

VERIFIED VERSION

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into budget estimates 2014–15

Melbourne — 16 May 2014

Members

Mr N. Angus

Ms J. Garrett

Mr D. Morris

Mr D. R. J. O'Brien

Mr C. Ondarchie

Mr M. Pakula

Mr R. Scott

Chair: Mr D. Morris

Deputy Chair: Mr M. Pakula

Staff

Executive Officer: Ms V. Cheong

Witnesses

Mr T. Mulder, Minister for Public Transport,

Mr D. Yates, Secretary,

Ms S. Eddy, Deputy Secretary, Finance,

Mr G. Liddle, Deputy Secretary, Transport, Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure,
and

Mr M. Wild, Chief Executive Officer, Public Transport Victoria.

**Necessary corrections to be notified to
executive officer of committee**

The CHAIR — I declare open the hearing for the public transport portfolio, hearing no. 22 of the 2014 estimates hearings. I welcome the Honourable Terry Mulder, Minister for Public Transport, and from the Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure, the Secretary, Mr Dean Yates; Deputy Secretary, Finance, Sue Eddy; Deputy Secretary, Transport, Mr Gary Liddle; and the Chief Executive Officer of Public Transport Victoria, Mr Mark Wild. There are other officers of the department and PTV in the gallery who may be called. We will identify them at that point.

As has been the practice in recent years, these hearings are being webcast on the parliamentary website. In accordance with the guidelines for public hearings, I remind members of the public gallery that they cannot participate in any way in the committee's proceedings. Departmental officers may approach the table during the hearing to provide information to the minister or other witnesses if requested, by my leave. Written communication to witnesses can only be provided via officers of the PAEC secretariat.

Members of the media are requested to observe the guidelines for filming or recording proceedings in the Legislative Council committee room. In particular, cameras must remain focused only on the person speaking, with no panning of the public gallery, the committee or witnesses. Filming and recording must cease immediately at the completion of the hearing or during any breaks that may occur during the hearing.

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 are not protected by parliamentary privilege, including any comments made on social media from the hearing itself. The committee does not require witnesses to be sworn, but I remind you all that questions must be answered in full and with accuracy and truthfulness. Any persons 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 fact verification within two working days of the hearing. PowerPoint presentations will be placed on the committee's website as soon as they become available, and verified transcripts will be placed on the committee's website within five days of their receipt.

Following a presentation by the minister, committee members will ask questions relating to the inquiry. Generally, the procedure followed will be that relating to questions in the Legislative Assembly. Sessional orders provide a time limit for answers to questions without notice of 4 minutes, while standing orders do not permit supplementary questions. It is my intention to exercise discretion in both those matters, but I do request that each answer be given as succinctly as possible, recognising that these are often complex issues.

I ask that all mobile telephones be turned off or to silent. The minister now has an opportunity for a brief presentation of no more than 10 minutes on the budget estimates for the public transport portfolio. Welcome, Minister.

Overheads shown.

Mr MULDER — Thank you, Chair, and thank you, committee members. I want to begin this morning with a snapshot of the performance of the state's public transport system before I move on to specific funding initiatives in this year's budget. The government has put a lot of effort into boosting performance in every public transport mode, working with PTV, V/Line, MTM, Yarra Trams and the state's bus and coach operators to lift performance. We backed that with an extra \$100 million over four years on rail maintenance from our first budget, and this is an investment that is delivering the dividends.

One of the features of the rail network the government has worked hard at has been reducing overcrowding. In October 2010, 23.2 per cent of the a.m. peak passengers travelled on overcrowded trains. By last October, this had fallen to 9 per cent. In the p.m. peak, the number of passengers on overcrowded trains fell from 13 per cent to 7.7 per cent in that same period. The new trains ordered and delivered by this government have contributed to that result.

Punctuality is also improving. On metropolitan services it is up from a 12-month average of 85.5 per cent in Labor's final 12 months in office to 92.9 per cent for the 12 months from May last year to April of this year. There has been an improvement in V/Line's on-time performance from an average of 84.4 per cent in Labor's final 12 months in office to 87.1 per cent for the 12 months ending in April this year. Yarra Trams achieved

record performance results in March 2014, a month that traditionally presents operational challenges. At a time when demand for tram services increases because of major events such as the AFL, the formula one grand prix and the international flower and garden show, Yarra Trams achieved punctuality improvements at seven of its eight depots.

In relation to performance on some metropolitan lines, improvements have been nothing short of remarkable. Punctuality on the Frankston line has improved from an average of 70.9 per cent in Labor's last year in office to 90.6 per cent in the 12 months to April of this year. On the Werribee line it has improved from 78.6 per cent to 89.7 per cent. On the Pakenham line it is up from 72.5 per cent to 89 per cent in the same period. There has been a dramatic reduction in the number of trains making unscheduled bypasses of the Altona loop, down from 1004 in 2010 to 320 last year.

The improvements in punctuality and the reduction in overcrowding are reflected in the figures for overall satisfaction. For the financial year 2009–10 metropolitan trains recorded just 62.6 points in terms of overall satisfaction with the performance of the network. As at March 2014 the satisfaction rating had lifted to 69.3 points.

Fare evasion has fallen from an unacceptable level of 13.1 per cent across the metropolitan network in October 2010 down to 8.9 per cent in October 2013. It is still too high. Last year the revenue impact of fare evasion was estimated at \$61 million on the metropolitan network and \$3.4 million on V/Line. Every dollar recouped from fares is another dollar we can invest in public transport, and that is why our new public transport awareness campaign, *Freeloaders*, aims to further drive down fare evasion on public transport. PTV's research shows that most fare evasion is carried out by a core of repeat offenders, and our last campaign was targeted at these people.

The other change we have made to our strategy on fares is that, as of this year, Metro and Yarra Trams will share 70 per cent of the total metropolitan fare box revenue. Previously, the government guaranteed the two operators the level of revenue contained in their franchise bids. This change means operators have a financial incentive to reduce fare evasion across all transport modes, not just on their own services. Our intention is that this will encourage operators to collaborate on a network-wide approach to tackling fare evasion.

Improvements in the performance of public transport have not been confined to trams, trains and buses. We are beginning to see the return of our investment in the taxi industry. This slide shows the improvement that has taken place in the key areas of overall satisfaction, the level of information provided to customers, the travel experience, the professionalism of drivers and the level of personal safety enjoyed by passengers using taxis. All the key indicators are pointing in the right direction.

I want to move now to talking about this year's budget, in particular our record infrastructure spend. Public transport's share of our \$25 billion investment in infrastructure is made up of between \$8.5 billion and \$11 billion for the Melbourne Rail Link, which includes an airport rail link, and up to \$2.5 billion to upgrade the Cranbourne-Pakenham line. We will make public transport more affordable by making trams in Melbourne's CBD and Docklands free and allowing commuters to travel across zones 1 and 2 for the price of a zone 1 fare, as well as maintaining discounted fares for commuters who only travel in zone 2.

I want to highlight some of the spending we have already allocated as a result of our commitment of \$108 million in public transport upgrades, made possible by the construction of the East–West Link. First and foremost, our investment in the Melbourne Rail Link will deliver a much-needed lift in the city's transport network. This multibillion-dollar investment boosts rail capacity across the entire network by 30 per cent or 35 000 people per hour. It includes twin tunnels from South Yarra to Southern Cross and a route to Melbourne Airport via Footscray, Sunshine and the Albion–Jacana freight line. There will also be new tracks near Airport West to a new station at Melbourne Airport.

The boost in capacity is the result of giving each metropolitan line its own dedicated tracks. Once Melbourne Rail Link is completed there will be a major change to train services in the south-east and the west. Trains from Frankston will run via new stations at Domain and Montague to Southern Cross, then via Flagstaff, Melbourne Central and Parliament, to Belgrave and Lilydale. This provides direct access for Frankston commuters to the vast majority of the CBD, including new job opportunities at the Fishermans Bend Urban Renewal Area and also Docklands. This will all but eliminate trains crossing each other's paths between Richmond and the

entrance to the city loop. This is the first step in turning our metropolitan rail network into a true metro-style system that many Victorians will have experienced in cities like London, Paris and New York.

Melbourne Rail Link has obvious implications for land use, so it will incorporate other key projects. We will have tram and train interchanges at South Yarra, Domain, Montague and Southern Cross stations, and we will invest \$100 million in tram and bus improvements in the Parkville precinct. Importantly, the new station at Montague will drive construction of a new residential and commercial precinct in the Fishermans Bend Urban Renewal Area. Melbourne's CBD and the inner city have generated jobs and growth for two decades, fuelled by new residential and business addresses in Docklands and Southbank. Employment growth has been particularly strong in education, financial and property services. For this prosperity to continue, more residential and commercial land is needed. Melbourne Rail Link will ensure not only better commuter access to the CBD, but the development of the Fishermans Bend Urban Renewal Area as a new residential and business location.

One of the changes we have made to the design of the former Melbourne Metro is to concentrate on making improvements to Parkville's public transport, rather than duplicating it with an entirely new underground station. Parkville is a very public transport rich area, as you can see on the slide. Seven bus routes service Parkville, including the high-frequency route 401, and trams on Flemington Road, Royal Parade and Swanston Street all provide regular services. We will build on these existing services to improve access to the hospital and university precincts.

The \$2 billion to \$2.5 billion upgrade of the Pakenham and Cranbourne lines makes a major investment in grade separations, 25 high-capacity trains and one of the first uses in Australia of high-capacity signalling technology. It will deliver a capacity increase on the line of 30 per cent. It will fund the removal of crossings at Koornang Road, Murrumbeena Road, Clayton Road and Centre Road and provide planning funding for the removal of crossings at Grange Road, Poath Road, Corrigan Road, Heatherton Road and also Chandler Road. This project will also rebuild the stations at Clayton, Murrumbeena and Carnegie and deliver a new train maintenance depot at Pakenham East.

The high-capacity trains planned for the Cranbourne-Pakenham line will have some critical design advantages over the current trains on the network. Capacity on the X'trapolis, Connex and Siemens trains is restricted by the location of the four driver's cabins. The new designs will have the driver's cabins removed from the middle of the train, which will allow them to carry in excess of 1100 passengers while requiring only minimal lengthening of the train platforms.

Elsewhere on the network, we will allocate \$209 million for the operation and maintenance of the Regional Rail Link, which includes funding for new bus routes. There is \$43.8 million for safety upgrades to the city loop, 1.3 million to protect the rail corridor to Avalon Airport and \$390.4 million for two initiatives: free tram travel in the CBD and travel in zones 1 and 2 for the cost of a zone 1 fare. This year also sees an increase of \$15 million to the \$100 million funding for the Bayside rail improvement project, which will deliver X'trapolis trains to the Frankston line as well as better stations, better safety and better customer information.

Works to improve public transport reliability and travel times along two of the city's busiest arterial roads — Victoria Parade and Hoddle Street — will start later this year. This work is an important part of the Doncaster Area Rapid Transit improvement package, funded by a \$108 million commitment made possible by the East-West Link project. The works will include new dedicated bus lines along Hoddle Street and Victoria Parade, upgraded bus stops, signalling improvements to give greater priority to public transport, improved bicycle connections and crossing options in Victoria Parade, and dynamic lane management to manage the many competing demands for road space. We expect the nearly 20 000 people per day who use buses between the city and the eastern suburbs to save an average of 7 minutes in the p.m. peak when the full package of upgrades is rolled out.

In regional Victoria we are going to invest \$14.3 million in a new passing loop at Rowsley, near Bacchus Marsh, to improve the punctuality of trains to Ballarat, Maryborough and Ararat, as well as improving car parking and bus access at Ballan, and in Geelong we have allocated \$5.4 million for improved disability access at the Geelong station.

A key project to improve access to the Regional Rail Link will be the upgrade of the Moorabool Street bus interchange. These works will include reconfiguring bus space and providing line markings for four distinct bus

bays between Little Malop Street and Ryrie Street; and an improved DDA waiting area, including new direction and warning markers and better signage. It is about getting the key bus terminal working more efficiently to carry more people more comfortably and more easily.

The budget delivers on improvements to the North Shore station. North Shore will become the key interchange for the northern suburbs of Geelong. It will deliver big time savings for bus commuters who will no longer need to enter Geelong to get to where they are going. The upgrade will include two extra bus bays for shelters, lighting and concrete hardstand, and an upgrade of the station's platform to include two new shelters, platform resurfacing and to upgrade lighting. We will also improve disability access on either side of the crossing, on the platform ramp, and on the platform edge. North Shore is where the Overland from Adelaide drops passengers for Geelong, so we want to see the station perform more of a transport interchange function.

Two new freight initiatives have been funded in this budget: the upgrade of the gauge standardisation of the Murray Basin rail corridor, and funding for the metropolitan intermodal system. I had not intended to go into any further detail on these projects because they are both freight-to-port initiatives that were covered off by my ministerial colleague David Hodgett in his presentation to the committee on Monday. However, given the level of interest in these projects by the committee I thought they were worth revisiting.

The budget contains \$58 million in funding for a metropolitan intermodal network. Melbourne has two metropolitan terminals connected to the network, and a third at Dandenong South is expected to be connected and developed. There has been a lot of interest among private operators in using rail to move containers to and from the port, and this investment is designed to bring metropolitan rail shuttles to fruition.

We will make an investment of up to \$220 million in converting the broad gauge tracks to standard gauge in the Murray Basin. The first stage of this project will see an immediate \$41 million cash injection to upgrade the Mildura–Maryborough and Hopetoun–Murtoa lines, while a business case for the full standardisation is being finalised. Standardisation will upgrade these lines to 21-tonne axle loading, providing an immediate 15 per cent productivity improvement that will increase train loads by 300 to 400 tonnes. The final cost and alignment of the full Mildura to Geelong rail standardisation will be guided by the business case to be delivered at the end of this year.

That concludes my presentation, Chair. I look forward to hearing the views of the committee on the record spend on public transport and answering their questions to the best of my ability.

The CHAIR — Thank you, Minister. As is my usual practice, I will kick off. Can you outline to the committee the budget initiatives in this portfolio which will contribute to the growth of Victorian jobs both in the coming year and over the forward estimates period?

Mr MULDER — The government has a very strong infrastructure program supporting jobs and growth across Victoria. The 2014–15 budget contains a record \$15 billion investment in Victoria's public transport network. Over the budget we will deliver better public transport across Victoria, including in regional and also suburban areas. We will build on the benefits delivered through the \$4.1 billion regional rail project. We will give Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo trains dedicated tracks through the metropolitan system from Sunshine to Southern Cross station. This has created 3481 direct jobs and 2700 indirect jobs. On completion, it will create capacity for an extra 23 metropolitan and 10 regional services during each morning and evening peak, or an extra 54 000 passenger trips each day. It is ahead of schedule, with completion expected in 2015 — can I also point out, well ahead of budget — being progressively opened as works are completed.

When we came to government we found this project in absolute chaos, this project was an absolute mess left behind by the former Labor government. It was underfunded, and it was underscoped.

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Order!

Mr MULDER — It was underfunded and it was underscoped. There was no provision for any trains, there was no provision for signalling or level crossings at Anderson Road. They all had to be included and the project had to be totally rescoped.

Highlights for public transport in this year's budget include: \$8 to \$11.5 billion Melbourne Rail Link; \$2 to \$2.5 billion Cranbourne-Pakenham rail upgrade; \$685.3 million to remove level crossings at Blackburn Road, Burke Road, North Road, and Main Road, St Albans — part of a program of 40 level crossing removals and grade separations; \$180 to \$220 million for the Murray Basin rail project; \$390.4 million for free tram travel in Melbourne's CBD and Docklands and travel in zones 1 and 2 for the price of a zone 1 fare; \$209 million to operate and maintain new regional link buses; 43.8 million for critical safety upgrades to the city loop; \$14.3 million for a new crossing loop at Rowsley to improve rail services on the Ballarat line; and \$5.4 million for improved disability access at Geelong station. The \$209.5 million I referred to to operate and maintain the new Regional Rail Link, including the bus routes, was not included in the forward estimates as part of the regional link project under the former Labor government, I just point out.

The Melbourne Rail Link will create 3700 jobs at the peak of construction, a new underground tunnel, new and upgraded stations, and a rail link to Melbourne Airport. It will also allow for a future passenger rail extension to Rowville, lay the foundation for improved rail links between Dandenong and the Port of Melbourne, and provide Victorians with more reliable, more frequent and more convenient services irrespective of whether you live in the north, south, east or west.

The Cranbourne-Pakenham rail upgrade will create 3000 jobs, with more trains carrying more people, more often. A new train maintenance depot at Pakenham East will also create an additional 300 jobs.

There are also new and continuing projects previously announced supporting the growth of Victorian jobs over the forward estimates period, including \$115 million Bayside Rail Upgrade, around 50 jobs through the construction phase; the \$66 million Ringwood station upgrade, 100 jobs; \$227 million for 43 new V/Locity rail cars to be built by Bombardier in Dandenong South, a further 70 jobs; \$276 million for 50 new E class trams to be manufactured at Bombardier's facility in Dandenong, more than 500 jobs; \$25.9 million for Grovedale railway station, 40 jobs; \$386 million for 15 new X'Trapolis trains, 7 already delivered, assembled in Ballarat North, 65 jobs — another 8 are on the way and will be delivered into service progressively from early 2015, supporting more than 130 jobs.

The Victorian government is building a better Victoria, and this record investment will keep Victoria strong. It will create jobs and cement Melbourne's position as one of the world's most livable cities.

Mr PAKULA — Minister, with regard to the Melbourne Rail Link, I would like to once and for all get to the bottom of this question about the business case or lack thereof. We had the original, now famous, interview between Jon Faine and Mr Guy where it appeared there was not a business case, then we had the Treasurer say there was an interim business case and then we had the Premier say there was a comprehensive interim business case. I am wondering if you can tell the committee when was the interim or comprehensive interim business case commissioned by the government, and when will a final business case be completed and delivered to the government?

Mr MULDER — Thank you, Martin. An interim business case has been prepared and considered by the government. A large amount of work has been undertaken sufficient to provide a solid cost range, and the government will be finalising that work over coming months. Funding in this year's budget will be used to finalise the development work, undertake site investigations, community engagement, design work and also planning approvals. The business case will contain sensitive commercial information which if released could severely inhibit our ability to get the best value for money for the project. However, we would look to release relevant information which does not create a commercial disadvantage for the state and the Victorian taxpayer at the appropriate time. Many parts of the business case material will be available through the comprehensive impact statement, which will be released as part of the statutory approvals process for this project.

I think the former transport minister would understand that, given the number of projects that we inherited from the former Labor government — not just in my portfolio, but the desal plant, the north-south pipeline, myki, overruns on a whole series of projects. Regional Rail Link — as I mentioned before, a lot of the components of that link project were not scoped, not included in the budget. There was no way known that we were not going to test the assumptions of the Metro rail project as put together by the former Labor government. There was no way known we were not going to test each and every one of those assumptions, and we did. With external consultants, through Public Transport Victoria, through the department of planning and transport, a comprehensive analysis was conducted of those two projects.

When that analysis was completed, it was quite clear to us that the new alignment that had been chosen provided far greater benefits than what the original Melbourne Metro project provided in terms of uplift in capacity, in terms of not having to disrupt for more than two years — possibly up to four years — Melbourne's CBD, and within the same budget envelope being able to get what Melburnians, and indeed all Victorians, have been calling out for for a long period of time, a Melbourne Airport Rail Link.

The question would have to be asked: I am a buyer of services and a buyer of infrastructure for the Victorian public. When you line those two projects up — the former Metro rail project versus Melbourne Rail Link with the airport link, without disturbing the CBD, with a greater uplift in terms of the amount of people we can move around, with a package for the Parkville precinct, it is a standout project. Anybody in my position or the government's position would on each and every occasion choose a project that provided far better value for the Victorian community and addressed the issue going forward of the capacity out at Melbourne Airport.

What have we got? Somewhere in the order of 30 million passenger movements a year are tipped to go to beyond 60 million by the early 2030s, and no thought by the former Labor government in dealing with that problem. In fact go back to 1999 — part of the former ALP's policy was to have an airport rail link, and it never happened. This is a one-off opportunity for Victoria to get this right. The work has been undertaken. The preliminary business case has been conducted. A lot of the work that was carried out with Metro in terms of untangling the network had already been done. This project delivers the same benefits but a greater uplift in terms of the number of people we can move around, so why would you possibly stick with an inferior project, and why would any incoming government accept a project without question from a former government that had a history of botching nearly every major IT project that they put their hands on?

I could go through lists that have really not even been made public: the major train maintenance facility at Craigieburn, the Sunbury electrification, Cardinia Road and that Lynbrook station is without power supplies to move the trains. I thought myki was the end of myki; I did not realise he had a little brother called RandL, which was the former Labor government's IT project for a better registration and licensing system for Victoria signed off by the former roads minister. Myki does have a little brother, and it is called RandL; and we have had to pause that project as well, so you can appreciate, Martin, that when we came to government we were always going to test those assumptions.

There is no way known as part of the planning process moving forward that we were not going to revisit it. I notice that Professor Graham Currie, who is often commenting on public transport in Victoria, says this is a good outcome. Sir Rod Eddington, who rolled this project out in its initial stages, supports the government's position; because we get a rail link out of it. We are about getting value for money for taxpayers. We are about getting the best possible outcome for taxpayers, and that is what this project delivers.

Mr PAKULA — That was a very comprehensive answer, Minister; and you will note that I let you go twice when you twice now falsely made your claims about the Regional Rail Link. Let me make the point that the claim about time overrun was made four years before the project was due to finish.

Mr O'BRIEN — What about myki? Do you want to tell us about that?

The CHAIR — Mr O'Brien!

Mr O'BRIEN — You're giving evidence here; let's have some answers to myki.

The CHAIR — Mr O'Brien, the deputy chair is in fact not giving evidence. He is asking a question. It is up to the minister to deal with any assertions that the deputy chair may make.

Mr PAKULA — The claim about time overrun was made four years before it was due to finish, and the claim about cost overrun was made before the tenders had even come back. In fact the project is now in line with the original time line and the original budget. So your claim that it blew out was a false claim in order to allow you to be able to claim it was something you fixed — —

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Order!

Mr MULDER — Chair, shall I take that as a question?

Mr PAKULA — No. My supplementary, Minister, is this: you talk about the comprehensive business case coming back. The Ernst and Young \$547 000 network capacity enhancement contract that is due to be returned to the department by 30 May this year — is that the comprehensive business case? If not, what is it?

Mr MULDER — My understanding is that is testing the work that is being undertaken as to the next stage of the project. Can I just comment in relation to the matters that were raised earlier in relation to the Regional Rail Link project, Chair?

The CHAIR — Please do.

Mr MULDER — I have here a copy of the Auditor-General's report from 2011–2012, and the Auditor-General states:

In early 2011 the budget for the RRL was under review. Additional costs were expected for the purchase of rolling stock, station platforms, signalling, land acquisition, and the removal of level crossings at Anderson Road, Sunshine.

Mr PAKULA — It was all in the envelope.

The CHAIR — Order!

Mr MULDER — This was after you left government. If you do not want to hear it, you can take it up with the Auditor-General.

The CHAIR — Minister! Again, this is not a debate. You were not interrupted by the minister in the assertions that you were making. You were interrupted by Mr Ondarchie and Mr O'Brien, and I asked them to desist. The minister now has the opportunity to respond. The process of this committee is not that we try to shout one another down; it is that questions are asked and then answers are given. That is the way we operate, so let us continue that.

Mr MULDER — The former minister referred to the so-called budget now being in line with what the original estimates were for the project.

Mr PAKULA — That is right.

Mr MULDER — The fact of the matter is that the project the budget set was at \$4.8 billion.

Mr PAKULA — It was 4.3.

Mr MULDER — That is after we added in everything else. Everything else was left out — that was actually written up in the Auditor-General's report, through you, Chair.

Mr PAKULA — The original budget was 4.3.

Mr MULDER — The savings have been achieved because the project is running very well ahead of time. There have not been any major overruns in terms of delivering the different packages. I know it is pretty hard for the former Minister for Public Transport to accept that you can actually run these projects on time and under budget as well.

Mr PAKULA — It is the time line we set.

Mr MULDER — But we have delivered well and truly ahead of the time line set by the former Labor government.

Mr PAKULA — The end of 2014 was the time line.

Mr MULDER — We have delivered well under budget, and we are also delivering a lot of the benefits of the Regional Rail Link project well ahead of time, such as Geelong trains being able to access the new platforms that have been built at Southern Cross station platforms 15 and 16. The fact is we have provided access now to the new railway stations that have been built along the line and those that have been upgraded: Sunshine, Footscray and West Footscray. It would also be noted — and I imagine Martin would like to go out and have a look at Footscray — we have installed ramps as part of that project, because we had a lot of

problems with railway stations built under the former Labor government that had faulty lifts. So we made sure that we had ramps installed there as well. We are hoping that towards the end of this year we will be able to provide further access to different parts of that network as a result of the project running well ahead of time and well within budget.

It is also important to note that at an awards ceremony conducted in Sydney, with about 500 people attending, it won the infrastructure project of the year — delivered by a coalition government. It has been a great success story. We have worked very hard, and hats off to the people at the Regional Rail Link Authority. The chair and CEO have done a fantastic job in terms of controlling the budget, but I must say we had several discussions very early in the piece in relation to contingencies within the project, and those contingencies were to be managed and managed extremely well, because my view has always been those contingencies belong to other projects the government may well be able to deliver if we can manage these projects well. In this particular case we did. Not only that; out of the management of that particular project we delivered something that the former Labor government had spoken about for many years but had never gotten around to, and that was that out of those savings we delivered the St Albans level crossing removal, right in the middle of the west. The St Albans level crossing will go — —

Mr ONDARCHIE — Is that a Liberal seat, a coalition seat, out there?

Mr MULDER — No, it is not a coalition seat, but the mayors out there are beginning to wonder with the amount of money that is being spent out there.

Mr ANGUS — Minister, I refer you to budget paper 4, page 115. As touched on in your presentation in relation to the Melbourne Rail Link and also following on from your previous comments, can you advise and detail to the committee what the investment in the Melbourne Rail Link will deliver?

Mr MULDER — At \$8.5 billion to \$11 billion, the Melbourne Rail Link will be Victoria's largest ever rail project. It improves reliability, and it is going to boost capacity on the network by around 30 per cent. Importantly it will clear up capacity issues in the inner core, particularly around North Melbourne and Richmond. A key part of the additional benefit will be the Melbourne Airport rail link. This will allow people in Melbourne and across Victoria to start their trip to the airport as soon as they get to a railway station. Your holiday begins when you get on a train anywhere around Victoria. You will be able to get access to Melbourne Airport.

Additionally there will be improvements to the bus and tram connections to the Parkville precinct. As outlined in the presentation, this area already has quite a variety of public transport. We have already started conversations with the health and university bodies in the area as to how we can further improve on that service. We met with them yesterday, and we have agreed to set up a working party which will also include representatives from Melbourne City Council.

Construction of the Melbourne Rail Link will involve twin 7.5-kilometre tunnels from Southern Cross to South Yarra, new underground stations in the Fishermans Bend Urban Renewal Area at Montague and Domain, new underground platforms at Southern Cross and South Yarra and train-tram interchanges at Southern Cross, Montague, Domain and South Yarra.

The Melbourne Rail Link will create 3700 jobs during construction, and \$830 million will be invested over the next four years. Early works are to commence in mid-2016 and major construction to start in mid-2017. Another important aspect of the project is putting a new railway station at Montague in the Fishermans Bend renewal area, which will promote economic activity and development of this precinct. Melbourne deserves a truly world-class rail network, and that is exactly what Melbourne Rail Link will deliver.

Of course this announcement has been widely supported by TTF — 'Melbourne Airport welcomes Victorian Government budget commitments':

Melbourne Airport has welcomed the Victorian Government's budget commitment to fund an airport rail link ...

As I pointed out previously in relation to this particular project, I have with me here an ALP 1999 transport policy, *Rebuilding the Transport Network — A Better Transport Network for all Victorians*. This particular document says:

Labor will:

... plan for the transport network

Victorians needs new solutions for today's problems

... approach to building a transport network

...

transport gateways

Labor will:

...

Build a rapid transit link to Melbourne Airport to improve the efficiency of Victoria's ports

Support the very fast train project

I repeat, Labor will build a rapid transit link to Melbourne Airport — it never happened.

Mr ANGUS — When was that dated, Minister?

Mr MULDER — That was dated 1999.

Mr ONDARCHIE — Whose document was it?

The CHAIR — Order!

Mr MULDER — That document is the Labor Party's policy document. As those who were around at that particular time will recall, not long after Labor came to government that particular project was dumped and was never revisited in the 11 years of the Labor government here in Victoria.

Mr SCOTT — Minister, I refer you to the *Infrastructure Investment — Budget Information Paper*, page 10, which makes reference to construction of new underground platforms at South Yarra station. It is my understanding that the proposed underground development of South Yarra station was rejected by the bureaucracy and Public Transport Victoria when it was considered as part of the Melbourne Metro rail project because of the massive land acquisition required. In the so-called comprehensive interim business case and any expert advice received by the government and referred to by the Premier, could you outline to the committee how much land and how many properties are required to be compulsorily acquired by the government to deliver this particular aspect of the project?

Mr MULDER — As you can appreciate, and as I have outlined in a previous question on this particular matter, we have a comprehensive preliminary business case. We have gone through all of the documents and all of the planning that was undertaken as part of the previous government's Metro rail project. The design of the station layouts at South Yarra, Domain, Montague and Southern Cross stations will be determined as we move forward into more extensive design and planning for the project.

Mr SCOTT — I am a fan of George Orwell as much as anyone else, and I do love the phrase 'comprehensive interim'; it is an excellent Orwellian phrase. When will you be able to tell the community in South Yarra how many properties will be acquired, what will the cost be and what will be the disruption to the community of that property acquisition?

Mr MULDER — I think, Robin, as you would understand, once we have an actual reference design in front of us and once that comprehensive detailed design and engineering work is undertaken — and that has been the case with the East–West Link; it is the case with major projects — we will be in a position where we can start a conversation with the community. That is how it happens with all major projects. That is how the current government goes about doing their business. I accept that that was not the case with the former Labor government. As many will recall, with the Zinc luncheon that was under way here in Melbourne with many Labor ministers at the time, whilst Regional Rail Link people were out doing their rounds, knocking on doors with TV cameras following them — not the way to go about informing the public in terms of the types of

projects that are being undertaken. We have done an enormous amount of work to repair a lot of the damage that was done by the former Labor government in terms of a lack of community consultation.

I brought a number of those people into Parliament. I sat with them around a table. I made sure that they all had case managers to support them through the project, in terms of compulsory acquisition of properties. We went through a similar situation with the East–West Link. We made sure that the property owners of those properties that were affected were notified prior to that appearing in the media. We are not into what you would call processes that involve a lack of backbone, by being prepared to talk to people up-front about the impact that these major projects will have on them.

I think it is important to understand as well that if we are going to have a discussion with the community, if we are going to have a discussion with local councils, we have the relevant information in front of us that enables that to be an informed discussion. Once the more advanced design work is undertaken, once we have a reference design in front of us for the project, we will be in a far better position to have an informed discussion with members of the public.

Mr O'BRIEN — Minister, I would like to return to budget paper 4, page 115, and ask if you would explain what the Melbourne Rail Link will actually provide for Melbourne commuters.

Mr MULDER — The Melbourne Rail Link will significantly improve the capacity of the rail network. The Melbourne Rail Link will ensure that we increase the capacity on the metropolitan rail network by 30 per cent, or around 35 000 additional passengers, per hour in the peak. It will provide end-to-end running. Each line will have its own set of tracks, reducing congestion and problems spiralling out of the important inner core. Currently, with different lines sharing the same tracks through the inner core, a problem on one line leads to cascading delays and problems right across the network. Many commuters would have at the same stage been on a stationery train just outside the city. The Melbourne Rail Link will help this dramatically.

It will also allow us to construct other projects, such as the Rowville rail extension. Frankston line commuters will get the benefit of using our newest rail infrastructure. The Melbourne Rail Link removes Frankston line commuters from having to share tracks through the city with the Pakenham-Cranbourne line, resulting in more trains operating more often and being far more reliable. Frankston commuters will also get access to the vast majority of stations within the CBD, including Southern Cross, Flagstaff, Melbourne Central and also Parliament, and they will have easy access to the job-generating precincts on St Kilda Road, in the new Fishermans Bend Urban Renewal Area and also in Docklands — one other benefit that will be in place for people living along the Frankston line.

Say you support St Kilda — you have their training base in Seaford; or you might live in Black Rock and support Carlton. Both of these football teams currently have Etihad Stadium in Docklands as their primary home ground. If you were able to catch the Frankston line in to the footy from, say, Cheltenham, Highett or a new station at Southland, you would then have direct connection to Southern Cross station and then straight out to Etihad Stadium. The Melbourne Rail Link will also get them there quicker and will be more reliable than is currently the case. All of these benefits are in addition to the work we are doing as part of the Bayside Rail program that will see enhanced stations and better weather protection and newest X'trapolis trains operating on the Frankston line.

Benefits for the Cranbourne-Pakenham line: Cranbourne–Pakenham line commuters will be on one of Melbourne's premium train routes. The new Cranbourne-Pakenham to Sunbury and Melbourne Airport line will provide greater benefits to commuters. Not only will they now no longer share tracks through the city but they will have direct access to our new airport rail link. Cranbourne-Pakenham line commuters will come in on their own tracks through Richmond station to Flinders Street, Southern Cross, then on to North Melbourne and out to either Melbourne Airport or Sunbury. Under the Melbourne Metro alignment the commuters on this line would go nowhere near Southern Cross, leaving them without a direct connection to the western half of the CBD and Docklands — that is, the new jobs precinct for Melbourne. Cranbourne-Pakenham line commuters will also benefit from the unsolicited bid we received from the Cranbourne-Pakenham rail corridor project. This project will lift the rail corridor dramatically, with new and larger trains, a modern signalling system and level crossing removals — all forming part of a great overall project.

I could go on with the benefits that rail commuters across the city will get, but overall there is one important aspect of this project that makes it truly transformational. This project is the first step in turning the Melbourne rail network into a true international metro system. This means it will be possible to run so many more train services on an individual line. There would be no need for a timetable; people would know that all they would have to do is turn up at a station, and the train would arrive shortly. It will also mean that some people may now need to change trains, from one to another, to get to their final destination. Many of us who have travelled overseas and have already undergone that type of experience have not heard of anybody ever saying that they wished the London Underground was more like Melbourne's current rail system.

If we are to deliver 21st century rail to Melbourne, we need the Melbourne Rail Link. It is supported strongly; it is a project that is going to change the way that Melburnians and also people from regional Victoria move around. We cannot continue with what we have got; we cannot continue with a system and a project that was provided to us by the former Labor government that did not provide anywhere near the benefits that Melbourne Rail Link does.

As I pointed out before, I am, as part of my role as minister, a purchaser of services and a purchaser of infrastructure to get the best possible value for taxpayers and the best possible outcome for people who use the public transport network here in Melbourne. This project builds on all the work that we put in in the early days of government to improve the punctuality and reliability. As those slides showed one after another, the network has improved. It has improved dramatically. We now move on to the next phase of building for the future so that we can move more people more often, in greater comfort and with a greater degree of reliability.

Ms GARRETT — Minister, I refer you to budget paper 4, page 115, and to the government's botched Melbourne Rail Link scheme. I refer you to comments made by the Premier recently on radio, when he referred to 'significant expert advice' that the government had received and over 600 boreholes drilled around the Fishermans Bend-Montague proposed site for this rail link. I ask: who provided the significant expert advice in relation to the Fishermans Bend-Montague site, and when will you make it public?

Mr MULDER — That advice was provided via the department, which engaged the service of a number of contractors to carry out that work for the government.

Ms GARRETT — That is not fully answering my question. When will it be made public, and is it not true, Minister, that no geotechnical work has been done along the new proposed route between Domain and Southern Cross via Montague?

Mr MULDER — As I indicated, we have a preliminary, comprehensive business case that has been provided — —

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Order! The minister has the call.

Mr ONDARCHIE — On a point of order, Chair — —

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Order! If we can have silence, I will call Mr Ondarchie on his point of order.

Mr MULDER — We have an alignment — —

The CHAIR — Minister, we have a point of order.

Mr ONDARCHIE — I wonder if we can direct the minister to please not use words like 'business case', because the opposition do not understand that.

The CHAIR — That is a frivolous point of order.

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Order! The minister has the call.

Mr MULDER — I guess I understand, Chair. There has been a significant amount of work carried out around that particular location. There will be further work carried out. As I say, we go forward to a design stage in relation to the project. We have identified the alignment. The alignment provides the benefits, as I have outlined in my previous answers, in terms of a massive uplift in terms of the number of people it will be able to carry in the peak hour. My understanding is the former Metro project spoke about something in the order of 19 trains and 20 000 people per hour in the peak. This particular project provides an uplift somewhere in the order of 35 000 passengers per hour in the peak — a significant improvement. The alignment has been identified. The alignment is contained in the preliminary business case that has been provided to government.

We are now in a position to move forward to carry out further work — to carry out further design detail work — with the project. Once we have that work completed we will be in a position to have further discussions with the community and indeed further discussions with councils who operate in those municipalities.

Mr ONDARCHIE — Minister, if I can direct you to budget paper 3, page 64, and slide 14. Can I get slide 14 back up? It is the one relating to the Cranbourne-Pakenham rail corridor project. While we are getting that up, Minister, can I just feed back to you the fact that constituents in my electorate of Northern Metropolitan Region are delighted to hear that the trams in the CBD will be free and that slashing the cost of train fares for commuters outside zone 1 has been accepted widely and they are really delighted about it.

Mr MULDER — It is a great initiative.

The CHAIR — The slide is now up.

Mr ONDARCHIE — They also noted the Melbourne Rail Link will boost capacity across Melbourne by 30 per cent; I am getting great feedback on that, Minister. But I want to ask you about the Cranbourne-Pakenham rail corridor project. Could you outline for the committee how that will provide better rail services on those lines?

Mr MULDER — Thank you, Craig. It is one of the issues that we faced when we came to government. I sat down with the department, and we started to talk through a number of various projects, such as having to rescope and revisit the Regional Rail Link project and a number of projects that had major cost overruns. We were at that stage establishing a time line for the delivery of a range of projects, and it was dropped on me out of the blue by the department that in the not too distant future we were facing a situation whereby people would be left behind on platforms along the Pakenham-Cranbourne-Dandenong corridor because the corridor was at capacity and the former Labor government had done nothing to address that. That all of a sudden became an urgent issue for government.

We did a couple of things in the early stages. We slotted in some additional services, peak and counter-peak services, and there were some changes to the configuration of some of the trains so they could carry additional passengers, but it was never going to address the fact that I think 1 in 10 people who travel on the metropolitan rail network travel out of that corridor. It came up as an urgent scenario that, as an incoming government, we had to pick up and we had to address it.

The Cranbourne-Pakenham rail upgrade, which runs along the Dandenong corridor, is a \$2 billion to \$2.5 billion investment — more trains carrying more people more often. Construction will start in 2015; it will conclude in 2019. It is being delivered by a consortium including MTR, John Holland construction and UGL rail services. More than 3000 jobs will be created during the five-year construction phase, 300 new local jobs through the construction of the Pakenham East stabling facility and 100 ongoing jobs at that facility.

Twenty-five next generation trains will mean we can carry more passengers per train. Twenty-first century, high-capacity signalling along the rail corridor will allow us to safely move more trains on the existing tracks. Removal of four level crossings — at Murrumbeena Road, Murrumbeena; Koornang Road, Carnegie; Clayton Road, Clayton; and Centre Road, Clayton — will mean that boom barriers will no longer be congesting the roads at these particular locations.

Planning and preconstruction funding to remove a further five level crossings is also included in that funding envelope: at Corrigan, Heatherton and Chandler roads in Noble Park; Grange Road, Carnegie; and Poath Road, Murrumbeena. This means that there will be no level crossings left between Caulfield and Dandenong. Newly

built stations at Carnegie, Murrumbeena and also Clayton will boost capacity on the line by around 30 per cent and will allow the scheduling of an additional two services in the busiest hour of the peak period, moving an extra 4500 people through the use of more and larger trains.

The Pakenham and Cranbourne rail corridor serves, as I said before, 1 in 10 Melburnians. The project will provide a more frequent and reliable journey for passengers on both the Cranbourne and also Pakenham lines. V/Line Gippsland commuters will also benefit from a more reliable journey, with new signalling providing a smoother journey through the metropolitan area. This initiative will cater for an additional 2 million passengers per year to meet growing demand on the Cranbourne-Pakenham corridor.

A lot was said about this project as far back as 2006, when members of the Labor government sang the praises of the third track between Caulfield and Dandenong — a project that was going to be delivered by the former Labor government and the former Labor government's public transport minister. I will go to a couple of quotes here from *Hansard* to give you an understanding of how this project was viewed at the time. This is from the member for Oakleigh:

... the Dandenong, Pakenham and Cranbourne lines — we desperately need some increase in capacity.

This was May 2006. Also, on Thursday, 1 June 2006, once again from *Hansard*, the member for Mulgrave said:

It will also deliver an upgrade of the Dandenong rail line and provide expanded peak period services, which is another very important project in my local community.

Mr ONDARCHIE — Who is Mulgrave?

Mr MULDER — That is the current Leader of the Opposition, a former minister in the former Labor government, who was singing the praises of a project that was put forward back in May 2006 by the former Labor government, which, it is fair to say, had good times in terms of money being available for projects and which turned its back, dumped the project and walked away from it. We walked through the door into government, and we were told that we were facing an emergency situation — that people would be left standing on platforms because this matter had not been addressed by the former Labor government or by former Labor transport ministers.

This is a very important project. As I said, it is a growing area; 1 in 10 people who use the metropolitan rail network are travelling on that particular corridor, and it has been left to the coalition government to walk through the door, inherit and yet clean up another mess left behind by the former Labor government.

Mr PAKULA — Minister, I also want to ask you about — —

Mr MULDER — You haven't got a good record, have you?

Mr PAKULA — You need to get over me, Tezza, seriously. My footy team, where I live — it is a bit spooky, it really is.

I just want to ask a bit more about the Cranbourne-Pakenham project. As was put to the Premier, we have got documents that show it will cost up to \$5.2 billion in availability payments, or \$1 million a day for 15 years with an implied interest rate of about 20 per cent, so there is a fair cost involved and Metro are doing it as an unsolicited proposal. Minister, can you either rule in or out whether Metro will have any development rights around those new stations that you have referred to?

Mr MULDER — When you refer to Metro, we are talking about a special purpose vehicle that has been set up for this particular project.

Mr PAKULA — The special purpose vehicle that involves Metro, UGL et cetera.

Mr MULDER — Yes. As you would also be aware, in terms of railway station development, this government has been actively involved in railway station precinct enhancement projects. VicTrack, when I came to government, were pretty much a little unknown organisation which floated under the radar — and I can understand at the time you were heavily involved with damage control with the public transport network in its own right — and the capacity of VicTrack to play a key role in bringing railway station precincts to life was never realised by the former Labor government.

We went down the pathway of working with the then Department of Transport, now with the new Department of Planning, Transport and Local Infrastructure, and working with VicTrack to identify sites where we believed that we could utilise railway land that basically had no future use for public transport purposes — usually dirty, untidy, unkempt — and painted a very poor image in terms of the way that the railway stations were presented to the public.

We believed we had a great opportunity to capitalise on the use of that underutilised land, to put in place developments that were sensitive to the area and, using some of the profits generated from those developments, to improve the railway station and for anything over and above that to go back into VicTrack. As you would realise, they are an off-budget organisation, and they do spend an awful lot of money on railway stations, historic buildings, decontamination and so on.

We have now got somewhere in the order of \$1 billion worth of projects. Some of those are on their way to market at the moment. We will have some further announcements going forward, with some of those that we have already got out in the marketplace, where we are going to use railway station land that has been underutilised in the past to paint railway stations in a more positive light than they have been in the past.

We will work with the private sector in terms of getting the best possible outcome and the best value for money that we possibly can. There are no special development rights. All Metro stations need to be designed in such a way that development can occur in the future. That is what we are talking about in relation to the Cranbourne-Pakenham-Dandenong corridor. We want to make sure in the work we undertake as part of the development of the new stations and in the work we undertake in relation to grade separations that we do not rule out the possibility that we could gain significant development rights going forward.

As you can appreciate and as I have pointed out, we have used VicTrack extensively in the railway station enhancement development projects. My understanding is that in the past, before we came to government, it could take up to a couple of years to get clearance of a piece of land around a railway station from the Department of Transport. I had a lengthy discussion with the former secretary of the department at that time and indicated I believed the railway station enhancement projects had fantastic opportunities for improvements to the railway station precincts, had great development opportunities and were a way in which we could generate income to put back into the public transport network without going to Treasury.

Within a matter of I think about six months I had 13 or 14 projects in front of me that were potential sites where we could go down the pathway of improving our railway station precincts. We have done some major presentations to industry groups on these proposals. They have been absolutely applauded in terms of a government finally prepared to look at underutilised railway land and put it to better use, particularly in these cases for the public and the people who use public transport but also to generate thousands of jobs in the construction phase.

This was just sitting there, prime, waiting to be picked up. On top of every other problem we inherited and every other issue that I was facing, I was not going to let this opportunity pass us by. They are a far different organisation today to what they were when we came to government. They are far more attuned in terms of providing better outcomes for public transport and better use of the land bank that they hold. I know they are also having discussions with councils in Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo, with some precinct plans already being developed at locations in regional Victoria, taking up the government's plan and policy position going forward to make sure we get the best bang for our buck — in particular that we do not have to go to Treasury asking for money to put into railway stations when we can generate income through these projects.

I assure you there are no development rights, but we just want to make sure we can develop these stations, look at these grade separations and ensure that they take into consideration our opportunity to further explore use of our existing land bank.

Mr PAKULA — I am trying to get my head around this, Minister. You talk about the development community being excited and generating income and all these future opportunities, but I am sure the communities around places like Murrumbeena, Clayton and Carnegie would like to know what kinds of developments they are likely to face as a consequence of the deal you have done. Are you going to put in place height limits or development restrictions as part of this arrangement, or is that all just in the ether for a conversation at a future time?

Mr MULDER — As I pointed out before, Metro have no development rights. These projects will be delivered in such a way that the state has the development rights, but we are more than happy to talk to the private sector in terms of what we could do in terms of developing these projects. You would understand, I am pretty sure, that I stood with — I do not think it is any secret — a Labor mayor at Jewell station who was absolutely overwhelmed. Craig Ondarchie was there with me at that particular time. The mayor was overwhelmed at the opportunity to clean up what was a dirty, unkempt area frequented by vandals and by drug users.

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Order!

Mr MULDER — They will get a modern upgraded station and an improved precinct. Activity around stations is what it is about — activity around stations — also complemented by PSOs. You can understand people who want to buy into these projects that are very close to railway stations. They want to come home at 6 o'clock at night, step off a train, be greeted by PSOs and walk through the forecourt into a residential development, perhaps with some retail.

As we said all along, we could have gone down the pathway the former Labor government chose to go down with Camberwell. We could have done that. What an absolute disaster. What an absolute disaster that the former Labor government attempted to inflict on the community. We go through the process of strong community consultation. We go through the process of working with local council. We want partnerships in these types of projects.

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Order!

Mr MULDER — We do not want to go down the pathway of sham consultation processes; we want to get good outcomes. But, as I said, we have a number of projects going to the market now that are widely accepted by retailers in the precincts, widely accepted by the community and widely accepted by councils. We discuss these processes, we look at their precinct plans and we make sure that we put in place developments that are going to complement the surrounding area but most importantly provide those real, important uplifts to public transport.

This would never, ever have happened under a former Labor government. It would never have advanced to where we have taken this today. I assure the former public transport minister there are an awful lot of councils lining up wanting to have discussions with us —

Mr PAKULA — I am sure there are!

The CHAIR — Order!

Mr MULDER — about being able to utilise railway land and in some cases land that they may hold close by, wanting to work in partnership with the government. I also assure him a lot of those are in the west and a lot of those are absolutely over the moon about the fact that they have a government and ministers who actually talk to them, actually sit down with them and are starting to deliver benefits, particularly in the western suburbs.

The CHAIR — Order! Before I call the next question, I just want to remind the committee, as I have made clear on other days, if we continue to have interjections during answers, there will be the loss of the supplementary. If we continue to have a series of interjections with supplementaries, there will be no further supplementary the next time the opportunity arises.

Mr ANGUS — I refer to funding for the Regional Rail Link in budget paper 3, on page 55, and budget paper 4, on page 117. Minister, can you outline to the committee what this involves, please?

Mr MULDER — Thank you, Neil. I did touch on this earlier in the piece, but I will give you a more comprehensive run-down on the Regional Rail Link project because, as you can understand, we as a government are very proud of the outcome, the progress the project has made and also the way that the budget has been held together for the project. It is now a \$4.1 billion regional rail project, and it is funded jointly by the

Victorian and the commonwealth governments. That \$4.1 billion figure also includes the level crossing project at St Albans. Because there were savings generated through this project, we were able to go to the commonwealth and ask the commonwealth to make a significant contribution towards the St Albans level crossing removal project; the remaining funding being provided by the state, of course. If you were to take that out, because it was not part of the original scope of 200 million, you start to push back the figures around 3.9, which is an extraordinary result given the complexity of that project — a brownfield project being built in an existing rail operation with trains continually running. There is also the greenfield component of it. But it was a real challenge. It was identified originally that it was going to be finished sometime in 2016 — who knows when? We are already starting to roll out benefits. It is a fantastic project, and it is a good story to tell.

It will give Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo trains dedicated tracks through the metropolitan system from Sunshine to Southern Cross station. It has created 3481 direct jobs and 2700 indirect jobs. At its peak it has injected 25 million into the Victorian economy each week. There are three new stations at Tarneit, Wyndham Vale and also West Footscray, and upgraded stations at Footscray, Sunshine and also at Tottenham. There are 43 V/Locity railcars that have been ordered by the government to be introduced onto the new RRL tracks progressively from early 2015, with all in service by the end of 2016. On completion the RRL will create capacity for an extra 23 metropolitan and 10 regional services during each morning and evening peak, or an extra 54 000 passengers each day.

The budget also provides \$209.5 million over the forward estimates for new train and bus services servicing the Regional Rail Link, and maintenance of the new infrastructure as well. We want to make sure that this new project that is being built is well maintained and does not fall into a state of disrepair, as was the case with a large part of both the metropolitan and regional rail network when we came to government.

The operational benefits after the completion of the rail link are that the Geelong line will have 12 services running in the peak; the Ballarat line will have 4 services running in the peak; the Bendigo line will have 5 services running in the peak; and the Melton-Bacchus Marsh corridor will have 6 services running in the peak. As I say, it is ahead of schedule and well ahead of budget by around \$900 million.

Two of the six work packages have already been completed. Signalling and train control works, including complex commissioning works, will continue for some time through to the opening of the Wyndham Vale and also the Tarneit corridor. West Footscray station opened in October 2013; platforms 15 and 16 at Southern Cross in December 2013; the new Sunshine station concourse in January 2014; Anderson Road, Sunshine, grade separation on the Ballarat line in January 2014; the H. V. McKay pedestrian bridge in January 2014; new platforms 1 and 2 at Footscray station and new customer service area in January 2014; Sunshine station footbridge in January 2014; and dedicated platforms at Sunshine station for Ballarat line passengers in April 2014.

So, as I pointed out before, this project, as we inherited it in its very early stages, was poorly scoped and poorly thought through. A lot of work has been put into it. It was originally claimed that it would be completed in 2016, and if you have a look at the record of the former Labor government in completing projects on time, it would not be hard to imagine that a project of this size could perhaps find itself in the bracket of 2017–2018. Not only have we brought the project forward, not only is it around \$900 million under budget, but we have been able to open up various sections of the Regional Rail Link project to enable early access when those particular sections of the project have been completed.

We have certainly been out to a number of these particular openings, and I can tell you that the communities, particularly in the western suburbs, are over the moon. They had no idea that they were going to get such early access to this project given what was predicted under the former Labor government.

I refer to a media release from Infrastructure Partnerships Australia of Wednesday, 12 March 2014, ‘Victoria’s Regional Rail Link recognised as nation’s infrastructure project of the year’, that says it has been:

... recognised as the country’s best, in front of more than 550 public and private sector executives gathered for Infrastructure Partnerships Australia’s National Infrastructure Awards, in Sydney ...

It was the best Australian project of the past year because it has been delivered extremely well in spite of significant complexities.

As I pointed out before, although there has been claim after claim by the former Labor government, now in opposition, that everything was covered off in the original budget, that there was no change to the scope and that they had done all the work that was required to put this project to market, as I pointed out, the Auditor-General's *Report on the Annual Financial Report of the State of Victoria 2011–12* says in early 2011 the budget for the Regional Rail Link was under review. Additional costs were expected for the purchase of rolling stock — you do need trains — station platforms, signalling and land acquisition and the removal of level crossings at Anderson Road in Sunshine. So as much as the former government may claim that the project was properly scoped, may claim that projects such as the Anderson Road grade separations, both of them, were in the scope, quite clearly they were not, because the Auditor-General points that out in his annual financial report.

Mr SCOTT — Minister, I refer you to budget paper 3, page 64. There is a reference there to the Avalon Airport rail link, to your pre-election commitment to build a new rail line to Avalon Airport and your 50 million first-term investment for design and planning, land acquisition and preliminary construction works of the rail link. Could you please outline to the committee exactly how much the government has invested in dollar terms in this project in your first term of office — and hopefully your last.

Mr MULDER — Thanks for the question, Robin. The 2014–15 state budget has allocated \$1.3 million to enable the planning for the Avalon Airport rail link transport corridor to continue and for a reservation to be put in place. This is in addition to the \$5.1 million already provided in the 11–12 and 12–13 state budgets. The government supports development of Avalon Airport as Victoria's second international airport and is undertaking a planning study for a future rail connection linking it with both Melbourne and Geelong. Relying on Melbourne Airport alone to meet Victoria's future passenger and freight care travel needs is short-sighted. We must plan for the future development of Avalon now.

The government has committed a total of \$6.4 million for the rail link planning study and is working to secure funding and support from the commonwealth government and also Avalon Airport for this link. Planning for a reservation for a future rail link is well progressed, and three preliminary route alignment options have been identified between Lara and Little River. Two rounds of stakeholder and community consultation have been completed. A range of more detailed technical, environmental and economic investigations have been undertaken to better understand opportunities and constraints of the preliminary route alignment options. The department is now working to identify a preferred alignment for the future rail link, as in engaging with the operators of Avalon Airport and the Department of Defence to secure agreement to reserve airport land for the rail link. State and commonwealth government planning and environmental approval requirements are currently being determined, and it is expected that a preferred alignment will be ready for seeking planning and environment approvals late in 2014.

We have done an enormous amount of work in relation to the project. As you would appreciate, the number of flights that are currently coming out of Avalon are minimal. The airport recognises that. In discussions we have had with the airport owners and management of the airport, they are not expecting the government — and we are not expecting the government — in this budget to commit to start to build a heavy rail line into Avalon at this point in time. However, they are prepared to work with the government to explore options for improved public transport until either their international or domestic passenger volumes start to pick up.

We have undertaken the work. We went to the election in good faith working with the people at Avalon. I understand this project was bagged, and it was not supported by the former Labor government. They did not want to see the Geelong region given access to a rail link, to what has now been categorised as an international airport into the future. We see it as being vital for the future of Geelong, and we see it being vital for Victoria in its own right that we have two international airports, both curfew-free and both connected to rail. That was the position that we took to the election, that is the position that we are advancing and we are working very closely with Avalon Airport to achieve these aims.

As you can appreciate, from commentary in the media in relation to this particular project, Avalon Airport are very, very supportive of the government's engagement with them, the amount of work that we have been doing with them, but at the same time understanding that what they had hoped for — and that was a large increase of flights in and out of Avalon Airport — has not eventuated at this particular point in time, but we will continue to work with them. But as I said, we were the only party that took an Avalon Airport rail link to the last election. We are delivering on that commitment with the funding that we are applying for the planning of that particular project.

We are the only party that has taken a metropolitan rail link to Melbourne Airport forward to the community. We understand that we should play to our strengths. The fact is we had two airports, both international status, both curfew-free. If you have a look at the difficulty New South Wales is encountering in trying to put in place a second airport, the fact that they have a curfew and the fact that traffic volumes are growing rapidly at Melbourne airport — 30 million passenger movements per year at the moment, predicted to go to around 64 million by the early 2030s — we have to make sure that we are ready for that growth. We have to make sure that we can accommodate that growth. We do not want to find ourselves in a position that has been clearly recognised by a former Labor minister, now opposition leader, that they were thrown out of government because they failed to plan for growth.

Whether it is rail, whether it is road, whether it is air or whether it is ports, quite clearly, in just one turn of office this government has made enormous steps forward in catering for growth, whether it be freight, whether it be people travelling to and from work, whether it be people travelling on the roads or whether it be people who wish to travel by air. We are covering off on each and every one of those particular areas.

I have to say, when you look at this year's budget — a \$1.3 billion surplus and surpluses going forward — we are the only ones who can turn up at the auction, put our hand up and bid. It is all right to put out a \$30 billion transport plan with no money, but you have got to be able to put your hand up at the auction and bid and deliver the projects, and that is what we can do as a coalition government. That is something that a former Labor government could not do, because they never had the funds, they were trading in a structural deficit and any of these projects going forward would have been funded via more debt.

Mr SCOTT — Minister, I find your boastful suggestions, when you have spent — what — \$6.4 million out of a \$50 million commitment, somewhat galling. But when will people be able to catch a train to Avalon Airport from either Melbourne or Geelong — in what year?

Mr MULDER — As I indicated to you, Robin, with your former question, we are working very, very closely with the people at Avalon Airport. You will notice the commentary through the media; they have been very supportive of the government's approach, recognising that the flights coming in and out of Avalon have decreased. As I said, they would not expect in this particular budget that there was going to be a commitment to start to build a heavy rail link into Avalon Airport. They have said to us in conversations across the table 'We will work closely with government' to ensure that we can put in place, working with Avalon Airport, the appropriate public transport requirements that will meet their current needs. As they are able to attract further carriers into Avalon we will then be in a position where we have got the reservation in place and we are ready to go. Can I just say, Chair, this is not a highly complex project. The great benefit of Avalon, whether it is air freight or whether it is passengers, is that they have a broad gauge and standard gauge rail line running past the front of the facility in its own right. To simply create a line into Avalon is not a complex or highly expensive project. We are going to work hand in hand with them. We have had to go through the process —

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — I have warned members about interjecting during supplementaries.

Mr MULDER — So we have had to go through the process of putting in place the planning. We do not want to get caught in a position whereby you make an announcement and say, 'How are we going to do this?'. All the planning will be undertaken. The investment has been made. The community consultation processes have been undertaken. There has been strong engagement with the owners of the airport; there has been strong engagement with Geelong City Council. They understand the position of the government, and they are supportive of the position of the government.

Mr O'BRIEN — Minister, I would like to return to budget paper 4, page 116, which refers to the Bayside rail improvement project. I was just wondering if you could outline what this initiative involves for commuters along the Frankston line. I am more than happy for you also to elaborate on that project — RandL, as I think it was referred to. It is rather intriguing.

Mr MULDER — I will leave that to roads, if you do not mind; we have got that later on in the day.

Mr O'BRIEN — I will wait with interest.

Mr MULDER — Thank you, David, for the question. The Bayside rail improvement project, \$115 million, budget paper 4, page 116: we are making a \$115 million investment in a better rail service on the Frankston line. Track, signal and power upgrades will allow existing and new X'trapolis trains to operate, providing greater reliability. There is also a major package of improvements to station safety, amenity and also for customer information. I think we have already got some rainbow boards out there being trialled along that particular corridor on some of the stations, and I had a look at some of those down at Public Transport Victoria through the course of the week. They give a detailed update of exactly what is happening with each of the lines on the network: what the services are like, where the delays are, what the time delays are, bus services connecting and so forth — fantastic outcome, fantastic initiative.

Currently the X'trapolis trains are confined to the Burnley and the Clifton Hill groups. The Bayside project will upgrade signals, track and power supply as well as maintenance facilities to enable the X'trapolis trains to operate on the Frankston, Werribee and Williamstown lines, as they are all part of the Bayside group. These upgrades will further improve reliability and punctuality on those lines, benefiting 50 000 weekday travellers on the Frankston line alone. There will be eight new X'trapolis trains in a \$176 million investment, as well as existing X'trapolis trains.

The first stage of the project involves improvements to the Frankston line stations. Works commenced in December 2013, involving more platform canopies; upgrades to station lighting; improvements to passenger security; new passenger information screens providing advice on the state of the public transport system, as I indicated before; covered walkways to bus interchanges; and more myki readers. A trial of the new passenger information screens, known as rainbow boards, as I was talking about, at three stations along the Frankston line — Moorabbin, Malvern and also Bentleigh — and station works are on track for completion in late 2014. Works are progressing ahead of schedule, and PTV is planning to start running limited X'trapolis peak services in the second half of 2014. People from Frankston will start to see the new trains running on their lines from the second half of 2014. The new X'trapolis trains are expected to enter service from late 2015. The ones that are already out there, the new ones we have brought on, the second half of 2014; the newer ones, late 2015.

As part of the Melbourne Rail Link, Frankston line passengers will be able to travel by rail all the way to Melbourne Airport. This will be a great thing for Frankston line commuters wanting to travel interstate and overseas — something that the Labor government could never have deemed possible to deliver. The fantastic project will improve public transport for the people all along the Frankston line. We know what the Labor government thought of the people of Frankston and how it turned its back on the people of Frankston and how punctuality on the Frankston line was the worst across metropolitan Melbourne. We all remember how punctuality plummeted to 62.6 per cent in May 2010. It has improved dramatically under the coalition government: the 12-month average, May 2013 to April 2014, is 90.6 per cent. So 62.6 at its worst to 90.6 per cent, compared to 70.9 in Labor's last 12 months in office, December 2009 to November 2010, which I am sure Martin can remember well.

As well, we have added 181 more weekly Metro services on the Frankston line since we came to government. Weekday daytime trains — —

Mr PAKULA — On a point of order, Chair, the minister is concerned for me, and I appreciate that; I am equally concerned for him. It appears that someone may have hacked the minister's Twitter account because someone claiming to be Terry Mulder just put out a tweet a minute ago while the minister is sitting here at the table, and maybe he could get his staff to look at that to make sure his account has not been hacked.

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Order!

Mr MULDER — I am more than happy to explain it, Martin, if you would like. I think it is very important that if you are going to put those messages out, they are thoroughly thought through and they are looked at, and my staff will on my behalf — —

Members interjecting.

Mr PAKULA — My concern was unfounded, Chair.

Mr MULDER — My staff will, on my behalf and with my approval, after I have looked at and approved tweets, put them on my site. As you can understand, it can be somewhat dangerous. As I understand, the shadow Minister for Public Transport put out a tweet on the day of our budget that Frankston line trains were being taken out of the loop. It is dangerous to put those things out without checking them first, so we just make sure that we cast an eye across those issues to make sure we get the facts right, Martin.

As well, we have added 181 more weekly Metro services on the Frankston line since we came to government. Weekend, daytime trains now run every 10 minutes, a doubling of the previous frequency. I think that explains these darts from the room every 10 minutes or so from the former transport minister. I was nearly going to remove the jug of water.

Can I go to this Frankston line issue? If ever a matter was summed up, it was summed up in an article in the *Age* of 4 December 2010 following the defeat of the former Labor government. It is comments from Rob Hudson, who was the defeated member for Bentleigh. This is what he had to say in relation to his pleas and discussions with the former public transport minister and with other senior people within the former Labor government. The article says:

‘... I think if we had a strategy I may well be still there’, he said.

He had approached outgoing Premier John Brumby and his transport and roads minister about problems with level crossings in his electorate —

that would have been North Road, Ormond, I would imagine —

that needed a grade separation and the impact of timetable changes on rail services.

‘... I certainly argued as strenuously as I could about the need to tackle the level crossings’ ...

It goes on and on. I think that tells a story in relation to what happened along the Frankston line — the fact that the government recognised that the people on the Frankston line had been treated poorly. We acted swiftly when we came to government in terms of addressing the problems along that line. I am not just talking about the Bayside rail improvement project; I am talking about the \$100 million of additional maintenance funding that we put into the rail network.

I said very clearly in opposition that when we came to government we would get back to the basics, that we would stabilise the metropolitan rail network and that we would improve the performance of the metropolitan rail network. That started, I said at the time, with the drainage, the ballast, the sleepers, the rails, the points, the crossings, the signalling and the power. If you go back over the last three or so years, that is where the money has been invested, along with adding additional trains and adding additional services — over 1000 — to the network. A lot of those have found their way onto the Frankston line and also onto the Pakenham-Cranbourne-Dandenong line, where they were needed.

I do not want to go back to the overheads that were put up as part of my presentation, but quite obviously you have to ask yourself the question, ‘How can you achieve those sorts of outcomes in just over three years, when a former Labor government, swimming in money, had 11 years and ran the system into the ground?’. There is no doubt that the facts and figures speak for themselves. We know that we have more work to do, and we are doing more work along that line. Southland station is another one of the projects which we announced as part of upgrades along the Frankston line. We will continue to invest, we will continue to make the improvements and we will not turn our back. It was the worst performing line when we came to government, and the improvements have been dramatic.

But, as those in Public Transport Victoria and the department know, we do not settle for what we have come up with. We believe that we can make further improvements, further enhancements to the network, and provide a safer, more reliable and more punctual service going forward. I would like to think that perhaps at the next hearing there will be an even better story to tell, and I am sure, if the Victorian public trust in us, we will have a better story to tell.

The CHAIR — Thank you, Minister, and I note that the frivolous point of order count is now one all.

Ms GARRETT — I refer again to the Melbourne Rail Link project and also again to the comprehensive interim business case, which I note has now been peppered with references to comprehensive preliminary

common-sense business cases. One particularly astute observer of these very proceedings created a new hashtag on Twitter called #oxymoronfridays, which I think is entirely apt.

What advice did the so-called comprehensive interim business case expert advisers provide in relation to the scheme's impact on the pressures experienced on the St Kilda Road and Swanston Street tram routes? In particular, did the advice say that your proposal to divert trains stopping at the proposed Domain station away from Flinders Street station would add to or reduce pressure on the St Kilda Road tram routes?

Mr MULDER — You have asked about an issue that is very much in the phase of operations, if you can appreciate that. I have with me Mark Wild, the CEO of Public Transport Victoria, who has worked very closely with this particular project, and I will hand over to Mark to answer that for us.

Mr WILD — Regarding the revised alignment for Melbourne Rail Link compared to our plan, the first thing I would say is that it is entirely consistent with our network development plan, which outlined a series of packages over many years and many phases. The only real difference to this, apart from obviously a geographical alignment, is that the sequencing of the project is much earlier in this package, but I can confirm that we have modelled the tram routes on Swanston Street and St Kilda Road with the new Domain station, and the new alignment will work according to that. Also, we plan to put additional services into Parkville, north-south through the CBD. I can confirm that we have done that modelling.

Ms GARRETT — I have probably a long supplementary question because, with respect, the question was not answered. It was about whether it would add or reduce pressure, not whether modelling had been done. Is it going to make it better for tram users?

Mr WILD — Transport modelling is a very complex issue, but to make it simple the situation will be able to be coped with in terms of the capacity. We would see no great increase in passenger load breaches in that area. In terms of the modelling, the modelling confirms that we can cope with that alignment, particularly as we have our new E-class tram, which is a very large tram with very high frequency. That is going very well for us at the moment. The modelling has been done, and we can confirm that we can manage the capacity that we expect.

Mr ONDARCHIE — Minister, in your slide presentation you very quickly touched on the affordability of public transport, and I refer you to page 55 of budget paper 3, where there is a line item in the output initiatives about affordable public transport. I wonder if you could outline to the committee what that means.

Mr MULDER — Thank you, Craig. This is a fantastic outcome for the travelling public: free CBD trams and cheaper trains and buses for Melbourne. Public transport will be more affordable under a coalition government. This is another way the government is building a better public transport system and moving more people more often. From 1 January 2015, tram travel will be free within Melbourne's CBD and also in Docklands. Bus, train and tram commuters will be able to travel in zones 1 and 2 for the price of a zone 1 fare; people who travel entirely within zone 2 will continue to receive the same discounted fare that they currently receive. What this means is that a commuter who pays for a zone 1 and 2 ticket every day will save around \$1200 a year or, if they use an annual myki pass, will save more than \$750 per year. It is about encouraging more people out of their cars and onto public transport and making it easier for travellers to move around Melbourne. It is about providing significant cost of living relief for families.

We are able to afford this measure and still invest a massive \$24 billion in transport infrastructure because we have rebuilt the state budget, creating strong surpluses that are the envy of other states, and we have managed our finances very carefully. For instance, if Marty from Springvale took a 2-hour trip in zones 1 and 2, it would cost him \$6.06. Under the new systems, Marty's fare would be \$3.58, so Marty would do extremely well out of this initiative, looking at that particular example.

Mr PAKULA — For the record, I have no idea where you live.

Mr MULDER — It is interesting, isn't it, that when we put up a fantastic initiative and announcement like this how you still get those people who will attack it? There are still people out there who will attack providing cost of living relief for families, and this is a massive cost of living relief. If you could imagine partners, both working, both who in the past have been travelling across zones 1 and 2, both getting that level of relief, somewhere around \$2400 a year will be put back in their hip pockets because of this initiative. Yet, as I say, it is a massive cost of living relief for the community, but not everyone approves.

There was an article in the *Bendigo Advertiser* on 27 March. It says:

Member for Bendigo East Jacinta Allan has hit out at the state government's promise of free and discounted public transport in Melbourne.

I would consider, being such a senior minister in the former government and with such a prominent role in the current opposition, that that is probably a reflection of what is being thought within opposition ranks.

Ms Allan said the announcement was about winning votes in Melbourne without supporting the needs of regional Victorians — forgetting, of course, about the Regional Rail Link. She said:

Denis Napthine seems to have completely abandoned regional transport needs ...

Perhaps the member would like to take a visit out to the new Epsom station in Bendigo or perhaps down to say hello to the PSOs at Bendigo station — the Ravenswood interchange at the same time — to understand what we are doing for the Bendigo community. Basically the shadow minister was complaining that we were taking pressure off families' budgets and putting money back into the pockets of people who travel in and out of the metropolitan area, in and out of zone 1 and zone 2.

This particular announcement was supported widely. Mark Stone from VECCI said:

The announcement of free tram travel within the CBD and Docklands, as well as zone 1 fares applying across the entire metropolitan network, from 1 January ... is a positive step towards making Victoria more livable and competitive.

This initiative will encourage people to use public transport because of the significant cost savings and provide benefit to local users ...

Also, in the *Age*:

The Committee for Melbourne supports the free trams in the CBD and Docklands.

The accolades go on and go on. We think this is a great move forward. We think the money has been spent and allocated into the right areas. We think this is where the relief is required for families.

I do note that there is another proposal that has been mooted by the opposition in relation to extended public transport on Friday nights and also on Saturday nights, for trains and trams to run throughout the night to make sure that the nightclubbers and the people who struggle out of the Men's Gallery in the early hours of the morning can get home safely.

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Order!

Mr MULDER — As I have pointed out in the past, we have a very good and extensive NightRider bus service that runs half-hourly from the CBD and basically mimics the train tracks that run out of Melbourne. There is plenty of opportunity for people who want to stay in the CBD late at night to get a bus home. Those services actually stop anywhere along the road where it is safe to do so. They have phones on board, women can travel up close to the drivers and, from 1 January next year, of course, they will all travel at zone 1 fares, so those people who want to stay in the city late at night are well catered for.

This has been raised in the past. In fact, it was raised with the former Labor government. I will just say that I am in receipt of a letter in front of me here. This goes to the Lord Mayor, Cr Robert Doyle, it is from the Minister for Public Transport and it is in relation to Melbourne City Council's request for all-night trains. What it says is:

Train and tram timetables introduced in October 2006 incorporated an increase in late night services of approximately one hour on Friday and Saturday nights. The non-operational hours provide an opportunity to perform essential maintenance services on the network. Extending services beyond the current timetable on weeknights or weekends would affect the time available for maintenance. Current levels of demand are not sufficient to warrant extending late-night services. The department of transport will continue to monitor the patronage levels of late-night services.

It also goes on to sing the praises of the NightRider weekend bus service:

It provides a safe, cheap alternative for late-night travel. Buses travel along the major routes from the city to Melbourne's outer suburbs, depart every 30 minutes —

as I said before —

and since late 2008 all the bus routes run every 30 minutes.

Three new routes have also been introduced to Doncaster, Healesville and Cranbourne.

We think that providing that providing that relief for families and for people who are working is very important. Quite obviously the former Labor government did not agree that they should extend late-night public transport, because it was going to create an enormous problem with maintenance. I know that the money allocated by the current opposition to this is around \$50 million for operational. Then of course there is the issue raised about PSOs — another 48. If you have to get around this issue of maintaining the trains, I think there is around \$192 million to add additional trains simply to get people home from King Street and, as I say, people who struggle out of other venues in the early hours of the morning. Our money has gone where we believe it should have gone.

Mr ONDARCHIE — Minister, are you happy to table that letter?

Mr MULDER — I am more than happy to table that letter that has been provided to us, stating that the former Labor government did not support late-night public transport. That is quite clear in the response they sent to the Lord Mayor.

Mr PAKULA — I am sure the minister will tell us whether he got that letter from the Lord Mayor or from the department.

Mr MULDER — Does it matter?

Mr PAKULA — Yes, it does.

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Order!

Mr PAKULA — I am interested in the characterisation by the minister of the sort of people who need trains late at night; I am sure they will be very appreciative of it. Minister, I want to ask you about Southland station. You and I think the Premier made an announcement a few weeks ago, and there was a bit of confusion at the time about whether it was a \$13 million project or a \$21 million project. I think the Premier said it was 13, and you then corrected him and said the total cost is 21. I note that in budget paper 4, at page 117, it is there at 20 860 000, despite the fact that there are no toilets for passengers. Can I just ask you: do you stand by that \$21 million figure as the total figure for the delivery of Southland station?

Mr MULDER — Thanks for that question, Martin. As you can appreciate, there has been a lot of discussion in relation to Southland station. As I recall, I believe it was the former transport minister Peter Batchelor who engaged consultants to provide the department with a costing to deliver the Southland station project. I believe, if I recall correctly, that costing was around about \$10 million or \$11 million at the time. In opposition we were provided with a copy of that consultant's report. We added to that the construction index, and we made a commitment at the time — it was around \$13 million to that particular project — based on the information provided by the former Labor government.

I will take it back a step further. When we made our announcement in relation to the fact that we were going to fund a new station at Southland, there was a rushed announcement, and it was referred to in the *Age* of 19 November 2010, whereby it was reported that Labor had promised to build a railway station at Southland shopping centre for \$45 million. From the original document that was provided to us in opposition, the project had jumped to \$45 million. I also refer to a statement that was made by the former transport minister in relation to that \$45 million project. Mr Pakula said that Mr Baillieu's price tag of \$13 million to build a station at the shopping centre would get him nothing more than half a platform.

If my calculations are correct, if in your view \$13 million gets you half a platform, I would say that \$26 million would get you one and \$52 million would get you two. Then when you start to add all the other facilities — the

underground passenger carriageway, the canopies on the station and all the other provisions that come with it — I think that your \$45 million is starting to look a little more like something in the order of \$70 to \$80 million, if you put \$13 million as the price for half of one platform, Mr Pakula. I am not sure where the 45 came from. Quite obviously that was plucked out in a panic attack.

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Order! Mr O'Brien!

Mr MULDER — It would appear to me that perhaps the announcement was made from the then Premier's office without consulting with the minister for transport, because to me there appears to be a massive escalation from what was first proposed of \$45 million out to what Mr Pakula indicated that this project would cost.

When we looked at this project we indicated that it should have everything that other stations have in terms of bus interchanges, toilet facilities and everything else you would expect from a modern, state-of-the-art station. At the time when we started to enter into arrangements with the owners of Southland shopping centre, we thought that when that original announcement of \$45 million was made by the former Labor government they would have had discussions at least — they were in government. It would have been very hard for the opposition, but they should have had discussions with the people from Southland. Nevertheless, we discovered when we came to government that those discussions about access and all the other issues had not been approved for a station at Southland. We had to go through a very extensive set of negotiations with the owners of Southland to make sure that we could get a railway station built there that was in the best possible location for easy access to the shopping centre.

The area that we have identified is constrained, and there was an enormous amount of engineering work that was undertaken by Public Transport Victoria to be able to provide a station with two platforms, with an underpass for passengers and with everything else that was required on the station platform. We were able to negotiate that with the owners of Southland. It is in close proximity to the shopping centre in its own right, and I believe through that process we got a very good outcome.

That station is going to cater for somewhere in the order of 4400 people a day. It is going to be one of the busiest stations on the network — I think around about the fourth busiest station — and it is a destination station. It is not a commuter station; it is a destination station, where people will come to shop. They will step off a train, and they will step into the shopping centre. They will do their shopping, do what they have got to do in there and then they will come out, step onto a train and head off again. The question was raised with me in relation to toilet facilities at this particular station.

Mr PAKULA — Point of order. It was actually a very simple question. The question was actually simply —

Mr MULDER — I haven't finished.

Mr PAKULA — No, the question was simply: does the minister stand by the \$21 million figure? That was the question.

Members interjecting.

Mr PAKULA — I just don't want the minister to be under any illusion as to what the question was.

The CHAIR — Order! Points of order will be heard in silence and, as the Deputy Chair knows very well, points of order are not used as an opportunity to ask the question again, to restate the question. I do not uphold the point of order.

Mr MULDER — Thank you, Chair, and I can understand the concern that Martin raises, given the fact, as I said, he is on the record saying give them half a platform at Southern Cross Station for \$13 million — —

Mr PAKULA — Southern Cross now?

Mr MULDER — I should say Southland station

Mr PAKULA — That one's 300 years old.

Mr MULDER — A station at Southland where half a platform would cost \$13 million. I can understand your concerns about costs when you have got those sorts of figures spinning in your head, but can I just go on, because the question was raised about the facilities at Southland station and the issue in relation to not having toilets. What I did was I had a staff member go out and step that out for me, from where the railway station is where people will come out of the station and where they enter the TLC Dry Cleaners and Oz Liquor at the main entrance opposite where the train station is now. He is not tall but he does walk reasonably quickly and takes long strides, and he tells me 132 steps and 1 minute and 12 seconds. I would push it out to 1 minute and 30 because he is a pretty quick walker. At Southland shopping centre, the back entrance to the nearest public toilets, was 170 steps — 1 minute and 30 seconds, so let's say 1 minute and 45 — let's stretch it.

As I said before, and I will say it again, I purchase, on behalf of the Victorian taxpayers, services and projects for people who use the public transport network. Given that those facilities exist in Southland shopping centre, given that people who get off a train and go in there, which will take them anywhere between 1 minute and 30 seconds and 2 minutes to reach these fatalities and given the fact that when they are leaving Southland they have the ability to use those facilities as well, I would think that people would be somewhat outraged to see those facilities duplicated on a railway station platform, being serviced and all the consumables supplied as well, and of course being subject to vandals. I think that the decision was the right decision. We provided a station that services people who are coming to Southland to shop, who are going to turn around, jump back on the train and head home, and all the facilities — bus interchanges, bicycle facilities, toilet facilities — are already there.

I watch the dollars obviously a lot closer than former public transport ministers. I monitor contingencies very, very closely, unlike former transport ministers, and I am obliged to get the best possible outcome, the best value for money for people who use public transport, but they have to understand it is heavily subsidised by other taxpayers, and other taxpayers would expect that we do not duplicate facilities that are available to the public. As I said — 132/170 steps — maximum, maybe we will just say 2 minutes away — from where the railway station will be located.

Mr PAKULA — Minister, I note that in that long, long diatribe you never went close to answering my question about whether you stood by the \$21 million figure for the station.

Mr MULDER — Do you stand by the 13?

Mr PAKULA — Thirteen was your figure, not mine.

Mr MULDER — No, yours was half a platform. Half a platform for 13.

The CHAIR — Order!

Mr PAKULA — So you announced this \$21 million figure only a couple of weeks ago and you now seem to be reluctant to stand by it, and I am wondering if it is because, if you look at page 116 of budget paper 4, the 'Bayside rail improvements (metro various)' TEI, which was \$100 million last year, has now magically become \$115 million, and it says that 'TEI has been increased by \$15 million due to a change in project scope'. I want to ask you, Minister, whether that additional \$15 million in project scope is fundamentally related to the Southland project and whether or not that station is closer to \$36 million now than it is to 21 million?

Mr MULDER — As I say, there seems to be some concern about the amount of money we are spending on the Frankston line.

Mr PAKULA — No, no. Is Southland 36 or 21?

Mr MULDER — No, I am just telling you, Southland station is on the Frankston line. There seems to be some real concern about the fact that we have acknowledged we are — —

Mr PAKULA — Is it 36 or 21?

Mr MULDER — That we have acknowledged the problems that we inherited from the former Labor government with performance along that line, with the fact that they had 11 years — —

Mr PAKULA — You've been caught out telling fibs about the cost. You've been caught out.

Mr MULDER — Eleven years to do something about the Southland railway station, and what do we get now? Carping, whingeing and whining about the money we are spending.

Mr PAKULA — You said it was 13, then you said it was 21 and now it is 36.

Mr MULDER — I tell you what I will do, Chair, from the architect of the \$13 million for half a platform, I will allow Mark Wild, who is the CEO of Public Transport Victoria, who has been heavily involved with the bayside project, to answer that question for me as well. He may be able to add some light.

Mr WILD — The cost of the Southland station is \$21 — \$20.8 million. That includes all the facilities for Southland station. The additional 15 million is for power work and signalling work, mostly related to the X'trapolis trains.

Mr PAKULA — Around Southland?

Mr WILD — No, for the whole of the Frankston line.

Mr PAKULA — That was what the 100 was for?

Mr WILD — The additional \$15 million is for additional power and signalling work associated with Frankston through to the Werribee line, on top of the original \$100 million. It allows us a more reliable service for the X'trapolis trains. It is not related to the Southland station.

Mr PAKULA — It is not correct. It is not.

Mr MULDER — Would you rather us take some scope out, Martin? What would you rather pull out?

The CHAIR — Mr Angus.

Mr MULDER — Train stations do need signalling, as you can appreciate. There needs to be investment in the network in order for us to provide the facilities along that line. That matter has been clearly explained to Martin; he does not seem to want to accept that that is the fact. And he seems to think that we are spending, once again, too much money on the Frankston line. That is what it gets back to — too much money is being spent on the Frankston line.

The CHAIR — Thank you, Minister.

Mr MULDER — If you have a problem with that, you might be able to — —

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Enough! I have called Mr Angus for the next question but there does not seem to be a desire amongst participants for Mr Angus to ask that question. Whether that desire exists or not, we are going to move on.

Mr ANGUS — Minister, I refer you to page 48 of budget paper 4 in relation to the metro level crossing — —

The CHAIR — Mr Angus, apparently we still have a point of order.

Mr ONDARCHIE — For the clarity of the estimates committee, did Mr Pakula just accuse the CEO of Public Transport Victoria of lying to the estimates committee? When he responded to the Southbank question he said, 'You are wrong'.

Mr PAKULA — There is a difference between saying someone is wrong and saying someone is lying.

Mr ONDARCHIE — I am just asking the question.

Mr PAKULA — Are you asking me or asking the Chair?

Mr O'BRIEN — Yes, we are asking you.

Mr PAKULA — No, I did not.

Mr ONDARCHIE — Thank you.

The CHAIR — Mr Angus, please continue.

Mr ANGUS — Minister, as I was saying, referring to budget paper 4, page 48, in relation to the metro level crossing blitz program. Minister, can you outline for the committee please what this program entails?

Mr MULDER — This is the level crossing removals and upgrades and separations. We are delivering the largest level crossing program in Victoria's history. The level crossings at Springvale Road, Mitcham Road and Rooks Road have already been removed. The 2014–15 budget provides further funding of \$685 million over four years to remove four level crossings at Burke Road in Glen Iris, North Road in Ormond, Blackburn Road in Blackburn and Main Road in St Albans.

Burke Road, Glen Iris — 26 000 vehicles, 158 trains and 186 trams every day. The boom gates can be down up to 47 minutes during the 2-hour peak, but due to manually operated signalling cars can be stopped for up to 53 minutes in the 2-hour peak. You can actually look up in the signalling box there and see someone sitting there pulling levers operating the signalling. The project features a new Gardiner station constructed over the rail lines; a new plaza constructed over the western end of the platforms linking to Burke Road and a new island platform for the tramline; a station car park on the southern side of the rail line, meaning no need to cross the tracks after parking to get the train to the city, retaining the same number of car parks — commence construction 2015, completed early 2017.

North Road, Ormond — a crossing that was referred to by Rob Hudson, a former member for Bentleigh, in his stinging attack on the former Labor government — carries 41 200 vehicles a day, including 180 buses; 223 Metro passenger services on a weekday and on average 4 rail freight services. Recently it was observed that boom barriers were down 39 per cent of a 2-hour peak — 47 minutes. The project features an upgrade of Ormond station; car parking on the eastern side removed, car park on the western side reconfigured — no loss of car parks; new pedestrian crossings across North Road at the station entrance, construction work on this to start this year. Delivery and construction start early 2016, completed by mid-2017.

Blackburn Road, Blackburn. Two hundred and forty trains cross the level crossing each day, and around 15 000 vehicles. Boom gates are down for around 45 minutes in an average 2-hour peak period — 38 per cent of the time. The project features retention of existing station with some improvements to the station entrance; the station subway flooding problem to be alleviated through improved drainage; the provision of a 3-metre-wide shared pedestrian bike path on the south side of the corridor. Major construction starts 2015, completed 2017.

Main Road, St Albans — funded out of savings from the Regional Rail Link project — \$200 million to remove this dangerous level crossing, fully funded, as I said, out of RRL savings. Construction will begin this year. More than 20 000 motorists and pedestrians pass through this intersection each day. More than 160 Metro, Sunbury and V/Line Bendigo trains pass through this level crossing each weekday. Tragically there have been two fatalities and 39 near misses involving pedestrians since 2006. The project will also include the construction of a new premium station at St Albans for the people in the west. We have been able to bring this project forward, as I said, thanks to the good project management of our government.

There has been a lot of commentary, particularly around level crossings, grade separations and the ability of governments to deliver them. Certainly the approach of the government of the day is they can be delivered, they will be delivered and they can be funded. There is another commitment out in the world at the moment by the former government, now in opposition, that they are going to deliver each and every one of 50 crossings across Melbourne for \$120 million. I say good luck. If you have a look at what St Albans is costing, I would say good luck.

The Leader newspaper on 10 May:

Dandenong Labor MP John Pandazopoulos said Springvale Road was not an ideal site for a tunnel or overpass.

'We want to get a rough idea of which crossings are more affordable and viable to grade separate', Mr Pandazopoulos said.

He did not want to touch Springvale Road — too close to the opposition leader's electorate to be worried about. Obviously he did not think there was a need to service and look after the people in that community.

The Leader, 10 November 2010:

Mitcham state Labor MP Tony Robinson and Transport Minister Martin Pakula told the Leader the level crossing was too complex to grade separate.

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Order!

Mr MULDER — It continues:

'If you wanted to get rid of the crossing you would need the line about 6 metres below the road. There is no way you could drop the line' ...

That was the approach of the former Labor government: to put up a case as to why these projects could not be delivered rather than do the hard work and make sure that they can be delivered. But as I say, it is a bit like the man at the auction: you cannot put your hand up if you have not got the money, and that was certainly the case with the former Labor government. There is no doubt that these projects will create an enormous difference in terms of — —

Mr PAKULA — Did you and Denis have a horse together?

The CHAIR — Order!

Mr MULDER — Well, I would not ask you. In terms of the number of people who were affected — people who were in trains in terms of safety issues, people who were in motor cars, cyclists, pedestrians — I would like to point out with a lot of these also a lot of thought goes into these grade separation projects. We are engaged heavily with local communities to make sure that we can cater for each and every member of the community. By that I am talking about cyclists, I am talking about pedestrians, I am talking about people with disabilities. We do not want cheap options. We do not want nasty options, because these projects when completed are going to be there for decades, and when they are done well, you can just see the difference that it does make to the surrounding areas.

When the Premier and I stood out at St Albans with Andrew Elsbury and Bernie Finn, the hardworking local members out there who pushed hard to get this project up, and watched cars coming from all different directions and watched the change that has taken place out there in terms of the improvement to the amenity of the area and the improvement to the presentation of the shops — you can understand that once the rail line is lowered, once a new railway station is built, that area is just going to blossom.

That area is just going to blossom, but there is no doubt, as I said, we have had members in that particular area, Labor members, who turned their backs on that particular community. We had a situation where Bill Shorten, the federal member, came out and attacked and attacked very strongly the lack of action by the former Labor government in dealing with the St Albans level crossing. You can understand that because there is no doubt there was a significant amount of neglect in terms of the people of the west, but we have picked that up. As I say, the councillors and mayors are over the moon about the level of visitation by members of government, ministers of government, and they can see that we are making a real difference to people's lives in those communities.

The CHAIR — As I have done previously when this matter has been raised, I advise the committee that I chair, at the invitation of Brimbank city, a group called St Albans Connect, which has an involvement in the revitalisation of St Albans.

Mr SCOTT — Minister, I refer you to budget paper 2, page 35, and there is a statement there:

The development of the port of Hastings as the state's second container port further increases the need for additional cross-city freight and transport infrastructure.

I want to ask you a question regarding rail freight, and the question is quite simple: what is the projected cost of a freight rail link between the city of Melbourne and Dandenong and Dandenong to Hastings?

Mr MULDER — Thank you, Robin, for your strong interest in the port of Hastings. As I understand, strongly supported by your government, and all of a sudden there seems to be a lack of support for that project, but times change and people move on, don't they? Priorities change and philosophies change, and it is very easy out of government to then turn your back on a project you supported in government.

Nevertheless, we understand a drastic need for a second major container port for Melbourne. We have already made a commitment in terms of the Port of Hastings Development Authority that was allocated \$110 million over four years in the 2013–14 budget to undertake the work. Planning for a rail and road connection is being undertaken in parallel with planning for the port itself. A four-year program to undertake comprehensive environmental commercial studies, complete a design of the port and transport connections, and develop the business case is now under way. That work is being undertaken as we speak.

A port development of this size will ultimately require a connection to the state and the national rail network. The planning work will therefore consider how best to achieve this, and at what stage in the port's development sequence a rail connection will be required. The planning work now under way includes a strategic assessment of the road network development needs, in particular the Western Port Highway, which will require widening to accommodate the increased port traffic and a reservation for rail. The business case development work will assess the cost of upgrading the rail and road connections.

To refresh your memory, I refer you to the *Victorian ALP Platform 2010 — Leadership for All. New Ideas. Forward Thinking* document where it says:

Labor will:

...

work towards increasing container handling capacity at the port of Melbourne and the long-term development of Hastings.

Whatever happened to that? Once again, airport rail link, a priority in government — or to get into government, I should say — ditched when you walked through the door. Hastings, a priority in government, ditched when you were marched out the door. Quite obviously there was a very, very strong sense in government that this project would proceed and should proceed under a Labor government, and it is interesting to note that this particular document is signed off by Daniel Andrews, chair of the ALP platform committee and of course Leader of the Opposition. How many of these have we got? How many of these broken promises have we got after 11 years? All of a sudden the philosophy changes, all of a sudden the position moves. Say anything to get through the door and then walk away from your commitments as soon as you are in there.

Members interjecting.

Mr MULDER — Walk away from your commitments as soon as you are through the door. No commitment whatsoever to that particular project. We understand there is a real need for these projects. We understand the pressure that is on the Port of Melbourne. We have committed once again to the mode shift incentive scheme to get as much rail as we could possibly get off the road network and onto the rail network. Of course there was \$38 million sitting in the budget, as I understand, under the former transport minister for intermodal hubs for port shuttles. It was sitting there, sitting there, sitting there, committed by the federal government. We have matched that with a \$20 million allocation to make that a reality. We have done market sounding.

Mr PAKULA — Made it a reality, have you?

Mr MULDER — We will make that a reality. We have put the money in the budget. The money is in the budget. It is there to deliver this project, unlike the former Labor government and former transport minister who sat on his hands and did nothing in that space. We actually back it up with money. We back it up in black and white, and we put the money in the budget. It is going to be a fantastic project in terms of getting more trucks off the road, more containers off the road.

Those container trucks that rattle through Yarraville, that rattle through Seddon and that rattle through Footscray would be alleviated by the western section of the East–West Link and would be further alleviated by a port

shuttle that puts those particular trucks and those containers on rail. It would make an enormous difference to the people who live in those suburbs. But obviously, once again, from what we understand, the opposition has turned their back again. Another project that they supported in government and have walked away from in opposition. The Port of Hastings: supported in government, walked away from in opposition. An airport rail link: supported in opposition, got into government, walked away from it again and now do not support it. You would have to ask yourself the question: what do they actually support?

Mr SCOTT — I note, despite the rhetorical flourishes — which I would enjoy if I had not sat through so many already — that you failed to answer the question. You did make reference to a development of a business case, and I ask: when will the business case be completed, and will you commit to publicly releasing it in full?

Mr MULDER — The business case development work will assess the cost of the upgrades and of course the improvements to rail and road connections. That will be completed in 2017, and as is the case with the current government and as was the case with the former government, we will release as much information as we possibly can as contained in the business case that does not put at risk the state in terms of our commercial position that enables us to get the best possible value for the Victorian taxpayers with the projects.

Mr SCOTT — If it went to financial close, you would release all?

Mr MULDER — I did not hear that question. Was it a further question, or was it just a remark?

The CHAIR — It is a further supplementary.

Mr PAKULA — So you are doing the business case after — —

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Order! Deputy Chair! Mr Scott has asked his supplementary. He then asked a further supplementary, which, given the nature of the initial supplementary, I was inclined to allow. If people behave, I will still allow it, but this constant toing and froing is not helping anyone to get information. Mr Scott, you ought to ask that further supplementary.

Mr SCOTT — My question was: after financial close, would you be willing to release the entire business case?

Mr MULDER — As I said, the Port of Hastings Development Authority was allocated \$110 million over four years in the 2013–14 budget to undertake this work, including the development of the business case. That business case will be completed in 2017. As you can understand, the Auditor-General undertakes a comprehensive analysis of these projects when governments go down the pathway of comprehensive business cases and developing these projects for funding. I have got no doubt that he will look very closely at this project and also at the Port of Hastings in its own right and the government's intent on developing that as a second container port.

I will repeat once again: as has been the case with former governments, and indeed your government, we will release as much information as is possible, but we will not release commercially sensitive information that would impact on our ability to get the best value for Victorian taxpayers out of some of those particular projects that would involve the development of the Port of Hastings.

Mr O'BRIEN — It might be useful if slide 3 is brought up. I would like to talk about improvements in punctuality. I note in relation to the answer to Mr Angus's question the excellent work by Mr Finn and Mr Elsbury in relation to the delivery of the St Albans level crossing removal. I know it is pretty hard to represent the Western Metropolitan Region when you live in Black Rock, so I do not know how you are going to go representing Lyndhurst from there — —

The CHAIR — Order! Mr O'Brien!

Mr O'BRIEN — What I would like to ask you, Minister, in relation to improvements — —

Ms GARRETT — Unedifying.

Mr O'BRIEN — Unedifying. It was beneath me, but he takes us down on occasion. I would like to ask you, Minister, about budget paper 3, page 248. Can you please detail for the committee the punctuality of metropolitan rail services?

The CHAIR — Before the minister answers, I note that there are 3 minutes left in this hearing.

Mr MULDER — Regarding punctuality on metropolitan rail services, as I said before, the system has drastically improved since we came to government, because we have focused on getting the basics right, from the drainage right through to overhead wiring. There are many things that make a system function and function correctly. Metro is operating somewhere around 1078 train trips a week, with an extra 134 on the Lilydale line, 181 on the Frankston line, 181 on the Werribee line, 130 on the Pakenham line, 81 on the Sunbury line and 58 on the South Morang line.

Metro trains is consistently beating its punctuality targets. Punctuality has been above 90 per cent for 24 consecutive months. We have seen massive improvements on the Frankston line, up from 66 per cent. We have seen the Pakenham line up from 64 per cent, Werribee line up from 75 per cent to 90 per cent now, Craigieburn line up from 83.5 per cent to 92.6 per cent and the Upfield line up from 84.9 per cent to 93.8 per cent. The 12-month average for punctuality across the metropolitan network is now 92.9 per cent. Punctuality on the Frankston line had plummeted to a dismal 62.6 per cent in May of 2010 under the former public transport minister.

Can I just touch on a discussion I had with Yarra Trams through the course of the week. The 28-day moving punctuality on the network is the best it has been for a long period of time. In actual fact since Yarra Trams took up running the network, of its 15 most punctual days ever, 13 of those have been in 2014 — a fantastic increase and massive uplift in terms of performance, not just on the metropolitan train network but also on the tram network.

As you can understand, we have had a lot of commentary running in relation to the problems that existed along that particular line. I know I spoke about the *Age* article of 4 December 2010, which quotes Mr Rob Hudson in relation to the Frankston line:

‘We needed to find a way to deal with these problems, and I think if we had a strategy I may well be still there’ ...

...

‘I spoke to more than 1000 people on the phone in my electorate and they kept raising public transport and community safety on trains. It wasn’t the only issue that people raised but it was by far the major issue that kept coming up’.

The article says:

He said timetable changes on the Frankston line in June meant the loss of at least five part-express services running through his electorate in the morning peak period.

...

Mr Hudson said there had been significant delays on the train line in the last week of the campaign, and people were ‘savage and unforgiving’ about that.

I do not know whether, as you say, he lost his seat in Parliament as a result of that. I do not know if there was ever an apology issued to Mr Hudson by those who let him down and let him down badly in relation to the poor performance of the public transport network. But I have got graph after graph and figure after figure that point to the 12-month average — April 2014 versus April 2010 — and it is just a great story to tell in terms of the improvements we have made to public transport since coming to office.

But I will say this now: we will continue to make the improvements. We have not stopped. This is ongoing, and it must be ongoing. We will continue to improve with the system we have got at the moment by maintaining it in a far better state than it has ever been maintained in the past, but we will build for the future. We will build Melbourne Rail Link, we will upgrade the Pakenham-Cranbourne-Dandenong corridor, we will upgrade the Frankston line, we will build new stations, we will open Regional Rail Link and we will make sure that the concerns of people who travel on the public transport network, particularly in relation to safety, are at the fore of the decisions we make going forward.

No doubt the rollout of protective services officers has made a huge difference to the way that people now view travelling on public transport. You only have to look at the satisfaction results that were up there; customer satisfaction is up. Customer satisfaction is up with taxis, customer satisfaction is up with buses and customer satisfaction is up with trams. It is a pretty good story to tell, but we acknowledge that we have got more work to do; we will do more work. I do thank the committee members for their questions in relation to public transport and the direction in which the government is heading. Thank you.

The CHAIR — Thank you, Minister. That concludes the hearing for the public transport portfolio. There were no questions in writing, so that concludes the hearing. I thank Mr Wild for his attendance.

Witnesses withdrew.