

SELECT COMMITTEE ON TRAIN SERVICES

Inquiry into the factors leading to and causes of failures in the provision of metropolitan and V/Line train services

Melbourne—2 March 2010

Members

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Mr G. Barber
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Witnesses

Department of Transport:

The Honourable Martin Pakula, Minister for Transport;

Mr J. Betts, Secretary;

Mr H. McKenzie, Director of Public Transport, and

Mr T. Sargant, Deputy Director of Public Transport, Safety and Asset Management.

The CHAIR—We will reconvene the inquiry of the Select Committee on Train Services established by the upper house, and we would welcome the Minister, the Hon. Martin Pakula, Mr Betts, Mr Brown, Mr McKenzie and Mr Sargant. Most of you we welcome back to the inquiry. I would indicate to each of you—because some of you may be called upon by the minister to make some comments as well to expand some of his answers—as we did on the previous occasion that you are covered by the Constitution Act 1975 and provisions of the Legislative Council standing orders in terms of parliamentary privilege for what is said in this hearing. Obviously if you were to go outside the room and make similar comments, you are not necessarily covered by that privilege. We certainly, as you may have noticed, have had some media interest this morning. The previous witness made it about three feet outside the door, I think, before he was collared, so I trust that he stayed circumspect in what he said, compared with what he perhaps said to the committee. Minister, I would give you the opportunity to make some opening remarks and then we will proceed to some questions.

Mr PAKULA—Thanks, Chair, and I thank the committee for giving me the opportunity to present. I will make a presentation and I want to divide that presentation into two areas.

Overheads shown.

Mr PAKULA—I want to first discuss the short-term improvements that we are making to the rail network and then move on to some detail on some longer-term projects that are designed to improve reliability and capacity. I would begin by concentrating on how Metro has dealt with operating the network in hot weather and the plans in place to deal with those sorts of events. On 11 January this year it reached 43 degrees in the city and 46 degrees in some suburbs. In those temperatures, heat had some impact on the rail network, and I do think it is instructive to make a comparison between that day and 28 January last year when the temperature also rose above 40.

On 11 January this year there was an 11 per cent reduction in number of trips which were cancelled in the p.m. peak by comparison to 28 January last year, and those services that ran were much more reliable with punctuality of 75 per cent as against 58 per cent on that day in January 2009, and the impact of cancellations on the commuters is best measured in terms of passenger weighted minutes of delay. That is, in short, how many people were affected and how long they were affected for. In 2009, the passenger weighted minutes for the similarly hot day was 6.68 million, and this year the total was 4.35 million. That was an improvement of 35 per cent. That result was achieved through the adoption of a number of key measures. Firstly, the effect of the cancellations was spread across all of the lines which had the effect of minimising the impact on any one line. There was only one incidence of two or more successive trains on any one line being cancelled.

Metro were also more strategic in their use of rolling stock. Service replacements were planned and were pre-emptive rather than simply being reactionary. Substitute services were in place and on standby before they were needed. Thirdly, Metro has improved the way that train faults are managed. Last year, fault lights that lit up on the driver's console invariably became a maintenance issue. A better understanding of those fault codes and how to manage the underlying problem has allowed Metro to ensure that trains that had non-critical faults are scheduled into maintenance in a way that minimises service losses.

It is also important to note that the changed maintenance approach taken by Metro resulted in a better overnight recovery than was the case last year. After the first day of hot weather last year, Connex was only able to get 129 trains onto the network the following day, whereas in roughly equivalent conditions, Metro was able to recover 139 trains this year. If the extreme heat had continued into the second day, which it did not, the system would have coped much better than it did on the second hot day the previous year, because in 2009 the number of cancellations between day 2 and day 1 practically doubled.

In regard to the Comeng airconditioners, the biggest heat related issue is still the reliability of the rolling stock, particularly the airconditioners on the Comeng fleet. There were 111 airconditioner failures on 11 January. About 70 per cent of those were on the Comeng trains, and that resulted in a large number of the cancelled services. The committee was advised, I believe, last year of the impending trial of 12 airconditioning units. That trial continues, and I am pleased to report that to date none of those reconditioned units had a heat related failure. In fact, on 11 January they all worked. Those units are

contracted to be retrofitted over the next three years, but Metro expects that the work will be completed in 2012.

Another issue affecting service delivery is the availability of rolling stock. As I think has been well publicised in January and February of this year, a number of the Siemens units were removed from service as a result of those trains overshooting. Following an assessment by the safety regulator, PTSV, all of those Siemens trains returned to service last month with speed restrictions in place at targeted locations. They are restricted to 30 K an hour on the approach to platforms that have a level crossing or a pedestrian crossing within 100 metres of the end of the platform and on the approach to certain types of signals when they are showing red.

Metro have obtained a quantity of Sandite from the UK. It is a sand and aluminium mixture which is laid on the track by the train as it brakes. Metro is currently testing the Sandite. They may have gone to this in their presentation. They will apply that to small areas of the track once the testing and the trials are complete. It also intends to trial rail sanding which is another technique designed to improve rail adhesion.

The next graph might be one that is familiar to the committee but I think it is important to reiterate the key points. The number of people using trains has risen from 124 million boardings in 1999 to 214 million boardings last financial year. In 2006-07 and 2007-08, patronage rose by between 12 and 13 per cent both of those years. In 2008-09 it was more manageable; it was between 6 and 7 per cent. That is a level of growth that no other jurisdiction has enjoyed. Growth in public transport across all modes has been much higher than population growth. For the last three years population growth has been between one and two per cent, but growth in public transport over that period has been between eight and nine per cent.

I suppose the key question is what have we done and what are we doing to cater for that growth. There are three key features of the new contract that will improve service delivery. Firstly, to improve service delivery we have put in place a contract with Metro that includes an increase in funding for train maintenance. Over eight years, approximately \$500 million extra will be spent on maintenance activities than on the previous franchise. That is going to bring a tremendous improvement to the robustness of the network and the reliability of service delivery over time. Secondly, the new franchise agreement does tighten franchisee obligations across a host of areas. The operator now incurs penalties for trains that bypass either the city loop or the Altona loop. Metro is committed to 2,000 fewer cancellations and a 10 per cent improvement in punctuality in the first year of the contract, and an improvement in fleet availability from 92 per cent to 94 per cent over the next two years. The equivalent of 57 full-time platform staff have been added to the network, and those new platform attendants ensure customers get safely on and off the trains. They help manage passenger platform traffic flows to help the trains run to schedule much better, and by 1 July this year, Metro will increase staffing at seven stations, will staff barriers from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. every day and that is also designed to provide a safer presence at the heavily patronised stations.

Thirdly, we have begun an upgrade of the network that will accelerate the replacement of timber sleepers with concrete sleepers; 120,000 new concrete sleepers have been installed since 2008. That takes the percentage of concrete sleepers in the metro network to around 25 per cent. Whenever we reconstruct tracks, such as at level crossings, station platforms, the new sleepers are concrete. The new operator is required to renew around 65,000 sleepers a year on the main lines. The vast majority of those will be concrete. That is an average of more than 1,200 sleepers a week. Metro is currently replacing around every fifth sleeper with concrete in a cyclical program across the 780 kilometres of track on the metro rail network. That truer track alignment that concrete sleepers provide means less wear and tear on the rolling stock. It means better overall reliability. In addition, 270 kilometres of track rail grinding has been completed since 2008. That equates to around 35 per cent of the metro network, and under the new franchise with Metro, 20 per cent of the network is planned to be re-profiled every year so that the entire network will be treated every five years. Rail grinding is a process which improves the rail's profile and, like the replacement of sleepers, leads to better overall reliability on the network.

We have also added new services. There is a graph there that will show the new services that have been added. We have added 1,563 new weekly services since 1999. Since 99, there have been an additional 35 daily peak services added to the metropolitan timetable. That has created capacity for 28,000 passengers. The Hurstbridge and Pakenham lines, for example, have benefited with each line receiving four additional morning peak services since 1999, and that is capacity for an additional 3,200 peak period passengers. As you

can see on the graph, most of the new services have been added since 2004 which was when we saw the real surge in patronage commence. Those new services obviously require increased capacity and that is a process that we are engaged in currently. The slide that you see there shows the location of a number of projects that have either recently been completed or are currently under way. They are all designed to increase capacity in the network and eliminate bottlenecks.

I will go into a little bit of detail about each of those. Last year we opened new stabling at Cranbourne. Trains were not being stored at the end of the Cranbourne line so trains were running empty from other stabling areas in order to be ready for peak hour services in the morning. The Cranbourne stabling and station upgrade has provided housing for six trains so that peak services can begin their journey at Cranbourne. That project also included the construction of a new 700 space carpark. The Clifton Hill duplication was another project we completed last year. That was the duplication of single track between Clifton Hill and Westgarth. That single track was causing a bottleneck between outbound and city-bound services which were using the same track. During peak times, up to 20 trains an hour used that junction. If one of those trains was even a little bit late, other services were delayed as they waited to share that single piece of track. The Clifton Hill rail project, which is a \$52 million project, has built a second railway track between Clifton Hill and Westgarth stations and a new bridge over Merri Creek. That duplication has increased the capacity of the line and improved reliability.

As part of the expansion of the Metro train fleet, new stabling is being built at Craigieburn. That is part of a \$440 million program that will see new stabling being built at Newport, at Sunbury, at Upfield, at Epping, Eltham, Upper Ferntree Gully, Westall and Brighton Beach. There are currently 12 stabling tracks at Craigieburn built as part of the extension of the line in 2007, but on completion of the upgrade there will be a total of 21 tracks. One of them will be for a train wash, three for minor maintenance, and 17 for overnight storage. That will make Craigieburn the largest facility of its kind anywhere in Australia.

Obviously the Dandenong rail corridor is one of the city's busiest lines, and the growing outer south-eastern suburbs—I know that is a matter of some interest to you, Mr O'Donohue. The \$153 million Westall rail upgrade project will see the construction of 2.7 kilometres of third track between Centre Road and Springvale Road. It includes additional stabling for five trains so that, in a similar fashion to Cranbourne, services can terminate and can commence at Westall. That eliminates the need for empty running. It means trains can start at Westall. The upgrade also includes the addition of a third platform, improvements to passenger amenity, safety and better disabled passenger access. There will also be a grade separation of three pedestrian level crossings between Centre Road and Springvale Road, and 80 new parking spaces on the north side of the station.

The Laverton rail upgrade is another one that is designed to benefit both metropolitan services and regional services. Trains that head to and from Warrnambool, Geelong and Werribee have to compete for space with trains entering and leaving the Altona loop. That results in a bottleneck at the Altona loop. To help ease that problem the government is spending \$92.6 million to construct an extra kilometre of third track between Laverton station and the Altona loop junction. That will give trains using the Altona loop their own dedicated line. That is demonstrated on that slide, although perhaps not particularly clearly. The project will enable additional services on the Werribee line to start and finish at Laverton station, as well as improve the reliability of both Werribee and V/Line services.

In regard to the project pipeline, there is a slide that shows a range of other major infrastructure investments that we have flagged in the Victorian Transport Plan. It includes the Regional Rail Link; the Melbourne metro; the electrification of the Sunbury line; the extension of the South Morang and Cranbourne East lines. We have begun the engineering work for the \$650 million to duplicate the single track between Keon Park and Epping, and to extend the Epping line through to South Morang. We turned the first sod on some of that work this morning. We have appointed a contractor for the \$270 million electrification of the Sydenham line from Watergardens to the growth suburb of Sunbury. That allowed extra rail services to Sunbury and Watergardens. We will build new railway stations in some of the major growth areas in the west and the south-east, including Williams Landing, Lynbrook, Caroline Springs and Cardinia Road in the east.

We are also investing in rolling stock. We have invested \$650 million in 38 new X'Trapolis trains. The first train is now in revenue service. A second train is at Newport undergoing final testing and commissioning.

This year, 16 new trains will be delivered; next year, 18 new trains will be delivered, and in 2012, four new trains will be delivered. That is in addition to the 50 new trams and new buses. All of that has been funded from the allocation in the VTP for new trains, trams and buses.

Finally, I want to talk about regional rail. Regional passenger rail is growing very quickly. Last financial year, passenger numbers were up almost 10 per cent on the previous year. Under the Victorian Transport Plan we increased the Victorian government's order of 54 locally built new V/line train carriages, the Vlocity carriages, by 20, bringing the total to 74. The first 22 of those are in service. The order will bring the total number of Vlocity carriages to 134 by the end of 2014. In December we added the hundredth Vlocity rail car to our booming regional rail network and that brought the total number of seats which has been added in the last four years to 7,200. On top of the rolling stock, projects like the Laverton rail upgrade and the Regional Rail Link will add capacity to the regional network, particularly on the very busy Geelong-Melbourne line which I experienced a couple of weeks ago.

Chair, the Victorian Transport Plan is a \$38 billion plan. It is the largest investment in the state's history. It is an action plan, one that we are rolling out right now. It is a plan that is making real improvements to the public transport network. It is increasing the capacity of the network by adding new rolling stock; by adding stabling and maintenance facilities; by adding new lines, extending lines; by providing additional services. It will improve the network's reliability by increasing maintenance funding; by track upgrades across the network; by a new operator with an increased customer focus, and by removing interdependency and the cascading effect of any one problem on the network. Chair, that is the presentation. I am happy to take the committee's questions. As I am sure members of the committee will appreciate I have been in this role for less than six weeks, so I will endeavour to answer as many of your questions myself as I can. Bear in mind, as much as I have crammed as much detail into my mind as I can in that six-week period, I have, to my left and right, people who have been involved in the public transport network for much longer than I. If I throw to them you will understand why.

The CHAIR—Fine.

Mr BARBER—You may have to refer to Mr Betts for his corporate memory of the public transport system. Is it true, as I have been told, that with the Siemens trains that they were originally purchased on a five-page specification?

Mr PAKULA—I will throw to Mr Betts on that one, Mr Barber, because, as I am sure you will appreciate, I was not the Minister for Public Transport at the time that occurred. In fact I do not think I was even a member of parliament.

Mr BETTS—Even I was not in Department of Infrastructure or Transport at that time, so I am going to pass to Hector McKenzie.

Mr McKENZIE—No, it is not true. The contract for the Siemens trains had a very comprehensive specification that was attached to it at the time that was signed. It very significantly was not five pages.

Mr BARBER—I presume though that given the amount of contestation and argument that we have had over the performance of the trains, someone has been back and had a look at that spec?

Mr McKENZIE—Yes. I think if you are asking did the train pass the acceptance testing when it came in, the answer is, 'Yes, it did.' So on acceptance there was an independent review. I think that was done by Halcrow. As well as that, there was a committee comprising Halcrow, ourselves, the then operator and Siemens that reviewed all of the testing. There was a test procedure which was in accordance with European standards, and the trains were then accepted on the basis of those tests. There is no dispute that they were able to be commissioned. As I say, there was an independent review of that.

Mr BARBER—There are two things, isn't there: one is, did the trains meet the specs; the other is, what did the specs say about braking performance? Perhaps you will need to take on notice that aspect of it and see if you are able to provide the committee with the aspect of the specification that defined braking performance at the time.

Mr McKENZIE—Yes, we are happy to do that.

Mr BARBER—In relation to the newly commissioned trains, again my understanding—and I asking you so you can tell your version of the story—that with the existing versions of the trains, that a number of modifications are being made in and around the driver's cab, and that when these new trains rolled off the ship some of those same modifications had not been included in the new version that we were getting. Was that the cause of the dispute.

Mr PAKULA—When you talk about the dispute, are you talking about the issue in regards to the first train commissioning?

Mr BARBER—Well, it did not have all the features that had been added over time to its older version.

Mr PAKULA—Let's go back to a couple of points about that. In regards to the first train there was some initial delay over the installation of CCTV and the way that the CCTV was operating. That was, as I understood it, a rectification that Metro were happy to make and they undertook some rectification of the CCTV to make it work better. That was the subject of some work that delayed the train going onto the tracks to carry passengers for a period of time. Beyond that there were a number of modifications that some of the drivers sought to have made which Metro were more than happy to discuss. They believed that some of the changes, as I understood them to be the case, they had no issue with but they were not an issue which necessitated the train being out of service while those modifications occurred. They could be done at a later date. There were some other changes that had been requested which they disputed were necessary.

Mr BARBER—What I want to know, Minister, is were there a number of modifications that were made to the driver's cab over time—whether you consider them to be important or trivial ones—that someone forgot to specify as standard in the new versions of that train that we are now starting to receive? Is that the nature of the dispute?

Mr PAKULA—In terms of the specs, I will hand over to Jim to provide you with details in that respect.

Mr BETTS—No, I do not think it is a matter of people forgetting to do things. When new trains are brought onto the network or are contemplated to be brought onto the network there is consultation with drivers, as you would expect, because it is their workplace. The understanding was that the drivers had requested a series of things, and the understanding was also that those modifications would be made or discussed with the drivers, but should not preclude those trains from entering into service in the meantime. Many of those modifications are over and above what existing X'Trapolis trains have that are operating on the network and have been for several years.

Mr BARBER—But does it include some others that have been standard or have been made, on that version of the train, over previous years? You are saying they have a new shopping list, and I am saying was this the old shopping list that was not included.

Mr McKENZIE—There is a series of modifications that are going to be made to existing trains and this train and they are being discussed with the drivers. My understanding is probably not all of those are in the new train. That is not a matter of somebody forgetting, it is a matter of working through the detailed specifications. For instance, there had been a lot of discussion with the drivers in respect to exactly what sort of seat will be fitted. There have been several trials of that. I do not believe that is why there is any issue to that train coming into service. They are not safety related issues. In that sense it is part of the process of bringing a new train into service.

Mr PAKULA—Metro indicated to me that in one regard to one modification, for instance, that had been requested they had trialled, I think, four different versions and had not been able to reach agreement with the drivers about those things. A point comes where, with all the consultation in the world, if you continue to provide people with options and you are unable to get agreement to a particular piece of equipment, it is no

longer acceptable for trains being delayed going into service for those reasons, particularly when they are not viewed by the independent regulator as being safety related.

Mr BARBER—Was the on-board PA system and the ability to test that one of the issues that was in dispute?

Mr PAKULA—Certainly one of the issues that the drivers raised was about automatic versus manual operation of that.

Mr BARBER—Of what?

Mr PAKULA—Of the PA system.

Mr LEANE—With the previous witnesses today there was a lot of discussion around the performance of the network the last two summers, especially around very hot days. One thing that was not touched on was rail buckling. It would be interesting to know how that performed this summer as far as any impact on the rail.

Mr PAKULA—Track buckling is a problem that rail networks around the world experience. It is a problem that occurs when effectively the track moves laterally because it has a tendency to expand in extreme temperatures. The risk of that is best avoided by preventative measures. I talked about some of them earlier, like the provision of concrete sleepers, but you also need to look at the supply of an amount of ballast to improve track stability, and the way you conduct maintenance activities in extreme temperatures. I think, Mr Leane, it is worth noting that on 11 January this year, whilst there were delays and cancellations, none of those delays were caused by track buckling. There were field based technicians in the field throughout the day at what we would consider the high-risk locations for track buckling to monitor the track conditions. There was significant work undertaken across the network in preparation for the summer. That included the ongoing replacement of the sleepers. We replaced life expired timber sleepers with concrete sleepers. I indicated before about 120,000 concrete sleepers were laid up to November 2009. There was provision of the additional ballast and other track strengthening works undertaken by Metro at 400 priority locations. We had mobile track gangs out there with water to keep the tracks cool as well.

On two occasions this year there has been separate instances where a misalignment of the track has required the implementation of speed restrictions. In answer to your question, track buckling is a significant issue. It is a significant issue on rail tracks throughout the world, particularly in hot weather. Under the new maintenance regime, Metro have much better plans in place to deal with it. I think the proof of the pudding was in the eating on 11 January.

Mr O'DONOHUE—Minister, when will Myki be fully operational?

Mr PAKULA—I was of the understanding this was a select committee on train services but if you want to talk about ticketing systems, Myki will be fully operational, Mr O'Donohue, when all of the testing, all of the work has been done by both Kamco, the TTA and Kamco's contractors, to remove the technical glitches that currently exist, particularly for trams and buses, have been resolved and we are confident—and the TTA advises us—that it will be able to be used by passengers in a way that is consistently reliable.

Mr O'DONOHUE—When is that likely to be?

Mr PAKULA—Mr O'Donohue, I have indicated in numerous public comments in the 5½ weeks that I have been the minister, that probably the least helpful thing that I could do would be to put in place arbitrary deadlines when what we have is contractors working around the clock to resolve what have been very difficult technical problems. The nature of those problems preclude the provision of a definite date because the problems need to be firstly identified, then a fix—whether it is a software fix or any other kind of fix—needs to be put in place to deal with it. Then we need to make sure that we can run the service for a bit of time with those fixes in place and ensure that when the passengers start using Myki on those other modes they can do so in a way that is reliable.

Mr O'DONOHUE—Minister, yesterday was the third anniversary of the date at which Myki was supposed to be fully operational—

The CHAIR—Point of order!

Mr VINEY—Chair, I let the first two questions go because I figured the minister would be perfectly capable of answering the question, but it is outside the terms of reference and I think two questions is enough and we should move on with the terms of reference of the committee.

The CHAIR—In fairness, I think the minister has been prepared to answer the questions. The minister is obviously in a position to bat it away if he does not wish to answer further questions. The inquiry, essentially, is about the reliability of train services and there has been, I think, an indication that the ticketing system response times and so forth may well have an impact on the reliability of trains. The times that it takes to go through the ticketing systems and so forth has been subject to some media speculation. I will allow another question—this question to precede on it: I do not think that it is so far out that it is outside the terms of reference that it can be.

Mr PAKULA—(indistinct)

The CHAIR—It may well be that you should have been here at the earlier hearing.

Mr O'DONOHUE—Thank you, Chair. Given that hundreds of millions of dollars have been wasted, the project is hundreds of millions of dollars over budget, which could have been spent on additional trains, Minister, it is not good enough for you to say—

The CHAIR—Mr O'Donohue, I am allowing you to question, after receiving a point of order. I am not so interested in your editorial, I am interested in the question.

Mr O'DONOHUE—Minister, given that Myki has been operational on certain modes now for some significant period of time, you must be able to give some indication to the suffering public about when it will be fully operational; not a precise date but some indications—later this year, next year, 2012.

Mr PAKULA—Let me answer that question in a couple of ways, Mr O'Donohue. Firstly, this is a select committee on train services, and on the Metro train network Myki is operating, and it is operating reasonably well. It is not operating perfectly, we recognise that. There are issues with data flow, there are issues with customer satisfaction. One of the reasons that we are not moving to full rollout yet is because one of the things that we want to do is ensure that those customer satisfaction measures are operating very well before we extend Myki to trams and buses. That is the first point about that.

Secondly, I have said publicly, as has the Premier, that it is my expectation that Myki will be operating on all the modes this year. That probably answers the second part of your question, but let me restate again that probably the least helpful thing I could do would be to provide an arbitrary date. We have seen last year that in regards to comments that were made and commitments that were made based on a device that was given to government, given to the TTA by the contractor that proved not to be correct, we ended up with a situation where a service that we had said would be provided by the end of 2009 was not rolled out in full. That was largely because there were commitments made that were not ultimately made good.

In this circumstance where we have the contractor, where we have Keane and Kamco working around the clock to fix those problems, I am much more focused on ensuring that all of those issues are rectified, and rectified properly, before we roll it out on trams and buses. What we want to do is provide customers who use Myki—and let's not forget that customers are currently using Met card and it is a good system. You talk about people suffering, Mr O'Donohue; the fact is that that is a bit more opposition hyperbole, quite frankly. The system is currently working well for those passengers but obviously we said we want Myki to be working this year and that is what our endeavours will be directed towards.

Mr VINEY—Minister, you talked about the appointment of Metro and I am wondering if you could expand on how they have performed, their performance improvements and their commitment to date.

Mr PAKULA—I know you have had Metro in here giving evidence this morning. I was not here for that but I think I will focus on what we have put into the contract to drive better performance. As you know, Metro assumed operation of the network only on 30 November last year. Their first focus, as it ought to be, is to improve train punctuality. It is to reduce cancellations by introducing the sort of proactive, preventative approach to infrastructure and rolling stock maintenance that I touched on earlier. As I said, they have committed to 2,000 fewer cancellations in the first year of the contract. They have committed to reducing cancellations by 30 per cent over the term of the franchise. They are aiming for a 10 per cent improvement in punctuality in the first year of the contract, and 24 per cent during the term of the franchise, and a 25 per cent reduction in unplanned delays from infrastructure failures by 2011.

We have, as a government, tightened the definition of late running services as part of the new contract. Previously it was five minutes 59. We have reduced that four minutes 59 as part of the new franchise. That is a new benchmark and, frankly, it is in line with what we see as being the passengers expectation of service punctuality, within five minutes, and it is consistent with the performance measurement regimes that exist in overseas jurisdictions. The delivery of services is also subject to a broader definition in the new franchise agreement with 'shorts' which are arrivals and departures which are short of planned services, and 'bypasses' which are services that are unplanned bypasses of the city loop and the Westona loop. They are now included in service delivery measurements alongside cancellations. In the previous service agreement, only cancellations were measured. The new franchise agreement also includes a new customer experience performance regime. That is a monitoring and incentive system which has been developed by the Department of Transport and it is about monitoring certain aspects of customer services, and that includes graffiti, it includes cleanliness, it includes assets and it includes the provision of passenger information which a number of passengers that I have spoken to, as I have gone around the metropolitan network, have already indicated to me that they think the provision of passenger information, both verbally and visually, is much better under the new contract.

Mr VINEY—Minister, at the last minute after an hour and a half, two hours of evidence from the new operator, Mr O'Donohue raised issues about passenger safety across the network and I am interested in your comments on the attention that is being paid to passenger safety and some of the initiative that are being taken in that area.

Mr PAKULA—Let me say at the outset it is an obvious statement but passenger safety is something that we recognise is critical, something we have a very strong focus on. As part of the Victorian Transport Plan we provided funding for an additional 50 transit police officers—that is an additional 25 per cent. That brings the total number of officers on the network from 200 to 250. That will boost the capability to undertake patrols but also to investigate crime on the network. Under the VTP, the VTP provided an additional 24 platform staff at key stations in central Melbourne. Under the new agreement, Metro will add 33 platform staff and in addition to that will increase staff levels to provide a staff presence at 22 stations which are currently unmanned. Metro have committed to reduce crime by 10 per cent across the network.

The VTP also provided another \$50 million to upgrade train stations to provide better customer amenity, and I have talked about some of the stations where that has already been upgraded, to improve drop-off areas, taxi zones, bus connections. We have worked very hard on keeping the network safe. There are 350 authorised officers on the metropolitan network. Metro works with Victoria Police to share information to target hot spots, to target trouble spots. Under those arrangements, authorised officers are deployed under an intelligence based method, because Metro is able to gather intelligence from a range of sources, including drivers, and that allows a flexible response to information that has been received from VicPol, from staff and from customers.

I think it is worth pointing out there are 76 premium stations on the Melbourne metro network. They are staffed from first train to last train. In addition to those premium stations there are 28 host stations. There are 57 stations with safety zones equipped with CCTV and duress buttons. We completed a \$4 million program in 2009 to install brighter white lighting at 63 stations and at five subways across the network. We have upgraded the CCTV equipment at all metropolitan train stations to improve the quality of the image that is received, to provide for a minimum of 30 days storage of surveillance data. Every train in the network, with the exception of the seven Hitachi trains, are fitted with duress buttons and CCTV. I think it is worth pointing out that despite some of the rhetoric, in the last 10 years, the number of crimes committed on public transport

has dropped by 15 per cent, despite the fact that patronage has grown by more than 50 per cent.

Mr VINEY—In relation to the 11 January issue, you commented—I think your words were—that there was a better next day recovery on that system and I am wondering if you could expand on why that occurred, what has changed that has allowed that to happen.

Mr PAKULA—Yes.

Mr BARBER—The temperature went down.

Mr PAKULA—Yes, Mr Barber, you are right, the temperature went down but that misses the point. The point was that had the temperature stayed up, the next day's performance would have been far better than day 2 of the heatwave in 2009 because there were 10 extra trains available because of the efforts made by Metro. On the second day in 2009 there were only 129 trains available, and on the morning of the second day this year there were 139 trains available. The fact that the temperature dropped masked how much better the service would have been on day 2 than it was last year because, as I said, last year you had—

Mr BARBER—That is hypothetical.

Mr PAKULA—Well, you might say it is hypothetical. The number of trains that were available is not hypothetical, it is a matter of fact. There were 10 more trains available on day 2 than there were on day 2 last year, and that is because of a range of actions taken by Metro, Mr Viney: the program to increase the availability of trains through an enhanced maintenance regime; additional works to improve the resilience of the infrastructure, as I indicated; the rail strengthening work; the step-down of services to balance the cancellations across the network when they are required. Last year it was a bit ad hoc; this year it was much better planned. The changes to the fleet management protocol and the enhancement of the train maintenance practices had that impact. I think also importantly there are a huge range of initiatives under way to improve the resilience of the infrastructure and the rolling stock to extreme weather conditions. There is the upgrading of the airconditioning across the entire fleet. That is going to make an enormous difference. When you think about the fact that each carriage has a couple of airconditioners and each train has six carriages, it is a major job to upgrade all those airconditioners. Metro have a commitment to have that done and that will be done by 2012. As I said, it was encouraging—and I will not put it any higher than that—that the 12 that had been reworked worked flawlessly on 11 January. That gives us some confidence that the Comeng airconditioning upgrade will be something that will provide increased reliability as we move forward.

The CHAIR—Minister, Metro indicated to us that they have identified some constraints in timetabling on a couple of lines and they are addressing that with new timetabling that they expect to be able to release fairly shortly. What is your expectation about when new timetabling might be available?

Mr PAKULA—My recollection at least, Chair—we have been on the record about this—is that we would be intending to revise the timetable in about May.

The CHAIR—Thank you.

Mr BARBER—Minister, on 11 January you did have five trains that never even got out of the yard due to a sagging wire so I think it still is a little bit hypothetical as to what might have happened if you and I had jumped in the wayback machine and gone back and fixed the problem in 2009.

Mr PAKULA—Yes.

Mr BARBER—However, I want to ask you about—

Mr PAKULA—You are talking about the trains that were in at North Melbourne because of—

Mr BARBER—Yes, they told us there were five trains and 76 cancellations.

Mr PAKULA—Yes. One of the things—one of the learnings from that—they were already working

on is understanding that the maintenance work on the overhead cabling is a critical function. One of the things about electrical wires is that in extreme temperatures they tend to sag and that can lead to a number of problems like trains being locked in or indeed pantographs pulling wires down. Metro are, can I say, keenly aware of their obligations to have a vigorous maintenance regime on overhead cables.

Mr BARBER—They also told us that they are doing a major re-timetabling exercise down on the south-eastern lines. They told us that as part of that, changes to the V/Line timetable component is not for discussion. They have to do a re-timetabling exercise but not look at possible changes to the V/Line part of it. Can you tell us if that is because you guys have examined and decided that there are no extra efficiencies in doing the two things together, or is it simply a matter of it is just more convenient to not have to make them talk to V/Line and do it all together?

Mr PAKULA—I might hand over to Hector McKenzie for this one.

Mr McKENZIE—I was not here, Mr Barber, and I did not hear exactly what they said, but I do know that the V/Line timetablers and the Metro timetablers do talk to each other about timetable changes; that there has been a history, and I know they are in discussions now, to make sure that when a Metro timetable change comes in that V/Line takes advantage of the fact that there are going to be changes, and also change this timetable to the extent that it is necessary to make space for any changes. I do not know the details of what is happening on the south-east line but there are not that many V/Line trains that are coming in on that line, and it may be that Metro has formed the view that they can timetable around the trains that are already there. But I do know that they are talking to V/Line about timetable changes that they are intending to do over the course of this year.

Mr BARBER—They were very definitive that the V/Line part of it will not be changed.

Mr McKENZIE—For the south-east line?

Mr BARBER—You will need to—

Mr McKENZIE—I am just telling you categorically that they are talking to V/Line.

Mr BARBER—That is not what they said. They said they will not be able to look at changes to V/Line, but you will need to check the transcript and check with them, and I am sure communicate back to the committee as to whether or not they are re-timetabling V/Line trains.

Mr McKENZIE—I do not know whether they need to re-timetable V/Line trains on the south-east line as there are not that many V/Lines trains in there. What I can tell you is that Metro and V/Line timetablers do talk to each other a lot, and are talking to each other about the introduction of additional services as part of the 38 trains coming in. That is happening.

Ms HUPPERT—We have heard a lot of evidence over a number of public hearings about the increase in patronage which has resulted from a variety of issues. Clearly one of them is population growth. That population growth clearly is not even around Melbourne with concentration, and obviously there is land use planning policies at the moment aimed at concentrating that population growth in particular areas. I am interested in how you see the projects currently on line with the Victorian Transport Plan, both the metro project, as well as some of the outer suburban, how that relates to projected increases in population and how we are going to deal with those, and the impacts of those increases in population on the transport system.

Mr PAKULA—Under the VTP which is not just a plan for the future, it is a plan which is being implemented as we speak, there is a \$14.2 billion investment in new trains and new stations in growth areas; extensions to Sunbury and South Morang, and two major rail projects—regional rail and the Melbourne metro. As I said earlier, I was pleased this morning to be out at the site of the commencement of work of the South Morang extension, the commencement of the early works. That will pave the way for the construction of a second track between Keon Park and Epping stations. That is the first stage of the South Morang rail extension. It will see the duplication of 5½ kilometres of track between Keon Park and Epping, and then the construction of an additional three and a half kilometres of track from Epping station to South Morang. That,

Ms Huppert, will provide a new station at Epping; a new premium station at South Morang with 450 parking spaces; a shared path along the rail extension to South Morang; major upgrades to the station at Thomastown, which will have a second platform and a pedestrian overpass.

That, as you rightly indicate, is a project which is very important to the communities of Melbourne's north which is growing very quickly. Ninety thousand people are expected to settle in the Plenty Valley growth area, including South Morang, in the years ahead. That is a project that builds on a number of improvements which the government is already undertaking to strengthen and improve the operations on the Epping and Hurstbridge rail corridors. We commenced stage 1 back in November 2008 when trains began to run in one direction through the city loop all day and that reduced delays on both those lines. Stage 2 involved the duplication of track between Clifton Hill and Westgarth to improve capacity on the Epping line. The entire South Morang rail extension project is about providing better transport options for Melbourne's north—new track, new stations and quicker and more direct access to the CBD.

In addition to that, there is the Sunbury electrification project which, I am aware, is a matter of some degree of controversy in that catchment, but it does link Sunbury into the metro network for the first time. It provides additional capacity and more services to those residents in Melbourne's north-east. It will enable the rail corridor to carry more trains than it ever has before. It is a project that involves—obviously because it is electrification—the construction of overhead power lines and substations along the rail corridor between Watergardens and Sunbury stations. That infrastructure is needed to run metro trains. But it will also deliver station upgrades at Sunbury and Diggers Rest; an additional 100 commuter parking spaces in the Sunbury town centre; 500 new spaces at Diggers Rest; better lighting; better CCTV; more seating and shelter.

When metro services are introduced from Sunbury, additional track capacity will be available to run additional trains into and out of the CBD. That will be especially valuable during the morning peak and the afternoon peak and that directly benefits everybody that uses that line. Passengers from Sunbury and Diggers Rest will have better stations, more carparking and up to double the number of train services each day. What it also means is that when metro trains start on what will become the Sunbury line, the V/Line carriages will then be freed up to run on other regional rail lines and that will mean that because of the electrification of the Sydenham line out to Sunbury, we can provide more services to other parts of the state as well. I will not go to regional rail to metro now, there might be another opportunity, but that is about radically improving the network; it is about providing Melbourne with a true metro system for the first time; it is about, particularly for those commuters coming from the western part of the state, separating regional services from metro services and improving reliability on both regional and metro services.

Ms HUPPERT—I think I am particularly interested in the impact that will have on more of the inner areas as well, clearly where planning policies are aimed at increasing inner city residential densities. I am assuming that the plan is that that will feed into timetable changes that will assist those who are trying to get on trains in the inner and middle suburbs.

Mr PAKULA—Obviously you can run more services and you can separate the V/Line services from the metro services. It provides additional capacity and better reliability across the network, and obviously when the metro work commences and is concluded, you will be moving towards what, I suppose, the aspiration would be which is to have train lines which operate which are not so interdependent on each other.

Mr O'DONOHUE—Minister, you have made reference to the transport plan a number of times. The transport plan lists projects by short, medium and long-term priority. Can you define what is meant by short, what is meant by medium and what is meant by long term in years?

Mr PAKULA—Mr O'Donohue, I would have thought it is self-evident that the short-term projects are the ones that have either commenced—and there are a whole range of them—like the purchase of the new rolling stock; like the improvements to stabling at a number of stations; like the commencement of construction on new stations et cetera, and those that are funded in the current budgetary cycle.

Mr O'DONOHUE—How do you define medium and long-term projects?

Mr PAKULA—There are projects which will commence right away, there are projects that will

commence over the next couple of years, and there are projects which the Victorian Transport Plan makes clear will commence somewhat further down the track. I think it is understood by most people that you cannot commence every project of a \$38 billion plan at once; to do so would be a recipe for chaos. What's more, you cannot fund all of it in one go. So what we do, Mr O'Donohue, is we prioritise and we commence providing those services that we can now, now. We can start the purchase of new trains. It is understood by the most experienced transport planners, for instance, that it is more important and more feasible to commence Regional Rail Links before we commence metro. That will provide extra capacity and extra reliability on the network sooner than we could if we started work on the other projects. I am happy, Jim, to pass over to you for more detail on that.

Mr BETTS—The Victorian Transport Plan is a 12-year transport planner. If you want to think about short term, as the minister has said, as being projects which are funded in the next four years. There are some projects which occur towards the back end of that 12-year period which we would be characterising as long term, and then there is obviously a whole bunch of stuff in the middle by definition. In the Commonwealth and state budgets last year, I believe from recollection, about \$7 billion was allocated across rail links, Sunbury electrification, South Morang, new rolling stock. That is the most significant commitment of public transport dollars I think at any point in Victoria's history in the space of a single eight-day period from state and Commonwealth. If you like, that is the short term, but it is a very substantial short term.

Regional rail link is a project which is under way at the moment, and there is a logical sequencing in the Victorian Transport Plan which says that it makes sense to move on to metro once the Regional Rail Link is funded and close to completion. There is logical sequencing in there.

Mr O'DONOHUE—Minister, you made some comments in response to Mr Viney about security on the network. Do you accept the proposition that stations staffed by police protective services officers is a superior solution than a CCTV camera with a distress button?

Mr VINEY—Who took staff off the stations?

Mr PAKULA—Mr O'Donohue, I understand that what you are trying to do is you are trying to get me to endorse your policy. Right? You are trying to get me to endorse your policy.

Mr O'DONOHUE—Feel free.

Mr PAKULA—Mr O'Donohue, why wouldn't you do that in your shoes? But here is the reality: last year there was a bill before parliament that would have done two things. It would have increased the range of operations that PSOs could have been used for and it would have provided the capacity to increase the number of PSOs. Your party, in conjunction with other parties, blocked it in the upper house. You blocked it in the upper house and a month later you announced a policy of staffing stations with PSOs. I think you have little credibility on this stuff. You block a measure that would have provided the capacity to do extra things with PSOs and create more of them, and then you say you are going to create more of them.

Mr LEANE—In your presentation, Minister, you spoke about an historic level of investment under the transport plan. But I want to touch on the relevance of the delivery of the 38 new trains for the system and how that is as far as a precedent—have we ever added to the rolling stock to that degree? In the long term—I know this would probably come under short term, the delivery of the 38 trains—what does that potentially mean to the reliability of our train service, having those new trains available?

Mr PAKULA—Well, that is one of the things that is probably not fully understood by people, just how much of the capacity to timetable extra services, the capacity to improve reliability and the capacity to reduce cancellations is dependent on how many trains you have. I talked this morning about the difference between having 129 available to 139. You have at the moment a system whereby to run full peak hour services, a.m. and p.m., you need somewhere between 144 and 149 trains. At the moment we had 165½ trains and the new train procurement is about adding 38 to that. You can see in terms of the ratios it is a very large increase in the number of trains that we have from 165.5 today to 203.5. What it means is a couple of things: first of all, it means you have extra redundancy in the system in case there are reliability issues with other trains that you've got, because there are always going to be a certain number of trains in maintenance at any

one time.

What it also means though is you have the capacity to change your timetables, provide extra services, and we have done a fair bit of that, but if we are going to continue to do that to expand the timetable, to provide additional services and to provide additional reliability, what we identified is that new trains is essential to doing that. That is why the VTP made a large provision for new rolling stock and why we are keenly anticipating the delivery of more and more of these new trains.

Mr BARBER—Minister, you very eloquently explained the value of electrifying the Sunbury line. I would like to take you back to the dialogue I was having with Mr McKenzie. Do you believe we could get more efficiencies out of the south-eastern group of lines if we went through an exercise of re-timetabling both the V/Lines and the electric trains together?

Mr PAKULA—Mr Barber, when you ask me about increased efficiencies on the south-eastern lines and the impact of that of re-timetabling V/Line and metro trains together, I will concede to you that that requires a level of sophistication in regards to the impacts of the interaction of timetabling between those services that I probably have not fully appraised myself of in 5½ weeks. On that basis I think that is a question—I do not know whether Tom or Hector would want to take that.

Mr McKENZIE—I would say to you that the issue of timetabling is a complex one. We would not accept a timetable from one operator that does not have regard for the other operator. In that sense I am not sure where you are driving at but certainly we are moving into position with metropolitan services and we are looking at the way that one form of service interacts with another form of service. That is why, for instance, Werribee was taken out of the loop and we have reversed the direction of Clifton Hill, so the number of stopping patterns and all those sorts of things that are within the network are things that we are looking at. But that goes across not just to V/Line and metro, that goes across a whole raft of what is the best way to run a network. We do try to treat it as a network.

Mr BARBER—If I caught what Metro said correctly, is the Altona loop going to run more like a shuttle now? Is that the intention?

Mr McKENZIE—No, I think the intention for the Laverton short service is that instead of the Werribee trains coming via the Altona loop, they would then run straight up the strait and that would allow the Altona services to run into the city.

Mr BARBER—They still start at Laverton and go through their loop.

Mr McKENZIE—Yes.

Mr BARBER—If I am coming from further west and I want to go to one of the trains along the Laverton loop, I will change at Laverton. That is what I mean by a shuttle.

Mr McKENZIE—Yes. If you were coming from Werribee you would need to change at Laverton.

Mr BARBER—Across the platform.

Mr McKENZIE—Yes.

Mr BARBER—Dive down the Altona loop and I get the train.

Mr McKENZIE—Yes.

Mr BARBER—I presume you have worked out a way to minimise the changeover times as well in that exercise.

Mr McKENZIE—I think the point of the exercise there is in fact the interaction between all those trains, particularly at that loop junction where Werribee had to cross—for instance, other Werribee trains

coming out and V/Line trains coming out—is in fact one of a series of bottlenecks along that whole section of line where the interaction between the train services creates issues for everybody along the train lines. The idea of having an ability to run each train line on its own merits a lot more is one that is going to be good for the vast bulk of passengers, and for the numbers of Werribee passengers that are transferring into one of those three or four stations along Altona then they will have to transfer, yes.

Mr BARBER—I am not saying I am wedded to the single seat journey, I am saying that if you are going to do it that way you need some coordination between the timetables to minimise changeover time. I am asking if you have that covered.

Mr PAKULA—Obviously, Mr Barber, that is a matter for the operator but, yes, you are right. You would imagine, and we would expect, that if you are going to have that kind of service that the timetables need to be integrated.

Mr BETTS—They are integrated and that is why you get projects like Sunbury electrification, why you get projects like Regional Rail Link because we have multiple use of the system—V/Line and Metro—and they talk to each other and we talk to both of them, and their individual timetable changes sit within an overall network operating plan designed to maximise efficiency and capacity. That happens.

Mr O'DONOHUE—Minister, Connex, when they were operating the system, on the 10th business day after the preceding month, would publish a list of cancelled trains on a line-by-line basis. The new operator has not been doing that. Is there a reason why?

Mr PAKULA—I do not know whether you asked the new operator that, Mr O'Donohue, but my understanding is that the performance obligations for the new operator are the same, and in fact they are providing more information than was provided by Connex. Jim, you might want to add to that.

Mr BETTS—You are right. I think the obligations are the same. Connex used to put a lot of information out on a voluntary basis. I am not sure what Metro's approach to that is going to be, but no doubt you had a chance to ask them that this morning. We have a document called Track Record which has been published on a regular basis, quarterly basis—

Mr VINEY—I do not think he asked.

Mr BETTS—for 10 years now and that provides more information about the punctuality, reliability, customer satisfaction of the train system, trams, buses and V/Line, and now taxis, than any other equivalent document in any jurisdiction.

Mr BARBER—Can I follow up? What they told us this morning was that they would be sacrificing the Williamstown and Alamein lines in future when they needed to do cancellations. If we are not getting line-by-line cancellation data we cannot see the impact of that on those two lines.

Mr BETTS—I believe that Track Record provides that information.

Mr McKENZIE—Track Record, I think, does provide line by line. I would have to double-check that. We would have no problems with them producing line-by-line data. I think the line-by-line data is around—I do not know about the timing exactly but there is no secret to any of that.

Mr PAKULA—There has been no change to the 10th day of the month requirements. That is still there.

The CHAIR—All done? I am not sure that they actually said that going forward that they intended to sacrifice those lines. They indicated that was a management position at that juncture.

Mr PAKULA—I would have been surprised if—

The CHAIR—They would be hoping that other activities would obviate that.

Mr PAKULA—Can I say I would have been surprised if they had said that because I know that was what occurred on 11 January, they closed those lines for a period of time but that was the decision on that day. There is no understanding that I have that is the decision moving forward. They have an obvious need to maximise a number of services on the system in a general sense, but that does not mean they have made a decision that Williamstown or Alamein or indeed any other line is going to be specifically dealt with differently than others in the future.

The CHAIR—A final question from me. In terms of the evidence we were given this morning, there was an indication that the braking systems on the Comeng trains performs differently to Siemens, as is understood. I take it that is a design issue, not a specifications issue—going back to Mr Barber's earlier line of questioning—and can I understand whether or not the specifications for the new trains have been developed with a view to addressing that braking inconsistency between the two systems that we already have.

Mr PAKULA—Chair, I will hand over to Tom for this one.

Mr SARGANT—Specifications for the Comeng trains have performance characteristics that were defined as being acceptable 20 years ago. Siemens trains have higher performance characteristics. The new trains also have the same specifications, the current fleet of X'Trapolis trains.

The CHAIR—Except on the braking system the Comeng is performing better.

Mr SARGANT—Not in terms of deceleration rate. The maximum deceleration rate I think is about .7 or .8 metres per second squared, whereas the X'Trapolis and Siemens are one metre per second squared or even slightly higher.

The CHAIR—Okay. Thank you, Minister, and entourage, for your attendance today. We do appreciate you giving the evidence and particularly, Minister, given that you are relatively new to the portfolio, we wish you well. Can I indicate to you, as a reminder, that you will receive a copy of the transcript of this morning's hearing and will have an opportunity to correct any mistakes in that. But obviously the substance of the evidence is not to be corrected. Those types of corrections will not be accepted. Thank you for your attendance today.

Mr PAKULA—Thank you, Chair.

Witnesses withdrew.

Committee adjourned.