

# CORRECTED VERSION

## 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 — 22 September 2009

#### Members

Mr B. Atkinson  
Mr G. Barber  
Mr D. Drum  
Ms J. Huppert

Mr S. Leane  
Mr E. O'Donohue  
Mr M. Viney

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#### Witness

Mr E. Dotson.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR** — Mr Dotson, welcome to the Legislative Council Select Committee on Train Services public hearing. The Chair, Bruce Atkinson, is an apology and so is another member, Mr Matt Viney. Today our members are Mr Barber, Mr O'Donohue, Ms Huppert and Mr Drum, and I am the deputy chair, Mr Leane.

Today's hearing is in relation to the factors leading to the causes and failures in the provision of metropolitan and V/Line train services. All evidence taken at the hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege, as provided by the Constitution Act 1975, and further subject to the provisions of the Legislative Council standing orders. Any comments you make outside may not be afforded such privilege. All evidence you give today will be recorded by Hansard; you will be supplied with a transcript and you will be able to amend anything that you think is in error. Mr Dotson, would you care to make any opening remarks before we ask some questions of you?

**Mr DOTSON** — Sure. First of all I would like to thank the select committee for giving me the opportunity to give evidence. But in this opening statement I would just like to be brief and draw the committee's attention to comments made in the report that I did in August 2008 which I think are relevant to the subject matter of this discussion, and also perhaps comment on some issues that have arisen since August 2008 in relation to matters that were in my report.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR** — That will be fine.

**Mr DOTSON** — I was asked to review a number of aspects of the East-West Link Needs Assessment related to public transport, but I think the one that is of particular relevance here is Recommendation 3A, which concerns making better use of the existing capacity of the network. This is discussed in pages 20 and 21 of my report. I will go over what I did in looking at this.

I looked at what I felt were the main reasons for the Eddington Report to make this recommendation, to try to assess the assumptions behind it, to look at the details of the recommendation and to set out particular items that would require consideration if a full feasibility study and business case were to proceed. That was basically the brief I was given. The conclusions that I reached were that I think there is a consensus amongst transport analysts, planners and operators that more capacity could be provided by the current system, particularly within the inner core area; although at that time I did not have the views of the incumbent operator. However, there have been only limited attempts previously over a number of years to increase capacity when demand was not increasing, and consequently limited investment. So prior to this large increase in patronage growth we have seen in the last five years, the patronage growth was fairly flat and therefore there was not a lot of incentive, if you like, to invest in some of these things.

Having said that, the East-West Link Needs Assessment did not focus to any great extent on analysing the constraints to making better use of the existing capacity or to the scope, cost and timing of measures needed to remove these constraints. My comments on what could be done are that they could have looked at short-term — I said 2010 — improvements in current operational practices and performance, and I understand that the Department of Transport is in fact doing some of this, but the details have not been made public. But it also requires developing a time-based and costed plan to remove operational capacity constraints so as to progressively raise the maximum practical, reliable capacity of all lines, with a target of, say, no less than 24 trains an hour.

In my recommendations I said that I thought the planning studies for the rail tunnel should include some analysis of what could be required in the medium term, which I put as 2010 to 2018, in order that the capacity could be increased on this system in parallel with the work being done for the east-west tunnel, and that any such improvements that were found to be feasible, economically viable and not likely to cause undue disruption during implementation and not made redundant by the construction of the tunnel should then be moved to a full feasibility study and business case assessment.

In terms of what should be done, I suggested that there should be a review and justification of all the current assumptions used for operational planning, including line capacity, dwell times, train loading standards and service patterns for both metro and regional trains. There should be an identification of all operational reliability constraints with an indication of possible solutions. There should be a screening of solutions and a cost-effective feasibility study done on those which could be implemented within a 10-year time frame.

In order to test these solutions, there should be some upgrading of the transport model that was used by Eddington to produce the forecast for the tunnel and the testing should be done as a series of what I call 'what if' scenarios. In other words, what if travel demand goes up faster than you anticipate or what happens if you change the operational scenarios. You can get a good understanding of what the impacts would be if you do certain things.

Since the report was published in 2008, the *Victorian Transport Plan* has been published. I note on page 71 of that, there is a reference to allocating:

... more than \$200 million over the next four years to a series of targeted measures to increase capacity and reduce delays ...

The items that were referred to were fairly specific items, including:

Improving signalling, modernising overhead power supply, and extending the new Metrol control system ...

Upgrading overhead power supply control systems

...

Improvements in driver changeover facilities to enhance the efficient operation of the train fleet ...

and:

A new timetable from early 2010 ...

The transport plan also provides \$650 million for 20 new X'trapolis trains and a further \$2 billion for up to 32 new generation trains. But it is somewhat silent on any other improvements to the infrastructure.

I would also like briefly to touch on the *Age* editorial of December last year, the discussion that took place about the report and the comments I made in my report. The essence of my report was that I felt more capacity could be obtained from the existing system, and that the tunnel proposal would take longer to come to fruition than four or five years. In my experience it would be at least 10 years before you could consider it could be opened and possibly longer because the major constraints would be finding adequate funding and probably also a series of discussions on the planning of the link and where the stations might be.

I think the *Age* took it as me saying I did not support the rail tunnel. My comment would be I did not support the rail tunnel going ahead right away because I did not think it could be justified right away on the basis of availability of funds or economic factors. There were other ways of achieving the same result, which is to increase the capacity of the system. But I did say that the tunnel would be justified in the future, and I put a date of 2030, if Melbourne keeps growing as we anticipate it will and if there is a continuing move to public transport. In other words, if the public transport mode share keeps going up as we would all hope and expect it to do, particularly if there are more stringent controls put on car usage or greater encouragement given to the use of public transport through various means.

Subsequent to that, we have had the announcement from Infrastructure Australia which has accorded finance for the construction of the Regional Rail Link. There has been public consultation on the Regional Rail Link between West Werribee and Sunshine, but I have not seen anything discussing the investigations between Sunshine and Southern Cross which, of course, is the critical part of upgrading that link.

More recently, last week I think it was, we have had the announcement by the Premier of the planning work for Metro 1, which I understand is the new name for Stage 1 of the east-west rail tunnel. Tenders are being called from selected consultants to undertake engineering and planning work but the actual brief for this work has not yet been made public. So it is not possible to see whether the brief for this work is merely for an engineering feasibility study for the line between Footscray and Domain, or whether it covers broader issues of increasing system capacity which is what was the essence of Recommendation 3A in the Eddington Report that I supported.

I would also like to make a couple of comments on track capacity, which has been the subject of some debate. In my report I mentioned a figure of 24 trains an hour. This is what I would call a reasonable, practical capacity under certain operating conditions. International best practice in an operating environment like a metro — by 'metro' I mean a train system which has trains basically running from one end to the other, with no other tracks

merging with them and no conflicting movements — is that you can get 30 trains an hour. This is not a theoretical academic figure; you can go onto various websites and see this on timetables in London, Paris or Hong Kong, but this does require a very stringent operating environment. I think there is a general consensus that taking 80 per cent of this figure would be a more reasonable maximum to aim for in a system like in Melbourne at least in the first instance, and this is based partly on work that has been done in the UK, partly again on looking at what operators around the world are operating. But that figure again does suppose that you are operating trains from one end of the line to the other, that you have eliminated any possible constraints to the maximum extent possible, that you are operating sensible service patterns and you are making the most efficient use of the crews and the resources.

My point is that that I feel this would be achievable. The question is: what would one have to do in Melbourne in order to achieve it, how much money would you have to spend and is it worth spending that money. What you have got to look at is comparing that amount of expenditure against expenditure on building a tunnel, which is a very large expenditure. Although it is currently split into two lumps in Melbourne, it is effectively one fairly large quantum of expenditure to achieve the increase in capacity, whereas other things could be done incrementally as the capacity requirements build up over time.

The difference between comments that have been made by people, including the Secretary for Transport, and what I am saying is that I am not saying you can get 24 trains an hour in the existing system as it is operating currently. What I am saying is 24 trains an hour ought to be a target that should be aimed for and one should be looking at how you achieve it, what you have to do to achieve and whether people are prepared to accept what you have to do to achieve it. I think that is all I want to say at this stage.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR** — Thanks very much. Could you give us a bit of an overview of your rail operating experience?

**Mr DOTSON** — I do not have rail operating experience; I have rail planning experience. Previously from 1983 to 1991 I was the general manager of planning for initially The Met and then the metropolitan part of the Public Transport Corporation. Subsequent to that I went to Washington where I was working for the World Bank. In terms of dealings I have had with rail systems, since about 2000 I have had an association with Mumbai. I spent two years preparing a World Bank-funded project in Mumbai. I do not know if you saw the recent SBS program on Mumbai, but it has one of the most heavily utilised — if not the most heavily utilised — suburban rail system in the world. We were looking at how to improve the capacity of that through investment. But I am not a rail operator; I am a planner. I know about strategic planning and I know a certain amount about rail operational planning, but I am not an operator.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR** — Thanks for your expertise.

**Mr O'DONOHUE** — Thank you, Mr Dotson, for your submission. One of the themes coming out of the submission is what is better value: to invest in improvements in a current system, or to build new infrastructure. I suppose that is one of the questions you have posed in your submission this morning.

**Mr DOTSON** — Yes.

**Mr O'DONOHUE** — Do you believe the work has been done to examine what is required to get to that 24 trains per hour that you suggest is achievable on a system like exists in Melbourne?

**Mr DOTSON** — Not that has been made public. I believe some work is being undertaken by the Department of Transport, but I do not think nearly enough has been done, and what is being done is not being made public in the sense that no-one is saying, 'This is a brief that has been given to a consultant to look at these items, and these are the results that are coming out'.

**Mr O'DONOHUE** — Further to that, do you believe investment decisions about new tunnels or new lines should not be made until that analysis is completed and put in the public space to be debated?

**Mr DOTSON** — Yes, I certainly think an investment decision on building the tunnel should not be made until alternative ways of achieving the same capacity increases have been investigated, costed and evaluated. It would be normal practice in transport planning to do what is called alternatives analysis. You say, 'We have a problem and here are alternative ways of solving it. What is going to give us the best value for the money?'.

**Mr BARBER** — You would have seen a lot of these over the years, obviously — these business cases, for want of a simple word.

**Mr DOTSON** — Yes.

**Mr BARBER** — When they are bad it is pretty easy to blow them apart. Can you give us an idea of what is a good business case, what it would consist of and how you would approach it? It seems with this report you have got stuck mainly arguing that it should be done. I am saying: let us say I agree with you and I am the Minister for Public Transport; what do I do next?

**Mr DOTSON** — You ought to do two things. One thing which you are doing is taking the rail tunnel and building up the case for the costing, and not just as far as Domain but through to Caulfield, and looking at what it is realistically going to cost to build and operate it. Then you look at other ways of achieving that. First of all, you have to ascertain what it is you want to get in terms of increased capacity, not in terms of train paths but in terms of the number of people you want to carry into the CAD in the morning peak or out of it of the evening peak and say, 'Okay, we need to provide this amount of capacity at these dates. How can we do it?'. Then you systematically look at the existing system and say, 'Can we get that capacity on the existing system? How much can we get from operational improvement? How much can we get by changing the track configuration, by buying new trains which have higher capacity? How much can we get by assuming higher loads per train, which may mean more people standing? At what point do we then have to start building new tracks? Could we do it by building a small section of tunnel somewhere rather than a whole 17 kilometres of tunnel?'.

You build up the case and the benefits and do an analysis of what the demands would be in order to get to the point of saying, 'Well, this is the decision we have to make'. You do other things which are normally in business cases like looking at the risk analysis and assumptions and contingencies, but you also have to look very hard at what you would expect to be the level of funding available to you. It is like with anyone: if you want to buy anything, you have to know you can pay for it. It is no good to me relying on saying 'We will get the money from the commonwealth government' unless there is some agreement from the commonwealth government to provide the funding.

I will give you two examples. In the United States the federal government provides funding for projects and it does so on the basis of requiring submissions from agencies; those submissions have a very strict format, but if the projects are accepted for funding the agencies get given the money to build a project. In London the Mayor has managed to get an agreement with the UK Treasury to supply quite a large amount of money over a 10-year period for the upgrade of the London Underground. This has been made public; it has been published and agreed. It is quite surprising that the Treasury, in a way, has been prepared to guarantee funds ahead of time, but that enables Transport for London to sit down and do some real hard-nosed serious planning about how it is going to upgrade the system.

**Mr BARBER** — You are saying that is normal, but in Victoria we do not have that culture and I doubt we have the expertise. You are pointing out that what we are doing is picking some low-hanging fruit — simple stuff like reversing the loop or whatever — while up there they have got the big bang. What I am asking is: what steps do we go through to somehow close that gap? Is it a case of hiring in expertise?

**Mr DOTSON** — No, it is a case of going through the process. The process is not being gone through; that is the point I am making. There is a process for evaluating capital investment in public transport or in roads that you need to go through. It is no good saying, 'Well, we have a problem' — we all know we have a problem — and then leaping into saying, 'Let's build a rail tunnel' and 'Let's build a rail tunnel that we don't know we've got the money for'. The process that you go through normally takes you through looking at the options that are available to solve the problem, costing them and then saying, 'How much money have we got? If we have not got the money, how do we go about getting it?'. But that process is not being followed. It is being short-circuited. There is a lot of expertise available in Melbourne, but my argument is it is not being made use of in the best possible way.

**Ms HUPPERT** — You have raised a number of issues, and I am trying to work out where to start, there are so many of them. I just really wanted to clarify your comments in relation to the Eddington review, which clearly was a consideration of a lot of those issues you have talked about — the current needs, public transport growth and use, public transport growth and the use of roads — and came up with a number of

recommendations for moving forward, many of which have been picked up in the Victorian Transport Plan, as you have said. Clearly you have said that you think there will be a need for the tunnel in the future and that you also agree with recommendation 3 which suggests making better use of the existing network to increase capacity.

I just want to ask for your comment on a couple of things that we have read about in submissions and heard in the evidence given today, and one of them is the actual lead time it takes to bring major infrastructure projects online. To me it seems quite logical that if we have experienced a 50-odd per cent increase in rail use over the last five years, which is expected to continue because the facts we have heard about — population growth, the appetite for reducing carbon emissions and all those types of issues — are going to continue, despite the fact that we do not have the money now, surely we should be planning for the future and leaving aside land and other resources that are going to be required to produce that infrastructure in the future when it will be needed.

A lot of the criticism that we have seen to date has been that, ‘Yes, there is this population growth. Yes, there has been this use, but there was not any infrastructure planning over the last two decades, which should have been done, and that is why when the population and the usage goes up we are left in a hole’. Surely the Eddington Report and the Victorian Transport Plan are trying to avoid us having that problem in the future by saying, ‘Yes, we have started the design. We have started the planning work. No, we may not have the dollars assigned to it at this stage, but if we reserve the land that is required, when we do in fact need that infrastructure we will not be starting from scratch’. Surely that is good planning.

**Mr DOTSON** — Yes, sure. It is good planning to do that for the future, but we also have to look at what we do in the short term. To answer your question — and you started off talking about the lead time — yes, there is a need for the planning. I am not saying do not plan the tunnel, because I think that should go ahead and so should planning for other rail expansions, but an issue that has arisen is why some of this planning was not done in the five years that the rail patronage has been going up.

**Ms HUPPERT** — Some of the other things that have happened are dealt with in the transport plan. You were talking about the incremental changes in terms of increasing capacity, and you gave your views on some of them — for example, moving towards a metro system, changing the direction of trains through the loop so there is not the same conflict, and improving stabling and improving signalling to remove some of the conflicts further out from the centre. There is a lot of work being done on that at the moment. Clearly, as Eddington has recommended, there is more work to be done on that, but surely what we need is a multifaceted approach, and that seems to come through in your comments. Reading your report, you seem to be saying that we need a multifaceted approach, and that is what is recommended in the report.

**Mr DOTSON** — We do need a multifaceted approach, but if one reads the publicly available documents, the accent is on the east–west rail tunnel and the Tarneit Link. For example, you mentioned signalling: there is not much I have read about what might be done on signalling, and again there will be a lead time on that, or on putting in a few over-rail flyovers, but again there will be a lead time on those. I am not saying do not do the long-term planning — clearly we have to — but there is also a need to look at some short-term things as well.

**Mr DRUM** — I am just curious as to this theme that is coming through your report where you effectively say, ‘We may need to do a better analysis of all the current assumptions that we use to plan’.

**Mr DOTSON** — Yes.

**Mr DRUM** — I would just naturally have assumed that the people in charge of the system would be constantly challenging their own assumptions and constantly challenging how their capacity has been reached. I would just naturally have assumed that the operators would have been looking at their existing systems and looking to see if they could find incremental improvements, and yet you are effectively saying that if you took a broadbrush approach or a blank-sheet-of-paper approach to what we currently have, you could possibly even double the services that currently exist.

**Mr DOTSON** — First of all I would just make a comment that I do not think your assumption is correct. Based on discussions I have had I do not think your assumption is correct. Secondly, I think if you did take a blank sheet of paper, which I think has been started recently in the Department of Transport, you could achieve increases in capacity. I would not say you could double it, but you could certainly make better use of the existing system. But let us be clear: when I talk about questioning assumptions I mean asking questions like:

what sort of operating patterns do you want on a line? Currently, if you look at lines, there are various operating patterns that are adopted. Why are there two or three operating patterns at peak on a line? This is historic, but maybe we should say that if we only had one operating pattern, it may take people who live at the end of the line a little longer, but maybe we could increase the capacity by 20 per cent. Maybe if we did not change crews at Flinders Street, we could increase the capacity. Maybe we could run some of the tracks in a slightly different way. But I think your assumption that people are looking at this hard is, from the discussions I have had, not correct. It may be that in the last 12 months this has been happening.

**Mr DRUM** — It must be very frustrating for you if you as somewhat of an authority on these issues. Do you sit back, shake your head and say, ‘Why do we keep doing what we have always done and expect to get a different result?’.

**Mr DOTSON** — I would just be a little surprised why people do not look at it, faced with the problems we have. As I said, I am not an operator. I am a planner. So as someone looking at the problem, the first thing I would say is, ‘How can we get the most out of the existing system? What can we do?’. I would go and talk to the operational people, the timetabling people or the crew scheduling people and say, ‘How can we do it?’. I do not know why the operators might not have been doing it. Maybe they have, but as I said, a lot of this material is not necessarily made public.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR** — You are someone with international experience in the topic and the reference we have been looking at, which is the causes of interruptions and delays to our rail system and delays. Do you see any jurisdictions around the world dealing with issues that are very hard for the operators to control in terms of interaction on lines with humans and livestock, and power failures? Is there any jurisdiction that might deal with it any differently to any other jurisdiction on those issues?

**Mr DOTSON** — Can you repeat that?

**The DEPUTY CHAIR** — We are looking into the causes of delays and cancellations, and we have had discussions with some of the previous witnesses, especially with the operators, and I would say operators around the world would have the same problems with people committing suicide and jumping from trains, and therefore we obviously need to have police interaction and investigation. We also have a problem in our V/Line area, our country area, with interaction with livestock, where there might be issues with fences, which are the responsibility of farmers, breaking down. We have also got things like power failures and things like that. These are things where it is pretty hard to say to the operator, ‘It is solely your fault’. From your international experiences, do they deal with things any differently?

**Mr DOTSON** — As I said, I am not an operator, so I could not really comment in any depth, but there would be protocols that would be used around the world, and I think you would find that railway operators would have similar protocols for dealing with issues like that. They may vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

Again, if I refer to the Mumbai case, on that system they have 10 people killed per day because of people walking across the tracks. The protocol there, because of the pressure on them to operate the system, is that they move the body off the track and then go. That is not an option that is probably available here. But I think you would find that in a lot of these issues the good practice responses fall within a fairly narrow band.

**Mr O’DONOHUE** — Mr Dotson, you have spoken about the need to compare the costs and benefits of making efficiencies to the current system versus the new projects that have been announced by the government. Have you done any analysis, or do you think the government has done any analysis, on comparing the new capital projects that have been announced versus those that are advocated by others? Our next witness is the Eastern Transport Coalition, and they want a railway line to Doncaster and Rowville. They are projects that have been mooted for decades. Are you aware of any analysis comparing, for example, the Tarneit Link versus those other infrastructure projects?

**Mr DOTSON** — No.

**Mr O’DONOHUE** — Is that something that should be done, do you think? Do you think new infrastructure projects should also be compared, just as efficiencies in the system should be compared against new infrastructure projects?

**Mr DOTSON** — Yes. You should be comparing the cost to increase efficiency in the system with new links within a financial envelope that you are sure of, and doing a cost-benefit analysis of these things in order to make the best possible use of funds.

I would assume that some of this work is going on, because 20 years ago this is what was being done by the Met and V/Line in terms of the capital investment programs at that time. What may not have been done as much as I would have liked to have seen is the comparison of the alternatives for new investment — and not just doing the analysis but sharing the results of the analysis with the public and with the interest groups, and discussing it with them and explaining why it would not be possible, for example, to have a rail line to Doncaster. That piece of analysis has now been done several times.

**Mr O'DONOHUE** — I suppose that gets back to your point that whilst you cannot provide funding for long-term projects today, having some sort of funding formula or plan is needed, otherwise projects are left in the never-never, a lot like the rail extensions.

**Mr DOTSON** — Yes, and I would say there should be effectively a rolling program of investments which can be moved up or moved down according to the funding availability. It does not mean it has to be fixed year on year, but it can move according to funding availability or differing requirements.

A system that again is used fairly generally is about developing three or five-year rolling programs and updating them annually. Things come into the program or fall out of the program according to the requirements of the time or the politics of the time as well, but at least it enables everyone to say, 'Over the next five years we know we are going to do this, and over the following five years the government is aiming towards another group of projects'. But it also puts into the financial picture the underlying level of investment that you need in order to keep upgrading the system and to keep increasing the capacity of the system.

**Mr BARBER** — This rail tunnel was proposed and developed by Sir Rod Eddington, and then it was submitted to a group called Infrastructure Australia, which at that stage was headed by Sir Rod Eddington. If this project had been submitted to you when you were still working at the World Bank, how far do you think it would have progressed in terms of the World Bank's willingness to support it, if all the material that you have seen was submitted to you as a bid for funds?

**Mr DOTSON** — I think in the short term it would not have progressed very far.

**Mr BARBER** — Are you saying that there are developing countries out there that are doing their transport planning better than Melbourne is and therefore are more successful when they come to bid for funds from the World Bank?

**Mr DOTSON** — I am saying that the World Bank is very demanding in what it requires of its clients in terms of justification for the use of the funds which the World Bank has, because the World Bank is a lender of last resort and it has calls on funds not just for transport infrastructure investment but for social projects as well, and so there is a very rigorous process that has to be gone through in terms of justifying the investment in projects.

**Mr BARBER** — But you would help all those people out with their bids, would you not? You would help those countries and bidders out by showing them how and giving them the expertise to develop a complying rather than an unsuccessful bid.

**Mr DOTSON** — You certainly help them out with technical assistance and show them how to do the analysis and help them with the analysis, but at the end of the day if the analysis does not come up with the rate of return that is required, there is nothing I or anyone else in the World Bank can do. That is why for a long time the World Bank was reluctant to fund metro projects.

**Mr BARBER** — Because they have pretty low BCR or IRR?

**Mr DOTSON** — They are very expensive pieces of capital infrastructure, not just in terms of transport infrastructure but in terms of urban infrastructure in the city. If you want to invest several billion dollars in a metro line, that may be competing against investing in hospitals or schools or sewerage systems or water systems.

**Mr BARBER** — Just like in Victoria.

**Mr DOTSON** — Yes, or like anywhere.

**Ms HUPPERT** — I think the World Bank investment issue is a bit of a furphy; I do not think we can put ourselves on the same level of demand for World Bank funding as a number of very underprivileged developing countries do.

I had a question about the Tarneit line in relation to recommendation 2 of the Eddington Report, which you have also concurred with. It seems to me that as a planning exercise we have heard a lot of evidence relating to the difficulties where there is not separation between metropolitan and regional rail. Obviously that is one of the aims of the Tarneit line. I just wonder if you could expand on some of the issues that are caused, which this line is aimed at alleviating, and the decision-making process.

**Mr DOTSON** — My understanding is that the Tarneit line is aimed at relieving two things, or maybe three. One is to provide extra capacity to Geelong. It is not possible to increase the number of trains running to Geelong — sorry, let me go back. In the west we have an increasing demand on the metropolitan services due to the increase in development that is taking place in the west and the fact that there are less jobs in the west in ratio terms of job opportunities to economically active people, than there are in the east. There is a greater number of people commuting out of the area. That is point 1.

Secondly, there is also a desire to increase the services to Geelong, which again has an increasing demand, and also to increase the V/Line services to Ballarat and Bendigo. If you look at ways to deal with the first issue of Geelong — let us say the Geelong and Werribee line — there are constraints in the number of places along that, most particularly through Yarraville. If you were going to do an alternative analysis, you would ask: first of all, can we build four tracks all the way through there and find a way to get to Southern Cross station? The answer is not obvious. The Tarneit line was proposed as a way of bringing the Geelong services across to the Ballarat–Bendigo corridor and then investing in the Ballarat–Bendigo corridor to separate out the V/Line and metropolitan services. The problem that arises is that you have V/Line and metropolitan services competing for the same piece of track, but they have different operating requirements and so you are not getting the maximum throughput on the track, and there are also problems of interaction when the trains are not running to schedule and therefore are losing their slots. It makes eminent sense to do what is called sectorising the railway — and I fully supportive of this — where you create a railway effectively for V/Line services which is separate from the railway for metropolitan services all the way into Southern Cross. But the Tarneit Link is only dealing with part of that. It is dealing with getting the Geelong services across to the Bendigo–Ballarat line. It does not deal with the issue between Sunshine and Southern Cross.

**Ms HUPPERT** — Though I understand work has started on another platform at Southern Cross that will —

**Mr DOTSON** — Sorry?

**Ms HUPPERT** — Work is starting on another platform at Southern Cross.

**Mr DOTSON** — Yes, but there is also a question of finding the extra space to put the extra track in between Sunshine and Southern Cross.

**Mr O'DONOHUE** — I just want to expand on that. On the issue between Sunshine and Southern Cross, what you are saying is that Tarneit will only solve part of the problem.

**Mr DOTSON** — Yes.

**Mr O'DONOHUE** — Specifically what is the issue between Sunshine and Southern Cross — lack of track capacity?

**Mr DOTSON** — Lack of track capacity and how it will be provided and how you physically separate V/Line trains and metropolitan trains. There was an assumption at one stage that the east–west tunnel would be built and therefore a number of the metropolitan trains would be taken off the existing system at Footscray and run into the tunnel. That is fine if the tunnel is built and the timing of Tarneit and the tunnel works is the same,

but if the tunnel were delayed you would then have a question about how you create the extra capacity between Footscray and Southern Cross.

**Mr O'DONOHUE** — If I just might continue, even if the tunnel were built, it still would not remove metropolitan services completely from that section of traffic.

**Mr DOTSON** — No, it would not.

**Mr O'DONOHUE** — And with growth over time that would probably come back, presumably.

**Mr DOTSON** — That would be my contention, yes.

**Ms HUPPERT** — But you are just assuming that no planning has been done for that.

**Mr DOTSON** — I am not assuming no planning has been done. I again say that there has not been much said publicly about what planning has been done on this.

**Ms HUPPERT** — But that is not to say that the Department of Transport has not done the planning and has just not made an announcement or is in the process of locating where those tracks are going to go. You have just assumed that based on your work 12 months ago; this is not something that is based on your knowledge of what the Department of Transport currently has under way in terms of projects which may be announced in the near future.

**Mr DOTSON** — You are correct, but I would have thought it was a little strange if the department is doing work on it but is not prepared to announce what it is doing. But then I am working in an environment where I think matters like this should be made public — —

**Ms HUPPERT** — I just think in terms of planning for the placement of new tracks one of the issues about putting things out in the public too soon before final decisions are made is that it allows for scaremongering about people losing land. From a good policy perspective it is important to actually make a decision before putting out any options that are uninformed. That allows people living in areas that may be affected by the new tracks to be properly informed in an orderly manner, which avoids the problem of people getting scared and worried about what is going to happen to their property. I think that is not a bad thing to be doing: to be doing the planning without uninformed information getting out to the public.

**Mr DOTSON** — I have a professional difference with you. That is not the current normal worldwide practice. Normal practice is to go in for full public consultation, including involving the public in writing the brief for the studies. That is the way that has been found over time to reduce the amount of concern and reduce the potential political backlash at a later date.

**Ms HUPPERT** — Just in terms of public consultation, what is your view on the process that led to the Eddington Report? I understand there was a great deal of public consultation, and people — —

**Mr DOTSON** — Let me be clear. When I talk about public consultation I mean a process that is not submission-based. You actually go out to the public and you talk to them about the issue you are going to address. You ask them for their view, and you ask them what they think about the issue. You ask them to make suggestions about how you may solve the problem, and then you go away and take that on board, together with the stuff from the technical people, and work up some solutions, come back to the public and say, 'Here we have three solutions. These are the costs, these are the benefits and these are the downsides we see. What do you think?'. You solicit public opinion in a variety of ways, and then you go away and you produce a preferred option to recommend to the minister.

That is a major criticism I have about the process. The submission-based process is not public consultation as it would be practised elsewhere. The reason that public consultation started in transport projects was to stop people laying down in front of bulldozers on projects they did not like. That is how it started.

**Mr O'DONOHUE** — Just to continue with the issue of the linking of V/Line and metropolitan services from Sunshine to Southern Cross, and taking up the point made in the previous question, all the details are not going to be in the plans, but from your reading of the transport plan released last year does it deal with the issue in any way? If this issue is not dealt with, it calls into question the whole — —

**Mr DOTSON** — My reading of the transport plan is that it is not mentioned specifically. Someone will probably say that there is a line somewhere that makes oblique reference to it.

**Mr BARBER** — With the whole North Melbourne to Footscray area we are shown all these confusing spaghetti diagrams which show all the tracks as if to say it is an impossible mess and how could you ever untangle it? Could you untangle it without a dirty great expensive plan?

**Mr DOTSON** — I take the view that you can untangle it if you say, ‘What do we need to do to untangle it?’. Then you sit down and go through a process of saying, ‘What is the tangle? How can we get rid of the tangle?’. It is like anything. If you want to solve a problem you can do it, but it is a question of what decisions you have to make in order to do it. I think it is solvable, but the problem has been there for some years. To be fair, no-one has had to look at it because the demands on the system have been such that it has not become a major problem until now. But the conflicts that exist have been there for a while.

The question is: do you spend some time and money to look at whether you can untangle it on the surface, or do you say, ‘That is too hard. We will take 14 or 20 trains an hour out of that mess and stick them in a tube under the ground, and that will solve the problem. When we have the 20 trains out we then go back and look at the tangle and see, with less trains in it, whether we can untangle it’. My argument is simply that if you are talking about \$3.5 billion, or let us say \$7 billion plus if you are going to do the whole Footscray to Caulfield tunnel, I think you need to spend a little more money on seeing whether or not you can untangle it.

**Mr BARBER** — With the benefit-cost ratio of this issue that you are describing here — I do not know whether or not you call them low-hanging fruit — you talk about loading standards, surface patterns and dwell times. The BCRs on those have got to be many, many times better than a — —

**Mr DOTSON** — Yes, they would be fairly high. I imagine they would be fairly high.

**Ms HUPPERT** — One of the things in the transport plan when we are talking about untangling the system is the move towards a more metro-style system.

**Mr DOTSON** — Yes.

**Ms HUPPERT** — Which obviously is set out in the transport plan. What are your views on that type of planning?

**Mr DOTSON** — I make two comments. I do not think what the government means by ‘metro-style system’ is really made clear in the VTP. We have a suburban rail system in Melbourne. A metro system is a very different system. It is a system where you have stops every 1 or 1.5 kilometres, trains running end-to-end on a piece of track on a regular schedule that is an interval-frequency service, a fairly high proportion of people standing, and very high capacity. That is not what I am seeing being discussed in the VTP. Yes, we do need a metropolitan rail system which is physically segregated from the V/Line system and what is called sectorised, which means that if not single lines at least line groups are, if not physically segregated, at least operationally segregated so they can operate in a metro-like manner, which means they are just operating end-to-end and not having to worry about interactions with the rest of the system.

I do not think the concept has been enunciated well enough in the VTP. I think we are moving in the right direction, but I still think there is further work to be done. Again, this is thinking that is going on, but it needs to be taken through to some logical conclusion. I would accept that there are elements of it which are going to be difficult perhaps for the public to accept because we are probably looking at higher loads per train and higher numbers of people standing per train but, hopefully, more trains running per hour running faster so the standing time, if it does not increase, can maybe decrease. If you take an average metro system, you get on in the peak and you are standing up and you are very close pressed. That is not what people appear to want currently in the Melbourne system.

**Ms HUPPERT** — How would you increase capacity without going to that sort of system? Or is it the fact that we live in a big city and the system we have was not planned for a major metropolis which Melbourne is turning into? Is it really just the fact that the identity of Melbourne is changing? Melbourne is turning into a busy metropolis and it needs to have a transport system that — —

**Mr DOTSON** — I think you have to accept that you are going to move towards having more people on a train. But you have also got to say, ‘What do we think we would like to have as the upper limit’. This is where we get into this discussion about when you drop the tunnel into the system, because at some point — and I have said it — there will not be any more capacity you can squeeze out or that people will be prepared to accept. Even in Mumbai there is a great deal of investment going into increasing the capacity to reduce the average load per train, not to carry more people but simply to try and get the conditions on a train less crowded. There will be a limit to the amount of people on a train that people in Melbourne will be prepared to accept, and I would suggest that it needs to go higher than it is currently.

**Ms HUPPERT** — Interesting.

**Mr BARBER** — If the same trains just ran faster we would be getting more capacity by default.

**Mr DOTSON** — Yes, you are running more trains per hour — that is what you are effectively saying.

**Mr BARBER** — I am saying that if you have the same amount of rolling stock and it goes 10 per cent faster you have just given yourself 10 per cent more capacity. Can they run faster than they are running now?

**Mr DOTSON** — I do not know. I think that is something people should be looking at. There will be technical issues that would need to be looked at in terms of the accelerating and braking capacities of rolling stock and technical issues to do with the capacity of the signalling system and the distance between trains on the signalling system. In terms of the new-generation trains, they are looking at issues like this. But, again, this goes back to how do you increase the capacity of the existing system?

**Mr BARBER** — These things would multiply off each other if you started doing them all at once, wouldn’t they?

**Mr DOTSON** — Yes.

**Mr BARBER** — All the different issues.

**Mr DOTSON** — Sure.

**Mr BARBER** — You would not necessarily just go out and do capacity tomorrow without addressing dwell times or speeds or whatever, you would work out which multiply off each other so that you get the biggest bang possible for your buck.

**Mr DOTSON** — Yes. For me, addressing the speeds, the dwell times, acceleration and braking characteristics and signalling is all part of trying to get the most capacity out of the system. You have got to do comparators. There is a major piece of work going on in London at the moment on the London underground where I think they are getting something like between 25 per cent and 30 per cent greater capacity by looking at issues like that because they have been forced to. They have the existing infrastructure and that is the only way they can increase the capacity.

**Mr BARBER** — These guys were your clients when you became a consultant, the Department of Transport, so they told you a whole lot of stuff about what they were doing. Maybe you do not want to turn around and sort of rat on them, but you have been pretty forthcoming in terms of your understanding of their current state of play with planning, and it does not seem like there is anything else that we do not know here.

**Mr DOTSON** — I go back to my point: I do not know. The Department of Transport is not releasing a lot of information, so it is genuinely not possible to know what is or is not being done. I can talk to technical people but anyone working on a contract for the Department of Transport and maybe for other government departments is on a confidentiality agreement, which, again, I think is somewhat strange. So there may well be things. It would be very good if the department came out and said, ‘We are doing these things’. It is the point I made at the time. I think it would silence some of the critics, or if not silence them at least say to them, ‘The department is taking on board some of your comments’. My view would be that you take these arguments and you follow them through logically until you reach a conclusion. You do not say no.

**Mr BARBER** — They have released the brief for the tunnel investigation, by the way, or they have released the brief to the extent of saying, ‘We want to bring in a contractor to do this work and here is what we want you to do’.

**Mr DOTSON** — When did they do that?

**Mr BARBER** — Just in the last few weeks.

**Mr DOTSON** — Are we talking about the same thing, a brief that says — —

**Mr BARBER** — It is a thing for you to bid against if you want to do the work, and the work is the further investigation on the rail tunnel if you want to go ahead and get the extra money they are seeking from Eddington.

**Mr DOTSON** — But how have they released that?

**Mr BARBER** — My understanding is it was at the tender stage.

**Ms HUPPERT** — It is a tender for consultants to do the study that you are talking about.

**Mr DOTSON** — Yes.

**Ms HUPPERT** — In other words, to work out where you are going to go from here to the station.

**Mr BARBER** — That is about as good as it gets when it comes to the transparency issue. You have to work out who they have hired to do what.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR** — It is turning it into a bit of a chat now. Are there any other questions for Mr Dotson? Thanks very much for the time you have given to the committee and your expertise.

**Witness withdrew.**