

# **PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE**

## **Inquiry into the 2022-23 Budget Estimates**

Melbourne—Friday, 27 May 2022

### **MEMBERS**

Ms Lizzie Blandthorn—Chair

Mr Danny O'Brien—Deputy Chair

Mr Rodney Barton

Mr Sam Hibbins

Mr Gary Maas

Mrs Beverley McArthur

Mr James Newbury

Ms Pauline Richards

Mr Tim Richardson

Ms Nina Taylor



**WITNESSES**

Mr Ben Carroll MP, Minister for Public Transport,

Mr Paul Younis, Secretary,

Mr Nick Foa, Head, Transport Services, and

Mr William Tieppo, Deputy Secretary, Network Design and Integration, Department of Transport; and

Ms Tammy O'Connor, Chief Executive Officer, Commercial Passenger Vehicles Victoria.

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

I begin by acknowledging the traditional Aboriginal owners of the land on which we are meeting. We pay our respects to them, their elders past, present and emerging as well as elders from other communities who may be with us today.

On behalf of the Parliament, the committee is conducting this Inquiry into the 2022–23 Budget Estimates. The committee's aim is to scrutinise public administration and finance to improve outcomes for the Victorian community.

I advise that all evidence taken by the committee is protected by parliamentary privilege. However, 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.

We welcome Minister Carroll, in the first instance for the public transport portfolio. We invite you to make a 10-minute presentation, which will be followed by questions from the committee.

**Mr CARROLL:** Thank you, Chair, and thanks, committee members and Deputy Chair. It is wonderful to be here. On my left I am here with Paul Younis, the Secretary of the Department of Transport, and Tammy O'Connor, who heads up Commercial Passenger Vehicles. And on my right is Nick Foa, the Head of Transport Services, and Will Tieppo, Deputy Secretary from the Department of Transport.

**Visual presentation.**

**Mr CARROLL:** Chair and members, it has been a very solid seven years of the Andrews Labor government when it comes to transport, both when it comes to doing our Big Build but then also unlocking and turning on the Big Build with all those extra services.

More and more now, as the \$90 billion Big Build gets completed, we are also running more trains more often and have an incredibly strong pipeline of rolling stock as well. In fact just yesterday I had the pleasure to launch our updated rolling stock program, which follows our 2015 investment, some \$8 billion in new trains, trams and buses, built here in Victoria by Victorians for Victorians, that will be running on our public transport system. Because our aim is, no matter where you live, no matter where you need to get to, that you have an accessible public transport system. We very much see public transport as an enabler, and it is very critical, whether it is train, tram or bus, that you get those services that you require.

Chair, in this budget in particular I want to just highlight a couple of the most important initiatives. The figure there, \$383 million, that will go towards turning on the Big Build I think is one of the most exciting things when you consider that we have been talking about the Metro Tunnel for so many years now. But now you have \$383 million, literally in the budget papers and budgeted for, to start all the recruitment for the train drivers, the service levels, the customer service, the signalling operators to actually get the Metro Tunnel ready for when it opens on day one in 2025. But also too we are very proud of our investment in rolling stock, and this budget continues that with \$250 million towards 12 brand new VLocity trains which will continue our

rolling stock program, which does lead the nation. Often I have delegations from other parts of Australia to Victoria to see how we do rolling stock, and it is something we should be very proud of as a government.

Also too when it comes to public transport we know some 20 per cent of our passengers have a disability or an impairment, so it is very important that this budget builds on our record when it comes to improving accessibility, and \$158 million will go towards this. That is for train, tram and bus upgrades at that local level to improve them for people that do need support with their mobility. That goes in partnership with the rolling stock, because there are two parts to the equation when it comes to accessibility: there is the rolling stock part and then there is the local level part at the A-grade level.

We also have our bus plan, and many of you are very fond of your buses in your own local communities, but \$109 million will go towards investing and implementing our bus plan. As I have said before, we are the first government since 2006 to actually roll out a bus plan. We know buses are the most resilient form of transport coming out of COVID and have a very bright future.

But more than that too we have got additional services now being unlocked in Cranbourne, East Pakenham and Waurin Ponds as part of that infrastructure gets upgraded. Nine-car VLocity trains will be running through some of our busiest suburbs, particularly in the western suburbs from Wyndham Vale right through to Southern Cross. And then when you think about it—and I was pleased to be in Shepparton just recently—the Shepparton, Bairnsdale and Warrnambool lines will have VLocitys. Retiring some of that old classic fleet that we know are heavy on maintenance to then have these new, smoother trains that I get so much good feedback on running in some of those parts of regional Victoria I think is very exciting for those commuters. And then, as I highlighted at the very beginning, we are preparing operations for the Metro Tunnel, and I and the Premier and Minister Allan just last week got to go underneath the Metro Tunnel, and it is a very exciting project—when it does open.

The rolling stock, I have said, is the leading of the nation. Many jurisdictions, particularly New South Wales, come down to talk to me to see how we do it. I am very pleased too that as part of the airport rail link we will have also those high-capacity metro trains that will service airport rail, and I know many members on this committee have seen HCMTs in action. Again, when it comes to disability, they have been the benchmark on how we work with the disability sector, and we want to roll out that with our tram upgrade as well.

One of the other big great things is the Regional Rail Revival. V/Line is the fastest growing commuter service in the nation, and the \$4 billion investment with the commonwealth in the Regional Rail Revival literally is unlocking and building every regional rail line in this state. When you think about the Commonwealth Games coming in 2026, it just underscores how important an investment that is. But also too we are modernising V/Line's operations, and very, very soon we will have even better services running right across the network.

But also too I want to talk about some of the frontline staff that we have and thank them for all their work that they have done during COVID. More than that too, we are also really trying to get more tech savvy and really provide more real-time information to commuters, no matter whether they are on a train, tram or bus or even in their motor vehicle. So we are going to introduce a geographical information system that will deliver real-time awareness of what is happening right across our network.

*Victoria's Bus Plan*—\$109 million. This goes in partnership—and I know the Parliamentary Secretary for Schools is here—and also works very closely with our education sector, our schools. They rely so much on good bus routes to get people to them. Also too there is a big interest in on-demand buses. I am very pleased that our government is rolling out the FlexiRide. Whether it is around Greensborough, Kilmore or Melton, this is a really good on-demand service that really underscores how important buses will be. You cannot talk about buses without talking about zero-emissions buses, which are the future. All around the world buses are turning electric as one of those important modes of public transport, and to think that just north of us Seymour will be the first town in Victoria to have an entirely electric bus fleet I think is very, very exciting. And this goes with our \$20 million three-year zero-emissions trial, where we will continue to roll out buses and make sure that they have zero emissions. As I also outlined at the very beginning, for climate change zero emissions is very important when it comes to transport, but going hand in hand with that is accessibility.

I am very pleased with the Andrews government's record. Since 2014, 44 new or upgraded train stations, 41 level-access tram stops and hundreds of new and accessible trains, trams and buses as part of our rolling

stock. Then this budget complements that work again, with another \$158 million. This will ensure along the Pakenham and Cranbourne lines accessibility upgrades at 14 stations, enabling passengers with wheelchairs, prams and other mobility devices—unassisted or needing assistance—to get on the train and get to where they need to get to as quickly and as smoothly as possible. But also, the CBD is very important. When you think about the Metro Tunnel opening, the CBD, that integration from train to tram. That is why in the budget we have funding to do the La Trobe Street and Park Street interchange that we know will be very busy. Lots of people with mobility aids—wheelchairs—will want to get off in the Metro Tunnel and go to those tram stops to get to Bourke Street, Flinders Street, wherever they need to go.

I also want to highlight that we do have one of the most unfenced railway networks in the country, and, sadly, suicide is an occurrence that happens on our public transport network. That is why we do have \$800 000 to expand and do everything we can—\$11.7 million for safety improvements on suicide prevention. Also, we want to expand the free travel pass program for students in crisis. I thank Westjustice for their work and support for that as well.

These investments, Chair, are very, very important and very, very much unprecedented as the government, really since 2014, has been ahead of the curve really worldwide and certainly around Australia when it comes to record transport investment and unlocking the services for a modern, safe and accessible network. I think the best years still lie ahead of us when it comes to public transport, because you really get to unlock that transport infrastructure, then unlock the delivery of all those services that come with it. If you think where we are placed right now with the Commonwealth Games around the corner and you look at the fanfare that has happened overseas with the opening of the Elizabeth line—just envisage yourself, as the Treasurer did in finishing that budget, 2025–26, the modern train, tram, bus network, the Commonwealth Games. Victoria is very well placed and a great place to be a part of. It is great that in the transport portfolio, with the Department of Transport, we are doing so much to make Victoria one of the best places to live, certainly in Australia if not around the world. Thank you, Chair. I will hand it back to you and committee members for questions.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much. Mr O'Brien.

**Mr D O'BRIEN:** Thank you, Chair. Morning, Minister, and team. Secretary, can I start with you? Budget paper 3, page 341, is the output for regional train services. Last year V/Line held an international search for a new CEO. How many candidates were there for that position?

**Mr YOUNIS:** Thanks, Mr O'Brien. Yes, we have been through quite a change to the V/Line structure and process. Yes, we went through an international search last year for a CEO for the position of V/Line. I cannot recall the number of applicants, but there was a wide range of applicants, across all of Australia mostly. We had a couple overseas, but I think the overseas applicants were down somewhat because of COVID and the ability to travel, so that did impact a little bit on that. But we had a number of really high-quality applicants from right across Australia, which we were really pleased to see.

**Mr D O'BRIEN:** Okay. As Secretary, did you have a role in appointing the CEO of V/Line?

**Mr YOUNIS:** Yes. I was part of the selection committee and on the selection committee.

**Mr D O'BRIEN:** So, Secretary, what convinced you that Matt Carrick, as a former ALP preselection candidate with no experience in the transport sector, was the best person or indeed qualified to run V/Line?

**Mr YOUNIS:** Mr O'Brien, I think when you look at the criteria and the people you are after for leading such a complex and broad organisation it is not just one set of skills that you are looking for. I know that when I have been appointing people in various roles over my whole career that it is not a single skill that you are after. What you are after is leadership skills, you are after people that can change organisations. Particularly with V/Line, it needed upgrading and it needed work to be done on that, and Matt Carrick without question was a stand-out in relation to the skills that we required at V/Line in the leadership of V/Line at this point in time. I am very pleased that Matt was able to accept the role, and he brought all of the skills that you need for that sort of complex role.

**Mr D O'BRIEN:** I note the *Herald Sun* in February wrote that:

In response to questions on the hiring process, the government said Mr Carrick “was approached given his significant experience leading other public sector organisations ...

So was he tapped on the shoulder or did he apply?

**The CHAIR:** Mr O’Brien, can I just remind you, like we needed to remind the opposition last week, that we are not here to base our questions on Twitter or newspaper articles but instead the budget papers.

**Mr NEWBURY:** It is a public statement. What are you talking about?

**The CHAIR:** Mr Newbury—but instead the budget papers. So if you could please relate your questions to the estimates, that would be appreciated.

**Mr D O’BRIEN:** Well, I was expecting that the government would try and hide this. I remind you, Chair, the objectives on our website—

**Mr NEWBURY:** Labor Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Newbury, I cannot hear Mr O’Brien.

**Mr D O’BRIEN:** The objectives of this inquiry on our website:

The Committee’s budget estimates inquiry aims to benefit the Parliament and the community by—  
the very first dot point—

... promoting the accountability, transparency and integrity of the executive and the public sector

**The CHAIR:** Deputy Chair.

**Mr D O’BRIEN:** Sorry, I have not finished, Chair. If a question about a Labor operative getting a senior job in V/Line is not in the public interest, what is?

**The CHAIR:** Excuse me, Mr O’Brien. Mr O’Brien, I am chairing this meeting. I allowed your first—

**Mr NEWBURY:** He could be one of your mates.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Newbury. I allowed your first question, and I did not rule your first question out of order. Your second question crossed the line and was out of order. You need to—

**Mr NEWBURY:** How?

**The CHAIR:** Mr Newbury, I am not talking to you. I am talking to this whole committee, and I would appreciate—

**Mr NEWBURY:** You are a Labor Chair who is protecting a Labor appointment. I mean, we can all see it. Just because you are using your position to protect a Labor operative—

**The CHAIR:** Mr Newbury, you are out of control, and I ask—

**Mr NEWBURY:** I am not out of control.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Newbury, you are yelling over the Chair, and I would ask that you control yourself.

**Mr NEWBURY:** I am very controlled.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Newbury, it is very early in the morning for you to start with this behaviour. Mr O’Brien, I did not rule your first question out of order—

**Mr NEWBURY:** Of course you do.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Newbury. I would ask that you make your second question relevant to this inquiry.

**Mr D O’BRIEN:** Secretary, who extended Mr Carrick’s appointment to 2026? Was that your decision or the minister’s?

**Mr YOUNIS:** So the decision of any extension in these circumstances was my decision.

**Mr D O'BRIEN:** Okay. Given V/Line has been mired in corruption scandals and has been failing to meet its performance targets time and time again, how is it that someone without a background in public transport was appointed to this position?

**Mr YOUNIS:** So I can only repeat what I said before, Mr O'Brien, that what we were after in the leadership role for V/Line is someone who has really strong leadership skills that can bring the organisation along. It has been through some really tough times, and it has been really disappointing some of the elements that we have had to deal with in the leadership of V/Line, and that is well reported. What Matt Carrick does is bring that broad range of skills to the organisation, and he has shown that he can do that. I am very pleased with what he has been able to do in leading that organisation. There are thousands of employees from across all of Victoria—

**The CHAIR:** Sorry, Secretary, I am having trouble hearing you over the constant interjections from Mr Newbury and—

**Mr D O'BRIEN:** You are wasting time, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Mr O'Brien, perhaps you could ask your opposition colleagues to stop talking over the top of you and the Secretary and then we could all hear the answer.

**Mr D O'BRIEN:** Secretary, can I move on. I note Moshe Same, a former adviser to Minister Jacinta Allan, has been appointed as chief of staff to the CEO of V/Line. Whose decision was it to create this role?

**Mr YOUNIS:** All appointments at V/Line, apart from the CEO, are the responsibility of the CEO. That is the structure of it. It is an authority that has a single chair, which is the CEO, and that CEO appoints all of the positions—is responsible for the appointment of all positions within V/Line.

**Mr D O'BRIEN:** Okay. Was that position advertised?

**Mr YOUNIS:** All of the positions that have been appointed through the V/Line restructure and works have gone through the proper procurement process.

**Mr D O'BRIEN:** And did you speak with Ms Allan about Mr Same before he was appointed to that taxpayer-funded, supposedly apolitical role?

**Mr YOUNIS:** No.

**Mr D O'BRIEN:** Do you know if Mr Carrick did?

**Mr YOUNIS:** I do not know any conversations that happened between Mr Carrick and other people.

**Mr D O'BRIEN:** Minister, did you have any involvement in this appointment?

**Mr CARROLL:** No.

**Mr D O'BRIEN:** Secretary, can I just go to comments made by a spokesperson for the Department of Transport—so specifically reported in the *Geelong Advertiser* as a spokesperson for the Department of Transport—last week in the *Geelong Advertiser*, and the quote was:

The Victorian Liberals have a track record of cuts and closures when it comes to transport infrastructure—only Labor is upgrading every single regional rail line and delivering modern new trains to create a more accessible network.

Why are Department of Transport staff giving blatantly political lines when they are meant to be apolitical?

**Mr YOUNIS:** Mr O'Brien, I would seriously question whether that quote came from Department of Transport staff. That is not typical of any quote that would come from the department. So I cannot—

**Mr D O'BRIEN:** It is a direct quote, Secretary, in the *Geelong Advertiser*. So it does say 'a Department of Transport spokeswoman said'.

**Mr YOUNIS:** I cannot comment on—

**The CHAIR:** Mr O'Brien, I would again—

**Mr Newbury** interjected.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Newbury, you do not have the call. Mr O'Brien, I would please ask and remind you again that we are not here to discuss media reports but instead—

**Mr NEWBURY:** What a farcical position! You have got the department using their position—

**The CHAIR:** Mr Newbury, you are out of control.

**Mr NEWBURY:** No, I am not. No, what is out of control is the political appointments in this department.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Newbury, please do not yell at me as the Chair. Mr Newbury.

**Mr NEWBURY:** You are a Labor Chair. The position is entirely Labor based. You have ruled out questions about appointments—

**The CHAIR:** Mr Newbury, you are completely out of order, and I would ask that you do not yell over the top of me, please.

**Mr NEWBURY:** by the Labor Party into taxpayer-funded positions. And now departmental staff are making statements that are blatantly political.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Newbury, this disrespectful behaviour is totally out of order and offensive, and I would ask that you control yourself.

**Mr NEWBURY:** Thank you, Labor Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Mr O'Brien's time has unfortunately expired. I would ask all committee members to give each other the respect of their own question time and to make their questions relevant to the budget process in the estimates, please. Mr Maas.

**Mr MAAS:** Thank you, Chair. And thank you, Minister, and thank you, department officials, for your time this morning. I will try to keep my line of questioning within the scope and within the frame of this hearing.

*Members interjecting.*

**The CHAIR:** Mr O'Brien and Mr Newbury, you are out of order. Mr Maas has the call.

**Mr MAAS:** Thank you, Chair. I would also note that by keeping within the scope we will meet the objectives as well—but I will move to budget paper 3, pages 109, 110 and 115. I would like to move to the topic of the Big Build, Minister. Would you be able to explain to the committee how the Big Build infrastructure investment is delivering benefits for public transport?

*Members interjecting.*

**The CHAIR:** Deputy Chair and Mr Newbury!

**Mr MAAS:** On a point of order, Chair—

**Mr Newbury** interjected.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Newbury, you are out of order and extremely rude.

**Mr NEWBURY:** Thank you, Labor Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Newbury! Mr Maas, your point of order?

**Mr MAAS:** Again, like last time, just given that my time has wound down so much now, I note that we did not interrupt Mr O'Brien when he was seeking to ask questions—

*Members interjecting.*

**Mr MAAS:** Given that now I am down to 6½ minutes, I would like to ask that my time be extended.

**Mr D O'BRIEN:** So, what, you can just do a few more Dixers? There is no precedent for this to occur, Chair—no precedent.

**The CHAIR:** Deputy Chair, I have stopped the clock. In the first instance, I will not extend Mr Maas's time; I have simply stopped the clock. I would ask that all members give each other the respect of their own questions. The only people that interrupted the Deputy Chair's questions were members of the opposition.

**Mr NEWBURY:** No, the Chair—the Chair protecting the questions, protecting Labor.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Newbury—

**Mr NEWBURY:** Well, that is just factually wrong.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Newbury, it is this sort of behaviour that wound down the time that was allocated to the Deputy Chair: you yelling over the top of the Chair and over the top of—

**Mr NEWBURY:** I did not yell. This is my voice, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Newbury, it was your behaviour that prevented all of us from hearing the Deputy Chair and the Secretary's responses that forced me to intervene. I would ask that you control yourself—

**Mr NEWBURY:** I am very controlled. Stop using inappropriate language, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** and I would ask the Deputy Chair if he could assist in asking his opposition to behave themselves.

**Mr Newbury** interjected.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Newbury, you are completely out of order. Mr Newbury, could you please control yourself?

**Mr NEWBURY:** I am very controlled. I just do not respect your position.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Newbury, you are absolutely out of order. I am going to start the clock for Mr Maas's time. Mr Maas has the call, and I would ask that all members of this committee provide each other with the respect they are entitled to.

**Mr MAAS:** Thanks, Chair. Thanks, Minister.

**Mr CARROLL:** Thanks, Mr Maas. Look, it is a good question, because there is the \$90 billion Big Build, and everyone immediately thinks of that as, obviously, the Metro Tunnel and level crossings, but it is so much more than that too. There are some 165 projects right across our state that are part of the Big Build. What is so important about the Big Build is you have got all the jobs and you have got all that infrastructure, and then in many respects it is what comes next—that is, that unlocking of services. What I always try to highlight, particularly for our members in regional Victoria, is we did that \$500 million upgrade of the Ballarat line. That then saw 20-minute services to Ballarat for the very first time—more trains more often, getting people on new stations and into the city or back to wherever they need to get to. It is really something we should be proud of, because it means we are getting on with it and really unlocking and enabling how people get to move around—since we came to office some 2000 additional weekly rail services across our public transport network. Also too if you think about COVID, having more capacity on the railway network has been critical right around the world, and in Victoria we delivered another 500 services through a pandemic to create more space on the network, particularly for emergency services workers and the like.

There is the north-east line, and I was with a Member for Northern Victoria yesterday down at South Dynon looking at that brand new rolling stock that is going on there. You have got, which I know is close to many members of this committee, the completion of the Cranbourne line upgrade in February, which has seen another 50 additional weekly services between Cranbourne and Dandenong, changing really the lives and the

opportunities of those individuals. It is about really ensuring that we get to see the benefits as we deliver it and, more than that too, making sure that no matter where you live you get to have every opportunity to get on one of the world's best public transport systems.

**Mr MAAS:** Thank you. The Metro Tunnel, as you mentioned in your presentation as well, is a big part of all of that. Can you give us a sense of what the experience will be like once that opens up for passengers?

**Mr CARROLL:** It will be an incredible experience. Having been underneath it for the first time myself at Parkville—and you think about Melbourne University, you think about the hospital precinct—we have been talking for decades about a turn-up-and-go public transport system where you literally throw away the timetable, and this is what the Metro Tunnel will provide. If you think about even where I live, on the Craigieburn line, it will have greater capacity and more frequent services on the Craigieburn line because you are separating the Craigieburn line from the Sunbury line. You are literally, as the TV commercial shows, untangling the bottlenecks in the city loop—so more frequent trains than ever before, they turn up and go and are more accessible too. Another thing—we have not had this in Victoria yet, but you see it often overseas—is where literally you get off the train and the doors open. You have got all those big, wide doors, electronically powered, that are going to be underneath the city. I think it is so, so exciting.

As I said earlier, if you look at the Elizabeth line and what has happened there in London, to think that is going to be the sort of fanfare that happens when the Metro Tunnel opens is a credit to the Premier and Minister Allan for their leadership in that. And then you add to that the high-capacity metro trains that are going to be going through it—21st-century accessibility needs, more space, more comfort, smoother. And again, built here in Victoria, running on the line—they are going to be so, so good. I cannot wait. And then you think what is coming after it: you have got, obviously, airport rail, you have got Suburban Rail Loop and you have got more level crossings being done. It is a very, very exciting future, Mr Maas, and I cannot wait for 2025.

**Mr MAAS:** Terrific. Thank you. Would you be able to describe in more detail the service improvements that train passengers in metro Melbourne will see as a result of the investments of this year's budget? You took us through some of those investments in your presentation.

**Mr CARROLL:** Certainly. The investments have seen us deliver literally thousands of extra weekly services, but more than that too, we know we have got growth pressures around places like Melton. You have seen the new Cobblebank station. You have got the Ballarat line upgrade coming through Melton. We know we also have Wyndham Vale too. In the last budget \$71.6 million will upgrade infrastructure at Wyndham Vale and Melton to allow the nine-car VLocity trains to run there for the very first time. Having those new VLocity—again, being able to retire some of our older classic fleet—is very, very important.

I think, Mr Maas, one thing we should all be proud of, no matter which side of the fence you sit on in this state, is that coming through COVID we continued to run a public transport system. Shanghai are just reopening theirs after lockdown. New South Wales went to a Sunday timetable. We ran and invested in our public transport system. It is a credit to everyone at the Department of Transport. It is a credit to the operators at V/Line, Metro, Yarra Trams and our bus services, because we invested in it, we supported it. We knew essential workers relied on it. We also knew there was a bit of hesitancy around COVID and public transport, so we created more space and had all the other things we did. As many people who have been on public transport have remarked to me, it is the cleanest it has ever been. I think we are now attracting more and more commuters back, and that is vitally important. It is really, really important that these growth areas—whether it is Cranbourne, Lynbrook or Merinda Park—have more and more services to get people where they need to get to quicker; and then to get them home quicker to their families and friends is just as important as well.

**Mr MAAS:** Great. Thank you. Just in the time remaining, would you be able to describe in more detail the service improvements that passengers in regional Victoria will see as a result of the investments in this year's budget?

**Mr CARROLL:** Well, certainly in particular the upgrades at the Waurn Ponds station—that infrastructure upgrade will allow passengers south of Geelong in particular to again have additional weekly services to and from Waurn Ponds station each week, including two extra services in the morning and two in the evening each weekday. One of the other important things too is that those shoulder peaks are not what they used to be. We have to really build and expand them out, because we know that the typical workday, the start and finish, is not

what it used to be. So it is really important that we have those investments. But I am very pleased to see Maryborough as well will have a weekend service uplift, with a weekend shuttle train between Maryborough Ballarat funded in the budget. It is really important. Whether its connectivity in the Geelong region or connectivity around the goldfields in Ballarat and Maryborough, we want to make sure that public transport continues to be invested in and no train lines ever again are shut in this state. It is the great enabler, and it is vitally important no matter where you live—whether it is Maryborough, whether it is down in Waurin Ponds or whether it is in Ballarat—that you have a fully serviced, professional service that can get you where you need to get to on time, securely, safely and reliably.

**Mr MAAS:** Thanks very much, Minister. Thank you, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Maas. Mr Hibbins.

**Mr HIBBINS:** Thank you, Chair. And thank you, Minister and your team, for appearing this morning. You referred to accessibility within your presentation this morning, but the reality is, according to the budget papers, the rate of tram stops to be upgraded is still the same or even less than previous years. It is currently sitting at two per year, which means it is going to be decades until all of Victoria's tram stops are actually accessible to everyone. I mean, this is coming at a time when I think you have got six months until you are actually legally obliged to make sure that every tram stop is accessible. Disability advocates have been running a very strong campaign for decades. Why hasn't the rate of tram stop upgrades actually increased in this budget?

**Mr CARROLL:** Thanks. It is a very good question, Mr Hibbins. And look, I share your sentiment that when you are operating the biggest tram network in the world you do have an obligation to those people with disability that rely on access to it. What we have been able to do is—and various reports have said this—the investment in this budget very much also complements that \$1.85 billion to get rid of those 100 high-floor trams to bring in those 100 low-floor trams, and that new rolling stock investment, those trams, will be able to go anywhere in the network. Mr Hibbins, we have got this issue at the moment where we have got some accessibility tram stops but then you have got the high-floor trams. You have got some low-floor trams, and then you do not have the stops. So we are working very hard at the Department of Transport to really ensure that we have an evidence-based approach when it comes to doing the tram stops. With the ones that are in the budget in the CBD, they have been specifically targeted because of essentially their high frequency and people with disabilities getting to work.

I do want to say, though, it is not in the budget papers, but I have also appointed for the very first time Tricia Malowney, who is our disability advocate, not only to hold me accountable, and the Department of Transport, but to really support the disability sector in making sure that we do everything we can to make it as accessible as possible. I met with the disability sector recently. We have the upgrades occurring. We have done a range of upgrades along not just tram but train and bus lines, but there is always more work to do. I mean, I like to consider that I have got a social justice background, Mr Hibbins, and I try to bring that to the portfolio—how we can really ensure that people with a disability have as much access as possible. I know the economic opportunity. I know the family members get a real kick when their loved ones with disabilities are on the public transport network, because it is their whole way of life. So we have always got more work to do.

**Mr HIBBINS:** Okay. Thanks, Minister. Also mentioned in the budget I think is planning for further routes or upgrading further routes. Could you provide the committee with some detail in terms of what that actually entails and what further corridors?

**Mr CARROLL:** I might ask Nick Foa, as Head of transport services, on that too, if that is okay, Mr Hibbins, just to comment on that one?

**Mr HIBBINS:** Yes. Sure.

**Mr FOA:** Thank you, Mr Hibbins, for the question. Yes, the budget papers do include funding for seven more stops—six on La Trobe and one on Park—and then planning for a further two corridors, which is really great in terms of being able to get a pipeline of planned projects. The selection of those corridors will come down to a range of factors that the minister just went through in terms of how we optimise low-floor trams with level-access stops and overlay patronage and overlay other works that are happening in the system so we can take advantage of other shutdowns that might be happening for other works so we can actually coordinate as

many of the works along the corridor as we can. So it will be a corridor view, it will be a utilisation view, and we are working through the consultation around that at the moment.

**Mr HIBBINS:** Okay. What will be the time line for those?

**Mr FOA:** The budget papers do not stipulate necessarily a time frame for the corridor plans to be done, but it is something that we will be cracking on with in the remainder of this year and early into next year.

**Mr HIBBINS:** Okay. Thank you.

**Mr CARROLL:** I think the Secretary just wanted to—

**Mr YOUNIS:** Mr Hibbins, I think you are right to highlight the issue of the number of tram stops we have got that are still inaccessible. I think we have only got 450 out of close to 2000 tram stops that are accessible, but the program that the government allowed us to be delivering this year, which are the ones along La Trobe Street, is a different delivery method. What we are trialling is trying to reduce the cost of each one, because they are quite expensive because of the services we have to change and because of the changes in all of the curbing and the access. What we are trying to do this time is look at a different procurement method and do a bit of a program of works so that we can reduce the costs, because getting the unit cost down of those accessible stops is also an important part of rolling them out more quickly.

**Mr HIBBINS:** Okay. Thank you. I want to ask now about electric buses as well that you referred to in your presentation. You have indicated, I think, 78 electric buses are to come online by 2025. I mean, that is still only about 2-odd per cent of the fleet by 2025. When you look at the comparison with, say, New South Wales, I think they have got a fleet of 8000 and they are looking to transition to 100 per cent by 2030. Why don't we have a stronger target and a higher uptake of electric buses here?

**Mr CARROLL:** We have got the trial underway at the moment, and the trial is really important, Mr Hibbins, because for example, we have really recently announced that Kinetic, which has taken over from Transdev, will be the home of electric buses in the western suburbs. Now we are also looking at where all the infrastructure goes, and then we do need to bring our industry with us. Obviously we make our buses in Dandenong predominantly through Volgren, and essentially all of us now right around the world are wanting to do electric buses. We have got the trial underway at the moment to look at all of the infrastructure. As part of that though, Mr Hibbins, I am working with the minister for TAFE, because we do have a real transition piece for the workforce because the electric buses essentially last longer and do not require the maintenance of the other buses. You are correct to say by 2025 all new government purchases will be electric, but then we also need to retire the fleet as well. Can I just say too, I think not having Barnaby Joyce as the federal transport minister is a big step, because that also means we can do a bit of work around standards and get to that Euro 6 level of standards. That will also then put a lot of emphasis on the importation of different engines and a lot of emphasis on Volvo, Mercedes and any of those big bus companies that are making the very best and ensuring when it comes to Melbourne, Victoria, that they get here. But our goal is, Mr Hibbins, to transition the whole fleet eventually.

**Mr HIBBINS:** Do you also anticipate increasing the size of the fleet? Because obviously transitioning the fleet is one thing, but there is also increasing the size of the fleet to increase the number and frequency of services.

**Mr CARROLL:** In the 5 seconds I have got left I can take that on notice. But building more and strengthening the fleet is very important.

**Mr HIBBINS:** Okay. Thanks.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. Ms Richards.

**Ms RICHARDS:** That is a good segue. Thanks, Minister, for your time here this morning, and also to the officials for not just your time but the work that you are doing. I would like to explore rolling stock and particularly refer you to budget paper 3, pages 109 and 115. I am interested in perhaps asking if you can outline the government's investment in the rolling stock program in this budget and how that is supporting particularly Victorian jobs.

**Mr CARROLL:** Thank you, Ms Richards. I have actually brought a copy of the strategy with me that is hot off the press from yesterday, so if any member wants a copy, we will be sure to give it to you. Rolling stock is a really important part of the Andrews Labor government. It has been led very much by the Premier, and it is something that we are very proud of. Minister Allan in particular set a very high benchmark when it comes to rolling stock and those high-capacity metro trains. Just yesterday we heard from the disability sector how important they are, what they mean and how that has set the benchmark on what we will do when it comes to our trams. But when you think about this budget, \$426 million in total funding for new trains, stabling facilities and rolling stock maintenance, and I will get to stabling facilities. They are so important too, because that is where the train can go for the very first time. So you have got the \$250 million for the 12 new VLocity trains—again, being able to retire the old classic fleet that have served us so well for many decades but are high in maintenance, high investment, to be able to replace them with the VLocity trains will be a really important investment. But then when you think about the new stabling facility at Bairnsdale station, on the Gippsland line you will have the Bairnsdale stabling facility built and VLocitys to go on the Gippsland line, being done and delivered by a Labor government, something we should all be very, very proud of.

And then when you think about the metro rolling stock, you have got obviously airport rail and you have got the high-capacity metro trains in this year's budget, which will be another five. Very much, as I spoke about earlier, we are turning on the Big Build, but we are getting prepared for airport rail as well. And then you have got the stabling facilities we are going to be doing at Flemington Racecourse to again support the Metro Tunnel, the tram rolling stock and then you cannot talk about all this without talking about the jobs component. They are great manufacturing jobs. You think about the closure of the auto sector and why these jobs are so important. For manufacturing to be a key cornerstone of the Victorian economy is vitally important, so rolling stock is vitally important for our future.

**Ms RICHARDS:** That is terrific. Thank you, Minister. Just following on from that, and perhaps referring you to budget paper 4, pages 186 to 189, I am interested in having the committee updated on the delivery of the government's rolling stock pipeline.

**Mr CARROLL:** Certainly—\$8 billion in rolling stock and some 10 000 jobs. If I go to delivery on the metropolitan train network first, 25 X'trapolis 2.0 trains will be built in Ballarat. The design work and mobilisation of this project is underway, with manufacturing to commence. For school students, if anyone has ever been to the 100-year-old Ballarat train facility, it is just something remarkable. It is like a step back in time. But to think now they are underway with planning and rolling out the advanced manufacturing to be building these brand new X'trapolis 2.0 trains is really important. And then when you think about the 70 high-capacity metro trains—you know, Ms Richards, you drive past it regularly, as other members of the committee would, in Pakenham. You see that incredible facility that has literally come out of the ground there—high-end manufacturing—and to think we are delivering 70 and that 20 of these larger and more accessible trains are now in service. And then you think about the 24 X'trapolis trains that have been fully delivered, something we are very proud of, and the 59 three-carriage VLocity trains—177 VLocity carriages. Thirty-five have been delivered.

So when you look at our pipeline of rolling stock, it is incredible when you think about what we inherited, where you had the ACT government ordering more trams than a Victorian government—with the biggest tram network in the world, it is beyond belief that that was what we inherited. We also had all these peaks and troughs, so under our government industry has been given certainty that they can invest and plan for the future. Rolling stock is a real global industry with lots of players. There is the glass, there is the leather, there are the plastics—there is that supply chain that is so important, and we are very proud of that. Can I say, too, I have obviously got a soft spot for trams, having grown up really with a tram and bus network. Building new trams and the new facility that will go in Maidstone—when you think about the servicing there of students from Victoria University, the elderly getting to where they need to get to and then that disability component, it is vitally important, Ms Richards. Rolling stock will be, I think, always a hallmark of our government and something that will continue to be the envy of the nation, but we cannot rest on our laurels. That is what this budget does, it provides that further investment.

**Ms RICHARDS:** Thanks, Minister. I will again refer you back to budget paper 3, page 109. I am interested in exploring and gaining some more detail on the investment and work done to maintain the existing trains and trams.

**Mr CARROLL:** Yes. We have the Rail Industry Development Advisory Committee. Jill Walsh will be very familiar to many members in this room. She is a strong leader, particularly when it comes to manufacturing, and she was there with me yesterday when we launched the new strategy. A lot of systems on trams and trains are ritually replaced several times over. That is why having that really important manufacturing and those local jobs is so vitally important, as well as making sure that the maintenance contracts are all lined up as well, because you do not just build the tram, the train or the bus and then it is okay for the next 20 years. You have always got to make sure that you continue to stay ahead of the curve and make sure that you continue to provide on that investment.

When it comes to some of the maintenance industry that goes with the rolling stock industry, if I can just highlight some of the jobs. When you think of the V/Line fleet, VLocity and the classic fleet support, there are 300 full-time jobs over the life of those trains, whether it is mechanical trades, electricians, diesel mechanics or coach builders. Then you think about how it is spread right across not just one part of the state but Melbourne, Ballarat, Geelong, South Dynon and Dandenong, and then they will be adding to that Maidstone very, very soon. The metropolitan fleet trains support some 500 jobs right across Newport, Craigieburn and Epping. Newport is thriving under this government with our investment. We just spoke before about what came out of the ground at Pakenham under this government. So it is vitally important. And then I am a very frequent visitor to the East Preston tram depot to see the great work that is coming out of that with the manufacturing. And more and more, too, I have got to say it is a great diverse workforce—women, migrants—really seeing their future in the burgeoning manufacturing industry, building our trams, trains and buses made here in Victoria for Victorians.

**Ms RICHARDS:** Great. Thanks very much, Minister.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Ms Richards. Mr Newbury.

**Mr NEWBURY:** Thank you. Secretary, can I just ask you to take a couple of things on notice if you would not mind. A number of constituents have raised the Sandringham line train noise issue with the minister. Can I ask you to take on notice that issue—

**The CHAIR:** Sorry to interrupt you, Mr Newbury. But we are not here—

**Mr NEWBURY:** I have not even finished what I am saying.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Newbury, you are not here to put on notice questions. You are here to ask questions.

**Mr NEWBURY:** I am perfectly entitled to.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Newbury, if the witnesses are unable to answer your question here, then they may choose to take it on notice if they can provide further information.

**Mr NEWBURY:** Secretary—

**The CHAIR:** Mr Newbury, please do not ignore—

**Mr NEWBURY:** Can I finish my question?

**The CHAIR:** No, Mr Newbury. Your question already is out of order because you asked it—

**Mr NEWBURY:** So can I rephrase my question?

**The CHAIR:** Yes, Mr Newbury. You can rephrase your question please.

**Mr NEWBURY:** Thank you. Secretary, do you know the exact number of contacts with the department on the Sandringham train noise issue, and if not, would you mind taking on notice the issue and an update on that?

**Mr YOUNIS:** Pretty much a safety device.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Newbury, could I also please ask that you relate your question to the budget papers and the inquiry that we are here to conduct?

**Mr NEWBURY:** Well, they are doing work on the requests.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Newbury, we are here to conduct an inquiry into the budget estimates. I would ask that you relate your question to the budget estimates process. If you have constituent matters, you are free to take them up with the minister in the appropriate fashion that we all do: either through the Parliament or through representation.

**Mr NEWBURY:** I do not know why you are being so painful. I mean, all he is going to say is yes and he is going to give me an update.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Newbury, you are continuing to frustrate this inquiry, and this inquiry—

**Mr NEWBURY:** No, you are. You are, Labor Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Newbury!

**Mr NEWBURY:** You are embarrassing yourself.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Newbury, we are here to inquire into the budget estimates and produce a report to the Parliament in relation to the budget estimates.

**Mr NEWBURY:** Can we move on? Can we move on, Labor Chair? Can we move on?

**The CHAIR:** Mr Newbury, could you relate your questions to the budget papers? I am sure if the witness is able to answer them they will.

**Mr NEWBURY:** Just take it on notice. It is nothing.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Newbury.

**Mr YOUNIS:** Mr Newbury, the train noise: as we change the network all the time, there are issues in relation to the changes in the way that the trains operate across the network and train horns are used differently across the network. So we are continually working with our community about managing that, working with MTM about managing that. Most of the calls go to MTM, and we would not have a record of what they are.

**Mr NEWBURY:** Thank you. If there is any further information that you do not have with you, do you mind providing me that on notice?

**Mr YOUNIS:** If there is any further information I can add, then I will.

**Mr NEWBURY:** And the same in relation—

**The CHAIR:** And if that information, Secretary, is relevant to our inquiry as opposed to the member's constituent matters. We are not here to discuss individual constituent matters, we are here on behalf of the Parliament to conduct an inquiry into the estimates process. It is clear from the outset of the hearings every day, Mr Newbury.

**Mr NEWBURY:** Secretary, I just looked up the matter referred to by the Deputy Chair in relation to a departmental spokesman's comment, which clearly was a departmental use of resources in making a comment. I am not going to go into the comments again, but would you mind considering the matter that was raised? It was in the media on 16 May, if you would not mind considering those comments. Those comments are freely available in the media and are clearly political, and I would not mind if you would consider those comments after this hearing.

**Mr YOUNIS:** Thank you, Mr Newbury. I would really like to answer that now—

**Mr NEWBURY:** Please.

**Mr YOUNIS:** because I have actually confirmed that because that was alarming. I have been advised by my staff that that response was actually from a government spokesperson, it was not from a departmental person, and it was incorrectly reported in the paper.

**Mr NEWBURY:** Thank you. I appreciate that.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Newbury. And could I just take the opportunity to remind members that is why we do not base our questions on media reports but instead on the budget estimate processes.

**Mr NEWBURY:** Seriously, this is a joke. I am not going to go back to the appointment of Matt Carrick or Moshe Same, the former Labor staffers and candidates. Has the department done any work—or is the department doing any work through the current budget, through the current financial year—on appointments and appointment processes? Does the department ever look at the way appointments are made? Is it currently considering how appointments are made at the moment?

**Mr YOUNIS:** So appointments are made in accordance with the government guidelines.

**Mr NEWBURY:** Yes.

**Mr YOUNIS:** Those guidelines are updated and renewed all the time, and we are always making sure that we make our appointments in accordance with those guidelines.

**Mr NEWBURY:** Can I ask: did you in your capacity as Secretary have any role in the appointment of Sashi Balaraman, the former chief of staff of the Treasurer, at the Suburban Rail Loop Authority?

**Mr YOUNIS:** No.

**Mr NEWBURY:** Did you have any role in the appointment of Tom Considine, the former Dan staffer, at the Suburban Rail Loop Authority?

**Mr YOUNIS:** No.

**Mr NEWBURY:** Did you have any role in the appointment of Lisa Maksimovic, the former Dan staffer, at the Suburban Rail Loop Authority?

**Mr YOUNIS:** No.

**Mr NEWBURY:** Did you have any role in the former appointment of the now Labor Member for Williamstown at the Level Crossing Removal Authority?

**Mr YOUNIS:** No.

**Mr NEWBURY:** Did you have any role in the appointment of the now current Labor Member for Footscray at the North East Link Authority?

**Mr YOUNIS:** No. Mr Newbury, appointments are made by those direct authorities, and the CEOs of those authorities are responsible for the direct appointments of those. The Victorian government public sector helps put out guidelines around the appointment of any individuals, and the CEOs of those organisations are responsible for those appointments.

**Mr NEWBURY:** And, I suppose without going into the specifics of Matt Carrick, you could perhaps understand—in your own testimony you said these appointments are made by CEOs—why it is important that CEOs are perceived to be impartial and that they make appointments that are perceived to be impartial.

**Mr YOUNIS:** I am not sure if that is a question, Mr Newbury.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Newbury, I am not sure what your question is. I would also remind you that we are here for the public transport portfolio. A number of the appointments that you are talking about do not even relate to the portfolio that we are here to discuss. I would ask that you keep your questions to the estimates process in order to assist this inquiry—

**Mr NEWBURY:** All of them fall under the Secretary.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Newbury, please do not speak over the top of me—in order for this inquiry to conduct the business that it is here to conduct.

**Mr NEWBURY:** Secretary, are you doing any work or has the department been engaged in relation to the Ombudsman's investigation into public service appointments?

**Mr YOUNIS:** I think the Ombudsman has not sent us any letters yet requesting any information. If there is anything that we can provide to assist the Ombudsman with that, we will.

**Mr NEWBURY:** Hopefully the list that I just read out to you will help you with a start to that work.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Newbury.

**Mr NEWBURY:** Moving on. If I can refer you to budget paper 3, page 343, the budget delivers \$32.5 million, an 8.8 per cent cut, to tram services. Meanwhile your expectations of both delivered tram services and punctuality have reduced. Minister, why are you planning for the tram network to get worse?

**Mr CARROLL:** We are not, Mr Newbury. We are investing in it. As part of our—

**Mr NEWBURY:** Can I refer you to that budget paper?

**The CHAIR:** Mr Newbury, could you please allow the minister the opportunity to answer the question.

**Mr NEWBURY:** I want him to actually take the opportunity to refer to the budget paper that I referred to.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Newbury, the minister will answer your question. You cut him off within about five words of his answer. Could you please give people the respect, once you have asked your question, of allowing them to answer it.

**Mr NEWBURY:** I thought it might be helpful to look at the referral.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Newbury, the minister will decide what is helpful and not helpful to him answering the question.

**Mr CARROLL:** Look, we are crystal clear, Mr Newbury, about our tram network. We have got a tram plan. You may be aware that we are also doing what are called trunk corridors, where we are really focused on those heavily utilised corridors that get the biggest patronage. That has necessitated us looking at different stops that do not have the patronage that they require and making some adjustments. But our rolling stock and our investments in the tram network are something that we are very proud of—

**Mr NEWBURY:** It is reduced.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Newbury.

**Mr CARROLL:** and we are very crystal clear, whether it is La Trobe Street or whether it is Park Street, that we continue to invest in it and unlock its potential.

**Mr NEWBURY:** Less.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Newbury, your time has expired. The call is with Ms Taylor.

**Ms TAYLOR:** Minister and department officials, thank you for being here this morning. If I could direct you to budget paper 3, pages 109 and 115, could you please explain the investments and actions the government is taking to improve the regional rail network?

**Mr CARROLL:** I certainly can, Ms Taylor. V/Line, I think, when we came to office, were getting about 14 million boardings a year. We got that up to over 20 million boardings just before COVID, so more and more people living in regional Victoria are wanting to get onto the regional train network to get to wherever they need to get to. V/Line has seen a 71 per cent growth in patronage since we came to office, and it is very, very important that we continue to unlock those investments. We have got the \$4 billion Regional Rail Revival program, which is essentially that hard surface, that ballast, those sleepers—all of that—being upgraded for a smoother journey; then you put the rolling stock on top of the lines—\$1.2 billion for 59 VLocitys; and then you look at how we have been able to support V/Line just with their annual budget—you know, in 2014 it was \$461.3 million, to \$966 million in the coming year. Regional rail is a vital investment for Victoria. It goes really

right back to another Labor government under Premier Bracks, continued under the Premier and the transport infrastructure minister. We are maintaining more than 3500 kilometres of rail track. It is also vitally important that we continue to maintain it, because it does carry a lot of freight. Freight rather than passengers is a heavier type of rail, and that is where we have to keep maintaining it and keep investing in it. We are putting record investment in it, and we will continue to do so.

**Ms TAYLOR:** Very good. Can you outline when and where the 12 VLocity trains will be delivered?

**Mr CARROLL:** I certainly can. The budget has \$250 million for those 12 new VLocity train sets to enable services on the Shepparton line and the Warrnambool line as part of that Regional Rail Revival upgrade as that gets delivered. These trains will increase reliability as well as efficiency because they have all the modern regenerative braking and all of the modern services, and it was wonderful to see some of them very close just recently. But this will also take the number of three-carriage VLocity trains ordered by the current government to 59. And to put that in some perspective, that is 177 new regional carriages committed since 2015, bringing our total investment in VLocitys up to 118 three-car trains. This, as I said earlier, does replace that older rolling stock—what is often referred to as the classic fleet—that is not as reliable and is costly. It is a bit like servicing an old car: you keep putting money back into and back into it. But these new trains are modern, well serviced and built locally. We know the network, and we are very proud of it, but we have got to keep investing in it.

As public transport minister, one of the first trains I got on—I think it was the very first—was a V/Line regional train from Southern Cross up on the north-east line, and to think we are delivering 12 train sets for that regional wider network. I was with a Member for Northern Victoria recently just getting to see what those new trains will mean for that community. We worked very closely with the Border Rail Action Group in the north. We really brought the community along with us. Something the north-east really wanted was a catering car, given the distances travelled. So it is like you are actually stepping into a train in Europe. You can literally go up and order your espresso and order your sandwich and whatever you need. It a modern train from the north-east down to the CBD, with catering, USBs and bike racks—you name it, it has got it. It is really, really exciting, Ms Taylor.

**Ms TAYLOR:** It is. I was thinking of my first trip to France and that experience of getting on a train and getting a baguette and a coffee. So there you go; I can relate to this.

**Mr CARROLL:** You will be able to do that right here in Victoria.

**Ms TAYLOR:** There we go. It is very exciting. You were talking before about stabling infrastructure, so I would like to ask, specifically: why do we need stabling infrastructure in Bairnsdale? It is referenced at budget paper 3 on pages 109 and 115.

**Mr CARROLL:** Yes. The short answer is so we can retire the classic fleet and then have the VLocitys running all the way to Bairnsdale. At the moment Bairnsdale station has been that last piece in the jigsaw—Mr O'Brien will appreciate this—that has been required. This will give us the new trains, the smoother trains and the more efficient and really first-class train services on that line and the safety of the trains in Bairnsdale. We will be able to operate the V/Line VLocitys for that full length—not just part of the Gippsland line but for that full length right through to Bairnsdale. It is something we are very proud of. We are now getting cracking on the work to do the Bairnsdale stabling yards. It is around 12 months we expect for planning and construction, and it is a late-2024 delivery we are hoping for. It will really give them such a wonderful experience. Again, with the Regional Rail Revival every line is being upgraded. When it comes to the Gippsland line, there is \$530 million. I do not want to go over old ground of who closed the Gippsland line and why that was done.

**Mr D O'BRIEN:** Well, who funded it?

**The CHAIR:** Deputy Chair!

**Mr CARROLL:** It is why we are funding it. It is a Labor government under a Labor Premier delivering everything for those stranded passengers in Gippsland. They will not be stranded anymore under a Labor government. We are sequencing this investment, we are upgrading it and it is something wonderful, because we govern for the whole of the state, and that is why we will continue to do it.

**Mr D O'BRIEN:** Thank you, Darren Chester, who funded it.

**The CHAIR:** Deputy Chair!

**Mr CARROLL:** With an Albanese Labor government, and maybe Darren Chester as the head of the National Party, imagine what we can do.

**Mr D O'BRIEN:** Eighty-five per cent of it was from him and the federal coalition. You never seem to mention that, Minister.

**The CHAIR:** Deputy Chair!

**Ms TAYLOR:** With reference to budget paper 3, pages 340 and 341, can you please update us on the government's previous investments into improving the regional rail network?

**Mr CARROLL:** Certainly. I mean, some 3500 kilometres of track is being upgraded and maintained right across that Regional Rail Revival program, and it has been a really important partnership approach. Often with our rail line infrastructure it literally is a century old, so you have got different things like the double block signalling systems, which have been canvassed before, on the Seymour line and the Shepparton line. I met with Siemens and our great manufacturing partners. That not only will really be an important safety upgrade but will just ensure the reliability is improved and that the local passengers, the commuters, can be certain of where they are going and plan for their day much better. By going from an old line block signalling system to an electronic signalling system this \$9.4 million project will support not only the local economy but advanced manufacturing jobs with Siemens and UGL and all of that engineering expertise that we can bring up to speed as we continue to upgrade what in many parts of the regional rail network is older infrastructure to that cutting-edge infrastructure for the future.

**Ms TAYLOR:** Excellent. Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Ms Taylor. Mrs McArthur.

**Mrs McARTHUR:** Thank you. Secretary, last year officials from the Department of Transport advised PAEC that nine services a day to Shepparton would be delivered in late 2023. Given the new VLocity trains ordered in this year's budget for Shepparton will not be delivered until mid-2027, how do you propose to meet that time frame?

**Mr YOUNIS:** I might actually refer to Mr Tieppo, who has got all of the construction program, hopefully, at his fingertips and who works with RPV and other delivery partners.

**Mrs McARTHUR:** That would be lovely. Thank you, Mr Tieppo.

**Mr TIEPPO:** That is fine, Mrs McArthur. I think in terms of the 12 additional VLocity trains that the minister was referring to, they are now currently in order, and they will start rolling out from the middle of next year into 2024 in readiness for the services for Shepparton.

**Mrs McARTHUR:** But you said they would be delivered in late 2023.

**Mr TIEPPO:** Well, I think that was the original—well, the original 59 that the minister was referring to will be delivered by the end of this year, with 20 remaining. And then there will be an additional two remaining on the original 59 order to be delivered by February next year, and then the additional 12 that were in the 2022–23 budget will start into production into 2023.

**Mrs McARTHUR:** Thank you.

**Mr YOUNIS:** Mrs McArthur, you have actually highlighted a really important part about our rolling stock program. What we do is try to balance that across all of the manufacturing areas, and we have had some challenges with supply through the last two years in particular, and there has been—

**Mrs McARTHUR:** COVID is probably a problem too.

**Mr YOUNIS:** Well, it is a supply issue.

**Mrs McARTHUR:** A good excuse.

**Mr YOUNIS:** That is a reality of trying to keep manufacturing happening in Victoria. So that is part of our program.

**Mrs McARTHUR:** Thank you, Secretary. Minister, the rolling stock required to deliver a fifth weekday service for Warrnambool also has a delivery time frame of 2027, yet the government promised that it would be rolled out this year. When will the fifth weekday service to Warrnambool actually be delivered?

**Mr CARROLL:** Mrs McArthur, it goes to what I was saying earlier, that with any upgrade it requires that infrastructure investment. As part of that Regional Rail Revival you have actually got to do the track, the ballast and then you can do that rolling stock. So it goes hand in hand, through our \$8 billion pipeline of rolling stock investment and then doing the upgrade at the track level and then working in partnership with the operators to ensure that you can then add those services. I might ask Mr Tieppo just to supplement me on that.

**Mr TIEPPO:** Yes, that is exactly right. I think the five services for Warrnambool were part of the scope for the Warrnambool line upgrade 1, and the Warrnambool line upgrade 2 includes the level crossing upgrades which then allow the enabling of the VLocity trains, which are part of the 2022–23 12 VLocity orders for the full fleet for Warrnambool.

**Mrs McARTHUR:** Well, why did you promise to deliver them this year?

**Mr TIEPPO:** Well, I think with the Warrnambool trains the construction works will enable the fifth service but not in a full VLocity fleet, but the additional trains that have been ordered as part of the 2022–23 will allow the full fleet following the completion of the works.

**Mrs McARTHUR:** So basically you cannot believe a word you say. Minister, will the new Warrnambool trains be constructed with catering carriages?

**Mr CARROLL:** We will work through that, Mrs McArthur. We work through with all of our rolling stock partners, and we work with the local community. The north-east line is a great example. For example, I mentioned the catering cars before. That was something that was asked for specifically. The Border Rail Action Group were very much in at the ground level, and that is how we do our rolling stock. You consult with the community and you make sure that it suits their needs. Whether it is USBs, bike racks, more space, more desks—all of those things get built into it, and we have to be nimble. For the catering cars you have got to sort of design it where the catering cars can fit. There are obviously microwaves, there are dishwashers, there are coffee machines, there is ‘Where do you display and how do you display the menus digitally?’—all of those things, Mrs McArthur, that go into our rolling stock program. It is the envy of the nation, and we will continue to support it. But most importantly when it comes to rolling stock you have got to bring the community with you and work with them, and we will do that in this case as well.

**Mrs McARTHUR:** Minister, the government has been running commuter VLocity trains to Bairnsdale. Do you have any plans to build Bairnsdale trains with catering facilities, as has been done on the north-east line?

**Mr CARROLL:** Look, we will, again, continue to work with the local community. And when we talk about ‘commuter’, it is sort of: how do you define ‘commuter’?

**Mrs McARTHUR:** Somebody who gets on a train probably.

**Mr D O’BRIEN:** A long-haul train needs catering. You are there for 4 hours.

**Mr CARROLL:** You work with the local community on their needs, but that has been a substantial investment, and we are about trying to do everything we can to unlock the potential. When you think about what we have been able to do through the \$8 billion rolling stock agenda to work with our partners—Ms Taylor basically highlighted how we really are bringing international experience to Victoria.

**Mrs McARTHUR:** Well, Minister, how long will it take?

**The CHAIR:** Mrs McArthur—

**Mrs McARTHUR:** You have said you have put the orders in, but how long will it take?

**Mr CARROLL:** This is part of a big global program—

**Mrs McARTHUR:** The Big Build.

**Mr CARROLL:** because we are rolling out advanced manufacturing at the factory level. When you look at the investments that we are making, whether it is through HCMTs, whether it is out at Pakenham, whether it is Ballarat, whether it is South Dynon, where I was yesterday with a Member for Northern Victoria, these are incredibly important big projects, and when you also look at the auto industry being shown the door—

**Mrs McARTHUR:** Minister, let us go to Ballarat—

**The CHAIR:** Mrs McArthur, you asked a question—

**Mrs McARTHUR:** You have mentioned Ballarat, Minister.

**Mr CARROLL:** Sure.

**Mrs McARTHUR:** Can I ask you about the \$28 million upgrade at the Ballarat station precinct, which was opened earlier this year with much fanfare but still has no disability access—and you have been waxing lyrical about disability access. Whatever the weather, anyone needing to avoid steps, including wheelchair users, has to go outside almost onto the road to get from one side of the track to the other. Is this supplying disability access in a station upgrade?

**Mr CARROLL:** You are actually incorrect, Mrs McArthur. Our investment does put money towards disability. We have improved disability at Ballarat station. I have been there and seen it myself. Whether it is—

**Mrs McARTHUR:** Well, people will have to walk across the tracks.

**The CHAIR:** Mrs McArthur, could you allow the minister to answer.

**Mr CARROLL:** tactile markings, whether it is more disability-accessible taxi services, which Mr Barton is very passionate about, we have made disability improvements. It is a wonderful station precinct. It has enormous potential. The local members of Parliament are strong advocates for that, and when you think about—

**Mrs McARTHUR:** You left the gates closed for 500 days in Lydiard Street. You could not even fix rail gates in Ballarat, Minister—500 days.

**The CHAIR:** Mrs McArthur, the minister is attempting to answer your question, but you are continuing to yell over the top of him while he does so.

**Mr CARROLL:** I appreciate, Mrs McArthur, questions on heritage coming from you very much—believe me, I do—because I know you are very experienced when it comes to heritage matters. That is why I worked very closely with the planning minister and Heritage Victoria to make sure that that old English system that we inherited in many respects 120 years ago as a rail system—

**Mrs McARTHUR:** Five hundred days to get the gates open.

**Mr CARROLL:** completes to stay. And I have been up there at the gates. It is very important that we celebrate our history, and Ballarat, like Bendigo, like Geelong, like the Latrobe Valley, will get investment under this government, not have railway lines shut.

**Mrs McARTHUR:** Yes, for 500 days.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Thank you, Mrs McArthur. Your time has expired. Mr Richardson.

**Mr RICHARDSON:** Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Minister and department officials, for joining us this morning and persevering on this Friday morning—interesting questions this morning about agencies and

authorities that did not exist 8½ years ago and the thousands of jobs that are created by them, interesting tactics this morning.

**Mr NEWBURY:** Labor jobs.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Newbury!

**Mr RICHARDSON:** But I might now go from level crossings, Suburban Rail Loop, North East Link—which will be the transport infrastructure minister’s responsibilities of course, but thousands of jobs. Let us go down the road to buses. I want to take you, Minister, to budget paper 3, pages 109 and 111. For the committee’s benefit are you able to explain how the output initiative ‘Delivering Victoria’s Bus Plan’ in table 1.18 will improve access to bus services for all Victorians?

**Mr CARROLL:** Thank you very much, Mr Richardson. It is wonderful to have a question on buses from a Labor member. It was an independent member that asked me about buses during the week—

**Mr D O’BRIEN:** Even though she was a Labor candidate.

**The CHAIR:** Mr O’Brien!

**Mr NEWBURY:** That is right—independent Labor.

**Mr CARROLL:** even though we are delivering the first zero-emissions buses in the regional city of Seymour in the shadow minister’s electorate. For buses, the benefit-cost ratio—and I know you know this, Mr Richardson—for every dollar invested returns \$5 to the community. They have a very important future. As I have highlighted regularly, they were the most resilient form of public transport coming out of COVID. Bus patronage—Melbourne, New York, London—exceeded rail patronage for the very first time. And it is then ‘How do we unlock that potential?’. So when you look at what we are doing through the FlexiRide service now more and more often people are wanting, essentially your mobile phone can become the bus stop, as can your home. So we are rolling out more on-demand bus services. Rather than having to go through all of that planning that goes onto it, we can now basically roll out a new bus service and literally put the power of the service in the hands of the consumer. They can literally log their order and a bus will come past when they need it. I know now of people under this government where the bus stop has almost become their home, because that is the sort of service reliability that we have been able to do and improve. But we cannot rest on our laurels. When you think about—you know, under the life of this government over \$500 million in buses; in the last state budget, \$109 million into buses—really looking at some of those important growth areas and doing everything we can to fill the gaps on that sort of first and last mile because we know about a third of people that use buses use the bus to actually get to the train or the tram, and then as the Parliamentary Secretary for Schools you would appreciate just how busy they are for school students as well, it is a very important investment in buses. And I think the work we are doing with Volgren and the work we are doing on ZEBs really bodes well for our future.

**Mr RICHARDSON:** I want to take you to a topic and segue into school buses, and I note that under this output initiative funding has specifically been provided for new and improved bus services with a focus on growth areas. Students are in most cases the most frequent users of that bus network. Are you able for the committee’s benefit to explain how this funding will make it easier for Victorian students to access bus services to get to and from school?

**Mr CARROLL:** Yes. And look, we are well known as being the Education State and we are committed to providing access to world-class education, and that means opening up not only 100 new schools but making sure too that those schools have adequate, secure, reliable, safe public transport. Without a school bus service we know that means more cars on the roads, with parents driving their kids to school, or students facing some very long walks or bike rides as well. So it is very important, when you think about some of those growth areas where footpaths have not been completed, where literally the school is going in as the housing is going up, that you have a properly funded public transport bus network, and we are working very closely with some of the local communities on the fringe areas of our suburbs that are really going through that exponential growth to ensure that we have the capacity. That is why this budget does make that direct investment in those communities to support school students get where they need to get to.

I think the collaboration that has been going on between the department of education and the Department of Transport has been very, very important. We do expect most of these services to start in the 2023 and 2024 school years, but I know it will be a wonderful investment. One of the things I am most proud of too, Mr Richardson, is the work we have been able to do with Westjustice to support disadvantaged students with free public transport travel as well.

**Mr RICHARDSON:** I will take you to the topic, Minister, of the Bulleen park-and-ride. How will that investment, made as part of this initiative, support the successful opening of the Bulleen park-and-ride, and what benefits will this provide to local commuters?

**Mr CARROLL:** Look, this is essentially going to be a game changer, Mr Richardson. So as part of the North East Link we are going to have our very first dedicated busway. And I think it just goes to show how our Big Build and the way we do infrastructure and planning are very much mode agnostic, because you see with the North East Link you will have a dedicated busway literally in its own lane on the North East Link just going back and forth.

So you do not actually have to get in a car to be on the North East Link. You will have that dedicated bus service, and away you go. It is incredibly important. More than that, it is going to be serviced by Myki machines, 5000 square metres of green roof with landscaping, bike storage, multilevel parking for 370 cars. So literally, rather than drive to get on the train, you will drive to get on the bus and then you will save yourself all sorts of time. You will be able to do your study, do your work, preparation, whatever you need to do.

So the Bulleen park-and-ride, due to be complete, you know, later—we will get on with building it, and I really think it is really exciting, and this budget does put the money into it to ensure that we can get the services right, the changes right, and support that. With the Bulleen park-and-ride our forecast is that it will be very successful, it will have a lot of attention and people will want to use it, so we are making sure that this budget does include those increases in services and ensure that we have the detailed operation and that we can make sure that everyone is where they need to get to, whether it is from Bulleen or whether it is from the city to Bulleen, and can get there in the comfort and safety of the bus service.

Also too we want to make sure, Mr Richardson, that this really does showcase our Big Build, that it is mode agnostic, whether it is active transport; whether it is the train line; whether it is the veloways, which are part of the big bike paths that we are doing as part of our Big Build, our 250 kilometres. The Bulleen park-and-ride will be I think a standalone project that will really be a game changer for buses but also too how we view buses. As I often talk about, that benefit-cost ratio of \$5 for every dollar invested—if you add in the Bulleen park-and-ride, then imagine getting on a zero-emissions bus. As I have said to a few people at the bus association—and they were with me yesterday at the launch—it is almost time we had a bit of a rethink on what that benefit-cost ratios for buses is, because I suspect now it is a lot more than a \$5 return to the community. It is probably around \$7 or \$8, given zero-emission buses and more people going on buses. They are essentially now operating where entry is at the rear door as well—so a lot of change as part of our bus plan, and the Bulleen park-and-ride is going to be a showcase for buses in the future.

**Mr RICHARDSON:** Thanks, Minister.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Richardson. Mr Barton.

**Mr BARTON:** Thank you, Chair. Good morning, Minister.

**Mr CARROLL:** Good morning, Mr Barton.

**Mr BARTON:** Budget paper 3, pages 344 and 345, regulation of the Commercial Passengers Vehicles Victoria—your government is closing down the regulator and merging it into a new entity. It is due to open or become live in the coming weeks, but at this stage we know no name, and we do not know the function or the direction for this new regulator. The government has allocated \$112.4 million to the CPVV this year. Is that \$112.4 million to the new entity or is that just for the role of the regulator?

**Mr CARROLL:** Thank you, Mr Barton, for your question. We have not closed down the regulator; we have put investment in the regulator and we have strengthened the regulator—and I will ask Ms O'Connor to supplement my answer. When it comes to the regulation of our commercial passenger vehicles, safety of the

passengers is first and foremost, as is the safety of the drivers. We know it is an area, and it is a very important part of the public transport system. I am very committed to ensuring that the regulator does everything they can to support what has been a very good and thriving industry, but I do believe it can get even stronger. That is why we are very committed through these reforms to ensure that the regulator has the strength, has the ability to work wherever they need to go and has that support as being part of a stronger outfit and a stronger and more invested regulator as well. But I might ask Tammy or the Secretary just to supplement some of my answer.

**Mr YOUNIS:** I might take that one. And, Mr Barton, you are right. In relation to the funding, all of that funding will go to the combined entity, so the allocation of funding for CPVV and TSV will be combined. So that will be a single budget outcome. The purpose of combining them is actually to strengthen the organisation and strengthen the output. What we have found is there was a duplication of roles and a duplication of skills in relation to both of those entities, and a single entity will actually, we believe, create a much greater centre of excellence for that sort of regulatory skills—

**Mr BARTON:** Secretary, can I just ask you—sorry, we are really pumped for time—for the multipurpose taxi program, in that \$112 million, is that included for the running of the program?

**Mr YOUNIS:** Ms O'Connor will be able to answer that one.

**Ms O'CONNOR:** Yes, that is right, Mr Barton, it is.

**Mr BARTON:** So that is in the \$112 million?

**Ms O'CONNOR:** That is right.

**Mr BARTON:** I believe that is \$60 million or something thereabouts.

**Ms O'CONNOR:** It is about \$90 million set aside for subsidies. That includes every subsidy payable for a trip, but also the wheelchair-lifting fees, all of that money—so about \$90 million for the subsidies and the administration.

**Mr BARTON:** We have had four rebrandings in the last decade of the regulator. We have had the Victorian Taxi Directorate, we have had the Taxi Services Commission and we have had the Commercial Passengers Vehicles Victoria. Have we got a name for this new entity yet?

**A member** interjected.

**Mr BARTON:** That is what I was going to ask next.

**Mr CARROLL:** We are working through that, Mr Barton, but safety is first and foremost, and that is what we are working to secure. Obviously the new regulator reports to myself but also to Minister Horne in charge of boating, and we are working through some of those matters. It is most important, though, that the resources within the regulator are strong and secure. What is hoped with this new regulator is too that we will be able to really bring best practice to how we do things, that there will be no sort of silos. It will be really working across different modes. We have very much a mode-agnostic approach in transport, because often people can be getting from one form of public transport to another. It might be a rideshare to one place and then something else to the other. That is why we have to think and think as much as we can right across the sector and ensure that the regulator is funded securely, invested in, and has all of that support that they need through the Department of Transport and the leadership of Ms O'Connor and the staff that she leads.

**Mr BARTON:** Minister, the industry—you can understand their lack of confidence after so many changes in the running of it. There is a toxic relationship, and I think we are kidding ourselves if we pretend there is not a toxic relationship between the industry and the regulator. In this new merger, we still have not had a response yet to the inquiry in 2019 nor to the multipurpose taxi program. Could you tell us: are we likely to get a response?

**Mr CARROLL:** Look, Mr Barton, you and I have had many conversations about the multipurpose taxi program. We do know it supports over 86 000 and more than 15 000 wheelchair users. I am very pleased that the 2021–22 budget invested \$99.7 million to ensure that the multipurpose taxi program is response ready, demand driven and very much works with industry. I do take issue with you that there is a toxic relationship.

As you saw yesterday, I was meeting with different parts of the industry in Parliament. I have seen, I think, some changes in this industry this year that have really been, I think, welcomed. We have seen that consumers are wanting good customer service. You only have to pick up the—

**Mr BARTON:** They have always wanted that.

**Mr CARROLL:** Yes. But what they have experienced, though, you have seen. So, for example, we put a lot of work into the grand prix and our major events, not only for trams and trains but also our rideshare. I saw firsthand how the 13CABS rideshare investment through the grand prix was working really well—

**Mr BARTON:** 13 taxis not 13 rideshare.

**Mr CARROLL:** 13 taxis. It was working really well. It is good to see different competition. Predominantly it has been an Uber set-up. To see 13 taxis there and to have their branding and to see more and more people choosing that service was really important. I think, too, we have seen with things like surge pricing people are questioning, and they are now shopping around. There is no doubt that people are returning to their traditional taxi service, because as you rightly identified customer service is what they want. They also love to know the background—who the person is—all of those things. We have a really close relationship with the industry. I meet with them. Again, we talk about COVID: I do not think any other jurisdiction in this country invested \$22 million through COVID to support the rideshare industry with their safety, their cleaning, their QR code systems—

**Mr BARTON:** You supported the taxi and the rideshare industry, Minister—that \$22 million.

**Mr CARROLL:** Yes, but that was a really important investment, and you would agree, Mr Barton, I do not think anywhere else in Australia, any other state government—

**Mr BARTON:** One of the best.

**Mr CARROLL:** had that level of investment. I thank you for your advocacy on it, and the work that you did with Mr Dimopoulos as well—

**Mr BARTON:** We may have brought you kicking and screaming.

**Mr CARROLL:** to support the industry to make sure that they were treated securely and fairly just like any other mode of public transport, because rideshare is a very important component of our public transport network. I view them as an embedded component of our public transport network and will continue to support them and ensure that their future is very bright.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister, and thank you, Mr Barton. That concludes the time we have set aside for consideration of the public transport estimates today. We thank you all for appearing before the committee for this portfolio. The committee will follow up on any questions taken on notice in writing, and responses will be required within five working days of the committee's request.

The committee will now take a 15-minute break before resuming consideration of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety's portfolio. I declare this hearing adjourned.

**Witnesses withdrew.**