

TRANSCRIPT

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Budget estimates 2019–20 (Roads / Road Safety and the TAC)

Melbourne—Wednesday, 12 June 2019

MEMBERS

Mr Philip Dalidakis—Chair

Mr Richard Riordan—Deputy Chair

Mr Sam Hibbins

Mr Gary Maas

Mr Danny O'Brien

Ms Pauline Richards

Mr Tim Richardson

Ms Ingrid Stitt

Ms Bridget Vallenge

WITNESSES

Ms Jaala Pulford, Minister for Roads and Minister for Road Safety and the TAC,

Mr Paul Younis, Secretary, Department of Transport; and

Ms Robyn Seymour, Chief Executive, VicRoads, and

Mr Joe Calafiore, Chief Executive Officer, Transport Accident Commission.

The CHAIR: I declare open this hearing of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. On behalf of the Parliament, the committee is conducting this inquiry into the 2019–20 Budget Estimates, in case anyone was in any doubt. Its aim is to scrutinise public administration and finance to improve outcomes for the Victorian community. I welcome the Minister for Roads and Minister for Road Safety and the TAC, the Honourable Jaala Pulford, and officers from the department and also agencies. I thank you for appearing before the committee today.

All evidence given is protected by the Parliamentary Committees Act. This means that it attracts parliamentary privilege and is protected from judicial review. Witnesses found, however, to be giving false or misleading evidence will be forced to watch a season's worth of Collingwood football games and also may be in contempt of Parliament and subject to penalty.

Minister, I invite you to make a brief opening statement or presentation of no more than 10 minutes, followed by questions—enlightened questions—from the committee. Minister, over to you.

Ms PULFORD: Lovely, thanks, Phil. I would like to begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we are gathered and to pay my respects to elders, past and present. I thank the committee for the opportunity to come and talk a bit this morning about the recent state budget and my responsibilities.

Visual presentation.

Ms PULFORD: My responsibilities as roads minister include managing and maintaining 23 000 kilometres of Victoria's major connecting roads. These are of course the lifeblood of our economy, getting people to work, to school and back home again and everywhere else they need to go. They are of course an economic enabler, our roads, and a generator of jobs, but they perhaps most importantly of all connect people. They are an important transport choice and an important mode for people for whom there are fewer transport choices, for people with little kids or for those tasks where a private car is simply the best option.

Our government was re-elected in November with I think Victorians particularly strongly endorsing our government's approach to transport. I believe we have a mandate to implement a really ambitious transport agenda, and this budget really is about getting all of that done.

Victorians use literally thousands of kilometres of roads each day in different ways, and this slide shows how people get to work. It shows how heavily Victorians do depend on our road network. So 78 per cent of people in Melbourne and 90 per cent of people in regional Victoria travel to work by car. Lots of our public transport journeys are on the road network of course, and then there are all the people who walk or ride a bike or a motorbike as well. Around 80 per cent of public transport services use our road network—the trams and the buses. So my job is to make that road network work as efficiently and effectively for people as possible.

The budget supports these journeys that everyone makes, both in regional Victoria and across Melbourne's suburbs, so whether it is upgrading the roundabout at the end of your local street or building the state's biggest transport projects, they are all very important to the people that we all serve.

There are some very big-ticket items in this budget. The government's transport infrastructure spend is now in the order of \$46 billion. The key budget initiatives for my focus on local projects and safety include \$52.9 million to fix some of our busiest and most congested local intersections; \$61 million to keep Ballarat moving; \$45 million for new bike and pedestrian paths; \$19.3 million for school crossing supervisors—some of

the most loved people in Victoria; \$121 million for road safety cameras; and \$4 million for an initiative called safer sites, safer speeds.

The budget commits \$653.3 million over two financial years to improve the condition of Victoria's roads network, and you can see that these funds contribute to a total overall spend that maintains the record levels of road maintenance funding established by my predecessor in the 17–18 budget. The graph depicts a consolidated year-on-year maintenance expenditure, so this includes the annual baseline allocation and then additional budget funds. The challenge for continued improvement of our network and managing the maintenance task is that greater investment, but not just once—it is really being able to maintain it. Our record-equalling investment will go also towards extra bridge strengthening, pavement rehabilitation and routine maintenance, like potholes and mowing and slashing, as well as preventative works to prevent road deterioration, but we are really proud to have doubled our regional maintenance spend when contrasted with the effort of our predecessors. In the 19–20 financial year our government is forecast to spend more than \$400 million and rebuilding, resurfacing and repaving our country roads.

If you are on a bike or walking, we want people to be feeling very, very safe on the roads as well, so whether that is commuting or heading to the shops or out for a ride on the weekend with family. There is the \$100 million Safer Cyclists and Pedestrians Fund, which is delivering 44 different projects across the state. These initiatives I think are really important to see in the context of the state's Big Build, so whether it is the North East Link or the West Gate Tunnel or the Level Crossing Removal Project, there are new shared bike and walking paths as part of many of those, and I see a number of you will have some familiarity with that from your own local communities and electorates.

Now, this year has seen an absolutely shocking increase in the number of people dying on Victoria's roads. As we stand today 147 people have been killed on our roads this year. This was 95 this time last year, so an increase of 52. We are comparing ourselves throughout this year to 2018, when all Victorian road users collectively achieved the lowest ever number of lives lost on Victoria's roads—213 people in total and 46 fewer than in 2017. There has been an increase in speed-related deaths. We know people are not wearing their seat belts in some circumstances, and police tell us that they are increasingly concerned about drug use and people driving impaired, and of course mobile phones and other distractions are a significant factor. Our response to this increase to date, and there will be much more we need to do, includes 300 additional road policing shifts, 430 more hours per month of mobile camera hours between March and June, increasing the number of roadside drug tests by 50 per cent and investing in new alcohol and drug-testing vehicles.

Our government has been delivering a \$1.4 billion record investment in *Towards Zero*, the state's road safety strategy. The aim of *Towards Zero* is to reduce the number of lives lost on our roads to below 200 by 2020 and to reduce serious injuries by 15 per cent. This includes \$450 million for the first stage of the rollout of flexible safety barriers. Most of the 20 highest risk high-speed regional roads, as part of that investment, will be completed by the end of this month. And then continued safety improvements—another \$340 million for roads in rural communities, in regional areas and in parts of Melbourne. There is a Road Smart program, which is all about helping young people develop very good driving habits in those early stages. And this year's budget also includes \$121 million for additional mobile road safety cameras, upgrades to existing cameras and security networks, redevelopment of the support systems and the implementation of a road safety campaign.

The safety barriers are a huge part of this investment, so if I could just indicate to members, safety barriers were hit more than 3000 times last year. Each time a safety barrier is hit people are saved from potentially life-changing injuries or deaths. This graph is demonstrating—even though the rollout is still very much underway—the quite significant reduction in fatalities and serious injury crashes for those top 20 roads where the barrier installation is occurring.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Sorry, Minister, could I just interrupt? When you say 'divided roads', is that as in dual-lane highways or do you mean with the barriers down the middle?

Ms PULFORD: Some have barriers down the middle and some do not. So just to give you a couple of examples, there was a more than 30 per cent reduction since barriers were installed along the Hume Highway in the area near Wangaratta and almost 30 per cent since barriers were installed along Princes Highway east up to Traralgon. Again, quite remarkable results.

I want to show you this video, and I am not 100 per cent confident that it is going to work, but if I could just quickly tell you the backstory: I had an email from a gentleman called Mal Clark, who lives in Kew, and he sent me his dash cam video. He sent this to me on 21 May. On 18 May, mid-afternoon, he was just east of Traralgon. He was heading east. The other car—that you will hopefully see if we can get this to work—in the video is heading west.

Video shown.

Ms PULFORD: This is his story he wanted me to share with people, so I thought I would share it with your committee.

A member: Struth!

Ms PULFORD: Yes, it is pretty scary. Pretty traumatic footage.

Mr D O'BRIEN: You would be able to finish the Princes Highway, Minister. We can talk about that later.

A member: Lucky there was not a fatality.

Ms PULFORD: Yes. This was his story, and he thought that footage might be useful to illustrate a very real example that happened to him.

So just to conclude, our government is an infrastructure government that puts people at the centre of our transport system. That is why we are building Australia's biggest infrastructure projects, why we are investing in maintaining our roads and delivering the local projects that we promised to the Victorian community. We are getting on with the job of transforming the state. I know you had my colleague Minister Allan in earlier and Minister Horne will be coming in a bit later this afternoon, and we are working together to help move people around as effectively as we possibly can and of course to get people from A to B as safely as possible. I am happy to take the committee's questions.

The CHAIR: Thank you for that, Minister Pulford, including finishing slightly earlier than you needed to. We will move to Ms Stitt.

Ms STITT: Good morning, Minister, and the officials with you today. I wanted to ask you some questions about your road safety portfolio, so I would like to refer you to budget paper 3, page 329, and in that table 'Road safety initiatives completed'. Could you just outline for PAEC the initiatives the government have delivered to improve road safety?

Ms PULFORD: Yes, certainly. Thank you, Ingrid, for your question. The \$1.4 billion investment is not entirely infrastructure, but the most significant share of that funding is. That investment includes community behavioural change campaigns and some additional support for enforcement, but a very significant part of that investment is those infrastructure projects. In addition to our flexible safety barriers, there are overtaking lanes, there are rumble strips and many, many different ways of making changes to an intersection to make it safer. So in the most recent tranche of *Towards Zero* funding there are a couple of hundred intersections that will be upgraded in addition to the next 16 high-speed roads for the barriers.

Ms STITT: Minister, you mentioned *Towards Zero* in both your presentation and in your answer to my previous question, so are you able to outline in a bit more detail for the committee this morning the *Towards Zero* strategy?

Ms PULFORD: So *Towards Zero* is, I guess, our guide and our strategy that is all about, as its title suggests, getting us to a place in Victoria where there are no lives lost on Victoria's roads. Now, I have had a few emails and Facebook messages and things from people suggesting that that is too ambitious a target, but as a government, as a parliament and as a community I do not think that people losing their lives on our roads is an acceptable cost of people getting around on them. We just do not buy that at all. Now, there will be a time I think, perhaps in the not-too-distant future, where technological innovation will assist us to get ever, ever closer to zero. But *Towards Zero* is a very clear expression of that ambition, and then that target of the number of lives lost being less than 200 by the end of next year is our interim goal. Now, it feels very hard and it feels

uncomfortably out of reach right now, but on 1 January, when we were remarking on the success of the program and the great, dramatic reduction in lives lost only five and a bit months ago, it felt very different. So it is an ongoing challenge, and I think what our situation tells us is that our work will not be done in this area for some time. So that is the essence of *Towards Zero* and there are four pillars to it. ‘Safer roads and roadsides’—that is about recognising that we are all human, people make mistakes, nobody is perfect, let us make the road system as safe as we possibly can. The barriers, for instance, in that video that I showed, is really a reflection of that pillar and our desire to make the road as forgiving for people who might find themselves making an error or in some trouble.

‘Safer vehicles’ is the second pillar, and this is about vehicle standards. There is I think a really interesting emerging issue that we have become particularly concerned about this year around import standards, and I have had a brief preliminary discussion with the Deputy Prime Minister about this and look forward to having further discussions with the federal government around import standards. Australia used to be an automotive manufacturing country, and the standard setting was around manufacturing standards, but of course now the market is entirely dominated by imported vehicles, and without getting into the whys and wherefores of all of that, that means that our attention to import standards is quite different and needs to be, I think, more rigorously applied. That is something we look forward to working with the federal government on. And there are some vehicles that are coming into the market that are just really, really unsafe. I know Mr Califiore is with us. He has told us some terrible tales, terrible stories, about conversations with trauma specialists at the Alfred, and the crash reports that he and people in his organisation read all day, every day, and there are some vehicles being imported that we probably do not want on our roads, so that is a new and emerging area.

‘Safer people’—that is about licence standards and appropriate penalties, effective penalties, to make sure that people are as well-equipped as they can be. There is a cultural and behavioural question in here as well. There is a small group of our road users who are engaging in really, really risky behaviour. Three-quarters of people who lose their lives on Victoria’s roads are men too, and that is something I am interested to understand better. That is obviously not in any way representative of the population.

‘Safer speeds’ is the fourth pillar, so highlighting the dangers associated with speeding, the importance of driving to the conditions and responding to different conditions, and also, where appropriate, having a better, more appropriate for the location speed limit.

Ms STITT: Obviously it has been quite a difficult period on our roads, but can you talk through the results we are seeing flowing from that significant investment in road safety?

Ms PULFORD: Yes, thanks. So 2018 we had 213 people lose their lives on Victoria’s roads. Now, 50 years ago when the *Herald Sun* declared war on 1034 we had so much more road trauma than we have now. And this issue I think has to be seen, unfortunately, as a long journey. We have had a reduction over the last five years of around 3 per cent a year in the number of lives lost on our roads in Victoria, but if you think about where we were 50 years ago when a committee of this Parliament made a recommendation to the government of the day that we be the first jurisdiction in the world to make seatbelt wearing mandatory—absolutely groundbreaking stuff—there were more than 1000 people losing their lives every year.

Now contrast that with Victoria today: the population has doubled and the number of vehicles on the road has quadrupled. So there has been a lot of success, but I have this year met a number of families, and of course, like all of us, know people who have been personally impacted by road trauma, and always have done. But I have met some amazing people this year who volunteer to talk young would-be drivers, who volunteer to go and talk to people who are in in our prison system on driving charges, about the impact of road trauma—people who have lost loved ones, whose lives have been profoundly altered by road trauma. And so for those people, and in memory of the ones lost, with great concern for the people who the evidence tells us will lose their lives over the remainder of the next week and months and the remainder of this year and future years, we just need to keep on going.

Ms STITT: Obviously you will have been turning your mind to this problem significantly. So in terms of the lives that we have lost this year can you outline why you think this is the case and what the government is doing to respond?

Ms PULFORD: The big factors that contribute to road trauma are largely unchanged, so speed is the number one factor. The biggest point of difference between 2017 and 2018, and now between 2018 and 2019, is people from country Victoria on country roads, overwhelmingly close to home, in high-speed crashes. So there is the speed, drugs and alcohol—fatigue is a factor in around 20 per cent of these accidents—and distraction. Now, these things often happen in combination as well. So you will have somebody who is drug and alcohol-affected who is going fast and looking at their phone all the while as they are hurtling down the road at an unsafe speed—not an uncommon story unfortunately.

So we recently launched a new campaign around distraction to help people understand that that quick 2-second look at their phone, which the evidence and research tells us people think is an acceptable risk, is not, and you might have seen the ad. There is the driver with his sort of body double covering his eyes with the hands for a couple of seconds. In a—Joe might need to correct me if I get this wrong—60-kilometre zone you travel 22 metres. In a 100-kilometre zone you travel more like 55 metres. We know people think, ‘It’s just a quick peep and she’ll be right’. You are going a long way with the equivalent of a blindfold on. So that campaign is really important. Additional enforcement effort—you will have seen the police launching their campaigns and the SES launching their campaigns before the series of long weekends we have had over recent months. That is all a really important part of it. The visibility of the enforcement effort is a really important part of it and the continued rollout of that very, very big infrastructure program, so that when people do make a mistake or do get themselves into a difficult situation the road is more forgiving.

Ms VALLENCE: Thank you, Minister, and officers for appearing. Minister, my questions are related to the Transport Accident Commission aspect of your portfolio and specifically around your responsibilities. On 29 November last year, after the election, the responsibility for the TAC transferred in full to your ministerial portfolio, and yet just about a month later, in January, there was a change to the general order that handed the Assistant Treasurer almost full responsibility for the TAC. Six months after, on 1 June, a further change to the general order meant that you once again resumed almost full responsibility for the TAC. So the question really is: why have there been so many changes to your responsibilities for the TAC in just a seven-month period?

Ms PULFORD: Well, I have always been very clear on my responsibilities and Minister Scott has always been very clear on his responsibilities. The recent change to the general order addressed any lack of clarity, and Minister Scott provided an answer to this the other day too, I believe.

Ms VALLENCE: So why were the functions related to the budget and the finances of the TAC removed from your portfolio responsibilities for the period of the six months?

Ms PULFORD: They were not.

Ms VALLENCE: They were not? Okay.

Ms PULFORD: There are some discrete areas of shared responsibility, and it is appropriate that the Assistant Treasurer has also a role oversighting the finances. But, no, the chief executive, the board, Minister Scott and I have always been very clear on where our responsibilities lie.

Ms VALLENCE: So just to clarify then: the financial responsibilities remained with you all that time?

Ms PULFORD: Yes.

Ms VALLENCE: And has the Department of Treasury and Finance provided you any advice in relation to the matters concerning your responsibilities for the TAC since that time?

Ms PULFORD: Yes. I have had briefings with the TAC where Treasury and Finance have been there, yes.

Ms VALLENCE: So were you briefed then or consulted prior to the Treasurer’s budget decision to take \$2.87 billion of the amounts equivalent to dividends from the TAC over the next three years in this budget?

Ms PULFORD: So there is a requirement for the Treasurer to consult, and that occurred, and there also was an announcement prior to the election about the government’s intent in relation to dividends from the TAC.

Ms VALLENCE: So the advice or the briefing was by the Treasurer himself?

Ms PULFORD: There have been a range of discussions. There was an announcement made. The government's intention on this has been very public. I know there has been some attempt to turn this into something exciting and dramatic, but in 24 out of the 28 most recent years in the 30-year history of the Transport Accident Commission there has been a dividend taken. So it is not actually all that remarkable at all.

Ms VALLENCE: I am not talking about how remarkable it may or may not be. But really we are after finding if you were briefed by the DTF.

Ms PULFORD: Yes.

Ms VALLENCE: And were those briefs written—in written format?

Ms PULFORD: I have had discussions with the Department of Treasury and Finance about this. Look, the essential point here is that the Transport Accident Commission is an absolutely essential part of social insurance and the safety net that exists for the Victorian community. There are 51 000 clients who are supported by the Transport Accident Commission who have been impacted by road trauma. The scheme has a 30-year history now and a very, very long future, in spite of our best ambitions to get the number of people impacted by road trauma dramatically reduced.

Ms VALLENCE: So on that—

Ms PULFORD: There are young claim recipients who will be recipients for all of their lives. They are very expensive claims and they run for multiple decades.

Ms VALLENCE: And so on that—obviously lives lost is a major issue—was advice provided also on that amount of money being withdrawn, on how that might impact their response to road trauma?

Ms PULFORD: So I can absolutely confirm for the committee, as I have indeed done in the house in recent weeks—absolutely confirm for the committee—that there will be no impact on the premiums that members of the community pay through their vehicle registration. There will be no impact on claimants, either current claimants or future claimants, and—

Ms VALLENCE: So advice was provided it would not impact their ability to—

Ms PULFORD: And there is no impact on the capacity to continue the rollout of the \$1.4 billion road safety strategy.

Ms VALLENCE: Okay. You said earlier that you do have the financial responsibility in your portfolio, so wouldn't it be expected that the DTF would provide you written briefs?

Ms PULFORD: The responsibility for the Transport Accident Commission is mine, and there is a shared oversight in a number of provisions with the Assistant Treasurer. The decision on dividends is a decision made by the Treasurer, and that process is outlined in the act.

Ms VALLENCE: All right, we will move on. Moving on to vehicle procurement within the TAC space, at the road safety summit earlier this month Assistant Commissioner Stephen Leane indicated that Victoria Police had been procuring BMW M5 vehicles for highway patrols, and these are obviously vehicles that retail in excess of \$100 000 before police pack modifications. Yet the Treasurer also stated that Victorians who wish to purchase vehicles in a similar price category—and most presumably often to benefit from the safe driver-assist technologies—should 'get a life'. Don't the Treasurer's comments, combined with the government's decision to also increase stamp duty on vehicles in this class, undermine the TAC's message about purchasing safe vehicles?

Ms PULFORD: You can purchase a 5-star ANCAP-rated vehicle for less than \$24 000. I think the view that you need to spend a well beyond the reach of most people in the community amount of money on a car to ensure safety is something of an outdated myth. Anybody can have a look at the ANCAP rating website and see

there are loads and loads of options. A number of those things that you have asked me are just not part of my portfolio responsibility, so Victoria Police procurement is just not something that I am involved in.

Ms VALLENCE: Often I think a lot of those vehicles are actually—a \$24 000 vehicle that meets ANCAP might actually be such a small vehicle that it does not take a family. So I guess the question then would be, in terms of that, as a part of your portfolio, will the TAC be adjusting its campaign and campaign spend at all related towards the *Towards Zero* road safety strategy to address the fact that its message about safer vehicles has been undermined in terms of saving for a vehicle with all the safety features that does tend to cost quite a bit of money?

Ms PULFORD: I just do not agree with your assertion. There are many, many cars on the market that are 5-star ANCAP-rated that are less than the type of quantities that you are talking about.

Ms VALLENCE: Still on the Transport Accident Commission, we are talking here about budget paper 3, page 267. There is an expected outcome for the performance measure ‘Total reported road fatalities in vehicle collisions’ and it has not been provided for 2018–19 despite expected outcomes being provided last year. Why has an expected outcome not been identified by the government this year?

Ms PULFORD: Do you mind just repeating the question? This is not a transport department output, so if you could just repeat it again.

Ms VALLENCE: So budget paper 3, page 267—

Ms PULFORD: Yes.

Ms VALLENCE: ‘Total reported road fatalities in vehicle collisions’, effectively the question is: why has an expected outcome not been identified by the government this year in relation to that measure?

Ms PULFORD: That particular target is technically, in the budget papers, as the budget papers indicate, a responsibility for the minister for police, so perhaps she would be better placed than I to indicate to you why that target has been written in that particular way. I mean, the note says:

The ... target has been reduced in line with Victoria Police’s ongoing efforts to reduce the number of lives lost ... in line with the ... strategy.

I have already spoken at some length about the target, how Victoria Police report that and the police minister reports that through the budget papers, so you might want to ask them.

Ms VALLENCE: It is related to road safety, Minister. It is related to road safety.

Ms PULFORD: Yes, and it is particularly policing.

Ms VALLENCE: So, not your area? Hopefully the police minister does not pass it back here and we have missed the opportunity. I will move on on that basis.

Ms PULFORD: The police minister and I are both equally clear that she is responsible for the enforcement part.

Mr RIORDAN: So there are no targets for road fatalities, clearly not.

Ms PULFORD: The target in my portfolio is set in the strategy rather than in the budget papers.

Ms VALLENCE: Just conscious of time. So delivering the existing project, Continuing Towards Zero regional Victoria, has been delayed 12 months until mid-2021 in this budget. Can you outline why you have elected to delay a much-needed safety improvement in regional Victoria at a time when the regional road toll has substantially increased? I notice that it is up 82 per cent now on this time last year at 89 country deaths.

Ms PULFORD: Which project do you refer to?

Ms VALLENCE: Continuing Towards Zero regional Victoria—it has been delayed by 12 months in this budget. Can you outline why there has been a delay?

Ms PULFORD: The \$450 million rollout of the 20 highest priority roads is overwhelmingly on track. It is substantially on track. It certainly has not been delayed by 12 months, and the other projects that are part of *Towards Zero* are all tracking accordingly. There are some instances where the rollout of them has been challenging, but to suggest that *Towards Zero* has been delayed by 12 months is not accurate.

Ms VALLENCE: And in particular—

The CHAIR: Ms Vallence, I am sorry, I am going to have to put an end to your questions as we move on to Mr Maas.

Mr MAAS: Thank you, Minister; thank you for your attendance today. I would like to take you to the topic of government investment in school area safety and school crossing safety, and I would like to refer you to budget paper 3, page 100, and the final line item there, which is the ‘School crossing supervisor program’. Would you be able to explain for the committee what the school crossing supervisor program will deliver?

Ms PULFORD: The government is investing in school crossing supervisors, and what a wonderful—

The CHAIR: Lollipop men and women.

Ms PULFORD: wonderful, wonderful service they all provide in helping all of our younger members of the community to get to school safely and all their grown-ups being confident that they are going to make that last little bit of their journey nice and safe and sound and settle into school for the day.

The CHAIR: Minister, can I interrupt and give you a fun fact that the lollipop woman at my children’s school, Ormond primary, was there when the former Attorney-General, now the minister for trade and other portfolios, was a student at Ormond primary. So she has been there for some time, and she is a much-loved member of the school community.

Ms PULFORD: Well, crossing supervisors are typically much-loved members of the school community, so we are very pleased to be in this budget supporting ongoing funding of this program, which has now a 40-year history in Victoria. The budget provides \$19.3 million for school crossing supervisors. The way that this program works is through a funding arrangement with local councils, and they deliver the program, so they take responsibility for hiring and placement. There is a policy and a formula about what particular numbers of people attract crossing supervisor eligibility.

Mr MAAS: How many school crossing supervisors will the program deliver?

Ms PULFORD: Three thousand.

Mr MAAS: Wow.

Ms PULFORD: Yes. What would be interesting to know, and I must confess I cannot tell the committee this, but Phil’s interjection from the chair does make me wonder what the cumulative years of service of those 3000 people would be. We should try and find out what that is.

The CHAIR: You know what is interesting about that. Given that Sue has been there for so long, I now notice the technique of various lollipop men and women and how they put the sign out in front. Some of them walk out with the sign; some lead with the sign. There is a real art to looking after children at school crossing times and I think we owe them a debt not just because of course my own children manage to get to and from school safely without me being there as I am stuck in this august institution but because I think that we need to be far more deferential to the work that they do than maybe what we are.

Ms PULFORD: They do wonderful work. We talk about that notion of vulnerable road users, and we have had quite a bit of discussion about road safety already this morning. In a lot of instances we are in the—hopefully—protective bubble of a vehicle, but for people who are on foot, people who are on a bike or people who are on a motorbike the exposure is great. Victoria is the only jurisdiction that has parts of this program

extended to some secondary schools. But for our little people, they are particularly vulnerable—they can be hard to see; they can move fast if something exciting happens over the road. It is just wonderful, wonderful work that those 3000 people do, and as you have observed many of them do it for years and years and years, but the impact on a child for the entirety of their life is so profound if they are struck by a car.

Mr MAAS: Absolutely, thank you. Can you outline any other school safety initiatives that the Andrews government has invested in?

Ms PULFORD: Oh, yes. This, I have to say is perhaps—

Mr MAAS: She was not expecting that one.

Mr D O'BRIEN: I am reminded of a tweet from a few years ago: 'Gee, Minister, aren't things great?'. I think it was the tweet from a former shadow.

Mr MAAS: That is my next question actually.

Ms PULFORD: No, actually I was just thinking that in the first few months that I was in this new role the single most common issue that communities raised with me was school crossing safety.

The CHAIR: I think what Mr O'Brien was wanting to tell you, Minister, is that community safety is a bipartisan issue.

Ms PULFORD: It is; absolutely it is, because I have had school crossing safety issues raised with me by members of the National Party, by members of the Liberal Party, by, indeed, one of your colleagues, Mr Hibbins, and many government MPs. It is an issue. That MPs are raising it with me I am assuming is and taking as an expression of an enormous amount of community interest in school crossings. Last year's budget included \$5 billion for a package of works around safety upgrades on high-risk roads around schools. Michaela Settle, the member for Buninyong, and I started the school year at a school in her electorate that had been a recipient of one of these upgrades, but there is significant demand for us to do more in this area.

Mr MAAS: Let us go to local roads and intersection upgrades and the government program. If I could take you to budget paper 4, page 76—local road and intersection upgrades statewide. Can you please provide further detail of the program and how it will benefit Victorian road users?

Ms PULFORD: This program is funded in the budget—\$52.9 billion for 13 projects. Some of these are about better safety for drivers and pedestrians, some of them are about reducing bottlenecks and some of them are about improving local amenity. So there are 13 of these projects. Many of these are election commitments. As I am sure you have heard from many of my colleagues, this budget has been all about delivering our election commitments, and that has been our top priority in framing this budget. But there are intersections in Gisborne, Coburg North, Carnegie, Curlewis, Ocean Grove, Frankston South, Ivanhoe, Flemington, Rosanna, Lynbrook, Moonee Ponds and Heathmont.

Mr MAAS: I will take you to some specific projects. Would you be able to outline in more detail the traffic lights projects in Gisborne?

Ms PULFORD: Yes. Gisborne is a rapidly growing community. I was there not terribly long ago with the local member, Mary-Anne Thomas. One of the upgrades there is at the intersection of Melbourne Road and Kilmore Road in Gisborne. That is \$12.5 million. That is one of the more significant projects from this program. Mary-Anne certainly tells me that she hears from locals all the time about their concerns around the safety of this intersection, and so Regional Roads Victoria are now developing design options and planning for an upgrade to that intersection. But in the time that I was standing on that intersection with Mary-Anne my observations were—and I am not a traffic engineer by a long shot, but there is not a great line of sight, and I think there is a lot of room for improvement there for something that has been a big, big issue in the Gisborne community.

Mr MAAS: I will take you to another project, the Sussex and Gaffney streets intersection. Would you be able to highlight the importance of that particular project?

Ms PULFORD: Yes. So this project—again, a very busy intersection. Melbourne is changing at such a great rate, with so much greater intensification in a lot of our inner suburbs and rapid growth in many other areas. Sussex and Gaffney streets is a really busy intersection. Over 30 000 vehicles a day go through the roundabout there. The plan here with this intersection upgrade is to convert the roundabout into a signalised intersection. That will make it all flow much more smoothly and make it safer for everybody who uses that intersection. There will also be some upgrades to crossing and movement for cycling and pedestrian use as well.

Mr MAAS: Are there any other specific road projects that you would like to highlight?

Ms PULFORD: In my own home town of Ballarat there is a program called Keep Ballarat Moving, which is a number of intersections again in an area that is experiencing quite significant population growth—a growth rate of about 1.8 per cent per year if my memory serves me correctly—and they are intersections in a range of different entry points around Ballarat to deal with the challenges of growth and also to take into account the big numbers of people that are moving into the western growth area in Ballarat.

There are so many projects in so many different communities, and we are really excited about delivering on all of those. I know expectations are high after the way we governed the last four years. When we say something before an election, we will deliver it as quickly as possible after. So I know that people are looking forward to us getting these things done, and having the funding secured for those projects in the budget is obviously an absolutely essential step. It will be good to have so much activity happening.

Mr MAAS: Thank you, Minister, for your time, and I think my time has come to an end, Chair.

The CHAIR: It has indeed, Mr Maas. Thank you for your generosity of spirit.

Mr HIBBINS: Thank you, Minister and your team, for appearing. I first might just ask about your responsibilities and what you are accountable for and the issues there. I will just give you one case in point. You announced the St Kilda Road bike lanes. You put out a media release. I think you even appeared on Channel 7 spruiking it. Yet then subsequently when I asked you a question on notice about it, you referred it and said, ‘No, it is actually the Minister for Transport Infrastructure’s responsibility’. How can we, I guess, hold you accountable if you announce a project in one week and then not answer questions about it the next week?

Ms PULFORD: So I was not, I must confess, watching, but I understand that Minister Allan was going to talk to the committee about the responsibilities that each of us have in the new three-transport-minister team and in the new transport department. So she may have gone to this. The St Kilda Road bike project is being delivered by the major transport infrastructure team, so Jacinta’s responsibility is for the delivery of that project. I have responsibility for active transport policy and in fact all the other project delivery that is not part of the major transport infrastructure projects.

Mr HIBBINS: So going forward, how are we going to determine what you are responsible for if you announce a project but then are not responsible for that project?

Ms PULFORD: This is on the major transport infrastructure website—the ones that Minister Allan is responsible for.

Mr HIBBINS: All right. So we will have to refer to a website when you announce a project to see whether you are actually responsible for said project.

Ms PULFORD: It is not that tricky, but we are always happy to help.

Mr HIBBINS: Okay, thank you. Can I ask about active transport. Is it true that the active transport unit only has one employee, as reported?

Ms PULFORD: No.

Mr HIBBINS: How many EFT does it have?

Mr YOUNIS: So for the active transport program, I have not got the numbers of employees in that, but we have a number of people engaged in active transport. The active transport division itself has one person that heads it up. However, VicRoads have a number of people that are employed in active transport, and the benefit of us coming together as an integrated transport portfolio will ensure that those skills and the benefits that we can get from working together in that space will come together. Keep in mind that the active transport delivery and policy process is not only done within the Department of Transport; the MTIA also deliver a significant number of our active transport programs through their major projects.

Mr HIBBINS: But there is a unit called the active transport unit?

Ms PULFORD: Yes.

Mr YOUNIS: Yes, a unit within the Department of Transport.

Mr HIBBINS: And so how many people sit within that unit?

Ms PULFORD: We might take that on notice.

Mr YOUNIS: I will take that on notice.

Ms PULFORD: I think we need to take that on notice. It is certainly not just one person, but there are different people delivering different active transport projects. So, for instance, there is a big cycling path project in Ballarat that is being delivered by VicRoads. VicRoads are delivering many. The major transport infrastructure projects, I think, all have an element of active transport in them, so the active transport team's role is really to oversee the implementation of the strategy that was released last year.

Mr HIBBINS: Thanks. You referred to the \$100 million Safer Cyclists and Pedestrians Fund. Can I just get some clarity around that, because I have seen a couple of lists as to what has actually come out of that fund. They have not necessarily been the same, and I have seen more projects being added to it. Can we just get some clarity: what is the status of that fund? Has that fund finished? Has it been totally expended? There are the 44 projects that you referred to in your presentation. Has that fund been completed?

Ms PULFORD: The projects are still being delivered. Many of them are still being delivered. Indeed some of them are in the really early stages of being delivered, where design is being finalised, but the funds have been allocated for that program. That is part of the *Towards Zero* strategy.

Mr HIBBINS: I ask you to take this on notice: are you able to provide the committee with the final list of projects that are being delivered out of that fund?

Ms PULFORD: Yes, sure.

Mr HIBBINS: I would also just like to refer to your presentation as well. The 250 kilometres of new and upgraded cycling paths in delivery, how many of those are on-road separated bike paths? How many kilometres?

Ms PULFORD: Perhaps the simplest thing, because I am conscious of members' time limits, is if we take that on notice and provide you with a detailed breakdown, because there are 250 kilometres being delivered as part of the major transport projects. There are many, many others as part of that \$100 million project, and then if your interest goes beyond cycling to active transport, a whole lot of other pedestrian crossing activities. I can probably run you through them now, but it might be better if I take that on notice and we will get back to you shortly.

Mr HIBBINS: I would like to ask about minimum passing distance laws. When this was looked into in the last Parliament the government indicated that its position was to undertake an advertising campaign or an education campaign and then undertake a review. Can I ask what the status of that review is?

Ms PULFORD: Yes. The review has been completed and we are now considering the outcomes of that review. The approach that was taken after the parliamentary committee made that recommendation was a staged approach to have a campaign targeted at all road users about safe distances. There is a guideline about

what is the optimal distance—so a metre or, at a higher speed, at a metre and a half distance. I have met many of our bicycle user groups over recent months. I know this is a matter of real interest to lots of people who ride bikes, so this is an issue we are continuing to work through.

Mr HIBBINS: So you have received the review and you are considering the review. When will you be responding to the review?

Ms PULFORD: Look, I am not in a position to give you a hard date today, but I understand this is a real interest to people who ride bikes all across the Victorian community and it is an issue people are looking forward to hearing some more from us on. The campaign, I think, has been an important part of work here, and other jurisdictions have implemented minimum passing distance rule changes. I gather there have been some mixed results in terms of how effectively they are able to be enforced, so that is something that we need to carefully consider before proceeding with any change in Victoria. We have an even more complicated than most road network with all our trams of course as well. This is an important issue to cyclists, I understand.

Mr HIBBINS: My next question is probably more of a question, I think, for VicRoads. It goes to, I guess, your current expenditure on road projects versus pedestrian projects versus cycling projects. Out of your allocation of your annual appropriation, what percentage of that gets spent on projects for vehicles, projects for pedestrians and projects for cyclists?

Ms PULFORD: Noting that lots of projects have something for everyone in their design of course and that people who ride bikes also drive cars and walk as well.

Ms SEYMOUR: We would need to take that on notice, but, as the minister said, a lot of our roads projects have built-in components that focus on the safety of pedestrians and cyclists, so it is not as straightforward as just looking at what are the committed road projects versus our cycling or pedestrian projects. But we can take that on notice.

Mr HIBBINS: Given the high road toll—and particularly I am interested in vulnerable road users and particularly pedestrians—are you looking at all at the criteria in which you fund pedestrian safety projects? My understanding is that you generally have a look at where the fatalities occurred and then allocate appropriately, but some of the feedback that I get is the frustration that even if there have been some near misses or what have you, that is not necessarily taken into consideration when looking at pedestrian safety projects.

Ms SEYMOUR: So generally the way we look at and develop our business cases around projects is really looking at the road trauma data and also what is happening around that—so what are the fatalities, serious injuries and other injury crashes that have occurred, whether it is for pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists or other road users. And it is based on very much a risk-based approach around how we then develop the responses to that and what that might look like.

Mr HIBBINS: Are you concerned at all that that is kind of like a waiting for an accident to happen approach rather than a more proactive approach?

Ms SEYMOUR: There are a lot of demands and a lot of changes happening on our road network and we need to make sure that the investment is where it is most needed, so our trauma data is a really important part of that. The difference to that has been through our *Towards Zero* work, where the work in our infrastructure program has taken lengths rather than specific blackspots. So the work we are doing on our 20 highest risk roads is really focused on a length of road rather than a particular crash site. So we are looking at other ways to determine projects.

Ms PULFORD: Can I just add as well, you might be interested to know—

Mr HIBBINS: I have got one final question and 1 minute, if that is okay.

Ms PULFORD: Okay, really quickly, I have asked the department to explore some options for me on developing pedestrian strategy.

Mr HIBBINS: Fantastic, thank you. Just a change of tack for the final question, and it goes to road maintenance and the use of recycled and recovered content in road maintenance. Given the waste crisis—and I know there are some pilot projects or I have seen some pilot projects—is this something that you are looking to roll out? Whoever is best placed to answer that question, whether this is going to be rolled out as mandatory recovered and recycled content for road maintenance.

Ms SEYMOUR: So, I know the Department of Treasury and Finance is certainly looking at potential targets in this space. A lot of road projects use recycled materials now, whether that is glass, rubber or concrete. And that is a really important part of the work that we need to do in delivering these projects, and we will continue to look at what we can do in terms of supporting recycled materials in the delivery of those, and work with government around any targets that might be determined.

The CHAIR: I might ask you to take that question on notice for Mr Hibbins in relation to the content and the amount that you are already using in VicRoads projects—which might assist you, Mr Hibbins.

Ms PULFORD: Happy to do that.

Ms RICHARDS: Thank you, Minister. And thank you to the officials appearing before us. I commented to Minister Allan earlier that there is a lot going on, and I would like to talk a little bit about what is going on in road maintenance. I would like to refer you to budget paper 3, page 343, and the ‘Road asset management’ road maintenance line. I am wondering if you can explain what work the Victorian government is doing to maintain the standard of the Victorian roads, and what the benefit is to between road users.

Ms PULFORD: Yes. Thanks very much for your question. This is a really important part of the work that we do, and the budget commits \$563 million over two financial years to improving the condition of our roads. That perhaps over two years is really important for planning and project delivery. A lot of this work is seasonal, of course, and as I indicated in the presentation at the outset, my predecessor, Luke Donnellan, I think did some wonderful work in dramatically increasing the amount of road maintenance investment that has been made in Victoria, and we are really pleased to be able to continue that effort in this budget.

Ms RICHARDS: Tell me a little bit more about the benefits of this investment in maintenance for regional Victoria. You know that is an area of interest to so many of us.

Ms PULFORD: Yes. I spent the last four years in the car.

Ms RICHARDS: I bet you did.

Ms PULFORD: And I have now, in my new role, seen many, many lists of roads, and I feel like I have been on all of them. So yes, this is a huge priority for regional communities. It is really important. The quality of our roads influences the journey experience in a whole bunch of different ways. And so the investment in regional road maintenance is hundred \$424 million over two years. That is in addition to the baseline and also is in addition to \$87 million already committed for regional road rebuilds from the previous budget—so in total a really significant investment. When you add up the various components of that, it will be \$732 million that will be invested in road maintenance in this coming financial year, and a huge proportion of that is in regional Victoria—so in regional Victoria, 1500 kilometres. So we will see our maintenance teams out everywhere they go, really, which will be fantastic. So rebuilding, resurfacing, repairing—the works are prioritised based on need, a very detailed and complex process that determines what roads get done when. But getting ahead of problems is always a much better use of public funds, and we do that at every possible opportunity. Roads are so important for business, for industry and so important for our economy of course. We want people to be travelling on a smooth journey and of course to make our roads as safe as we can.

Ms RICHARDS: So, having spoken about regional Victoria, what about Melbourne suburbs, so closer to where we sit now? What are the benefits of this investment in Melbourne suburbs?

Ms PULFORD: Yes, so the investment for metropolitan road maintenance is \$229 million. There will be 300 kilometres of road maintenance works done over this coming period and it represents, if you want that number in construction jobs—

Ms RICHARDS: Yes. Absolutely.

Ms PULFORD: Seven hundred people who will be busy at work delivering those improvements and that maintenance for our suburbs.

Ms RICHARDS: Great. I have commented to you before that everyone thinks that they are a road engineer, but I am interested in finding out how VicRoads prioritises maintenance works and the type of maintenance work they actually do.

Ms PULFORD: Robyn, did you want to maybe—would you like Robyn to make a few comments on this?

Ms RICHARDS: Yes, lovely. Thanks, Robyn.

Ms SEYMOUR: So in terms of how we prioritise our maintenance, we take a mixture of data, both from our regions, what the community is experiencing on the road and also what our modelling shows us. And that is what forms our business cases around our maintenance budget. As part of that, we prioritise our highest strategic routes, the ones that are key to the economy and supporting the movement of people across the state. So our high and medium priority roads tends to be the ones that we prioritise in terms of funding, rather than the lower priority roads, which tend to be more local roads that people use to get onto those more strategic routes. So the funding is balanced around the ones that will really deliver those outcomes to the community, whether it is from an economic perspective or the movement of people perspective.

Ms RICHARDS: That is terrific. Thank you.

Ms PULFORD: And then sometimes we have severe weather events that require adjustment and change and response to changing circumstances. So it is really it is the ongoing work of the team at VicRoads.

Ms RICHARDS: Gosh, you must have seen some extraordinary projects. And as you drive around you must be so pleased to see the work that is going on.

Ms PULFORD: We saw something amazing at Warrigal Road, close by. A quite dramatic storm resulted in one lane being closed for quite some months after a land slip. Lucky that nobody was in the wrong place at the wrong time because that was a very dramatic shift in circumstances that required a really complex technical response.

Ms RICHARDS: It is often much more complex.

Ms PULFORD: Yes, but a great outcome for the local community with that reopening a few months ago now.

Ms RICHARDS: Minister, I am going to move on to something that is close to the heart of many of us here, and that is the flexible safety barriers. I refer you to budget paper 3, page 328, and I am wondering if you can explain how the flexible safety barriers are helping Victorians to stay safe on our roads after that compelling video you showed as part of your presentation.

Ms PULFORD: Yes, definitely. Look, this is an issue that garnered a huge amount of community interest—thousands of kilometres of barriers being installed, thousands of hits on them, which is extraordinary when you think of those accidents avoided and those injuries avoided—

Mr RIORDAN: Not because some of them were installed incorrectly, Minister, would it be?

Ms PULFORD: Sorry?

The CHAIR: You will get your time in a minute, Deputy Chair.

Ms PULFORD: And of course installations are still underway. These are showing some really encouraging results in terms of a reduction in fatalities and road trauma from serious injury, and we are very pleased to be delivering this very transformative and significant improvement to the road network.

Ms RICHARDS: It is fascinating. And just thinking about future activities, what road safety infrastructure can Victorians expect to see being rolled out over the coming year ahead?

Ms PULFORD: In terms of safety improvements?

Ms RICHARDS: Yes.

Ms PULFORD: Yes. So there will be a couple of hundred intersection improvements. There will be a further 16 high-speed roads that will have the barriers installed, so we are quite advanced in planning for that next group as that first group of 20 comes to a conclusion. But having a road network that is as forgiving as possible is just one of the central pillars of the *Towards Zero* strategy, and they are saving lives. I mean, they feel very different—the road feels more enclosed—so it is quite an adjustment in terms of how drivers respond to that, but they are undeniably saving lives.

Ms RICHARDS: I am interested in the Safe System Road Infrastructure Program, and I am going to ask about what the government is doing to make rural and regional roads safer, conscious that there has been a really strong focus in your evidence today and in your presentation as well.

Ms PULFORD: Yes. So SSRIP, which is its nickname, the Safe System Road Infrastructure Program, is the infrastructure part of *Towards Zero*. Those high-speed roads that are being treated with barriers are a response to a really quite shocking and unacceptable number of fatalities and serious injuries. For every 100-kilometre section of high-speed road in Victoria 17 people are killed or seriously injured each year, which is quite extraordinary. So the barriers, which is the greatest part of the funding as part of SSRIP, are about avoiding head-on collisions or run-off-road collisions. Now, when people are in a vehicle that is travelling at 100 kilometres an hour and they come off the road, they hit another vehicle or they hit a tree or a bridge or something—some other object—the chances of them surviving are really very low and the chances of them surviving and being able to return to anything vaguely resembling their previous life are even lower again. So 2000 kilometres of those barriers—it is certainly changing the way the roads look and feel for drivers, but it is important work.

Ms RICHARDS: Are there any other road infrastructure projects that are going to be included that you would like to provide more evidence to the committee about? You know, we are all so conscious of the work that you are doing and—

The CHAIR: Alas, the minister will have to take that as a question on notice as we move on to Mr O'Brien.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Thank you, Chair. Good afternoon, Minister.

The CHAIR: My pleasure. I think you are one of the most polite members on the committee. You always thank me so nicely.

Mr D O'BRIEN: I try to be, Chair.

Ms PULFORD: I am unsurprised to hear that.

The CHAIR: Group hug.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Minister, continuing the theme about the road toll and particularly the country road toll, if we have a look at some of the measures enforcing road safety, budget paper 3, page 267, indicates that the number of alcohol screening tests conducted will be reduced by 400 000. Why would you be doing that when the road toll itself is going up?

Ms PULFORD: There is additional funding in the budget for enforcement, but on the output measures for the minister for police I would encourage you to raise those questions directly with the minister responsible for enforcement.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Okay. Well, likewise, the number of prohibited drug screening tests conducted by booze and drug buses and highway patrol units is steady at 150 000 when the evidence that we have heard recently is that drug use, drug driving, is actually going up. Why again would that not be being increased?

Ms PULFORD: I am really happy to provide the committee with whatever answers I can to questions in my own areas of responsibility. Enforcement is undertaken by Victoria Police, so those questions you might want to ask the minister for police.

Mr D O'BRIEN: As the minister for road safety though—this is the enforcement of road safety very clearly—do you have any say in it? Do you have consultation with the minister?

Ms PULFORD: I have responsibility for developing Victoria's new road safety strategy. The approach that we take is one of partnership, so overarching road safety policy is my responsibility, and of course I work very closely with the police minister on enforcement. The police minister and I jointly hosted the recent road safety summit, which brought together all of our experts. We have a group of our senior leadership from VicRoads and from the department, from the Transport Accident Commission, from Victoria Police and indeed from the department of justice, where some elements of enforcement responsibility lie, coming together on a very, very regular basis. We are shortly to be convening a ministerial committee on road safety that will involve me and Minister Neville as well as the Attorney-General and health portfolios.

Mr D O'BRIEN: So in that committee would you be raising your concern at the reducing target for roadside alcohol testing?

Ms PULFORD: Look, again, the targets that exist in another minister's portfolio are best directed to—

Mr D O'BRIEN: No, no, you just told us that you are going to be meeting with them and setting up a committee. Shouldn't that be something that you would be saying to them, that you are concerned about a reduction?

Ms PULFORD: We have increased enforcement through this budget as part of *Towards Zero*—

Mr D O'BRIEN: Well, actually on the issue of alcohol testing you actually have reduced enforcement.

Ms PULFORD: As part of *Towards Zero* the \$1.4 billion package includes boosts to the enforcement effort, and we are certainly developing the next road safety strategy mindful of the gains that have been made in the current one but also the future one. As both Minister Neville and I have indicated in many, many different forums over recent months, we will leave no stone unturned in terms of identifying opportunities to deal with road trauma generally but also this quite dramatic increase that we have seen this year.

Mr D O'BRIEN: So, Minister, the government is also proposing to do away with the measurement of drivers tested who comply with alcohol limits—that is in budget paper 3, page 397. Again it is a police matter, but what are you intending to replace that with and what action will you take with your ministerial colleague to ensure that we are actually measuring the success of our roadside breath testing regime?

Ms PULFORD: Look, so the performance targets that exist for the police portfolio I think you are probably best raising with the police minister.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Okay, Minister. Continuing on road safety, given the big increases, as I said, in regional Victoria, and you have highlighted that as well, why is there no funding listed by the government for major regional road projects, including matching funding for the Western Highway between Ararat and Stawell and the Princes Highway duplication between Traralgon and Sale, both of which have federal funding on offer, and thirdly, funding to match the \$80 million provided by the federal Liberal-Nationals government for strategic freight routes in the south-west and also the \$60 million provided for the Princes Highway between Warrnambool and Port Fairy?

Ms PULFORD: Okay, so I think it is important to note the number of people who have lost their lives in regional Victoria this year stands at 89 today, 58 in Melbourne. We know these people to be overwhelmingly people who are travelling not that far from home on roads that they are on on a regular basis—

Mr D O'BRIEN: I understand that, Minister, that is why I asking about these important regional road projects and whether the state government will actually stump up its funding for what the federal government has already put money in for.

Ms PULFORD: We look forward to a constructive relationship with the federal government on these projects. A number of the projects that you have mentioned are either recent initiatives of the federal government in their budget or even more recently in election commitments.

Mr D O'BRIEN: The Princes Highway was funded in last year's federal budget.

Ms PULFORD: You talk about Princes Highway west among them. The approach that—

Mr D O'BRIEN: The Princes Highway east was funded in last year's federal budget and the minister then said, 'Oh, we didn't fund it because we didn't know the feds wanted to do it'. Well, they wanted to do it a year ago, they have funded it again in this year's budget and there are still no matching funds—indeed your budget papers actually list this project as a completed project when we all know there are still two stages to go.

Ms PULFORD: Our program of \$46 billion of transport infrastructure projects includes many projects, including \$30 billion worth of projects that do have funding contributions from the state and commonwealth governments. We do look forward to having constructive dialogue with the commonwealth government. The transport ministers of the commonwealth will all be getting together in about six to eight weeks time, and there are a number of issues to be worked through in advance of those discussions.

Mr D O'BRIEN: The main issue to be worked through, Minister, is whether the state is going to put any money in.

Ms PULFORD: So we know for a fact—and I know you are interested in providing an ad for the federal government, and that is nice, but—

Mr D O'BRIEN: No, I am actually interested in getting results for people in my electorate, in the electorates of the member for South-West Coast, the member for Polwarth, the member for Ripon and the member for Lowan, where there is money on the table from the federal government to do major projects that will improve the safety of our roads and it is not being matched by the state government, and yet we get shouted at every week that the federal government is dudding Victoria on infrastructure funding. Here are some projects where there is infrastructure funding available and the state government is not contributing and not getting on with the projects.

Ms PULFORD: Okay, so if I can have a turn, on dudding, Victoria receives 17.7 per cent of the national funding allocation for transport, which is well shy of our 26 per cent of the population—

Mr D O'BRIEN: Does that include the funding for these projects that I have listed?

Ms PULFORD: Well, I am sure—

Mr D O'BRIEN: Because they are projects that are not going ahead because the state Labor government is not funding them.

Ms PULFORD: You have been a member on this committee since the beginning of the hearings into this budget. You have probably heard a number of my colleagues say that this budget has been about delivering on our government's election commitments and our government's priorities, and they have been articulated in the months and indeed in some cases years prior to the election. We have a very, very busy program—a totally transformative transport infrastructure program—and we are delivering on our priorities. Now, the federal government have some priorities that align with ours and they have some priorities that are slightly different. We also believe some of their priorities that are not funded in this budget—because they were not our election commitments, they were their election commitments—have some work to do to confirm the detail both in terms of the practicalities of delivery time lines and the actual costs.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Well, Minister, the Western Highway and the Princes Highway are VicRoads projects. They are known quantities what they are. They are planned, they are ready to go. So, anyway—

Ms PULFORD: But the point—

Mr D O'BRIEN: I will move on, Minister, because I am not getting anywhere on the funding.

Ms PULFORD: No, no, the point remains we are really keen to work constructively with the federal government on our priorities and most of theirs. There is one notable commitment of theirs that we are not keen on pursuing, but we will work through those and we will work on some of the assertions they have made, particularly during the campaign, about what things actually cost.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Okay. Minister, can I move on. You talked before about wire rope barriers or barriers full stop. Just to clarify, is the rollout and maintenance of wire rope barriers, or Armco barriers, fully funded by the TAC and ongoing in a maintenance sense? So when someone runs into a barrier and it is damaged, which budget output actually funds the maintenance of the repair?

Ms PULFORD: Well, the barriers, in the same way as a stop sign or a give way sign, ultimately become part of the road network as projects are completed, but there is some funding for maintenance as part of the funding for the program.

Mr D O'BRIEN: For the SSRIP (Safe System Roads Infrastructure) program?

Ms PULFORD: For the barriers, yes.

Mr D O'BRIEN: When you say some funding, the question I am getting at—

Ms PULFORD: Sorry, from the TAC?

Mr D O'BRIEN: So the TAC funds ongoing maintenance. If someone destroys part of the barrier, the TAC funding does that, or does it come from VicRoads's output?

Ms PULFORD: It is a combination.

Mr D O'BRIEN: A combination of both, okay. Is the condition of the road itself considered when rolling out areas of barriers?

Ms PULFORD: Look, our SSRIP team and our maintenance teams, they do work together. Often just the practicality of having a team doing roadworks in a particular location gives rise to some changes in projects along the way.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Can I perhaps clarify—sorry, I have only got 30 seconds left, Minister—does the SSRIP program fix bad road surfaces as part of its safety process? I believe in the past it has not, but are you interested in allowing it to do so?

Ms PULFORD: The SSRIP program is identified based on improvements to road safety and road safety risk, and so that is the number one factor. So the 20 highest risk—

Mr D O'BRIEN: So would that include poor road surface, though?

Ms PULFORD: Well, poor road surface is—

Mr RIORDAN: Excuse me, Minister. As much as I want to give more time to my colleague to have his question answered, I am just thinking—

Ms PULFORD: This is interesting.

Mr RIORDAN: If I could just google for a little while to find some sports scores and a few other time wasters, if we go through that, then I would gladly hand over to my colleague Mr Richardson for his fair share of questions.

A member: Well, thanks, head comrade.

Mr RICHARDSON: I think he did say 'comrade'. Goodness me.

Mr D O'BRIEN: We have served on committees before. Deputy Chair, good work.

Mr RIORDAN: In the spirit of kindness—

Ms PULFORD: I have never seen someone cut off a colleague like that before in one of these.

Mr D O'BRIEN: It is because your chair has disappeared.

Mr RICHARDSON: He is a very independent fellow.

Ms PULFORD: How is the coalition, fellas?

Mr RIORDAN: It is worth noting, Minister, that the Chair has set us a very strict and hardworking agenda for this committee.

Ms PULFORD: You are now chairing. I had missed that, sorry, Acting Chair.

Mr RIORDAN: But unfortunately despite his many protestations that we are all lily-livered state parliamentarians and his endless years of experience in the Senate dictated that none of us knew how to work very hard, I do note for the record that it is in fact the Chair that has worn out first.

A member: Hear, hear.

Mr RIORDAN: So we will just keep that recorded that the rest of us can hold up. Mr Richardson, over to you.

Mr RICHARDSON: Thank you, Mr Riordan. Thank you, Minister, for joining us today. The chief executive officer of the TAC, secretary of the department and CEO of VicRoads, thank you for joining us today. Minister, I wanted to take you to something that I am very passionate about, and that is around worker safety and particularly along our myriad of road projects that are underway across our state, and then also that important roads maintenance. I share with my committee members and you, Minister, that in a previous life I was part of some of the road painting—line-marking, as they call it—some of the re-sheeting across Greater Dandenong, and something that was critically important out on sites was the safety of workers at all times when vehicles are passing by at various speeds. So I wonder if you would indulge me, Minister: I want to take you to budget paper 3, page 100, and refer you to that section. Could you take the committee through Safer Sites, Safer Speeds and how this will benefit Victorians?

Ms PULFORD: Yes. Thanks for the question, Tim. I did know that bit of your backstory, and I had the opportunity earlier in the year to meet some representatives of the line-marking industry association and learn a little bit more about all of their member organisations and the really important work that they do. Of course we have touched briefly on the role of new vehicle technology and the increasing prevalence it is going to have in all of our lives. The line-marking industry association, I think, they are as important as they have ever been as vehicles are now increasingly looking for that line themselves as well as of course the drivers. So, yes, safety for people working on our roads is a really important part of what we do.

Before the election we made a commitment to provide for speed limits—where it is safe to do so and appropriate to do so—to be lifted when construction crews have gone home for the day. Now, I get lots of correspondence from communities and from members of Parliament about reducing speed limits, and people want—like some of the questions Mr Hibbins was asking before—in pedestrian-heavy areas where traffic has slowed down, it is a pretty common request. The frustration that motorists feel going past a worksite at worksite speed when everybody is all packed up—we just not long ago had a long weekend where some of those sites would have been quiet for three days—it can be frustrating for motorists. So being able to provide certainty and clarity and less chopping and changing is important. So Safer Sites, Safer Speeds, as we have named this initiative, will expand the compliance regime, which will see those speed zones at sites returned to their original limit or their best safe limit more often.

Mr RICHARDSON: And so just taking us to that budget paper reference before of budget paper 3, page 100, what does the Safer Sites, Safer Speeds funding pay for?

Ms PULFORD: So it will employ a team of surveillance officers to patrol some of these zones across the state. There will also be an education program that is part of this funding to provide advice to industry and to construction and traffic management so that they are aware of their requirements. And we are also going to set up a hotline.

Mr RICHARDSON: So the other area is obviously compliance with the program, and I did dabble a little bit in traffic management as well, to get vehicles to move together towards each other, but I want you to just take the committee through how the program will ensure compliance by the construction and traffic management industry.

Ms PULFORD: There will be three full-time compliance officers and a manager that will oversee compliance. They will be working at those hours of the day where they will be most effective as well.

Mr RICHARDSON: And just finally on this section, Minister, I am wondering if you can direct the committee on how road users can assist with the implementation of Safer Sites, Safer Speeds, acknowledging, I guess, the holistic role that we all play in those safer worksites.

Ms PULFORD: There have already been 108 non-compliance notices issued this year, but we would certainly welcome people in the community who would like to contribute to this effort of making our road system run as smoothly as possible. There is a VicRoads hazard reporting phone number, which I encourage you to share with your constituents, Tim: 13 11 70.

Mr RICHARDSON: Minister, I am hoping now to take you to some regional projects. Obviously categorised throughout the ministers and your colleagues that we have heard so far is about the significant focus on regional and rural areas and the benefits in this budget to those communities. I want to take you to budget paper 3, page 14, and something that you have touched on briefly before, but could you please explain what the 'Keeping Ballarat moving' initiative will deliver for those important communities?

Ms PULFORD: 'Keeping Ballarat moving' is a really important initiative. I touched on it briefly before. It will provide upgrades to a number of intersections, so the southern entrance to town along the Midland Highway at Albert Street and a number of other intersections, including Magpie Primary School, the intersection of Wiltshire Lane and La Trobe Street, Wiltshire Lane and the Glenelg Highway, Gillies Street and Gregory Street West and then Dyson Drive and Ballarat-Carngham Road. Some of these are areas that are experiencing quite a bit of additional pressure as a result of changing population and increased freight activity and increased movement of all kinds of vehicles on the road network. So it will be good; it will be very much welcomed by my local community.

Mr RICHARDSON: I was out there the other week at the Ballarat Tech School for an initiative with all the local schools, and obviously Ballarat being the third city in Victoria and the size of the growth corridor through their, that is a substantial amount of investment going on. What other road upgrades are underway or soon to be underway in the Ballarat area?

Ms PULFORD: We have a really significant project underway, which is being delivered by VicRoads but is a project that is more for cyclists, but it is also about that really quite rapid population growth to the west of town and giving people another option to enter Ballarat. There are quite a number of projects that will be underway as part of the 'Keeping Ballarat moving' blitz, and it is wonderful to have the funding for these confirmed in the budget.

Mr RICHARDSON: Obviously, Minister, there has been a substantial focus on regional and rural roads and that important and critical investment. I was amazed, in your slide in your presentation, by just the amount of kilometres of roads that are a part of that brief. There is such a telling amount of maintenance and required upgrades that are meant to be underway in a certain year. Minister, I was wondering if you could outline any other regional road initiatives that the Andrews government has invested in, for the committee's benefit.

Ms PULFORD: There are many, many projects, and you see that travelling around regional Victoria—just the sheer scale of activity. I know everybody in the state knows about the level crossing removals and the big, transformative public transport projects that you cannot avoid if you move around the city. Certainly in my portfolio's areas of responsibility we do work around that schedule a bit in a whole lot of different ways. But

there is certainly a lot of activity underway in regional Victoria as well. The Fixing Country Roads program is currently being rolled out—the second round of that; some wonderful local projects assisting councils with some of their responsibilities as well, sealing roads—

Mr RICHARDSON: Is that underway now?

Ms PULFORD: Yes, there are a number of projects that are just commencing. Round 2 will see some local road network improvements that will include 110 kilometres of road reconstruction, close to 200 kilometres of road widened, 65 kilometres of gravel road sealed, 38 bridges improved, 27 intersections upgraded and another eight projects for people who are on foot or on bike.

Mr RICHARDSON: I am mindful that we are probably going to be eating into somebody else's time and will not be able to get you underway, so I might hand back to the Chair in that final 20 seconds.

The CHAIR: Thank you. What we will do is when it is my time I will cede to you straight away to be able to continue, Mr Richardson. In the meantime, Deputy Chair, I will give you the call until 12.48.

Mr RIORDAN: My first question is: I understand through budget paper 3, page 301, that the VicRoads licensing and rego will be moved to Services Victoria. Could you tell us what the cost of this move will be?

Ms PULFORD: This is something that is on, I guess, a different trajectory to the work of the department in terms of the transformation that I understand that both the secretary and Minister Allan spoke about a little earlier in the day. Registration and licensing is a really important part of the work of that occurs in my portfolio and the work of VicRoads. They process—

Mr RIORDAN: So do we know how much it is going to cost?

Ms PULFORD: For quite some time now, a couple of years at least, the government's ambition around fewer points of entry for members of the community seeking to access government services has been well known and well understood. I stand by my earlier comments on this. This is not something—

Mr RIORDAN: So you do not know how much it is going to cost.

Ms PULFORD: that is going to happen particularly quickly, certainly in terms of—

Mr RIORDAN: So you do not have a start time of when it is going to happen?

Ms PULFORD: Sorry, if I could just finish. In terms of the time frame for the transformation that is occurring within the department, registration and licensing will be unimpacted by that, and for members of the community for whom the registration and licensing function is their main interaction—

Mr RIORDAN: So you have not got a time frame yet for when it is going to start?

Ms PULFORD: Look, it is something that requires detailed consideration—

Mr RIORDAN: So it has been going for two years and—

Ms PULFORD: No, no, it has not. But—

Mr RIORDAN: But you are none the wiser at this point as to when it is happening?

Ms PULFORD: Discussions have commenced. Look, I am not in a position to put a deadline on it, and there is no funding allocated for it in this budget, which was your specific question.

Mr RIORDAN: And is there a rationale for the change?

Ms PULFORD: Oh, look, I mean, there was a recent Ombudsman's report that identified some room for improvement, like any customer-facing function of government.

Mr RIORDAN: And that is because VicRoads cannot do it?

Ms PULFORD: Well, VicRoads do do it, and it is 26 million transactions a year.

Mr RIORDAN: If they are doing it, why are you moving it?

Ms PULFORD: Well, they are currently doing it and they will be continuing to do it for some time.

Mr RIORDAN: Right; okay. So it is 'Watch this space', is it? And have you got a budget? Is there an allocation of funds put aside to manage this migration?

Ms PULFORD: Look, at this stage we are just considering a range of options.

Mr RIORDAN: Right; okay. So there is no future funding provided in the budget for—

Ms PULFORD: Not in the budget for this, no.

Mr RIORDAN: Okay. While on the topic of VicRoads, within the budget the TAC does not appear to have any new asset funding contribution towards new road and road safety infrastructure projects, as it has in previous budgets. Has the TAC provided any advice that the government's decision to take the \$2.87 billion in amounts equivalent to dividends will reduce its capacity to deliver new asset funding towards road safety infrastructure projects in the next three years?

Ms PULFORD: I sort of answered this question earlier.

Mr RIORDAN: We are just asking: is it reducing the capacity? Because in light of new information that you had this year with the road toll, that has not gone—

Ms PULFORD: No, no, no. As I have already answered this, again—

Mr RIORDAN: I mean, clearly you are going to have to be in a position to make new and improved changes to the road safety message and road safety initiatives.

Ms PULFORD: So the \$1.4 billion strategy that is currently being rolled out is completely unaffected. The ability to meet the needs of TAC clients is completely unaffected.

Mr RIORDAN: I understand the TAC clients, but there is also the important role that TAC has in funding road safety initiatives, and that is the question I am asking. Clearly, despite all the hundreds of millions spent to date, we are not seeing the return on the ground, this year particularly. Surely that would pose the question that if this is a one-off aberration, that is perhaps manageable. But if this is a continuing trend, surely the TAC is going to need to be in a position to work with the community on whatever is changing?

Ms PULFORD: You are asking about funding for a strategy that is yet to be developed and funding sources that are yet to be identified. So I put to you, Chair, we are well into hypothetical scenarios here.

Mr RIORDAN: We are not being hypothetical. It would be, under common business practices, a growing problem, and someone who is in charge of road safety and roads would be the primary person responsible for it.

The CHAIR: Deputy Chair, you will note that I have not interfered thus far, but the minister has responded no on three occasions to your current question and to previous questions as well.

Mr RIORDAN: The TAC premium paid by Victorian vehicle owners has risen every year and is scheduled to rise every financial year.

Ms PULFORD: Yes.

Mr RIORDAN: Correct. Under this government now it is over \$521.40 for private passenger vehicles in the high-risk zone. If the TAC can afford to give \$2.8 billion dividends through to the government, could it also not look at providing relief on cost-of-living pressures to people who are mums and dads with cars as an option?

Ms PULFORD: The TAC is indexed in line with CPI each year. I assume that is what you are referring to. So the TAC charge will have its annual adjustment for inflation. Dividends have been taken from the TAC in 24 of 28 years, and that is—

Mr RIORDAN: We know about the dividends; that is not in debate. It is about the scale.

Ms PULFORD: Well, that is what your question was about.

Mr RIORDAN: Well, the question is the scale of the dividend. So in a year where the road toll has significantly increased over previous years—in fact the worst in 14 years—we are seeing the TAC giving out record dividends to the government. You are telling us quite clearly that this will not affect your ability to invest in road safety, and you are saying that people paying regos will continue to pay more regos each year, even though there is clearly this surplus money sitting in the coffers.

Ms PULFORD: There is absolutely no change to the way that the TAC charge is collected across the state—like, there is no change there. So to suggest otherwise I think is a little cheeky. I am happy to give the committee—

Mr RIORDAN: We will keep moving on. I have a question for the—

Ms PULFORD: an assurance about my level of confidence about our ability to continue to fund the current road strategy, to when the time comes confidently invest in a future road safety strategy and also to meet our obligations to 51 000 current clients and all future ones.

Mr RIORDAN: So following up my question to the CEO of the TAC, many public statements about wire rope barriers have been that for the life of the wire rope barrier they are being paid for by the TAC. Now, the minister in an earlier answer made it clear that, ‘Ooh, it might be a bit of road maintenance, it might be a bit of TAC’. Can you just confirm—

Ms PULFORD: No, no, no. I did not say it might be a bit of one, it might be a bit of the other. I said it is shared between the two.

Mr RIORDAN: Well, that sounds like a little bit of one and a little bit of the other. So Mr Calafiore—

Ms PULFORD: No, no. I think you were suggesting that I did not know or that I was making it up.

Mr RIORDAN: can you confirm whether these are per your public statements—which are wide and varied across regional Victoria—that the funding is for the life of the barrier or whether it is what the minister has said today?

Mr CALAFIORE: Thank you for the question. As the minister correctly indicated, it has been a longstanding practice that there has been a mixture of funding sources for the remediation. I am conscious of time, but to give you some very brief context, about eight or so years ago the infrastructure rollout would have been about 50 to 65—

Mr RIORDAN: I just really want to know whether you are funding it permanently, because the nub of the question is: in rural and regional Victoria the big issue is road maintenance and people need to know that when they are seeing four lanes of wire rope barriers put out that seem quite excessive in areas, and we have only seen today where VicRoads has decided not to roll out some in far East Gippsland because they have woken up to themselves that they were not required there, are we going to see potholes and dangerous intersections ignored while, as the minister has said today, 3500 hits on wire rope barriers are going to start. If that is the cost a year, do we have an idea what that cost is?

Ms PULFORD: Yes, so if I could just—

Mr RIORDAN: My question was just to—

Ms PULFORD: Yes, and Mr Calafiore does not have a responsibility for road maintenance funding, so the funding that comes to VicRoads and to the department for road maintenance funding is quite separate and the

projects are managed differently and the budgets are oversighted by different processes when compared to the delivery of the SSRIP program for instance.

Mr RIORDAN: So money will be taken from road maintenance to maintain the hits on the wire rope barriers?

Ms PULFORD: Road maintenance funding and—

Mr RIORDAN: So previous public statements by the TAC that they are for the life of the barrier is not correct?

Ms PULFORD: the funding for SSRIP come from a different source.

Mr D O'BRIEN: The SSRIP comes from the TAC, doesn't it, Minister?

Ms PULFORD: Yes.

Mr D O'BRIEN: So the question still stands. The question was about how much the TAC has to spend on the ongoing maintenance of road barriers.

Ms PULFORD: You were talking about road conditions and road surfaces, and my point was—

Mr RIORDAN: Well, you said there is a mix, but the TAC has been very public that they are paying for wire rope barriers and their maintenance.

Ms PULFORD: perhaps Robyn or I might be better placed to help with that.

Mr RIORDAN: You have now said today that that is not the case, and that statement has been put into the public domain to assure country road users that their dangerous intersections, poor road surfaces and broken shoulders are not being sacrificed for wire rope barriers.

Mr CALAFIORE: I suppose, if I could just add: the statement is correct, as the minister has correctly indicated and as I have indicated on the public record. In part it is covered, as has always been the case for this program over the last 25 years. So I can assure the committee the statements on the public record, and as the minister indicated, are entirely accurate.

Mr RIORDAN: So have you got a proportion then of what the TAC would expect to fund of maintenance?

Mr CALAFIORE: That particular question, given the size of the program, I would have to happily take on notice.

Mr RIORDAN: Okay, we can take that on notice. Do we yet have an approximate cost on—I mean, I know my regular 200-kilometre trip home, I have lost count. I used to keep a little notepad on wire rope barrier breakages. Those installing them tell me they are actually more dangerous when they are sitting broken on the side of the road, so obviously there is a time pressure point to get them repaired. Do we have a running cost on what that maintenance cost is, Minister?

Ms PULFORD: Robyn, you are probably best placed to answer this.

Ms SEYMOUR: We do not have a breakdown on the specific cost of maintaining wire rope barrier. The bulk of the maintenance of wire rope barrier comes out of our routine maintenance budget.

Mr RIORDAN: Right, and where would that budget have been spent if wire rope barriers were not being excessively hit?

Ms SEYMOUR: In terms of our routine maintenance, it is responsible for looking after things such as our potholes, our electrical assets, our grass cutting.

Mr RIORDAN: So country people are rightly concerned when you on one hand tell them how they have been hit 3500 times—

The CHAIR: Well, unfortunately, the time has expired, Deputy Chair.

Mr RIORDAN: but the roadside mowing, roadside maintenance and potholes will in fact suffer.

Ms PULFORD: No, they won't.

The CHAIR: Deputy Chair, your time has expired, but thank you very much. You can put that question on notice.

Mr RIORDAN: They just have to.

Ms PULFORD: No, they won't.

Mr RIORDAN: But you cannot even say how much they cost to repair.

Ms PULFORD: No, they won't, because maintenance funding has doubled. That is why.

The CHAIR: Minister, the Deputy Chair's time has expired. The time is now mine, and I cede to Mr Richardson to continue his last line of questioning.

Mr RICHARDSON: Thank you, Minister, and it is good to see that we are all on the same page about the need for wire rope barriers, and shown in that presentation before is just another drastic reminder of why these investments save lives. It is as simple as that. If you may, Minister, I want to go to the development of the next road safety strategy, and obviously this is critically important on the areas that your presentation has touched on and that also your predecessor, Minister Donnellan, with the *Towards Zero* campaign, and you talked a little bit about that. We are now at a point where we are looking towards the future, so I am wondering if you could take the committee through the development of the next road safety strategy?

Ms PULFORD: Thank you. *Towards Zero* will next year be in its final year, so work is commencing now on the next strategy. So there is deep analysis of all available data. We certainly listen very intently to expert advisers. Some of the world's leading experts in road safety were at our road safety summit a couple of weeks ago, and they will certainly be a very important resource for us going forward. There has been a long-standing partnership between the Transport Accident Commission and indeed the department and VicRoads with the Monash University Accident Research Centre, and all of those things and emerging trends will be very much in our thinking.

The road safety summit will also be complemented by a number of regional roundtables that Minister Neville and I will be hosting over coming months. As the Deputy Chair indicated, regional road safety and regional road trauma is a very significant problem and people on our regional roads and dying on our regional roads is the most significant point of difference where we find ourselves this year when compared to last year's record low loss of life on our roads. So really it will be a 12 to 18-month work program to develop the new road safety strategy, but listening to the community will be an important part of that. But being guided, as we have always been in Victoria for 50 years or more, by expert advice and by data and by evidence.

Mr RICHARDSON: Minister, one of the telling things that you mentioned—and I think more could be done to reflect on where we have come from as well with the mandatory seatbelt initiation and that 1034 figure to where we are, and the campaign that was run at that time is truly extraordinary. You touched on briefly there the emerging and safety issues that you might need to look at in the next road safety strategy. Are you able to take the committee through: what are some of the emerging challenges and what are you seeing that might form part of that future strategy?

Ms PULFORD: We think distraction is quite significantly under-reported and under-represented in the information we have available. We know that coronial inquests and police investigations will be able to ascertain if somebody had been sending a text message at the point of impact, but we also know that there is a bit of a disconnect between what can be observed after the fact in a crash and people's own personal accounts to their trauma surgeons or nurses, and that is a real challenge.

I think an area of importance for us will be new and emerging technology. The fleet of vehicles on our roads is changing. It is always changing, but it is changing at a particularly rapid rate at the moment with increased automation available in newer vehicles. As each year passes that will become a larger and larger factor in the driving experience for all road users. There is also, as Victoria Police tell us, a real challenge around drug and alcohol use and abuse when combined with driving.

So there will certainly be some very familiar aspects to our approach in the next road safety strategy because the most significant causes of trauma on our roads are those consistent five things: drugs, alcohol, speed, fatigue and distraction. But we need to be very mindful of new and emerging issues as well. We have older people in older cars over-represented in road trauma this year. The average age of a car on our roads is nine years. The average age of a car in an accident where somebody is killed is 12 years. Again that question about why there is that very hard to get to group of people in the community who are taking enormous risks to their own safety and that of others in the community remains a persistent challenge.

It is pretty early days in terms of the development of the new road safety strategy, but they are certainly some of the things that are in a lot of our thoughts as we grapple with this in obviously very difficult circumstances this year.

Mr RICHARDSON: I was really interested in that strategy in the point you made about—was it three out of four men being represented in the road toll?

Ms PULFORD: Yes, three out of four people killed on our roads are men.

Mr RICHARDSON: Yes, that is an interesting stat that might go forward with that strategy as well.

Ms PULFORD: Yes, I agree.

Mr RICHARDSON: Obviously there are a myriad of strategies that go towards forming our efforts towards zero and the work that you do. I am wondering if you can take the committee through the Ministerial Council for Road Safety and what it is set up to do and then the role that it plays in those important efforts.

Ms PULFORD: Look, this is I think something that other jurisdictions, as I understand, around the world look at with great interest in terms of the coordination of effort by our road safety partners here in Victoria. I might even invite Ms Seymour or Mr Calafiore, who both have a long history in these forums—more so than I do. But at its essence it is about taking a whole-of-government approach and making sure that our compliance and enforcement efforts—which I know some committee members are probably interested to explore with the minister for police—align with infrastructure improvements, road rules and other measures and other tools that are available to us, such as the community education campaigns. So making sure that we are working together as cohesively as possible is really important. Would either of you want to add anything to that?

Mr CALAFIORE: As the minister indicated, we certainly at the executive level find it a really helpful forum, because as the minister touched on, it really allows us to provide that whole-of-government coordination. As we have discussed in today's hearing, there is unfortunately not one silver bullet when it comes to trauma prevention, so being able to tie in the health side, the trauma system, the policing side of road safety and important road safety initiatives and get that real buy-in across government certainly at the executive level we find incredibly helpful.

Mr RICHARDSON: Minister, in the remaining time that I have got, I just want to take you to the federal government's vehicle standards and safety requirements and how they interact with the Victorian jurisdiction. Are you able to provide the committee with a bit more information on that?

Ms PULFORD: The federal government have undertaken their own road safety strategy in recent years, and there is a review or an evaluation underway about which jurisdictions have responsibility for which elements of the collective task of making the roads as safe as we can. Now, overwhelmingly the responsibilities for the assets that people are getting around on and the rules that surround people's behaviour on the roads are all squarely responsibilities of state government. But the federal government's responsibility around import standards I think is an increasingly important factor, because the proportion of imported cars on our roads has risen dramatically in recent years, and we are seeing some one- and two-star ANCAP-rated vehicles on our

roads. There is a vehicle called Great Wall, which is very popular with young people, particularly people working in trades, and it is pretty highly represented in crash statistics. When these vehicles get into strife, the impacts on the driver and any passenger are life-changing.

Mr RICHARDSON: That is very interesting to hear, Minister. Just in the final minute that I have got, and I might have to get you to take this on notice, but budget initiatives around cycling and walking—can you take us through them? I know the member for Prahran would be very interested in that. What are some of the budget initiatives in that space around cycling and walking?

Ms PULFORD: Yes. So we touched on this quite a bit with Sam's questions. Indeed we actually undertook to provide Mr Hibbins with some further detail on notice around some of those initiatives, because there are actually quite a long couple of lists in terms of projects that are underway. So there are some new initiatives in the budget: safer pedestrian crossings; the very significant St Kilda Road project; continuing funding for our active transport group, that really have a big job in bringing this all together; and then across in my colleague's areas of responsibility a whole lot more going on to make it as easy as possible for people to get around.

The government released, and my predecessor, Luke Donnellan, led this—

The CHAIR: Minister, you will have to take the rest of that question on notice.

Ms PULFORD: the cycling strategy in 2018, and delivery of that guides our work. Sorry, Chair.

The CHAIR: Minister, thank you for appearing before the committee today. The committee will follow-up on any questions taken on notice in writing, and responses will be required within 10 working days of the committee's request. The committee will now take a brief break of no more than 3½ minutes before beginning consideration of the fun portfolio of camping, fishing, boating and we are going to have some fun. I declare this hearing adjourned.

Witnesses withdrew.