

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 Roads and Road Safety,

Mr Paul Younis, Secretary,

Mr Paul Northey, Chief, Regional Transport,

Mr Nick Foa, Head, Transport Services, and

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

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

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 respect 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 back Minister Carroll and officers of his department, this time for the roads and road safety portfolio. We invite you to make a presentation, which will be followed by questions from the committee.

Mr CARROLL: Great. Thanks, Chair, Deputy Chair and committee members. It is wonderful to be here to give an update in my capacity as roads and road safety minister. Can I also acknowledge we have got the Secretary, Paul Younis, on my left; we have got Mr Joe Calafiore as the Chief Executive Officer of the Transport Accident Commission on my left; Nick Foa, Head of public transport and trains and roads in the Department of Transport; and Paul Northey, the chief of Regional Roads Victoria, is also with us here today.

Visual presentation.

Mr CARROLL: Chair, can I outline the agenda that the Andrews Labor government set when it came to roads from 2014. I have already spoken about the Big Build as it relates to public transport, but it also relates equally to our road projects right across Melbourne and regional Victoria. We have complemented a substantial program of investment, resurfacing, upgrading, maintaining and improving safety on our arterial road network right through every year of this government to provide safer and faster journeys for motorists, cyclists, pedestrians and our freight operators as well.

Turning to this year's state budget, there is \$780 million for road maintenance works across both the metropolitan and regional road networks—works including routine maintenance, road resurfacing and bridge strengthening to ensure our roads remain safe and sound. We are also investing \$226 million on road upgrades on every corner and to every corner of our great state, including traffic lights, intersection upgrades, overtaking lanes and new roundabouts as well. We will continue to invest in our road safety strategy. Often a road safety strategy is a 10-year document. We have done that, but we have also pulled it down to three smaller documents—three years of our road action plan—where we are doing priority cohorts focusing on some of the most vulnerable road users, whether it is motorists, cyclists or pedestrians to, in addition to infrastructure, to have a real people focus when it comes to road safety. One of the other things I am really proud that we are doing is actually investing in technology and smarter roads to make sure that our existing network and traffic

flows are as smooth and reliable as possible and to get more information back through our department, through our traffic operations centre, through our social media channels to people in vehicles about where they need to go and what is the best way to go. That is a major upgrade through technology, and \$14.7 million will go to traffic management reform as part of this program.

We are also, though, investing in active transport. Some 250 kilometres of new infrastructure is being delivered in the Big Build. I had a tour of the West Gate Tunnel during the week, and the staff said one of the biggest number of questions they get is about the veloway for the cyclists. At the customer service centre most inquiries are often from cyclists because they see the benefit that that will build for them. Whether you work in Docklands or you work in the CBD, the second level crossing is a vitally important piece of infrastructure, particularly for someone like me who comes from the west, but then having a mode agnostic output as well is vitally important. So 250 kilometres of cycle lanes. I know, Chair, you have seen this firsthand on the Upfield line, you have seen other investments through our strategic corridors and then you have got the 100 kilometres of pop-up bike lanes as well. This has been a really targeted approach to look at areas where we can support people that often might want to get on public transport to get on a bike and have that opportunity as well to go into the city or wherever they need to go. The next challenge is to be broadening that out into the other suburbs as well; I know that is a very important program. It is very hard to purchase a bike at the moment. I think sales have gone through the roof and continue to go through roof, and they have got more people trying electric bikes as well. So for those pop-up bike lanes, particularly getting more women on bikes, safety is the critical factor and the data from the Heidelberg Road trial has shown a real uptake, particularly from women cyclists. That is why that is really important. But we are also doing everything we can to rebuild and ensure that our roads and bridges are continually strengthened, invested in and upgraded.

Chair, I do want to go to the facts, because since the 2018 election, under our government, \$813 million per annum has been spent on our road maintenance upgrades, strengthening and resurfacing. It is very clear, compared to what we inherited, where that level of investment is now. That chart tells the story in many respects of our road maintenance budget and program under the Andrews Labor government. I am very keen to see that we build on that and continue to ensure that our road network is as safe and reliable as possible. That is why we also have in the budget \$101 million to deliver 11 regional road construction projects as well as three development projects for future upgrades. So you do the development, and then you get the business case often and then you do the rest of the investment as well. But when you look at Geelong, Shepparton, Bendigo, Portland and Gippsland, these sorts of projects will really benefit regional communities. We know that roads are really the lifeblood of regional communities—they are the arteries really of where people need to get to and where freight needs to get to as well.

I am really pleased that this project will also complement some of our really high-level projects, whether it is the Great Ocean Road upgrade, the Keeping Ballarat Moving program or that really great work the Department of Transport with the department of agriculture and other people have been able to do with the dairy supply chain work. When it comes to regional Victoria, we stand with regional communities, we invest in them and we support them. Equally when it comes to metropolitan Melbourne, whether it is motorists, cyclists or pedestrians, we are investing \$126 million in this budget to get people home faster and safer on our metropolitan roads as well, including seven high-priority road projects to improve safety as well as ensure that intersection capacity and better access to key activity centres and locations are also complemented. This is all about getting people home faster to be with their families and to get more of their own free time as much as possible. We are doing the biggest review of traffic lights in a century. We are looking at new traffic lights at the intersections of South Gippsland Highway and Clyde-Five Ways Road in Devon Meadows—which I know Ms Richards is very passionate about, having visited that recently with her—as well as Derrimut Road and Hopkins Road in Tarneit, areas that have big, big freight truck movements, pedestrians and cars, where we really do need to drill down into how can we make those intersections as safe and reliable and smooth as possible.

I am also very proud of our investment in Smarter Roads—\$340 million. Often when it comes to our road network, we have got a lot of eyes on the big arterials in terms of your CityLinks and all of those. We have got a lot of cameras on all of them. But for a lot of the network—you know, Punt Road, Hoddle Street—we have not had the eyes on them that we would like. So that Smarter Roads initiative is really about rolling out CCTV and smart infrastructure at the ground level and at the traffic light level to really see how we can unlock and use technology to bust congestion and get people home safer and in more a timely way—730 new traffic operating cameras, 260 travel-time sensors and 31 live travel signs right across our arterial network, getting more of those

benefits and giving more power to the driver so they know which sort of mode of choice they want to use to get home safely.

I would also be remiss if I did not identify that for many Victorians the road network is not just the place you sort of go to and from work or to and from university or school, it is actually your workplace—the road network is your workplace. It is a worksite for many, and that is why it is vitally important that we continue to ensure that we take a real hands-on, safety-first approach for our workers out there to ensure that they can go to work and be safe, whether it is doing our renewals or our strengthening works or whether it is our freight industry or our work around heavy vehicle licensing reform to really support them.

It goes without saying, Chair, that Victoria has been a world leader in road safety. I am still waiting for the opposition to appoint a shadow road safety minister, but we have been a world leader. We have just launched National Road Safety Week here in Victoria. One death is one death too many when it comes to roads and road safety. Every death is preventable. Like we have these targets around climate change, we also have a need to keep talking about targets around having zero deaths by 2050 in everything we can do. It is achievable if we work together. It is also achievable if we get more people in 5-star ANCAP-rated vehicles, more people abiding by the limit and more people doing the right thing, having a good night's sleep and doing everything they can to support it.

It is wonderful, Chair, to be here. I thank the Department of Transport for their support and the Transport Accident Commission for their support too, and I am happy to take any questions.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Deputy Chair.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Thank you, Chair. Minister, budget paper 3, page 339, details the road safety outputs. We have lost 99 lives already on Victorian roads this year, which is 14 per cent up on the same time last year. In this context, why is the government cutting \$47.6 million from the state's road safety budget?

Mr CARROLL: We are not cutting any funding from our road safety budget.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Standard answer.

Mr CARROLL: We invest more in road safety than any other jurisdiction. And just—

Mr D O'BRIEN: Well, Minister, \$136 million last year down to \$89 million this year.

Mr CARROLL: I will get to your point, Mr O'Brien. Just last Sunday I, with families that have been affected by road trauma, highlighted what our budget has in it for road safety. And then you look at the work we do through the Transport Accident Commission in terms of supporting clients that have been affected by road trauma. You look at the work of Road Trauma Support Services Victoria. We are putting record investment into road safety. We continue—

Mr D O'BRIEN: Well, Minister, the budget papers suggest otherwise.

Mr CARROLL: We continue to invest in road safety. We know one death is one death too many. It is about having that multipronged approach from the infrastructure investments and then there is a lot of the campaign work—you know, 'The lucky ones get home', for example, a great collaboration between the TAC and police. These are some of the campaigns that you are not including in your figures.

Mr D O'BRIEN: This is all important, Minister, but I am talking about your budget papers, your performance measures.

Mr CARROLL: Yes, yes, and I am talking about how we drive down the road toll and what we need to do—

Mr D O'BRIEN: Well, we do not do it by cutting the budget.

Mr CARROLL: to invest in Victorians and support them every step of the way.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Secretary, the budget papers, again on page 339, show the target for 2021–22 was \$136.9 million, but the expected outcome is only \$86.6 million. So there is a—

Mr YOUNIS: Sorry, Mr O'Brien, which part are you talking—the budget outcome for?

Mr D O'BRIEN: Budget paper 3, page 339, 'Road safety' measures. If you go right to the bottom of the page, the 'Total output cost'—so this is the outputs for road safety—you will see there the target for 2021–22 versus the actual expected outcome, which is \$50 million less. Will that money be recouped by Treasury or has it rolled over?

Mr YOUNIS: So that money does not include the TAC money, and when you look at our total expenditure outputs—you also need to refer to budget paper 4, which has some other new projects—there is \$245 million included in budget paper 4 for delivering the road action plan as well. So the—

Mr D O'BRIEN: But that is obviously capital, if it is in budget paper 4. I am asking about the output for 'Road safety'. Is that money that is underspent—

Mr CARROLL: But is that the asset funding as well, or have you not included it?

Mr D O'BRIEN: The \$50 million underspent last year in the budget, is that recouped?

Mr CARROLL: There is output and there is asset funding.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Yes. Well, I am asking the question, Minister. They are your budget papers.

Mr CARROLL: Yes, and you are not including the \$34 billion we are doing in making our roads safer and smoother for all Victorians.

Mr D O'BRIEN: \$34 billion? Wow.

Mr CARROLL: We are doing a record investment in terms of our road—

Mr D O'BRIEN: Where is the \$34 billion on that page, Minister for Roads and Road Safety?

Mr CARROLL: Well, you have got to add up. You have got to do the maths on the different parts of the budget to get to these figures, Mr O'Brien. I thought, as an experienced person like yourself, you would know that.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Right, so the road safety performance measures here and the total output for the budget are just irrelevant—'Don't look at that, that's nothing to do with it'.

Mr CARROLL: We are investing \$220 million in infrastructure; \$5.1 million in our school crossing supervisor program, a great collaboration with the local government sector; \$21.7 million with the heavy vehicle licensing industry—heavy vehicles, sadly, given their size, their nature, the lack of visibility of other people around them, need a big reform program. That is why this Victorian government is doing everything we can.

Mr D O'BRIEN: If all this is true, Minister, why is there a cut to the performance measure, the output?

Mr CARROLL: We are also working very closely with the commonwealth on road safety barriers and rolling them out as well. So it is—

Mr D O'BRIEN: Minister, if I can then go to 'Road safety initiatives completed' on the same page, page 339, it is looking like you perhaps have not actually looked at it at all, but the expected outcome for last year is 73 road safety initiatives. The target for next year is 34. Why are you cutting the number of road safety initiatives you are doing?

Mr CARROLL: We are not cutting, we are investing. If you look at the budget paper on page 117, 'Delivering the road safety action plan', it highlights all of the projects we are doing, not only the road safety strategy but the action plan as well. Because—

Mr D O'BRIEN: Okay. Those are the words. These are the projects. These are your projects—

The CHAIR: Deputy Chair.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Seventy-three down to 34, so what has been—

Mr YOUNIS: Can I just say—

The CHAIR: Deputy Chair, the minister and the Secretary are attempting to answer your question.

Mr YOUNIS: So we increased some of the works. We got works done earlier last year, but what that output does not include some of the commonwealth funding and outputs for the commonwealth funding that we expect to come on in tranche 2. So the commonwealth funded a lot of road safety programs through the COVID response, and there were tranche 1s, which we have now completed. We completed them a lot more cost effectively than we initially anticipated, so that is one of the reasons for the reduction in the actuals of the costs. So we completed the projects. The next tranche, tranche 2, we are expecting the announcements and approvals for those in the next month—or the previous government indicated that they would provide the guidelines to us at the end of May—and that will then be included in the output for the road safety initiatives for next year. They are not included in these budget papers as yet.

Mr D O'BRIEN: That is the first time that the government has not included expected federal government funding. We hear it through every portfolio, 'We're going to just put it in the budget'.

Mr CARROLL: No, because the federal government announce projects, whether it is commuter car parks or road major road upgrades, without doing any of the planning that is required—

Mr D O'BRIEN: Well, it is constant.

Mr CARROLL: and it is very hard when you are trying to work—

Mr D O'BRIEN: It is constant. Have a look through the budget papers how often commonwealth funding is included.

The CHAIR: Mr O'Brien.

Mr CARROLL: with a commonwealth government that announces commuter car parks and announces road projects and there is nothing to back it up. So we do the heavy lifting at this level, and that is why we do the work that is required to get the business cases done, get the data done and the analysis to then go back and work out what we actually need for this specific project and what level of commonwealth funding we need.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Minister, on the government's response to the Economy and Infrastructure Committee's inquiry into Victoria's road toll, the committee recommended that the government review its current road maintenance priorities to ensure standards are adequately maintained on high-speed minor roads, but the government only supported that recommendation in part. Why? And will you rule out permanently reducing speed limits as a result of risk to road users on poorly maintained rural roads?

Mr CARROLL: I am very happy, Mr O'Brien, that you asked me about speed limits, because I do need to pull up some of the commentary from you and others. It is an incredibly minor amount of speed limits that are reduced, and I have no role in it—

Mr D O'BRIEN: I can tell you how many in my patch.

Mr CARROLL: It is less than 1 per cent, and I have no role in it as the minister. I am at arm's length. They are advocated for by the local government of the area, and then it is the road safety partners too. So we only reduce speed limits when we need to for safety.

Mr D O'BRIEN: But you supported the recommendation in that report.

The CHAIR: Mr O'Brien, the minister is attempting to answer your question.

Mr CARROLL: And I thank everyone that was part of that road safety report, because what that highlighted too was infrastructure is one thing but working with people matters just as much—

Mr D O'BRIEN: But, Minister, you also supported a recommendation to that end—the government, not the road safety partners.

Mr CARROLL: and that is why we are rolling out world leading investments in 5-star ANCAP type—

The CHAIR: Mr O'Brien, the minister is attempting to answer your question.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Well, no, he is off it now.

Mr CARROLL: 5-star ANCAP rating materials for motorcyclists. It is why I was the minister that introduced the A Metre Matters rule finally in Victoria, and I had good support from—

Mr D O'BRIEN: What has that got to do with speed limits?

Mrs McArthur interjected.

The CHAIR: Mrs McArthur, you do not have the call.

Mr CARROLL: Because cyclists are over-represented and motorcyclists are over-represented in the data, Mr O'Brien—

Mrs McArthur interjected.

The CHAIR: Mrs McArthur, you are out of order. You do not have the call.

Mr CARROLL: And that is what it is about. You have got to look at the data and you have got to work at it.

The CHAIR: The member's time has expired. Mr Maas.

Mr MAAS: Thank you, Chair. Thanks, Minister, and thank you, department officials. Minister, I would like to move to the topic of metropolitan road upgrades if I could. Budget paper 3 at 109, table 1.18, which I am sure you are very familiar with, has 'Metropolitan road upgrades' there as a line item in the output initiatives. What is the total new investment as part of this initiative, and can you please provide details of what will be delivered through it?

Mr CARROLL: Certainly, Mr Maas. So \$125.7 million is being invested in eight intersections and road upgrades. Members of this committee would be aware about some of the population challenges we have and that we have had an incredible growth in population over the past decade. We need to respond to that in a number of ways. Obviously you have got the Big Build under Minister Allan—

Mrs McARTHUR: That would be the 'Big Blowout'.

The CHAIR: Mrs McArthur!

Mr CARROLL: delivering great resurfacing works on the Monash—the south-east; the north-east line; and the West Gate Tunnel, which I visited earlier this week with the Member for Sunbury. And then also too it is about getting smart, and that is why under our government too we are rolling out a \$340 million investment in smart infrastructure to make our roads smarter, getting more eyes on the roads to make sure our traffic light sequencing is right and to make sure that where those hard services from public transport meet the road we get all the data we can. That is why it is so important that we continue to focus on bottlenecks and we continue to look at some of those arterial roads that we do not have the eyes on to see what we can do. With the Member for Cranbourne I thought I got a classic example out there recently, where we are putting that \$15.4 million investment into the South Gippsland Highway and Clyde-Five Ways in Devon Meadows, where you really have—and the Member for Cranbourne will agree—a lot of things happening at a different intersection all at once without it being signalised. That is why we are putting in this investment to really make sure that motorists, wherever they are, at some of those higher speed levels of the South Gippsland Highway, can turn right and can turn left and it is as safe as possible. We also, though, look at the data and, very importantly, we

have to be data- and evidence-based and make sure we make those investments that are correct for the time and correct for that local community as well.

Mr MAAS: Thank you very much, Minister. It is a real challenge, the growth which is occurring in our outer suburbs. You have touched upon the outer south-east. Is there any further detail that you would like to provide on that? And also perhaps provide some detail about what is happening in the outer west too.

Mr CARROLL: Certainly, Mr Maas. I know you are a strong advocate with what is happening in the south-east, and it was good to be with you recently looking at how we can support and improve the bus services. I have already mentioned the Five Ways intersection at Devon Meadows. You have got the sealing of Ryan Road in Pakenham, another big growth corridor; \$7.7 million to provide better access to the Pakenham East train station; and \$30 million to improve safety and reduce the risk of crashes and delays at the intersection of Burwood Highway, McMahons Road and Clyde Street in Ferntree Gully. Can I thank the Member for Bayswater for his strong advocacy around that, and it was a pleasure to see that most recently. But we do know we need to make investments all around the state. In the western suburbs you have got \$8.6 million to Derrimut Road in Tarneit and \$14.9 million for the Melton Highway in Plumpton, and it was great to be with the Member for Melton recently to look at those projects. When you look at it, Mr Maas, basically our population has grown by an average of 100 000 people, or 2.3 per cent, a year. There has been incredibly strong population growth, and that all combines to having more trips on our road network. It has been a very well known fact that more and more people through COVID have shifted to the online ordering of different goods and services. Again, that is another impact on traffic, so we need to be mode agnostic and make sure we have all of those transport investments that are right, from public transport to active transport and our roads, but also the more we can do to really bust congestion, support commuters and support people in their vehicles to where they need to get to is vitally important.

Mr MAAS: Thanks, Minister. Would you be able to outline how that investment builds on the government's existing road upgrade programs in metro Melbourne?

Mr CARROLL: I certainly can. It is very important. A great example and one that the Chair is very familiar with is Gaffney and Sussex streets in Coburg. I have been there with the Chair, and it was great to see that project changing how people move around safely in what was an incredibly difficult to navigate intersection at Gaffney and Sussex streets in Coburg. Now that project has been completed and delivered, and it was a wonderful project for that community and had strong advocacy.

But more than that, though, it really is about linking up as much as we can some of those Big Build projects with those interconnected arterial roads as well. In the 2021–22 budget 79 projects were being delivered. The pipeline for 2022–23 is equally impressive, with another 72 projects scheduled for delivery in 2022–23. Whether it is Ballarat Road with \$8 million or whether it is Springvale Road with \$3.9 million we are doing everything we can to make sure that these upgrades really improve people's travel times but also safety as well—safety for school students. We all participate. I saw recently many members of this committee participating in the Walk to School day. That is part of the equation with us: how do you slow the traffic down and make people mindful that the road is a shared space? There are young vulnerable kids out on the road and there are elderly members out on the road getting to the shops or the chemist or wherever they need to get to, so it is vitally important, Mr Maas, that we continue to do that.

Equally, though, while people are moving around the arterial network we need to do everything we can too. Whether it is with the tram network through trunk corridors and getting trams quickly and safely to where they need to get to or some of the campaigns around their safety and equally too around the bus network's as well, it is about making sure that wherever you are you have got that choice between a bus or walking or riding. We often talk about the 20-minute neighbourhood, and the planning minister is passionate about this. That is what is driving us very much to ensure that no matter where we live—we note coming out of COVID most people got to know their neighbourhood like never before, and we need to be mindful of that—we want our neighbourhoods to be attractive and have those investments at that local level through road resurfacing, traffic light upgrades, roundabouts and active transport, also combining that with zero-emissions buses. More and more now our cafe districts are going to be a lot more pleasant when you have got a zero-emissions bus parked out the front while you are having your coffee or your baguette. You know, you are not going to have any fumes. It is going to be quiet, it is going to be peaceful and it is going to be a wonderful way to operate and a wonderful way to live.

Mr Maas, there are more than 70 projects year on year in the budget. There is more work to do. There are also too, I should highlight, really good, important local jobs on the ground, because they are local jobs for local people in local communities. Whether it is the native vegetation, the resurfacing, the engineering work or the drafting work, it is really important.

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

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

Mr HIBBINS: Thank you, Chair. I want to ask—in your presentation you referred to active transport.

Mr CARROLL: Yes.

Mr HIBBINS: But ultimately the budget line for active transport in this year's budget is still less than 1.5 per cent of total transport capital spend—about 3 per cent if you just include roads funding. Emissions from transport are still growing in Victoria—it is probably one of the few sectors that is actually growing. You would have seen around the world, particularly during COVID, a number of governments really significantly increased their amount spent on active transport. I think if you look at jurisdictions like Scotland and Ireland, you are looking at 10 or 20 per cent of their transport capital spend. Why aren't we seeing a greater share of active transport as part of the overall capital spend for transport?

Mr CARROLL: It is a fair question, Mr Hibbins. With active transport we are very committed to it, and I am very committed to it as public transport and roads and road safety minister. It is a triple-line, as you say, investment: good for you, good for the economy, good for your health—good for the Victorian health budget to have more people on bikes and looking after themselves as well and good to reduce congestion on our roads. We have got the 100 kilometres of pop-up bike lanes being rolled out, the 250 kilometres being rolled out as part of the Big Build initiative, and then you have got some of the shared user path that comes under Minister D'Ambrosio's portfolio. And then we have got some of the work that we are doing on the strategic corridors. One that the Chair and I spoke about recently is out in Essendon and Strathmore—a \$3.5 million investment to link up some of the strategic cycling corridors to the train stations.

Mr Hibbins, we can always do more. We have got committed \$21.8 million in the budget. I work very closely with the Bicycle Network—I should confess, too, I am a member of theirs. I obviously work very closely with the Amy Gillett Foundation. I must say it does not get included in this budget but I had the fortune to participate a few weeks ago in the great ocean bike ride, and there is no doubt that the work of Mr Northey and his team made that bike ride so much more pleasant because the roads had been all resurfaced around the Otways and Great Ocean Road. It was wonderful to see. I—

Mrs McARTHUR: Just for you.

Mr CARROLL: No, there were thousands of us doing it. And, to be frank, I was actually doing it on behalf of the Peter Mac foundation, so you should be careful, Mrs McArthur, before you jump to any conclusions.

But we can always do more, Mr Hibbins, and I know you are a strong advocate on this. We have spoken about it. To plan a bit of a way for the future—obviously I think we are focused very much on the inner city with our cycling corridors and our pop-up bike lanes, but it is sort of getting out now into the suburbs on what we can do there. I have got to say it is not easy work either, as you would appreciate. You have seen what the City of Melbourne is going through at the moment; it is not easy work. But we have got to get on and do it nevertheless. It is a way to build better for the future and build back better and fairer.

Mr HIBBINS: I did want to ask about the rollout of the pop-up bike lanes and just get an update in terms of the time line there, because obviously I think we have had some changes—an extension—to the time line there, and in particular as well, why the Kerferd Road separated bike lanes were removed from the project there. I mean, that was probably the only full separation that was actually part of that Port Phillip section.

Mr CARROLL: Yes. I will ask Mr Foa to supplement my answers. But despite challenges and despite a lot of people having a view on which way a bike should go or where it should go or how it should go et cetera, et cetera, we try and work very closely with the local government sector and with the bicycle user groups. And we also have to take into account, Mr Hibbins, small business owners. It can be quite a disruption to some

members of the community that have never had this disruption before. Heidelberg was probably the best case example. It was the first one. We obviously spent more time on it; it took longer. We did manage to return some car parks that had been taken away, but it required a lot of negotiation, a lot of talk, a lot of ‘How can we look at other entrances?’ and things like that. Just at a high level, Hobsons Bay, City of Maribyrnong and City of Moonee Valley are all progressing quite well. I will ask Mr Foa if he can just supplement my answer, and he might have a bit more info on Kerferd Road.

Mr FOA: Yes, indeed. Thank you, Minister. Overall completed out of that 100 kilometres, 23 kilometres are completed and in use. There are a further 46 to be completed in late June and then in June–July another 37, so we will get very close to the 100 kilometres by the middle of the year. Kerferd Road was subject to a great deal of local community consultation. In conjunction with the City of Port Phillip, Department of Transport officers spent many weekends out there talking to residents and talking to local user groups. We know that the shrine to the bay is a long-held dream of cyclists and the cycle planning in that area and this was 1 kilometre out of 20, but 19 will be delivered. That 1 kilometre that was subject to the council’s advice and working with that local community was withdrawn from the program.

Mr HIBBINS: Is it still being looked at as part of the shrine to the sea?

Mr FOA: I think we would not rule anything out for future consultation in that regard. We understand it is such a strategic corridor.

Mr HIBBINS: Yes, okay. Thank you. I want to touch now just quickly on—you mentioned fuel standards before, and I think the government has previously indicated that it is looking to do something with the states on fuel standards. Just looking at the current motor vehicle census, about a million vehicles on Victoria’s roads are registered from 2005 and prior; now, that is Euro 2 standard. We have still got some of the oldest, most polluting cars on our roads. What is the government doing to phase those cars actually off the road and help people actually transition to more electric vehicles and more fuel-efficient vehicles?

Mr CARROLL: Yes. That is a very good question, Mr Hibbins. We have obviously got our grants that we are rolling out to get more people into electric vehicles, and hopefully we can have a more serious conversation at the commonwealth level now about standards and what is being imported. One thing I am very proud to be doing, though, as the road safety minister is trying to get regional young Victorians into 5-star ANCAP-rated vehicles, which come with better standards as well. Often young regional Victorians inherit a vehicle. So that is something we are doing with our road safety partners.

Mr Barton to your left has also been a strong advocate for rideshare being part of this transition, and we are working with that sector as well. But you are exactly right, I think we are one of the few jurisdictions in the world that has not put minimum standards on the importation of vehicles to get to that Euro 6, and that is why wherever you drive now around Victoria, whether it is the ads for Toyota or Volvo, that is what they are advertising—electric vehicles. They are the future, they are coming and the commonwealth level needs to start doing some heavy lifting like the states are.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Ms Richards.

Ms RICHARDS: Thanks, Minister and officials, for your time this morning. I would like to explore regional roads and particularly refer you to budget paper 3, page 109 and table 1.18. I notice the line item there ‘Regional road upgrades’. Can you perhaps provide for the committee some further detail on the regional road initiatives in this budget and the outcomes that are expected to be achieved?

Mr CARROLL: Certainly, Ms Richards, and thank you for your question. It is unprecedented, the investment we are doing in our roads program across regional Victoria. Since 2014, \$34 billion—that figure I used before—has been invested in new and upgraded roads across every corner of our state. Then if you look at this budget, 2022–23, there are 11 new road safety projects. At \$100 million these projects respond to the needs of regional communities, and they also support businesses in some of our fastest growing regional centres, whether it is Geelong, Ballarat or Bendigo, but also too supporting freight and our movements through Portland and Gippsland. The Six Ways, Lara, intersection—I was with the Member for Lara recently looking at that. It is a very complicated intersection and one that has been put in the too-hard basket for too long, but our \$16 million investment will actually fix that. It gets its title ‘Six Ways’, Lara, because it literally has a roundabout with six intersections to it and it is not signalised. Again going to the data, it has had the statistics, it

has had the crash data. That is why we have made that investment. But then I was very pleased to be in Shepparton recently as well to look at the investment we are making there—\$700 000 for the Goulburn Valley Highway intersection where it meets with Graham Street on the doorstep of the local hospital and university students—again an investment by our government in an intersection and a safety upgrade that is very much warranted. It is really important, Ms Richards. Some 5000 vehicles, for example, use Graham Street and the Goulburn Valley Highway intersection daily, including both emergency services and school buses. These are complicated, difficult projects. You are dealing with hard surfaces and a lot of infrastructure under the ground. So we do our planning, they take time and we are very proud of them. I know all members of Parliament know that when you are doing these intersection upgrades it is a bit like when you are doing a school upgrade: the local community really, really love them and really, really get on board, and that is why these investments are so important.

Ms RICHARDS: I would like to perhaps explore road maintenance. We know that it plays a really critical role in ensuring the roads are reliable and durable and that this is particularly important to regional commuters, especially where industry and locals heavily rely on the road network. Minister, can you perhaps update the committee on the government's program of road maintenance quite specifically in regional Victoria?

Mr CARROLL: I certainly will, Ms Richards. I am going to get specific myself and quote the budget papers as well. If you go to page 16 of budget paper 2:

Combining output and asset funding, this budget invests \$780 million in road asset management in 2022–23—more than 37 per cent higher than the average of the previous decade ...

which was \$567 million. So whichever way you look at it, whether it is dollars or kilometres, our government has invested more in road maintenance than any other government in our history. And this budget, like our other budgets, has an additional \$780 million going to maintaining and renewing our arterial road network. Mr Northey and his team, the apprentices, the drones we use and the technology we use to get more road surfacing catalogued and checked out first and faster than ever before—it is a massive program that goes on yearly. We have obviously had severe weather occurrences in more recent times and rainfall. That all has an impact, and it is why we have to be agile. That is why we need to make sure—whether it is repairing potholes, replacing traffic signals and road signs, managing vegetation, cleaning out drains, repairing culverts or removing other hazards from the network—it is a daily practice that we need to continue to do day in, day out. I thank our partners, our road safety partners, the contractors and the local government sector. It is an incredible feat. We have got more work to do—I always appreciate that—but since 2018 we have rebuilt or resurfaced more than 6800 kilometres of regional roads and more than 900 kilometres of metropolitan roads. That is about quality, it is about safety and it is about smoother journeys as well.

Ms RICHARDS: That is great. Thanks, Minister. It is an opportunity also to call out some of our hardworking police, who I know are really focused on road safety as well.

Mr CARROLL: Yes.

Ms RICHARDS: I note the strong pipeline of existing projects being undertaken in regional Victoria. They are outlined in budget paper 4. Are you able to provide an update on some of the projects that are within your portfolio?

Mr CARROLL: Yes. Thank you. Look, it is really important, Ms Richards, that we work almost sector by sector. Victoria is the dairy supply chain of the nation, so what does that mean? That means more heavy vehicles are going around our south-west coast and around our different regions. How do we work with them? How do we make sure that what we call the high-productivity freight network is actually high productivity and that we resurface and ensure that our budget and our investments go where they are needed? \$17.4 million literally supports the dairy supply chain, making sure that right through Barwon, that south-west area, that is supported and funded to get all of those products to market and where they need to get to as smoothly and safely as possible.

I mentioned too that the Great Ocean Road is iconic not just in Victoria and Australia but around the world. More and more people are coming back to flying and more and more people want to get to the Great Ocean Road for a range of reasons to check it out. We need to make sure that we continue to heavily invest in that. That is why in 2020 we invested some \$272.4 million. That project will see the resilience of the Great Ocean Road strengthened, but it will also see some of those inland routes to the Great Ocean Road—it is not just

people going to the Great Ocean Road; they love to get into the Otways and see the other parts of our state—are done as well, so it is vitally important. More than that too, we are very well known in Victoria for our goldfields, and a big part of our budgets has been Keeping Ballarat Moving. There is a lot going on in Ballarat, with the university, with the Midland Highway that continues to be upgraded, with the Glenelg Highway and the traffic light sequencing. It is becoming a real destination, as are other parts of the state. And it is about working with the arts minister and the precincts and making sure that our roads are safe and secure and that public transport options are there equally as well.

Finally, I just want to acknowledge too the work that goes on with our bridge repairing. Bridge upgrades are vital, and \$10 million—in 2020–21, \$6.7 million. We continue to invest. We have around 6000 state-managed structures such as bridges. Accessing them is a big task. That is why I work with our road safety partners on the use of drones and things like that to really ensure that we can get into every nook and cranny of a bridge, because one small, little thing can become a big thing if we are not careful. It is like maintaining your garden in many respects: get onto it as quickly as you can and make it the best you can and make it as strong as you can going forward.

Ms RICHARDS: Thanks so much, Minister.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Richards. I will pass the call to Mrs McArthur.

Mrs McARTHUR: Thank you. Minister, budget paper 4, page 87, mentions the Western Highway duplication. With work halted and another devastating crash taking the life of a mum of three just this week, can the minister give communities in western Victoria an answer as to when the Western Highway duplication project will recommence?

Mr CARROLL: Thank you, Mrs McArthur, and can I first and foremost add my condolences to that family and express my deepest sympathies. Any death, particularly a tragedy like this, is something we should all—as roads and road safety minister I think about these regularly.

Keeping people safe on our roads is at the forefront of everything we do, and that does include, Mrs McArthur, the Western Highway, and we have invested to ensure its safety. If I go to this financial year alone, between Ararat and the South Australia border our government has invested \$7.5 million, and that is some 2500 asphalt patches, 380—

Mrs McARTHUR: We just want to know when the duplication project will recommence, Minister.

Mr CARROLL: Well, I will get to that, and I will ask Mr Northey to supplement my answer, but you cannot just—

Mrs McARTHUR: I can. I can just ask you the question I like.

Mr CARROLL: All of these big projects—

The CHAIR: Mrs McArthur.

Mr CARROLL: All of these projects take time and consideration, and you need to work at getting other parts of the network fixed before you can do the duplication, whether it is looking at where the heavy rainfall occurs—

Mrs McARTHUR: We just want a date.

The CHAIR: Mrs McArthur.

Mr CARROLL: and then working on rehabilitation at Dimboola.

Mrs McARTHUR: Just a date, Minister, would be helpful.

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

Mr CARROLL: I have given you, Mrs McArthur, the work we have been doing to date. We are literally working around the clock—you know, twice-weekly inspections of the Western Highway. I will ask Mr Northey to supplement my answer.

Mr NORTHEY: Thanks, Minister. So there are two stages to the works. For Buangor to Ararat, currently a new cultural heritage management plan is being prepared for that, and for Ararat to Stawell, we are currently working through environmental approvals, looking at flooding impacts and various other technical studies at the moment. So that is the current work being carried out by Major Road Projects Victoria on those two upgrade projects.

Mrs McARTHUR: Well, why hasn't the government progressed this section of the road between Ararat and Stawell?

Mr NORTHEY: Again, working through the approval side of things, whether it be environmental improvement, cultural heritage, looking at reviewing plans, trying to come up with the most efficient option, that is the work that is currently being undertaken.

Mrs McARTHUR: Well, Mr Northey, plans to duplicate the highway mean that no work has been undertaken to reseal the current road. Will you now take immediate action to address the serious safety concerns raised by community members?

Mr NORTHEY: Well, there has certainly been resealing done—

Mr CARROLL: Yes, there has.

Mr NORTHEY: along other parts of the highway, certainly the section from Ballarat to Buangor, and that is certainly not the reason why those works will not continue right across the Western Highway up to when the road is upgraded.

Mrs McARTHUR: Maybe the Secretary: you have talked up your road maintenance program, but you are going to miss your regional road maintenance targets this year by 324 000 square metres. Why hasn't the government delivered the road maintenance that was promised?

Mr YOUNIS: Mr Northey can probably add a bit more to this. Our road maintenance program is done under an asset management system, which we really work closely under. It looks at the deterioration modelling for the roads. So on the output levels, we hit our output levels and exceeded our output levels last year in relation to the area covered, and therefore the level of output required on that particular area is not required this particular year when you go through the entire asset management process.

Mr NORTHEY: And if I could add: we are doing over 1400 kilometres of road resurfacing or rebuilding, which we have done previously and is consistent with what we are planning to do in 2022–23.

Mrs McARTHUR: I will ask the minister: this figure represents just 6.6 per cent of the regional road network—that is, 11 476 square metres maintained of a total 173 553. At your current rate it will take you 15 years to maintain the regional road network. Do you believe the current repair jobs being undertaken by VicRoads will last a full 15 years? Actually, with most of the roadworks I see in western Victoria my toaster has got a better guarantee than your road repair jobs; they are lucky to last six months, let alone 15 years.

Mr CARROLL: Mrs McArthur, it would have helped if we had not inherited cuts to the road maintenance budget, and it would have helped if you had had a transport minister that actually did the investment. The facts and the figures do not lie, Mrs McArthur. Of the 19 000 kilometres of arterial roads in regional Victoria, we have got 1000 projects underway. Our crews are out daily—from Geelong to the south-west to Gippsland. \$101 million in this budget will deliver high-priority upgrades to get people home safely and securely. We are continuing to do everything we can, whether it is through geotechnical work, whether it is through the drones or whether it is through the cameras, to ensure that our road network is as safe and secure as possible. And I have been on the road network. I was on the road network up to Shepparton last week. Before that I was down in the Geelong region. I have been down to the Gippsland region. We are putting record investment in the road network. We came into budget—

Mrs McARTHUR: You know what you are doing? You are putting 'Slow down' signs everywhere.

The CHAIR: Mrs McArthur.

Mr CARROLL: The data does not lie, Mrs McArthur. Every way you look at it, our investment is literally creating thousands of jobs at the local level—\$813 million per year on average. The facts matter, Mrs McArthur. Every way you look at it, our investment is well and truly above and beyond what we inherited and more than that too. Whether it is the dairy supply industry, whether it is the grain industry, whether it is Keeping Ballarat Moving, whether it is all of the other investments we are doing, it is vitally important. That is why if you do not take my word for it, take the budget papers:

Combining output and asset funding, this budget invests \$780 million in road asset management in 2022–23—more than 37 per cent higher than the average of the previous decade (\$567 million).

We are also locking in:

... asset expenditure of \$187 million on pavement rehabilitation, drainage renewal and structures renewal.

So the budget papers—it is in there in black and white. Whether you are looking at kilometres or whether you are looking at the investment in the dollars, the Andrews Labor government has invested many, many more dollars than any other previous government, and it will continue to do so. We will continue to work with our road safety partners and the local government sector, as well as our freight and industry partners too, whether it is the dairy supply chain, whether it is the grain industry, whether it is getting young people in regional Victoria into safer cars or whether it is doing everything we can at the commonwealth level to roll out more road safety barriers, because on this side of the chamber we know that road safety barriers save lives and you are living a falsehood if you think they do not.

Mrs McARTHUR: Yes, on that, let us go to wire rope barriers, Mr Northey. The fines for Gheringhap Road—it has had 18 crashes since 2020, 18 crashes dues to wire rope barriers.

The CHAIR: Sorry, Mrs McArthur, your time has expired. Ms Taylor.

Ms TAYLOR: Actually, I would like to pick up on that issue of road safety if I could. I refer you to budget paper 4, page 82. Could you please outline in further detail the investments and strategies the government is implementing to reduce road trauma?

Mr CARROLL: Thank you very much, Ms Taylor. We want zero deaths by 2050 and we want to halve road trauma by 2030. We have been a world leader when it comes to road safety. Obviously we were the first jurisdiction to introduce mandatory wearing of seatbelts. We have got literally in our backyard the Monash University Accident Research Centre. We have got the world-class insurer—under the John Cain Labor government—headed up by Mr Calafiore, the Transport Accident Commission. Whether it is our campaigns; whether it is the work we are doing at the school level; whether it is focusing on vulnerable cohorts; whether it is motorcyclists, cyclists, young kids, pedestrians—

Mrs McARTHUR: They love wire rope barriers.

The CHAIR: Mrs McArthur, please stop interrupting.

Mr CARROLL: we are always keen to do more, and we are continuing to invest in more, and I am very, very pleased.

If I just take a lady I met last week, Linda, who lost her son. He was going to Bathurst with some friends. He was not the driver, but the driver had fatigue, and it has changed her life forever. You have always got to remember that we are talking about people here, and that every life that is lost on our roads is preventable. That is the mindset we should all have—that every death is preventable. That is why we have to have that combined investment of infrastructure of \$220 million, working with the education sector to really support our young students and supervised crossing supervisors and then working with our heavy vehicle people—and can I acknowledge the work of Minister Horne and Peter Anderson from the Victorian Transport Association—to ensure that we do everything we can to make sure, whether it is a high heavy vehicle, whether you are a vulnerable user on a pushbike, whether you are a young school student getting to school, that we do everything we can. So we have a 10-year road safety strategy. Combine that with the action plan to really get targeted and try and drill down and do everything we can to reduce road trauma every day. It is what I know drives me and the Department of Transport. I know it also drives very much the Transport Accident Commission as well.

Ms TAYLOR: In particular—and I note you have been discussing in detail the vulnerable road users like the young people, cyclists and pedestrians as a priority—can you detail the investments in the budget focused on these groups?

Mr CARROLL: Yes. Thanks, Ms Taylor. Look, one thing when I became the transport minister—and it goes to Mr Hibbins's point before—cyclist deaths were up, and we needed to make a real investment to do what we could. We know cyclists have very little protection, very similar to motorcyclists and young students and pedestrians as well. That is why we have got \$21.8 million as part of this budget to really invest and ensure 100 kilometres of new and upgraded active transport infrastructure is done and delivered, literally making sure that people are protected on the bike going to wherever they need to get to and that they are in a secure lane, to really try and get as much as we can for their safety.

Pedestrians—whether it is the elderly, whether it is young students—are also incredibly vulnerable. We have recently with the TAC had a campaign, a pretty hard hitting campaign, about a young child walking at the back of mum and dad's driveway, really reinforcing that message for parents to be so mindful of little kids. It only takes a moment for them to walk or get where they need to get to. It is why we have the Walk to School program supported by our government. We have got the pedestrian crossing supervisors program that we are continuing to support with the department of education and our local government sector.

Then too it is really important that we keep talking to kids about road safety and that mums and dads engage them and talk to them about getting to school safely but also making sure they are as alert as possible when it comes to roads, because the other thing is, with electric, cars are getting quieter. I am very fortunate out at Niddrie Primary that we have always had a strong emphasis on the fluoro type of uniforms that can really aid kids—their jackets and things like that—to make sure they are identified as much as possible.

The bike education program is really important, so not only talking to school students about Victoria Police and their role and safety but how to actually be better on a pushbike and things like that and the different things—why we have mandatory helmets and things like that—to really get them as ready as possible.

Ms TAYLOR: Very good. You also talked before about roads being a workplace as well. What specific actions has the government taken to improve the safety of those who do work on the roads?

Mr CARROLL: Thank you very much, Ms Taylor. I and Minister Horne chair a heavy vehicle round table where we regularly talk to them on what their needs are and how we can support them through licensing, training and assessment standards. We know that heavy vehicle crashes, as the data shows, result in death and injury more than any other type of vehicle. Sadly because of, as we know, their size, their mass, they are not easy to navigate, they are not easy to move. There is a role there for us to work with the drivers in those heavy vehicles as well as with different communities, whether it is the port of Melbourne, the work right through the City of Maribyrnong, the south-east, where those heavy vehicles are moving and going. What can we do to support them on dedicated freight networks? What can we do equally to try and get more freight onto the rail network to support having fewer heavy vehicles? What can we do to upgrade the vehicles with regenerative braking and all those things that we know will go a long way to the amenity? But we do know freight coming out of COVID, online purchasing of goods and services, is continuing to increase. We also know as part of our Big Build and our rollout we actually do have more people out in hi-vis vests working on our road network doing the resurfacing, doing the vegetation work. That is why it is very important that we work with our road safety partners, that we work with VicRoads, the SES, police. That is why we are very mindful that when we do introduce a speed limit change, predominantly it is for the safety of workers that are out on the road doing very vitally important maintenance and upgrades.

No-one, at the end of the day, Ms Taylor, should die on our roads, no-one should go to work and die on our roads, and we want our roads to be safe for everyone. But it is equally important to grow the community and grow the economy. I know we have got a lot more work to do. I know Minister Horne is coming to the committee later today, and there is no doubt when she talks about freight that she will touch on this topic, particularly heavy vehicle law reform, accreditation, training and making sure we do everything we can to have the data right and continue to work with the sector. Because we know the big cranes that doing our wind tunnelling, the big cranes that are doing all sorts of things as part of our big major build, have an impact on the road network, getting to where they need to get to to do that infrastructure and the investment, and we need to

support them as much as possible and make sure that for all those cohorts heavy vehicle licensing is considered as important a factor when it comes to road safety as any other cohort.

Ms TAYLOR: Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Taylor. Mr O'Brien.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Thank you, Chair. Minister, do you agree with your colleague and parliamentary secretary, the Member for Eltham, who said that the concerns of rural Victorians about poor roads are an 'imagined fantasy'?

Mr CARROLL: The Parliamentary Secretary for Transport, the Member for Eltham, is doing an outstanding job getting around her community.

Mr D O'BRIEN: That was not the question, Minister.

Mr CARROLL: And I know—with me—we spend a lot of our time working with communities in regional Victoria. I am very pleased with the work we are doing.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Or getting texts from her mum.

The CHAIR: Mr O'Brien.

Mr CARROLL: I spend a lot of my time in regional Victoria, and I am all about supporting regional Victorians—where they need to get to and supporting them. It is a wonderful part of our community, whether it is your part of the world, whether it is Bendigo, Ballarat, Geelong—

Mr D O'BRIEN: You are not answering the question, Minister.

Mr CARROLL: and I spend a lot of time in regional Victoria.

The CHAIR: Mr O'Brien, I would ask you to relate your question to the estimates and budget papers, please.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Minister, three months ago Wimmera farmer Ryan Milgate invited you to see the deterioration of roads in his region. On air you told the ABC you would be happy to meet him.

Mr CARROLL: Yes, yes.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Why haven't you accepted that invitation?

Mr CARROLL: Well, I have accepted that invitation, and unfortunately we have not been able to meet. I am actually in country Victoria next week, and we have tried to get representatives from the National Farmers Federation to attend the meeting and be part of the meeting with me, and the irony is that they are going to be in Melbourne when I am in regional Victoria, so we are still making sure that our diaries marry up.

Mr D O'BRIEN: The question is about Ryan Milgate.

Mr CARROLL: My door is always open, Mr O'Brien. I have an open-door policy.

Mr D O'BRIEN: But he wrote to you in March. Have you responded?

Mr CARROLL: I have responded on the radio directly as well.

Mr D O'BRIEN: No, no, have you responded—

Mr CARROLL: No, I have responded directly—

Mr D O'BRIEN: That is not directly.

Mrs McARTHUR: What—

The CHAIR: Mrs McArthur, you do not have the call.

Mr CARROLL: And we were on the same radio program, and I always respond, I have always worked—and can I say I spoke about our round table before with the heavy vehicle industry and its impact on regional roads. The farmers federation are represented on that, and I have a very close collaborative working relationship with them—

Mr D O'BRIEN: Are you talking Victorian or national?

Mr CARROLL: and take what they need to say seriously, just as I did with Rural Councils Victoria in my meeting with them some three weeks ago.

Mr D O'BRIEN: The question is about Ryan Milgate.

Mr CARROLL: Yes, yes.

The CHAIR: Mr O'Brien, I would appreciate it if you could relate the question to the inquiry we have at hand, please.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Secretary, the regional roads upgrade project, which is an asset initiative on page 115, is \$91.4 million all up, but \$39.8 million is from the commonwealth. Is that commonwealth funding secured?

Mr YOUNIS: Sorry, which part of the budget are you referring to?

Mr D O'BRIEN: Page 115, budget paper 3, 'Regional road upgrades', note (e), 'initiative includes commonwealth funding'. I am just wanting to know whether that is secured, that is already agreed.

Mr YOUNIS: There is a range of funding that we have agreed with and have agreements with the commonwealth—

Mr CARROLL: Paul can supplement.

Mr YOUNIS: Yes, 'Is this secured'—do you know the answer to this one?

Mr NORTHEY: Yes. There is, as the Secretary said, a range of funding, so I think that funding refers to the ROSI funding, or roads of significant importance—

Mr D O'BRIEN: Strategic importance, yes.

Mr NORTHEY: Strategic importance—thanks for the correction. So there is that funding plus obviously the funding that we are getting through two road safety tranches: the commonwealth-state road safety program and the targeted road safety package as well.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Okay, so that commonwealth funding is locked in—it is not something you are still waiting on?

Mr NORTHEY: For ROSI funding, yes; for tranches 2 and 3 of the road safety program, yes; for the targeted road safety package, yes. And now we are just working through in terms of tranches 4 and 5 for that road safety package.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Okay, thank you. Minister, can I mention budget paper 4 has the department's existing capital projects. When you came to government all the planning on the Kilmore bypass was done. The project was scheduled for completion by the end of 2017. Each year the budget papers say you are going through a land acquisition process, which has taken 10 years. To date, has any property actually been purchased for the Kilmore bypass?

Mr CARROLL: Mr O'Brien, there are a lot of detailed planning, surveying and preparatory works that are going on. Obviously we need to get the detailed design work done before we secure what properties may be required. If we go to—

Mr D O'BRIEN: Does that take 10 years?

Mr CARROLL: No, no, let me finish my answer. If we go to this budget and a project of this scale, it does take time, and to secure and get the final alignment right north of—I think you pronounced it—Willowmavin Road is really vitally important. So we do need further planning and approvals before construction is finalised and before we finalise and determine the dates, but we have put in and we are investing \$12 million to get on with the delivery in the meantime of the Kilmore bypass southern roundabout, which will, as you appreciate, make a very big difference to this part of your community, while we continue to do the detailed planning, surveying and preparatory work as well.

Mr D O'BRIEN: It is actually not my community, but anyway.

Mr CARROLL: I might ask Mr Northey if he wants to supplement my answer on that.

Mr D O'BRIEN: No. Minister, that is 10 years to plan a project that was actually already planned. You did the West Gate Tunnel, which is an \$11 billion project, in two years. Why does it take 10 years to plan a project? And, again, the question stands: have you purchased a single plot of land for the Kilmore bypass?

Mr NORTHEY: I could answer about the land acquisition.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Thank you.

Mr NORTHEY: As the minister said, we are in the process of designing the roundabout at Wandong Road—Northern Highway, which is the first stage of the works, so we are going through a land acquisition process for that as well as working through service relocations and other works that we need to do as the first part of the project.

Mr D O'BRIEN: So land has already been purchased?

Mr NORTHEY: Yes. We are acquiring land for that part of the project, which is the roundabout that I have just described.

Mr D O'BRIEN: But has that actually been completed now?

Mr NORTHEY: We are working through it, so I think some land has been acquired and others are still working through at the moment, as I understand it.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Can you provide, perhaps on notice if necessary, Mr Northey, how much land has been acquired and also the latest advice on the estimated construction costs of this project?

Mr NORTHEY: Yes. We can certainly do it for the roundabout, yes.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Thank you. Well, I am talking about the entire project.

Mr NORTHEY: The entire project? Yes.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Yes. Thank you. Likewise, Minister, funding to plan the Shepparton bypass was first included in the budget in 2017 with an expected completion date of March 2020. This year's budget now has it revised to the end of July next year. Again, the West Gate Tunnel took two years to plan; why does it take six years to do the Shepparton bypass?

Mr CARROLL: Look, you are getting confused a little bit too, Mr O'Brien, with what are my portfolio responsibilities and what comes under the transport infrastructure minister—

Mr D O'BRIEN: Well, just quietly, you and your colleague also get a bit confused as to what it is.

Mr CARROLL: but I am happy to say we have been working very collaboratively with the independent Member for Shepparton and equally very collaboratively to date with the commonwealth, but I think we will see now the commonwealth, rather than just putting notes and submitting a press release, actually get on and do the planning work—

Mr D O'BRIEN: Well, Damian Drum actually provided the money for it.

Mr CARROLL: Damian Drum might have supported the planning work and he might have supported some work, but at the end of the day he was not the minister.

Mr D O'BRIEN: And then it sat on Jacinta Allan's desk.

Mr CARROLL: Barnaby Joyce was the minister, Mr O'Brien. Unfortunately you and he—

Mr D O'BRIEN: It sat on Jacinta Allan's desk for six years, didn't it?

The CHAIR: Mr O'Brien, can you allow the minister to answer the question, please?

Mr CARROLL: We have been working through the business case. We want to make sure that we do these projects right. These projects require a high level of planning—

Mr D O'BRIEN: Six years—you did the West Gate Tunnel in two.

The CHAIR: Mr O'Brien, could you please allow the minister to answer the question?

Mr D O'BRIEN: Well, he is not trying to, Chair.

The CHAIR: Mr O'Brien, he is trying to. He is being constantly interrupted by you.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Six years to do this one and two years to do the West Gate Tunnel.

The CHAIR: Mr O'Brien, you asked the question; you need to give the minister the opportunity to answer it.

Mr D O'BRIEN: He waffles and talks politics, that is what he does.

Mr Newbury interjected.

The CHAIR: Mr Newbury, you have just walked back in; please do not start interrupting again. Mr Richardson.

Mr RICHARDSON: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Minister and department officials, for joining us today. I want to take you to the topic of Smarter Roads. Minister, I refer to your presentation and budget paper 3, page 119, under 'Smarter roads—phase 2'. For the committee's benefit, can you inform us of what this investment will deliver?

Mr CARROLL: Thanks, Mr Richardson. It is an important investment, but it is a smart investment as well. Smarter Roads has been a really important focus for us coming through the pandemic on how people move around their communities. Essentially we need to have more eyes on the roads than what we do now. The Smarter Roads initiative is about ensuring that we have the rollout of more CCTV, more digital signing, more tactile movements and a relook at how we sequence our traffic lights and how the VicRoads surveillance and audit team works, and that is why it is a big program of investment, with \$14.7 million being allocated as well. Often, Mr Richardson, you have clearways, which is the classic example that comes under the Smarter Roads initiative. But under this government what we have done is to make those clearways tollways, so on Hoddle Street and Punt Road and those bottlenecks literally there is no warning; your car will be towed away. That is what we need to do, because we know more and more people are in their motor vehicles moving around. I spoke a little bit about public transport. We have got to get more people back on public transport—that is really important—but it is really important that we keep traffic flowing smoothly and really try and get as much informed decision-making to people in their motor vehicles as possible.

We also, for the very first time, have introduced a congestion management team at the VicRoads traffic operations centre with the Department of Transport. Like me, you will hear the different voices on 3AW and 774, that do a wonderful job every day, trying to get that information through to Virginia Trioli or Neil Mitchell to let them know what is going on. Last night they did a superb job with an issue that we had on the West Gate. It is about trying to get as much information into the ears and minds of people in their vehicles so they can make an informed choice and get home safely, securely and as quickly as possible.

Mr RICHARDSON: This will be interconnected with phase 2, but on the phase 1 package, referring back to budget paper 3 again, page 119, can you please update the committee on how the government's \$340 million Smarter Roads package and phase 1 are helping to keep traffic flowing, reduce delays and provide drivers with better traffic information?

Mr CARROLL: Exactly. Thanks, Mr Richardson. We have got more than 130 new staff in our incident response team and our transport operations centre that are looking at our roads in the west, the east, the south-east and a lot of Melbourne where there are very busy areas. Then we have Melbourne's first dedicated congestion management team. I have been down to the operations centre. You have literally got the big bank of TV screens looking at our road network and our freight network 24/7, trying to make sure that any matters are dealt with as quickly as possible and dealt with securely to have the road network opened up.

But one thing that I am really proud of is we are actually doing the biggest review in a century of our traffic lights, and we know that is timely—looking at sequencing and how we can make it work better, how we can support more students in getting across the roads and how we can get a bit smarter too. So rather than traffic lights always just going when there is one person at the traffic light, can we get smarter with our technology where we actually have multiple people, five to 10, before the traffic light is triggered? And then doing that through school hours and programming it better too. So there is no doubt technology, traffic management and monitoring are vitally important. I think we are going to see it common practice in our state and many other jurisdictions that technology and transport go hand in hand as we try and get more and more people back getting to where they need to get to as safely and securely as possible. Secretary?

Mr YOUNIS: I should have updated you, Minister, but we have got some recent figures on some of the benefits we have seen from Smarter Roads. Because it is a new program, we are just verifying those figures, and of course it is difficult to verify them through COVID because you have got to make allowances for changes in traffic patterns. But the initial work we are looking at from the Smarter Roads projects shows reductions in travel times of between five and 15 per cent on our road network—and that is I think a conservative look at what it is—and throughputs through intersections of similar amounts. That really is a significant change in our road network. And the broader we can expand this and the more corridors we can work on, the greater that outcome. So they are just recent figures I have only received in the last short period of time. We are confirming those to make sure they have got some veracity around them and that we are allowing for the changes through the travel patterns that we have seen over the last two or three years.

Mr RICHARDSON: Fantastic. I might just skip to the topic of active transport, Minister, and the new budget measures, outputs and delivery, and take you to budget paper 3, page 109, table 1.18, and page 115, table 1.19. Could you outline for the committee's benefit the further details of this investment in the new active transport projects?

Mr CARROLL: Yes. Thanks, Mr Richardson. I know you have got a very active transport area in Mordialloc. If you go to the data, coming out of COVID-19 we obviously saw a massive increase in people riding bikes. Our forecast was that it increased by some 300 per cent on bicycle paths. That was literally the uptake. That more people are riding than ever before is what the Bicycle Network data and survey work show. So how do we leverage this moment in time for people's health, for the economy and for the environment? It is making sure that we continue the roll-out as part of the active transport agenda but also the Big Build and that that is mode agnostic—I spoke about the veloway on the West Gate Tunnel getting as many inquiries as anything on that project—and that is why there is \$21.8 million across the state in the 2022–23 budget. Some of the infrastructure is going to be on some of those key cycling corridors in Greensborough to Eltham, the shared trail. You have got, I know, close to the Chair's heart the Merri Creek Trail and the Capital City Trail. And then also what we have got to do is more rolling out of the bicycle parking and facilities at train stations. Some of that is getting really, really high end as well—literally your pass, your bike. It is secure. You can get on the train and get to where you need to get to.

I should give a compliment to the Transport Accident Commission too, because in addition to the funding that we are providing and the support, they do fund the \$100 million Safer Cyclists and Pedestrians Fund, and that is a very important project. It is a very important program. The TAC were also very good partner with us in terms of getting the 1-metre rule change and really getting that message through to motorists and cyclists about keeping your distance and really enforcing that cyclists are vulnerable.

Mr RICHARDSON: Thank you.

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

Mr BARTON: Thank you, Chair. Minister, could I refer to the \$44.8 million allocated to transport safety and security in budget paper 3, page 333. Due to the time on the road, the drivers most at risk of fatigue are commercial drivers. They also face financial pressures to work beyond what is safe to make ends meet. Those in the gig economy have even less protections and are forced to work beyond what is considered safe. Failing to do so can leave them without a job. We know that driving fatigued is the same as driving intoxicated.

Mr CARROLL: Yes.

Mr BARTON: Does the department intend to utilise some of the funds allocated to transport safety and security to conduct a fatigue management review for professional drivers, and I am including—you have spoken before about heavy truck work—Amazon Flex drivers and Uber food deliveries.

Mr CARROLL: Thanks, Mr Barton. It is a timely question, and I will ask Mr Calafiore to supplement my answer. You are exactly right. The work that we are doing through the Monash University Accident Research Centre on driver fatigue is vitally important. We know that we need to do everything we can to support what we need to do.

Mrs McArthur interjected.

The CHAIR: Mrs McArthur, could you please—

Mr CARROLL: Mr Calafiore, do you want to supplement my answer?

Mr CALAFIORE: Thank you, Minister. That is right. It is an increasing concern for the road safety partners, and insurers for that matter, because we know from the projections that a greater proportion of usage on the road is for work. As the minister indicated, from the TAC perspective, over the next year we are going to be initiating a couple of projects with the VTA—the Victorian Transport Association—the Transport Workers Union and all of the various stakeholders, some of it research and some of it educative material for the workers and the fleet owners also because there is a lot more that can be done in this area.

Mr BARTON: Thank you, Minister. You know that obviously I have got a relationship with the New South Wales taxi industry, and they have been doing work on this for some time. I just want to give you an example of what is happening. They call it up there the chain of responsibility, and in that chain we all have got our hands on it—it goes from the driver to the networks through the department right up to the minister, so everyone has got a responsibility to keep everything safe.

Mr CARROLL: And there is technology being developed right now, Mr Barton, that when you get in the vehicle, like you have got your alcohol monitoring, the work of the Monash University Accident Research Centre means they can now measure essentially through your eyeballs the level of fatigue you have. We have got more work to do, but I think we are only really now appreciating, as you have rightly identified, how much fatigue impacts on the road toll and road trauma.

Mr BARTON: Yes. I just want to give you an example of what is happening right here in Victoria. It is something that I have been trying to counsel a fella on. He does 12 hours in one network, jumps out of that car on a Friday night at 6 o'clock and then goes and drives all night for a foreign rideshare company. It is 24 hours on the road. We have got to find ways that we can put a brake on that, because that is just stupid.

Mr CARROLL: Yes. And we are working with our union partners. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer, Mr Staikos, has done a lot of work in this area around the gig economy as well. It is vitally important, and it goes to the work of the Fair Work Commission too—fair rates and breaks and all those things. You are right to identify it as an issue, and it is something that I am mindful of as well.

Mr BARTON: Thank you, Minister. We do not always agree, but this might be one we might be able to agree on. When we had the deregulation in 2017 we took away the obligation for commercial passenger vehicles to have a proper roadworthy certificate check by a VicRoads authority. Now it can be done by a simple walk-around check. What we have got on the road now are over 80 000 vehicles since 2017 that have never had

a roadworthy check. We have done some tests there and we have had vehicles fail after they have had that check. What I would like is, when we think about this commitment to safety, if we are doing this, that we look at having vehicles checked properly. Not only that, we also want to get people into the higher safety cars and we are putting a limit on the age limit for commercial passenger vehicles.

Mr CARROLL: Thanks, Mr Barton. I will ask Mr Foa to supplement my answer. But I am all about, when it comes to taxis, trying to get that fleet as modern as possible. We are seeing more and more of the hybrids—the Toyota hybrids—going around in the taxi fleet. Obviously they are good for the environment but also good for safety, and we have got to work with the regulator and have that real hands-on approach to ensure we can take taxis on that journey to a modern fleet as much as possible. In relation to the checks around safety, we obviously do spot checks as well, and we have done some of that recently. I think we may have even done it at the grand prix. Obviously we need to be vigilant because safety is first and foremost, but I think I might ask Mr Foa to supplement my answer.

Mr FOA: Thanks, Minister. Yes, Mr Barton. Correct. The road safety partners in roadworthy certificates have been third-party delivered in Victoria for a long time, but the VicRoads registration and licensing team do have an assurance program over that where they go and check the checkers, if you like. That is a pretty comprehensive process that they go through. They also do that with motor vehicle testing in the heavy vehicle space and motorcycle space. So the assurance program within VicRoads is very strong to ensure that those organisations issuing a roadworthy certificate are doing so correctly.

Mr BARTON: I have every confidence in VicRoads and the roadworthy checks. What I do not have confidence in is the red book system where they can walk around and not take a wheel off a car and say that vehicle is safe.

Mr FOA: I accept your point.

Mr BARTON: We can have a look at that later.

Mr CARROLL: Yes, sure.

Mr FOA: But the assurance programs in VicRoads, as you say, are very strong assurance programs, Minister.

Mr BARTON: Yes, I have no doubts about them. 46 seconds—I might just leave it there.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Barton. That concludes the time we have set aside for consideration of the roads and road safety estimates.

We thank you, Minister, and your officers for appearing before the committee today. The committee will follow up on any questions taken on notice in writing, and responses will be required within five working days of the committee's request.

The committee will now take a 1-hour break before moving to consideration of the ports and freight portfolios at 12.45 pm. I declare this hearing adjourned.

Witnesses withdrew.