at school and then go to the bus stop, the train station or whatever. There are issues around that. It has been well documented over the last 30 years that women in particular are subject to those kinds of constraints. So there are those sorts of things to bear in mind. This is also about a broader education campaign. When you actually think about the vast area around a public transport stop, like a Park'n'Ride, the area around it that is probably taken up by car-parking space does not make it a good area to walk or cycle through. So you are effectively getting rid of those options. There is also that issue of a bus ride increasing the time of your journey to actually get to the train station. So why not drive your car?

Senator STERLE—I am tempted, because my question to you was followed with your question there, to take that on notice—but then I would have to come back to you. Just to make it easier, and it is unfair for me to ambush you with that and keep coming back to all the reasons why, I can guarantee you that the Park'n'Rides are chock a block at 7.30 in the morning. So they are not being filled by people taking their children to school and then going to use them. These are actual commuters heading into the Perth CBD. It is just a mad rush and if you get there after quarter to eight then you will not get a parking spot. Anyway, I am trying to find the answer and so far we have not been able to.

Dr Bonham—Don't supply the car parking—that is the answer.

Senator STERLE—I have already worked out what will happen then. They will not be on the train.

Dr Bonham—I think you actually have to provide genuine alternatives and not simply make it open slather to get to the car-parking station by train. You have to provide some genuine alternatives and provide incentives to actually use other modes of travel as part of the solution. It is about providing incentives to actually get fit and walk and cycle and actually have your walking and cycling.

Senator STERLE—Talking of incentives, and I will just use the Western Australian example again, you can go into the city from the southern suburbs and it will cost only $3—that is for zone two. That is not a lot of money. And then it costs $3 to come back out. Then when you are in Perth we have what is called the red cat the blue cat, which are free services around the city. So cost is not prohibitive of getting people out of their cars, because it is damn cheap. What other incentives could you suggest?

Dr Bonham—Basically you could actually subsidise people to walk or cycle. At the moment, to try and discourage people driving in the Netherlands in peak hour, and I was discussing this with a colleague in the Netherlands a couple of weeks ago, they are actually offering people money not to drive at particular peak times. So we can actually start thinking about monetary incentives to walk, cycle or catch public transport.

CHAIR—On that example, how do you implement that or police it? In terms of financial incentives for walking or cycling, how do you implement it and how do you police it? How are they doing it?

Dr Bonham—That is not one of their incentives in the Netherlands—they are actually using the incentive, and I presume it is by electronic tagging or something of cars, to actually stop people driving at peak times. But we could be using similar incentives. I think really though the issue is going to be around the amount of supply. If we keep supplying people with car parks around transit stations then they are going to keep driving to those transit stations. We need to actually get the planning right in the first instance and have medium mixed density housing around our transit stations. We need to make them environments that are pleasant to walk to. I looked at the Joondalup line when it was initially being built and quite frankly there is no way that I would have wanted to walk to that stop either. It was a vast desert of car parking at that time. We are actually not creating pleasant spaces.

There is a mass of walkability literature that demonstrates what you need to do to get people out there walking. The medicos, the public health people, basically have recognised that it is not just socioeconomic characteristics that are the inhibitor of people exercising. There are actually urban environmental issues. Hence

we have this massive walkability literature emerging, which looks at different urban contexts and what features in that context encourage people to walk and cycle. Providing a car park does not encourage it. You need it from the beginning. I do not know what hope you are going to have of turning things around in Perth, because I think you can only go so far with the system that you have got. But I do think that here in South Australia, with our government currently going down this path, although there are some problems around the latest 30-year plan the concern is to actually have some genuine transit oriented development and get it right around the railway stations in the first instance and not try to fix up a mess some years down the track.

Senator STERLE—That is a very good point, and it comes back to Senator O'Brien's questions to you earlier. When you are talking about greenfields areas, anything can be achieved on those types of site. But I know the problems that we have had. People want to buy land cheaply so they buy near a railway line or nor an airport. Then as soon as they move in they want to start action groups to get rid of the damn railway line or the airport. That is the frustration that we have had with a lot of public transport systems around Australia. It is the nimby effect. We are really aware of the nimby phenomenon.

Dr Bonham—We have regeneration in progress here. There is a move to 70 per cent infill and only 30 per cent greenfields into the future. Part of that infill is going to be a transit oriented development in Brompton. It needs land remediation and so forth, but if you actually have in the first instance in those areas good public consultation, and if you do not start suggesting to people that you are going to put in a 20-storey apartment building but rather have appropriate medium density housing, then I think you are actually going to find that you start laying the foundations for higher levels of public transport use in those areas.

Senator STERLE—I am feeling the vibes from the chair, because we have run out of time. For the record, through this series of hearings we have had around the country, I find it frustrating when a lot of witnesses compare the likes of the Netherlands and older European cities with us. I have been to the Netherlands. Whether you go to Amsterdam, The Hague or the Utrecht, if you look you will see thousands and thousands of granny style pushbikes where they all sit up like that. They are all the same colour, look exactly the same and they have been bicycle riding for hundreds of years—

Dr Bonham—No, they have not.

Senator STERLE—I will give you the chance. I cannot accept witnesses telling us that that is what we should be doing here, because when I think of bicycles here I always get the impression of lycra-clad weekend warriors flying around with the latest fancy helmets.

Dr Bonham—There has actually been a shift. First of all, in the 1960s the Netherlands were in exactly the same position as we were in in South Australia. A speaker is actually coming out to the Australian Cycling Conference in January next year. They will discuss the measures that the Netherlands took to deliberately turn things around. We had a very strong cycling culture here in South Australia in the 40s and 50s and in fact our head of the tramway services blamed cycling on the downfall of the tramway services in the late 1940s, early 1950s. A political decision was taken In the Netherlands to implement bicycle strategies. They could see the Netherlands becoming overrun by the motor vehicle. At that point they did not have a strong tradition of cycling and they actually turned it around and deliberately put in place measures to improve cycling.

We are seeing in Australia—in Sydney, Melbourne and here in Adelaide a return to town bikes. I am not sure whether or not you will look at cycle retail sales and the types of bikes being sold et cetera. We do have a strong lycra set, especially here in Adelaide with the Tour Down Under. We are also seeing a turnaround whereby we are seeing an increase in the purchase of town bikes—and, by the way, I do have one of those granny style bikes. At university there is also an increasing number of students turning up on campus. I would like to get to the bottom of why those bikes are no longer sold in Australia, yet there is a resurgence of interest in commuter bikes and town bikes that probably have a radius of three to five kilometres comfortable riding distance. We are shifting away from the lycra set, with what we are seeing in Melbourne.

A couple of weeks ago I saw cyclists all over London, as a result of their congestion tax. I had never seen a cyclist in London before. Not only does the public transport work a lot better because the buses can now get around central London, not only can the taxis get around a lot easier but there are many cyclists in the centre of London. I do want us to overcome this notion: 'They can do it in the Netherlands, but we can't do it here. It is somehow natural and in their genes.' In fact, there were political decisions made, all the way along, over the last 40 years to not go down the path of allowing endless roads to be built.

CHAIR—Thank you. Perhaps the park-and-ride should first change to bus-and-ride.

Dr Bonham—Perhaps.

CHAIR—Just on that, before we finish up, I understand the interest in getting people to bus, to rail and then into a city, but just to use figures, say your home is five kilometres from the railway station and the railway station is 30 kilometres from the CDB, is it still not going to be an improvement if you are only driving five kilometres rather than driving 35 kilometres into the city and contributing to the congestion?

Dr Bonham—There all sorts of issues around cold starts and warm starts with a car and congestion on the way there and back. I think the issue in South Australia with those kinds of things is that if we go down that path in our outer suburban areas it will open up a peri-urban area, agricultural land and viticultural areas for urban residential development and therein lies one of the major issues that we are facing here. We are basically eroding our food bowl and an important economic resource.

CHAIR—Thank you very much for appearing today.

Proceedings suspended from 1.05 pm to 1.48 pm

WARD, Mr James, Beyond Oil South Australia

CHAIR—Welcome. Would you like to make an opening statement before we move to questions? Your presentation is going to be your opening statement?

Slides were then shown—

Mr Ward—Yes. Thank you. I kept my presentation brief so there will be plenty of time for conversation. The first slide introduces Beyond Oil South Australia. Who or what is Beyond Oil SA? It is a very informal group of people who are basically unified in our concerns about peak oil and what this might mean in terms of food security for our society and just the viability of our relatively dependent society as a whole. So we keep each other company on the lunatic fringe! Nobody is in charge; I am not here as the leader of Beyond Oil SA, nor would anybody be—it is a flat organisation. We have overlaps with the Bicycle Institute of South Australia, and I believe you are hearing from Sam Powrie from BISA on later on. We also have an overlap with PASSA and also we have links with the Australian chapter of the Society for the Study of Peak Oil and Gas, whom I am presuming you have heard from.

The numbers at the top of the slides refer to the references at the back of this presentation. I have given you all a copy of the slides, so you can follow those up if you so desire. This is a picture of a peak oil curve that I produced using data from the *BP Statistical Review of World Energy 2007*. It is a country-by-country analysis. The big pink wedge is, I believe, Saudi Arabia. It is very simple. I am not saying this is what oil supply is going to look like; it is just a simplistic model. I have just taken the amount of oil the BP statistical review says each country has left and extrapolated that at current growth rates until they reach a peak defined by the point at which the ratio of production to reserves is equal to 10—and then we assume that it peters out. So it is a simplistic peaked curve for each country. Some countries have passed their peak—this one is in its decline mode. Based on this data, there is the possibility that some of these Middle East countries—this green one is Iran and the other one is the UAE—might grow a little bit. But the overall trend is likely to be down from about now onwards—the dotted line represents today.

CHAIR—Is that indicating growth around 2025 or 2030 for the UAE and Iran?

Mr Ward—The *BP Statistical Review of World Energy 2007* said the United Arab Emirates and Iraq had very large reserves—and I think this one here is Iran. Based on this simple model, there could be potential for growth prior to them peaking and declining. But I would not read too much into this peak. There are far more detailed analyses of oil production than mine. This was done on a spreadsheet in one afternoon—and that is why I have provided a few references. But it gives a picture that it does not matter too much what you do with the numbers, the problem is that the countries will start to run out of oil at different times and the party that we have been enjoying up until now appears to be drawing to a close.

Senator STERLE—Are these British Petroleum's figures?

Mr Ward—That is correct.

Senator STERLE—How reliable are these figures?

Mr Ward—The totals are consistent with other figures. What I should have mentioned is that this does not include unconventional oil such as Canada's oil sands. That would add another wedge roughly the size of this green one for Iraq. BP's figures, as I said, are consistent with other figures such as those from the US Geological Survey. It is a pretty widely accepted industry summary. I think they do it each year.

Senator STERLE—Some of these questions might seem to be a little bit from left field, but Senator Nash and I were involved in an inquiry by this committee some three or four years ago into Australia's future oil supplies. You might be familiar with that inquiry, and that is why we are asking questions as we go.

Mr Ward—I made a submission to the inquiry. If anything, criticism of these numbers tends to suggest that they are too high, and therefore these possibilities for growth might be optimistic.

CHAIR—I have two quick questions before we move on from the graph. I cannot figure out which country the pink section represents.

Mr Ward—I think it is Saudi Arabia. Whoever it is, it must be big. It might be the US.

CHAIR—Could you take that notice and come back to us. I am interested because it is the one that goes out the furthest—to 2100.

Mr Ward—And that proves that it is Saudi Arabia.

CHAIR—What is the vertical line across the yellow and green sections?

Mr Ward—I am glad you picked up on that, because I had forgotten to mention it. It is a change in the reporting. In this yellow section it was reported as other Europe and Eurasia, which included Russia. At the point where it changes, Russia started being reported as a separate country, so you could consider those to be Russia plus other Europe and Eurasia, if you like.

Beyond Oil SA has some key concerns. As the previous slide showed, the point is that peak oil is approximately happening now. A large amount of our oil is spent driving cars around, so peak oil is peak cars. The questions that remain include: will the decline be fast or slow? I suppose what one considers to be fast versus slow is somewhat subjective. We are not really prepared for a decline of any kind. A fast decline might mean that it is too late to mitigate and we will just have to let whatever adaptation strategies that are open to us evolve as they will. It might be too late to build bold new high-speed rail linking up the capital cities, for example, if we are running out of oil at a very fast rate, but we can hope that there is still time. But it is difficult to predict how this might play out in terms of economic activity and how that might shape future demand patterns. Can we rely on past experience or will it take us into a new economic paradigm? We would like to think that we have a narrow window—or we like to think we have a window; and it would appear to be narrow and narrowing—in which to build this critical infrastructure to get us past the car era.

Senator STERLE—You are not taking into consideration alternative fuels, though, are you?

Mr Ward—On alternative fuels, there is some promise in some of the second-generation biofuels. Whether they can be ramped up in time and whether they can produce the sort of volume is the question. First-generation biofuels like canola oil, biodiesel and ethanol made from—

Senator STERLE—No, I did not mention that. There is gas and all sorts of other alternatives. They are already operating. What you are putting to us is the assumption of a downgrade in vehicles if we are relying on oil to power them.

Mr Ward—That is correct, yes. I should say that, as we are talking about Beyond Oil SA's key concerns, we have a key concern that the alternatives such as gas-powered vehicles are unlikely to prevent the disruption caused by the decline in oil. There are possibilities, but we as an organisation have a fear that the decline will be too steep to be offset by the growth in these alternatives. I should state that as our position.

I wanted to mention peak oil and oil prices. There were wild predictions when people first started talking about peak oil that, the day after the peak, it would skyrocket to $500 a barrel and all sorts of predictions like this. The experience of the last year has shown that, as the oil price goes up, it takes a larger and larger chunk of the world economy with it. On this slide, the link, No. 3, is to a Brookings paper on economic activity by James Hamilton that looks at the economic side of the oil shock of 2007 to 2008. It concludes that the restriction of oil supply was enough to be a significant trigger in the global financial crisis. This has then triggered a reduction in oil demand and a reduction in oil prices. This is to say that the early predictions of skyrocketing oil prices are probably premature. It is a significant point in terms of public transport demand because in a scenario where there are high prices but people are still economically active, if you like, the key conclusion is that people want an alternative to get to work so they do not have to pay for the fuel for their car.

In the other scenario, where the price triggers some sort of economic collapse, people might not have jobs to get to or the problem may manifest as a bubble of unemployment rather than just higher prices for everyone. That is a significant uncertainty when we look forward to supplying public transport for people. In the face of that uncertainty, some degree of adaptability and resilience is advocated by our organisation. Investing multi-billion dollars in things like railways that take people into the CBD needs to be very carefully planned if that is going to be public money invested—will that demand persist; will that demand survive peak oil; is it guaranteed that it will be well patronised and be money well spent? Perhaps there will be humbler solutions that enable us to adapt to changing conditions.

Senator STERLE—Around the country, state governments have been committing not multi- but billion-dollar railways to the CBDs and not using oil but electricity.

Mr Ward—Yes, that is right. I should clarify. I am not suggesting that the railways themselves are a bad idea. Technologically, they are an excellent idea to get us away from oil. The question comes from the previous slide, where there is uncertainty regarding demand. If people just want to essentially get away from high oil prices, that is an excellent idea, but, if people do not have jobs to get to, then that railway may be basically underused and that money could perhaps have been spent on something that would be more useful in

the long term. I am definitely not against railways—I should say that—and nor is Beyond Oil SA. We are stating this as almost a potential paradox, really.

Senator STERLE—You are still giving your opening statement, but do you have alternatives?

Mr Ward—We will suggest a few—yes. There is the idea of humbler solutions that can adapt to circumstances which might change as we move down that oil curve. We have to remember that the aim is always to reduce fuel consumption. There are certain solutions which, on the face of it, may appear to reduce fuel consumption but actually do not. There have been some criticisms of things like hybrid vehicles, for example, in that they basically displace a problem, from higher fuel consumption to larger investment of energy in creating the vehicle. That is one example. We need to remember that the aim is to reduce fuel consumption as we go down the decline curve. That is to free up oil for more productive economic activities, because driving cars around is not getting a lot of bang to your buck.

I should mention physical fuel shocks. This is another key concern of Beyond Oil SA—that, as we march down the curve on the wrong side of peak oil, we are increasing the risk that we will find that fuel stations will run out of fuel. At least South Australia has very short-term fuel storage; I do not know what the other states are like. I think SA is one of the worst. As it relates to public transport, it is critical because buses and trains will be a significant form of transport for more and more people. It is critical that they have their own emergency fuel supplies so that they can keep running even if the petrol stations shut down temporarily.

Senator STERLE—Do you have any figures as to the cost to bus and rail depots of having several months worth of storage tanks?

Mr Ward—No, we do not.

Senator STERLE—It might be a very interesting scenario. I can only talk from a very humble background as a truckie. It is not only about having the space, infrastructure and money to store; it is also a very expensive commodity to store.

Mr Ward—That is an excellent point. They are probably already storing significant volumes of fuel. This point is to say that, as we anticipate an increase in public transport use, there should probably be an increase in the volume of fuel. That is a bit of a no-brainer, I suppose.

Okay. So far I have discussed things that related to city travel, but in a very sparsely populated country like Australia we need to think in terms of interstate travel as well. The two pictures here illustrate a gentlemen sitting in an empty aircraft as contrasted against a picture of a train with thousands and thousands of people clinging to it. There have been some studies looking at the viability of airlines as oil supplies decline. The prognosis is not good, because alternatives to jet fuel are not forthcoming at the moment. All we can hope is that aeroplanes continue to get more efficient, although I think we will soon be approaching the maximum efficiency we can get from a jet aircraft. It is likely that there is going to be a fair bit of turbulence ahead for the airline industry, if you will pardon the pun. Interstate rail is likely to see an increase in patronage in the coming decades. Our understanding is that passenger rail is already subsidised and probably more heavily subsidised than the airline industry, which I do not actually think is subsidised at all. If demand is going to shift from an unsubsidised or largely unsubsidised industry to a more heavily subsidised one that raises questions about viability and funding. It raises questions on a more practical, physical level—that is, competition for track space between freight and passenger rail. That might need to be considered. It is not immediately obvious but, if these trains are sharing the same tracks and there are going to be 10 times as many passenger trains, that could greatly disrupt the freight industry, which is the predominant user of those railway lines around the country.

As well as interstate travel changing, possibly trips to the seaside or regional travel near city destinations may become more attractive than interstate or overseas travel. We might need to be contemplating public transport services that are sufficiently fuel-efficient to get people to and from these near-city destinations. More significantly, perhaps, places like seaside towns undergo a very seasonal, almost tidal, oscillation in population, with population sometimes increasing by a factor of several times, or maybe even 10 times, in the peak season. If these seaside towns are going to have their own public transport, it will basically lie idle for a certain proportion of the year. That is a significant issue in planning.

I mentioned before that there would be some solutions offered. Beyond Oil SA believes that public transport should be seen as any publicly funded measure that deals with the impact of peak oil on transport. It is not just about the buses, trains and trams that we conventionally see; wandering buses or dial-a-bus services are already in place and this may be a way to cope with very erratic or unpredictable demand scenarios.

Senator STERLE—Can you give us some examples where the wandering buses or dial-a-buses operate—in which cities—and how they operate?

Mr Ward—Yes, certainly. There is a town south of Adelaide called Willunga—I believe this is where the dial-a-bus operates out of. Basically, rather than having a regular route to the city, which might end up with one or two people on it and be completely unviable, people call and say, 'I would like to go to the city,' and, when a critical mass of people have requested the bus, the bus comes at a particular time and all those people are notified. To some extent it is on demand but it is not quite on demand; it is on demand with a time lag and very good. A wandering bus might pick up a whole lot of people at one location and then meander through suburbs dropping people off. It is not on a set route. That is more of a hypothetical idea. I am not aware of that occurring yet. It is essentially like a taxi. The next option is like a share taxi where, instead of paying $30 for one trip, you might have four or five people, or it might be a van with more flexibility than a bus that only goes between certain locations. It can take you where you need to go, but you would be sharing it with other people to make it more fuel efficient per person.

Senator STERLE—This committee was in Darwin yesterday. I do not know whether you are aware, but Darwin has a system of mini metro buses that operate in a very similar way to this. There is a set run, so to speak, but it is not rigid. If someone jumps on and that is halfway through an outer suburb to the city, they can say, 'Can you take me two streets off the beaten track?' and they will detour and drop people off.

Mr Ward—Fantastic. That is exactly—

Senator STERLE—You are not aware of what goes on up there?

Mr Ward—No, I am not aware of that.

Senator STERLE—It is the metro mini bus.

Mr Ward—Fantastic. Thank you. I will look it up.

Senator STERLE—That is well and truly in operation. They have had hurdles and speed humps along the way, but it is a quite flexible and efficient service.

Mr Ward—Excellent. That is great.

Senator STERLE—There are cash rewards for people who use it.

Mr Ward—Personally, I am a car-pooler. I caught the bus into the city today. I catch the bus frequently. When I am not catching the bus, I share a car with two other people. We do it through our workplace, but there are websites where people can register and get together with other people who are travelling between similar origins and destinations. Car sharing is different to car pooling. This is where the ownership of the car is shared. These are all things that—

Senator STERLE—You obviously do not have teenage kids!

Mr Ward—Not yet.

Senator STERLE—It will come. Sorry to interrupt.

Mr Ward—That is okay. Our first is due in November.

Senator STERLE—Great—I am envious.

Mr Ward—This is an interesting one. As I said, Beyond Oil SA is loosely affiliated with, or has some overlap with, the Bicycle Institute. When we were planning this submission, there was the idea of some sort of subsidised cycling. I do not know how you would subsidise cycling, because bikes are so cheap and most people have one in their shed, even if they do not use it. It is about investment in infrastructure which supports cycling. Basically, many cyclists could be considered to be public transport. This is thinking outside the box.

Another thing that came up in our meeting was the acquisition of land for bus terminuses. This could be an expensive exercise. However, there was a thought—I do not know whether it was a rumour or an official idea; either way, it has not eventuated—where Grenfell Street in Adelaide was apparently going to be made a car-free street. It is already a street where many buses arrive. This is a way in which one could create a bus interchange relatively cheaply.

Senator STERLE—For all of us in the room who are not from Adelaide—

Mr Ward—Grenfell Street is the next street over to the south from where we are—that is Curry Street, and the extension of Curry Street on the other side of King William Road is Grenfell Street. It is a central Adelaide street and it is where many of the buses from the surrounding suburbs come in. The thought was that, because

so many buses come in through Grenfell Street anyway, it should be made a car-free street. You could arrange bus stops in the middle of the road and do whatever you want to do, like a normal bus interchange, and it would be relatively inexpensive compared with purchasing land somewhere else.

Senator STERLE—Obviously, that did not happen.

Mr Ward—It did not happen. As I said, I do not know whether it was only a rumour: someone said in a pub once, 'I think this would be a good idea' and—

Senator STERLE—It sounds good; you ought to steal it!

Mr Ward—Accessibility of public transport is critical. Not everyone is able to ride a bike. Everyone should be able to use a bus, a train or a tram. So things like gopher ramps and wheelchair ramps for trains, trams and buses are absolutely critical. If cycling was endorsed as essentially a form of public transport, and attracted government funding as such, then gopher friendly surfaces on bike tracks might not be such a bad idea. A gopher is, of course, an electric vehicle.

This slide is interesting. It shows a priority system. If there is a bus that is full of people and someone wants to get onto that bus who is in a wheelchair, or is otherwise not as able bodied as the people on the bus, should they be allowed on while you jettison one or two of the able bodied people because they can theoretically walk or get a bike from somewhere and ride? As we move down this peak-oil curve we are likely to find ourselves with an overrun public transport system and we might need to anticipate some kinds of unpleasant situations where people are forced off buses to make way for people who need the services more.

Senator STERLE—Help me out, Mr Ward. Here in Adelaide, that does not happen at the moment.

Mr Ward—It does not happen at the moment. I have never seen that happen. I have never seen someone forced off a bus. I have only seen people refused entry to a bus.

Senator STERLE—I am not advocating anyone should be forced off but I know that in Perth you stand. There are dedicated seats for the elderly and for the disabled.

Mr Ward—Definitely we have that—you stand—but I have not seen it to that point. If the bus is completely full in Adelaide and someone flags it, they put up a sign saying, 'Sorry, full,' and sail straight past. What this is asking is: if that bus is full of people who are able bodied enough to walk and there is someone who is not able bodied and needs that bus more desperately, should the bus stop and kick off a couple of people who can walk, in order to give the person in the wheelchair a ride? It is hypothetical and I think we are going to face these sorts of challenges.

CHAIR—Good manners alone and consideration would dictate that, but how on earth would you decide who got jettisoned off the bus?

Mr Ward—That is the question. It raises all sorts of issues where people would be—

CHAIR—It is an interesting point.

Mr Ward—Yes. I am not professing to have an answer to this question. I am seeking to pose it as the sort of question we are likely to face as our public transport system becomes overrun—and I believe it will. We have some bit-by-bit solutions. A trolley bus is an interesting innovation. It has been around for a long time. It is a cross between a tram and a bus. It is essentially a bus in that it has rubber wheels and it is a road-going vehicle rather than being on tracks, but it is powered by overhead lines.

There are dual-mode trolley buses which can be powered by overhead electric wires and also an auxiliary diesel motor. These are highly adaptable because they can run oil-free for the component of the trip where they are being powered by electricity but then if they need to go off the beaten track to service a different route they can run on a diesel motor. That is an example of an adaptive solution. You can add tram tracks later and convert the whole thing to a tram line if it is a heavily patronised route and make it, basically, all electric. So you could replace some of the trolley buses with all-electric trams.

Senator STERLE—But that is an example we have heard about when we have travelled around the country but the complexities around this are enormous. So if anyone was picking up the *Hansard* to have a read one Sunday because they had nothing better to do, they would think, 'What a great idea!' but it is not that simple.

Mr Ward—Right.

Senator STERLE—As you would know—and this is where we are facing the problems that were mentioned earlier—it comes down to the old nimby stuff. Everyone would love to see light rail, and

unfortunately some political parties around Australia run around promising light rail in every seat they contest. But the harsh reality is that it is expensive. Where do you get the land from? Who do you take the land from to put the rail lines in? Where do you put the stops? Normally, they are in the middle of the road. People look at Melbourne and say what a wonderful system it has with the electric trams, but unless you are starting with a green-fields situation, this is not an easy or sustainable option in the short term.

Mr Ward—Does that include the trolley bus option?

Senator STERLE—No, I am talking about tracks. A lot of people would love to see that. They think it would be great. But it is really very difficult, once the infrastructure is in, to take away lanes. It will affect public transport.

Mr Ward—Yes. The reason for suggesting this is that, rather than building the tracks and having to acquire the land and incur that expense, you could install overhead lines—perhaps more cheaply. It would not be an easy exercise by any means. But it is only half of the work; it is not 100 per cent of the work, anyway, because you are leaving the tracks until later. And then you could start with trolley buses. If it turns out that it is extremely well used and makes sense, you could change that over to trams. If not, the trolley bus could still operate as a regular bus for part or all of its time.

In Adelaide we have a thing called the O-Bahn. I am not sure if you are familiar with it. It is a guided busway. It has regular buses but, for part of their route, they go along a high-speed guided way. Again, you can build the solution bit by bit. You can start with the buses and, if you find that it is a very well patronised route, you can add the O-Bahn tracks. So, rather than having to invest all the money in building it and then finding that it does not get used, you could build it bit by bit.

I do not know to what extent fuel excise is intended to fund public transport but, as oil consumption goes down, the total money coming in from fuel excise is also going to go down. It is going to be a decreasing source of government funding. Whether or not that money in particular goes to public transport, it is a sizeable chunk of money and it is going to go down. So one thought, politically unpalatable though it is, would be to increase the excise now. I would not like to be planning the election campaign around increasing fuel excise.

CHAIR—Thank you for that, Mr Ward!

Mr Ward—You could increase the excise now, in a very open and honest way, so as to temporarily boost funding so that you could invest in large, one-off purchases of public transport ahead of hard times. As I said, I would not like to be planning this as a political campaign. I would not like to be planning any political campaign around a decline in oil production., but that is a hard reality that we are facing. That is as much as I have got. So I would like to open it up to your questions. Here are the references I quoted earlier in the presentation. I would encourage you to look at them, especially the Hamilton reference relating to the financial implications of the oil shock in the context of the financial crisis.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. That was very interesting. It is quite a useful way to do those types of presentations. It is really quite useful—though not so much for the *Hansard*. You were talking about cycling being a form of public transport, which it obviously is. Do you think governments at all levels are placing enough priority on cycling as an option, and are there enough measures in place to support the take-up of cycling as an option?

Mr Ward—I do not think governments are taking it on board enough. I have heard people use the phrase 'the trip not taken'. If we are planning on reducing car dependence, for example, it is about the number of passenger trips that can be taken on some other form of motorised transport rather than the number of trips we can eliminate altogether. A trip by bike is still a trip taken, but, in terms of its contribution to the overall transport task, I think cycling is not given enough attention. There are a huge number of trips that are short enough to be conveniently taken by bike—in the cities and towns at least. There are also power bike options. So far, these options have not been endorsed sufficiently by government. Extending the range of a bicycle by putting a small motor on it, for example, could replace an even larger number of car trips than ordinary bikes can potentially replace—and that is already a large number. So far, I think governments are really resisting. People who ride their bike to work or to the shops are seen as being on the fringe. Around Adelaide we have bike lanes which terminate as soon as a car parking lane starts. You can be riding along on your bike and suddenly be faced with a car that is parked in your space. You then have to negotiate a lane change out into busy traffic. It is quite clear that cycling is not seen by our government as a serious form of transport.

CHAIR—Do you have a view on incentives? You spoke before about subsidising the infrastructure for cycling, but is there any way of directly providing incentives to bike riders to ride bikes?

Mr Ward—I do not know. I guess there could be a psychological incentive, through an advertising campaign, to demonstrate to people that they could save money on things like gym fees and health costs by being fit and cycling. There is already an incentive: cycling is a worthwhile activity in itself. If we wanted to encourage people to ride their bikes more, and therefore use their cars less, the incentive could be through a kind of user-pays system with respect to cars. Our cars cost us $600 a year to register and something like $200 or $300 a year to insure. So we spend the best part of $1,000 just to keep a car in the driveway. Some insurance companies are scaling their premiums on the basis of the number of kilometres driven. But if we could, say, shift the cost by reducing the vehicle registration fee and increasing the fuel excise then people who drive a lot would incur a greater cost and people who drive less would make a saving. So people who take their bike, or anything else, instead of a car, get a benefit. As to singling out cyclists and giving them money to ride their bikes, that might be a strategy.

CHAIR—Maybe we should get supermarkets to do home deliveries in electric cars. People could ride their bike to the supermarket and the supermarket could deliver their shopping in an electric car. There are all sorts of interesting possibilities. I am trying to turn my mind to how you would police the financial recompense for riding a bike. How would you be able to prove that you ride a bike in order to get the financial reward? These are certainly thinks we need to think about. Senator Sterle, do you have any further questions?

Senator STERLE—In wrapping up I have an observation to make. I congratulate you, Dr Ward, on the expected arrival of your first child. As a father of two I can tell you that it is a wonderful opportunity and it is something you cannot put a price on. But it is amazing how much more you find you are reliant on a motor vehicle once the little one comes along. That is half the problem. When we were kids growing up—and there are probably not a lot of years between you, Senator Nash and me—just about every child walked or rode to school, and that just does not happen now. There is that thought out there that about security, or whatever it may be. If we listen that way you would think that the suburbs are full of deviants. But please don't' get me wrong; they are serious issues. But we have boxed ourselves into a situation now where you try to drive through any state or private primary school in the morning and it is as busy as the damn CBD. That is what we are confronted with now. You said that it costs $1,000 just to have the car in the driveway. But in terms of running children around that is not a lot of money to today's parents, surely?

Mr Ward—That is the problem we have and we have to find a way around it.

Senator STERLE—Is your child a boy or a girl?

Mr Ward—We do not know.

CHAIR—Very exciting.

Senator STERLE—How can you paint the room then!

CHAIR—I didn't know either; it was very exciting. Best wishes. Thank you for your submission; it has been extremely useful.

[2.32 pm]

POWRIE, Mr Sam, Vice Chair, Bicycle Institute of South Australia; and Editor, *Pedal Update*

CHAIR—Welcome. Would you like to make an opening statement.

Mr Powrie—I have worked for 25 years in the human services industry rather than a technical industry, such as James. I work in the disability industry as a senior speech pathologist. The only reason I mention that is that my enthusiasm for cycling is channelled through community development and community access sorts of issues rather than the lycra issue. Hopefully, you have a copy of my briefing notes—

CHAIR—We do.

Mr Powrie—I am not intending to go into an enormous amount of technicality today and I do not wish to throw too many left-field notions at you because I do not think it is a particularly useful way to address your committee's terms of reference. What I would like to do today is focus on what I think is a need for a reframing of all of the issues that surround public transport, cycling and walking and how we spend Commonwealth money in this country.

Senator STERLE—Because we have just received your briefing notes I would appreciate it if you could walk us through it.

Mr Powrie—I will start with a statement about Adelaide, BISA and cycling. I am not sure if you know the geography of Adelaide, but it has a population of 1.2 million people and it is situated on a coastal plain that is about 15 or 20 kilometres wide. At the moment Adelaide's area is approx 32 kilometres wide—we stretch up into the foothills—and it is about 95 kilometres long. Like Perth, for instance, it is a very spread out city. I like to compare Adelaide with Los Angeles, which is a similarly spread out elongated city and, for the US, it supposedly has a pretty good public transport system. Los Angeles has about 12.5 million people compared to Adelaide's 1.2 million, so it has approximately 10 times the population, but Adelaide's urban area is already half the size of Los Angeles. So Adelaide covers half the area of the fifth biggest city in the United States. I am not a technical person and I am not a planner but as a layperson interested in access to transport, and as a taxpayer, this raises interesting questions for me about whether Adelaide can actually afford to put into place a high-quality public transport system capable of covering that urban area. That is a really interesting question and I have no answer for it, but I imagine that a similar question has been posed in Perth by Peter Newman and in other cities. Because the Commonwealth government gives a lot of money to the states to fund public transport systems, I think you have a significant role in ensuring that those questions are addressed at a state level.

We currently have a government here—and I notice they do not figure in your program so I am not sure if they have given a submission to the inquiry—that expresses a lot of enthusiasm for monumental public transport proposals but I have this recurrent question in my mind: through the electrification of our rail system and so on, are we addressing the problem of building a public transport system that can actually cope with the future needs of a city the size of Adelaide? Public transport development is essentially about building for the future. It takes so long to build a railway line or even just to electrify one, so we are essentially building for future needs. I will leave that point with you.

I would like to talk a little bit about BISA. BISA is a 35-year-old community based organisation staffed by volunteers, of which I am one. It has been around for well over 35 years and we have about $48,000 in the bank. We are a very strong and viable organisation. We do not run roads, we do not wear lycra—at least not to meetings!

CHAIR—Neither do Senator Sterle and I, you will be happy to know!

Mr Powrie—I take that comment quite seriously—and it is no reflection on you, Senator—but unfortunately we do not live in Holland, Denmark, Britain, Portland in Oregon or Bogota. Most people think of cycling as something lunatics do or something annoying colourful people do or something kids do. In fact, in many places in the world—over most of Africa for instance—cycling is the major form of transport. Prior to about 1930, cycling was the major form of transport in Britain, especially for women. The advent of cycling in the 18090s and early 1900s had an absolutely profound effect on the place of women and young people in society. There are plenty of references around for that. So cycling still has the capacity to change lives and I think we need to remember that.

The sort of cycling I am talking about is: how does the use of a bicycle add in a productive way to the transport mix and to the productivity, health and viability of our communities. That is the only aspect of cycling that BISA is really interested in. To give you an example of some of the things that we have been instrumental in prompting our state government to fund over the last two years, prior to BISA's intervention there was no proposal to include cycling facilities on the 20- or 30-kilometre Northern Expressway north of Adelaide. There is now to be an on-road bike lane plus a 27- or 28-kilometre long off-road cycleway, with the highest quality surface in the world, to be called the Stuart O'Grady cycle lane. That came about through our lobbying. BISA has been lobbying for some years for the creation of 'greenways'—green travel corridors along all of our metropolitan tram and railway lines, mirroring in fact the greenways that have been created into Manhattan. Just as an aside—and I have never been to Manhattan but some of our members have—there are more people who travel into Manhattan by walking and cycling every day along the greenways than actually travel into Manhattan island on public transport. It is a different context I know but it gives you some illustration of why we have become very enthusiastic about greenways. Greenways have become an absolute cause celebre in New York. Everyone is very aware of the value of greenways, even just as a recreational provision.

Senator STERLE—Is 'greenways' another name for a bike track?

Mr Powrie—No, the actual term chosen by our state government is 'green travel corridor'. I am not sure if you have seen our state government's state cycling plan. It is called *Safety in numbers* and it is available at the Department for Transport, Energy and Infrastructure website. They might even give you a printed colour copy if they have got any left. It is certainly there as a PDF file. On page 14 there is a map and the most important things on that map are the little green dotted lines, which represent the green travel corridors that we have been advocating for the last nearly 2½ decades.

Senator STERLE—So these corridors are available to cyclists and pedestrians?

Mr Powrie—The concept is to provide a space for walking and cycling directly linked to the rail and tram route.

CHAIR—How does that differ from a cycle path? Not being a cyclist, I do not know.

Mr Powrie—It does not differ from a cycle path necessarily. I will give you an illustration. There is an enormous greenway movement around the world. Nearly all of the greenway movements are linked directly to public transport assets in place now. How might it work here in Adelaide? Adelaide is essentially an Edwardian-Victorian city. Along our metropolitan railway lines there are vast essentially unused spaces consisting mostly of wide tree-lined roads. They are essentially unused. They are the size of arterial roads but they are essentially unused because they are blocked off at each end. They were built as railway boulevards—because metropolitan railways were built prior to the car so they were the main way that people had of getting around the city quickly. So it was a very high status thing to live on a railway boulevard.

If you want to see a great illustration of this, there are six beautiful railway boulevards running down each side of our 14-kilometre railway line from the city down to Port Adelaide. Each of those roads is as wide as this room and there are continuous groves of hundreds of established trees on both sides. You could basically walk down the middle of the road quite safely. So for that particular route nearly all of the green travel corridor would consist of improving those railway boulevards very slightly, improving continuity where one finishes and the next one starts, so that you can safely, easily and conveniently ride a bicycle along there.

CHAIR—How is that progressing? It certainly sounds like quite a sensible proposal. How is that actually progressing?

CHAIR—How is that progressing? It certainly sounds like a sensible proposal.

Mr Powrie—It is progressing very well. As is said, two years ago the state government, as a last-minute provision, included those green dotted lines on the map on page 14. My understanding is that money is now being allocated. BISA has been a very strong advocate for state government to put funding of the green travel corridors in as a bid to the Commonwealth.

As a further explanation, as I said Adelaide is quite a large elongated city but we have green travel corridors on that map extending to Gawler, which is 45 kilometres to the north of the CBD, and down to Willunga, which is some 30-odd kilometres down. You can now ride all the way on the green travel corridor from Darlington, which is the edge of the city major, all the way to Willunga without travelling on a road.

One of the other aspects of the green travel corridors and why we are enthusiastic about them is that we believe—and I am jumping around here but it is one of the points I have made—that it is absolutely essential that cycling and walking perhaps, but certainly cycling, be seen as a part of the public transport system. Cycling has to be seen as part of the mainstream transport system. It fits best with public transport for a whole range of reasons, such as making better use of existing public transport assets. There is a very strong body of science that says that the value of public transport use is multiplied several times when you increase the connectivity between cycling and walking activity and using buses and trains. I am not sure if members of the committee have been to Perth—

CHAIR—Yes, Senator Sterle lives there and I have been there.

Mr Powrie—Jim Krynen, the manager of cycling in the public transport system in Perth is extremely proud of the positive outcomes from their integration of cycling and walking with their public transport system. There is a multiplying effect because you improve the capacity of formerly isolated systems of public service to start to work together in a very creative way to bring about transport solutions.

Senator STERLE—There are some wonderful bikeways around Perth but they have not got it perfect because the pedestrians are integrated with the cyclists. That is alright while there is mum and dad and the kids on a Saturday or Sunday but it is quite dangerous when there are large groups of committed cyclists.

Mr Powrie—There are major problems with shared bikeways. Shared bikeways are almost a uniquely Australian invention, although I think they use them in the United States too.

Senator STERLE—It is a wonderful concept but it just has not worked the way it was supposed to.

Mr Powrie—I think it has to do with the fact that our cities are so big and so extended outwards. Personally, I believe that we need to bite the bullet and have dedicated cycleways. To a large extent, though, we need to take into account that there are cultural outcomes that can solve those sorts of problems. Even on our Southern Veloway here, which starts at Darlington on the edge of the city and climbs up very large, steep hills to the southern suburbs, I will not walk on the Southern Veloway because you will get killed by someone travelling at 60 or 70 kilometres an hour. Yet there are groups of ladies who insist on walking along the Southern Veloway with their little dogs admiring the birds. It is because I think they simply do not understand that they should be walking on the footpath on the other side of the freeway. It is a cultural thing. I have no ready answers but obviously solutions have to be sought there.

One of the key things that I think Australian governments need to a clear and consistent understanding about is why they want to foster public transport and cycling. There are all sorts of rosy statements made about cycling and about public transport but the bottom line is that there are some very, very strong bodies of science that we need to be acknowledging and that need to drive changes to how we spend our dollars.

I noticed that Dr Chris Rissel has provided a submission to you. I have not read it yet but I spoke to him recently and I suspect the submission is worth reading because when he spoke to me recently he gave me some pretty astounding facts such as the fact that the CSIRO tell us that there is some minimal amount of exercise we all need to be doing per week to get maximum benefits for cancer prevention, heart attack prevention and so on. What Chris made very clear to me was that he actually only had to do a small fraction of that recommended level of physical activity to get about 50 or 75 per cent of the benefit. So the point he was making to me was that you only had to get people a little bit more active to get a very large percentage of the health benefit. He has all the numbers and figures about the enormous benefits that would accrue from that small increase in daily physical activity. It is not a half hour; it is a small increase measured in minutes. He has all the facts and figures showing that there are enormous economic benefits to be accrued from that, but mainly in terms of reducing costs on our hospital systems and increasing productive working lives and that sort of thing.

Senator STERLE—I am always sceptical about those sorts of announcements because someone told me that if you gave up sugar in your coffee you would lose eight kilograms a year, but I have got fatter!

Mr Powrie—It is possible. It takes a long while to cycle off a lolly, I can tell you!

There are several key issues that I would like to present following on with that theme of Australian government's needing to understand why they may want to pursue public transport and cycling and walking development. There are very strong lobbyists for the motor car industry, for motor car users and for the road freight industry. I would not deny any of those lobbyists their arguments or their rationale because cars and trucks have an essential place in Australia at the moment. I find it very hard to envisage how this country would work without those services. But the point is that our nation and our cities are dominated by cars. There

is a balance that needs to be redressed. There are at least four strong arguments for that. One is equity. I do not believe that equity is increasing in our societies. I think equity is at real risk. Access to transport is a very important equity issue. The reference I have in my paper here is one that the previous speaker referred to, which is the Dodson and Sipe research. It is unique in the world; it is very easy to read and very accessible. It states very clearly that people in nearly all of Australia's larger cities and many of the larger towns, like Geelong, Bendigo and so on, are at significant risk of what, I believe, Dodson and Sipe call 'oil vulnerability'—transport vulnerability. Graham Currie has done similar studies in Melbourne. He found whole areas of Melbourne where people simply can no longer afford even to use public transport. I am not quite sure what the issues are but people are being locked out of transport access. He has measured significant changes to their access to work, to study and so on. So equity is an important issue. There are other obvious things like disability, age and so on but I encourage you to give your attention to that issue.

Integration, I think, is a significant issue for the Commonwealth government. I think the Commonwealth government has a key role to play in these four issues I am proposing, because you can ask for outcomes associated with these issues when you give out your funding to the state governments. I guess it is in that sense I am presenting them. I have already talked a bit about integration and I think it is essential that not only should those three forms of transport—public transport, cycling and walking—be integrated but public transport should not be seen as separate from the road transport system. We need to find ways to make all of these modes work much more effectively together. Plenty of research and creativity is happening both in Australia and around the world on this, but I think the Commonwealth government has a key role in promoting that either in a friendly way or with a bit of arm twisting associated with the provision of funding.

There are plenty of social research institutes in Australia that are looking at issues of resilience across our community. When Dodson and Sipe looked at Adelaide they found very large areas to the north and south of the city as well as key pockets, where I live, towards the rich, beachside suburbs where communities have very little resilience left. They are at the edge of viability in terms of economic access, transport access, recreational and schooling access and so on. I am not sure whether you have been following the South Australian state government's proposals to build large new suburbs to the north of the city. They are proposing increasing the number of households in Adelaide by 10 per cent over the next 10 years without any notion of where services such as phone booths, taxi services, public transport, utilities, hospital and medical services for those extra 44,000 households are going to come from. That is how I measure resilience. I do not understand how you can propose to build 44,000 new houses 30 or 40 kilometres from the city in those circumstances, but I think the issue of resilience must be raised.

The third issue is oil depletion. I share some of the concerns that BOSA has, which James outlined. I do not have quite the catastrophic kind of vision that some people in the so-called peak oil community have, but I think there are very serious issues there for some sectors of our community. Senator, you mentioned you were from the trucking industry. When we had that spike in oil prices a bit over a year ago—it went up to US$147—the trucking industry here in South Australia, the representatives of the road freight industry were saying that if it went up another 10c, 12 per cent of Australia's trucking road freight service providers would go out of business overnight. I know that it is a volatile industry and companies get swallowed up by bigger companies all the time and that people are operating on the edge all the time but there are limits to the viability of industries like road freight and we have to take that very seriously. One of the great things that the Western Australian sustainable transport institute has come up with—

Senator STERLE—Professor Newman's mob.

Mr Powrie—Yes. They did a survey of the transport vulnerability of remote communities across outback Australia—South Australia, the Northern Territory and Western Australia—and the distances between those outback communities which those road freight services service are absolutely extraordinary. They are not all Aboriginal communities. The dependency of those outback communities on road freight is extraordinary. I cannot understand that as a city dweller. I think we need to take all of that very seriously. I am not sure about the role of public transport in that, but the point I am making is that I do think oil depletion needs to be taken seriously.

The key informant for me in that is the release in November last year of the International Energy Agency's *World Energy Outlook for 2008*. The key statement in there is that, from about 2011 onwards, there will be a 6.7 per cent decrease in world production of conventional oil. I know that all sorts of promises are made about unconventional oil and tar sands and all that sort of thing. I am no expert. But the point is that conventional oil is where Australia gets its road transport fuel from and, if they start producing another five million barrels a

day from the tar sands in Canada, I guarantee you that none of that will come to Australia. We are the second-largest customer of Singapore's oil production, their refined fuels production. The biggest customer of Singapore's oil is China. China can outbid us and anyone else in the world on any day of the week on the world spot markets, so we need to take these things into consideration.

Senator STERLE—And we do. I should have asked earlier in the piece when you were talking about cycling for health benefits. One of the most topical, political points at the moment is emissions trading. When we talk about public transport, apart from sustainability, safety and the like, bear in mind that a large chunk of the public transport argument could be pointed towards the carbon footprint that is being left. From your expertise with the cycling community, do you think a large number of your members cycle purely, wholly and solely because of the thought of reducing greenhouse gas emissions?

Mr Powrie—Yes, there are. I am a bit reluctant to talk about BISA's members, because we have 350-odd members, we have over 1,000 friends of BISA and we have an unpaid sort of sign-up thing. These are people who are activists and people who have a specific interest in cycling. They are not representative of the broad range of households in Adelaide and are not representative of the potential broad range users of public transport. There is of course very strong interest in the community on questions like reducing greenhouse gas emissions. We are a bunch of activists.

Senator STERLE—Sure. That question was not set up for me to bolt out and ring Minister Wong and tell her that the whole cycling community in South Australia is behind her emissions trading scheme. I am interested, because I was saying earlier—I do not know whether you heard, Mr Powrie—that in Perth we do not have a bad public transport system, electric trains et cetera. I think a lot of Western Australians are now making the effort to use the electrified train and there are reasons for that—parking is expensive in Perth, there is less hassle in that they can read the paper on the way and all that sort of stuff. But I am interested to get a feel as to whether greenhouse gas emissions or climate change really are major factors around the country. At one of the early hearings in Sydney we heard that an international survey had been undertaken—I cannot remember the international organisation—and it revealed that about 10 or 12 major reasons why people use public transport, and the environment was not one of them.

Mr Powrie—In my experience, global warming is somewhere off in the distance. Most people have a very nebulous understanding of it. If you open a newspaper on a day when Senator Fielding, or someone like him, has made a statement then your convictions flow one way or the other. It is one of those hard things to kind of grasp. That is why I mentioned my own work background at the start of this discussion. One of the things that I have learned over the last 24 years in which I have worked in the disability area is that it is about the day-to-day practicalities; it is Maslow's hierarchy of needs which governs people's behaviour. That applies to transport behaviours as well.

The thing that prompts me to get on my bike and ride to work—I do not know whether you saw me when I got up; I am not the lightest of characters—is the information that we now know: a little bit of physical activity can have a profound effect on the last five or 10 years of your life, for instance. Regular bicycle use, Chris Rissel and other researchers have found, means that you do not spend the last five or 10 years of your life sitting with diabetes socks on and stuff like that. You are much more likely to be an active person until the day you keel over. These sorts of facts start to weigh on you in your 40s and 50s.

Senator STERLE—That leads me to where I am trying to find a link. I remember Norm telling us to get off the couch when I was a teenager. That is how long that campaign has been around. You were probably a teenager at the same time as me.

Mr Powrie—I was older than a teenager. I had stopped watching TV by that time.

Senator STERLE—That is the point, isn't it? I am very conscious and I know a lot of mates my age are—some are and some are not.

Mr Powrie—I am trying to present a pragmatic set of arguments for the integration of cycling and walking into public transport and the integration of public transport into the greater body of thinking about transport.

Senator STERLE—Would you have jumped on that pushbike when Norm was telling us to?

Mr Powrie—Yes. I lived in the country and rode my bike, but not because of Norm. There are a few other points I would like to make, mainly with regard to the terms of reference. I may be overstating the role that the Commonwealth, as a provider of transport funding, can take in reframing and resetting the benchmarks for outcomes from funding to the states. I am not sure whether I am not. I do think that an audit of the state of public passenger transport in Australia would be a very important step. I understand it has not occurred before.

I think it would be a very important opportunity to promote in-depth and consistent attention by the states to the whole issue of public transport. It would be great to have such an audit discussed at the regular Australian Transport Council meetings, where state ministers get together. Such an audit would be a profoundly important opportunity to get onto the agenda some of the key science and some of the important values around the integration of active transport, public transport and road transport.

CHAIR—What is your knowledge of the audit processes of individual states and territories? Is it happening at a state level? I ask that because we seem to have had a pretty clear indication as we have been travelling around that individual jurisdictions are working towards 10-year plans for public transport and transport systems, but one would assume that, having embarked on those planning processes, they had already undertaken some kind of auditing to see where they are. Is that the case or not? Is that just an assumption?

Mr Powrie—Not in South Australia. About four years ago, South Australia prepared a state transport plan which was based on some auditing of public transport use at the time, but it was only on the department of transport's website for about three weeks before it was pulled.

CHAIR—Why was that?

Mr Powrie—I am not a politician—

CHAIR—I should have asked why you think that is, in your view.

Mr Powrie—When you put a whole lot of grand plans on the web, based on science, and then the political analysts and economists amongst your advisers start telling you how much it will cost and the dangers of promising things to people—I am sure you are aware of the danger of promises—I guess it just scared people off. It was replaced by an infrastructure plan—a monument-building approach to development rather than what someone from the community development industry, like I am, would call a culturally based approach to development.

CHAIR—I am just speculating, I guess, that as a national issue we need a national audit to see across the country where we are sitting in terms of public transport, rather than a piecemeal audit jurisdiction by jurisdiction.

Mr Powrie—Yes, I agree. Australia really needs consistency. If you are going to make state governments accountable for the use of Commonwealth funds in any meaningful way, that accountability must be framed consistently across the country. At the moment I do not see that. I know there are statements made about the values associated with this or that form of outcome, but I do not see consistency. I do not see our own government, for instance, being made accountable for the vast sums of money it sinks into things like the Northern Expressway and the very little it spends on cycling. Spending on cycling in South Australia is around $2 million. It does not even approach equity. If you take one or two per cent of the $600 million state transport budget—the regular transport budget; I do not mean the major Commonwealth allocations that came recently—we would have somewhere between $6 million and $12 million spent on cycling. I know the state government has issued statements saying it spent $95 million on cycling over the last four years, but it is a flexible use of numbers, if you ask me.

CHAIR—On that, moving back to the cycling issue, how do you make cycling more mainstream? From a lay perspective, cycling is something that people over here do and it is not something that I would tend to call—a very technical term—'groovy'.

Mr Powrie—It is one of the questions that was raised in your earlier discussion with Mr Ward about incentives. I do not see any point in incentives, quite frankly. Cycling needs to be something that people either choose to do or choose not to do. It needs to be a viable option. The way you make it a viable option is by making it convenient, effective, efficient, accessible, safe, secure and comfortable for whatever distance people want to use their bikes, whether they want to ride to the shops or the doctor or to the bus interchange where there is a decent, secure bicycle parking facility. I am not sure if you met Jim Krynen in Western Australia, but Jim rides 30 or 35 kilometres to work each day. I am not sure I could do that.

CHAIR—I hope there is a shower at the end of it!

Mr Powrie—That is what he does. He is the manager of Cycling Integration in Western Australia. We basically need to make cycling as convenient as driving a car. You will see in my notes that BISA is very strong on greenlinks because they represent an opportunity—

CHAIR—Strong on what, sorry?

Mr Powrie—Greenlinks or green travel corridors; greenlinks was our initial name for them—because they represent an opportunity to build extraordinarily cheaply iconic, inspiring community infrastructure. Every time someone drives on a road or rides on a tram or train, they will see cyclists riding to work and kids riding their bikes to school along the cycleway, and the observations will rub off. That is what we mean by an iconic cycling facility—something that people cannot ignore.

CHAIR—Thank you very much for appearing and thank you for your detailed submission. That is going to be extremely useful.

Mr Powrie—Thank you very much for your interest.

Committee adjourned at 3.14 pm