

TRANSCRIPT

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Budget Estimates 2018–19

Melbourne — 30 May 2018

Members

Mr Danny Pearson — Chair

Ms Sue Pennicuik

Mr David Morris — Deputy Chair

Ms Harriet Shing

Mr Steve Dimopoulos

Mr Tim Smith

Mr Danny O'Brien

Ms Vicki Ward

Ms Fiona Patten

Witnesses

Ms Jacinta Allan, Minister for Public Transport,

Mr Richard Bolt, Secretary,

Dr Gillian Miles, Head, Transport for Victoria,

Mr Jeroen Weimar, Chief Executive Officer, Public Transport Victoria,

Evan Tattersall, Acting Coordinator-General, Major Transport Infrastructure Program, and

Mr Kevin Devlin, Chief Executive Officer, Level Crossing Removal Authority, Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources.

The CHAIR — I declare open the public hearings for the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee inquiry into the 2018–19 budget estimates. All mobile telephones should now be turned to silent. I would like to welcome the Minister for Public Transport, the Honourable Jacinta Allan, MP; Mr Richard Bolt, Secretary of the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources; Dr Gillian Miles, Head of Transport for Victoria; Mr Jeroen Weimar, Chief Executive Officer, Public Transport Victoria; Evan Tattersall, Acting Coordinator-General, Major Transport Infrastructure Program; and in the gallery, Mr Kevin Devlin, Chief Executive Officer, Level Crossing Removal Authority. Any witnesses called from the gallery today during this hearing must clearly state their name, position and relevant department for the record.

All evidence is taken by this committee under the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act, attracts parliamentary privilege and is protected from judicial review. Any comments made outside the hearing, including on social media, are not afforded such privilege.

The committee does not require witnesses to be sworn, but questions must be answered fully, accurately and truthfully. Witnesses found to be giving false or misleading evidence may be in contempt of Parliament and subject to penalty.

All evidence given today is being recorded by Hansard. You will be provided with proof versions of the transcript for verification as soon as available. Verified transcripts, any PowerPoint presentations and handouts will be placed on the committee's website as soon as possible.

Witnesses advisers may approach the table during the hearing to provide information to the witnesses if requested by way of myself. However, written communication to witnesses can only be provided by officers of the PAEC secretariat.

Members of the public gallery cannot participate in the committee's proceedings in any way, and I will make a note that if there are interjections from the public gallery, the gallery will be cleared and I will ask for the PSOs to remove the gallery.

Members of the media must remain focused only on the person speaking. Any filming or recording must cease immediately at the completion of the hearing.

I invite the witness to make a very brief opening statement of no more than 10 minutes, and this will be followed by questions from the committee.

Visual presentation.

Ms ALLAN — Can I at the outset acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we are gathered and pay my respects to elders past and present. Can I also, Chair, express my gratitude to you and your colleagues on the committee for accommodating a change to the hearing schedule to allow me to appear today so that I could attend a personal funeral yesterday. I appreciate that assistance yesterday.

I want to step back a little bit before we go forward and talk about the 2018–19 budget and go back to 2015 — or the end of 2014 — when we came into government and took over the public transport portfolio and knew that we had to act in a whole range of different areas in response to a growing population, increased demand for public transport services and disappointingly, a cupboard that was empty in terms of a forward pipeline of projects. So we knew we had to move very, very quickly. We have done that, and we have certainly invested very heavily in the public transport portfolio and, as you would have heard yesterday, in the roads area as well.

In public transport we have invested across all modes of the system. We have invested in metropolitan trains, in regional trains, in trams, buses and taxis. Also, we have invested beyond the nuts and bolts, if you like, and the concrete and steel that you need to run a modern system. We have also undertaken reform in a whole bunch of different policy areas to deliver better outcomes for passengers. I want to refer to that a little bit today because obviously a lot of attention goes on the big infrastructure projects — and rightly so; they are critically important — but also as important is the significant policy work that we have invested our time and energy in, with the most important outcome of delivering a better, fairer and more equitable and accessible public transport system for passengers. It has been that focus on putting passengers first, at the heart of the system, that we have focused our reform agenda on as well.

Turning to the first slide, we have recognised that there have been opportunities that came to us in government that exist through contract negotiations to improve performance and improve services for Victorians. That is why, whether it has been in the ticketing, in the metropolitan trains and trams franchising, in the bus contracts, we have lifted baseline performance targets through new contracts for those different areas. We have also developed a really strong foundation to drive and deliver this reform by creating Transport for Victoria so that our planning and reform is also more coordinated and integrated and also responsive to what passengers are telling us that they want and need.

Also, too, where we have seen that there is an opportunity to, if you like, pull a policy lever, we have done that as well to support passengers. A good example of that was the scrapping of the unfair and poorly targeted penalty fare regime and making fares much fairer. Also, too, we are planning for the future, and this is critical to some of the work that Transport for Victoria has been undertaking. No government should come into the future to government facing an empty cupboard again, so we are investing heavily in the policy and the development to get a pipeline of projects up and running.

If you go back to just three years ago when I first appeared before the committee in the public transport portfolio, we said back then that we would get started, and we certainly have, and we have been delivering. The Metro Tunnel, for example, is on track to open a year ahead of schedule. We have got 19 level crossings removed and another 10 underway. We are also completing the Mernda rail ahead of schedule, and that is importantly going to bring trains to that community for the first time.

Also, too, in 2016 we released the first ever framework for the regional passenger network as well, the regional network development plan. Also, too, after a fair bit of engagement with the federal government we have also been able to secure \$1.7 billion in funding to upgrade our regional network.

This year's state budget represents the culmination of that four budgets worth of intensive investment and effort in the Victorian transport network that is underpinned by some of those other policy reform pieces we have been undertaking. We have introduced almost 600 extra services across our regional network over that time and over 5000 in the metropolitan network. Since 2015 we have increased the capital funding in the portfolio by over \$35 billion, 25 of that in the public transport area. This is an unprecedented investment.

That brings us to the 2018–19 budget that sets the stage for the next wave of significant transport projects that will help shape the state. The first tranche, as I have mentioned, of level crossing removals, track duplications and upgrades are about to deliver a massive capacity dividend. This is a budget that is about delivering more services, better stations, improved public transport, and delivers the benefits to passengers that that infrastructure investment allows.

The next slide starts with rolling stock. The budget continues our really strong investment in rolling stock. This budget provides for another five X'trapolis trains, of course manufactured in Ballarat. This adds to the 19 X'traps, the 30 E-class trams and the 87 VLocity carriages for the regional network that we have ordered since 2015.

This year's budget also provides just over \$16 million for detailed planning and design work to be undertaken on the next generation tram that will help support the future demands on our tram network. Also too in the regional areas, we are funding \$15.8 million for technical specifications, preprocurement and market sounding for a new regional train so that we can run more modern trains on the network and look at how we can retire off the ageing classic fleet, which is something that we said we would do back in 2016 when we released the regional network development plan. This is in addition to the work that we did in last year's budget, with the \$10 million to redesign the VLocitys that was in the 17–18 budget.

Also, if you fast-forward from those three years in 2015, we are starting to see the new infrastructure do what it has been built to do: get people to work, to home and to their families safer and sooner. This is why you invest in these big projects. For example, soon every dangerous and congested level crossing between Caulfield and Dandenong will be gone, and that enables us to introduce the new turn-up-and-go services. Every 10 minutes on the Cranbourne to Pakenham line will be extended until 10.00 p.m. on weekdays.

The opening of the Mernda rail link brings 1000 new services to Mernda, and the completion of the Hurstbridge line upgrade stage 1 and the removal of the two level crossings on that corridor will also see the introduction of new peak services. Also on the Hurstbridge line, this year's budget provides for the planning for the future on that corridor, looking at how we can potentially create more capacity into the future. We are also planning for a

new tram from Caulfield station to Monash University and on to Rowville to connect people to what is a really important employment and education precinct and health services also that are in that area.

This year's budget provides funding to extend bus routes and deliver more services for residents in our growing suburbs around the city and also to help them to connect to train stations, schools, shopping areas and jobs as well. The budget invests \$55.7 million in better bus services across a range of different areas. Also there is funding for regional buses as well and also more FlexiRide services in our regional towns in places like Bellarine, Lara, Gisborne, Trentham and Daylesford. I could go on, Chair, but time may be against us. All up over our four budgets we have invested around \$200 million in upgrading bus services across Victoria. That is extending bus routes into growing suburbs, adding extra services in existing suburbs and putting more bus services into our large regional towns and our small country areas as well.

Looking at our train stations, the budget provides \$16.3 million for accessibility improvements at Essendon and Watergardens stations and also provides for more planning work for upgrades at our major interchange stations like Broadmeadows and Pakenham. It also looks at how we can make improvements at Seaford and Kananook stations. This builds on our record investment in new and improved stations. We have been upgrading and building new stations right across the metropolitan and regional network.

Car parking is something that is very important for passengers to be able to easily get to the train station to be able to catch their train services. This year's budget funds more than 2000 new and upgraded car parks at a whole range of key stations across the network. Also too, when we are talking about stations, South Yarra station will be undertaking stage 1 of an upgrade that will include a wider entrance, enable passengers to move more easily around that busy station and also improve the tram stop at the front of the station on Toorak Road to make it a more accessible tram stop for passengers.

This has been also an important feature of the work we have done over the past four budgets, where we understand that people with a disability are more reliant than others on public transport, so we need to make all parts of the network, whether it is our trains, our trams, our buses or our taxi services, more accessible. What we have seen is that around 420 tram stops across the network have been made more accessible to help people get around, and there have been a range of other improvements too with working with the operators of the network to make their services easier to use for people with a disability.

In the regional areas, the centrepiece, if you like, of the work in the regional areas in this year's budget is the \$313 million for stage 2 of the Shepparton line upgrade that will help pave the way for nine services a day to and from Shepparton. It was great to be in Shepparton the day after the budget to talk to the local community about what a big difference that is going to make in that area. There was money in last year's budget for stage 1 of these works, and those works are already underway, and this money in this year's budget will bolt on to that program of works and add to those services for the Shepparton community.

I mentioned Shepparton in particular, but the next slide shows how we are already making a range of investments on the regional network, and we are indeed upgrading every single regional passenger line. This budget provides 130 million of track and signalling upgrades in Maryborough, Ararat and Ballarat, and that is part of the Murray Basin rail freight project that will help separate passenger and freight trains through the Ballarat area.

Chair, should I check how much time we have got?

The CHAIR — You are eating into government time, but it is such a fantastic presentation that I am happy for you to continue.

Ms ALLAN — Very kind of you. I had better get my skates on.

I have mentioned policy reform a couple of times. I might move through that pretty quickly. We have made a range of policy reforms. I have mentioned abolishing the unfair on-the-spot penalty fares. We have also introduced new contracts for our metropolitan train and tram network, with tougher penalties, higher performance targets and an emphasis on a better passenger experience as well. We are also making similar improvements in the bus contract area, and also we have made significant reforms to the commercial passenger vehicle network as well.

This year's budget brings together a whole range of investments and policy reforms that we have been working very hard on over the past four budgets over the past three and a half years. As I said at the outset, the focus every single day has been on how we can build a better, more accessible and fairer network for passengers, whether they live in regional Victoria or metropolitan Melbourne.

The CHAIR — Thank you, Minister, for that comprehensive presentation. I might lead off, if I may. The budget paper reference is budget paper 4, page 136, and it relates to the Metro Tunnel, with a completion date of 2026 — or the second quarter, it says, of 2025–26. Can you update the committee in terms of the status of the project, please?

Ms ALLAN — Thank you, Chair. I am very pleased to report on progress of the Metro Tunnel. It is on budget and it is ahead of schedule — a full year ahead of schedule. That was able to be communicated publicly when we signed the largest PPP in Victoria's history at the end of last year, 2017. This PPP is worth \$5.24 billion. It is to do the large construction part of the project, the construction of the twin tunnels and the five underground stations. As a result of the tremendous amount of work that Evan Tattersall and his team have led, we have been able to get on, and get on very quickly, and to bring forward the completion of that project by a full year.

I just note that this PPP that was signed last year is just one of four packages of work. There are the early works that you can see going on around the city right now, and there is what is known as the Rail Systems Alliance, which is a significant package for which the tender process was also concluded at the end of last year and is worth around \$1.2 billion. That is for all the technical aspects to allow the trains and the tunnel to be integrated, and we also have what is known as the Rail Infrastructure Alliance that is currently in procurement.

Importantly too, this is a project that will create 7000 jobs, and I was delighted to join the Premier and the Minister for Industry and Employment last week to celebrate a milestone on that journey: 2000 jobs have already been created through this project and 5 million working hours have been undertaken on the project as well.

This morning I was at Federation Square with the new Lord Mayor and with Evan as well, where we released the designs for the new stations. They have been finalised in consultation with the consortium delivering the project, the Cross Yarra Partnership consortium, and also a range of world-leading architects who have worked on projects like this around the world and are giving us their best advice. The designs, if I can say, I think look very good, and I am sure they will invite a lot of public feedback. We have taken our time to carefully think about the design for these new stations because we are not just building train stations, we are building meeting places and open space where people will come and gather, and we want them to be very special places that last the test of time as well.

The CHAIR — Obviously it is a very detailed and complicated project. Can you outline some of the major risks about the project and how you are managing a project of this complexity and this scale?

Ms ALLAN — It is an enormously complex project. I have mentioned the four different packages and the way it has been packaged. We are obviously undertaking an \$11 billion project through the heart of the city, so we have to manage impacts on the road network and the tram network and how we connect the tunnels into the existing CBD stations such as Flinders Street and Melbourne Central, so there are a lot of complexities that we are managing, and we are working closely with a range of different stakeholders across the CBD to manage those things.

I do not want to put a little dark cloud over the project, but there is a bit of a risk that we have seen, which is that the Liberal Party has written to the consortium, the Cross Yarra Partnership, to say that if they were to come into government they would seek to renegotiate the contracts. This would grind to a halt the significant amount of work that is already underway on the Metro Tunnel project, potentially adding billions of dollars of cost and obviously time and delay to what is a critically important project. It sat on the shelf, as we know, for four long years and we have brought it back to life, we have got it up and running and it is being delivered a year ahead of schedule.

Ms WARD — Sorry; just to clarify, Minister, so if they were elected they would want to halt work while they renegotiated a contract that is already being enacted?

Ms ALLAN — Yes, the consequence of that action to renegotiate the contract is they want to look at adding a connection to South Yarra, an issue that has already been extensively canvassed through the business case process and ruled out. The consequence of that is that the project would have to stop and you would have to go back and look at these issues again.

When you consider the pressures on the metropolitan network at the moment and that the capacity of the city loop is full, plus the fact that the Metro Tunnel is going to unlock the opportunity for us to run more services on a whole bunch of passenger lines across the metropolitan network, we want to add that capacity as quickly as we can. This sort of action would just dramatically grind the show to a halt and would require work to be done on contract renegotiations on issues that have already been addressed, rather than focusing on delivering the project, which is what we are well and truly focused on at the moment with the work that is underway.

The CHAIR — Just in relation to those broader network benefits — having the Craigieburn line run through my electorate I am very well aware of the increase in the Craigieburn line which will occur once you unlock the loop — what are the other benefits to some of the other lines as a consequence of this project?

Ms ALLAN — That is a really good point, because that is the reason why we are investing all this time, energy and investment, because the end of this project will see a significant capacity increase across the metropolitan network. As you have mentioned, Chair, the Craigieburn line, this will give us the capacity to carry 27 per cent more passengers on the Craigieburn line when it is completed. On the Frankston line it will be 15 per cent. The Metro Tunnel takes the busiest lines out of the city loop. It joins the Cranbourne-Pakenham lines to the Sunbury corridor, takes them out of the city loop and gives us the capacity to run more trains in and out of the city loop as well as more trains on those other corridors, which is really what we very much need to keep up with the population growth and the significant public transport demand that we are experiencing. We know we need to run more train services. We are building bigger trains as well to run on the tracks. So this all comes together to give us that overall passenger capacity increase to be able to simply run more trains more often in and out of the suburbs, and for those of us in the regions, it also gives us more space to run services in and out of the regions.

The CHAIR — I am conscious of time, so briefly can you outline to the committee in the remaining 1 minute just in terms of employment creation as a consequence of this project?

Ms ALLAN — I mentioned jobs before, and that comes because we have had a really strong focus through the Metro Tunnel project and through our tender processes to drive local content and local jobs, and we have done that significantly, but also too the Metro Tunnel is delivering the Major Projects Skills Guarantee. I have met many young trainees, apprentices and engineering cadets when I have been on the worksites who are not just going to start their career but some of them will get to finish their apprenticeship or finish their training program whilst they are working on this project. So that is obviously great for them, but it also is contributing overall to the state's economy by supporting skilled and productive workers who can go and work on the next pipeline of infrastructure projects that we are planning for at the moment. We are also working as well, Chair, on — we have an Aboriginal employment target of 2.5 per cent on the Metro Tunnel project supporting Indigenous people to get —

The CHAIR — Order! We might come back to that, Minister.

Mr T. SMITH — Minister, I refer to the regulation of commercial passenger vehicles output on pages 152 to 154 of budget paper 3. You are responsible for the Taxi Services Commission and also, frankly, the destruction of taxi license conditions in this state implemented in October last year and still continuing to be played out into the budget estimates period. Minister, will you confirm that a promise was made by Labor at a fundraising function in Kew before the last election, where the Premier said, 'I will not destroy the taxi industry'?

Ms SHING — On a point of order, this does not relate to the actual budget period or to the estimates period or to the period of this government, so perhaps it could be rephrased.

Mr T. SMITH — I think you will find that for the people in this room, Chair, this does very much relate to the current budget period.

Ms SHING — The standing orders are the standing orders, Mr Smith.

The CHAIR — Order! You are asking a question about an event that occurred outside of the current financial year, outside the forward estimates, Mr Smith. I am very happy for you to ask a question in relation to the taxi commission as it relates to the current financial year or the forward estimates.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Chair, on the point of order, the question relates to an ongoing issue that the government itself has outlined for I think eight years hence with respect to the Fairness Fund and tax collections. To suggest that this is not somehow related to the budget period is just absurd. Further, we have had again, as we had yesterday — for the benefit of Ms Shing, who was not here — I made the same point yesterday that when the Premier was here we asked him questions that related to his position as the Leader of the Opposition prior to the current government and how that reflects on the current budgetary period. This is the same principle. The Premier answered the questions; no-one raised an objection then. I urge you to reconsider that ruling because this is a very relevant question.

Ms SHING — Further to the point of order, in fact when the Premier was here there was a lengthy exchange involving Mr Smith and me in relation to the capacity in which the Premier was being asked questions, at which, as my recollection goes, Mr Smith indicated that it should not in fact matter because he was the same person —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — The Premier answered the questions, Ms Shing.

Ms SHING — irrespective of which hat he was wearing. The question does not actually relate to this government. It does not actually relate to the budget or to the forward estimates.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — An election commitment given by the Labor Party does not relate to this government; is that what you are saying?

Ms SHING — So again, the point of relevance and the point of the standing orders remains — that it has to fall within the scope of the standing orders.

Mr T. SMITH — Chair, is it therefore your ruling that we cannot ask questions relating to this year's budget based on Labor's election commitments in 2014?

Ms SHING — Just rephrase the question, Mr Smith. Just rephrase it and we can all move on.

Mr T. SMITH — Is that what you're saying?

The CHAIR — What I am saying to you, Mr Smith, is that your question related to events prior to the 58th Parliament. It relates to matters which you are alleging occurred sometime in the past. It does not relate to the current financial year; it does not relate to the forward estimates. So if you have got a question about the current financial year —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — So an election commitment does not relate to the current government, Chair?

Ms SHING — The minister was not even part of the question. You are talking about a commitment or a statement allegedly made by the opposition leader prior to the last election.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — It is directly related to the minister's portfolio responsibilities.

Ms SHING — Firstly, it fails on hearsay; secondly, it fails under the standing orders.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Why are you so determined to defend this?

Ms SHING — If you want to talk about rules, then you have got to play by them.

Ms WARD — It is a clumsy question.

Mr T. SMITH — Once again, let the record reflect our first question has been essentially garrotted.

Ms WARD — No, just rephrase your question, so that it can be used.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — You guys don't get to tell us how to ask our questions.

Ms SHING — The standing orders do that.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Can I just make the point, Chair, we just had the minister in her presentation and in her answers to you going on about what the Liberal-Nationals opposition's policy is. We did not stand up here and say that the minister cannot talk about that because it is not in her portfolios.

Ms SHING — These are things which the Liberal-Nationals have done during the term of this government.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — It is just getting bizarre what you guys are trying to do to shut down any debate on anything that is remotely controversial.

Ms SHING — Just rephrase the question and we can all move on.

Ms WARD — We are actually just trying to help you do your job.

The CHAIR — I would encourage you to rephrase the question, Mr Smith. Mr Morris?

Mr MORRIS — Chair, Ms Shing just — I am not sure whether it was a substantive contribution or an interjection — made a reference to questions being determined by the standing orders. Indeed they are, and the standing orders make no reference about limiting the period for when questions can be asked. This is a question that has a direct bearing on whether the government has honoured its election commitments or not, and you cannot possibly say that it is an election commitment that was made prior to the current year and forward estimates and therefore it is out of order. You simply cannot do it.

Ms SHING — Just rephrase it.

Mr MORRIS — Or you make a mockery of the whole process.

Ms SHING — Arguably the question did that all on its own, Mr Morris.

Mr MORRIS — You have confirmed through your interjection that it is the standing orders that determine the scope of questions.

Ms SHING — And if Mr Smith cannot confine himself to the standing orders — or whoever drafted the question —

Mr MORRIS — In the scope of the standing orders the question is entirely in order.

Mr T. SMITH — There is no statute of limitations for this.

Ms SHING — It is not a statute of limitations, Mr Smith.

Mr MORRIS — Exactly right; there is not a statute of limitations.

Ms SHING — This is not a Perry Mason moment for you.

Mr T. SMITH — You cannot decide what year.

Ms SHING — This is not your Perry Mason stand up and be Matlock sort of arrangement.

Mr T. SMITH — You cannot say that I cannot ask a question from a statement from 2014, despite the fact the minister even mentioned taxis in her preamble.

Ms SHING — Just rephrase the question.

Mr T. SMITH — No, I am not rephrasing the question, because you're —

Ms SHING — Get Mr Davis to text you through something else and we will all keep going.

Mr T. SMITH — You can carry on as much as you like. Let the record reflect, you have tried to shut down our questions.

Ms WARD — That is not an accurate representation of Ms Shing's behaviour at all.

Ms SHING — I am not trying to shut it down.

Mr T. SMITH — Then what are you doing?

Ms WARD — Being helpful.

Ms SHING — I am helping you play by the rules that are established, Mr Smith.

Mr T. SMITH — You are not being helpful at all. You are being condescending, snide and deliberately provocative with regards to these very important questions that, quite frankly, the gallery want to hear an answer to.

Ms WARD — Mr Smith, who knew you were so thin-skinned.

Ms SHING — Are you working for the gallery here, are you, Mr Smith?

Mr T. SMITH — For the people of Victoria.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Actually working for the public of Victoria, which is what we are here for. You have probably forgotten that, I am sure.

Ms SHING — Rephrase.

The CHAIR — As I have indicated, these hearings are to focus on the current financial year and they are intended to focus on the forward estimates.

Mr MORRIS — Chair, by what authority do you do that? Can we have your authority, the ruling that limits that? The Speaker's ruling?

The CHAIR — It has been longstanding practice.

Mr MORRIS — That is not accurate, actually.

The CHAIR — You have raised a question. My understanding is it is longstanding practice that the estimates relates to the current financial year and the forward estimates, which I think would have been the same case when you were the chair, Deputy Chair.

Mr MORRIS — I would not have put it as narrowly as this, never interpreted it as to exclude election commitments.

The CHAIR — We had accounts hearings in February. If you would like me to clear the gallery and to suspend the hearing, we can have a deliberative meeting. I can call the Clerk and we can have this out if you would prefer. Alternatively, in the 4 minutes remaining if you would like to ask a question that relates to the current financial year or the forward estimates, I would be delighted.

Mr T. SMITH — I will try another question. Minister, taxi families, many destitute after your destruction of their assets, face enormous hardships in the coming year. I draw your attention to Geelong-based Carolyn, whose 87-year-old mother formerly owned three licences but was ineligible for the Fairness Fund because she was not in debt. Carolyn's mother relied on the income from her three licences to self-fund her retirement but has not received any income from her licences since 9 October. These licences were assets Carolyn's mother and father bought in the mid-1980s with the proceeds of an inheritance and which Carolyn's mother intended to pass on to her two daughters and disabled grandson but which are now worthless. Minister, is this intergenerational asset theft fair? How is this just? What do you have to say to Carolyn, who is here today?

Ms SHING — I am not even going to bother with the asking of opinions and relevance on the detail on this.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Given they voted against the compensation I think the minister has a good story to tell.

The CHAIR — I am happy for the question to stand as it relates to the forward estimates.

Ms ALLAN — In the 2½ minutes remaining, there is a lot in that question that is incorrect. I will do my best to address the issue in the time I have got remaining, and perhaps we may come back to it. I will not respond to invitations to address the gallery, but what I can say to any former taxi licence holder is that it was the Liberal Party who voted to regulate ridesharing but voted against providing one single cent of financial assistance — transition industry assistance — that was contained in the legislative package that went before the Parliament last year. We saw previously where the Liberal Party were quite prepared to stand next to ridesharing providers before they were regulated —

Ms SHING — Promoting Uber.

Ms ALLAN — Promoting Uber.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — You are the government, Minister. You are the government.

The CHAIR — Order, Mr O'Brien.

Ms ALLAN — Danny, please, it is most unbecoming to get angry like that this early.

Mr T. SMITH — On a point of order, Chair, we have now had an inappropriate use of names and a prop, so could you —

Ms ALLAN — Spare me the false anger.

Mr T. SMITH — That actually is in the standing orders.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Just answer on behalf of your own government.

Ms ALLAN — I would have been delighted —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — No, you were talking about the Liberal Party. Get on with what your job is.

The CHAIR — Mr O'Brien, can you please not badger the witness. Let the witness continue her answer.

Mr MORRIS — If the witness stops being provocative, there will not be a response.

Ms ALLAN — Chair, it is a great shame that one of the features of this public debate has become one of inciting anger and negativity. I will leave that for now. But, Chair, I think it is important to put these facts on the record, because we have worked very carefully in recognising that the taxi industry went through a significant reform period. Under the previous government there were significant reforms that were made that saw taxi licence values dropped dramatically, and not one single cent of support was provided. We took a different approach, which is our policy approach, and all up we have provided, I think, over \$400 million of industry transition assistance. Every licence-holder received financial support, and in addition to that we established the Fairness Fund to provide further support to those who were in particular hardship.

Mr T. SMITH — You have not compensated them at all.

Ms ALLAN — We have been working very carefully with a whole range of applicants to that fund. It went through an independent process; an independent chair oversaw the process.

Mr T. SMITH — Tell them that you compensated them properly, Minister.

Ms ALLAN — It was also independently audited by KPMG, and we worked very carefully with a range of applicants to provide them with additional support over and above the individual transition assistance that was provided to every single licence-holder. We were only able to provide this support because of the package of reform that was put to the Parliament, and those on the opposition benches voted against the financial elements of it.

Ms PENNICUIK — Good morning, Minister, secretary, deputy secretaries and heads of divisions and departments, and all the other staff that are here today. Thanks for coming. In your presentation, Minister, you

talked about renegotiating contracts, and your last slide says ‘Contract reform in all modes’. Can I refer you to pages 159 to 162 of the budget papers, and that relates to tram and train services and includes the targets for payments made for trams and train services and also the patronage expected for tram and train services. For the patronage it is about 1 per cent for both trams and trains — metropolitan trains — in the next year. However, the payments, in terms of trains it is about 20 per cent higher this year than last year and about 30 per cent higher than in 16–17, and for trams it is about 20 per cent higher than last year and about 60 per cent higher than in 2016–17. So my question is: given the very small expected patronage increase, why are the payments for tram and train services so much higher?

Ms ALLAN — Thank you, Sue, for your question. As I said before, we were faced with the need to renegotiate the metropolitan train and tram contracts, which expired in November of last year. Pretty much from the moment we came to office we were working through how to undertake those contract negotiations to get the best possible outcome for passengers, and part of getting that best possible outcome for passengers was making an additional investment that has been delivered through the operators in upgrading the asset.

A significant amount of work needs to be undertaken on the maintenance and renewal of both the train and the tram network, and a lot of that work has and will continue to be delivered by the operators. Some of it is undertaken by us through our works — particularly, for example, through the level crossing removal program where we are renewing significantly the assets through that program, where we have got the opportunity, alongside the removal of level crossings. But beyond that, across the network more broadly, there is the opportunity as part of the day-to-day operation of the network to require the operators to invest in improving the asset, because we know we have parts of both networks. It is an older network and it needs ongoing maintenance investment. That is why these contracts included an additional investment from the government for maintenance and renewals. For the tram network it was a 63 per cent increase in support funding for maintenance and renewals and for the train network it was 32 per cent, and that is all about helping our trams and trains run more efficiently and more reliably.

Ms PENNICUIK — Thank you, Minister. I am sorry to interrupt you, but I think I have got two and half minutes left and I have got another question. I wonder if you are able to detail some of the specific activities that are going to be undertaken by the operators in order to get this increased payment. Just quickly, why would the increased payment be given now rather than after these are done? Because you did say in your presentation we inherited problems on the networks, things not being done et cetera. So if you could just briefly answer that.

Ms ALLAN — Thank you, Sue. The funding is spread across the seven-year life of the contract and, as I also said in my introductory comments, we are requiring from the operators a higher performance, and what needed to go alongside of that was additional investment in the network. Also too —

Ms PENNICUIK — Sorry, Minister, I am just interrupting you. Could you take that on notice and get those specific activities? It is just time. It is basically time.

Ms ALLAN — Okay, sure. You also mentioned you wanted some examples. An example of —

Ms PENNICUIK — Yes, and if you could take those on notice.

Ms ALLAN — Okay.

Ms PENNICUIK — If you could supply those to the committee on notice, because I would like to refer also to —

Ms ALLAN — Yes. We will look at what we can come back to the committee with and provide that information for you.

Ms PENNICUIK — Thank you, Minister. Budget paper 3, page 162, with regard to the number of level access tram stops that were meant to be disability compliant : 90 per cent by last year, 2017; and 100 per cent by 2032. I think there are 12 upgrades planned for this year. I am just wondering if you could talk about whether the government is expecting to comply with the standards for tram accessibility.

Ms ALLAN — Again, there is an enormous job to upgrade our tram network, again reflecting the size of the network. There are a lot of tram stops and, as we know, a substantial number of them are not accessible, but we

are working on making more of them accessible. Particularly we are focusing on making sure that we are along tram corridors — I think we are going to run out of time, so we might need to come back to this, but —

Ms PENNICUIK — Or perhaps if we could just take that on notice as to what is the plan for complying with the need by 2032 to be 100 per cent and where we are now in terms of the 90 per cent.

Ms WARD — Minister, in your presentation you briefly spoke about the level crossing removal project. Could you please give us a bit more detail as to where that project is up to, what has been achieved thus far and what is to come?

Ms ALLAN — Yes. Thank you very much, Vicki. I know you are very interested in level crossing removals.

Ms WARD — I am indeed.

Ms ALLAN — As I said in my introductory comments, we came to government with a commitment to get rid of 50 dangerous and congested level crossings by 2022, with 20 to be gone by 2018, and I am very pleased to advise the committee that 19 of those have already been removed. I really do appreciate the great work that the Level Crossing Removal Authority have done, and we are well on track to exceed that number of 20 gone by the end of 2018. We are expected to hit 24 by the end of next month, with level crossings on track to be removed at Skye/Overton Road near Frankston and the remaining four level crossings on the Dandenong line as well. This is a project that has also engaged thousands and thousands of workers right across the city, and they have done a huge amount of work.

I would also like to acknowledge that we have needed to disrupt the passenger network as we have got rid of these dangerous and congested level crossings. We really do appreciate that passengers have accommodated the changes to their journeys through these rail occupations. We are also seeing the feedback we are getting from the community — and perhaps you are getting this from your own communities with the work that is being completed on the Hurstbridge line — how with the removal of these level crossings they are safer places and that the traffic is moving more freely. And of course it does give us the capacity to run more reliable train services as well. Also — I mentioned this before — where we have had the opportunity to go beyond the level crossing removal program, we have, and that is why we have also invested in upgrading the signalling and power systems as well across —

Ms WARD — So these are additional network enhancements?

Ms ALLAN — Yes. This is in addition to the core level crossing removal program. Where we have gone in and disrupted, if you like, the rail network, we thought, ‘Well, if we’re in there and we’re doing the work, we may as well do a lot more’, and that is why, particularly for the power and the signalling work across the network — it needs to be upgraded — we have been doing that in those areas. Also too, again, for example, on the Hurstbridge line, we duplicated the single section of track through Heidelberg. And as we all know, single sections of track are a major bottleneck when it comes to running more trains, so as we removed the level crossings at Grange Road and Lower Plenty Road we went in there and duplicated that section of track.

Another example of where we added to the program is at Carrum. Not only are we getting rid of level crossings around Carrum; we are also building a new road bridge at Station Street in Carrum over the Patterson River. Together with the removal of the level crossings in Carrum and the connection for the first time across the Patterson River of Station Street, this will give people a better way of moving through the Carrum community. Where we can we are also adding in features like bike cycling and walking paths, extra train stabling, open space and car parking — all these things are going into the program. Beyond what was initially developed and conceived as a level crossing removal program, has become really a significant enhancement and investment in the metropolitan train network as well.

Ms WARD — You mentioned some of the work that is going on at Carrum, and you also mentioned that stabling is part of the additional network enhancements. Could you explain to us why the stabling is being moved from Carrum to Kananook?

Ms ALLAN — This is again another example of where we are going beyond the initial scope of the level crossing removal program, and it is also as a consequence of the work that we are doing on the Metro Tunnel. I

mentioned earlier that the Metro Tunnel will give us the capacity to run more trains on the Frankston line. To run more trains on the Frankston line we need to provide stabling for more trains on that line. So as we have been doing the works around Carrum — there is currently stabling for six trains at Carrum — with the revitalisation work that is going to go on around Carrum, we are taking that stabling out of the centre of Carrum. It is not really in an appropriate location, so we are opening up that space in Carrum and we have identified a site at Kananook to relocate the stabling to — but not just the current six; we are expanding the stabling along that Frankston line to 24 and that will give us the capacity to run those additional services on the Frankston line. It will come as a consequence of us both removing level crossings and delivering the Metro Tunnel program.

To give you an example of how this will benefit the system, trains on the Frankston line currently have to be stabled on other lines beyond the ones, for example, at Carrum — so at Westall, near Dandenong and at E-gate here in the city. To get trains from those locations to and from Frankston each day to run the services on that line we run over 180 000 hours of dead running every single year. That is a lot of train movements, a lot of working hours that are not being used at best capacity, because obviously they are running without passengers. We would rather run more trains with passengers, and the way to do that is to get a better alignment between the stabling on each line and where the services start and finish from. So that is why we are adding to the capacity on the Frankston line with the additional stabling at Kananook.

There has been some commentary in the community around Frankston and along the Frankston line about these issues. This stabling at Kananook is going to be needed. There is some talk and some work that is being looked at around a potential future extension of the rail line towards Baxter, and Transport for Victoria is doing some planning work on it at the moment. And whatever we do at Baxter will always need the additional stabling in and around the Kananook area, because we need those trains now and we will also need additional capacity that might potentially come from Baxter in the future.

This is the program of works that we have been working on. We did need some parliamentary approvals for these processes last year. I am disappointed to report to the community that unfortunately there were some in the Parliament who wanted to try and vote against the extra stabling and the extra capacity on the Frankston line. The upper house tends to deal with these planning approvals in a particular way. Unfortunately it was the Liberal and National parties that actually voted against the planning approvals to allow for this extra capacity of the stabling on the Frankston line, and it really is quite a short-sighted view —

Mr MORRIS — We voted against you destroying small businesses. That is what we voted against.

Members interjecting.

Mr MORRIS — You know what the issue is, it and it is the destruction of small businesses —

The CHAIR — Order, Deputy Chair! The minister to continue.

Ms ALLAN — Disappointingly, this continues to be —

Mr MORRIS — It is disappointing that ministers do not tell the truth.

Ms ALLAN — I do not appreciate that allegation. I am going to ask you to withdraw that. I am going to ask you to withdraw that.

Mr MORRIS — And I do not appreciate the construction you are putting on the opposition.

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Order!

Ms ALLAN — Chair, it is a statement of fact that the Liberal and National parties voted against the planning scheme amendment to do with these matters. That is a statement of fact and it is in *Hansard*, and I would appreciate the Deputy Chair withdrawing that comment.

The CHAIR — Deputy Chair, do you withdraw?

Mr MORRIS — Chair, the minister is seeking to fit up the coalition with her comments. If she withdraws her comments, I am happy to withdraw mine.

The CHAIR — Deputy Chair, as you know, if a member asks another member to withdraw, the forms of the house are that you should then withdraw.

Mr MORRIS — I am not withdrawing.

The CHAIR — Well, Deputy Chair, you have been asked to withdraw by a member.

Mr MORRIS — I am not withdrawing.

The CHAIR — This happened in the accounts hearings earlier this year with Mr Smith, and that matter was referred on to the Speaker. I will ask you again to withdraw.

Mr MORRIS — I told you, I am not withdrawing.

The CHAIR — All right. That is fine. I am not going to have any questions from the Deputy Chair until he withdraws.

Mr MORRIS — That is fine.

Ms ALLAN — I will continue —

Mr MORRIS — I will be taking the matter up with the Clerk independently, by the way, as I will be taking up a number of other dubious rulings that have come from the Chair in the last sitting and this morning.

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Order! The minister to continue.

Ms ALLAN — Thank you, Chair. There is a significant amount of work with removing dangerous and congested level crossings along the Frankston line that goes, as I said, beyond the removal of level crossings. It goes to those issues of how we can provide investment capacity for the future, and stabling is a really important part of that. There is a terrific amount of work going on at Frankston station as well.

Mr T. SMITH — My question is for the secretary. I refer to page 20 of budget paper 4, which is the table ‘Major high value and high risk projects’. There are 34 DEDJTR projects listed. Do all of these projects have an oversight and governance component in addition to the cost of the actual infrastructure in their total estimated expenditure, and if not all, could you specify which do?

Mr BOLT — Thank you, Mr Smith. I am just pulling up those projects. So your question, just to clarify it, is: is there specific governance for each project; is that your point?

Mr T. SMITH — I will read the question to you again, if you like. Do all of these projects have an oversight and governance component in addition to the cost of the actual infrastructure in their total estimated expenditure, and if not all, could you specify which do?

Mr BOLT — Well, broadly speaking, all of them have oversight and governance. Is the cost of that oversight and governance factored into the TEI of each of them? Well, in most cases the oversight and governance would be in bodies within the public sector that deal with more than one project and therefore do not specifically get added to the TEI of individual projects, but those would be fairly small costs. By that I mean that there are committees that operate across government and across suites of projects that cannot be attributed to the cost of a project so therefore are not factored into those TEIs, but those costs are a very small indeed relative to the size of the project. So, for the most part, the costs of managing the project and delivering the project that are significant are actually factored into the TEIs.

Mr T. SMITH — So the oversight and governance component, is that a base rate, or could you just give us some indication? You were referring to it — that it was very small.

Mr BOLT — Well, the amount of oversight is —

Mr T. SMITH — But these are very, very large projects, so —

Mr BOLT — The project-specific oversight, to deliver the projects themselves, is bespoke to every project need and factored into the budgeting. The overarching oversight of committees that operate within Transport for Victoria or, for example, in the Major Transport Infrastructure Board, those are obviously designed to be fit for purpose, and the cost of those as —

I should ask one question of Evan Tattersall as I am thinking through the answer here. If we are talking about those projects in this list that are in the major transport infrastructure program, there is a board; that board is appointed under contract to me. I would have to leave it to Evan as to whether the cost of that comes out of the TEIs of individual projects, but I would say that amount of money is going to be a fairly small component of each of those projects.

Mr T. SMITH — In the case of, for example, the level crossing removal program, Melbourne Metro rail, the West Gate tunnel project and the north-east link, could you provide the committee with a full budget, including its construction component, its project management component, its governance component, its risk component, its advertising and marketing component and its preprocurement component — i.e. preparation of tenders and specifications.

Ms ALLAN — Chair, can I just clarify? The member asked about a couple of projects that are not the responsibility of the Minister for Public Transport, and I would ask for your clarification on how the secretary should respond to that question.

Mr T. SMITH — Well, I asked the secretary, so.

The CHAIR — You did ask the secretary, and I know the secretary is the secretary of DEDJTR, but these hearings are in relation to the public transport portfolio, so I would ask that the projects relate to the minister's portfolio.

Mr BOLT — As far as high-value, high-risk components and how those costs are borne, that is a question for the Treasurer. Is your question about only high-value, high-risk? Is your question about the governance and oversight of projects within the department? If it is the latter, then as far as public transport is concerned, I would have to take on notice exactly how those costs are attributed to particular projects, but in general terms the department's costs or the agency's costs are factored into the TEI for project-specific work.

Mr T. SMITH — And this is for public transport projects?

Mr BOLT — That is all we are dealing with.

Mr T. SMITH — That is all we are dealing with.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Just to clarify, Secretary, the list is high-value and high-risk projects, so the high-value as well.

Mr BOLT — Yes, I understand that. It is the high-value, high-risk projects. I would have to take on notice exactly how those are attributed.

Mr T. SMITH — Okay; thank you. Minister, if we could return back to taxis, I refer to the case of Andy Thompson. Why was Mr Thompson required to sign a non-disclosure agreement in order to receive any support from the Fairness Fund, and will you, in the period of the forthcoming budget estimates, agree to waive the extraordinary and harsh gag order you have put on Mr Thompson?

Ms ALLAN — Look, I will have to check the accuracy of that claim, because Mr Thompson's matter has, I think, been raised at least twice in the Parliament and there had been a substantial amount of work undertaken with Mr Thompson on his situation and a level of support provided. So I would have to check the claim that you have made on that matter.

Mr Morris interjected.

Ms ALLAN — No, I would need to check that matter. I do not —

Mr Morris interjected.

The CHAIR — Order! Deputy Chair!

Ms ALLAN — There is a lot of unnecessary aggression this morning, Chair.

Mr T. SMITH — But Minister, you would know if you had asked him to sign a non-disclosure agreement.

Ms ALLAN — The matters to do with the Fairness Fund have, as I pointed out before, been independently administered through an independent chair working with officials in the department and independently audited. I do find these matters a little bit challenging to address, Chair, given the rank hypocrisy of the Liberal and National parties when it comes to this issue.

Mr Morris interjected.

The CHAIR — Order! Deputy Chair! The minister to continue without interjections.

Mr T. SMITH — Chair, if I could respond to the minister's commentary, how is my question hypocritical?

Ms ALLAN — It has been reported in the media, Chair, that the Liberal Party are proposing to do a deal for political purposes with people in the industry. So I do think we need to put —

Members interjecting.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Minister, can you come back to your responsibilities as minister? If you want to make it political, that is fine. How about you answer on your behalf as a minister of the government. Do not worry about we are doing.

The CHAIR — Order! Mr O'Brien, I understood that the minister was —

Ms ALLAN — Can I respond to that point? Do you want to know why I am worried about what you are doing? What you are doing is inciting vicious attacks against me and my family, and I am quite happy to read into the record where people have been putting on Facebook that they are surprised that I have not been killed by now. There have been references to my children and my husband. Do you want to know why I want to call out your hypocrisy? Because it has been disgraceful. You did nothing to support this industry when you were in government. You did not provide one cent of compensation. In Parliament you voted against that compensation and now you are leading people astray and you are supporting these attacks on members of Parliament — on both me and the member for Oakleigh.

Mr T. SMITH — I am disgusted. I am not supporting any vicious attacks on anyone.

Ms ALLAN — Certainly your shadow minister is.

Members interjecting.

Mr T. SMITH — I do not ask people to withdraw because I think it is gutless, so I am not going to do that, but let the record reflect that the minister has accused me of inciting violence against her. I have never done anything of the sort; I never would. It is an outrageous slur. You are better than that. That is disgraceful from you. That is a disgraceful slur. Explain to me how I personally have incited violence against you.

Ms ALLAN — I am happy to answer the member for Kew on that question. I was referring to the collective of the party that you represent, and your shadow minister, in *Neos Kosmos* last week, appeared to be endorsing the attacks against members of the government that have been made on social media. I will not stand for that. It has been a really difficult issue.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Again, we will take that on notice.

Ms ALLAN — No, you will not take this on notice. This has been a really difficult issue.

Members interjecting.

Ms ALLAN — I am happy to have this conversation, if I could not be shouted over, Chair. This has been a really difficult —

Members interjecting.

Mr MORRIS — On a point of order, Chair —

The CHAIR — Order! Deputy Chair, I am not allowing you to ask questions, but I will allow you to raise a point of order briefly.

Mr MORRIS — Thank you, because you cannot not take a point of order from me. Let us get the facts right; you cannot not take a point of order from me.

The CHAIR — Anyhow.

Mr MORRIS — Chair, the minister has now made a series of unsubstantiated allegations, one that Mr Smith has made clear that he finds offensive. She has just made another unsubstantiated allegation against a shadow minister.

Ms SHING — It is not unsubstantiated.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — On a point of order, Chair —

Mr MORRIS — I do ask you to direct her to withdraw both those unsubstantiated allegations.

Members interjecting.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — On a point of order, Chair, it was truth. It was an absolute defence and the minister read the truth into the transcript.

Ms SHING — If Mr Smith wants to seek withdrawal, then he should do it himself.

The CHAIR — Yes, if Mr Smith does wish to seek a withdrawal, he is entitled to do so, but as members know, under standing orders you cannot seek a withdrawal on behalf on someone else.

Mr T. SMITH — I am not seeking a withdrawal. I think the minister —

Ms SHING — There we go; problem solved.

Ms PATTEN — Good morning, Minister, secretaries and heads of department. I would just initially like some clarification on —

Ms SHING — Sorry, can we just get some order, please?

Ms ALLAN — I am not going to —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — There are people walking out.

Mr T. SMITH — They are leaving.

Ms SHING — Comments to a witness while people are leaving the gallery are entirely inappropriate.

Mr T. SMITH — It is still a free country.

Interjections from gallery.

Ms SHING — Shut the hearing down.

The CHAIR — Order! All right, we are shutting the hearing down.

Hearing suspended.

Ms PATTEN — So let us talk about car parks. You mentioned in your presentation, and certainly in budget paper 3, page 27, it shows that the government plans to spend \$60 million in 2018–19 on train station parking. It was just an interesting clarification, and I am fairly certain I know the answer, but with 2000 car parks to be upgraded and built in key stations I am assuming that a car park is an individual car space.

Ms ALLAN — Yes. Well, I hope so.

Ms PATTEN — Yes, that is right. So that is 2000 more cars across the entire network with separate areas of parking. I just note that there is no future planning for any further car parks, so that is it — 2000 — and you think that will meet the demands of the extensions of the lines and all of the extra work?

Ms ALLAN — Thank you, Fiona, for your question. Car parking is an important part of delivering a public transport service and enabling people to be able to easily access their stations. Just to help clarify, and perhaps Jeroen might want to supplement what I am saying, the \$60 million that is being provided in this year's budget will provide for more than 2000, as you identified, car parks at a range of different stations. Those stations include Belgrave, Sandown Park, Epping and Craigieburn. That is not an exhaustive list. There will be others. They are the ones that for which there has been some planning work already undertaken, and we have identified that we can undertake the work at those stations. There will be other stations that will be able to be added to the list as we do further works.

The \$60 million is already allocated. There is some capacity to add to that into the future, but that is not the beginning and the end of the work that we do on car parking. I have mentioned the level crossing removal program. The figure is not coming to me easily, but there is a significant number of new car parks that have been added at stations as part of that work.

Ms PATTEN — Have you done any assessment of how many car parks are part of that extra work?

Ms ALLAN — 700 additional.

Ms PATTEN — 700, great.

Ms ALLAN — And also on the regional network as well —

Ms PATTEN — There will be more.

Ms ALLAN — We have been undertaking a significant amount of car parking works at a whole range of regional stations. For example, at Ballarat, as part of the new station precinct there, there are 400 extra car parks, and I am being advised that, all up so far, we are delivering 7400 new and upgraded car parks across metro and regional. This \$60 million is a dedicated fund, but it is not the end of it.

Ms PATTEN — Could I just now turn to the X'trapolis trains — the additional trains — and there is 103 million in budget paper 4 for these. As you mentioned in your presentation, they will be assembled in Ballarat. Can I get a bit of a breakdown of that expenditure? How much of the 103 million goes directly to Alstom, and how much will go to the tender process and the oversight of that contract?

Ms ALLAN — We will need to examine that and come back to you. We might have it?

Dr MILES — No, we do not have it.

Ms PATTEN — You can take it on notice.

Ms ALLAN — A substantial amount of that 103 would go into the manufacturing, though.

Ms PATTEN — Fantastic.

Ms ALLAN — A small amount, if any —

Ms PATTEN — Yes. So understanding that some of those new trains will go onto the Hurstbridge line upgrade — and that is due to be tested, I understand, in November — when can we expect to see more services on the Hurstbridge line to capitalise on that duplication and, I understand, with the extra stock, and will there be any flow-on benefits to the South Morang line?

Ms ALLAN — There are a few things in that.

Ms PATTEN — Yes.

Ms ALLAN — On the deployment of the X'traps that are in this year's budget, we have not determined that yet. They will come off the production line in the next probably 18 months to two years, so we will work out the deployment of those at that point in time. The budget has provided for some additional services on the Hurstbridge line and the timetable for that is being settled at the moment. We would be expecting those additional services to start running part way through the second half of this year.

Ms PATTEN — Just on that as a supplementary, what we have seen on the Hurstbridge and South Morang lines is that South Morang has become a bit of a poor cousin to Hurstbridge and this is causing real issues, particularly around Clifton Hill and around that Northcote area, and I am just wondering whether we will see any flow-on benefits to the South Morang line with the extra trains on Hurstbridge.

Ms ALLAN — Jeroen says we will and he will —

Mr WEIMAR — So we are currently working on a series of timetable options to bring the new Mernda extension into line and that will enable us to bring some additional services onto the South Morang line and the Hurstbridge line. That will boost particularly services in the Clifton Hill area.

Ms PATTEN — Any idea when we will know about that, Jeroen?

Mr WEIMAR — We are still confirming these timescales as to when it is due to be completed and we are able to run those services.

Ms PATTEN — So before November, possibly?

Mr WEIMAR — We will advise when we approach —

Ms PATTEN — Yes, okay. Thank you.

The CHAIR — Mr Dimopoulos until 10.46 a.m.

Ms ALLAN — Sorry, Chair, I know I am eating into government time. I thought I would do it at government questions, not opposition questions. I have got some advice that there are no non-disclosure agreements being required for the Fairness Fund. So the basis of the question from Mr Smith earlier was incorrect, and this validates my needing to question the factual accuracy of the statement he made.

Ms SHING — Sorry just a point of clarification on that. Non-disclosure agreements — that includes deeds?

Ms ALLAN — My advice is that what applicants were required to sign was simply a stat dec on the accuracy of the information that they were providing to the Fairness Fund.

Ms SHING — And that was not done under cover at all, so not any sort of non-disclosure component to that?

Ms ALLAN — So you can appreciate why I wanted to take the time to correct the record and to illustrate that the basis of the question was not correct.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Minister, I wanted to ask you about a progress report on the level crossing removals in my electorate, but I cannot go past what happened before. So I am sorry but I am going to ask you a couple more questions about that.

Ms ALLAN — Okay.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — So I am reading here from a Facebook account on the taxi families Facebook account where the shadow minister, Mr Davis in the upper house, has been on their page strongly supporting them and bringing them into the Parliament. Someone called Dennis Smith says, 'Queen of diamonds on the hit list', referring to you. Dennis Smith, referring to the Premier, says:

The only time —

referring to a previous comment —

I would like him is with three bullets in his head and 6 feet under.

There is more; there are many more:

The scarf around your neck —

referring to a picture of you, Minister —

may prove to be quite useful.

There are a whole bunch of those things. There are millions of those that I have had to put up with and you have had to put up with. I understand in politics people put up with these things, but what I want to support you in doing is calling out other members of Parliament who in an implicit sense, if not explicit, support —

Mr T. SMITH — On a point of order, have I ever —

Mr DIMOPOULOS — exactly that position.

Mr T. SMITH — On a point to order, Chair, there is an insinuation again —

Mr DIMOPOULOS — No, there is a clear insinuation, I am not even hiding it, mate.

Mr T. SMITH — that Liberal and National MPs are somehow stoking the flames of inappropriate comments on social media. Have I ever blamed the Labor Party for some of the crap that gets chucked my way by your mates in the UFU? Never, ever.

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Order!

Mr T. SMITH — This is ridiculous. Make your allegations outside of this chamber, my friend. Make your allegations with regard to anything I have done, with regard to this issue and the taxis outside of this chamber where you are not protected by privilege. I dare you to.

Mr Dimopoulos interjected.

The CHAIR — Order! Mr Dimopoulos, is there a question?

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Okay, I will get on with the question, but, Minister, I just wanted to thank you for —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Chair, sorry, point of order. Firstly, on the question of relevance, but I also want to make it clear from my perspective that I do not in a single heartbeat condone any of those comments, and I say that to you, Minister —

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Members of your party do.

Mr T. SMITH — They do not.

The CHAIR — Order, Mr Dimopoulos!

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Mr Dimopoulos, that is grossly —

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Have you read Mr Davis's letter in *Neos Kosmos*?

Mr D. O'BRIEN — That is grossly outrageous to say that we endorse the comments that you just said.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Have you read it?

Mr T. SMITH — You are honestly trying to suggest that Mr Davis supports some of the vile stuff that I have just been presented with? Are you honestly making the case?

Ms ALLAN — If it would assist the Chair —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Can I finish my point of order? First of all, I again want to emphasise I do not condone any of the things that the minister has presented to us, and indeed I strongly condemn them.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — I know you do not.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — As the member for Kew has just indicated, we all receive these sorts of comments from time to time.

Ms WARD — Not to this degree.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Sorry, I can tell you that I have received similar comments, and I just want to condemn that in the strongest possible terms. I do take offence, Mr Dimopoulos, that you are saying that we are have incited this and that we support it, which is what you just said. I do take offence. I would also argue that the question is not in order.

Ms SHING — Mr Smith opened the door to this line of questioning, Mr O'Brien. You cannot have it both ways.

Mr T. SMITH — What? To ask a couple of questions about a genuine public policy issue?

Ms SHING — Your exchange has flung the door open to this discussion which the minister has been in a position to respond to and which has now led to a dialogue about these broader issues.

Mr T. SMITH — I am sorry. Are you suggesting that by asking some questions about a legitimate public policy issue you are holding me responsible for some of the ridiculous and outrageous comments —

Ms SHING — You can sanitise it all you want, Mr Smith, but the bottom line is that you have seen here today what the impact of your words has.

Mr T. SMITH — It is a bit like me blaming you because of your mates in the UFU, and I do not blame you for some of the crazy things your mates in the UFU say about me on social media.

The CHAIR — Order!

Ms SHING — I have had the death threats. I have had the insults. I have been spat at. I understand how this goes, but the bottom line is you have opened the door to this line of questioning. Mr Dimopoulos is perfectly entitled to pursue it as the minister has been in responding to the initial question that you outlined.

Mr T. SMITH — I am sorry. You are blaming the Liberal and National parties for the minister being trolled on Facebook. We are not responsible for that.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Just to complete my element of this point of order and to clarify with Mr O'Brien, I know you do not condone it. I know that. I said specifically there are people in your party — and I absolutely implicated Mr Davis — and I have got real evidence of this. He stood outside my electorate office with 70 taxi licence holders and watched while there was vandalism of my parliamentary office. What I am saying to you is you cannot run and hide. We do not come in here with aggressive people and say, 'Look them in the face, opposition'. We do not say that. That is my point.

The CHAIR — Order!

Members interjecting.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Thank you, Minister, for calling it out.

Ms ALLAN — Chair, if it would help I am happy to read into the record a letter to the editor that the shadow minister had published in *Neos Kosmos* where he said —

Ms SHING — Or perhaps table that if it is a long document.

Ms ALLAN — I am happy to table it. It said:

Ms Allan is quick to label opposition to her seizure of the assets of former taxi licence holders as threats of violence and vile abuse made or incited against her and her family, and admits ...

and then it goes on. There is in that an attack on me for calling out this bad behaviour. Mr O'Brien, I appreciate your sentiments, but this issue has been going on for a very long time, and when we read in the *Herald Sun* that the Liberal Party are doing a deal with these people for the forthcoming election, it does raise our hackles more than a little.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Minister, the reference is budget paper 4, page 137, on the Murray Basin rail project. The budget indicates the estimated completion date for the project is the second quarter of 2018–19 — that is, the end of this year. Do you still expect the project to finish at the end of 2018?

Ms ALLAN — Thank you for your question on the Murray Basin project. I will have a rare breakout of bipartisanship at this point, Chair, and note that this is a project that had members of the opposition singing its praises as recently as last week in the Legislative Council.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — It was our project, Minister. We started it. We funded it.

Ms ALLAN — Yes — well, let us go through a few of the facts. I do acknowledge that this is a project that as a concept has had quite a long period and may have gone into —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — The 2014–2015 budget papers, Minister — that is not a concept; that is actually budget papers and funding.

Ms ALLAN — And the challenge has fallen to us, Mr O'Brien, to deliver this. Your question goes to those delivery time frames, and I appreciate the opportunity to put on the record where we are at with the delivery of this project. Since the 14–15 budget was handed down — and then there was the work that we had to conclude on the business case that was submitted to the federal government, if my memory serves me correctly, in August or September 2015 to secure their funding as well, because this is a project that is jointly funded by federal and state government and delivered by the Victorian government — what has changed since that period of time, which was four years ago, is that we have also commenced work on the Ballarat line upgrade. There is a significant amount —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Minister, I am conscious of time. I want you to come to my question —

Ms ALLAN — This is directly answering your question. Please, bear with me.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Please, as quickly as possible. We do not need a re-history of the whole thing.

Ms ALLAN — No, this is current history that you may not have fully picked up on, and I do not mean that in a negative way.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Will the project still be completed by the end of the year?

Ms ALLAN — Well, the project has had its scope changed, and this is the point I was getting to, so if you can just bear with me. Because of the work that is being undertaken on the Ballarat line upgrade, and this is the area around Ballarat — and Evan may want to talk in a bit more detail on the technical aspects — there is an overlap between the passenger and freight movements in this area. The way the Murray Basin project was additionally scoped and in terms of its delivery, when stage 2 was coming to its conclusion, then you would move into stages 3 and 4, which were the branch lines on Sea Lake, Manangatang and then the work through on the Gheringhap bit of the project to Warrenheip.

We needed to look at how we changed that progress, and we have done that on the basis of the feedback we have had from industry. We have been doing a lot of work with industry. We have got an advisory group, which Peter Tuohey has been chairing, that gives us direct feedback. What they are asking us for — the freight industry and stakeholders — is to go back and have another look at the staging and the delivery of those final parts of the work because of the work that is now also happening at Ballarat. It is all in the same geographic

area, and we need to make sure from the freight industry's point of view — they want to keep the lines open so they can get their goods to market, and we have been asked to look at how we stage the works in that framework.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — So Minister, stage 3 of the project was scheduled to begin in March this year and be finished by August — that is, the Manangatang and Sea Lake lines that you referred to. When will work begin on these sections?

Ms ALLAN — As I have just indicated to you, we are now taking the time to go and do some further work with industry — and Evan, as a said, perhaps may want to add to this — about how we deliver stages 3 and 4 of the Murray Basin project, because the landscape has changed, and I am very happy, external to this hearing, to offer you a more detailed briefing on that, because —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Minister, is it true, then, that stakeholders were advised yesterday that stage 3 has been put on hold indefinitely?

Ms ALLAN — I cannot test the veracity of that claim, because I do not know where that claim has come from.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Well, I am asking you: has the government told stakeholders, or has the government put stage 3 on hold indefinitely?

Ms ALLAN — No, we have not put it on hold indefinitely. We will be delivering this project.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — So when will it be delivered?

Ms ALLAN — I would need to ask on what basis you are making —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — You do not need to worry about that, Minister. When will it be delivered?

Ms ALLAN — My experience of previous hearings has demonstrated, as indeed my most recent experience in answering the question from Mr Smith shows, that I do need to check the accuracy of the claims that are made.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Okay. I will ask the question again: when will stage 3 begin?

Ms ALLAN — It will begin once we have finalised our engagement with industry. What they have told us — and I would have thought, Mr O'Brien, you would understand this — is the freight industry do not want us to shut down their connection to the port. They do not want us to block off their access to the port at their peak time.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — These are all things that can be planned for, Minister, and they have not been.

Ms ALLAN — That is exactly what we are doing.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — There have been shutdowns because of this project before.

Ms ALLAN — Yes, that is right.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — That is all perfectly understandable. I am asking you: you said stage 3 would start in March. It has not started. When will it go ahead?

Ms ALLAN — It will go ahead once we have concluded the consultation with industry and we get their advice on when they want the next stage of the project to be undertaken, because they are telling us that they do not want their access to markets restricted by work that is undertaken on the line. I would have thought that when you have the grain season coming up towards the end of the year — we have had some beautiful rain in central Victoria overnight, and we are hopeful it is a good season —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — This was meant to be completed in August, stage 3, under your time lines.

Ms ALLAN — Yes.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — That would have been well before the grain season kicks in. What I am trying to find out is: is this project going ahead? Stage 3, can you answer me —

Ms ALLAN — Yes, it is going ahead.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Can you answer me: what is the total cost of stage 3, and is there enough money left in the budget for it to be completed?

Ms ALLAN — The project, as you indicated, is funded jointly, 50-50, between us and the federal government. There is \$440 million in the project to do that, and we are working to that budget.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Has any of that funding been redirected to other projects?

Ms ALLAN — No.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Okay. So can you give us some idea and appreciate the issues around freight movement? They are not unreasonable and they are eminently foreseeable and have been in the past with this project. We are now four years since this was first funded, this project —

Ms ALLAN — No, no. It was not —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — It was first funded in the 2014–15 budget.

Ms ALLAN — It was not fully funded, no. It was —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — In the 2014–15 budget it was fully funded. It was announced, and I am asking you, four years down the track, of which you have been in charge for three and a half years, when will it be completed?

Ms ALLAN — Chair, let me just, in answering that question —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — No, no —

Ms ALLAN — No, you are not going to get away with verballing me.

The CHAIR — The preamble forms part of the question.

Ms ALLAN — Let us be clear: the state contribution was put in the budget as you have indicated. There was a contribution from the state in 2014–15. As I have pointed out to you, it is a project that is a \$440 million project. Half of that came from the federal government. The federal government funding I will need to check, but regarding the federal government funding, as I pointed out to you, the business case was submitted to them in August 2015. Their funding came —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — So it is still three years ago. I am trying to get an answer —

Ms ALLAN — No, no —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Are you going to go ahead with it, and when?

Ms ALLAN — We are going ahead with it. I would hope that you are not going to leave these hearings and spread a campaign of misinformation amongst the industry that this is not going to happen.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Well, it is a pretty simple question. When is the next stage going to proceed?

Ms ALLAN — And I have answered that question.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — No, you have not. You are saying, 'Oh, we're still talking to people'. What has been going on for three and a half years?

Ms ALLAN — Danny, perhaps if you stopped interrupting me you might have heard the answer.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — No, but you are not answering the question, Minister. That is why I am interrupting you. You are going off on what you want to say.

Ms ALLAN — The answer I have given you repeatedly is that stage 3 will go ahead when we have concluded the negotiations with industry, because we want them to tell us what is the best time frame to deliver stage 3 that does not affect their economic viability and that does not affect their ability to get their product to market. I would have thought that that is a fairly fundamental point to address before we embark on stage 3 of the project.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — And a fairly fundamental and eminently foreseeable problem, Minister — one that you obviously identified —

Ms ALLAN — Yes, which is why we have foreseen it.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — You said that this stage would start in March and finish in August, and it is now not happening. You have obviously put it on hold. I am trying to find out exactly when it will actually start again, because I can only take it from what you are saying now that it is not going to start again.

Ms ALLAN — No, and I would hope, Chair —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Right, well, can you give me some idea? Next year?

Ms ALLAN — I would hope after everything we have been through this morning that you would not verbal me in this way. I said before that we will deliver this project. Stage 3 will commence once we have concluded the conversations with the freight industry. So please do not walk out of this room and misinterpret those comments in any other way. Perhaps Evan, who is responsible for delivering this project, can share with you, and you will maybe let him talk without interruption on the delivery of this project.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — If he will answer the question, yes. Please, you have got 30 seconds.

Mr TATTERSALL — One of the key issues is that at the time the Murray Basin project was originally envisaged, Ballarat was not. The Ballarat project has come along since. There are major occupations and disruptions that have to happen. For Murray Basin the key is converting from broad gauge to standard gauge. You cannot do that. It will be in chunks so that the freight —

The CHAIR — Order! We will come back to that.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — I still did not get an answer on when it is going to happen.

Ms WARD — Because you kept interrupting.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — No. When is it going to happen? Is it going to happen next year? In five years time? We can only assume that you are never going to do it.

The CHAIR — Order! We can come back to this after the break, Mr O'Brien.

Ms PENNICUIK — Minister, I know the secretary will be very disappointed if I do not ask for an update on high-capacity signalling and the trial on the South Morang line, which I do like to pursue in these hearings and in the financial outcomes hearings. I was informed at the financial outcomes hearings that indeed there is a trial underway, I believe, on the South Morang line, and that will inform rollout on the Melbourne Metro and eventually, in the far-off mists of time, on the full rail network. But my question really is: can you just provide an update on the trial? What are the expected outcomes of the trial and when is it expected to be finished?

Ms ALLAN — Again, there is a lot in that. If I could make some introductory comments, then I will hand over to Jeroen and Evan to work out who answers which bit, because we do have further progress since we were together last year, and that is in the signing of the rail systems alliance as part of the Metro Tunnel project. With the signing of that tender last year, that includes the rollout of the high-capacity signalling and communications system on our network. With that frame, who wants to go first? Evan will go first.

Mr TATTERSALL — Where we are at, it is early days. The design for the whole new high-capacity signalling system needs to be done first, which is happening now. Once they get to a certain stage, next year they will start to install infrastructure out on the South Morang line. You will see masts and signals on the sides of the track, and using XTrapolis trains, because the high-capacity Metro trains will not be available at that

stage, we will start to do early implementation work, which is all around getting drivers familiar with how high-capacity signalling systems will operate. They have never operated in Australia before, let alone Victoria. That process will go during 2019 and early in 2020 as a forerunner so that when we get enough of the new trains ready they will then have high-capacity signalling equipment installed on them and then will be tested on the line between Sunbury and Dandenong to roll out as part of the project.

Ms PENNICUIK — When will that commence — the Sunbury to Dandenong testing?

Mr TATTERSALL — The actual testing on that will be in stages. It will be the western part first, then the eastern part and then the central tunnel area, and it will commence in about 2022 and then progressively through to 2025.

Ms PENNICUIK — Thank you, Mr Tattersall. As you know, this has been something I have been following for a long time, and we still actually have not commenced it, I am understanding. It has not actually commenced on the South Morang line yet.

Mr TATTERSALL — We have commenced the design.

Ms PENNICUIK — You have commenced the design for testing.

Mr TATTERSALL — It is a very long process.

Ms ALLAN — And it is complex.

Mr TATTERSALL — Very complex.

Ms ALLAN — I think you should talk about how it is not flicking a switch.

Ms PENNICUIK — Yes, I understand that. Thank you, Minister. I will leave it at that — thank you for that answer — because time will get us in about 3 minutes. I just wondered with the \$3 million that is allocated — budget paper 3, pages 12 and 25 — to the planning for the Caulfield to Rowville light rail line can you provide any further detail about what is envisaged there, or is that part of the planning, and whether the funding arrangement between the commonwealth and the state is contingent on what type of mode is actually built there?

Ms ALLAN — I will try and be brief. We have 3 million in our budget this year to undertake the planning, as you have indicated, for a light rail connection from the area of the Caulfield station through to Monash and then through to Rowville. The commonwealth have provided in their budget funding of \$475 million. In their most recent publication that they have released, they indicate that that is for a heavy or light rail connection, so we are having some ongoing conversations. Indeed I have already had conversations with the federal minister responsible for this area about the reasons why we are preferring a light rail connection.

Given that a heavy rail connection would need to come off the busiest rail corridor in the country, putting what would be a spur line off that corridor presents some real challenges and does not, in our view, give the optimal passenger outcome for getting public transport into this part of the city. Also, we would see this as an opportunity to connect — Monash has two campuses, obviously, at Caulfield and Clayton —

Ms PENNICUIK — Yes, I know it well.

Ms ALLAN — and I was also going to talk about how there is an opportunity to also connect into what is a shopping precinct, the Chadstone shopping centre. A lot of people work there —

Ms PENNICUIK — Thank you, Minister, for that. You mentioned briefly heavy or light or a combination.

Ms ALLAN — No, not a combination. Our planning is based on a light rail option; the federal government are saying it is a heavy or light rail connection. The planning work we are doing is for a light rail connection, and we will continue to advise them of the progress on that work. Given their funding commitment — there is only \$23 million in the forward estimates of their budget for this project — we have got some time to work through these matters.

Ms PENNICUIK — Thank you, Minister. I will just follow up on another issue I raised in the hearings on the financial outcomes, which is the lack of a transport plan under the Transport Integration Act, section 63, which calls for the lead agency in consultation with the department to prepare and periodically revise the transport plan for the secretary, and outlines eight objectives of that plan. I wonder if you could provide — and it should be probably provided on notice — progress on that plan.

Ms ALLAN — I have got a document that I can share with the member that addresses her concerns.

Ms PENNICUIK — Excellent.

The CHAIR — Perhaps table it.

Ms SHING — I would like to move to the substantive issue of regional public transport. To pick up on a number of the elements, Minister, that you discussed in the course of your answers to Mr O'Brien in the last round, I will take you to budget paper 4, pages 137 and 138. I would like to get a context from you of how the initiatives that are set out at these pages of BP4, building on projects that are already underway, how these investments support new trains that are on order, the status of the regional rail revival program and also track upgrades, which are a crucial part of that. If you could talk in the general in the first instance, and then what I would like to do, which will come as no surprise to you whatsoever, is to move on to the Gippsland line in a subsequent set of questions.

Ms ALLAN — Certainly, thank you. I will be at risk of going on a bit about this one, so feel free, Harriet, to jump in and cut me off when you need me to focus on those other issues. In 2016, as I mentioned earlier, we launched the regional network development plan, and that has been guiding our ongoing program of investment and projects across the regional passenger network. In every budget we have invested heavily in public transport in regional Victoria, particularly, as you mentioned on the way through, rolling stock. In total we have ordered 87 new VLocity trains for the regional network. This budget includes funding for new stabling and maintenance facilities, because the consequence of ordering more trains is that you need more stabling and maintenance facilities, so I just draw the committee's attention to the funding of \$172.9 million for new stabling and maintenance facilities that will support the accommodation of those additional trains.

Also, this budget provides funding of \$15.8 million to finalise the design and procurement of a new modern regional train — if you like, our next generation regional train — because the needs of the regional network are changing; we need trains to run on the longer haul services to places like Bairnsdale and Warrnambool; we need a particular type of train to run on the north-east line. Some of the design work for this was funded in last year's budget, and this year's budget continues to build on that.

Ms SHING — So that is the 25.8 million for the new regional train — is that the one you are referring to?

Ms ALLAN — Yes, part of that is contained within that funding. One of the reasons why we need more trains of course is that patronage on the regional network is absolutely booming. Last year nearly 19 million passenger trips were taken on our regional passenger network, which is significant growth over a short period of time, and part of that is being driven by the fact that there have been over 600 new services that have been rolled out across the regional network since 2015. This year's budget adds to that with services for Seymour passengers, in particular, who will get those works.

Ms SHING — And where is that patronage growth most concentrated?

Ms ALLAN — There has been significant growth along all of our corridors, but the largest growth is on the Geelong and Ballarat lines, particularly since 2015 with the operationalisation of the regional rail link and the introduction of 10-minute peak services to and from Geelong. That has driven an enormous increase in passenger numbers on the Geelong network but also, too, across a lot of our regional corridors. Indeed we have added extra services into places like Ararat and Maryborough, so there have been extra people using those services as well.

That brings me to, I think, the other part of your question, which was track upgrades. There has been a lot of commentary around the regional rail revival program. A significant amount of this is the \$1.7 billion of funds that we have secured from the federal government over a long journey — a successful journey, can I say — where we campaigned strongly to secure —

Ms SHING — Five infrastructure ministers, Minister! I think we got there in the end.

Ms ALLAN — Was it five? It was a few.

We have added to that in this year's budget with the Shepparton line upgrade. The regional rail revival program is critically important because you cannot run the new trains on the old track that will not accommodate them. You have got to upgrade the level crossings, and you have got to upgrade the track and the signalling to accommodate the new VLocity trains to places like Bairnsdale and Shepparton and on the north-east line and to Warrnambool. So that is why a significant amount of the regional rail revival program of works was designed to get the funds necessary for those track upgrades.

Ms SHING — What I will do then is just cut you off there, Minister, at the point at which you were talking about the line to Bairnsdale and the regional rail revival and money secured under asset recycling from the commonwealth. The Gippsland line is, as we all know, a line which has been in very severe need of large-scale infrastructure upgrades, and we have seen the \$9 million and the \$530 million come together over a couple of budget periods to provide that infrastructure improvement. One of the things that comes up consistently for people in Gippsland is reliability and the way in which frequency, reliability, delays and disruptions are managed and are taken into account so that people have a better understanding about how their trip is affected or going to be affected by cancellations, closures and upgrade maintenance works. What are the steps being taken as part of track and infrastructure upgrades to improve the Gippsland line experience, and further down the corridor, once we get into the metropolitan area, what work has been undertaken to facilitate a better go for Gippsland line trains as they head into the city? Because population growth has grown, as you have indicated.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — This should not take long.

Ms ALLAN — I think Mr O'Brien is supporting an extension of time to answer this question, because there is a lot in that and there is a huge amount of work that is being prepared for, some of which is underway on the Gippsland line.

The CHAIR — One minute.

Ms ALLAN — One minute? Okay, I will be quick.

The CHAIR — Or you can come back to it.

Ms ALLAN — There is \$530 million worth of work on the Gippsland line. Part of this is to do a lot of work at the Bairnsdale end, and I am pleased to advise the committee that as a result of that work we will be able to run VLocitys to Bairnsdale for the first time — and that will happen; we will have VLocitys down there towards the end of this year.

Ms SHING — The Avon River bridge is being funded though, isn't it?

Ms ALLAN — It has been funded.

Ms SHING — So Mr Bull's concerns are misplaced.

Ms ALLAN — Geotech work has started. You were with me.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Of course it has been funded; Darren Chester gave you the money for it.

Ms ALLAN — Unfortunately your colleague down there is suggesting otherwise; he is suggesting that it has not been funded, and I am pleased to say of course you can only —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — No, he has suggested it has not started and is not going to start.

Ms ALLAN — You can only upgrade the Avon River bridge because a former Labor government reopened the line to Bairnsdale.

Ms SHING — Minister, in the next round of questions, I will also get you to talk further about duplication of the Gippsland line, which is an exciting new promise from the National Party.

Ms ALLAN — I would be delighted to talk about that.

Ms SHING — Fantastic, thank you.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Let the record show that the Gippsland upgrade is funded thanks to the generosity of Darren Chester and the work of the federal Nationals. I might also correct the record, Ms Shing, that it is not funded as part of the asset recycling initiative, because the current government messed that up and did not get it in time. However, The Nationals have delivered it anyway.

Ms SHING — Just like you were going to deliver a duplication of the Gippsland line into the city.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — You asked the question, and you did not get an answer from the minister, did you, Ms Shing?

Ms SHING — You say a Nationals government will deliver it. That is your media release about Mr Peter Walsh promising to duplicate the Gippsland line.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — And you just asked your minister about what she was doing about it and you did not get an answer.

Ms SHING — Promising to duplicate the Gippsland line, so I wonder what your shadow public transport minister and what Mr Guy have to say about that.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — I look forward to your policy on it, Ms Shing.

Ms SHING — You are going to duplicate it 'somehow', I think was your media release.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — I will see what you have got to offer.

Ms SHING — Somehow you are going to duplicate the Gippsland line and bring rail back to Leongatha, Mr O'Brien. You are so busy.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — It would be nice if you actually visited anywhere out in South Gippsland at some stage too, Ms Shing. That would be great.

Ms ALLAN — He has invited you around for dinner.

Ms SHING — Do you not stand by your promise, Mr O'Brien, that you are going to duplicate the Gippsland rail line? Or you are going to duplicate it? Let the record reflect that Mr O'Brien is going to duplicate the Gippsland rail line.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Can I ask a question of Dr Miles, and I refer to the work of Transport for Victoria. Unless you can assist me, I cannot find a reference to Transport for Victoria in the budget papers, but very obviously it is a significant organisation.

Ms ALLAN — It is the department.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Could you actually tell me what exactly Transport for Victoria does, what it costs and what the FTE numbers of people working there is?

Dr MILES — Transport for Victoria is part of the department. The head of Transport for Victoria reports to the secretary, so it essentially operates as a division within the department with statutory powers to coordinate across the entire transport portfolio. The funding for transport is part of the departmental budget.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Is that broken down? Is there a separate line item for it?

Dr MILES — In the annual report we report the separate divisions.

Ms ALLAN — Just to be clear, Transport for Victoria is what previously was the old transport division within a previous department. Some other functions have been added to it, but it is what is the department function for transport.

Dr MILES — To the third point of your question: the number of people in the department who work under the banner of Transport for Victoria is about 497 people.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — 497?

Ms SHING — Headcount or FTE?

Dr MILES — FTE.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — And that is currently?

Dr MILES — Yes.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Just to flesh that out a bit, what does it actually do? Is it a matter of second-guessing line agencies that report to it? What is the value-add there in terms of Transport for Victoria?

Dr MILES — The Transport Integration Act provides guidance for the transport portfolio, particularly around the coordination and integration of all components of the transport system in Victoria. We have been focusing a fair bit of our energy on planning, and one of the key components of the Transport Integration Act asks us to look very clearly at people and design the system as a user-focused system. So planning requires all components of the portfolio to come together and think about one system and their contribution to the entire transport system, so that users can have a single journey, so they have a seamless ability to move around the network.

The other task for Transport for Victoria is to work across the portfolio to ensure that information provision to people using the system means they have best access to the system. The other bit of work we have been doing is working across and with the major project program to ensure that disruption management is coordinated, particularly with Public Transport Victoria — PTV — and VicRoads to ensure that users have choice in their travel design, given the disruption on the program.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Can I just go back to the headcount FTE, Rail Projects Victoria, does that come under you at T for V?

Dr MILES — No, that is Evan.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Okay, can I just ask again for the number of staff in that division?

Ms ALLAN — It is in the PAEC questionnaire. It is provided for in the PAEC questionnaire, I believe.

Ms SHING — It is their time.

Ms ALLAN — Okay, I was just trying to be helpful.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Perhaps, Mr Tattersall, if you do not have it there, you could come back to it in a minute — or have you got it there now?

Mr TATTERSALL — I have got it here. Total number of employees you are asking for, across RPV or?

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Rail Projects Victoria.

Mr TATTERSALL — At Rail Projects Victoria we have projected 357 full-time equivalent staff at the end of the financial year.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — And again, what is their role?

Mr TATTERSALL — Rail Projects Victoria is the renamed Melbourne Metro Rail Authority, and it is delivering the Metro Tunnel project — the \$11 billion project — and it is delivering all the regional rail revival work, \$1.7 billion, and we are also now looking at the front end of this new swathe of projects — the airport link, the faster rail, services to the regions, electrical extensions of the network — in conjunction with Transport for Victoria.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Regional rail revival as well?

Mr TATTERSALL — Regional rail revival, yes.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — And Murray Basin?

Mr TATTERSALL — Murray Basin, only as an interface with the Ballarat line that I was referring to before.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — So you are focused on passenger rail rather than freight?

Mr TATTERSALL — It is passenger rail, but the work we actually do as part of the Ballarat project also facilitates freight to come through that area of Ballarat, which is why you have got this complex interface.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Dr Miles, sorry, going back to T for V, do you know how many employees are expected to attend the InnoTrans conference in Germany in September and what the cost of that will be?

Dr MILES — I do not have that detail. We are expecting to participate in that event, as we always do. No, I do not have any other information at the moment, but we will be participating.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Could I ask for that information to be taken on notice, then — how many are attending and what the cost of that is? Thank you. Minister, just going back on the regional rail revival stuff, I may have misheard you: did you say the Shepparton upgrade is also being contributed to by the commonwealth?

Ms ALLAN — No.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — I misheard it. Just quickly on the Gippsland line, putting VLocitys to Bairnsdale — is that a permanent arrangement?

Ms ALLAN — Yes.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — So once the new bridge is completed they will stay VLocitys?

Ms ALLAN — As you would be aware, the Avon River bridge is in need of some work and there have been significant track speed restrictions on that bridge for some time now. As part of the work we have done on the Gippsland line upgrade we have, if you like, brought forward some of the work on the Avon River bridge, because if we did not, the services would have had to have been suspended while some substantive works were undertaken. So to mitigate against that we are doing the work on the Avon River bridge and some other works along the line, because to run VLocitys to Bairnsdale we also need to undertake some other level crossing upgrades.

Ms SHING — Seven level crossing upgrades in fact.

Ms ALLAN — Thank you; seven level crossing upgrades. The conclusion of that — and my advice is that that will be concluded around, I think, September of this year — will enable two of the three services to and from Bairnsdale, for VLocitys to provide those services. One of those free services will still be a classic fleet train, but two of the three services will be runners by VLocitys.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — When is the bridge meant to be finished?

Ms ALLAN — The Avon River bridge — the whole work is \$95 million worth of work. That is a much more substantive piece of work. Even, that is due to be concluded as part of the Gippsland line upgrade works —

Mr TATTERSALL — Early 2020.

Ms ALLAN — Early 2020.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Early 2020. If you have got VLocitys, presumably you are not running the Traralgon line VLocitys permanently to Bairnsdale. Will there be upgraded VLocitys for the long-haul service?

Ms ALLAN — We are doing some design modifications at the moment with Bombardier. That was work that was funded, I think, in last year's budget. So the VLocitys will need to be modified slightly to accommodate the longer haul services, and we need to do that work anyway because the intention is into the future to run VLocitys to Bairnsdale, to Warrnambool —

Dr MILES — For all services.

Ms ALLAN — on the north-east line and on the Shepparton line, so we need to do that design work anyway.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — So is that simply modifications to the existing VLocitys or are you actually building new trains?

Ms ALLAN — It will be within, if you like, the existing shell. There is also —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — The existing fleet, I would guess.

Ms ALLAN — There is design work on the existing model and then there is the next generation regional train, which is a separate piece of work.

Ms PATTEN — I would like to turn to page 152 of budget paper 3, which is around the 'Commercial passenger vehicle industry participants conform to key safety requirements'. I note that it is to be confirmed — these measures — but I also note that I think all of this should be operational by 1 July. I am just wondering if you have got any ideas of what those performance measures will be looking like going forward, given that the taxi commission will be up and running on 1 July and looking after the wide scope of passenger vehicles?

Ms ALLAN — As a result of the significant legislative change that went through the Parliament last year, there have been a whole lot of regulations that have been enacted or are currently in the process of being enacted to operationalise that legislation, and it does include how we can address standards around safety, whether it is safety for drivers or safety for passengers as well. That work is ongoing, as I understand it, and there has been a lot of negotiation with industry as well, getting their feedback as to how we can improve services for passengers.

Ms PATTEN — When it was just taxis, I think 83 per cent was the target —

Ms ALLAN — For?

Ms PATTEN — The previous target for taxi vehicles was 83 per cent in conforming to key safety requirements. Are you envisaging that you would be sitting around that target in going forward once it is in action on 1 July?

Ms ALLAN — Can I come back to you on that in terms of what the actual target is because, as I said, it is being worked through on some of those regulatory changes.

Ms PATTEN — Yes. Just keeping in that area, last year I asked a question about the performance measures for the taxi services online customer satisfaction rating. I noted that the target was 61 per cent satisfaction, which seemed on the low scale. There is a new measure, which is the recording of satisfaction in regulatory service to vehicle operators rather than passengers, and that benchmark sat at 55 per cent.

Ms ALLAN — What page are you on there?

Ms PATTEN — Pardon me. That is on page 153 — the second line item on page 153.

Ms ALLAN — Yes, and your question?

Ms PATTEN — The question is, why so low?

Ms ALLAN — Right, yes. That is a very good question. Again I may need to come back to you on that. Given we are going through a period of significant transition, my assumption is that that is pitched at that level as we go through that period of transition, and we should point out that this covers all taxis, hire car and ridesharing as well. It covers all types of services that fit within that commercial passenger vehicle framework.

Ms PATTEN — Yes.

Dr MILES — In terms of the question about the performance measures, performance measures are the same or slightly higher, and the new wording is really to articulate the new industry arrangements, so we go beyond taxis.

Ms PATTEN — Yes. The wording previously seemed to be more directed at passenger satisfaction rather than operator satisfaction. It seems that the measure has changed to reflect the operators rather than the passengers.

Dr MILES — No. I can take that offline with you for a conversation if you like, but they are mostly the same issues.

Ms PATTEN — Thanks, Dr Miles. Just quickly, in the time left, you mentioned in your presentation that the discounted public transport concessions for international students were continuing. I noted in an article late last year that Myki fares and public transport fares are increasing at a greater level than inflation. You have set them at, I think it is, 2.5 per cent — rising at the consumer price index plus an additional 2.5 per cent. So they are rising above inflation, and that is going to put some pressure particularly on low incomes and put pressure on students — all students, not just international students — so I am wondering if there has been any consideration for lowering concession ticket prices for all school students in Victoria.

Ms ALLAN — Thanks, Fiona. Just at risk of raising the ire of the committee, that fare setting of CPI plus 2.5 is one we inherited, and that was set in, my memory is, the 2014 budget, so that gives you some policy context about that fare rise that you have identified. What we have been working on is that we have made some changes, for example, for regional passengers who buy what is known as a 28 to 69 day pass.

Ms PATTEN — Yes, I saw that.

Ms ALLAN — They are now getting the reduced rate they would get with a pass beyond 70 days. That is providing significant benefits. I am anxious of time. We also made some changes for primary school students and Victorian Carer Card holders — free off-peak travel. You are aware of that for primary school students. Also free Saturday travel; previously it was Sunday. If you had a Victorian Carer Card, it was only Sunday that was free. Now it is Saturday. Where we can, we are wanting to make fares cheaper, within the constraints obviously of running the system. But also abolishing the on-the-spot penalty fare has been a significant change in making our infringements — administration of the system — fairer as well.

Ms PATTEN — So at this stage there are no plans to lower those concessions for students.

Ms SHING — Minister, I will take us back to the discussion we were having in the last round in relation to the interface between regional trains on the Gippsland line and making their way into the Melbourne CBD through a metropolitan corridor and the challenges that that presents around reliability and frequency of services. What steps are being taken in relation to unclogging this very, very busy part of the network to reduce the delays and the inconvenience for regional travellers from Gippsland?

Ms ALLAN — Thank you, Harriet. Evan has indicated he wants to add to his previous answer to ensure the accuracy of the information provided to the committee.

Ms SHING — This is a gonzo-friendly zone, so you should feel free to just do your worst.

Mr TATTERSALL — I am just going to admit I made a mistake. The Avon River bridge is early 2021 for completion, not early 2020.

Ms SHING — Good. Thank you for that.

Ms ALLAN — But the VLocitys will be running from the end of this year. Will that get faster speeds as well — slightly improved speeds? No, better reliability.

Ms SHING — There are still speed restrictions on the Stratford bridge, as far as I am aware, having seen it very scenically myself on a number of occasions.

Ms ALLAN — Coming back closer in to the metropolitan network, one of the areas we have been doing a lot of work on with the Gippsland line is obviously, as we have seen a huge amount of work go on in the Dandenong corridor, which is Gippsland's line into the city, that the occupations, the rail disruption that is on that line, obviously also have an impact on Gippsland passengers as well, so we have been getting a lot of careful feedback from Gippsland passengers. We have obviously also, Harriet, been talking with you as well about how we can improve their journey in and out of the city during these periods of disruption. One of the activities we trialled through the April disruption, and we are now making it a permanent feature for the disruption that started today — trains ran for the last time on a level crossing in the Dandenong corridor last night, and when trains run again on that corridor between Dandenong and the city, they will be level crossing free —

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Minister, sorry, I know it is Ms Shing's time, but I literally got three text messages and two emails this morning saying they drove past Poath Road and Murrumbeena Road effortlessly and they could not believe it, even though it makes sense intellectually, in their hearts. After 30 or 40 years of doing it they finally experience the benefit, so thank you.

Ms SHING — That is one side of the coin; the other being the construction.

Ms ALLAN — Excellent. What we trialled in April were express coaches from Warragul and Drouin into Parliament via the Eastern Freeway, and we also ran a mix of express and semi-express services from Traralgon and Morwell as well. We got some very positive feedback that that combination of different options presented a good suite of options for people in the Gippsland community to get in and out of the city during that period of time. The buses we ran were also kitted out with free wi-fi. Those arrangements of express coaches — express and semi-express — stopping and starting from different places along the line, plus free wi-fi, is something that is going to continue during this disruption that is being experienced now on the Gippsland line.

Ms SHING — And when we look at status quo more generally being a greater volume of trains on the metropolitan end of the network, how are we proposing to alleviate the congestion such that Gippsland line passengers using heavy rail to go into the city are not comparatively disadvantaged when compared to metropolitan travellers?

Ms ALLAN — So the question is, how are we —

Ms SHING — What mitigation is in place to alleviate the congestion within the metropolitan component of the network, which disproportionately disadvantages Gippsland travellers, when status quo returns as part of the upgrade to the level crossing removal program?

Ms ALLAN — There have been a few things. Removing level crossings on the Dandenong line benefits the Gippsland line because it improves your reliability for every train journey on that corridor because you are removing that potential point of intersection along the corridor. There has been a lot of work that PTV have been leading with Metro Trains and V/Line on how they can better communicate and integrate their operations so that, if there is an issue in the metropolitan part of the network, that is communicated to V/Line and the V/Line services are not overly compromised as a result where possible. I can see your colleague from Gippsland is very excited about the elevated rail line that is opening up — the final section which is opening up soon. So much so that he wants to bring his own version of that to the corridor, which —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — You have messed it up for us all now.

Ms ALLAN — No, I do not think it has got entire support in your party room, but anyway we will have to see. You say you are building it. I am not sure if your colleagues in the Liberal Party agree with that.

Members interjecting

Ms SHING — Sorry, just to bring us back then to the subject matter at hand —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — I was invited to interject, Ms Shing.

Ms SHING — Improving the comparative journeys and the reliability for Gippsland travellers is a really significant issue as we encounter delays and disruptions, some ordinary some extraordinary, along the Gippsland end of the track. What are the steps being taken to alleviate the way in which Gippsland passengers,

after encountering those difficulties within the Gippsland line — for predictable or unpredictable reasons — get into the Metro side of the link? Communication is one part of what you have talked about. What is being done to actually make sure that services from that line are given favourable or preferential treatment wherever possible? Jeroen, I am happy to hear from you.

Mr WEIMAR — Thank you. So the Dandenong corridor, which of course the Gippsland line runs into, is the busiest corridor in our entire railway network across Victoria. That is why the upgrade program we are working on now is to remove the level crossings, but also the power upgrade and the signalling upgrade is happening on the corridor at this very point in time.

Ms SHING — The signalling will make a substantive difference as far as improvement?

Mr WEIMAR — It will make a massive difference to the reliability of that Metro corridor and the regional trains that are running through it at the moment. So our strategy is to get the reliability and the performance of that Dandenong corridor to the highest level that we can before we introduce high-capacity signalling in 2024–2025 with the opening of the Metro Tunnel. What that would ensure for regional trains is a much more stable and effective performance layer to run regional trains through — all the way into Flinders Street and Southern Cross.

Ms SHING — Have we done any modelling in relation to the improvements that will be made available to regional travellers as result of the changes to that signalling?

Mr WEIMAR — None that I have with me today, but the modelling we are doing at the moment is also looking at future timetable changes that we will do for both the Gippsland corridor and the Metro network to ensure we get to maximum reliability for regional trains coming through from Pakenham into the network. It also, of course, ties into the additional 28 Traralgon rail services per week we introduced last year. So we are continuing to find ways to get the meshing of the Metro train services and the regional train services on that corridor to work as well as possible. That benefits Metro passengers. It also benefits the regional rail passengers that depend upon it.

Ms SHING — Thank you, I look forward to getting any of that information on modelling on notice to the extent that you can provide it. With the time remaining, Minister, I would like to again pick up on something that was discussed in an exchange between you and Mr O'Brien earlier, whereby The Nationals have indicated that they will deliver a dedicated line to Gippsland. To quote Mr O'Brien:

It was very gratifying that Peter Walsh has listened to our concerns and ... highlighted the need for action on the dedicated line and indicated that ... The Nationals in government will deliver it.

Being a standalone line. In relation to the improvements that are designed to be delivered on the Gippsland line, to what extent has duplication been part of any modelling or discussions on the infrastructure component of improving services to Gippsland and on the customer service and reliability end of things, as part of improving and increasing the number of services and the frequency of services.

Mr M. O'BRIEN — It is actually quadruplication that you need, because there is already duplication.

The CHAIR — Order! Mr O'Brien!

Ms SHING — The door has been opened now, Minister.

Ms ALLAN — Should we step through it?

Mr D. O'BRIEN — This is your fourth attempt to ask this question on how you are fixing the access into Melbourne, and you are still not getting an answer, Harriet. You must be disappointed.

The CHAIR — Order! Mr O'Brien!

Ms ALLAN — Well, the reality is I think we all know that the National Party are running out there with their policy. I do not think it has been through all their processes because I certainly have not seen it being backed in by the coalition colleagues.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Have a look at the *Express* last week, Minister; you might actually see it.

Ms ALLAN — You know what? I did.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Yes, well, what was the headline? 'Libs back Nats on rail policy', I think was the headline. You might have missed that, sorry.

Ms SHING — The Liberals are going to duplicate the line to Gippsland, are they? Let us see how the home acquisitions and the discussions go within the south-east corridor. The shadow public transport minister will just be aghast to hear of how —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — You just do not have any interest in doing it. You have done it for Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo, Ms Shing. Why don't you care about Gippsland?

Ms SHING — Sorry. Minister, as you were.

Members interjecting

The CHAIR — Order!

Ms ALLAN — The Gippsland line upgrade —

Mr MORRIS — On a point of order, Chair, are we seriously suggesting after the discussions we had about the scope of the hearings this morning that it is reasonable to canvass opposition policies which may or may not be outside the scope of the estimates in terms of timing, but they are certainly outside the scope of the estimates in terms of this government's budget?

Ms SHING — Further to the point of order, Chair, I know that it may be the opposition's intent to run down the clock on this one because scrutiny is a difficult thing, but what I would say is that —

Mr MORRIS — I am happy to talk about opposition policy all day, very happy, including this particularly good one, but it is a matter of the scope of the estimates.

Ms SHING — What I would say is that the way in which I framed the question was very, very carefully in the context of alleviating congestion and improving the travelling experience for commuters on the Gippsland line —

Mr MORRIS — Here we go; we will just keep talking.

Ms SHING — and the extent to which duplication of the Gippsland rail line had been part of the discussion.

Mr MORRIS — I was actually making a point of order but I am just being talked over, which is what has been happening all day

The CHAIR — Order! I am conscious we are now eating into opposition time. I am happy to hand it over to the opposition. If the witness wishes to provide any additional information in relation to Ms Shing's —

Mr MORRIS — Within the scope of the estimates hearings.

The CHAIR — Of course, Deputy Chair.

Members interjecting

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Chair, may I proceed?

The CHAIR — I have been waiting for the last 7 seconds, Mr O'Brien. Over to you.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — A related issue, Minister, is sky rail. Page 136 of budget paper 4 outlines the total estimated investment of \$608.3 million for the Caulfield–Dandenong conventional signalling and power infrastructure upgrade, something the notes in table 6 in BP 4 state is delivered as part of the Caulfield–Dandenong Alliance level crossing removals. Minister, in relation to the sky rail blowout, which I note the Treasurer has taken to referring euphemistically as additional costs, because he says 'a vast majority is extra bits

and pieces', what proportion of the blowout in costs on sky rail is these extra bits and pieces and what proportion is simply not planning and scoping the project in the first place?

Ms ALLAN — Firstly, let me just be very clear that for the Caulfield–Dandenong project, it is incorrect to characterise it that way. The package remains on budget and we are on schedule to remove nine level crossings by the end of this year, and indeed by the end of June.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — The Treasurer said that the costs of sky rail generally — the increase in costs compared to what was committed to at the election — is in the vast majority extra bits and pieces. What exactly was he referring to?

Ms ALLAN — This is where you may describe additional funding for public transport as a cost; we will describe it, and always describe it, as an investment.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — No, it is what you said it would cost versus what it actually does cost — it is a blowout.

Ms ALLAN — On the Caulfield to Dandenong line five brand-new stations are being constructed along that corridor. There are significant power and signalling upgrades that are being undertaken along that part of the corridor. Those power and signalling upgrades are needed for high-capacity trains to interface with the metropolitan tunnel, and we are asking the Level Crossing Removal Authority to deliver that because it makes sense while they are in the corridor and are causing disruption to undertake the works at the same time on that part of the corridor.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — We just heard about the Murray Basin rail project, that it is being put on hold —

Ms ALLAN — Can you just let me finish?

Mr D. O'BRIEN — because you had not considered the planning arrangements. Again, these things could have been planned at the time that the project was proposed. It is a \$3.1 billion blowout overall for level crossing removals.

Ms ALLAN — That is not right, but let us keep —

Mr Morris interjected.

The CHAIR — Order! Deputy Chair! The minister to continue.

Ms ALLAN — We have committed to remove 50 dangerous and congested level crossings, and where we have at each individual site —

Mr Morris interjected.

Ms ALLAN — I am just not going to answer if I am going to get interrupted. I am happy just to sit it out.

Members interjecting.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — They interrupt us every time we ask a question, Minister.

Ms ALLAN — I am endeavouring to do my best to answer your question, and the constant interjections make it difficult. That is merely the point I was wanting to make.

Where we have had the opportunity to add to that project, we have. They are shown very transparently in the budget as two separate line items — the level crossing removal program and the network enhancement program. Together they represent a significant additional investment into the metropolitan network where we have added 16 new stations and upgraded stations across the network, 12 new pedestrian signals, 689 additional car parking spaces, 30 kilometres of shared user paths, 29 new or upgraded electrical substations, pedestrian bridges and 22.5 hectares of open space. I can happily go on.

In answer to your question, were these things not anticipated when we first announced the level crossing removal program back in November 2013? You are right; they were not. But when we came to government and we looked at the opportunity to make further investments we grabbed that opportunity. We did not want to

ignore that opportunity. We did not want to make it someone else's problem. We absolutely grabbed these opportunities to go beyond the removal of level crossings. These are investments in our metropolitan network. I would be surprised that anyone would be critical of making investments and improvements to our metropolitan train network at a time when Melbourne's population is growing, when we are experiencing ongoing passenger demand. As I said, we describe it as an investment and we are proud to make these investments.

And passengers — the feedback we are getting, for example, at Rosanna station. Rosanna station was not a commitment that we made in the 2014 election, but when we went in there and we removed the level crossing at Lower Plenty Road, we saw there was an opportunity to build a brand-new station at Rosanna. Similarly at Clayton station —

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Order! Ms Shing!

Mr T. SMITH — If I could pick up the allegations you made in your evidence some hour and a half ago with regard to your insinuation — well, more than insinuation; your allegation — that I had a role in encouraging or in any way, shape or form facilitating some of the vile abuse you have received on social media, I am just asking whether or not you will make that allegation outside of this chamber without parliamentary privilege?

Ms SHING — Further to the point of order —

Ms ALLAN — I am very happy to answer that, Chair. The comment I made was characterising the behaviour of the collective of the opposition. I am happy to withdraw if you took personal offence to that in relation to your personal behaviour. I am happy to withdraw any inference that you may take —

Ms SHING — Mr Smith does not seek withdrawals.

Ms ALLAN — No, I am happy to withdraw any inference that you have taken that that was directed personally at you, but you cannot deny —

Mr T. SMITH — It was directed at individual members of the coalition, Minister.

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Order!

Ms ALLAN — Chair, I am trying to assist in bringing some dignity back to this session because —

Mr T. SMITH — Well, you wrecked it, Minister.

The CHAIR — Order, Mr Smith!

Ms ALLAN — No. I shared with you and your colleagues some of the commentary that has been made, and I shared that in the hope that you would see what was behind some of the concern that I have had and that my colleagues have had on this matter. I would hope that, in the reflection of what has gone on, we can collectively recognise that we all should condemn this behaviour. We should not be encouraging it. I am not saying you are, but there should be no encouragement —

Mr T. SMITH — But you were before, Minister.

Ms ALLAN — No, I was not, and there should be no —

Mr T. SMITH — Minister, this might be —

Ms ALLAN — I am not going to let you —

Members interjecting.

Ms ALLAN — We should not be encouraging this behaviour.

Mr T. SMITH — This might surprise —

The CHAIR — Order! The minister is answering your question, Mr Smith.

Ms ALLAN — We should not be encouraging this behaviour. We should recognise as leaders in our community we have got —

Mr T. SMITH — No-one is.

Ms ALLAN — Well, no, that is not true, because —

Mr T. SMITH — Minister, I might remind you —

Ms ALLAN — No, let me finish.

The CHAIR — Order, Mr Smith!

Mr T. SMITH — You are not the only politician, Minister, who cops it on social media.

Ms ALLAN — The reason why this is important —

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Order, Ms Ward!

Ms ALLAN — The reason why this is a matter of public discourse is because it has been reported that the Liberal Party are looking to do a deal with people who are engaged in this behaviour. That has been publicly reported, and that is —

Members interjecting.

Mr T. SMITH — Minister, you are not the only politician that cops it on social media.

Ms ALLAN — I am not saying I am.

Mr T. SMITH — So, for example —

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Order! Is there a question, Mr Smith, for the minister in relation to her capacity as the minister?

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Order! I thank the witnesses for their attendance. The committee will follow up on any questions taken on notice in writing. The written response should be provided within 10 business days of the committee's request.

Witnesses withdrew.