

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into the 2021–22 and 2022–23 Financial and Performance Outcomes

Melbourne – Wednesday 22 November 2023

MEMBERS

Sarah Connolly – Chair

Nicholas McGowan – Deputy Chair

Michael Galea

Mathew Hilakari

Lauren Kathage

Bev McArthur

Danny O’Brien

Ellen Sandell

Meng Heang Tak

WITNESSES

Paul Younis, Secretary,

Will Tieppo, Deputy Secretary, Network Design and Integration,

Natalie Reiter, Deputy Secretary, Policy, Precincts and Innovation,

Andrew McKeegan, Deputy Secretary, Planning, and

Stuart Menzies, Director, State Planning Services, Department of Transport and Planning;

Kevin Devlin, Director-General, and

Duncan Elliott, Chief Executive Officer, North East Link Project, Major Transport Infrastructure Authority;

Frankie Carroll, Chief Executive Officer, Suburban Rail Loop Authority;

Samantha Cockfield, Executive General Manager, Road Safety, Transport Accident Commission;

Angela Skandarajah, Chief Executive Officer, Development Victoria;

Matt Carrick, Chief Executive Officer, V/Line; and

Anna Cronin, Chief Executive Officer, Victorian Building Authority.

The CHAIR: Thank you. I declare open this hearing of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. I ask that mobile telephones be now turned to silent.

I would like to begin by acknowledging the traditional Aboriginal owners of the land on which we are meeting. We pay our respects to them, their culture, their elders past, present and future and elders from other communities who may be joining us here today.

On behalf of the Parliament the committee is conducting this Inquiry into the 2021–22 and 2022–23 Financial and Performance Outcomes. Its aim is to assess what the government achieved in both years compared to what the government planned to achieve.

All evidence taken by the committee is protected by parliamentary privilege. Comments repeated outside this hearing may not be protected by this privilege.

Witnesses will be provided with a proof version of the transcript to check. Verified transcripts, presentations and handouts will be placed on the committee's website.

As Chair I expect that committee members will be respectful towards witnesses, the Victorian community joining us via the live stream and other committee members.

I welcome the Secretary of the Department of Transport and Planning, Mr Paul Younis, as well as other officials who have joined you here today. Secretary, I invite you to make an opening statement or presentation of no more than 10 minutes, and after this time committee members will ask you some questions. Thank you.

Paul YOUNIS: Thanks very much, Chair, and thank you to the committee for inviting us along. I am supported here by a range of senior staff across our transport, planning and Big Build programs, because what has happened – and I will give a bit of an overview at the start – is that we have made some significant changes to the department over the past two years, joining the department of transport with the planning division of the functions of government.

Visual presentation.

Paul YOUNIS: If you look at the range of functions that we have, you will see our transport department, which includes our public transport, VicRoads and regional roads, Freight Victoria, active transport and Road Safety Victoria. Our delivery partners – and these are a really important part of our structure of having

specialist areas to deliver the significant projects that we have on the agenda – are our Suburban Rail Loop Authority, major transport, level crossing removal, Development Victoria, major projects and Rail Projects Victoria.

The planning and statutory authorities that have joined the department since the MOG changes in January 2023 include the VBA, the VPA and the supporting building and planning areas. We have in Victoria quite a range of private operators and venture partners that run our transport system. They are a very important part. If you look across the world, Victoria probably run the most privately operated network in the world, where we rely very much on a franchise arrangement and contractual arrangements with the private sector to deliver a lot of our works and a lot of our programs. Very important parts of that are our V/Line team, Metro, Yarra Trams, of course our growing and important bus fleet as well as our private operators of significant parts of our road network.

The other parts of our department include VicTrack and the regulatory functions of the department to support all of those functions, and last on the list but certainly most important are our ports – Ports Victoria and local ports – which support those supply chains into the country. This structure, from our point of view, is an important structure in that it really brings to life the *Transport Integration Act 2010*, where that was all about integrated, sustainable transport systems. We have added to that building safe communities and precincts, which is an important part of what we do to deliver to our Victorian community.

Of course building on all that, there are a lot of challenges for us, not least of all population growth. When we talk of population growth, it has a lot of implications around it. To get that in context for Victoria: we are projected in the next 30, 35 years to grow to just over 10 million people in Victoria – over 8 million in Melbourne – and that puts us at the size of London. To get that in context, and it is hard to just look at numbers like that, around every 10 years we will have to accommodate the population of Perth. So we will be having to build the infrastructure, the services and the support that would support a population close to Perth every 10 years. You need to get those sorts of numbers in context. They are not just numbers on their own, they come with some significant implications. They have issues in relation to housing affordability and housing availability, which is now in our agenda in relation to our role to play in that complex environment in our planning framework.

Important also is the freight volumes. Last year the freight growth on our network was close to 8 per cent – 8.2 per cent, I think – and that varies, depending on roads and rail, but managing our freight and accommodating that growth and supply to our community is really important, and accommodating that in with that population growth is incredibly important.

Of course we have had natural and non-natural issues that we have had to deal with over the last few years, not least of all the rising cost of construction, and that has hit everyone. It particularly is relevant for us in our transport and Big Build program. That has affected supply chains, and there have been various implications to our supply chains over the last few years. When the Ukraine incident occurred, we lost supply to critical wheels for our trams, so we had to look for other suppliers. The factory that was the reliable supply chain for that was bombed early in the conflict, and therefore that supply was lost. We had to go to Berlin, and we are working with Newcastle, to fill that gap.

It is those types of things that are unexpected that we need to deal with. Particularly in our construction costs and supply chains – and I am sure Kevin Devlin, who is the CEO of MTIA, deals with this every single day – are the specific issues we have in relation to certain resources. The one that we are dealing with now, and we know that it will be a challenge for us over the coming years, is our signalling supply. We do a lot of work – just about every single project we do on our rail network requires signalling intervention. That is a really critical part of what we do, and the supply of resources to that. So it is not just the overall supply, it is these critical elements that create some challenges for us, as well as the cost increases.

I am sure we will talk at length in relation to the extreme weather events that we have dealt with. That has caused incredible implications and challenges to our road network in particular, and so we have had to deal with that over an extended period of time. It is quite unusual for us to deal with that sort of impact over such an extended period of time.

On top of all that, we know that transport is a significant contributor to our carbon pollution, and we have a significant program in decarbonisation across our Big Build program but also, importantly, in our public transport program as well. That is an important part of what we do.

Given all those challenges, we need to frame up our response in layers. I quite like this picture because what it does is it says that we have got precincts that we need to build. We have got our regional areas that need to take on the task that we have in relation to all of those challenges, but they all need to be linked, and this is a long-term plan. This is not something that we can fix tomorrow, this is not something we can deal with in a heartbeat, this is something that we really need to manage over an extended period of time. What this tells us is it starts with a high-level framework. This is our high-level heavy rail network. It includes the Suburban Rail Loop and the Metro Tunnel – the new introductions to that. It identifies the significant precincts that will be important for us to develop and accommodate the growth that we are doing in Melbourne and Victoria and recognises that growth and the work that the regional areas need to do in accommodating that population growth.

Of course underlying that are all the other elements that come into the planning changes that we need to put in place to support that program – the other transport infrastructure that we have got in place to do that, particularly in our bus network, which is now taking a much greater part of the load. We have done a lot of reform in our bus program to be able to accommodate that, our tram network is the basis of a lot of that work, but importantly the improvement to our freight network in our regional areas – we have done a significant amount of work in that space. So that I think reflects the challenge we have got.

I will just briefly – and I have only got a minute left; I should have timed this before I started – talk about some of those responses. The housing statement responds to some of that. We have got a significant role to play particularly in the planning and building area to make sure that we are playing our part in that supply chain of housing to our community, which is an important part, and we have got a number of programs in place on that. But of course we have still got the big infrastructure program that we are delivering. We ran the Metro Tunnel testing. It is now operating; we have got trains running through there now. Every single day there are trains, and we are doing the testing program for that. I did mention our bus reform program, a really important part of that network that we do.

The other element that we do is we have built over a period of time a really strong manufacturing program. We have got our G-class trams, 100 new trams that we are building in Victoria. They are being built at Dandenong. That is a Victorian construction. We build our rolling stock in Victoria; we have done that all along. We are just completing our HCMTs in relation to that. We have got a maintenance facility that we are building in Maidstone to support that. We have got 40 electric buses operating on a route as we are working through how we transition our fleet to electric buses. And of course we are improving a lot of those elements across our regional network, particularly the improvements we have done across the freight network, expansion of our high-capacity network and others. So thank you very much, Chair.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Secretary, indeed. I can see your enthusiasm for this topic. There will be lots to talk about. The first 21 minutes is going to the Deputy Chair.

Nick McGOWAN: Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr Younis. I have got a question for Duncan Elliott, but while I am waiting for him to come up: given everything you have said about population growth, it strikes me that it is ironic that both Melton rail and Wyndham rail have not happened. Why is that?

Paul YOUNIS: Sorry?

Nick McGOWAN: Melton rail and Wyndham rail. What are the plans? When will they happen, I suppose, is the quick question.

Paul YOUNIS: So we have a massive program of works, and we are rolling out all of that program of works. We are starting with the construction program that we have got running now. We have got our regional rail program now. We have got our West Gate Tunnel program operating. We are working through our Western Rail Plan – and the Western Rail Plan was a part of the Commonwealth infrastructure review works and so we are revisiting that now, given the Commonwealth infrastructure review findings are out, so we can understand the implications of that. We are building all of those programs. The Metro Tunnel is a very important part of getting more services out into that western region, and we are rolling out nine-car VLocity

trains and setting the infrastructure up to increase the capacity out to Melton. So we have a program of works so that when we do construction works there are no regrets for future planning. It is a rollout of programs –

Nick McGOWAN: Okay, but just very quickly, current regrets. Melton and Wyndham rail – when will that start?

Paul YOUNIS: So Wyndham Vale – we have got nine-car VLocity trains running out there now.

Nick McGOWAN: The rail out at Wyndham?

Paul YOUNIS: That is rail.

Nick McGOWAN: Finished by when? The commitment that was given previously, though –

Paul YOUNIS: That is operating now.

Nick McGOWAN: Melton?

Paul YOUNIS: Melton, nine-car VLocitys – Will Tieppo might be able to help me on a program of when that is happening.

Will TIEPPO: Look, I think just to add to Mr Younis, the Melton line upgrade has already been committed, and that project has now been integrated together with the level crossings program. The nine-car VLocity trains will be able to run as soon as the infrastructure is complete, and that work is currently in the planning and preconstruction phase.

Nick McGOWAN: But I am talking about electric trains here.

The CHAIR: I think you are talking about electrification.

Nick McGOWAN: Yes.

Will TIEPPO: Oh, okay. Sorry. So we have got –

Nick McGOWAN: As much as I loved the coal and steam era, electric.

Paul YOUNIS: Well, there are different ways to provide services to communities, and electric trains are not the only one. We –

Nick McGOWAN: Steam and coal, I get it, but electric – when will electric be done?

Paul YOUNIS: We have a range of programs that we run to improve services to our community. They are not just heavy rail electric. In that Melton area we have got bus upgrades as well, so they are an important part of that. The electrification – we have done work around the planning for the electrification to Melton, and we will be rolling out the programs in a staged manner that allows that to happen. There have been no funding commitments to the Melton upgrade as a single project to date, but we are doing the planning work to allow government to make those decisions.

Nick McGOWAN: Thank you, Mr Younis. Thank you, Mr Elliott, for joining us. The North East Link project – what is the total budget for that?

Duncan ELLIOTT: The total budget is \$15.8 billion.

Nick McGOWAN: \$15.8 billion. Does that include the major capital works?

Duncan ELLIOTT: It does, yes.

Nick McGOWAN: Okay. Does it also include the other ancillary works – the gardens, the parks, the blah, blah, and the rest of it?

Duncan ELLIOTT: That is right.

Nick McGOWAN: It does. And is there any progress on the Watsonia end? I know the Watsonia end has got the raw end of the deal compared to the Ivanhoe electorate. The Bundoora electorate, Mr Colin Brooks's electorate, has very little in terms of either pedestrian overpasses for connectivity or for train stations. The train station is just a big blob on the map; there are no details. When can we get real details around that?

Duncan ELLIOTT: We have just recently released the – I should take a step back, sorry. The main contract works, the tunnel works, were contracted in late 2021. Those works are well under way now, and they terminate just before Watsonia Road. So there is another package of work that we are currently procuring which will connect the tunnel into the M80 ring-road. Design updates for that package were recently released for public consultation as part of that procurement. As part of the main Spark contract the tunnel was extended using TBMs about 1.9 kilometres north of where it was originally planned to end – primarily in relation to community feedback but also environmental outcomes. The solution through Watsonia builds on that by keeping the road low – you would be aware there is a rail trench through there as well – so then we are able to connect pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles into the arterial network at grade, without having to build structures.

Nick McGOWAN: Can we have a pedestrian overpass? There is a 15-lane trench there, obviously.

Duncan ELLIOTT: In some small parts it is 15 lanes, but most of it is about six. So where we have the ramps coming in it is wider. But the design is geared towards maintaining the vent tunnel portal – which was a significant issue during the EES hearings – at its original location near the Simpson Barracks. The Spark solution, whilst it extends the tunnel a further 600 metres north in terms of where it starts, means that vent tunnel will not move, and that was a really positive outcome for the public. Moving that tunnel further north would mean that vent structure would have to move – we would not be able to pump that air any more than about 600 metres backwards. If we were going to extend the tunnel, we would have to extend the vent portal, and that was something that we certainly heard during the EES hearings.

Nick McGOWAN: Perhaps I can take you up, Mr Elliott, later on at another time about how we can try to improve the Watsonia end, because it has got the raw end of the stick right now. I know citizens there are very keen to make sure we have a pedestrian overpass at the very least and also some very detailed drawings other than that pathetic little town square, which is just an abomination – but that is my opinion. Certainly, beyond that, the locals would like to know what the train station looks like, and they would like to have surety around the connection of Greensborough secondary college with the Watsonia side. Because of course otherwise we have got a 15-lane trench, and we have got people at grade crossing that 15-lane freeway, as you say, at its worst spot. But I will move on. Thank you for your time.

Paul YOUNIS: Chair, can I –

Nick McGOWAN: That is okay – Mr Younis, coming back to you. High-capacity trains – they are referred to in budget paper 5, 2021–22, page 16. Changchun Railway Vehicles Co. are the builder of these trains. They have a history of using asbestos-based insulation, particularly in the ceilings of the vehicles they produce. Can you guarantee there is no asbestos-based product in any of the trains we will be acquiring here in Victoria?

Paul YOUNIS: Yes.

Nick McGOWAN: And is that part of the contract?

Paul YOUNIS: We just receive the shell and the design – the steel shell – from overseas. The rest of the train is fitted out and built here in Newport and in Pakenham. So we have got those supply chains, we work through those supply chains and we keep track of the material that is used in them. That is all put together here in Victoria, in Pakenham and in Newport.

Nick McGOWAN: So there is no installation around the electrical componentry that might be –

Paul YOUNIS: Yes, of course there is, but that is –

Nick McGOWAN: Is it done here or there?

Paul YOUNIS: We are putting all the electrical componentry in here. So we buy the shells from overseas, they are brought over here – and we are buying the design and the IP in relation to that – and we are putting them together in Victoria.

Nick McGOWAN: Do you know what the life expectancy of these capacity trains is?

Paul YOUNIS: Will?

Will TIEPPO: We normally design and build our rolling stock to last up to 40 years, and in some cases some of our existing rolling stock, like our Comeng trains that we have already decommissioned and disposed of, were in the order of a 40-year lifespan.

Nick McGOWAN: Thank you.

Paul YOUNIS: Can I just add to that: we can extend that period by doing life extensions. So in particular with our Comengs we are doing life extension programs, which is quite a significant refurbishment. Every train has a program of maintenance and refurbishment. Once they get towards that end of life, we can do a life extension program on them to extend that period.

Nick McGOWAN: And are they modular? Hypothetically, can we make them an eight-car unit?

Paul YOUNIS: Yes, so they can go up to a 10-car unit. All the infrastructure that we are building in the new infrastructure through Metro Tunnel, and it is quite an impressive sight to see when you go down and see the length of those platforms, they will accommodate a 10-car capacity train.

Nick McGOWAN: Thank you. Will they be rated to run on every line in the metro system?

Paul YOUNIS: Right now they are limited to – we have got enough to run on the metro system. We are not intending to expand them across the network. What we are doing in relation to other trains across the network is working through the X'trap 2 train. That is being built in Ballarat. That train will replace the existing Comeng and is able to run on other parts of the network, but the current HCMT train, which is being built in Pakenham, we are up to number 40 something, or 50 –

Will TIEPPO: Sixty-eight.

Paul YOUNIS: Oh, 68 of those. They will be dedicated to the Sunbury-to-Pakenham line, and that is the amount of trains we need to run that service.

Nick McGOWAN: Just to be clear, all the electrical systems – it is just the shell we are getting from China. All the electrical systems are done here, so installation and so forth are all Victorian based or all Australian based?

Will TIEPPO: Yes. All the electrical looms and the fitting out of the train actually happens in Newport.

Nick McGOWAN: Mr Younis, Yarra Trams and the security force, or the public perception of security. Can you give me any details in terms of the spending you might have done on security officers and making people feel safe in trams?

Paul YOUNIS: There is an allocation for PSOs across the network. I have not got that –

Nick McGOWAN: Do you have it for the tram network specifically, as opposed –

Paul YOUNIS: No, that is across the public transport network, and that is shared across V/Line, Metro Trains and Yarra Trams. The majority is on the Metro Trains system. That is through the department of justice. Yarra Trams also have a responsibility, as others do, to ensure the safety, and they will run their own program. Where they see hotspots or where they think they can look to improve the customer response, they will run some of these programs specifically. The recently introduced authorised officers, who are Yarra Trams employees, are there for really picking up any areas that they think they can put them to to improve safety, or improve the perception of safety, and make people feel safer on that network.

Nick McGOWAN: Are we picking up on any concerns the public have around transport on public trams in particular?

Paul YOUNIS: There has been no increase in concerns around that, although it is really difficult to measure trends, particularly when we had this interruption of COVID. Right now we have got different changes in

people accessing the network. There are no significant changes in the trends of safety in the network, but it is something we always are aware of, that one of our obligations that we want to achieve is a safe network where people feel safe. There are incidents on the network. We are not free of incidents on the network. That happens daily, and managing that so people do not feel intimidated on our network is important.

Nick McGOWAN: Are you confident there are enough substations in respect to the high-capacity metro trains?

Paul YOUNIS: Yes – well, I am confident because the high-capacity metro trains are running on the network, so last week or the week before the high-capacity metro train ran out to Sunbury. So the train is running on the network, it is running through the tunnel and –

Nick McGOWAN: Through the loop?

Paul YOUNIS: It has been through the loop previously, before it went through the Metro Tunnel. The high-capacity trains now actually every day are running through the loop – from Pakenham out through the loop and back again. Once Metro Tunnel opens, that structure will change and we will be running through the loop, and they will be dedicated to that line. Mr McGowan, that is a really important part, because one of the challenges we have had in the Melbourne metropolitan network is that it is an integrated system – you cannot run separate lines. We have gradually and progressively separated those lines. The Metro Tunnel will be such an important part of separating further those lines and removing the congestion in the city loop, and that allows us to run more trains from other parts of the network across the network.

Nick McGOWAN: A matter close to my heart, the Hurstbridge line. We have got 1.3 k's between Greensborough and Monty, and in 2018 I think the Premier said that would have duplication to Wattle Glen, notwithstanding there is an issue in Eltham with the trestle bridge. Any progress on those plans or are we stalled?

Paul YOUNIS: I have not got an update on them, but Kevin may.

Kevin DEVLIN: There is no commitment to that third stage of the upgrade of the Hurstbridge corridor. Obviously have just completed the stage 2 duplication of the Hurstbridge line, and extra services are running on that line.

Nick McGOWAN: Stage 2 being what? Greensborough to Monty?

Kevin DEVLIN: Yes.

Nick McGOWAN: Okay. How much over budget was that?

Kevin DEVLIN: We delivered on the approved budget for Hurstbridge. We did increase the budget to deal with the Eltham copper butterfly that was identified, and we had to change some scope. I think that was appropriate to deal with a –

Nick McGOWAN: What was the volume of that increase?

Kevin DEVLIN: nationally significant environmental protected species, so that investment was made to allow us to complete the Hurstbridge duplication and deliver those services on time.

Nick McGOWAN: How much?

Kevin DEVLIN: Approximately \$60 million.

Nick McGOWAN: Over and above, or in total?

Kevin DEVLIN: To deal with the change. In the budget papers the budget changes by about \$60 million to deal with the issues we had with identifying that nationally significant species.

Nick McGOWAN: Any chance I can nominate Greensborough for being the ugliest new train station on the Melbourne metro network?

Paul YOUNIS: We will take that as a statement.

Nick McGOWAN: The level crossing removal at Bedford Road – I am very keen to make sure that the schools that use it are taken into account. You have got Ringwood Secondary College there. Is it possible to have a meeting in respect to that with the principal to make sure particularly parking issues are addressed there, obviously during construction but also after the construction?

Kevin DEVLIN: We engage with all our stakeholders in those vicinities. I am sure the team is more than happy to have the discussions with all the stakeholders around those level crossings, as we have done over the last eight years.

Nick McGOWAN: Sure. Can we have a meeting before the end of the year with the principal? Is that possible?

Kevin DEVLIN: Yes, subject to the team's availability, but I am sure that is possible.

Nick McGOWAN: Awesome. That would be great. Thank you.

Bev McARTHUR: Mr Tieppo, perhaps you can help us. How many other projects are or have been funded to sustain VLocity railcars as suburban trains due to them never being intended to be used as such?

Will TIEPPO: I think at the moment we have got a production of VLocity trains to make sure that we are retiring some of the older classic fleet. We have got 23 VLocitys still in production. They are all scheduled to be complete in early 2026, but that work is going really well. We are producing VLocity trains probably the fastest we have ever produced. Those sorts of trains will provide additional capacity, more comfort, speed – they are the sorts of things that we are initiating as part of the VLocity program.

Bev McARTHUR: Okay. Mr Tieppo, the budget overview statement of 2021–22, page 50, states:

\$94 million will be invested in the Melton and Wyndham Vale corridor to enable higher capacity trains, including nine-car VLocity trains.

Can you confirm that the VLocity railcars which run on these two lines, first ordered in the 2000s, were never intended for suburban services when they were first ordered?

Will TIEPPO: Well, I cannot comment in the past, but I guess the Wyndham Vale corridor does cater for nine-car VLocity trains. As Mr Younis said, those trains are running on it today. The additional stations that have been announced by the government will be set up for nine-car VLocity trains, and they will continue to run as they do today. As the production of our new trains continues, those will continue to be rolled out on those corridors.

Bev McARTHUR: What is the life expectancy for VLocity railcars working suburban services on the Melton and Wyndham Vale lines?

Will TIEPPO: Well, I think going back to Mr McGowan's question, with the VLocity trains and our metropolitan trains we run a very similar 40-year lifespan. As Mr Younis said, there are life extensions on those trains if we need to to make improvements or renew parts and those sorts of things on those trains, so you can get extensions to those. It does not really matter whether they are suburban or regional, they will have a similar design life.

Bev McARTHUR: Are you planning for nine-carriage services on the Wyndham Vale line because there is no plan in the long term to follow through with electrification of the Wyndham Vale and Melton lines?

Will TIEPPO: Well, I think, as Mr Younis and Mr Devlin said, the Melton electrification has not been committed. But we are progressively staging the investments on the Melton line, with the first one dealing with patronage – longer trains to deal with that demand on Melton. In terms of Wyndham Vale we are already running those nine-car VLocity trains, so we are dealing with that patronage growth on those corridors. And certainly the ones that we have actually implemented to date have made a difference, particularly for those people in Geelong, in not experiencing the growth in those as well.

Bev McARTHUR: Using sprinters on long-haul services was done 20 years ago, then stopped as they were never intended for long-haul services – the gearboxes wore out, surprise, surprise. What studies have the department completed on the wear and tear of using VLocity trains as suburban trains on their life expectancy, given they were never meant to be used as suburban trains?

Will TIEPPO: Well, as I mentioned before, Mrs McArthur, I think the VLocity train program will continue to be rolled out across regional Victoria and we will continue to retire some of the older classic fleet. So I think the work that we are doing – we constantly monitor how parts perform, we work with our manufacturing partners in Alstom to look at wear and tear on those sorts of parts, and we make changes to those things as part of our normal maintenance of the trains.

Bev McARTHUR: The government put forward money to retrofit platforms on the Wyndham Vale and Melton lines for nine-carriage VLocity trains. Would this work have needed to be done if six-carriage suburban services were being used, as originally planned?

Will TIEPPO: Well, I think, coming back to the regional rail link when it was first built, the project always had looked into the future around making sure that that corridor, which is a busy corridor, could deal with future demands on that corridor. So the work that was done as part of regional rail link has futureproofed that work anyway.

Bev McARTHUR: Okay. Can you confirm why the two busiest lines, Wyndham Vale and Tarneit, had their electrification cancelled?

Will TIEPPO: Well, I do not think there was any funding ever committed for the electrification for Wyndham Vale, and the same with Melton. But we have done, as Mr Younis said –

A witness: We are doing the planning.

Bev McARTHUR: You made election commitments, though.

The CHAIR: Apologies, Mrs McArthur, the time is up. We are going to go straight to Mr Galea.

Michael GALEA: Thank you, Chair, and good morning, Secretary and officials. Thank you for joining us. I have a couple of questions for Ms Skandarajah from Development Victoria.

Just while she is coming up, though, Secretary, picking up from Mr McGowan on the HCMTs – obviously I represent the south-eastern suburbs, so I use them quite regularly on the Pakenham–Cranbourne lines, and I am happy to say that, yes, they do go through the city loop as well currently. I note as well that they have recently started operations, just a couple of trains a day, on the Sunbury line to prepare for when the Metro Tunnel does open. Can you please talk me through the rollout of the HCMTs currently and where we are at in preparation for the tunnel opening?

Paul YOUNIS: I think I will go to Kevin Devlin on this, with the amount of work that he has done to prepare not only the rolling stock, the stations, the platforms, the access and egress from our stations, but also there is going to be a significant change in the timetable. So we will be changing the train network across the program because we will be running up to 18 trains an hour through Metro Tunnel with the new HCMTs, which are a high-capacity train. They take more passengers than the normal Comeng and X'trap that we have now, and they will be running through there. So we have been rolling out the production, and the production of course we have been doing for a number of years. And they have been operating successfully across the network, as you know, running through the loop and in revenue service. For nearly two years now, I think, they have been running revenue service very successfully. And we are continuing to build and will build up to the 65 in the next 18 months or so. We are testing those trains through the Metro Tunnel now. That is a really important part, because the testing needs to make sure all the systems talk to one another. I was fortunate to be down in the Metro Tunnel last week. I went to Arden station. Arden station is the test bed where they do all the testing and the signalling – all the testing of the works that go on – and make sure everything runs through that. That is where I was fortunate to be able to get on a high-capacity Metro train and ride it in to State Library station, which is a massive station.

But I might go to Mr Devlin, and he can talk us through the actual delivery and testing that is done and the complexities around that. I will add, though: one of the things that I had not quite appreciated until I went down there and talked to the hundreds of people that we have employed to do that is the testing is not just about testing the trains to operate as they are, they are testing them to failure. You need to push everything as far as it will possibly go, into failure mode. I had not quite appreciated that. All of the station systems, the exhaust fans, need to be designed and tested for explosions in the network. While I do not want to catastrophise that, I found it incredibly interesting that that is the way that we have designed the network – to be as safe as it possibly can be and to operate under extreme conditions. So we are testing the network for extreme conditions and right to failure, which takes a lot of planning, a lot of design and a lot of work. But I might go to Mr Devlin to talk us through a little bit more of that.

Kevin DEVLIN: I think you have adequately covered a fair bit of that.

Paul YOUNIS: Sorry, I got a little bit carried away.

Kevin DEVLIN: No, it is impressive when you go down to the stations. Arden as a station is essentially complete, and we are using that as our significant test lab so we can then roll out the testing regime with more certainty through the other four stations. At the moment experts are progressing very well with the testing and commissioning. It is a critical phase, however, I would say. We are testing it to its limits, as Mr Younis indicated. To date that testing is going very well. The train is at line speed. Platform screen doors are operational. And importantly too, for the first time we have our high-capacity signalling system operational, both in the tunnel and outside the tunnel, on that Pakenham line, operating in what we call a mixed-mode scenario. All of that implementation has gone very well. We are now really testing it for that continued reliability and stress testing, so that importantly we have good confidence in the progress of the tunnel operations. Now we are moving also to the next phase, where we need the trains and the tunnel to talk to the stations. There are lots of systems – fire and life safety systems, communication systems – that are talking to the trains, and all that is being tested at the moment. So, yes, we are really looking forward to opening that service in 2025.

Michael GALEA: Thank you, Mr Devlin and Secretary. Just before I move on, you did mention, Mr Devlin, the new in-cab signalling as well. Of course this is a first for Melbourne but we have seen it in other similar major projects, such as the Elizabeth line in London, where that in-cab signalling allows trains to run at that higher frequency. Can you talk me through that and what sort of frequency the trains will be able to run at that you are testing them for currently?

Kevin DEVLIN: At the moment we are testing for 18 trains per hour running through the tunnel and on that line, and a significant level of service on the busiest rail line in Melbourne. The CBTC high-capacity signalling system, as I indicated, is a first for Melbourne and a significant technology boost across Australia. Implementing that CBTC allows us to reduce the headway and run more trains, so you are sweating the existing asset as well rather than having to duplicate more lines and provide more track. You can run the trains closer together in a safe way, and that signalling system controls that digitally with the driver in the cabin. Yes, it is pleasing to see the first implementation of CBTC in Victoria. I know a lot of the train gunzels were out there. When the signals went black, that was actually an indication that it was operating in CBTC mode, and they all were cheering about that. For the layperson it may not be as exciting, but that is a significant improvement in our ability to run more trains more often.

Michael GALEA: Certainly. We can see those frequency benefits too, absolutely. Thank you for that. Ms Skandarajah, thank you for joining us. In the 2021–22 and 2022–23 financial performance outcomes questionnaire, you have indicated, I believe on pages 5 to 7, discussion around land sales. Can you tell me how many houses Development Victoria has delivered across these two years that we are looking at?

Angela SKANDARAJAH: Sure. It is an important part of our statutory mandate to deliver on housing affordability and diversity. For the financial year 2022 we had 510 sales of new homes, and for financial year 2023 we had 214. So across those two years, 724 sales.

Michael GALEA: Thank you. And what percentage of those homes in that period were classified as affordable?

Angela SKANDARAJAH: So we have ambitious targets to meet, but for the financial year 2022, 37 per cent of those sales can be classified as affordable housing, and for the financial year 2023, 21 per cent.

Michael GALEA: Twenty-one per cent, thank you. Can you give me an indication of the geographic spread of these projects, I guess between regional and metropolitan but also subregional: where in regional Victoria, where in metropolitan Melbourne?

Angela SKANDARAJAH: Most of our existing projects that are in delivery are in the metropolitan or the greater metropolitan area. We are moving into the regions as part of the work that we are doing. But there were six projects across the financial year 2022, located in Altona North, in Aurora, Epping, Officer, Werribee, Sunshine North and Taylors Lakes. In financial year 2023, the sales resulted in again Aurora, Springvale South, Officer and Werribee.

Michael GALEA: Thank you. Moving beyond the residential side, I understand that there are a lot of civic projects that you have done as well as also outlined in those FPO questionnaires that Development Victoria has undertaken for 2022–23 as well as the previous year 2021–22. Can you talk me through some of those civic projects that have also been delivered in this two-year period?

Angela SKANDARAJAH: An important part of our work also is to deliver capital works projects, largely in the social infrastructure space. In financial year 2022 we completed two important projects, the Docklands sound studio Stage 6 in the Docklands, which was a \$46 million project for Docklands Studios Melbourne. Also the completion of the third stage of the Melbourne Park redevelopment, which was a nearly billion-dollar investment by government. And in financial year 2023, a really exciting project in the regions, the completion of the Bendigo GovHub, Galkangu, an approximately \$130 million investment by government. Also, the Geelong Arts Centre, which is, again, the largest performing arts centre in regional Australia, is at a \$140 million investment.

Michael GALEA: Thank you, a few interesting projects there. The Docklands studio Stage 6, that is quite a large number. I know that has been an operational studio that has been quite popular for some time now. What has stage 6 delivered for that?

Angela SKANDARAJAH: Forty-six million dollars, in terms of the cost.

Michael GALEA: And what was the project delivering?

Angela SKANDARAJAH: It has delivered for obviously the Dockland Studios Melbourne, but to deliver in conjunction with Film Victoria, a great film investment in the state.

Michael GALEA: Yes, excellent. You mentioned the Bendigo GovHub; can you tell us a bit more about how this project has progressed, as well as some of the sustainability aspects of the GovHub?

Angela SKANDARAJAH: The project was completed earlier this year with capacity for nearly 1000 state and local government workers to be accommodated in the building. It is an incredible, incredible building designed in conjunction with the Dja Dja Wurrung, so with really incredible traditional owner design elements incorporated into the building. It is also the largest timber-framed building to be constructed. It is actually an amazing outcome from a sustainability perspective. But it is a really important consolidation of government services in Bendigo, bringing together both the local and state government.

Michael GALEA: Terrific. Thank you. We heard yesterday from Court Services Victoria as well of course about their new building, their wonderful new law courts in Bendigo, so together with this GovHub it is terrific to see that investment right across –

Angela SKANDARAJAH: Both stunning buildings.

Michael GALEA: They both are indeed. Can you tell me a bit more – outside of the Bendigo project, those sustainability aspects, how have you applied them with other civic projects?

Angela SKANDARAJAH: We always strive for best practice in sustainability, and we are targeting all of our projects. In the housing area we target 7-star NatHERS energy ratings. For our civic and community buildings we do target the highest sustainability standards, and we are working towards net zero precincts in the

precincts area, particularly in Fitzroy gasworks. So there is a lot happening in the sustainability space, but each project is looked at for its unique characteristics and how we can incorporate best practice.

Michael GALEA: And you touched on there as well the sustainability for the housing aspect. Can you go into a bit more detail about these new communities that you are building, whether it is Aurora, Officer or Springvale? What sustainability measures are you putting into those developments?

Angela SKANDARAJAH: Again, each project is looked at for its unique characteristics and what we can incorporate, but obviously gas free is now the standard for our housing projects, and moving forward we will continue to look for initiatives in terms of incorporating best practice in all of those communities. We tried to pilot – part of our role in the housing space is demonstrating to industry what can be achieved using commercial disciplines, as we are required to do under our Act, so part of what we do is showcase opportunities for industry to come along and deliver housing that is sustainable, and not only sustainable in construction but through the operating period as well.

Members interjecting.

Michael GALEA: Those to my left might be tutting about sustainability measures, but it is very good to hear that that is being put in place. We are talking about outputs and outcomes here, but there is a big housing statement that has been announced that will require a significant amount of work from Development Victoria. How have these projects, specifically these residential projects, set Development Victoria up, and are there any particular learnings from these last two years that will help you to deliver these future projects as well?

Angela SKANDARAJAH: Yes. Of course every project is a learning experience for us. We do lessons learned after the completion of every project to make sure that we incorporate those lessons into future projects. We think we will have an important role to play as part of the housing statement. Our expertise and our capability in delivering all types of development, particularly housing development, places us in a good position to support the government's ambitious agenda in this space.

Michael GALEA: Thank you. Can you talk to me about the sort of job creation that you have been able to deliver as part of these – obviously all projects, but particularly those civic projects such as the ones you mentioned.

Angela SKANDARAJAH: We have an annual spend of around half a billion dollars. That generally creates around 6300 jobs, primarily in the construction and development industries.

Michael GALEA: Thank you. And it is not often that, representing the south-east, I get to go to Geelong, but I do understand there is a fantastic new arts centre –

Bev McARTHUR: Did you get your passport?

Michael GALEA: I will come and visit you, Mrs McArthur. But when I do, on my way to see Mrs McArthur, I am very keen to drop past the performing arts centre that has been built. Can you talk to me about that project and again the sustainability measures but also what has been able to be delivered for the Geelong community as part of that?

Angela SKANDARAJAH: The ARM Architecture designed building is again incorporating some fantastic traditional owner elements not only into the art but also integrated into the building through the stories it tells on each level of the building. Again, as I said, it is the largest regional performing arts centre in Australia, with stage 3 completed in August and now operating. It is so busy, apparently, that it is constantly booked out, which is absolutely fantastic for the local community. Again, it has the highest elements of sustainability in terms of re-use of materials from other projects, including projects in the Docklands to re-use materials. As I said, in all of our projects we look for opportunities to incorporate great sustainability outcomes, and the Geelong performing arts centre is a really good example of that.

Michael GALEA: Terrific. Thank you, Ms Skandarajah. Just for the time I have left I might go back to Mr Devlin or the Secretary on rolling stock. We have spoken about HCMTs – perhaps, Secretary – and obviously for my electorate that is a very exciting project that we are already seeing the benefit of. In terms of the other projects, you did mention briefly the X'trap 2.0, and we also have the G-class trams. I understand the

X'trap 2.0 project will be largely in replacement of the Comeng trains. What sort of work has been done by the department over the past two years to prepare the network for replacement of those Comeng trains?

Paul YOUNIS: It is a really important point, because the HCMT is a dedicated train with high-capacity signalling built into it. The rest of the network is not set up in that much more sophisticated way. The network is over 100, 120 years old, and what we are doing is retrofitting our programs and upgrading it as we go.

So the X'trap 2.0 train has been designed to run on the network and replace the Comeng. The framework – we spend a lot of time with Alstom working through to the design detail and testing the existing network and the capacity of the Comeng trains so the X'trap 2.0 will be a direct replacement. It is an important part of being able to apply a modern designed train with all the technology that we need onto quite an old network that, while we are upgrading, has not all been upgraded, and there are elements that it needs to work on. But Mr Tieppo is actually running our train and tram upgrade network and might be able to give us an update on the construction of the X'trap 2.0 and the jobs.

Will TIEPPO: Yes. I think X'trapolis 2.0, like Mr Younis was saying, was specifically designed to run on our network without too many additional infrastructure upgrades, and that work is really progressing. We are going through the design process and completing the design process as we speak, with Alstom. We had the mock-up train that we took to people, looking at accessibility improvements, getting feedback as part of the design process, and we have already started production of some of the parts at Dandenong, particularly around the shells that are being produced in Dandenong. And then once all those parts have been produced, and with our supply chain, they will be assembled in Ballarat as part of the production of that. So in terms of manufacturing, that is already underway and we are looking forward to that.

I guess in terms of the G-class tram we have got a mock-up as we speak and we are doing the same process there as with the X'trapolis 2.0 and again getting feedback from, you know, people with disabilities, the drivers, anyone who is looking through there. So we are getting feedback and we are in the design phase of the next-generation trams – that is the 100 that we are producing. We are going through that design phase. As Mr Younis said, part of the work with the next-generation tram is the building of the facility at Maidstone. That is where the maintenance facility is and the trams will be maintained and stabled at night as well.

Michael GALEA: Thank you very much.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Galea. We will go straight to Mrs McArthur.

Bev McARTHUR: Thank you, Chair. I am going to Angela – just before you vacate your seat, if you do not mind. Tell me, what species of timber was used in that timber build in the Bendigo hub?

Angela SKANDARAJAH: I am not across the detail. I will have to take that on notice.

Bev McARTHUR: Well, was it hardwood or softwood?

Angela SKANDARAJAH: Hardwood.

Bev McARTHUR: Hardwood. So where did it come from?

Angela SKANDARAJAH: I would have to take that on notice.

Bev McARTHUR: Can you take it on notice?

Angela SKANDARAJAH: Yes.

Bev McARTHUR: We want to know whether it is Australian hardwood or imported. Okay, thank you.

Angela SKANDARAJAH: It would be Australian.

Bev McARTHUR: Also, just while you are there, the government has committed to building 80,000 new dwellings each year in the government's housing statement released on 20 September. This represents an average of 220 houses per day over 365 days. How many dwellings have been completed since 20 September 2023?

Angela SKANDARAJAH: I do not have those numbers on me. I would have to take that on notice.

Bev McARTHUR: You take it on notice. Thank you. And since the –

Members interjecting.

Bev McARTHUR: I will just continue.

Michael GALEA: Chair, a point of order.

The CHAIR: Excuse me, Mrs McArthur. A point of order has been raised.

Michael GALEA: We are here for the inquiry into 2021–22 and 2022–23. Questions about September 2023 onwards are quite clearly out of scope.

Bev McARTHUR: Well –

The CHAIR: Mrs McArthur, I have not ruled on the point of order. Thank you, Mr Galea. Mrs McArthur, could you please keep your questions to the inquiry at hand. I do suggest you are straying outside of the financial and performance outcomes that we are looking at today.

Bev McARTHUR: Well, thank you, but the continual conversation has been about the Big Build.

The CHAIR: Mrs McArthur –

Bev McARTHUR: We have just heard about the houses being built; they were waxing lyrical about them. So I want to know –

The CHAIR: Mrs McArthur, I have just ruled on the point of order. If you have a question that is within the remit of this inquiry, I suggest that you ask it.

Bev McARTHUR: Well, what measures are being put in place to report how the government are performing against their promises in the housing build, Angela?

Angela SKANDARAJAH: I am not in a position to answer the question.

Paul YOUNIS: That is a question probably for me, Chair.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Secretary.

Paul YOUNIS: I will ask Ms Reiter to support it. We use ABS data, so we have got data that is verifiable in relation to that. The September 2023 ABS data shows that the number of residential building approvals in Victoria grew during 2020–21 and have been falling since 2022–23. In the last 12 months to September 2023, there have been 53,000 building approvals compared to a peak of more than 71,000 the year before. I think that reflects the challenge we have. I think what the government have put is a target that is going to be challenging for us, and there are a range of measures that we need to work through to make sure that both state and local government and particularly industry are in a position to be able to deliver that housing that we need for the future.

Bev McARTHUR: So the government gave you an unachievable target.

Paul YOUNIS: What we think we can do is – with all the measures that are put in place, and with the support of industry in particular and developers through this program, that target is achievable. It is not going to be easy; there is no doubt about that. I think you are right to highlight the challenge that we have.

Bev McARTHUR: 220 a day is quite a challenge.

Paul YOUNIS: The challenge that we have in making sure that we accommodate the growth that Victoria has had – and I spoke to that at the very start – is that the growth elements are not just around housing, they are also about building the infrastructure and the support mechanism around that. I think what the government have told me and announced – that is a challenge. We need to have a plan in place. Of course the plan is to make

sure we are in a position to do this over a period of time. It is not something that will be achieved tomorrow. I think I mentioned that –

Bev McARTHUR: Or even daily.

Paul YOUNIS: and that of course the risk is that people will try to do a daily figure on this, which is somewhat irrelevant to the overall aim of making sure that we are providing affordable housing.

Bev McARTHUR: Eighty thousand a year is your target.

Paul YOUNIS: It is also to make sure we are building the precincts and the planning to accommodate those people in a way that is affordable and environmentally sustainable.

Bev McARTHUR: Could I ask Mr Carrick from V/Line to get to the table, please?

Nick McGOWAN: Just while we are waiting for him to come here, is it possible for Angela to provide the Excel spreadsheet of Mr Galea's question in respect to the number of houses and the sales points – how much they were sold for? You went through the two figures for two respective years.

Angela SKANDARAJAH: It was in our questionnaire, I think. We have provided it.

Nick McGOWAN: If you could provide for each of those homes what they were sold for, that would be great. Thank you.

Angela SKANDARAJAH: Sold for?

Nick McGOWAN: The price – that is right.

Angela SKANDARAJAH: That would be commercial information, and we would need to take some advice on if we can disclose it –

Nick McGOWAN: It is public money. I would hope you can.

Angela SKANDARAJAH: because it is purchasers' personal information.

Nick McGOWAN: I am sure it is online, like everything else at realestate.com.au, but sure. Thank you.

Bev McARTHUR: Mr Carrick, why has the government steadfastly refused to reinstate the heritage rail gates that were such a feature of Ballarat, and specifically Lydiard Street in Ballarat? The swing gates have operated on this level crossing since 1862. Why is it they are deemed now to be unsafe to use when heritage gates like this are used in many places – in Great Britain, for example, where the speeds are in excess of probably 160 kilometres an hour? Why aren't we going to reinstate the heritage gates at Lydiard Street? After all, it took you 500 days to open up the road after a train driver crashed through it. Why aren't you going to reinstate the heritage gates?

Matt CARRICK: At the start, I just want to correct the premise that a rail driver crashed through the gates. There was no fault attributed to the train driver.

Bev McARTHUR: It was not a car crashing through the gates, it was a train.

Matt CARRICK: No, but there was no fault attributed to the train driver, and I think from a reputational point of view we need to be really clear and have that on the record.

Bev McARTHUR: So the train crashed through the gates.

Matt CARRICK: Correct. So in terms of the broader point about where we are in the process, we are currently in discussions with Heritage Victoria. They are currently coming to a position on what they believe an appropriate outcome is. You are right to point out that we have put forward a submission which does recommend that the gates are not replaced in working order in the way that they were. The rationale for our position on that is the safety advice that we get from our engineers, both from a safety point of view and also a performance point of view, is that is not the best possible outcome for the travelling public. There are a couple

of aspects here. One is, as we saw when the gates were damaged, that was potentially a really dangerous outcome. Fortunately it was at a time of night when there were not people around, so the smashed gates did not result in injury. That is why the way the gates are installed is really important. Having a modern signalling system in place is really important as well.

Bev McARTHUR: Can't you have a modern signalling system with heritage gates?

Matt CARRICK: No is the short answer.

Bev McARTHUR: Well, they do it in other places.

Matt CARRICK: The other aspect is that the gates were prone to breakdown, so that would have a real impact on both drivers and also, for that matter, train travellers. From our point of view, we are obviously subject to –

Bev McARTHUR: In other words, you do not want to restore the heritage of Ballarat.

The CHAIR: Mrs McArthur, please allow Mr Carrick to answer the question. He is answering your question.

Bev McARTHUR: He has done well.

Matt CARRICK: I think it is a really important point you make, Mrs McArthur, in terms of the heritage value of the Ballarat station precinct. It is one of the great railway heritage precincts not just in Australia but, I would put to you, in the world. Ensuring that the heritage is respected in that precinct is important, so one of the important aspects which we are committed to is making sure that the gates are essentially in place in the precinct somewhere. That is one of the discussion strands that we are having with Heritage Victoria – about what that might look like so that we can get the right balance between the safety of the travelling public and the most efficient use of railway assets to ensure that trains can run as efficiently as possible, but also respecting the important historic value that the gates and the wider precinct represent.

Bev McARTHUR: Okay. Maybe this is still in your bailiwick: given the removal of the mode shift incentive scheme, what incentives are now in place for freight operators to use rail rather than trucks?

Matt CARRICK: It is not directly in my remit, but I can comment in terms of: one of the things is ensuring that the freight network is fit for purpose and allows operators to run. So there has been a significant investment program over the last couple of years to try and deal with some of the legacy maintenance issues which do affect the freight network. Hopefully that will help ultimately the competitiveness of the freight network vis-a-vis other modes of transport.

Bev McARTHUR: So given that rail freight was 14 per cent in 2014 and is now 5.3 per cent in 2023, is the government still committed to getting freight off trucks and onto rail?

Matt CARRICK: Well, within a V/Line context I am happy to comment in terms of that maintenance program, which is underway. It is really important. As you have seen, there have been some great outcomes in terms of grain of late. In terms of the broader context, I might look to some of my colleagues who can talk more broadly from a policy point of view. But rest assured that from a maintenance point of view there is a big program underway.

Bev McARTHUR: A big program underway to get rail off road. Mr Secretary?

Paul YOUNIS: To go to rail –

Bev McARTHUR: To get freight off the road and onto rail.

Paul YOUNIS: I get what you mean. Yes, I think it is a real challenge for us, Mrs McArthur, and you are right to point that out. The MSIS was really put in place for individual businesses to be able to build the infrastructure within their program to be able to make that a competitive option – to support farmers to make freight a competitive option. I saw the figures, actually, just the other day, that grain volumes across Victoria are up by 43 per cent from the previous three-year average – and that is taken by rail. So it is an incredibly

important part. What we have not been able to do, because freight has been growing so rapidly, is to have that shift into rail at the same pace. So the road freight network has taken up the majority of the growth. We have held and grown some of the rail freight network, but the growth has been in the road. I think the challenge for us is to make the competitive environment for that, and there are a number of things that we are working through and doing to do that. Of course the main one, as Mr Carrick was talking about, is the improvement of the network.

In all the investment of nearly \$200 million across the freight network over the last few years there has been an important program, the removal of temporary speed restrictions across the network, and the numbers are there, of hundreds of temporary speed restrictions. Where we were getting average speeds of freight of 15 kilometres an hour it is now up to around 40–45 kilometres an hour – that is an incredible difference. The completion of the Ararat connection has meant that that we are not – particularly in that northern area – moving into that passenger growth that we are getting into Ballarat, and we referred to that before. We were able to get a pathway into the major ports of Portland, Geelong and Melbourne via a different route. So we have increased the number of routes that are available from 29 to over 40 routes available for our freight network, and therefore the reliability of that system is really important.

Bev McARTHUR: Terrific, Secretary.

Paul YOUNIS: The other part that I think is incredibly important is having ports in our framework as a part of that. So we have got a port-on-dock rail facility, but that is about –

Bev McARTHUR: I am not asking about the ports at the moment, Secretary. Can we go on to airport rail, Secretary. Perhaps you would like to talk about that. In October 2022 the government stated that works are underway on the airport rail. However, in May 2023 the project was still subject to federal infrastructure review. What level of work had been completed on airport rail by that date, and why is it not enough for the project to be considered ‘under construction’?

Paul YOUNIS: As you rightly pointed out, the airport rail project was subject to the infrastructure review, and we have just had the findings of the infrastructure review and therefore as a result of that the federal government have committed to continuation of that project and we will be able to advise government in relation to that. Now that we have got that outcome in relation to that, as to the next phase and how we can now move into further delivery of the airport rail project, we will be advising –

Bev McARTHUR: Will it be completed by the 2029 due date?

Paul YOUNIS: We will be advising government of that. Of course the federal government infrastructure review was only just completed. What we have been doing – I think the budget papers show an expenditure of nearly \$600 million up to June 2023 in relation to the works going on to accommodate that, so we certainly progressed the works and we continue to progress the no-regrets work in relation to airport rail through that period. There was an expenditure of that right up to that date. Now that the Commonwealth review has been completed, we will be talking to the Commonwealth about the program and we will be advising government on a program that delivers airport rail. I am not able to confirm or announce any dates at this point in time. What we are –

Bev McARTHUR: Have a crack.

Paul YOUNIS: I am sure everyone would have a view, but we will be working with government and with the Commonwealth in relation to a delivery program. Mr Devlin has done a range of works in that corridor in preparation for us to work through. I think in relation to the airport rail, though, and it is an important part and it has been publicly stated, the challenge for us is that working in this project is different than most other projects that we have. One of the important parts of delivering any project is to give certainty once you move into a project. What we do in relation to that is make sure that we have access to the land and that we have all of the planning elements in place so that when we go into a construction phase, we are able to deliver that without any impediments. In relation to the airport rail, it is a unique project because we do not have the powers across the airport land as we do other land in Victoria. And working through that in negotiation with APAM is an important part of that project.

Bev McARTHUR: In 2018 it was said the total cost would be in the range of \$8 billion to \$13 billion. However, in the past three budget papers the total estimated investment is 'to be confirmed'. Between 2021 and 2023 have you provided any advice on cost escalations? In other words, how expensive is it going to be?

Paul YOUNIS: We are still working on a program of \$8 billion to \$13 billion as the deliverables in relation to that, and as the –

Nick McGOWAN: Can't we just do Koo Wee Rup?

Paul YOUNIS: Sorry?

Nick McGOWAN: Can't we just do Koo Wee Rup – a new airport?

Paul YOUNIS: There has been \$10 million – \$10 billion allocated –

Bev McARTHUR: Billion – we do not talk in millions these days.

Paul YOUNIS: Yes – allocated from both the state and Commonwealth governments, but what we have consistently said to both the Commonwealth and the state is that, depending on the final scope of the works, which we work through in the development and design phase and with APAM, we expect the works to still fall within that \$8 billion to \$13 billion. As we develop the works and as we continue negotiations with APAM we will be able to finalise and advise government if there are any changes to the scope and/or the costs or timing in relation to that program.

Bev McARTHUR: Has the department commenced or concluded any work on the Geelong fast rail project now that it has been scrapped?

Paul YOUNIS: We have been doing the planning for Geelong fast rail, and that was a part of the initial works. All the work we have been doing along the corridor – and you mentioned Wyndham Vale – has always had a mind to what a Geelong fast rail or a *Western Rail Plan* would look like. So what we do is make sure that any investment we make in that corridor accommodates the future needs, and they are no regrets works.

Bev McARTHUR: So it is ready to go.

Paul YOUNIS: So while there is no specific work being done on Geelong fast rail, what we have been doing is making sure any work that we do in relation to other projects can accommodate that sort of project into the future.

Nick McGOWAN: Mr Devlin, did you have to seek any Treasurer's advances for the LXRA works?

Kevin DEVLIN: Yes, often Treasury and Finance choose to use Treasurer's advances to manage cash flow movements in the financial year.

Nick McGOWAN: Can you tell me how much that was for?

Kevin DEVLIN: There are a variety of cash advances that are documented in the questionnaire, I think. They are not additional costs to the program, they are just to account for differences in the cash flow for the level crossing removal program. It is well ahead of schedule. It at times accelerates works and needs cash advances to keep the works going, but in actual fact the level crossing removal project is under budget and ahead of time, so that is not a concern. And that is just a tool that Treasury and Finance decide themselves to use to fund our commitments.

Nick McGOWAN: Personal passion project – the second international airport for Melbourne. Is there any more work on that?

Paul YOUNIS: Sorry?

Nick McGOWAN: Personal passion project – a second airport for Melbourne, international. Any more work done on that planning-wise?

Paul YOUNIS: We have done no planning work on that.

Nick McGOWAN: Not since we were last in government.

Paul YOUNIS: The Department of Transport and Planning, in the last two years, have done no work on that.

Nick McGOWAN: Likely to do any work?

Paul YOUNIS: We have not got it on our program to do.

Nick McGOWAN: Okay. Third runway for Melbourne?

Paul YOUNIS: That is a matter for the airport.

The CHAIR: Apologies. We are going to go straight to Mr Tak.

Meng Heang TAK: Thank you, Chair. Secretary, I refer to 2022–23 budget paper 3, page 27, ‘Delivering sustainable growth for a resilient Victoria’. Through you, how has the planning system been reformed to ensure that we are delivering sustainable growth for Victoria long term?

Paul YOUNIS: I think the issue of sustainable growth – and I will go to Ms Reiter in relation to more detail on this – is a real challenge for us. I think I said in my opening address the population growth that we need to accommodate is not something that is an easy task collectively for all of governments and the private sector to be able to manage, but we are setting ourselves up with the combination of infrastructure and planning in the department. From my point of view, my selfish point of view, that allows us to think about all of those elements and design and develop those elements as a package of works but also as a policy setting so that we get those right policy settings across to make sure that we are delivering on that growth. But I might go to Ms Reiter.

Natalie REITER: Yes, thank you. As part of the housing statement of course the aspiration for at least 70 per cent of the future homes in Victoria to be delivered in infill areas will really help to ensure that they are sustainable. A number of planning reforms have been undertaken to facilitate that outcome, including density around activity centres. We have already embarked on a program with 10 activity centres to deliver 60,000 dwellings in and around those activity centres. Particularly the interface from the density of the central part of the activity centre out into the area within 800 metres of that activity centre to allow that more three- and four-storey built form will reduce the cost of living for the people living in those dwellings and provide an opportunity for them to access existing transport infrastructure, making it sustainable not just for those individuals but for the state as a whole as the reduction in car ownership allows us to not just have safer roads because they are less congested but also contribute to our greenhouse gas emissions targets.

Other initiatives in the housing statement that will provide that reform for those sustainable outcomes include the ability for people to develop the Future Homes product that has been produced within 800 metres of any train station, activity centre or in regional centres, the large regional centres. All of these types of initiatives that have been a product of reform of the planning system will help to provide those opportunities and deliver those sustainability outcomes.

Meng Heang TAK: Thank you. You talked about reform, which is a big part. What specific reforms have been introduced, and how are they travelling?

Natalie REITER: Some of those initiatives that I spoke about will allow people to have as a right the ability to build, which means that they can enter into plans for these Future Homes with more confidence that they are not going to be challenged, and that has a twofold benefit. One is a greater confidence, and further to Mrs McArthur’s comments around how are we going to achieve these targets, we need to give developers and consumers confidence that they are going to be able to build, so removing some of those opportunities for challenge will provide that confidence to the market. The standardised product through the Future Homes product is actually embedded in the planning scheme, so people know what they can build and they are going to have the confidence to be able to do that. There are a number of other reforms that will be rolled out in the forward program, including a revision to the *Planning and Environment Act* to, once again, streamline processes and allow us the confidence to reduce planning time frames from their current levels. Already through the development facilitation program – the expansion of that program to include the housing – we have had a tenfold uplift in the number of applications to that program. We are very confident that a big percentage

of those applications will result in development, and I think it is indicative of the potential from these reforms to result in deliverables on the ground.

Meng Heang TAK: Thank you. Just a follow-up question: so do we have a time line for that to happen?

Natalie REITER: Some of those reforms are already in place. They became effective with the housing statement. We have a very ambitious but structured program to deliver these reforms over the next 18 months. But I defer to Andrew McKeegan, who is dealing with a number of these reforms.

Andrew McKEEGAN: Yes, I am happy to elaborate in relation to a couple of other reforms there, which have been ongoing for some time but are really important around our partnership also with local government. We had a really important program of regional planning hubs, because as you know this housing task is not only a metropolitan task but also one that we want to focus on with the regions. This is a really effective team that works with the regions and regional councils around unlocking matters so it is an approach to those metropolitan pathways and the pathway that Ms Reiter referred to – the development facilitation program – has a pathway for affordable housing now, which is a new addition that focuses on both metropolitan programs but also regional programs for social and affordable housing, which is great.

Meng Heang TAK: Thank you. Talking about – if I can come back to the new initiative – what new initiatives were introduced into planning schemes?

Andrew McKEEGAN: Yes, so there has been a range. In addition to some of those legislative changes that we talked to or the changes within that system, we have also made a number of non-legislative changes that we have introduced. Some of that is really important around the guidance on how people understand and work with the system, so making sure that we updated the ‘how to write planning permits’ guidance for people to understand better the guide to working with planning schemes that you referred to and the importance of those planning schemes. Clearly it is a shared system between state and local governments, so it is about us working in partnership with local government to be able to understand those schemes. Specifically in relation to a number of those schemes, there were amendments that were made in rural zones; there was an exemption for planning permits for dwelling extension outbuildings that were related to agricultural use within the planning schemes. There were also a number of reforms within the planning schemes to enable better delivery of state and local government infrastructure, which were enabling better operations in our Big Build to respond directly to those matters through the planning schemes, which were both really important changes.

Meng Heang TAK: Thank you. Before moving on to ports and freight, any other questions?

Mathew HILAKARI: Oh, yes, sorry to take a bit of your time. You just mentioned the time lines to get a planning permit and how the changes will go to affecting them. I am just wondering if you could talk about some of the actual time lines that exist but also if you could touch on planning permits and building permits – we want to make sure we have got great built cities – and how those building permits are in place and interact with those permits?

Paul YOUNIS: I might start that and I think both Mr McKeegan and Ms Cronin can follow up, because it is a really important part. The delivery of proper housing is not just a supply of housing, it is making sure that the housing is of good quality and that there are consumer protections in that process. Combining with the building reform work that is going on, particularly the strengthening of the VBA, is an important part of consumer protection and also ensuring that there is a quality of supply of housing. The important part – you talk about a reduction in time frames; the reduction in time frames is important – is making sure that there is a system in place and checks and balances. But what we have done is in relation to the removal of some of the planning permit requirements for dwelling extensions. What that means is that local government are not spending their time on very, very low-risk planning approvals that really do not have a significant impact at all. What that does is allow them to concentrate their planning efforts on the buildings that matter, the buildings that will make a difference and the buildings where proper planning and comprehensive planning are required and allow that concentration. It is a proper risk management approach to making sure we do that. But with those growth dwellings there is still a requirement of course for a building permit to ensure the protection of the building and the quality of the build, and there are a number of building reforms in place to ensure that that is done.

It was mentioned before about the Future Homes program. A part of the Future Homes program is to say, ‘Let’s design a really quality outcome which meets all of the current standards and all of the current outcomes

that people would want in community housing; let's make that.' We are getting the Victorian government architect to do that work for us – a really important partner in this delivery, because what we are after is quality builds. We are doing that work, and we are making exemptions for some planning elements in relation to that. There will be a deemed-to-comply component with those, so that if you meet those standards and it meets that sort of quality, then it is deemed to comply. So that means that the planners that are doing the work, the builders that are doing the hard lifting and the developers that are investing in this are spending their time and effort on the bits that matter, not the elements that are not making a significant difference. I think that is the important –

Mathew HILAKARI: So it is quality building quicker.

Paul YOUNIS: It is a really important part of making sure that we are spending our efforts where we want to make the difference. And sorry, I was looking at Andrew to –

Andrew McKEEGAN: No, that is excellent. The only thing I will add in the sense of the development facilitation program is the reason that we can shorten up the approval process within that application is because we front-load a lot of really important conversations. So when the developers are building up their plans, they are working through their information. We are involving the government architect. We are involving the agencies that need to be thought through in a referral sense. We collaborate with Invest Victoria to make sure that these are shovel-ready projects that need to be able to move through the system. So by the time they get to our assessment team, ready to make that application, a lot of that front-end work has already been done and done through a collaborative process of working with all of those sorts of key agencies and making sure that the projects are of a quality and at a point. Therefore the assessment process is much faster and a really smooth assessment at the back end.

Mathew HILAKARI: Terrific, thank you.

Meng Heang TAK: Thank you, Secretary. Budget paper 3 on page 96 provided \$3.5 million for the mode shift incentive scheme – MSIS – in the next financial year. Would you be able to elaborate on the role of this scheme?

Paul YOUNIS: Yes. I could talk a lot about the mode shift incentive scheme and the benefits of that overall as well as the challenges we have in that freight area, and it goes on from a little bit of Ms McArthur's questions. But the mode shift incentive scheme in itself – there was a drop of course through COVID, and we do not want to go back to that, because that is the issue. There were 35,000 containers that had been transported in the last year – just over 35,000 or around 34,000, 35,000 containers – which were transferred specifically through the mode shift incentive scheme. It has been an important program for a couple of reasons. One, it has supported some specific industries that have some specific needs where we know that rail transport makes a significant difference for them, and it reduces their overall costs of delivery of really critical goods. And they are usually critical goods – these are not the general run-of-the-mill goods – and require a specialist type of transport on rail, so it has been a really important program to support those businesses. But because it has been running a while, it has allowed those businesses to build the infrastructure within their framework of a supply chain to make sure that that is an ongoing benefit. It is not just a grant scheme for supporting the cost, it is a grant scheme for allowing them to invest in some of the infrastructure that is required. Quite frankly, on the road network, that infrastructure is primarily provided by the state. We provide all of the road network. In the rail networks a lot of it is privately provided, so the transport companies access the transport network by having to build significant infrastructure on their side of the rail network. So the MSIS – mode shift incentive scheme – has been a really important program to assist those businesses in their critical transport of goods to ports and other places over the last – it has been running for nearly 10 years. Yes, 2012 I think it started running, so it has been running for quite a while and has maintained a significant level of volume of freight on our rail network.

Meng Heang TAK: Yes. Good, thank you. For the south-east – I am talking about Dandenong South – the Port of Melbourne is very important for the electorate that I represent. How is the work at Dandenong South and the Port of Melbourne for the port rail transformation project that is proposed to shift more container freight onto rail?

Paul YOUNIS: Mr Tak, I am really glad you asked that question because that is such an important part. While it is not that interesting, I suppose, it is a really important part of the supply chains. One of the challenges that we have had in Victoria is that every container that comes off a ship has to be moved and then put on a

truck, so to get it onto rail it needs a double handling. The work that we are doing at the port now, and the Port of Melbourne are doing, is making it so that we can go directly from ship onto rail. That is only the start of it – that is only one part of it. That project is in construction now, Mr Tieppo, I think, is it?

Will TIEPPO: On-dock rail is now finished.

Paul YOUNIS: Now finished? So it is completed. But an important part of that is connecting it to intermodal terminals. So there are intermodal terminals being built at Altona, Somerton and Dandenong South, which will provide direct connection for rail into those intermodal terminals straight off ship. Those are then supported by the other infrastructure improvements that we have done across the rail network in our freight to be able to ensure that there is not a double handling. It will take us time to get to the point where we remove the double handling of freight when we want to go onto rail. This is such an important part of that program.

I was down at Webb Dock a couple of months ago, and the importance of the automation of Webb Dock is incredible – getting everything as automated as it can be so you do not double and triple handle. Of course Webb Dock is a challenge for us because it needs to be able to connect into this network. That will be a challenge, but starting at Swanson Dock, where we are now and getting that part of our network constructed in the way it is an important step, which will take a long time to make sure that all of that supply chain and all of the containers that we possibly can are taken off the network. It is important for a number of reasons. One is the impact that our freight network has on our roads is significant and we need to support that, so it helps to manage that. The more freight, really, we can put on our rail has significant impacts on our carbon emissions and taking that freight in a much more sustainable manner, if we can make it an efficient and go-to choice, connects all of the state to other export and import opportunities. We have been talking to rail operators interstate – I am trying to remember their name – that are running a hydrogen train.

Will TIEPPO: Horizon.

Paul YOUNIS: Horizon are running a hydrogen train into Victoria from Perth and the Northern Territory. That is an important part of that whole supply chain issue so that we make sure that the option for using rail freight is a real option and is competitive in relation to the use of road for transport.

Meng Heang TAK: Thank you. Maybe just a last question: how do we increase that share?

Paul YOUNIS: I think you have actually really hit the nail on the head: we have been able to hold the growth, but we have not been able to increase the share significantly of our freight network. I think these measures are the elements that will start to do that because it makes it more competitive. We provide a lot of support for our road freight network, as we should, and that is an important part of our network because it supports so many businesses. But the challenge for us is getting a greater share onto rail. Making sure we get the security of pathways is important, so we completed our Victorian freight plan last year, I think it was, which started to lay out some of those measures we need to do to make sure that rail freight becomes a mode of choice. We are rolling that rail freight plan up, and we will refresh that over the next year or two as well to make sure we are on the right path and achieve that outcome.

Meng Heang TAK: Thank you, Secretary.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Tak. Thank you, Secretary. The committee is going to pause for a very short break, fortunately or unfortunately. We are going to resume at 11:15 am.

Thank you. The committee will now resume its consideration of the Department of Transport and Planning. I will go to Mr O'Brien.

Danny O'BRIEN: Thank you, Chair. Secretary, I am going to go to roads. The department's questionnaire on page 25, on programs that underperformed, highlights that the total area of road pavement resurfaced or rehabilitated across metro and regional Victoria fell 30 per cent short of the target. You missed your target for fixing up the roads. Why was there not then an increase in funds for 2023–24 to catch up?

Paul YOUNIS: Mr O'Brien, I think the entire roads question has been a challenge for us. I spoke at the very start about how roads and road maintenance has been a challenge for us the entire year. We have been working through a program for quite a while. Sitting at the table now, Will Tieppo has had decades of working in roads

and road maintenance, and I have myself, and I would say this has been the most challenging 12 months in roads that I have ever seen in the decades that I have been involved in the network.

Danny O'BRIEN: I think particularly regional Victorians would agree with you because the roads are absolutely disgraceful at the moment, and my question is why is there not more money this year to catch up given we missed our target by 30 per cent last year?

Paul YOUNIS: I do not set the budget. It is government that allocate the budget. My job is to make sure we are applying that budget as effectively and efficiently as we possibly can. In relation to roads, and you talked about the measure in the questionnaire, I will point to maybe three more issues that have really hit us hard. Firstly, it was the cost of works, and the unit cost of production went up significantly. We have had the wettest years in the last two years that we have ever had, and then we got, on top of that, a flood that has hung around for very long, and the timing of that flood was such that it meant that we were trying to manage a wet network from January right through to about now. That is very unusual. Usually we are managing a wet network from May, June till September.

Danny O'BRIEN: Actually that is not entirely true, Secretary, because from probably April to October, certainly in Gippsland and southern Victoria, it has been very dry.

Paul YOUNIS: We do moisture content testing across the network, and it is only in the last three or four weeks where it has dried out to a point where you can give – and it is variable. You are right, Mr O'Brien. It is a variable issue. But generally, particularly in the north and others, where we would normally be able to go in early and do works, we have not been able to do those sorts of works. With the measure that you talked about, what we did halfway through last year was we changed our approach, because what the measure does is measure the area of roads that you are resurfacing. There are three different types of resurfacing. You will do a full rehabilitation, where you reconstruct the entire road and pavement and everything; there is a patch, where you redo the surface part of the road; or there is a seal, where you reach out over the top – so a seal over the top. Over the past two or three years we have done significant amounts of the sealing. That is a smaller unit cost, and we get much greater coverage. I am very pleased that we did that, because what it did was stop water going into the pavement. That was really important. Halfway through last year we reset that. The amount of degradation of the pavement through that two years of wet period and the extensive flooding means that is no longer going to be the most effective way to spend these dollars. We need to move to more of a major patch program. So that is why the figure went down from last year, because we changed half through the year from going from a resealing program to a major patch program. Added to that was that the unit cost of works went up more than we anticipated.

Danny O'BRIEN: Well, on that, the unit cost of works – we keep hearing that, particularly in this portfolio, but when the unit cost goes up for the level crossing removals, the Metro Tunnel, North East Link, West Gate Tunnel, whatever it is, we put more money in. Why are we not doing that for roads, particularly country roads? You have just said, 'Oh, the cost went up, so we can only spend the same amount of money, so we have actually done less.'

Paul YOUNIS: So last financial year we put another \$165 million into that, so our total spend –

Danny O'BRIEN: That was the floods. That was entirely the floods. We have already dealt with that.

Paul YOUNIS: Our total spend across the network was over \$970 million, and this year \$770 million. As I said, Mr O'Brien, I do not set the budget. As an asset manager I would always ask for additional funds.

Danny O'BRIEN: No, no, we know it is the Labor government's fault.

Paul YOUNIS: What I do is make sure that we spend those funds in the most efficient and effective ways we possibly can.

Danny O'BRIEN: So clearly it is the Labor government's decision. Can I ask – in answer to a question on notice where I asked, 'Will there be a resurfacing program this year', as in 2023–24, the minister replied that the department was still modelling the impact of last year's floods. I got that reply on 28 September, nearly a year after the floods. That was October last year. How could it take a year to remodel? Or was that just an excuse for her not to say there will not be a resurfacing program this year?

Paul YOUNIS: The minister has asked us to go back and do a new strategy in relation to our maintenance program, which resets some of the things that I just talked about. In relation to the modelling, when we got such a wet period – you know, the floods started in October but they went right through over Christmas and January – there were a couple of decisions we made which were really, I think, crucial decisions. We recognised that we needed to get a much broader scope on the data that we had, and so we commissioned a significant redo of the data and the gathering of information from our network using our iPAVE program. We normally do that every year, but we expanded that because we knew that there was going to be a significant impact due to the wet period and the floods. We started that in January–February and finished that in I think it was March or April, that data. It takes a while to analyse that data. It is very complex data, and it takes us a long time to analyse that.

In the interim, by the way, we had not just waited for that data. We had reset our program, and we have reset what we are doing. And getting that data did a couple of things for us: it allowed us to do long-term planning in relation to what it is, but it also identified that there has been a significant drop in the underlying condition of the road network in a period of just six months. That was important because that is absolutely –

Danny O'BRIEN: That is very important, Secretary, and it highlights –

Paul YOUNIS: But I think it is important to provide this, Mr O'Brien, because that is attributed to the floods, and what that does is allow us to make sure that we are claiming the right money from various sources for damage caused by extraordinary events.

Danny O'BRIEN: Well, I am glad you moved to that, Secretary, because on 30 June the federal government released a statement that said '\$1.8 billion relief for disaster-impacted councils', and it said specifically it was to help 'all levels of government get on with the massive job of repairing roads and essential public assets after years of disasters', floods in particular. Every state got money except Victoria. Why did Victoria not get any of that money?

Paul YOUNIS: That is a question you would need to put to the Commonwealth government.

Danny O'BRIEN: But it was under the disaster relief funding arrangements. Was it because Victoria refused to cough up matching funding? Literally every other state, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, WA – but Victoria did not get anything.

Paul YOUNIS: Well, the disaster recovery fund is managed through EMV. We are confident that we will get the share of the disaster recovery fund from the Commonwealth that is attributed to the network. We have now got significant data to be able to back that up. We have no indication that that funding will not come through that disaster recovery fund, as it should.

Danny O'BRIEN: Well, I appreciate it is a federal release, but you just said you were looking for every single avenue to fund the flood recovery you could possibly get. \$1.8 billion of federal funds and Victoria did not get any – why?

Paul YOUNIS: What we do first is we go to our insurance, and once you do the insurance we go to DRFA –

Danny O'BRIEN: Sorry, can I come to the question about the federal –

Paul YOUNIS: What I do know, Mr O'Brien, is that we are in a very good position to understand the condition of our network. We are in a very good position to understand that we can maximise the insurance funding that we get from that, and we are in a very good position to maximise the DRFA funding. The timing of when the Commonwealth make announcements of release of that funding is not an issue that I, quite frankly, care about.

Danny O'BRIEN: Okay. Can I get to the key point that I started with before: will there be a road resurfacing program in Victoria this year?

Paul YOUNIS: We have a road resurfacing program, yes, and we have allocated –

Danny O'BRIEN: Have contracts been let?

Paul YOUNIS: We have allocated the works program. We have got new contracts in place for our road maintenance program, and we have allocated the works program for the year. And I must say that we are continually adjusting that, depending, because we know so much now about the underlying condition of our road. We will continually adjust that as we go, but the works program for the year is essentially set. I say that with – there are always adjustments we do as we move in through the delivery program.

Danny O'BRIEN: So usually 8 per cent of the network is resurfaced every year, I am told, by contractors. Is that happening this year?

Paul YOUNIS: Our intent is to reduce – and to be clear, it goes back to my original preface around what resurfacing is. We will reduce our amount of resealing works this year and increase our amount of major patching works.

Danny O'BRIEN: Okay. Can I ask: the questionnaire states that in 2021–22, 11.4 million square metres of road pavement was 'resurfaced and rehabilitated'. What percentage of the road network was resurfaced in each of the years?

Paul YOUNIS: Look, that is a straight calculation, which I can do. I have not got that figure there, but it is around that 8 per cent to 10 per cent. I think there was one year we did a bit more than that to catch up on some previous ones, but that is a simple calculation.

Danny O'BRIEN: Can I ask for that on notice, then, for both years – so the percentage of the network, plus the kilometres, the actual length?

Paul YOUNIS: Yes, because we work off square metres, and –

Danny O'BRIEN: But in 2021 outcomes the department told us that it had either repaired or had periodic maintenance on over 18,000 kilometres of our 19,000 kilometres of regional road. Can you give me that –

Paul YOUNIS: 23,000 kilometres of regional roads, yes.

Danny O'BRIEN: Well, 19,000 of regional, I guess, and 23,000 overall, isn't it?

Paul YOUNIS: Metro, yes.

Danny O'BRIEN: So can you give me those figures for the last two years as well?

Paul YOUNIS: Yes. They are just straight percentage figures which we will run off. By the way –

Danny O'BRIEN: Okay. Thank you. I notice the government now talks about including in the questionnaire potholes repaired as one of its measures. Is that an official performance measure? It is certainly not one in the budget papers.

Paul YOUNIS: It was a measure that was asked for through the flood recovery, so that people could get a feel for when works were and how much work was going on out there. We can measure that. We have a works program. We have an allocation of works to our contractors. We have new contracts in now that record and report back on that level, so it is a measure that we can report on.

Danny O'BRIEN: Okay. Can I ask: how many sections of road are currently subject to a pavement in poor condition management plan? I have got multiple in my electorate now, the situation where the road is so bad that instead of fixing it we put up a permanent speed reduction sign. So the question is, if you can provide: how many sections of road are actually subject to such a management plan?

Paul YOUNIS: Can I tell you, the management plan – and this is all about trying to make sure that we have as safe a network as we possibly can, and let us be –

Bev McArthur: They are staying up for years.

Paul YOUNIS: It is a real challenge for us. When our teams were going out earlier in the year to repair roads with potholes, there was water coming up out of that –

Danny O'BRIEN: Sorry, Secretary, I have got limited time, and I understand why it is happening. The question was: how many are there? Do you have that?

Paul YOUNIS: That varies all the time, and if I am able to provide that information, I will provide that information. I have not got a number here, unless Mr Tieppo has got one? No.

Danny O'BRIEN: If you could provide it for the two years in question, and the current figure if there is one. Likewise, if you are looking, how many new signs did it require, because one of the consistent pieces of feedback that I get – and I am sure Mrs McArthur gets it – is people saying, 'If you stopped spending the money on bloody signs that reduce the speed limit because the road's wrecked, you'd be able to fix the road.'

Bev McARTHUR: You have rough surface signs as well.

Danny O'BRIEN: Yes, that too.

Paul YOUNIS: It would be unusual for us to have that information, because the road signs are supplied and provided by our contractual arrangements, and that is part of the unit cost that we have. I would be very surprised if we had the number of signs that we bought for this program on hand, but –

Danny O'BRIEN: All right. Well, I will let you look for me and see if you can find out. Can I move on again: the TAC questionnaire pages 27 and 28 indicate that the safer road system infrastructure program was cut by \$150 million from 2020–21 to 2022–23. In percentage terms this was a cut of 80 per cent. What impact did that have on physical improvements to the road to actually improve safety, such as barriers, rumble strips and tactile line marking?

Paul YOUNIS: My recollection on that one – and if it is not right, Sam is here from TAC – is that that reduction was because we had rolled out a lot of our wire rope barrier program, and it was a reduction in our wire rope barrier program. We had identified a lot of the roads that were eligible for – and I know, Mrs McArthur, you are a super fan of the wire rope barrier program –

Bev McARTHUR: I am passionately against them.

Paul YOUNIS: It was that we had really completed that program of wire rope barriers.

Danny O'BRIEN: The explanation in the questionnaire is that it was:

... due to a shifting focus by the Department of Transport and Planning to federally funded projects.

Paul YOUNIS: Yes. So –

Danny O'BRIEN: So was the \$150 million replaced by federally funded projects?

Paul YOUNIS: We have a federal program – a road safety program – as well, and we have a state-funded program, which is through the TAC. I have not got the details of those, but –

Danny O'BRIEN: Again, I can probably help you on that, Secretary, because in this year's budget the reductions in tactile road marking for the current financial year go from 653 kilometres down to 103 down to 3 kilometres and the roadside barriers from 220 kilometres to 23.5 kilometres. And the explanation given was that that was because of the end of federal government safety programs.

Paul YOUNIS: Yes, so some of those –

Danny O'BRIEN: So they are gone too – \$150 million cut from TAC, and now the federal programs are gone too.

Paul YOUNIS: Some of the federal programs were on pause. Have you got an update on those programs?

Will TIEPPO: Mr O'Brien, I think over the last 10 years there has been something like 3400 kilometres of safety barriers rolled out across the network. Coming with that, most of those works would have come together with tactile edge lines. That is all part of the first three-year action plan in our road safety strategy, which is the

10-year strategy. We have done nearly \$1.9 billion of rollout of road safety infrastructure, including wire ropes, tactile edge lines, intersection upgrades, improvements to –

Danny O'BRIEN: I get all that, Mr Tieppo. But the question is – there is \$150 million cut now, the federal programs are gone, the reduction is happening. You said 3400 kilometres; there are 23,000 k's of road. The TAC questionnaire also indicates that \$80.9 million was cut from marketing and road safety on what was budgeted versus what was actually spent. That is presumably road safety promotion and education. Does the government accept that the combination of these cuts ultimately reduces our ability to tackle the road toll?

Paul YOUNIS: Ms Cockfield, do you have any information in relation to those figures, or are you in a position to answer?

Samantha COCKFIELD: Yes. I can clarify; there have been no cuts in relation to the Safe System Road Infrastructure Program.

Danny O'BRIEN: Into the what, sorry?

Samantha COCKFIELD: The Safe System Road Infrastructure Program. That is the infrastructure program that you are referring to. But there are differences –

Danny O'BRIEN: But the questionnaire highlights it.

Samantha COCKFIELD: There are differences year to year in terms of expenditure, but there have been no actual cuts in budget. It was a \$1.74 billion project to be run out primarily over 10 years, and there are differences year to year. That program is actually now starting to roll up, so to speak, so we are getting to the end of that program. And so you will see issues such as how much tactile edge lining is being rolled out, how much barrier is being rolled out – it will be coming towards the end of that particular program.

Danny O'BRIEN: So if you are saying that it is an annual cut, not an overall cut, is that money coming back in future, or are those programs now funded?

Samantha COCKFIELD: There have been no cuts to that \$1.74 billion.

Danny O'BRIEN: But literally your own questionnaire shows that from 2020–21 to 2021–22 it has gone from \$191.6 million down to \$82 million – a \$109 million cut.

Samantha COCKFIELD: It would be in relation to the forecast for how much money can be expended. The entire program has had no budget cuts. All monies that have been allocated to that program remain in the program, available for infrastructure.

Danny O'BRIEN: I can only go by your own questionnaire, Secretary, and with the TAC as well. Can I move on to wire rope barriers. What is the repair and maintenance spend in both years for the roadside barriers? We were told in 2021 it was 3500 repairs at a cost of \$11 million.

Paul YOUNIS: That is pretty consistent to what we are having now. We have around 4000 repairs a year – it varies a bit – which is a fantastic indication that they are doing their job. That figure of repair is similar – around 3000. So that works around that \$11 million to \$12 million.

Danny O'BRIEN: What percentage of that is funded by VicRoads and how much is funded by TAC?

Paul YOUNIS: The percentage funded by TAC and our appropriation – I will have that figure, unless you have got that figure.

Will TIEPPO: No, I have not got that split up, Mr O'Brien.

Danny O'BRIEN: Could you take it on notice for me?

Paul YOUNIS: Yes.

Danny O'BRIEN: For both years – that would be good. Can I ask too, and I am sure Mrs McArthur will be interested in this: you might be able to tell me what was spent on herbicide application by the department.

There is a particular issue with particularly the wire rope barriers where they are put in place and it is then impossible for slashing to occur.

Bev McARTHUR: You need a whipper snipper.

Danny O'BRIEN: Has herbicide application increased as well?

Paul YOUNIS: I am not aware of herbicide application. We have our fire management and roadside management program, which we have an allocation of funding to. That is an allocation. We have not changed that allocation through these programs.

Danny O'BRIEN: Could I ask you to look at that on notice for me, because there certainly is an issue where it is physically impossible to slash the roadside because of the barriers. If you could take that on notice.

A quick one before we wrap up – the questionnaire on page 34 shows a Treasurer's advance of \$51 million needed to:

... progress with a joint venture model for VicRoads Registration, Licensing function.

That is the privatisation of the licensing function, effectively. What was \$51 million needed by taxpayers to progress that for?

Paul YOUNIS: So there is an income – the licensing program, the joint venture allocation, received an income from the government of \$7.9 billion.

Danny O'BRIEN: Can I perhaps get an answer for that on notice? You have run out of time, Secretary. Is that possible? Could I ask you to take that on notice?

Paul YOUNIS: I will take it on notice and provide a response, yes.

Danny O'BRIEN: Thank you.

The CHAIR: Mr O'Brien – it is not just Mr O'Brien, I remind all committee members about comments I made yesterday – taking things on notice with 10 seconds to go. We will go straight to Mr Hilakari.

Danny O'BRIEN: I am sure Mr Hilakari would be happy to give up his time not asking the questions the PPO gives him.

Mathew HILAKARI: I might move out to something a bit more widescale. I take you to page 42 of the questionnaire. We have talked a little bit about the Arden station development already. That was particular to the train station itself, and I am actually interested in the precinct and if you could provide an update on some of the precinct milestones and where they are up to at the moment.

Paul YOUNIS: Yes, Mr Hilakari. I will go to Ms Reiter in relation to the Arden station. I think this is such an important part of what the infrastructure build that we do results in. As I said, I was fortunate enough – and I get excited – to be down in Arden station last week. When I was down there in previous visits it was an infrastructure project, and being an engineer of background it was really exciting watching and seeing and being part of the development and build of a really complex and intricate infrastructure project. Particularly Arden is an example because the station-box elements are nearing completion, because that is part of that first testbed. What you are seeing now is the integration of that and creating a precinct and creating a community. That is very evident in Arden, and it is very evident in Parkville. In Parkville there are rail tracks underneath and there is a concourse level which connects the university and the hospitals and the university square, and creates this entire precinct. The same at Anzac, where it connects across a road. So what we are doing is turning these massive infrastructure builds into precincts and places which create communities for people. That is a really exciting part of actually what we are doing and the incorporation. In relation to Arden itself, it is certainly at a stage where that station is nearing completion, and the works around that can begin. We will be running trains through there in 2025. I will go to Ms Reiter to talk through the detail of what we are doing at the actual precincts and creating a place for people to live and for jobs.

Natalie REITER: Yes. Central to the success of Arden is really the Parkville precinct. Parkville is our pre-eminent precinct in terms of really achieving agglomeration benefits with the biomed research space. Parkville

is essentially built out now, most of the opportunities are taken, and Arden is coming on line at the perfect time to really take advantage of the future opportunities in that biomed research space. The committee is likely aware that we achieved the planning scheme amendment on Arden in the middle of last year, and that has allowed us to turn our focus to work with the market and to understand the opportunities from the market. What we have heard from the market is that developers are looking for significant landholdings down there, not a piecemeal-type approach. We are working with Development Victoria on this, and early next year we will be going out with an EOI for the government-owned land approximate to the station and identifying a partner that can deliver that land for us in the near future.

Mathew HILAKARI: How much government-owned land is there in the area?

Natalie REITER: It is about 14.8 hectares of land, so there are significant landholdings down there. Most of it is owned by VicTrack. Not all of it is –

Mathew HILAKARI: Is much of that land available for housing and business, or does that remain in VicTrack as part of future rail works?

Natalie REITER: Most of that land will be able to deliver precinct outcomes, including biomed and housing. We are working closely with VicTrack on that land and in particular how that is brought to market in conjunction with DV. We are looking at delivering homes for around 20,000 people. It was 15,000 in the planning scheme, but we think that it has got more opportunities than that down there.

Paul YOUNIS: Mr Hilakari, I might just add to that, because I think you have raised a really important part. Part of the task of the Department of Transport and Planning now is to consolidate government-owned land – and that is a perfect example – and therefore determining and giving advice to government as to what is the best use of that land. A lot of that land was owned by VicTrack, but the future and best use is not now needed for transport purposes. We have built the heavy rail infrastructure that is required there, and that is really looking into generations of impact across that. What we are doing now is having a structure and a program where we identify government land – there are a whole range of different opportunities in government land – and consolidate that into a package that then can be used for its best use. In Arden, for example, a lot of that land – there has been a structure done around what the future development is. And maybe you can talk around that structure plan, because that will dictate that this VicTrack land is better used for housing, it is better used for jobs or it is better used for the medical and other options and taken away from that rail purpose. That is a really important part of the housing statement, and it is an important part of what the task of the Department of Transport and Planning is now.

Mathew HILAKARI: Can you talk to the hope to see 20,000 people accommodated there? What is the sort of housing that we are looking at? Are we looking at high-rise, mid-rise, people-centred housing, detached housing? What is that going to look like in reality?

Natalie REITER: It will be quite intense housing, which is appropriate given its proximity to the Melbourne CBD and the Parkville precinct. We are very ambitious to have significant key worker housing offered there, particularly for future workers for Arden and the current workers in the Parkville precinct to have affordable accommodation approximate to where they work. That is that next generation of what has been the traditional VicTrack land. The precinct will also be home to significant open space to really make it a place where that more intense product is complemented by opportunities to recreate and enjoy that precinct more generally.

Mathew HILAKARI: I think if we think about the city just outside our door here – you know, it was once a place of jobs only, it is now a place of jobs and housing, or increasingly so. Whenever you see a supermarket arrive, you know that there are people living there. But taking us to jobs in the Arden district, we have had a big uplift of jobs around the Metro Tunnel, but ongoing what are we going to see in that area? What are the plans around jobs, and how many do we think are in that area? I am happy for you to expand into Parkville as well if you would like.

Natalie REITER: So we are looking at 34,000 jobs in Arden. We have significant market –

Mathew HILAKARI: More jobs than people – great.

Natalie REITER: Yes, more than people living there. But it is that mixed-use component that is really important. In terms of looking internationally, the most successful, vibrant precincts are those that are mixed-use precincts, so we are seeking to embed that in all of our precincts moving forward. There is significant market interest already in that biomed space too in light of not just the Parkville precinct but also the new campuses of the Melbourne and the Royal Women's hospitals that will be down at Arden. And I think then it is, as you suggested with supermarkets, all those complementary uses that will be down there that will be required to really add to that vitality of that precinct.

Mathew HILAKARI: You mentioned that those people seeking to develop the area are looking for larger scale blocks of land. Is that so they can do all those things at once, or are they specialising in a particular area?

Natalie REITER: It is both because they would do those things at once but also because they get economies of scale for their construction costs. We have had quite a number of conversations with developers over time, and that is the consistent message that is coming through. And in fact if you look around Melbourne at the developments that have occurred more recently, they tend to be that larger format where developers have consolidated land ownership so that they can have a bigger play and achieve a better product for their investment.

Mathew HILAKARI: Great. And I might just draw us to the other priority precincts that we are developing across the state. Can you just talk through some of the key milestones of what we have just passed and what is coming up next?

Natalie REITER: Yes. Fishermans Bend – we have the early works underway in the innovation precinct, so we are in discussions with future tenants or owners of the land down at Fishermans Bend. There are a number of pieces of planning work that have yet to be done at Fishermans Bend; it is a very large precinct, as you will be aware. Significant development is already underway in the Montague precinct, already home to many people. The innovation precinct in particular is a big focus for us down at Fishermans Bend, with the University of Melbourne due to be accommodated there within the next couple of years. At Sunshine we have already released a number of plans, including the master plan for Sunshine, and we are currently working through what the early works will be at Sunshine to really –

Mathew HILAKARI: Could you just go to jobs and the housing in Sunshine in particular that have come out of that planning?

Natalie REITER: Yes. In Sunshine we have got \$80 million for the rebuild of Albion station. Sunshine will accommodate 70,000 residents and 45,000 jobs at completion, so it is a big opportunity for Sunshine. Brimbank council have done significant work over recent years in terms of the urban amenity, and it is really considered that now is the time to take advantage of quite significant land opportunities around Sunshine to add that vibrancy once again through the additional residential opportunity and then jobs. We have also got the opportunity down at East Werribee that is expected to deliver 58,000 jobs, which will be an important piece of the puzzle for the people within that Wyndham and western growth corridor.

Mathew HILAKARI: So that is in line with – I am going back maybe a decade now – the previous plans there.

Natalie REITER: That is right.

Mathew HILAKARI: Can you tell me a little bit more about East Werribee? The electorate that I represent just borders that area and partly takes in the East Werribee precinct.

Natalie REITER: We have got the police station that has been in place for about two or three years. The law courts are currently under construction, and there are significant opportunities around those law courts for an extended precinct and those complementary uses for the courts precinct. The government landholdings down there are quite significant, so we are looking at and working with Development Victoria on a development plan to execute that plan and bring those opportunities forward.

Mathew HILAKARI: What are the sorts of landholdings that government has in that area?

Natalie REITER: I am just not putting my finger on the land – sorry.

Mathew HILAKARI: That is all right; I will be able to go to that later. In terms of residential population in East Werribee, have you got an estimate on that? I know that is in progress, some of those –

Natalie REITER: It is, yes. That early structure plan was 6000 residences, and we are looking at and reviewing that plan at the moment in light of current market conditions.

Mathew HILAKARI: I think that is important, because you look at some of these other numbers of 20,000 in Arden and 70,000 in Sunshine and it is a big lot of government land there surrounded by a really significant population already in an area bigger than Geelong. Even though it has got one of the most impressive arts precincts, Geelong, already, those cultural institutions I think will be really important there as well. Sorry, I think you just got some –

Natalie REITER: 775 hectares of land there.

Mathew HILAKARI: That is huge.

The CHAIR: Is that the largest in the country?

Natalie REITER: Largest in the country?

Mathew HILAKARI: Largest undeveloped land in metropolitan Melbourne, I would have thought.

Natalie REITER: It would be among the largest that proximate to town I suppose, but there are still pretty significant landholdings up in the northern corridor that are under various stages of PSP development.

Mathew HILAKARI: Thank you so much, and keep up the great work on getting these precincts activated. They are such an important part of fulfilling that 70 per cent further housing into our metropolitan areas.

I might just move on to public and active transport if I may. I am particularly interested in the regional fare cap, and I refer to page 23 of the PAEC questionnaire responses, particularly a quote that stuck out to me: ‘Reliable and people-focused transport services’. How is the regional fare cap contributing to that?

Paul YOUNIS: The regional fare cap has been really well received by the community. What we have seen is a lot more casual travel and travel on the weekends. I might get Mr Carrick to come up, because he has the task of operating the regional rail network in light of the regional fare cap program. The important part of that is we really set ourselves up well for the regional fare cap. We introduced over 200 new services into regional Victoria in the last two years, a significant amount through the build that we did through Ballarat. We have set ourselves up to also increase the regional services next year. We probably have not got a date yet for our next timetable change, which will introduce more services. But most importantly it goes back to what I was talking about earlier in the hearing: we have got the rolling stock. We have been building the VLocity trains. They do a fantastic job of servicing this type of development, and they are able to carry the weight of this. They are a much more reliable train than others, and certainly that has been a very important part of us being able to not only deliver the regional fare cap, which is better access to various issues for regional Victoria, but also being able to accommodate that. It has not been without its challenges. We have had areas where we have had to put extra services on, but the benefit that people have –

Mathew HILAKARI: They are good challenges, aren't they, having more people come to regional Victoria –

Paul YOUNIS: They are good challenges.

Danny O'BRIEN: You might even come out, Mat.

Mathew HILAKARI: Whenever the invite is extended.

Paul YOUNIS: It also builds on that really extensive regional rail upgrade that Kevin's team have been doing over a number of years and allows us to build on that. I might go to Mr Carrick.

Mathew HILAKARI: I might not go too far into how many lines had been opened as opposed to closed in this term of government, but we might go to the regional fare cap.

Matt CARRICK: Thanks, Mr Hilakari. When you think about the fare cap it is within a broader context where essentially fares are now being put in line for regional Victorians with metropolitan Melbourne's. Historically there was this great inequity whereby regional Victorians had to pay much more than metropolitan Melburnians for basic public transport services, and that is now gone. It is over, it is gone for good, we have equity and fairness in terms of the way public transport prices are applied and that is a fantastic thing.

Mathew HILAKARI: Mrs McArthur might know the dollars, but for the committee's purposes do you want to just tell us those price differences?

Matt CARRICK: Certainly across the network you would have differences which could range up to \$80, almost \$90, in some circumstances. But now there is basically a \$10 cap to get from any one place to another place across the state and \$5 concession, so that is a great outcome. That has had a practical effect in that it has put \$31 million back into the pockets of regional Victorians, and we all know the cost-of-living pressures are there. \$31 million has been returned to regional Victorians in seven months alone, and that will continue to cascade. So that is a fantastic outcome, and we have seen the public respond in terms of taking up patronage. As you would have seen from the budget papers, in 2022–23 we had a continued post-COVID upsurge in patronage of around 75 per cent. But what we have seen since April and the introduction of the fare cap is that patronage has increased by another 30 per cent again, and there have been some really interesting things about that in what you see in terms of when and where that patronage takes place. We are seeing on longer distance journeys there have been more people. Weekends have been particularly popular and also school holidays. Traditionally what has happened is that during school holidays there has often been a dip in levels of patronage. Now we are actually seeing increases from the baseline rates.

Mathew HILAKARI: So we are filling those periods when there was not a lot of train travel for jobs into town, jobs across the state. We are filling those gaps. In terms of additional services per month, I understood it was 100 additional services per month. Is that correct?

Matt CARRICK: Yes, it works out to about that. In terms of the response we have had, as you would be aware, there has been a build-up of services over the last few years. But one of the things we have been really keen to respond to is additional demand, so there have been over 700 special services that we have applied, especially around things like major events, footy in the city, things like that, to help people to get back and forward. What we have noticed is post COVID there have been really significant changes in travel patterns, so there has been perhaps less travel during peak periods, Now the peak periods are extending, and there is more interpeak travel as well. That is certainly mirrored here in metropolitan Melbourne, if Metro were here to talk for themselves. But what we have seen are high levels of returning patronage on the regional network. V/Line is now one of the, if not the, fastest growing railways in the country.

Mathew HILAKARI: Great. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Hilakari. We are going to go to Ms Sandell.

Ellen SANDELL: Thank you, Chair. Secretary, my first question is to you. It will probably be no surprise. I think we have asked this almost every single year at PAEC. It is about South Kensington station. During this year's budget estimates I asked for information about upgrading South Kensington station, a station that has been identified through various mechanisms as being the worst on the metropolitan network, particularly upgrading it to be DDA compliant. I asked about information regarding the department's audit and by which criteria it is found to not be eligible for upgrade. The answer was taken on notice, but the answer that we were given essentially did not address that question. It just talked about some of the minor upgrades to lighting, for example, that the station has had in the last few years. Could you please give us some information about what exactly is the barrier to South Kensington being upgraded? Is it cost? Is it patronage? Are there other infrastructure considerations? We just really want the facts here.

Paul YOUNIS: If you did not get the right information last time, I apologise for that, and we will follow that up to make sure you get the full information in relation to that. I will give you an overview now, but I have not got the detail in front of me, because I thought we had answered the South Kensington station issue for you. The prioritisation of station upgrades has to do with the patronage and the timing. We have a number of stations that are not DDA compliant, and that is one of the challenges we have got across our whole network. It is patronage, it is about the number of services – and I know therefore if you add the services, the people will

come to there – and it is the cost issue. So we weigh up all of those issues in relation to how we prioritise our upgrades. We call them the minor upgrades to our program, to our stations, because the major ones are complete rebuilds, and it is done on those criteria.

Ellen SANDELL: I appreciate it. I guess what we are after is: where is Kensington on the list? Where is it as a priority, and out of all the things you have mentioned, is it a cost barrier? Is it an infrastructure barrier? Is it a patronage barrier? Is it not enough services? I just want an answer on why it is continuously overlooked.

Paul YOUNIS: And we will attempt to give you that in the thing, but the answer will be that it is all of those, because we use all of those issues combined to determine the priority that we apply to our minor station upgrade program.

Ellen SANDELL: Thanks. And I guess I am just interested in where it is on the list, whether it is right down the bottom or whether we can expect something.

Kevin DEVLIN: Secretary, if I could add, South Kensington has obviously been right next to the tunnel portal for Metro Tunnel, so it has been a significant area under construction –

Ellen SANDELL: There have been some minor upgrades to the entrance of a park.

Kevin DEVLIN: and constrained by the amount of work going on in that exact location at South Kensington.

Ellen SANDELL: Well, if that is the barrier, we would be very interested to know. If it is genuinely that we need to wait for those works to finish before we can consider South Kensington, the community would really appreciate knowing that.

Kevin DEVLIN: We will confer over that.

Ellen SANDELL: Thank you. In estimates earlier this year I was also told that as of late 2022, 26 per cent of tram stops in Melbourne were level access. Can you confirm what the current figure is?

Paul YOUNIS: It is around the same figure. We have upgraded probably one or two since that period. We do not have an extensive program. We do five or six a year, so the percentage is still at 26. We have got 1400, I think it is, tram stops across the network. To make a dent in that 26 per cent, we will need a significant program. I think this is important because it is a challenge for many people on our network: there are two things that we will do. We have introduced a corridor approach to our planning and introduction of tram stop upgrades. So we will be working through corridors so that people on a corridor can actively use that, and that will mean the removal of some stops that are close together so that we can get better access to others. But the important part of that is the replacement of our high-floor trams with the new G-class. That is so important in that.

Ellen SANDELL: You mentioned that in order to go faster than this, it will need a significant program. So are you essentially saying that the barrier to doing it faster is funding?

Paul YOUNIS: Yes.

Ellen SANDELL: Thank you. You indicated the department will shift from a stop-based to a corridor-based approach to accessible tram stops. There have been only three corridors identified to conduct detailed planning in the short term, so two short sections of route 86 and one short section of route 82. Why just three sections that have been identified?

Paul YOUNIS: Those sections are identified based on patronage, the impact it will have across the network and how it connects to other networks so we can provide a whole-of-network approach to accessibility rather than have it isolated and people having then, therefore, nowhere to go. The prioritisation of that is based on those sorts of criteria. I think the question is: why only three? We have got a lot more corridors than that. The reason is that we know that the funding is available. We do not want to do planning and spend time planning on projects that are unlikely to get funding in the short to medium term.

Ellen SANDELL: Thank you. That is clear. You mentioned that it is about the stops but it is also about the trams that can access the stops. My understanding is that route 19 is currently served by a mixture of both high- and low-floor trams. Accessible stops obviously would be more useful immediately on routes where they already have low-floor trams, so why not route 19 as part of this?

Paul YOUNIS: I will have to take that one on notice – exactly why – unless we have got an update on that. Route 19 still has a number of inaccessible stops, as you said, but the critical ones along there are at the hospital precincts. We will be upgrading the Grattan Street precinct as a part of the works that I think are underway now – in actual fact I went through there the other morning – so that will be done. But there is still a lot on route 19, as you say, through Sydney Road, which is –

Ellen SANDELL: Understood. Thank you. Sydney Road is a particular one that is of interest to us, because with the Upfield railway line, there is level crossing removal work happening there, and so obviously people will not be able to use those stations – people who have accessibility needs – and therefore will need to use trams instead as an option, but those are not accessible on Sydney Road. The government's response so far has been taxi vouchers, which I think shows a bit of a lack of understanding of the needs of people who use that public transport. Could you provide an update on Sydney Road accessible stops in light of this urgent need with the trains closing?

Paul YOUNIS: Sydney Road – are you referring to it in light of the works we are doing along –

Ellen SANDELL: Yes.

Paul YOUNIS: We have got another whole program of level crossing removals to do down through that section there, and a lot of the planning around that is about how we reallocate patronage through the tram network. I think there is some work being done therefore on accessibility and creating if not permanent then at least temporary accessible stops. That work and planning is still underway as a part of the level crossing removal program works, and we will be working with government and advising government on what the options are in relation to management of patronage and movements given the fact, which you have raised, that accessibility therefore becomes a real problem.

Ellen SANDELL: So it is still in the planning stage is what you are saying?

Paul YOUNIS: Where are you at with that, Kevin?

Kevin DEVLIN: Certainly the first section of the removal of level crossings on the Upfield line – Moreland station, Coburg station – is fully DDA compliant and provide full access. We have obviously then put separated pedestrian and cycle paths in under the elevated rail line. The next section, the removal of eight level crossings, again is a –

Ellen SANDELL: I appreciate that. It is more about what people do when that work is happening. They cannot use the trams.

Kevin DEVLIN: Certainly there is – and we have experienced that over the last eight years – some disruption, which we try and minimise in the construction methodologies. There are periods where stations are closed, and tram stops and bus stops have to be relocated, and there are disruptions, but we look to service people of all abilities and ensure –

Ellen SANDELL: So are we saying that works are being prioritised on Sydney Road for accessible tram stops given that people cannot use the trains, or no, it is still planning?

Paul YOUNIS: What I am saying is I think there is still planning being done and discussions about how you could provide accessibility to the tram network through Sydney Road. I have not seen the finalisation of that planning, so I do not want to commit to anything there, but that is a part of that planning. If that can be done and be done effectively, that would be part of the advice we would give to government. But there are significant issues in relation to all of those things, and I am not at this stage able to give an update of where that is and whether there has been a decision on that.

Ellen SANDELL: The community would benefit from knowing before they have to just use taxis to get everywhere. I would like to turn now to the Arden structure plan. Perhaps this is for the Deputy Secretary. The

City of Melbourne has been quite critical of the plan, saying that it ignores most of the recommendations of the expert standing advisory committee. For example, the plan says it will only support and encourage 6 per cent affordable housing. Can I confirm there will be no mandatory requirement for affordable or social housing as part of Arden? Is it still just 'support and encourage'?

Natalie REITER: We are not able to require the affordable housing. That is a limitation of our powers, which is why we are supporting and encouraging. You would be aware through the housing statement that the Minister for Planning has put a limitation on access to the development facilitation priority path that one needs to at least provide 10 per cent affordable housing to get access to that priority path. Down at Arden, 6 per cent is very much considered the floor on the social and affordable housing. We are currently having conversations with a range of developers who are interested in development down there, one of whom is considering 50 per cent affordable for their development. Particularly in light of the proximity of Arden to Parkville and that key worker housing, we will be doing everything possible through that EOI process to ensure that we have a partner who is able to develop a very considerable percentage of the dwelling stock down there for affordable. As I say, it was only a limitation of powers that ever meant –

Ellen SANDELL: Some of it is Victorian government land, though, so that limitation of powers includes land that the government owns.

Natalie REITER: No, the government-owned land – there is a commitment to 10 per cent affordable as a minimum but once again –

Ellen SANDELL: Mandatory?

Natalie REITER: Well, as you are saying, because we can control that, that is at the floor of our commitment. The expectation –

Ellen SANDELL: Just to confirm: that is a mandatory minimum, 10 per cent on our own land – is that correct?

Natalie REITER: That is right, but we cannot require it of others, yes.

Ellen SANDELL: You mentioned that minimum 10 per cent to access the pathway. What is the definition of 'affordable housing' in that?

Natalie REITER: Yes, very good question. Sometimes affordability is determined by 10 per cent under the market value. That is not our preferred definition of affordability, for obvious reasons. Our preferred definition of affordability is that it does not cost the owner of the property more than 30 per cent of their disposable income. We are finalising an agreed definition on that, but at the moment various definitions apply.

Ellen SANDELL: Okay. And will it include public or social housing?

Natalie REITER: At the moment we are talking about social and affordable housing and have not differentiated in that for access to that pathway.

Ellen SANDELL: Okay, and any public housing, for example, as part of the Big Housing Build?

Natalie REITER: The Big Housing Build has got its own planning pathway. I might defer to –

Ellen SANDELL: I am just wondering: will there be any public housing as opposed to social housing as part of Arden precinct?

Natalie REITER: At Arden – I would expect so, yes. We have been in conversations with Homes Victoria. We have not identified any specific opportunities at this stage.

Ellen SANDELL: Okay, thank you. Can I just confirm the expected number of residents for Arden? Is it around 15,000?

Natalie REITER: Fifteen thousand is in the planning scheme – we think that with increased density we could accommodate 20,000 people.

Ellen SANDELL: Twenty thousand – thank you. And could you talk to me just about schools. Both Arden and Docklands are in my electorate. We have learned – hopefully – from some of the failures of Docklands, where at the time the government did not expect that many families would live in Docklands and therefore no school was provided for, and then the government had to go back in and retrofit a school, which is now over capacity. How do we avoid that at Arden? What is the provision for schools looking like? Twenty thousand people is like a big regional city.

Natalie REITER: Yes. We have got land planned for the school. We had significant conversations with the Victorian Schools Building Authority through the process about what that school would look like, the land area required and the need to have a model similar to that at Fish Bend, where the schoolchildren can access the neighbouring park area for play and recreation.

Ellen SANDELL: So just one school for 20,000 residents?

Natalie REITER: That is the plan at this stage. There are quite a number of schools proximate.

Ellen SANDELL: They are all at capacity or over capacity.

Natalie REITER: We can continue to look at that, but there was a limitation on the location of that school. I think there are four schools within whatever the VSBA's requirements are for proximity of schools to one another.

Ellen SANDELL: Okay. So regardless of density and number of residents, you cannot put extra schools there because other schools close by, even if those schools are over capacity?

Natalie REITER: Well, there will be operational benefits of having expanded school sizes, I would imagine. I am not familiar with the rules.

Ellen SANDELL: So you are looking at a primary school – am I correct?

Natalie REITER: Yes.

Ellen SANDELL: High schools in the area are also over capacity, so where will those kids go to high school?

Natalie REITER: We are looking at attracting that key worker market, I suppose. As we work with our –

Ellen SANDELL: Not expecting high school kids to live there?

Natalie REITER: Potentially. I think that as we put this out to the EOI and we work with our partner we can do more work.

Ellen SANDELL: I think the lesson from the Docklands is that not only is a primary school needed now, a high school is needed, because all the high schools in the area are at capacity. So I might leave that as a comment, but I think it would be short-sighted not to think that for people who have primary school-age kids, those kids then grow up to be secondary school age kids.

I would like to ask about the gasworks now. This was something I asked of the Department of Treasury and Finance, and they said that it was now in your patch. In relation to Development Victoria's planned redevelopment of the old Fitzroy gasworks site at 433 Smith Street in Fitzroy, how much did the acquisition of the Yarra council depot at Fitzroy gasworks cost?

Paul YOUNIS: This is being managed by DV. I think that cost was – I was going to say \$75 million, but do you know?

Angela SKANDARAJAH: Sorry, the question was?

Ellen SANDELL: How much did the acquisition of the Yarra council depot at the Fitzroy gasworks cost?

Angela SKANDARAJAH: I would have to take that specifically on notice. Development Victoria acquired the site from DTF, so that would be part of the previous –

Ellen SANDELL: I asked DTF, and they said that I had to ask you due to the machinery-of-government changes.

Paul YOUNIS: I have got that –

Angela SKANDARAJAH: We will take that on notice.

Ellen SANDELL: Well, the Secretary I think has that figure.

Paul YOUNIS: If this is wrong, I will correct it, but I am going to say that it has been valued at \$75 million, but I –

Angela SKANDARAJAH: I do not think that was the City of Yarra component.

Paul YOUNIS: Okay. Sorry.

Angela SKANDARAJAH: That is why it was two components.

Ellen SANDELL: I am happy for you to come back to me on notice. Thank you very much.

Paul YOUNIS: I did have that somewhere.

Ellen SANDELL: How much did the remediation of the land cost?

Angela SKANDARAJAH: The remediation is still ongoing, so the final numbers have not been confirmed.

Ellen SANDELL: Okay. Do you have any initial numbers – say, cost to date?

Angela SKANDARAJAH: I would again have to take that on notice. DTF is primarily responsible for the remediation costs.

Ellen SANDELL: I appreciate that. Thank you. Has parcel B been sold to private developers?

Angela SKANDARAJAH: No, it has not.

Ellen SANDELL: And parcel C?

Angela SKANDARAJAH: No.

Ellen SANDELL: Okay. Thank you. I would like to move back to transport now, talking about patronage data. My understanding is that the department publishes patronage data broken up by month, but it seems to be fairly lumpy and it can be a long wait to get that data. For example, we checked in November – this month. The last update was in September, but that only covered up until June. By contrast, New South Wales publishes their patronage data every month. The delays make it difficult to see patterns or the effects of policy and service changes. Why does it take the department so long to publish that data?

Natalie REITER: That is I think just a legacy of what we have done in the past. It is something that we can definitely improve upon.

Paul YOUNIS: We have got the data.

Ellen SANDELL: You have got the data?

Natalie REITER: Yes.

Paul YOUNIS: We get it pretty regularly. We will talk to government about putting it out.

Ellen SANDELL: That would be great. Is there any work being done to publish it more frequently?

Natalie REITER: There has not been, but we are in the process of redeveloping the public-facing website, so it might be a good opportunity.

Ellen SANDELL: Wonderful. Thank you. I would like to ask about Punt Road. The department has been telling us for years that you are working on a Punt Road strategy for the part that is covered by the Punt Road acquisition overlay. What is the update? Has it commenced? What is the expected completion date?

Paul YOUNIS: I would have to take that on notice. The exact update of the Punt Road program with the overlay application, planning wise, I would have to take that on notice.

Ellen SANDELL: Are you reviewing outdated public acquisition overlays like the one on Punt Road to better utilise the land that is covered by them?

Paul YOUNIS: Once again, I know we did a lot of the planning work around that, and I know we completed it a couple of years ago in relation to the overlays and what was required and any updates to do with that. I have not got an update on the exact status of that.

Ellen SANDELL: Thank you. Could I ask for the status of the Windsor station extra entrance project? I think preliminary designs of the second entrance have been completed, but I am interested in the status beyond that.

Paul YOUNIS: Once again, we will have to take that one on notice.

Ellen SANDELL: No problem. Thank you. Asking about the electric vehicle tax, do we have the figures on how many individuals paid the tax in 2022–23?

Paul YOUNIS: I know what the total number was of income from that. It was about \$3.9 million –

Ellen SANDELL: Yes, we have got the income. I was just interested in the number of individuals.

Natalie REITER: I think it was provided on Monday.

Paul YOUNIS: We can definitely provide that –

Ellen SANDELL: No, it was not the number of individuals. I asked DTF, and they asked me to ask this department.

Paul YOUNIS: I wish they had told me that they asked you to do that. I would have got that.

Ellen SANDELL: Are you able to provide that on notice?

Paul YOUNIS: If I can provide that figure, which I surely will be able to, because we know the number of electric vehicles that are registered, and that registration –

Ellen SANDELL: And were any vehicles deregistered or was there any penalty for any individuals not paying the EV tax?

Paul YOUNIS: Yes, so the process was, if you do not pay your EV tax, then you – yes, 80-odd people.

Ellen SANDELL: Eighty-odd people? Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Sandell. Your time is up. We are going to go to Ms Kathage.

Lauren KATHAGE: Thank you, Chair, Secretary and officials. I want to take us to the suburbs and ask about the Growing Suburbs Fund, and what is referred to as the Living Local Fund as well. The 2022–23 budget sets out the funding for that. We are going through a growth boom, so how are you best using that fund to support suburb amenity?

Paul YOUNIS: I will get the Deputy Secretary to –

Natalie REITER: Yes, thank you. The suburbs area is just in the process of coming into the Department of Transport and Planning. Minister Kilkenny is the Minister for the Suburbs as you would be aware, and so we are in the process of transition not just with the staff but also the program, and we are endeavouring to make the most of that suburbs funding and focus. To date that funding has been used as a grants program to fund quite a

number of individual grants to local governments and metropolitan regions to identify opportunities for solving problems in those communities. Moving forward, we are expecting that that fund will increasingly be used to complement other works that are underway in those metropolitan precincts to make sure that we are leveraging that investment and solving the most problems as well for the dollars spent.

Lauren KATHAGE: Okay. Two weeks ago I was at the opening of the Mernda Social Support Centre, which is a place for older residents in Mernda to connect, get help with their wellbeing, dementia, memory programs, et cetera. That received support from the Growing Suburbs Fund previously, working with the City of Whittlesea. While I was there I met the woman who started the ball rolling by raising awareness about the needs of older people in the area. Because it is thought of as a young area, she started a petition, she agitated and worked with council, and this was sort of the fruition of her work. Going forward then, in the way that you are describing, how will we ensure that there is community consultation or community input into what is important or what is needed for the area?

Natalie REITER: I think we have got a huge opportunity through that formation of the current department to be engaging significantly with local government around what work they are doing with their communities and dovetail our engagement much more into theirs. We do understand that in some areas there is a degree of community fatigue where we both do engagement, and we think we have got opportunities to do that much better – to be able to hear from a grassroots level what is important and what initiatives would deliver the best community outcomes. We are about to embark on a huge engagement program with the next plan for Victoria. It will be unprecedented in terms of the level of engagement on such a plan, and we have already engaged with the Municipal Association of Victoria to understand how we can work with local governments across Victoria to do complementary planning to understand the specific needs of those communities and embed those initiatives into the broader plan.

Lauren KATHAGE: Great. It would be great if you are also able to connect with the sporting associations as well because I know, for example, after the Matildas, soccer interest in my area has just gone through the roof. So those insights from sporting groups, et cetera, I think would also really benefit your planning work.

Natalie REITER: Yes, the program of engagement is enormous. Sporting clubs tend to be very good too at lobbying and advocating, and justifiably so – there are such terrific benefits from having sporting infrastructure and getting kids in particular out there and using that infrastructure. I think there will be a big focus through the plan for Victoria for engagement on the youth element. We are planning for this future space that not all of us will be around to enjoy but those young people – it needs to be designed to deliver on their aspirations for how they want to live, and so sporting groups and sectional interests that sometimes we do not hear from in our traditional engagement approaches will be a big focus of the next tranche.

Lauren KATHAGE: That is true. I met with the grade 5/6 students at Wandong Primary School recently – they are people that you do not usually specifically ask – and I learned that a BMX bike track is the number one priority for that cohort, if you could take a note of that. I am not, though, so familiar with the Neighbourhood Activity Centre Renewal Fund. Do you have examples of how that fund is used?

Natalie REITER: So that has been used to focus on particular neighbourhoods where there has been disadvantage. That has been endeavouring to, as you are suggesting, get to the grassroots in that neighbourhood community, to have a committee set up for a period of time with a whole range of local stakeholders to identify what those priority initiatives will be and then to provide grant funding to undertake those initiatives. In two cases those neighbourhood groups have transitioned to council, and that would be the expectation – that they come in, they do a body of work and then it transitions to council responsibility.

Lauren KATHAGE: Okay. Thank you. You were talking earlier about the reforms to planning and the changes that we are undertaking. With transport and planning coming together under one department, how have those reforms played out into preparing for aligning, say, planning and public transport planning?

Natalie REITER: I think it is one of the most exciting parts of the new department, and anyone that has been involved in planning has had a long-held aspiration for land use planning to complement the transport planning. I think the biggest opportunity that we have got is to use our land use planning now to leverage the Big Build, the significant investment in transport infrastructure, and to have many more people live proximate to that transport infrastructure. That is going to solve very, very many of our current and future problems,

including getting people out of cars where they can, which will allow that road space to be used for those who cannot, which will alleviate the need for the car and offer that incidental exercise that contributes to both physical and mental health. And that is the main focus of our work at the moment in terms of land and transport coming together, but also within the department all of the modes are now planned together. So we look at movement challenges as a movement challenge, rather than a road or tram or train problem, and then work out how that movement challenge will be solved. Bringing all of those things together is really going to deliver a terrific outcome for our future planning.

Lauren KATHAGE: Thank you.

Paul YOUNIS: I might just add to that because I think it is a really, really important part, and if we go to the Suburban Rail Loop, for example –

Lauren KATHAGE: You read my mind. Go ahead.

Paul YOUNIS: Okay. The Suburban Rail Loop is a project that, while the emphasis is on the infrastructure and the Big Build part of it, is actually about building communities and building precincts. And that project now is in the first phase of that environmental assessment part but also about the development plans for each of the precincts. And what the department does now across all projects – and it started with the SRL – is talk about building connected and thriving communities. So it is not just about transport elements, it is actually about ‘What is the outcome for communities?’ It is enormously exciting for people working in the department to be able to think about that benefit that they can provide to people living in their communities and across regional Victoria as well but also using the really interesting elements of transport connectivity to realise that dream. So the Suburban Rail Loop is a typical example of where we have done that.

And I mentioned before about the new precincts we are building, and in relation to the building of the level crossings, if you look at the level crossing removals, they have built precincts around that, so there is community space, there is public space, there are bike paths, there is a whole range of things. It is not just a transport project; although that is the driver through the initial bit, the outcomes are precincts. The combination of the department of planning with the department of transport really allows us to realise that dream. I think the work we will be doing and what the government and the minister have said in relation to the development of Plan Victoria, where that looks to the future will be about how do we build communities, how do we do that in a sustainable way, and how do we do that in a way that really leverages off the infrastructure that is already in place or we are building into the future. It is a really important part of it.

Lauren KATHAGE: Yes, and it changes the whole sort of playing field. You are talking about permanent community change and a community-building project, with the Suburban Rail Loop being a once-in-a-generation opportunity. But in the here and now, it is creating jobs as well – like, a lot of jobs. Do we quantify that at all?

Paul YOUNIS: Yes, we do. I might get Mr Carroll, who is the CEO of Suburban Rail Loop Authority, to update us particularly – if he gets here quickly enough – in relation to the precinct work that is being done, because that is where the jobs and the connectivity are. The important thing about the Suburban Rail Loop of course is that it is not just about connecting those particular communities to each other, it connects very much into our regional network. So people wanting to go to Monash through from Gippsland will have a much greater connection into those sorts of precincts and the hospital precincts around there – really important in resetting that. So the development of the precincts, quite frankly, is what is the most important part of that. The transport infrastructure – the tunnel with the train running through it – is the enabler for that outcome. But Mr Carroll might be able to tell us a bit more about the precincts and the structures around that.

Frankie CARROLL: To answer your question, SRL East will create 8000 direct jobs in its start-up. In relation to the precincts, we released a precinct discussion paper document to get the views of the community in relation to what we have heard so far and actually talk to the community about what the next stages in precinct planning are. It is about engaging with the community and making sure the community has a say in relation to what we do in these precincts going forward – making sure we have the right home mix and the right economic mix in those precincts going forward. This is the first stage which was released and it has been welcomed by the community, and the engagement has been extremely large in relation to the feedback for this document. So

we are gathering what the community aspirations for those precincts are going forward, and each precinct is going to be different.

Lauren KATHAGE: I guess I have got a slight insight into that. We had the rail line extended out into our community in 2018, and to see the empty land around that now, it has sprung up with commercial opportunities et cetera. I walked around and spoke to each of the shop owners and asked how many people they employed locally, and there were over 150 local jobs just next to the train station through that investment. But actually, Secretary, it is the first time I have ever heard anyone sort of flip it that way and say it is actually about the precincts, it is not about the rail line. But early works for the rail line are important; we need to get that underway. So can you update us on that early works progress with the funding allocated?

Paul YOUNIS: You are right. Whilst the outcome for our community is the precincts and the spaces that we build and the communities that we build, getting there is really complex. I know that people think the early works are not much. The early works are a massive piece of work, and Mr Carroll, I think, is very well placed to understand the complexities of getting the early works done for Suburban Rail Loop, so I will go to him on that.

Frankie CARROLL: The initial works have started for Suburban Rail Loop. We are seeing activity in most of the precincts going on at the moment. We just recently completed the terminus for the 109 at Box Hill, the new terminus for the tramline. This has brought a safer terminus to the Box Hill area. There has been disruption in the community in relation to what this has done, but actually the feedback from the community is that it is a really good outcome for the tramline. We are seeing site establishment in Burwood, which will see the tunnel access shaft – the launching area for the TBMs – going on. That is going on as we speak. We have had a sewer relocation at Clayton; we have utility relocations in Box Hill, which are going on on Whitehorse Road; relocations in Burwood; communications, water pipe and power relocations in Glen Waverley; demolition and site establishment in Monash; and at the western portal site, establishment of the stabling yard at Heatherton and structural works and a bulk power supply. All this work is actually about de-risking the project to start with. This is where we actually clear the projects area for the launch of the TBMs going forward. It is an inordinate amount of work which is going on at the moment, and really engaging with the community and letting them know what is going on on a day-to-day basis.

Lauren KATHAGE: I think you were running through works that have been completed to date, but where does the full scope take us for those early works?

Frankie CARROLL: What it is really trying to do is make sure that all the utilities are moved out of the way so when the TBMs launch the utilities are not in the way, make sure there are launch pads for the TBMs going forward, make sure tunnel access shafts –

Lauren KATHAGE: Sorry, TBM?

Frankie CARROLL: Tunnel boring machines.

Lauren KATHAGE: Ah, of course.

Frankie CARROLL: Sorry, my apologies. I live with these on a daily basis, so apologies for using acronyms. So making sure that we actually de-risk those activities going forward so we actually can launch those TBMs. The scheduled launch for the TBMs is in 2026, so most of the initial and early works will be completed in that stage.

Lauren KATHAGE: Okay, fantastic – not boring at all. Thank you. We have got other big projects going on as part of the Big Build. In my neck of the woods we have got the Bridge Inn Road upgrade, which I inspected last week. They are putting bitumen onto the new bridge, which is exciting – getting closer. So we have had \$7.1 billion in 2021–22, \$6.7 billion in 2022–23. Can you provide an update on the progress of those additional investments?

Paul YOUNIS: Yes, and you are right to say what we have got is a significant infrastructure program. It is the most significant infrastructure program this state has ever seen and rivals any infrastructure build in transport across the world. Planning those works and getting to a stage where they can be developed and implemented is a really complex process. Mr Carroll has just taken us through a little bit of the complexity with

Suburban Rail Loop about how we get to the point of launching the tunnel boring machines so that they can operate. We have got the West Gate Tunnel. What I might do is actually go to Kevin to take us through some of the updates of these projects, because there are some pretty significant milestones that we are reaching on a lot of them over the next two or three years.

Kevin DEVLIN: Thanks, Secretary. Certainly we are looking at, I think as people out west will see, significant progress on the West Gate Tunnel Project – again, on track for opening in 2025. People are seeing a lot of the freeway barriers even being removed out there as you drive into town. The next tranche of asphaltting works over summer was recently announced, which will see the final wearing course layered on West Gate Tunnel. Of course we have landed – the minister was out recently with the milestone of the last steel segment being installed for the bridges, so the team is making really good progress out there and really looking forward to seeing the benefits of that project relieving congestion and improving safety, as well as the active transport measures being applied to West Gate Tunnel.

We have touched on Metro Tunnel. Of course, again, level crossings have hit 72 removed. Forty-seven planned new train stations across suburban Melbourne, and as the Secretary has mentioned, not just train stations but precinct outcomes and real urban renewal and revitalisation driving a lot of pride of place for those local communities with those 47 new train stations. Thousands of additional car parks being built at train stations – I think over 10,000 car parks have now been delivered. I think nearly over 150 kilometres of cycling path has been built across a number of these projects as well. You only have to go out of an evening and see how many people are walking and cycling along these new corridors and active play spaces that have been provided.

The transport regime as well as the road program – the road program is significantly progressing. We have seen North East Link as well – major works. Anyone who goes out to the north, again, would be blown away by the scale of all the works that are happening there: a huge amount of foundational work – piling – to ready for the tunnel boring machines, which have been now delivered to site and are being assembled on site and will start tunnelling very soon. That North East Link connecting the M80 to the Eastern Freeway, again, is going to deliver tremendous benefit to those northern suburbs and get a huge amount of trucks off local streets.

Lauren KATHAGE: I think for people in the southern end of my electorate it is going to make going to Box Hill for dinner for dumplings possible. I think we are going to miss 18 sets of lights to be able to get from the bottom end of my electorate to Box Hill, so on behalf of all Chinese food lovers we thank you for that. The Mickleham Road upgrade and Epping Road upgrade – are they underneath that program or are they a separate program?

Paul YOUNIS: Mr Duncan Elliott will actually be able to – he has probably missed the question because he was distracted. Mickleham Road – or Mr Tieppo. You are going to run out of time. That is part of a program of works we have got for Mickleham Road and an important part of our major roads projects that we have got going across the entire state, which is headed up by Mr Elliott.

The CHAIR: Unfortunately, the time is up, and the time for questions has come to an end. Secretary and officials, thank you very much for taking the time today to come and speak and appear before the committee. The committee is going to follow up on any questions taken on notice in writing and responses are required within five working days of the committee's request. The committee is now going to take a break before beginning its consideration of the Department of Education at 1:30 pm.

Witnesses withdrew.