



TRAVELSAFE COMMITTEE

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Mr G. J. HEALY
Mr H. W. T. HOBBS (Deputy Chairman)
Ms NELSON-CARR
Mr L. W. STEPHAN
Mr T. B. SULLIVAN

STAFF PRESENT: Mr R. HANSEN (Research Director)

PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN SOUTH-EAST QUEENSLAND

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

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**MONDAY, 14 APRIL 2000
BRISBANE**

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The Committee commenced at 8.28 a.m.

WILLIAM FRANCIS BAUMANN, examined:

The CHAIRMAN: I call this public hearing of the Travelsafe Committee to order. The hearing today is being conducted pursuant to the resolution of the Legislative Assembly of 30 July 1998 which appointed this Committee. Today's hearing is being conducted as part of our inquiry into public transport in south-east Queensland. I would now like to introduce the members of the Committee: Howard Hobbs, the Deputy Chairman of the Committee and the member for Warrego; Graham Healy, the member for Toowoomba North; Lindy Nelson-Carr, the member for Mundingburra; Len Stephan, the member for Gympie; and Mr Terry Sullivan, the member for Chermside. I am Nita Cunningham, the member for Bundaberg and Chairman of the Committee.

Today's hearing is a lawful proceeding of the Parliament. Those giving evidence will not be required to do so on oath or affirmation. However, I am confident that they will respect the nature of these proceedings and the importance of the hearing. The Committee is holding this hearing in an open forum for the public's benefit. I remind members of the public that, in accordance with the Legislative Assembly Standing Rules and Orders, they may be permitted or excluded at the pleasure of the Committee.

It is our intention to break for morning tea at 10.15 until 10.45 a.m. and for lunch from 12.45 until 1.45 p.m. For afternoon tea we will break at 3 until 3.30 p.m. The hearing should conclude by 4 o'clock. Mr Peter Moore, from the International Association of Public Transport, was scheduled to appear between 4 and 4.30, but he is unable to be here and sends his apologies. The hearing should conclude at 4 p.m. Our first witness this morning is the member for Albert, Mr Bill Baumann. Bill, would you like to begin with an opening statement?

Mr Baumann: It is great to have the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry. Going back probably 18 years now, in a former life when I ran a reasonably successful bus operation, the chances to put forward ideas for improvement did not seem to be as plentiful as they are now. With that in mind, despite persevering over the past 18 years we have not made a great deal of progress. Perhaps from here we can make some. Thank you for the opportunity to appear.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

Mr SULLIVAN: Bill, we know of your extensive experience and we value your assistance to the Committee. Can you give us some general idea of what you see as the main problems with public transport in south-east Queensland, particularly around the Albert area, with which you are most familiar? We have had submissions from people around that area and we would like your views on the general problems that you see with public transport and then, more specifically, those in the area that you know best.

Mr Baumann: The main problems are still the same today as they were 18 years ago. I think many hearings have all been told the same things. Inflexibilities, whether they were because of the previous licensed area system or because of the current contract system, contribute to a lot of the problems that we experience down there. When I say "inflexibilities", I mean the inability of operators to cooperate in the provision of services. That goes right across all modes, be it bus, taxi, ferries, you name it. Funding is the perennial issue. We all know that you get what you pay for directly these days. Successive Governments have never been forthcoming with the sort of funding that is necessary to put in place public passenger transport networks that will compete with the car. That has been the desired aim, I think, across all Governments in recent times.

Mr SULLIVAN: Could you explain what you mean by "inflexibility" and the inability to cooperate with other operators?

Mr Baumann: The legislative arrangements that have given us the previous licence system and the now current contract system do not allow for those sorts of flexibilities to occur. If there is goodwill between operators, yes, perhaps it can. But it has never been written into legislation in a form that can be overseen by the department in a fashion that would—if you want to use the carrot and the stick analogy—provide incentives but also give the department the opportunity to encourage, for the want of a better word, operators who for some peculiar reason may be feuding among themselves over territory and other things caused by the way the contracts are put together. We need them to be built in a fashion that will allow those flexibilities whilst still giving security of tenure to the major operator, perhaps it might be in this case, because we know that financial institutions and others look for security. Without that security, of course,

you cannot finance and go forward in your business. There is a multiplicity of issues, but nothing is impossible today. I believe there is a way forward with it.

Mr HEALY: What you are saying is that there has been a less than harmonious relationship between the department and the operators simply because you believe that the department has not been as flexible or the legislative framework has not allowed that flexibility to be there so the pressure is always on the operators to comply with those legislative standards, and intelligent and decent commercial practice, which you as a businessman were expected to comply with, anyway, compounded the whole situation. Is that what you are saying?

Mr Baumann: A fair bit of it does relate to that. The departmental people have to operate within the legislative guidelines set down. Legislative guidelines can be interpreted in different fashions by different people, but by and large the department is driven by what legislation we give it to work with, and there is not an opportunity there. It is rather inflexible, no matter which system we have looked at. The provisions for flexibility have not been there and nor has the encouragement for operators been there. I will just relate an instance to you. Going back under the previous licence system, when an operator by the name of Smekels ran a service at Southport on the Gold Coast, and we, as Baumann's at that time, had the neighbouring area to the north and the west, because we were able to reach agreement between ourselves as operators, I was able to provide services for some of the outlying areas that were impossible for Smekels to service. That was always on the understanding that, when it became a viable proposition for the area that was within Smekel's licensed area, I would have to give that up or come to some commercial arrangement with them—buy it or do something of that nature. That does not seem to be available today. Nor is the opportunity there for the department to encourage that sort of thing to take place. I reckon that can be addressed somewhere in the legislative framework. But we need to be careful of the grey areas and their interpretation.

Mr HEALY: This is a broad question, but what would you recommend the Government do to address and enhance the region's public transport?

Mr Baumann: We do not have enough time. Do you want to address just the south-east corner?

Mr HEALY: Yes, that is the area at which the inquiry is looking.

Mr Baumann: By and large, if we can fix the problem in the south-east corner, it can be pretty well used as a blueprint for the rest of the State as well. I go on quite a bit about integration, "intermodalling" and so on. I realise there are differing views on the integration angle. I guess there are differing degrees of what you can call integration. But "intermodalling" is very important to the success of the whole public transport scenario here. We need flexibility and the ability to "intermodal" our services. It relates to ticketing and the integration of ticketing. There are several different versions of integrated ticketing, too.

In the early nineties, we moved to an electronic ticketing system simply for security and ease of accounting and also for analysing traveller numbers, different loadings, different stops—all of the available information that came from that technology. Even at that time it was able to compartmentalise that technology that we had then into the ability to cost centre. We could work with a neighbouring operator even at that time and sell a through ticket at that stage. With the aid of that technology, we could account at the end of the month as to what part of the fare had to be paid to whom. I think we need that sort of thing spread right across the whole spectrum. You will have noted that one of the main problems that I feel with it is that in the funding of public passenger transport as it is today we tend to fund train travel, on the one hand, at one rate and we fund bus travel, on the other hand, at another rate or we do not fund it at all. We have those two entities competing for funding instead of those two entities being funded to compete with the car. You have to sort through that lot, Graham. You can understand it is a complex issue. You could talk about it for hours. But the problem is solvable. It will cost money. I think that is what frightens all Governments.

Mr STEPHAN: Going along that same vein, you discuss the issues affecting the private bus operators in south-east Queensland and the current contracts between Government and the operators, which have been proven to be unworkable. What would you do to put this in place, and can you give us some specific examples of what you could be doing?

Mr Baumann: I guess you have to go back to the legislative framework that the department works within at the moment and have a look at that. The department needs to be able to offer incentives but also have the ability to use the force if necessary to bring about a result. When I say that, I mean that in the instance that we spoke of previously where a licensed or a contracted operator now sees that an area is unviable for him to service. You may have local government members from different areas ringing you as a member, as I have, and the general public pushing for extra services into an area, yet the operator will maintain that it is unviable to put another vehicle into that area for one reason or another. There is no ability there really if the major contract holder or licence holder is unwilling to talk to someone who feels they can do it; the department cannot make them do it.

I know that a lot of operators will probably not see eye to eye on this. However, from past experience, I think that if everybody disregards the personalities and the parochial approach and looks at it purely as a business, the major holder of a contract area should be able to look at it and say, "Okay. Perhaps I can franchise that little piece or sublet that little piece" or whatever, particularly if it will work in the best interests of the travelling public, and that is what we are after. Too many times I have seen examples of how the department has had to react or has reacted for one reason or another that is certainly not in the best interests of the travelling public. I guess it can be related back to the interpretation of the legislation that we have at the moment. We need to revisit that and we need to be able to achieve those sorts of things so that operators can work within those areas, albeit on the understanding that they are subcontracted or whatever arrangement may be able to be entered into. There are certainly myriad types of arrangements, and they can be between different service providers, be it taxis or other bus operators. I dare not encourage courtesy coaches because that has been the bane of most operators' lives for quite some time. But across other modes there is the opportunity to service those sorts of areas, and that is what we have to do. I could go a bit further, but I had better not so as to let somebody else have a try.

Mr HOBBS: I want to ask you about the subsidies that the Government pays to public transport operators to run services that are not commercially viable. You refer in your submission to community costs due to how the Government defines rural and long distance services. Can you explain the difficulties with these definitions and what the resultant community costs are?

Mr Baumann: When you talk about community costs, we talk about the road infrastructure we have to build, the environment, the ideology that drives us to look for improving public passenger transport and all those other things. Here again we go back to legislation and the interpretation given to "long distance service". I speak in this instance probably of the Brisbane-Gold Coast style services. They are an intercity service. They are gazetted as long distance services now. There is not a really long distance between here and the Gold Coast. I think I had local service runs that were equally as long and they were not regarded as long distance services. I think it was convenient perhaps to designate them as long distance because long distance services do not attract any subsidy at all. Prior to the introduction of the rail system on the Gold Coast route, that did not matter because the competition was between like service providers—all buses—and there was plenty of that. I can recall having the opportunity to purchase part of Clarrie Skinner's operations and subsequently the remainder of what was Greyhound's Gold Coast operation, only to have the department then deregulate that service to the Gold Coast. Everybody then walked back in the door and had a licence for free. That is the sort of thing that I guess probably engenders that little bit of scepticism from operators owing to decisions that the department makes at times.

Turning back to the subsidy, here again now we have the train which is a beautiful service but costs anybody's guess to subsidise. I have heard numbers bandied around such as \$35 a head to subsidise that marvellous service to the Gold Coast. In due time hopefully that will improve and the subsidy will be similar to what is paid to some bus operators. In this instance we have now seen, I think, \$750m-odd spent plus some on the upgrading of the motorway to the Gold Coast to M1 motorway standard. We have the train service in place now competing for patronage on that piece of highway and still there is no subsidy for the bus operator or bus operators because he is designated long distance—whoever is running the services up and down there. If, indeed, we were fair dinkum about reducing the level of traffic or using the highways and byways, then I think we should fund all forms of scheduled public passenger transport in a similar fashion. Then and only then will we see some real inroads made into reducing the number of cars

using our highways. It will give the opportunity to put in place services such as we were—I hark back to my experience and I hope you do not mind me doing that.

We started a commercial service to the Brisbane Airport some years ago which was certainly not funded by the Government in any way, shape or form, as none of the services were then. That was a door to door service. Unfortunately—and I can say it now that I am not in the business—it was difficult because legislation did not really allow for a door to door service. We had to operate a service to the Gold Coast and then a courtesy service at no charge to people's homes. This just highlights one of the legislative inequities. That was a marvellous service and it actually did get people out of cars. They were able to be picked up at their homes and delivered to Brisbane Airport and then picked up at the airport and delivered to their homes, hotels or motels—whatever the case may have been.

We could have had a proliferation of that sort of service. That was the design that we were going to work on, that was the business plan of the future: to enlarge that style of service. We spoke to taxi companies to see if there was any way that we could work with them. At that point no deal was able to be worked but to provide services then for all the line haul that we had operating up and down the Gold Coast, which amounted to probably 60 or 70 services a day—be able to be given the opportunity to go door to door. That sort of service can still be provided in today's environment, including the train services, and including the local service contract area if there is some sort of legislative change that would allow, encourage, force the cooperation to deliver that. Unless you can deliver something like that, you will not get people out of cars. I think that most people who operate any form of public passenger transport will agree with that. I do not know how many boundaries I crossed there—a few, I think.

Ms NELSON-CARR: Further to that, do you mean that in here you want a subsidy on an equal footing? Do you mean a subsidy that is the same for everybody across-the-board?

Mr Baumann: By saying "on an equal footing" I mean equal access to—I think recognition of the fact that scheduled public passenger transport services, be they trains, buses, ferries or whatever form they are likely to take should be able to attract subsidy money in an all-out effort to take the motorist out of his car—encourage him out of the car. You will never beat him into submission. When we talk about the subsidy money, I do believe that local government should make a contribution to the thing too, whether it is via planning of new estates and other things in the future—it is very hard to retrofit this one. The Brisbane City ratepayers contribute to their passenger services around here. I think that they should look to the future. I think that the Gold Coast in particular as well as the larger environments—perhaps Cairns—and some of the other tourist destinations should be looking to subsidise their public passenger transport. It is a little bit of a hard ask, I think, for most residents of Queensland to subsidise the tourists who come to town, and the beneficiaries of the tourists coming to town are the local councils and businesses from within those regions. I would look to them to contribute to this.

Overall, all forms of public passenger transport should attract some form of subsidy and they should be able to attract it on an equal footing. You could go on for hours defining how things should happen, but we do not have the time for that here. I do believe that if we are going to make the whole thing work and work in a fashion that people want to see—and that is to attract people out of cars—we could look at all sorts of ways of contributing to that. Public parking is another one, I guess, that you could look at. For a start, a disincentive could be a ban on parking in the streets in the cities. That would relieve a lot of congestion and allow smoother traffic flow for those going through. Another one is to have premiums on car parking, and that money could then be a contributing factor towards enhancing—or even the introduction of your IRTP, and you are all aware of that.

Ms NELSON-CARR: What actual benefits would the passengers and the system itself get from that?

Mr Baumann: If a Government-run operator or a private-run operator can cross-subsidise from their heavier patronised services right across-the-board—and I indicated a while ago that we ran that Brisbane-Gold Coast service when I was the CEO there with no subsidy. We did that 22 out of 24 hours a day only because the peak periods would allow us to cross-subsidise the non-viable period and, in building together the quantity of service, it also built the expectation of the public so that they could rely on that sort of service and know that it was not going to be every hour and a half or two hours, but that it would be every 20 or 30 minutes.

It is a catch-22 really. It is like the egg and the chicken. If you cannot provide a service, you will not have people coming looking for it. If you do not have people coming looking for the service, you cannot provide any. The thing that really got to me when deregulation occurred after we bought up the licences was the very fact that the department did not require the new entrants into the game to provide 32 services each way a day as we were doing at the time. They were able to service the peaks, if you like, of a morning and afternoon. It took a long time and a lot of hard, painstaking work to work our way through that, but that is what we had to work our way through. What won in the end was the fact that we maintained the provision of services every half an hour. People become reliant on that rather than going up to the one service provider at peak time and paying the same fare and arriving at the same counter at 12 o'clock only to be told, "We don't have one till four," or something like that. We can look at myriad ways—do not get me started on deregulation. I had better stop there. I am sorry. I have waffled away from where you were.

The important issue is the accessibility of all providers in the scheduled area of public passenger transport being able to access funding, whether it be via State or local government avenues, and to be able to provide the services before they are required. That means subsidising unviable services into the future until the area builds in order to be able to support it. There were many problems with the GFR system. I think the GFR system—gross fare revenue—still works today whereby you have a major route that returns a handsome profit which also attracts a huge subsidy. If the operator is not of the nature that he then uses that to cross-subsidise some of the lesser services or provide more services into a particular area and instead goes and buys a block of flats or units or something as an offset, you will not ever achieve what you set out to do. There have to be some strings attached to the funding. But they most certainly need to be funded, otherwise we will not be able to provide them.

Mr SULLIVAN: I have a question following on from that. I am trying to see whether there have been improvements in this area. I am not sure whether you are aware of the contract arrangements with private bus operators that opened in Gympie and Toowoomba in the past 12 months. I was at both of those openings and there seemed to be significant cooperation between the department and the private operators. There seemed to be a great deal of flexibility in the contract. The department helped with market research and worked with them to work out routes and service details, etc. Are you aware of those new ones? If so, are they real improvements or not?

Mr Baumann: I am aware of those ones. I am not aware of the actual workings of them so I cannot comment really and truly on whether it is an improvement or not. One would have to hope that five years down the track it is an improvement and that some of the issues we spoke about earlier may be addressed. Inherent within the previous major contracts was inflexibility. The intent and the desire for what we have spoken of previously actually taking place, that is, giving the operator the huge licensed area or the contracted area to work within, did not materialise over time because of personality problems that were not able to be addressed. I think Hagens have the service contract for Toowoomba at the moment.

In the instance of the Gold Coast, there was no ability for the department to say to Surfside, for instance, "We've got myriad complaints about a certain area"—I can mention Helensvale and Gaven, and there are a couple of them—"We require more services in that area. Can you provide them? If not, why not." If a genuine reason was shown as to why they could not because it was unviable and there was another operator who believed that in the short term perhaps he could provide those services in addition to his services, that would not be able to be implemented on the understanding that, into the future, as was mentioned previously, the area would be handed back. In this instance, you could operate on a subcontract type arrangement in any case.

The CHAIRMAN: Is there anything further you would like to add?

Mr Baumann: We do not have enough time. I think that, by and large, we have covered most of the areas that are of concern. In my short submission to you I indicated that all of the problems have been identified many times over. It has been the intent of all Governments to fix this sort of thing, but the will has been deserted at the 11th hour. Perhaps that is to do with Treasury and funding. I think we can speculate about those things all day. Really and truly, whichever Government has the will to address the funding areas that QBIC, or whoever the

organisation is these days that represents bus owners and operators in the private sector, puts forward and the Government addresses those issues with the funding necessary, we will provide the service in the best interests of the travelling public.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much for giving us your time this morning.

Mr Baumann: My pleasure indeed.

The CHAIRMAN: As a past operator in the industry, the information you have given us in your submission and again this morning will be very valuable to the inquiry. Thank you very much.

Mr Baumann: Thank you.

LORRAINE ANNE DOUGLAS-SMITH, examined:

CHAIR: For the record could you please state your full name and position?

Ms Douglas-Smith: My name is Lorraine Anne Douglas-Smith. I am Executive Director of the Queensland Bus Industry Council.

The CHAIRMAN: Would you like to start with an opening statement?

Ms Douglas-Smith: Yes. I would like to thank the Committee for the opportunity of, first of all, putting in our written submission and the added opportunity to appear here today to add to that. I hope I can be of assistance to the Committee.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Mr SULLIVAN: My question is very similar to the one I asked the previous witness. What does your peak body see as the main problem or issue with public transport in south-east Queensland? What sort of priority would your organisation see in those problems?

Ms Douglas-Smith: To start at the very beginning, I see a problem with public transport in the recognition of public transport as a whole. It is recognised as a social and mobility issue, but it is not recognised as an environmental or a road safety issue. I would say that up front. I represent the private bus industry throughout the State. We have members all over the State. My preference is for bus transport, and that is where my expertise is.

I feel also that the private bus industry does not receive the recognition it should. Our industry has proven to be very efficient. It is noted in our submission that we are 37% more efficient than Government owned transport in Brisbane. Even though we carry 24% of passengers in south-east Queensland, we receive 4% of subsidy. It is a little unbalanced in relation to how we operate. We get penalised for our efficiency. Having said that, I also have a major concern that there are a lot of initiatives at the moment for public transport. I do not want to put those down. There are a lot of good initiatives, but a lot of them are very costly initiatives. I am very concerned with the benefit that we will actually get from those dollars being spent on those initiatives. I believe that the No. 1 requirement for public transport is putting services on the ground. My major concern is that I would really like to see the dollars spent on public transport, and I would like to see them spent efficiently where they create most benefit not just for the industry but for our passengers as well.

Mr SULLIVAN: So there is the recognition factor. It is interesting that you mention the environmental and safety aspects, and you might expand on those issues later in other questions. I will let that go, but I will come back to it later.

Mr HEALY: You heard what the previous witness, Bill Baumann, had to say, particularly in relation to subsidies. Is that the same issue that your council is concerned about, that is, that there is not enough equity as far as subsidy for private operators is concerned?

Ms Douglas-Smith: That is a major concern. You will see in our submission that per passenger the private bus industry gains about 54c whereas QR is over \$7 and the Brisbane City Council is \$1.75 in total. When looking at inequity, it is not just inequity of the operators; it is inequity of our passengers as well. The areas that we are actually servicing are also getting less concentration in that funding. I might add that funding in Queensland on public transport is well below funding in any other State in Australia. I think we have done fairly well to date on the very limited resources that have been put before us.

Mr HEALY: The previous witness talked about the inflexibility that exists given the legislative constraints between the department and private operators. Is there a need for further legislative amendments to try to make the arrangements even more flexible?

Ms Douglas-Smith: I do not really see flexibility as a major concern for the private bus industry in relation to legislative change. One of our major concerns at the current time with the legislation is the fact that we are tied to five-year contracts. That is a very short time for the amount of investment we need to put in. We need to look again at those contracts. Inflexibility relates more to the individual services. At the current time under the legislation, we are very much told where we will run and how we will run. I do not think that private operators in their own operation get enough say in the matter, and neither does the industry as such in the total planning of public transport. We are a little bit forgotten. We do not get the glory. I must admit that the glory normally seems to go to the public owned services.

Mr HOBBS: Can you explain the importance of pre-emptive services in new areas and what difficulties new operators face providing these services in south-east Queensland?

Ms Douglas-Smith: The whole issue is providing services, getting anyone on public transport. You are not going to get people on public transport if they get to the bus stop and no buses come along. So the services are most important. If we are going to change the thinking of people and get them away from cars, which are our major enemy, we really have to be in there early when new areas are developed. The service needs to be run immediately. We need to have fairly high level services which encourage people to start thinking that they will use public transport.

The problem with that, and the previous witness pointed this out in what he had to say as well, is of course those services are very unviable in the early stages. We put a couple of suggestions up. One was that we feel that there should be seed funding from developers to assist with getting those early services in. They should be subsidised. It is very difficult to drag money out of perhaps our viable services—we are already supplying unviable services in some areas—to try to prop up new services in new areas. But they are a very important initiative.

Ms NELSON-CARR: On page 10 of your submission you refer to the Government's payment of subsidies to individual transport operators at different levels and rates and the resulting imbalance between private and public transport providers that this creates. You then recommend using performance based incentives to increase subsidies for private operators. Could you outline the levels of subsidies paid to operators in SEQ? Why should all public transport operators receive equal levels of direct subsidy from the Government?

Ms Douglas-Smith: If I could start at the end, I feel they should all get equal subsidy because therefore we are giving equal treatment to all passengers. I think that is where the major inequity is to start with. We in the private bus industry are very keen. We are not looking for dollars for nothing. We do not just want our back pockets padded out. We are very keen to go with new and innovative ideas, to really put the effort into our services, but we think perhaps there should be some reward for and some funding of those ideas. We are keen to have a performance tied to it. We are not saying, "Give us the money and don't ask us to perform." We are very happy to perform—to lift service levels and to try new, innovative ideas—but we feel there should be some reward there. At the current time there is not. Equal subsidy is basically to the passenger as well. Where the private bus service is the only service in the area and it is not getting the same concentration of Government funds, whether it be local government or State Government, that is actually to the detriment of the residents in the area.

Ms NELSON-CARR: The cost to Queensland Rail to provide rail services will always be higher than road-based bus services on a per passenger basis, simply because QR has to maintain its own permanent way while bus companies can use the existing road network. Do you agree with that?

Ms Douglas-Smith: To a limited degree. I do not feel that is where the total subsidy would be going at the current time. In measuring the private bus industry against Brisbane Transport, I quoted a report done by David Henscher in 1995. That found that we are 37% more efficient. I would tend to think that sort of figure runs across to QR as well and I would think there is a very high efficiency figure in there, as well as the fact that they are maintaining their own infrastructure. Yes, it is part of the whole equation, but I do not think it is the total equation.

Mr STEPHAN: In your opinion, what key indicators should the Government use to measure performance for the regional public transport system?

Ms Douglas-Smith: The first is improving patronage and services. It would be better services, higher patronage levels and better response to services. Better marketing is another indicator. Improvement in the public's perception of the service is probably a high indicator as well.

The CHAIRMAN: Earlier you mentioned private operators not having enough say in planning. What expertise can the private sector bring to public transport planning and which areas of public transport planning do you think should include private sector representation?

Ms Douglas-Smith: I think it should include all areas. We bring a lot of on-the-ground experience. They have to work very hard towards it. My main problem at the moment with the involvement of the private industry is that when we are brought in with public transport planning

we are always standing down there having the ball served to us. I really would like to be there when the ball is being served and have some say at the start.

As I said earlier, I have a concern with some of the current initiatives. We have been given the documents to comment on, but we were not there when they were actually being drawn up. There are some initiatives on the table at the moment, such as light rail, integrated ticketing and busways. I am not saying that they are not good initiatives, but they are very costly initiatives and I do not know whether they are the best initiatives to improve patronage of public transport on the whole.

For example, integrated ticketing is a big-dollar item and I dare say it will be very attractive to some people. For other people it will not have any attraction at all, because you really have to need to use integrated services to see that as an advantage. Having a bus going past people's doors every five minutes may be a much better initiative to get them on. Likewise, I have some concerns with light rail and where it will be drawing its patronage from.

Some time ago I was sitting at a committee with some retirees and representatives of the elderly and the lady next to me was talking about these initiatives and she said, "They are not going to make us actually use light rail, are they?" Her concern was that when she got on a service she just wanted to stay there. She was not interested in integrated servicing. The thought of jumping off one mode to hop on another terrified her. Really, we need to get perspective on the dollars we spend so that we get the highest possible benefit.

Mr SULLIVAN: Your submission makes a number of suggestions about safety. Safety is obviously one of the key concerns of this committee. You mention a safety audit of bus stops by Queensland Transport and the police, security guard patrols and the implementation of a travelwatch program. Could you explain to the committee the extent of security problems your council sees at the moment on the private line? What do you believe would be achieved by the travelwatch program that you suggest?

Ms Douglas-Smith: The security problem is a personal security problem. I emphasise that it is a personal safety problem, not a road safety problem. I think there is a lot of public perception there. The difficulty at the moment is that there is a gap with public transport across-the-board. People in private cars drive them into their garages and they are right on their own piece of turf. With public transport, somewhere along the line people have to get off and probably walk to their homes. That is what we were pointing out.

QR has already addressed this. It has more of a problem on board, because a bus is a much smaller and more personalised service. To that extent it is preferable. I think in Sydney the rail actually employs bus operators to do their late-night services for that very reason. But there is a problem at the bus stop, and that is where the major concern is. Lighting may not be good at the bus stop. There is very high concern particularly with women and young people in relation to the possibility of personal safety problems.

We have asked that there be some initiative to monitor that, to try to improve it. We have set out a number of recommendations. Of course, it also needs some publicity. Personal security is a very big problem because when one case is reported by the media people tend to think it is happening at every single stop. But it is a concern to us. We would like to see it improved. We think it would have a very high value in promoting public transport.

Mr SULLIVAN: How do you see the security guard patrols working?

Ms Douglas-Smith: There is going to be a limit, but there could be security there or security that could be called and good lighting at stops. We have suggested a program where we actually have people reporting when they see problems—a bit like the Schoolsafe Program or Neighbourhood Watch—that is, anyone loitering around bus stops and so on that could present problems. The presence of security guards is really a visibility thing, a bit like police. If we can get a high visibility and get the message out there that there is some security associated with public transport, it will probably do half the job.

Mr SULLIVAN: I am trying to link this in with something we did earlier on rail safety. The number of railway stations over, say, the south-east corner network is quite limited. In my own area in Chermside, there are a number of bus stops. I would have as many bus stops in my electorate as there are railway stations throughout the whole of south-east Queensland. Part of the problem would be that someone seeing some security patrol at a bus stop could think it is a

security patrol for the bank or the shopping centre just behind them. I am not sure how your council sees it working.

Ms Douglas-Smith: It has been piloted to some extent. At one stage there was a major concern in the south-western area, up around Inala. They did actually put security arrangements in there. We had concern for drivers as well. It was a Brisbane Transport service. In that case they knew where the high risk stops were. Assistance was given. There were panic buttons on buses which were responded to. So if there was someone on board the bus who looked like they might be a problem to passengers or the driver, the panic button could be pressed and they could be assured that there would be security at that stop when the bus got in.

I can see what you are saying. We are not anticipating that we have a security guard at every stop. I can also see that the measure would have to be given publicity. We do say that it would have to be advertised and given a fair bit of publicity, or else they would be thinking it was the bank's security guard. You are quite right.

Mr HOBBS: You talked about how the private industry was much more efficient than the public industry. Can you tell us why that is the case?

Ms Douglas-Smith: It is probably pure need. Basically, there is no-one to prop up a private bus operation. They have to be efficient if they are going to survive. If they are going to have a profit margin they have to be even more efficient. They are watching their own dollars. With a Government-owned service there is not that personal investment or personal commitment to it. I would say that is purely why. Private operators will look at every possible initiative to improve efficiency. I have seen them line up at conferences where anyone will speak on new efficiency measures. It is purely the position they are in, I would say—necessity. That is the nature of private industry.

Mr HOBBS: Does the public industry have more constraints on it in some ways? Is it expected that they would provide either a better service or a more complex sort of service, rather than what you have to provide?

Ms Douglas-Smith: I cannot speak with any surety about public-owned transport services. It is the private industry I represent. Under the current legislation, basically there should be the same requirement on them as on the private industry. Legislation sets down the same performance levels for public-owned services and private services. Whether that works in the real world is another thing. From memory, QR's current contract is a seven-year contract. Ours are five. Even though the legislation is there, obviously there is slightly different treatment. I do not know whether there is a higher public expectation. There possibly is.

Mr HEALY: I asked earlier about the suggestion that there may need to be some legislative changes particularly to the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act. Your submission actually suggests there really should not be any reason why those contracts should not be extended to 10 years, after a period of review. If there are operators that fail to come up to the performance standards, their contracts may not necessarily need to be reviewed. Can you see any impediment for those operators that have been working well and whose performance has been up to standard if after a period of review their contracts cannot be renewed for 10 years?

Ms Douglas-Smith: I cannot see any impediment at all. I have stressed that we are quite happy to perform. If an operator has not performed we are not asking that his contract be renewed. It is very hard to get financing of the degree we require on a very short-term contract and a contract that does not necessarily turn over.

Mr HEALY: Do you think the department understands the commercial aspect and the pressures that a private operator must be under when it comes to financing their business in a short time frame such as five years?

Ms Douglas-Smith: Probably not totally. If you asked the department, they might say that the contract term is a little bit short at the moment anyhow. I think they may appreciate it. The current administration really was not there when this legislation was passed. I do not want to give the impression that we are going hammer and tongs with Queensland Transport. Queensland Transport has tried very hard to be of assistance in many areas. Its hands are probably tied, not just by the legislation but also by the very tight funding restraints on what they can put into public transport. I do not think that there would be an impediment. Bill did mention the fact that it is very

hard for them, with the five-year contract, to get through the process. That is definitely the case. We have our first five-year contract coming up for renewal at the moment. My operators have been offered temporary contracts because they have not been able to get what we are calling new generation contracts in place to give them, which a few of them are a little bit upset about. So the department would probably appreciate a bit of extra time up their sleeve as well, I would think.

Mr SULLIVAN: I have a bit of a curly one. Coming back to the difference in efficiencies between private and Government, is it not also correct that one of the major differences is the difference in wages and conditions that are paid to drivers in the private industry compared to those in the Government sector?

Ms Douglas-Smith: The private industry predominantly works on award wages. Having said that, we do have Australian workplace agreements and enterprise bargaining agreements in a lot of the private companies. The offshoot of that is that their staff are getting higher remuneration than the award. That is part of it for the flexibility that we are given. I do not know, but I would suspect probably there are a lot higher payments being made in Government owned services to employees. They would be above award, I would imagine. To be honest, Mr Sullivan, I am not an expert on the conditions that the employees are operating under—the Government owned ones—but I would say that it has a high impact on efficiency, yes.

Mr SULLIVAN: You quoted the report that gave the efficiency factor.

Ms Douglas-Smith: Yes.

Mr SULLIVAN: I would think that the wages and conditions and outlays plays an important role in that, just as does the purchase of the vehicle and the operating costs.

Ms Douglas-Smith: I do not think that is just it. I think it is higher than that. I think that a private organisation is looking all the time for efficiency as well. I mean, a lot of that efficiency is probably at the administration level and not necessarily at the on-the-road level, because we have a lot of family owned private bus companies in Queensland. They are putting the dollars into the business rather than into the wages in a lot of cases. So that is an efficiency as well. But no, I think on general operating, they are looking more at the fact of where the wastage is in the business. It is not wages. I have never met an operator who has tried to pay anything less than award wages. As I said, most of them are paying well above award wages, but whether that is up to what the payment is in public owned services, I do not know. I could not say.

Mr SULLIVAN: Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN: Are there any other questions from Committee members? I would like to ask one other question. You referred earlier to equal levels of direct subsidies. How would that be allocated when some companies have very modern and expensive buses and others do not? Also, some bus services probably go long distances with few passengers and others are in more built-up areas where there are short distances and a huge clientele. How would we level that out?

Ms Douglas-Smith: You hit a point there when you were talking about distances because, on the whole, the private bus industry operates on the perimeters in south-east Queensland. We probably have longer distances to cover than the Government owned services. I do not think that the fleet age is of major concern because, under our contracts, we are all required to maintain the same average age of fleet. I do not think that the actual standard of the bus—while it might be a performance level, I do not think that it is really a subsidy level. I think even if we got anywhere near a level playing field, we would be very happy, but it would be probably on patronage level measured also with the number of community service obligations, the number of not viable services that were being performed. That would be important.

If you have a long distance passenger service and, say, you have a peak period—and I think that we have a representative from one of the companies who have exactly that here watching today—or if you have a peak period and you are running short services, you may be able to run two or three services with one vehicle. But to run the same two or three services with that long distance one, you have to supply two or three vehicles. I think that would have to be gauged in. But I am quite certain that, given an opportunity, we could quite easily bring down that level playing field. It may not be a dollar-for-dollar arrangement but an outcome for outcome, and the dollars to match that.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. Is there anything further that you would like to add?

Ms Douglas-Smith: I would just like to once again basically push the importance of public transport. I see it as a very important issue and, once again, the fact that it is not just a social and mobility issue but the fact that it is also a very big environmental and road safety contributor. I think any initiative or any dollar spent in public transport is well spent. I would like to once again emphasise that we have concerns on the dollars that are spent—that for every dollar we spend, we get the maximum benefit. That is very important. On behalf of the private bus industry, of course, I feel that if we could get more security, better opportunity for to us actually invest in our services and to obtain that investment by more secure contracts, we have a longer chance to actually work it over a longer amount of time. I thank you very much, Madam Chairman, for the opportunity to appear here today.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much for making your time available today and also for your submission. I think that your involvement in this inquiry is also very valuable to the outcome of it.

Ms Douglas-Smith: Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN: Our next witness this morning will be Mr Mirko Draca from the Department of Economics at the University of Queensland.

MIRKO DRACA, examined:

The CHAIRMAN: Good morning. For our record, would you please state your full name and position with the University of Queensland?

Mr Draca: Yes. Mirko Draca, Senior Research Officer for the Centre for Economic Policy Modelling within the Department of Economics, University of Queensland.

The CHAIRMAN: Would you like to begin with an opening statement?

Mr Draca: Yes. Basically, what I will do in this opening statement is introduce the issues, go over the scope and problems in the south-east Queensland transport market, basically outline an economic analysis of transportation systems and talk about strategies for improvement to the public transportation system, and go over some potential recommendations and conclusions that we did not outline in the submission. Basically, what I will do is give a non-technical explanation of the background behind the submission, because we actually took out a lot of the technical stuff. I think that is an easier way to get across these ideas because, basically, the idea was to give a technical submission. Before I start, my apologies, I had a family bereavement recently so I am just a bit—

The CHAIRMAN: We are sorry. Would it be easier if we start off with a few questions and then we will let you go from there?

Mr Draca: No, once I get going it will be okay. All right. Basically, over the past 10 years Queensland has experienced a rapid and far-reaching transformation of its transportation system. This has been the result of demographic trends begun in the 1970s and 1980s, and they have been consolidated in this past decade. Basically, the two fundamental demographic trends have been population growth, in large part due to interstate migration, and the gradual decentralisation of the south-east Queensland region and the growth in particular of the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast areas.

In brief, if you look at the instruments of public transport policy, you have three potential instruments: infrastructure improvements, public transport reform—that is structural reforms of public transport services or modal reforms of the structure between modes of public transport services—and travel demand management, and that is the instrument that this submission was designed to focus on, because we think that there has not been a great enough emphasis on this instrument of travel demand management. The emphasis has been instead on what you would call building ourselves out of congestion, that is, building road capacity to accommodate car utilisation.

So the basic ongoing problem behind south-east Queensland's transportation system has been accelerating travel demand, as exacerbated by decentralisation. That has contributed to the development of chronic car dependency in south-east Queensland. I think that was identified in the issues paper put out by the inquiry. Basically, the argument behind this submission is that, given this problem of acute car dependency—and we believe that it is acute—the focus should be changed towards the use of travel demand management instruments specifically like a road pricing framework for more accurately charging consumers for the use of roads. Basically, it is a theoretical or technical submission in that sense designed to emphasise the potential directions for transport policy over the next five to 10 years. Are there questions?

The CHAIRMAN: Yes.

Mr HOBBS: Mr Draca, in your view, how should the effectiveness and efficiency of public transport systems be measured? That has always been the challenge in the past. How do we really measure these things?

Mr Draca: That was one of the early problems that we came across and that is one of our potential recommendations—that there is not sufficient data for us to measure the efficiency of the public transport system. For example, we do not have accurate measures of car use and car dependency. So basically we are forced to rely on anecdotal evidence—just from ourselves driving around the streets. To efficiently measure it, yes, you need inputs into analysis such as data and a methodology. So I would say probably a general cost-benefit framework which is widely used.

Mr HOBBS: So we really need a lot more statistical data over a long period to get some trends as well, presumably?

Mr Draca: Yes. Basically, it seems that the Department of Transport has focused on using population and demographic data to just basically project the population growth and the decentralisation of the region. So as far as the effectiveness or efficiency of individual public transport services, or a system—you should do an articulated analysis between different modes as to how effectively they complement each other. But if you were to properly gauge it, you would have to do a cost-benefit study of these services.

Mr HOBBS: Thank you.

Mr SULLIVAN: What, in your view, are the main problems that SEQ public transport faces and what do you see as the priorities?

Mr Draca: Okay. Basically, the problem with south-east Queensland's public transport system is a general inflexibility in the transportation system in the area, that is, to the very structure of it in the sense that we have a public transport system that has been built on an idea of an outdated radial structure, that is, a centralised radial structure which goes outwards. We built our trains and bus routes based on that and based on the idea of travel to the CBD, whereas what seems to be happening is a fairly rapid process of decentralisation and an increase in cross-town traffic, for example. This has been associated with employment trends such as the increase in service sector employment.

Mr SULLIVAN: So the lack of a ring-road system and a reliance on the old radial system is one of the key things?

Mr Draca: Basically, yes.

Mr SULLIVAN: Anything else?

Mr Draca: There seems to be a sort of lack of articulation of intermodal links built on this sort of old radial structure. So the different services have developed separately, basically, and it is only in the past 10 years that they've started to bring them together in a complementary fashion. The final problem would be the lack of travel demand management policies in south-east Queensland; that is, policies to attack car use in south-east Queensland to actively charge people for the use of their cars.

Mr SULLIVAN: The problems you have given there have been transport problems, but since you are from the department of economics, what do you see as the key economic problems of the south-east Queensland public transport system?

Mr Draca: I would say that basically it is a matter of, again, travel time management in the sense that demand—basically, we have been working on an idea of matching supply to demand; that is, building more roads and trying to build ourselves out of trouble and building roads to facilitate car use. It seems to be the case that as we increase road capacity, utilisation increases, so demand continues to rise. So the idea behind travel demand management is to match demand to supply, and that is to discourage people from using their cars by setting up extra costs to that through road pricing and through tolls and charges. If you want the economic problem, it is a matter of we have got to do something with the demand side of the transport market.

Mr HOBBS: It is an economic type of thing, but is there another way to use a comfort lifestyle type of way—more so than economic—to encourage people away from cars and to use public transport? Is it possible to do that?

Mr Draca: It would not seem to be the case, basically, until we can collect data and have a look at that. I mean, what has been happening is we have accommodated car use and that would be what—what sort of lifestyle measures were you thinking of?

Mr HOBBS: It is good to travel by train; it is cool to travel by train or bus—try to make it more attractive in some manner. In the car you get caught in the traffic, etc.

Mr Draca: I would say those arguments would have fairly limited effectiveness, but you need a range of tools to attack that.

Mr STEPHAN: Given the problems that you have identified, what do you recommend the Government do to address them and enhance regional public transport in itself?

Mr Draca: Basically, it is a matter of developing a stronger policy framework over the next five to 10 years. The recommendations that we would make would be related to policy development—that is, aid the collection of effective data sets to analyse car dependency and public transport use to establish different modes of public transport demand elasticities between car use and the use of public transport so that then you can design instruments—that is, sort of tolls or electronic charging mechanisms for cars so you can have an accurate forecast of how the introduction of these measures would affect car use. So I would say it is a matter of, first of all, data collection and potentially piloting test technologies such as electronic road pricing technologies. You are probably aware of them, they are the sorts of devices that you fit onto cars so that you can have credit systems for car use. Electronic cordons around the city—in Europe they set up circular electronic cordons around certain areas and when cars cross that they incur costs. So it is a matter of piloting those technologies which are actually quite alien to the Australian transport debate.

In terms of the actual policy measures, what you find is that because of, in particular, Brisbane's outdated radial structure or decentralised structure, it is very difficult to set up effective cordons. So that is why we would say that you have got to be fairly careful or cautious about introducing these types of measures. While there is a strong case for a comprehensive set of road pricing measures, there are certain structural problems to setting them up. So you need about five to 10 years to test them out. So it is an ongoing policy development process. Are they the sort of ideas?

Mr STEPHAN: The different types of transport, say, car and the use of cars as against the buses or that sort of situation?

Mr Draca: Well, yes, that is the other aspect of it. You have got to complement travel demand management policies with the creation of alternatives or alternative transport modes for people, because one of the key issues is that road pricing—that is, toll roads—are obviously politically not feasible and highly politically unpopular. The two ways that you can get around it are, as you suggested, increasing the capacity of the public transport system or giving people alternatives. The second way you can circumvent its unpopularity is by hypothecating the revenue from road pricing. That is, using the revenue from those charges to fund either improvements to public transport or measures to stave off environmental degradation.

Ms NELSON-CARR: In your opening statement you talked about travel demand management and chronic car dependency. How urgently do you think south-east Queensland needs to manage its travel demand and what will the region and its transport system look like in the future if Governments do not introduce the travel demand management measures that you talk about in your submission?

Mr Draca: How soon?

Ms NELSON-CARR: Yes.

Mr Draca: As soon as possible, but the problem is that we do not have the infrastructure to do that. We have to basically set it up over the next five to 10 years. You have to pilot these technologies which are still in fairly early stages. You have to collect the data and you have to get the public ready for this type of idea, because they are just not going to like—this is like a new structure of taxation. That is how they will treat it. In terms of actually quantifying how urgent the problem is, we cannot do that because we do not have the data. You can only go on measures of congestion or just monitor trends in public transport use and what is happening. For example, the BCC has tried to increase utilisation of its bus system over the past five to 10 years. Despite a fairly comprehensive strategy there have been problems in up-take.

Ms NELSON-CARR: What would happen if we do not introduce these measures?

Mr Draca: Well, current trends would accelerate. I think that you would have a further decline in public transport use. It is difficult to forecast. Do you want a quantifiable scenario or—

Ms NELSON-CARR: Just a prediction.

Mr Draca: One of the first things I learned as an economist was not to make predictions and forecasts, actually. I think in the Department of Transport's IRTP, Integrated Regional Transport Plan, it had fairly robust projections. It basically took out the population projections and looked at what was happening to different areas like the Sunshine Coast and Gold Coast. So, basically, what would I predict would happen? I am going to go back on what I just said. You

would probably have more drastic problems emerging in, say, the Sunshine Coast area. What seems to be happening is south-east Queensland's social and economic structure is becoming more diffuse and you have got the rise of these regions, the Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast, and these are, again, non-radial regions. They do not have definitive city centres or growth poles and, therefore, they are going to be harder to service. So I think in terms of what it will look like, you are going to have very messy transportation systems as you go out to the regions as these regions grow.

Ms NELSON-CARR: There are a lot of ways to manage travel demand. These obviously include the road pricing and congestion pricing measures that you discuss in your submission. Have you examined the efficacy of other approaches to managing travel demand? There are a couple of examples here, like encouraging more people to work from home, using telecommuting, introducing more flexible work hours to spread the peak hour rush over a longer period and introducing parking restrictions and access restrictions for certain vehicles in the CBD. What are your conclusions?

Mr Draca: They all contribute, basically. You need a complementary strategy. All those factors contribute and they are good measures, but what you really need to do is hit travel demand, and basically one of the interesting economic characteristics of transport and travel demand is that travel or transport has got derived demand conditions. That is, people do not demand transport as a good—they don't demand a bus, they demand getting to a destination. That is what they value and that is why a lot of those measures that you suggested—for example, encouraging people to work from home—would have only a marginal impact, because the fundamental sort of thing driving this demand is people's wish to get somewhere. That is the sort of condition you are running up against.

Ms NELSON-CARR: Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN: With regard to demand management measures, I have a concern that a system that seeks to distribute access to the road system on an economic basis would tend to favour the rich motorists over the poor. It seems to me that the more well-off motorists would continue to enjoy access in peak times to the CBD simply because they can better afford to pay for it, while the less well-off, who can less afford the charges, will be the ones to move to public transport. What is your opinion on that?

Mr Draca: Okay. I think that is true. Basically, it is a basic economic condition of a flat-rate charging system. That is why people oppose the GST, because they see it as inherently regressive because it has the same impact across different income groups. Nevertheless, I think it is important to introduce these types of measures and, to circumvent that problem, you have got to bring up the supply side of the transport market and introduce more comprehensive public transport services and cheaper public transport services to minimise that negative equity impact. But, you are right, that is an intrinsic feature of these types of charges; obviously if you have a higher income you will be able to use your car a lot more. I think that is the way that you have to handle those types of flat-rate taxation mechanisms.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you not think there are more equitable ways to distribute access to the road system based more on a needs basis rather than on who can afford to pay?

Mr Draca: Yes. If you introduced fancy electronic technologies, for example, some type of box on the dashboard of your car, and you had a credit system, rather than having people pay for credits for road use you could ration it. For example, people could use X or Y amount of kilometres per year. You could combine it. People could start off with a rationed amount and pay for a top-up. You can get around it in that way.

The CHAIRMAN: It still comes down to the fact that the ones who can better afford to pay can buy extra?

Mr Draca: Yes, that is right.

The CHAIRMAN: You are still limiting access for those who cannot afford it?

Mr Draca: It depends. You could make provisions in the same way as the Federal Government has made provisions in respect of the GST by giving, for example, people on welfare benefits extra money after 1 July. You could give people credits for road use. You are right; there is an intrinsic problem in that it does impact differentially across different groups.

Mr HEALY: You make some interesting observations in your submission in relation to why we have increased road use. I think you are right. Over the past couple of decades, we have encouraged increased road use because we have continued to build road infrastructure—and very good road infrastructure. The technology that is available is attracting people onto the roads. I have often made the observation that, if we are fair dinkum about trying to encourage more people onto public passenger transport, such as trains and buses, we really have not been going about it the right way. I will give you a couple of classic examples. We reintroduced a rail service to the Gold Coast, and that is great. Then we upgraded the highway beside it to eight lanes. The people who may have been encouraged to use public transport are still now being encouraged to use the road because the road is a lot better. The South East Transit Project is probably another example. We have built a dedicated busway, but at the same time we spent millions of dollars to upgrade the road infrastructure beside it. Do you agree that there needs to be a change in thinking in that regard to try not so much to discourage people from using their cars but to encourage more people to use public transport?

Mr Draca: I think it is a difficult issue. You are right about all of these parallel developments, with roads along public transport systems. But we have to ask the question: do we want to starve people of roads? Do we want to starve our public infrastructure, basically? I do not think that is the case. In the most ridiculous situation you could go around and destroy roads and bulldoze them if you wanted to encourage the use of public transport or discourage car use. You would just rip up the Captain Cook Bridge or something and you would not have people using cars.

Mr Healy: We need a fine balance. But it seems to me that the balance is not there. To me the balance is still more in favour of the infrastructure provided to cars than it is to other forms of public transport.

Mr Draca: In terms of transport policy in Australia, basically, transport policy seems to be underpinned by what you would call an engineering based approach to policy, that is, it is focused on the physical manifestations of travel, that is, roads—building new and bigger roads, devising alternative routes and that sort of thing—rather than on looking at the most efficient strategy across different modes of transport. I think historically there has been a dominance of that engineering based approach.

Mr HEALY: Your submission places a large emphasis on charges?

Mr Draca: Yes.

Mr HEALY: For example, what if we were talking about introducing a charge through the CBD? A lot of people travel in cars through the Brisbane CBD every day to jobs and other destinations across town, often because there are no viable cross-town public transport services. But if we introduced a charge through the CBD, would you not find that a lot of those people would then try to find an alternative route in their motor vehicle, which could adversely affect traffic in adjacent areas to the CBD, as those motorists try to beat the charges?

Mr Draca: Yes, that is right. I think the 1991 study of the Kelvin Grove corridor basically made that type of point. That is why there are barriers to the introduction of comprehensive road pricing measures in Brisbane in particular. You have alternative routes, and people use backstreets. Nevertheless, you need to introduce demand management policies. You have to take 5 to 10 years. You have to collect the data and sit down and articulate the road pricing strategies with the road building and the capacity utilisation.

Mr SULLIVAN: Firstly, in your opinion, what impact will the GST have on public transport?

Mr Draca: As I pointed out before, as a flat tax it is contributing to the costs of public transport. It is a matter of balancing to what extent the GST contributes to the costs of public transport use and to what extent it contributes to private car use and what that does to relative prices and demand between different modes. I do not think we are going to know exactly what the GST will do to the price level until 1 July. For example, up until the last couple of months I thought that it was just going to be a clear-cut case that petrol prices would go down after the GST has been introduced. But every couple of weeks out of Commonwealth Treasury you get something funny going on with what is going to happen to the price level. I just do not think that we can predict what will happen on 1 July. The hunch would be that the costs of public transport

use will rise further than the costs of car use, and that will obviously have an impact. It will cost more to use public transport after 1 July and therefore—

Mr SULLIVAN: Are you aware that when the GST was introduced in New Zealand there was a drop in public transport patronage of between 2% and 3%? Has your department at the university done any modelling on the effect that it might have here?

Mr Draca: No, we have not done any modelling. But if you can find your best elasticity estimate, you could do a good back-of-the-envelope estimate.

Mr SULLIVAN: In respect of the submission that came from Professor Mangan, the director of your centre, we wanted to tease out a few issues. First, it states that the costs of road usage are not really as apparent as the costs of public transport. When people hop on the bus or train twice a day they put their money into their pocket or they buy their ticket once a week at the newsagent. However, when it comes to the cost of a car, you pay your registration and insurance once a year and you are generally sitting at home in your study or at the kitchen table when you write the cheque. Your petrol is paid for once a week, but you control that. It appears from what your submission is saying—and I think there is relevance in it, but we want it teased out a bit—that, if in fact the costs of road use are not evident, you think that there should be charging mechanisms directly related to them. What should they be? You note, for example, that overseas—Europe, Canada, the US and South East Asia—they have introduced road charging which more directly relates to the cost of the user and this has led to increased public transport usage. Can you spell that out for us? Are we as a society in a bit of a daydream such that we do not realise the costs of the car? What are those costs and how can we more honestly reflect the overall costs of public and private transport so we can come to some economic decision as to what it is really costing our community?

Mr Draca: That is a good point. You are right; basically, currently, the costs of car use are infrequent indirect charges related to the general use of the system—annual registration, licence and insurance fees. Basically, at the moment you have mostly fixed costs in relation to car use in the sense that you pay registration, maintain the car and service it a few times a year. The idea behind road pricing would be to introduce more explicit frequent costs to car use.

Mr SULLIVAN: Such as?

Mr Draca: Actual mechanisms?

Mr SULLIVAN: Yes.

Mr Draca: Basically, it is a matter of devising clever little strategies to charge people for the use of roads. I think I mentioned before cordon pricing. That basically aims to charge for congestion as vehicles pass certain access points identified by a cordon around the city. You could have supplementary licensing. That is a fairly extreme measure which has been used in northern Europe where special licences are issued for travel in certain areas. Then the most sophisticated system would be an electronic road pricing system where you actually have devices fitted on cars and you have a credit system operating, which seems quite alien to Australia's experience of transportation and road pricing but which is becoming more common overseas.

Mr SULLIVAN: The last point you make in your submission is that this has to be introduced as a package of measures where benefits are clearly communicated. Your answer made a lot of sense from that side of the table. On this side of the table, we have 28,000 people who are going to say, "We do or do not like the decision you've made." If we tried to introduce a pricing system such that every time someone brought their car into the office and went back out they think, "Click, click. The Government has just hit me for more dough", that would mean a fairly short-term career for us on this side, unless there were a package. How can we sell the package? It strikes me that over the years the environment movement has actually sold the environment as an economic reason to have clean air, not just an environmental one. Other groups have sold their idea on an economic basis. Yet in this whole area we have not sold the idea on an economic basis, but it is costing us a squillion to run cars.

Mr Draca: One point would be how it was sold. You would have to sell the effectiveness of the public transport system. As you say, you have to develop or enhance the public transport system to complement the introduction of these charges. There are two ways of doing this. Hypothecation is where you allocate the funds generated by road pricing charges to certain projects related to public transport or ameliorating environmental problems. Experience in

northern Europe has shown that you can cushion any unpopularity. That is the case with a lot of taxes. The Timor tax is the classic example of a hypothecated tax. The Federal Government did not face so much resistance in introducing that tax, because it was seen to be funding a special one-off expense—and an important expense—to the country's foreign policy. But one of the problems you will find with hypothecation is that, if this inquiry made a recommendation that the Department of Transport or Treasury should investigate the idea of hypothecating revenues from road pricing or anything else, hypothecation is extremely unpopular within the bureaucracies, the Treasury and Finance Ministries, in this country and around the world. It is more an intuitive thing; they just think that it is really messy. You can only really understand it once you talk to these guys. That is the big problem that you will face. You have to adopt stuff like hypothecation and you have, firstly, to devise good strategies for making it popular with people and, secondly, you have to come up with a convincing case to the bureaucracy. They are going to say that you are fragmenting the revenue base. It is the slippery slope argument. That is why they are going to resist hypothecation in the first place. And I can understand their argument.

The CHAIRMAN: In relation to the demand management and the imposition of extra charges on people using particularly the inner city areas, have you done any work on the economic impact on business in the CBD area if those measures were introduced?

Mr Draca: No. You would basically look at to what extent will that economic activity in the CBD be hit by people not coming through the CBD. You could not measure it. You could do a "back of the envelope" measurement but, as I said, you really need better data and better projections of what is going to happen to travel demand as you introduce these measures. I imagine the ideas that we have been foreshadowing—just a gradual testing out of these methodologies—would not have much of an impact on business.

The CHAIRMAN: Are there any other questions? Would you like to add anything further?

Mr Draca: No. I put the submission together. As I said, I had a bereavement recently so I have not been able to give as strong a case as I would have liked. I have to present to Treasury on Monday on something else completely.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much for giving us your time this morning. Your contribution added a different dimension to our inquiry.

Mr Draca: I have to get out of the university more often, I think.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much for coming. We will now break for morning tea for half an hour and resume at 10.45 with the Queensland Conservation Council. I invite everyone to join us for tea and coffee in the hall outside.

The Committee adjourned at 10.13 a.m.

The Committee resumed at 10.49 a.m.

ERIC GENE MANNERS, examined:

JAMES MARTIN WHELAN, examined:

The CHAIRMAN: Ladies and gentlemen, we will now resume the public hearing into the Travelsafe Committee's inquiry into public transport in south-east Queensland. I welcome members of the Queensland Conservation Council. Would you please state your names and positions within the Conservation Council for the record?

Mr Manners: My name is Eric Manners. I am the Transport Research Officer within the Queensland Conservation Council.

Mr Whelan: I am James Whelan, Project Officer, Queensland Conservation Council.

The CHAIRMAN: Would you care to make a short opening statement?

Mr Manners: This morning on the way here I was wrestling with myself about what would be the most important point to put across to the Committee. It is a great opportunity to be able to have this inquiry in the first place and to be able to make a presentation. I very much appreciate that on behalf of the Queensland Conservation Council. But there are so many urgent public transport needs that it was very difficult to say, "Well, is the most important thing better allocation of funds? Is the most important thing a transit authority to suitably integrate the services that exist? Is it to stop adding road space? Is it to provide information at every bus stop or train stop?" There are just so many things that need to happen that I think it leaves the community at large in a state of desperation because we do not have public transport that we can use. I do not think that this problem is being solved; I think it is actually getting worse.

One piece of evidence to support that is the recent Queensland Transport Vision 2007 which is an update of the Integrated Regional Transport Plan. Figures from 1996 in this 1999 Queensland Transport publication state that, although 7% of trips were made by way of public transport in 1992, this was down to 6.5% in 1996. The next figures given are for a targeted 9% of trips made by public transport in 2007 and then 10.5% of trips by 2011. This modal split has gone down and there does not seem to be any indication that it has actually gone up since 1996. One would presume that, if they had more recent figures than 1996, they would have given them.

This declining modal split presents some major problems for the region, especially considering that the 1997 IRTP itself projects a 60% increase in population in the south-east Queensland region by 2011 based on 1992 figures, a 71% increase in person trips and a 100% increase in vehicle kilometres travelled. This means not just a lot more traffic on the road but also a lot more air pollution—a lot more greenhouse emissions. We have targets not just from the IRTP and 2007 modal split changes increasing public transport use, cycling use, walking and decreasing motor vehicle use, but we also have greenhouse targets.

There are serious problems in relation to the greenhouse area because of the increase in population and vehicle kilometres travelled and the fact that we have already overdone our 8% allotted increase for Queensland and for Australia that we agreed to in Kyoto and that Queensland has agreed to with the Federal Government. We have already used up at least that and maybe more. We are on target for something like an 80% increase in greenhouse emissions within the south-east Queensland region. Of course, the politicians say that we need to decrease the emissions caused by land clearing and all those sorts of things. Clearly, transport has well used up its share, and there are plenty of things that we can do to solve that problem that perhaps we are not doing. Air pollution targets is another problem. SEQRAQS are not actually really being implemented yet. We have significant increases in the air pollution in Brisbane that are not really being addressed. So there is a reason that we have the transport targets, and that is because of such things as air pollution and greenhouse. We do not seem to be solving those problems.

A document by Laird in 1999 provides the figures of \$43 billion of Federal transport funding has been spent on roads since 1995, \$1.2 billion on rail and \$1.3 billion on urban public transport. The regional figures and State figures or even city figures are very hard to determine. The Queensland Conservation Council has made a submission to an inquiry into public reporting which emphasises the fact that it is near impossible to actually determine exactly how much money is being spent by regions, by States—Queensland in particular—on such things as

transport. They will say we are spending huge amounts of money on public transport. They would be thinking in terms of infrastructure, which leads us to another point.

We see those funds as actually being road building funds, because when you build a busway, as Peter Newman has pointed out, busways put more cars on the road. This is consistent with international evidence pointing to the almost direct correlation of increased road capacity to additional traffic. A 1% increase in road space in road miles correlates to a 0.9% increase in traffic. This means that when we build a busway—two extra lanes right beside a freeway—this has actually increased road space. Those buses are removed from the freeway and cars on the freeway and in the additional transit lanes, such as near Griffith University where they are adding the busway and also a transit lane—this does not seem specifically to support public transport. Even so, when you take the buses off those roads, you give more road space to cars. It is more convenient, it is faster for people to get around by car. Suddenly it is not really as necessary to use a bus because, "Hey, I get there so fast by driving my car." This does not seem to have been acknowledged by transport planners in south-east Queensland and perhaps in Australia altogether. "Induced traffic" is the term and it is a serious problem. It is not really included in impact assessment studies of specific transport projects. We are saying that any time increased road space results from a transport project, this actually has a significant negative impact on public transport use and also on greenhouse, air pollution and traffic congestion in the long run.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much for that.

Ms NELSON-CARR: I think you have probably answered everybody's questions with that opening. How vital is it that we have an efficient and effective public transport system as far as the environment and lifestyle go?

Mr Manners: At the emissions summit in June 1999 the Queensland Government gathered a lot of experts and a lot of industry representatives to discuss ways that improvements to motor vehicle design and use of alternative fuels could reduce emissions. This is going to make such a small fraction of an impact because we still have the same impact due to the manufacture and disposal of motor vehicles. All fuels have pros and cons to them. You might have particles in one, but CO₂ in another. You are never going to solve the problem in the same way you can with public transport, where you get a huge number—a quantum number, you might say—of motor vehicle drivers all travelling on one vehicle, which hopefully is using the best form of fuel possible and is as efficient as possible, for example, rail as opposed to buses and bicycles are even better. Those are the modes where we are going to make the big difference. Nothing significant will happen by making little improvements to the transport system if it is going to continue to be car based. This is important to the environment, but there are also, of course, the social equity issues, which QCOSS will probably talk about later.

People now do not have the option of not owning a car. Right now if you want to get around and be able to get where you need to go and have people rely on you getting there on time, you really cannot rely on public transport or any other transport mode. It is very significant.

Mr HOBBS: I guess you have mentioned quite a few of the things that are actually wrong with the transport system, but to make it a little easier for us can you prioritise the worst aspects of transport in south-east Queensland?

Mr Manners: It is the lack of integration, but that integration is not just the lack of integration of services, for example, buses connecting to trains so you can get from an outer suburb to a rail corridor and then straight into the city very quickly; it is also the lack of integration of transport funding as a whole. We see the solution to that having a transit authority which has control of all of the transport funds for the region or perhaps the State and it says, "We have targets for how people will travel. How are we going to spend our money in order to achieve those targets?" We see a transit authority as the only way to do that because at the moment we have multiple State bodies—Department of Main Roads, Queensland Transport, etc. They spend a lot of money and give a little bit of money to local authorities. They put together services that do not match up with each other. It is a poor investment of ratepayers' money in terms of actually getting the outcomes that we need in order to have a system that is usable by everyone.

Mr STEPHAN: I turn to what we call the unlevel playing field. In your submission you talk about the serious imbalance of funds from the Federal Government, which you are referring to now. Would you like to outline the extent of that imbalance?

Mr Manners: Some \$43 billion towards road funds out of, say, \$45 billion means that about 96% of spending goes towards roads. To put that into perspective, in 1996 79% of trips were made by car. If we spend 96% of our funds on roads, that only leaves us 4% of funds in order to provide any of the infrastructure or any of the investment necessary to provide 10.5% of trips by public transport by 2011, 15% of trips by walking, which is footpaths, and 8% by cycling. The \$43 billion is not a State figure. The problem is that we do not know the full extent of the imbalance of State and local funds because they are not made available to us. We have clearly been derided for suggesting that even 1% of transport spending in Queensland should go towards, for example, cycling when we are gearing towards an 8% modal split for cycling. If 8% of trips are going to be made by cycling, why are we only spending less than 1% on it? Public transport is probably not very different.

Mr Whelan: I have an anecdote to add to that. I attended the opening of the new Garden City bus station upgrades worth \$15m under the previous State Government as part of the busway project which the previous parliamentary Committee inquiry concluded was an engineering solution to public transport problems. It was not engineering in nature. The \$15m bus station looked very impressive. On my way back to the city by bus, the first, second, third and up to 40th bus stop I passed failed to provide any timetable or route information at all. That would suggest that \$15 is the routine bus stop. The only time we get more than the \$15 bus stop is where there is a major infrastructure project going on. In the case of busways as an infrastructure project, it is in fact leading directly to an increase in road capacity.

Small things that could have been done like providing a decent bike path along the South East Freeway would have added to the busway project. As Eric said, it had less than 1% of the project funds in that case. We pointed out a number of times to the project management, to the director general and to the Minister that a very small investment of money there would see cycling become much more viable to trip generators like the universities in the south-east. There was no way that allocation could be made.

Mr STEPHAN: While we are on the subject of cycling, how many areas are there around the place where a cycling track could be put in? We have one here, for example.

Mr Manners: It is not always cycling tracks; it is a matter of making existing road space not hostile towards cycling. That means perhaps having a bike lane as a dedicated space for bikes. At the most, that would be a separate bikeway but that is, once again, a major infrastructure solution to a problem that does not need infrastructure. The easiest solution is lowering the speed limit, but that is not seen as positive to motorists. That one piece of evidence by itself is used as enough to say, "We can't do it." There is not much political will, you might say. For whatever reason we are not seeing the solutions that we need to reach the targets that are made.

Mr SULLIVAN: I believe that recently the QCC had discussions with Don Chen from the Surface Transportation Policy Project in Washington during his visit to Brisbane to talk about their group's approach to US funding of public transportation in the States. Could you outline the approach now taken in the US under the ISTTE legislation? I will have a couple of follow-up questions from that.

Mr Whelan: As we understand, the ISTTE legislation, the Inter-modal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act, represented a sea change in Federal transport funding to the States in the US where, it would appear, there is political will to predicate the transfer of funds from Federal to States on the basis of attaining modal targets. The previous system was very similar to Australia in respect of Federal funding. For instance, our Federal Government has promised \$60m towards a light rail project. It works project by project, case by case, top down, infrastructure oriented. The new paradigm in the US is that local and regional State transport plans are developed by including the community, local government, State Government and stakeholders. Should those transport plans sit strategically with modal targets consistent with the Federal Government's priorities, transport funding is given to the States.

We have argued for some time that the framework for following a similar approach in Australia, or certainly in Queensland, exists. Already integrated regional transport plans are expected for each region across the State. All of your regions will have them, if they do not now. Within those regional transport plans, the expectation is that integrated local transport plans will be developed, in our instance, in SEQ by each of the local councils. In order to receive State

funds, theoretically a local government in Queensland needs to have an integrated local transport plan consistent with the integrated regional transport plan. As we have seen in Brisbane, however, a local government is very much capable of developing a transport strategy that blows the State Government's modal targets out of the water.

An evolution in motion, the Brisbane City Council's 10-year transport strategy is a big road transport strategy. The community at large, certainly the residents and environment groups we deal with, are appalled by Brisbane City Council's transport strategy. Yet the State Government provided an untied \$100m late last year to the City of Brisbane to spend as it chose on transport projects, most of which will be road projects, in our belief, and has subsequently been picking up the bill for other major infrastructure projects that have been proposed by the City of Brisbane. On the other hand, the State Government is interested in having a light rail system in order to attain its modal targets in the metropolitan City of Brisbane. The local government authority in this instance, the Lord Mayor of Brisbane, is campaigning hard against light rail and, it would appear, is succeeding in his campaign. We would suggest that the framework is there.

Mr SULLIVAN: Can you give us an idea as to whether the ISTE legislation is funding an isolated project in the States. How widespread is it? Is it now 2%, 10% or 30% of the funding of local transportation networks within the States? How big is it?

Mr Whelan: ISTE funding is currently funding some tens of thousands of projects across the US. In principle, it has taken some tens of billions of dollars from what was Federal highway funding—initially created as a result of the Eisenhower administration for transporting army vehicles and troops across the US in the case of invasion—to integrated transport outcomes. Don mentioned that in part it seems to be politically palatable in the US that, where a State member may possibly within a Government term get to open one road, State Governors and other officials are opening some tens or hundreds of small pavement projects, footpath projects, cycleway projects and public transport improvements. The whole picture has changed. It is very significant sums of money.

Mr SULLIVAN: Based on the United States ISTE project, what potential benefits to the community do you think that sort of legislation or project could bring to Australia?

Mr Whelan: We would suggest that adopting a similar model—for instance, only passing State or Federal funds to a local government authority if they have not only developed an integrated local transport plan that is consistent with State and Federal targets but also successfully implementing that strategy—is the only way to get around the current impasse where local government authorities can thumb their nose at the States and the State can thumb their nose at those at the Federal level. The State Government of Queensland is in a position—with fairly minor changes to legislation, we would suggest, but perhaps a major change of political will—to make transport funding to local governments and to regional collectives of councils contingent upon those conditions.

Mr SULLIVAN: Thanks.

Mr STEPHAN: I understand that your council has conducted a survey of public transport users just recently on the issues facing the region's public transport system. Could you outline the findings that you have come up with?

Mr Manners: I have a copy here that the Committee can have of the near final, currently being reviewed, report for my portion of a project funded by Queensland Transport to determine world's best practice and community attitudes pertaining to public transport information at stops. We conducted the Better Public Transport Survey. The results of this survey were fairly high ratings for rail services in south-east Queensland but not very high ratings for buses. Ferries were in the middle.

I will inform the Committee of responses to the question, "What do people want at bus stops?" People demanded more things at bus stops than train stops. People seemed to be very satisfied with the facilities of train stops. The only thing they really wanted was local area maps. Some 27.1% of people wanted a local area map. At bus stops, people had a high number of demands. Some 57.1% of people wanted route maps, 54.3% wanted timetable information and ticket machines—how viable that is, who knows—41.7% wanted sun and rain shelters, 41.4% wanted local area maps, 34% wanted lighting, rubbish bins, phones, seats and security down to 16.6%. Those are the basic services at stops.

The survey focused on information because the report focused on information. Clearly, people indicated that they do not necessarily rely solely on the telephone service—TRANSINFO by dialling 131 230—because a lot of people do rely on information at bus and train stations. They rely on just going down to the stop and waiting for the next service. Some 30% of people said they do that. Some 36% of people wait for information at bus and train stops. Some 90% of people keep a copy of a timetable for regular trips. We have separated regular trips and ad hoc trips, because not all trips a person wants to make in their life are the normal trips they make. That is why public transport needs to plan for those trips which people do not normally make so that they can actually go to their stop or somehow find the information and then use the services that they know are available.

Mr Whelan: We note that before lunch you will be hearing from Dr Paul Mees. As he will elaborate, he finds frequency, speed and connections consistently to be the three things people seem to be after. In previous public surveys we have administered in south-east Queensland over the last five years in an unprompted fashion they have certainly come through as a major request. In the most recent survey, when we asked, "What would need to change before you'd use public transport more?", the number one ranking response was the frequency of buses. Very few people, it seems, require more frequent trains, which was a surprise. Cheaper fares was the second thing, again specifically with buses. The integration of modes of transport and routes of public transport was the third most strongly desired improvement.

Mr HEALY: You would be aware that the Public Works Committee flagged those needs in relation to route maps, timetable information and local area maps at bus stops back in 1997 when it did the inquiry into the SET project. That committee was chaired by my colleague Mr Stephan and I was a member of it. In your opinion, given the results of the survey—how old is that survey, by the way?

Mr Whelan: The one we were referring to was only just completed in the last fortnight.

Mr HEALY: What you are saying is that in that time, since 1997 when the Public Works Committee flagged those needs, transport operators and departments really have not taken too many steps to improve things?

Mr Whelan: That recommendation by the Public Works Committee's two hearings into the South East Transit Project is not the only one that has not been heeded. The line we most often hear from the Department of Transport is, "Yes, parliamentary committees will make recommendations." We would say that the two most significant conclusions made by the committee were that the project was an engineering solution to what is essentially not an engineering problem and that the committee believes improving increasing the frequency, et cetera, of public transport is the way to go.

The other conclusion reached by the committee, which we could not agree more with, was that, with the exception of the South East Transit Project and the inner-northern busway study, construction of the rest of the busway should not proceed until a comprehensive evaluation of the South East Transit Project has been completed by an independent organisation. There is no sign whatsoever that that recommendation is being heeded. The inner-northern busway is moving ahead post haste. We will not be surprised to see large sums of money changing hands from the State Government to the Brisbane City Council to construct the inner-northern busway before a single bus has rolled down the South East Transit Project.

Mr HEALY: Given that, my question is mainly looking at those basic aids you referred to from the results of your survey, such as maps and timetable information at those bus stops. Are you saying that there has not really been any improvement since 1997 in that specific area as well?

Mr Whelan: Yes. At that time we had a perception that most bus stops were without basic information of any kind. Since that time we confirmed with Brisbane City Council that, of the approximately 6,000 bus stops across Brisbane, roughly three-quarters have no information whatsoever. We see again the infrastructure fascination by the transport engineers, evident in the construction of high-tech information solutions that are able at best to capture some of the most high frequency corridors radiating from the city and provide real-time public transport information while for 80% or 90% of the city's coverage there is no information whatsoever—let alone a seat, let alone a shelter.

Mr Manners: This recent report, Public Transport Stop Information: A Marketing Action Plan, has very much a focus on marketing public transport in saying not, "We are providing these services. That's good enough, isn't it?" No. It is a matter of saying, "What do our potential customers and our current customers want or need in order to use this service?" In it I have focused on information, but it is a focus on doing market research to determine what consumers would in fact need in order to use the service.

The Brisbane City Council has just printed a public transport directory, which is a major step forward. The only criticism I could come up with on that relates to increased consultation, which is market research, which is talking to the consumers, and saying, "How can this be usable to you? How can this help you to get where you are going?" There are a lot of other areas of public transport information, but certainly, of public transport services as a whole, we would like to see the planners getting out there talking to their customers and talking to their non-customers and seeing what those people need and want in order to move from the automobiles, which are so heavily marketed and are made so perfectly personalised to the needs of the individual, to public transport services that right now are quite edgy and very hard to use.

Mr SULLIVAN: What percentage of bus stops did you say did not have information on them at this stage?

Mr Whelan: Three-quarters.

Mr SULLIVAN: That is not as bad as it seems in many ways, is it? I am thinking about the local network around where I live, in the Kalinga/Wooloowin area. At a major area, such as at the Eagle Junction Railway Station, there is massive linking, whereas at little stops up at Shaw Road and along the top of Rode Road, which are used only by the locals, there is not the same information. But those people would not be transients; they would be the regulars who have the bus timetable. I think the key thing is that where you have new people to an area or itinerant passengers you have sufficient signage. For example, along Gympie Road, where there are major links, you would have the information. Where there are small stops, you do not have it. I am not quite sure whether those figures really reflect the quantum of information being given to passengers.

Mr Manners: I will read from page 19 of the report. Section 4.2.1 states—

"It is the conclusion of this report that regardless of passenger volume, service frequency or any other factor, every public transport access point must be equipped with departure times and route maps of every route serving the stop. The need for timetable information and route maps at public transport stops is attested by Giannopoulos (1989, p.302), Lovelock (1981, p.91), the Institute for Science and Technology Policy (n.d., p 45), Stanley (1997, p.49) and Environment Victoria (1997 p.2). This finding is consistent with the community attitudes illustrated in Section 3 of this report."

It is really just a matter of what you think, and it also has to do with market research. I would like to see Brisbane Transport out there offering participants in a study the alternative by saying, "Here's a bus stop with no information, as it is now. Here's a bus stop with information"—they would have a number of participants in that study who are existing public transport users and a number of participants who have never used public transport before in their life—and see how the bus stop with information impacts those people and whether they say, "That's even more helpful than the information I already have as a user", or, "If I had known that this was where the services went, if I had been able to step out my front door and say, 'There's a bus that takes me exactly where I need to go' "—

Mr SULLIVAN: I am sure that is an ideal we can work towards—we all have our ideals to work towards—but the question was whether there had been improvements and you said there had not. I am just interested. Sure, let us have a goal to work towards, but let us recognise the improvements that have been made and let us recognise what the figures mean, too.

Mr Whelan: Perhaps the bus stop case could be used as an illustration of a broader problem, though. Rather than suggesting that the best thing for the Committee to do would be to ensure every bus stop in Brisbane had a timetable post haste, I do not think that is really what we are trying to say. It is actually current State Government policy, through the regional air quality strategy, that every bus stop in the region have basic timetable and route information. That is a Government policy with a two-year time frame that shows no sign whatsoever of being

implemented. It could be fully implemented, we would suggest, within six months with a budget of no more than \$2.5m.

While the regional transport strategy's modal targets are receding into the unachievable distance, along comes Brisbane City Council with a proposal for a 4.5 kilometre freeway through an inner city park, a proposal that was not a detailed proposal for the 15-year regional transport strategy. Brisbane City Council has been able to secure State Government approval and funding for this freeway that will cost some \$166m, estimated at time of approval. Since its approval, the estimates now are that the budget may be two or perhaps three times that \$166m before completion. In personal discussion with the Transport Minister I said, "Wouldn't it be great to open one of the new 4,500 bus stops across Brisbane with this timetable and route information?"—a cheap thing to do that shows public and political support for public transport. What we see instead is hundreds of millions of dollars being spent on more freeways.

Mr HOBBS: In your submission you talk about clean air. We have been told today and on other occasions that economics plays a pretty important part in relation to the use of the motor car. Therefore, if we can find reductions in the cost of the fares we have to pay for public transport we will use public transport and fewer cars. I would have thought that the proposed reduction in the price of diesel, for instance, of 30c or 40c would have been better overall for the public transport system to actually reduce the cost or, conversely, counter the increase in the use of the motor vehicle. Would that not be the case?

Mr Whelan: It is a complex area. We did participate in discussions with the Federal Government last year over the rebate, the excise systems for diesel. It is unfortunate that public transport operators with diesel buses will see their fuel prices increase and fares obviously increasing at a time when new cars become cheaper. It is expected by Peter Moore, who will be speaking with you later this afternoon, that there will be a drop in patronage of public transport of perhaps up to 10% to 15%, all else being equal.

For some years now we have championed alternative fuels for buses. It is worth noting that, through our very successful advocacy, gaseous fuels for public transport vehicles will be considerably cheaper under the new tax system. For a fleet operator with buses to convert those existing buses to run on gas will be almost cost neutral under grants that exist under the Australian Greenhouse Office.

There has been an interesting conference in Brisbane over the last two days on road pricing, which is increasingly being seen as a way of attributing real costs, or something approximating real costs, to transport users. Currently motorists are not paying for the externalities of their choice of transport. It was estimated at the conference that a 10c a kilometre additional charge would be a low figure for attributing real costs to motoring—up to 40c per kilometre. It was an international conference held here in Brisbane.

An alternative arrangement to begin to see people paying the true costs of their transport mode, we have suggested, might be to administer a parking levy on inner-city car parking spaces. This is in the transit authority paper that Committee members have received. A very small levy of somewhere between \$10 and \$20 per week for each of those inner-city parking spaces would generate the funds necessary to establish and administer a transit authority for south-east Queensland.

We do not believe that the answer is to spend more money. The answer is to spend money differently. We would suggest that by setting up a transit authority and changing dramatically the way transport funding is done in the south-east, rural electorates, which most of the Committee members represent, would see an enormous shift in available funds.

Mr SULLIVAN: In your submission you say that new road space undermines any attempt to increase public transport usage and that, rather than fund a few expensive infrastructure projects, funding should be reallocated to fund wide-ranging travel demand management programs and other low-cost network improvements. What would be your top three or four travel demand management programs and low-cost network improvements?

Mr Whelan: Firstly, we are fervent believers in travel demand management initiatives. In Australia, the two approaches that have the strongest track record to date are TDM—travel demand management—initiatives targeting households and those targeting workplaces. Bruce James from the Transport Department in Western Australia will be speaking at a public meeting

convened by the Conservation Council in early May. He will be speaking about a trial in south Perth involving approximately 15,000 households with personalised information. An individualised marketing strategy for each household is going ahead. Even if that approach seems expensive—providing the staff, the resources and incentives—for householders to look at their way of travel and consider the alternatives, the cost-benefit analysis of that approach over perhaps an inner-city bypass alternative solution, or problem, is approximately 10 to one. It is 10 times more expensive to build roads to accommodate extra traffic than it would be to actually manage that demand. It has been demonstrated numerous times.

Mr SULLIVAN: What is the name of that project? We have some information on it. It has been going for about a year and a bit, has it not?

Mr Whelan: South Perth Travel Demand Management Initiatives. We believe that, while he is in Queensland, Bruce James will also be speaking with Queensland Transport officials. The alternative to household programs is workplace programs. The Conservation Council has been trialling very successfully here in Brisbane workplace travel demand management initiatives. Over a 12-month period of engagement with an architects firm in Fortitude Valley, we saw a 35% reduction in car travel by the commuters in that office. Simultaneously, train travel escalated dramatically; cycling to work and walking to work increased very dramatically. We suggest that was a fairly small intervention in achieving a 35% reduction in car travel.

The State Government has more than the resources to target a very large number of major trip generators—universities, large offices, large companies, industrial estates - where numbers of people are working and provide incentives. Unfortunately, the Federal Government has made it harder through the new tax system. Workplaces are being encouraged to offer car packages. Public transport entitlements will be more heavily taxed under the new tax system.

Mr SULLIVAN: Where would some of the best TDM information be available? Through what sort of groups?

Mr Whelan: The Conservation Council has quite a collection of information and that library has been accessed by the Department of Transport on a few occasions.

Mr SULLIVAN: So we could get access to some of that research, too?

Mr Whelan: Yes.

Mr SULLIVAN: Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN: Would you like to add anything further?

Mr Whelan: Just to wish the Committee well and thank you for the opportunity.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much for giving us your time. You mentioned a number of times a lack of political will. On behalf of the members of our bipartisan Travelsafe Committee and the number of parliamentary staff who are making this possible today, I would like to assure you both that we certainly do have the political will to do something about this problem. So thank you very much for that.

The next witness this morning is Jennifer Leigh from the Queensland Council of Social Services.

JENNIFER M. A. LEIGH, examined:

The CHAIRMAN: Good morning. Thank you for coming. One of our members, Graham Healy, has had to leave for a short while, but we appreciate you coming in today. For our records, could you please state your full name and position with the Queensland Council of Social Services?

Ms Leigh: My name is Jennifer Leigh and I am the Project Officer for the Transport Options Project currently under the auspice of the Queensland Council of Social Services.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. Would you like to make an opening statement?

Ms Leigh: I would. Thank you very much. QCOSS' interest in this matter is really twofold: it is to raise the voice of the disadvantaged who currently are not enfranchised with access to public transport and whose needs have not traditionally been overly considered in the current emphasis on the mass commuter market. They are not mass commuters. They are not commuters primarily. So that is one issue that we are interested in. The other issue that we would like to hold is also to represent the community service sector, who traditionally have played a role in plugging the gaps in the public transport web. That is both on a funded basis and on an unfunded basis. There is a variety of funding programs for all sorts of different target groups that serve to continually fragment, I think, a web of support to individuals and to our community at large.

The Transport Options Project, or TOPS as it is known colloquially, and which I will subsequently use, is playing a role, though, with QCOSS' auspice to work with Government at all sorts of levels to build a relationship to raise these various issues and to participate. There is a growing—and it is very much fledgling—attempt by a variety of agencies such as Queensland Transport and the Brisbane City Council to actually address the needs or to look at trying to handle alongside the massive commuter need market the needs of people who are not commuters. We traditionally in our sector call it transport for the community, or community transport. We are talking about primarily that part of the population who do not work or, if they do work, are interested in cross-suburb travel rather than radial-based travel. But on the whole we are talking about people on fixed incomes of a range of types.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Ms NELSON-CARR: I will ask the same question that I asked the conservation group: how important do you think effective and efficient public transport is to the environment and quality of life that you are talking about in south-east Queensland?

Ms Leigh: Clearly, I am certainly not an agency; we are going to talk about the quality of life issues, predominantly. That is our focus. It is vital. For people who are on fixed incomes, low income groups, for whom car ownership is just not feasible and/or affordable, public transport is for them. Often it is their only transport option. So it is vital. Their quality of life completely hinges on their ability to get out. Transport is not a means in itself. It is there only to provide, to underpin or fulfil an individual's desire to move out of their home, to do something and to move back. It is not a means in itself. So it is completely pivotal. It is crucial. I cannot emphasise enough for the fixed income group of people its role. Affordability is a major issue, not to mention availability.

Ms NELSON-CARR: Right. Does the council have views on how the system's effectiveness and efficiency should be measured?

Ms Leigh: As I have said in our submission, effectiveness and efficiency, particularly the issue of effectiveness, really depends on what parameter you are wanting to use. If you are talking about coverage kinds of issues, which is pretty much what we are dominated by at the moment, then, of course, you are talking about are there bums on seats to the capacity that you possibly can for the route that you are travelling—those sorts of issues. Yes, that is an effectiveness measure of just simply use, but I think that because of the nature of public transport there needs to be an effectiveness measure that is about its role in people being able to fulfil their life needs rather than, "Is the number of people travelling the maximum number that we can get for any particular time?" So I think that the issue is about what parameter or yardstick you are using on effectiveness.

Efficiency is pretty cut and dried. It tends to be, "Is this the best option for return on the dollar and/or any other issue?" For me, the issue about efficiency that we perhaps are not maximising our focus on is to do with what the Queensland Conservation Council mentioned,

which is the integration of the funding. There is all sorts of funding out there from all sorts of sources that often set up competing relationships rather than, "Is there the capacity to take all this funding and look at rejigging this mix a little bit differently?" So I think that there is some room to actually start moving over towards a more holistic view of efficiency as it is perceived for total funding provided to the community across Government.

Ms NELSON-CARR: Thank you.

Mr HOBBS: You have mentioned some of the things that are wrong with the public transport system. Are you able to prioritise what you believe are the most pressing issues so that we can nail them down a bit more easily?

Ms Leigh: I think that the priority is the fact that the mass commuter market is focused pretty heavily on the IRTTP and a lot of the planning process is about the mass commuter market—how can we maximise, move people out of cars and into public transport. I would like to see one of the priority issues being much more of an equal balance to the non-computer market—community transport. It is not considered. The non-users are generally not included in planning processes. We tend to survey users—"How can we do what we are doing smarter, faster, cheaper?", rather than perhaps trying to tackle those people who are non-users who potentially, I would assume, are really one quite large market, to grow the percentages and the performance targets that most of the departments have. I think it is an untapped resource to help public transport providers reach their targets. So for me, the first issue is about holding as a policy imperative the needs of the community, the disfranchised individuals, and how we can better include those people for the system to become more inclusive.

Those sorts of concepts of inclusive transport would also address my second issue, which is the consistent failure to address a consistent policy of concessions travel—that it looks at really trying to target the disfranchised individuals. There is a report that the Committee can have. This was primarily about health-related transport, but it still highlights the dominance of things such as people who hold pensioner concession cards. The visible means by which you can check a person's eligibility dominates. Consistently we have in our community some subgroups, for example, senior citizens and pensioner concession card holders, consistently getting quite a range of income support plus concession travel, yet other groups of individuals in society, because they are not quite so easily identifiable through such things as holding a card of some description, are actually disfranchised. So the second issue for me is about the continued disfranchisement of people who are not easily identifiable or screened by such mechanisms as the pensioner concession card holders. They are primarily health benefit card holders, because that is the most catch-all kind of benefit for the groups that we are interested in representing.

Secondly, one of the other major areas that public transport providers continually try to grapple with but perhaps ignore is the issue that a lot of people with mobility impairments or visual impairments—sensory impairments—require an attendant. The cost of that travel, because the attendant has to pay, is prohibitive and they will not travel. So there is a potential for growth in the transport market by such initiatives as perhaps approved carers being able to access concession rates of travel and/or travel free. Queensland Rail, for example, has a travel warrant system where the support person can travel free but there is an admin fee of \$5, for example. That would mean, of course, that a whole sector of the market, through those sorts of initiatives, might actually start using public transport because they have the assistance of an individual to do that. So the issue of concession travel is the second concern for me.

I think the other issue is the cross-Government planning and/or integration of service delivery. I heard the Queensland Conservation Council talk about the issue of integration of modes, but it is also funding and it is also planning. There have certainly been in my experience decisions made by one department taken in complete isolation from another. Of course, there are all sorts of tensions often created through that. I think that also has something to do with the role to be played by a lead agency. Queensland Transport has certainly been nominated as the lead agency for the integrated regional transport planning, but at an operational level it is pretty much on an ad hoc basis.

So I would like to suggest that, with the idea of a cross-planning involvement concept, we look at the issue of perhaps lead agency at an operational level, service planning level, not just the much more macro level. The issue of transport centralised—the demand attracters of things like hospitals, it is related to the issue of the non-mass commuter market. I hear constantly about

getting to work, getting to work. The difficulty of people getting to centralised medical facilities is very real and, without that involvement at the cross-departmental level of places like the demand drivers like the health system involved in that type of planning, we are continually going to see people struggling to get to public hospitals.

The concept of planning—focusing more on infrastructure. I have heard the Queensland Conservation Council talking about engineering solutions. That is very much part of our submissions. There has been a real dominance in transport planning on infrastructure engineering solutions, technology, ya, ya, without necessarily an equal balance being given to the social planning concepts. Perhaps that is because social planning will not provide you with necessarily the ability to have a one-size-fits-all solution or a formula-based response to planning and development.

So, yes, the fifth issue for us is about planning that is not inclusive at a community level and community resourcing to help articulate their needs. Because the reality is that in the life span of an individual, the people who will rely heaviest on public transport are the people who are underage drivers and people who have to relinquish their driving licence. So that is two ends of the age span that are predominantly totally reliant upon public transport.

I endorse the Queensland Conservation Council's concern about integration of transport. It is about modes. It is about, though, I think more, the maximisation and better use of the existing funding that has all sorts of sources. There is a plethora of sources of funding that could be better, I think, marshalled to provide a more coordinated transport response, both to the commuter market and to more the community market. They are really the six issues that I see in priority order.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Mr SULLIVAN: You have answered most of my questions. You have looked at the social planning side of things; the emphasis on work rather than other activities; you discussed the need to be involved in the planning. It strikes me that over the northside recently with the Chermside regional plan and the review of the bus network, things like the bus routes going into and through and stopping at Prince Charles Hospital have been incorporated into that. I notice you give the example that it is possible to travel from Wynnum to the city virtually within an hour at peak hour but trying to get to the PA Hospital can take three hours because of the lack of services at off-peak times. Are you starting to see some positives examples, such as the northside where things such as the bus routes are linked into Prince Charles and have been linked up from the railway line to the bus network, the bus interchange, to include things like senior citizens centres on their routes and that sort of thing? That is certainly happening to some degree.

Ms Leigh: As I said in my opening statement, there are fledgling moves and I think that might well have something to do with the presence of project officers like myself and my equivalent in the sister project on the northside. Yes, there are. There are definitely changes where people are trying to build in these sorts of concepts and these considerations—well and truly.

I can balance that by also giving you an example from my own work which is about the latest edition of the community bus loops in both Greenslopes and East Brisbane undertaken recently by the Brisbane City Council. Now, those loops were designed and I heard about them, so I made contact with the transport planner, "Give us a look at what you are thinking." Those routes largely went predominantly where most of the complaints came out of—the people who fell out of a service from the bus review. So they certainly addressed those concerns, which is a good initiative. They had not necessarily thought about where the community loop bus would need to go—retirement centres, nursing homes, those sorts of facilities, no.

So that is where I think there is a vital role to be played in building in some mechanisms by which local communities can feed into these processes and they are automatically involved, not happenstance—because I happen to hear this, I am going to come along to have some sort of input. We are talking about some sort of systematic involvement of community into these decisions.

Mr SULLIVAN: Who is your fellow worker on the northside?

Ms Leigh: You have a submission from St John Ambulance Service. They sponsor or they auspice the Community Participation Assisted Transport, CPAT, and that person is Sandy Doré; it is a female.

Mr SULLIVAN: Thank you.

Ms Leigh: So, yes, there are certainly initiatives. They are very ad hoc at the moment. They are popping up like mushrooms and people like myself and Sandy are certainly playing a role, I think, in trying to kind of coordinate some of these initiatives.

The CHAIRMAN: I believe your TRACS project was developed in order to begin addressing some of these issues. Can you tell us if the recommendations made by that project have been successfully introduced?

Ms Leigh: Both the CPAT project on the northside and the TOPS on the southside are HACC funded—Home and Community Care funded—which is State and Commonwealth funding primarily to the frail, aged and younger, disabled and carers. In both of those projects, they have chosen a different way of operating. We are both trying to take an indirect service delivery community development kind of methodology to developing solutions. Most of the needs identified in my Brisbane south area we are working towards. We have a plan of action that is a rolling local area development where we have a local worker base. We have one area in operation with imminently two others to join, so we will have three areas under operation soon.

What I see happening is not necessarily the large system change, but on the ground with local workers. I see a better deal for this group of individuals, more coordination because we do the running between the departments and things to try and address particular issues. I think the TOPS model has a lot to offer Government departments at all levels. Certainly organisations like the Brisbane City Council and Queensland Transport are cognisant of the model and, more importantly, seem to be trying to struggle with how can they integrate the concept of community development work that has got a transport focus. We are not talking at the regional level, we are talking at a much more sub-regional level of the community, however that is defined, and that is going to be a challenge all the way.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Ms NELSON-CARR: Your submission highlights the value of including non-users of public transport in transport planning as a means of identifying problems within the system. Can you suggest how these non-users should participate in transport planning?

Ms Leigh: Recently Queensland Transport—and I mean recently, like the last month or so—have been conducting a number of community consultations. That kind of initiative, I think, is a way to at least provide an avenue for people who are non-users to be embraced and have their issues raised. So that is a positive. The downside is that it is not necessarily very well advertised or promoted. So that is always going to be the key—how do you let those people know that something is coming into town, a bandwagon is coming into town for a community consultation about some issue? It is always a challenge for any person.

The way, I think, is for a range of options to be provided to individuals at any time. Certainly Queensland Transport spends a lot of time surveying their users. Maybe to also gear up and think about how we can look at some of the non-users by such things as providing a 1800 number for people: "If you are not a user and you want to be and there are barriers, please phone this number these hours." So that would be one way. Equally, you could set up an email system for those people who have email. Traditionally, the people we are talking about are not necessarily email linked but the agencies who represent them or service them often are.

So it is about providing a range of mechanisms. The community consultations are good provided they are advertised through local service providers, plus also through such mechanisms as—even with Queensland Transport, for example, sending it through their own database of subscribers to the parking permits, disability parking permits, the taxi subsidy scheme voucher database, for example. So with those sorts of initiatives they could maximise their own resources to try and get to those markets that traditionally we know are disadvantaged and to include them. People will only stand up and participate if they feel they can, but that is a whole different issue to being actively encouraged to be part of the process.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Mr STEPHAN: You highlight the importance of creating an inclusive transport system. Do you have any statistics that would demonstrate the potential of users who are excluded at the present time from using the system?

Ms Leigh: No, I have no statistics that accurately give me any indication of people who are excluded. What I do have—what is known by organisations such as the Brisbane City Council and so forth is that 18% of the population at any point in time have a disability. So if we look at some key sectors in our community, they will give you some sort of indication. So 18% of the population at any point have a known disability. There is some percentage, which can be gained through Centrelink, of people who are currently health benefit card holders. Those sorts of statistics can be provided, but it is only a matter of marking out the groups we know who are traditionally disadvantaged. You only need to look at the stats of people with disabilities—the aged, the sick—we are talking about chronic illnesses here; the Queensland Radium Institutes of the world, renal associations, really mega-sick individuals—chronic illnesses and looking at Centrelink's statistics on disability pensions and health benefit card holders and you will get those statistics.

Mr SULLIVAN: Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN: We do not have any further questions. The information that you have given us is going to be very valuable to our inquiry. It focuses on the groups and users that you are working with all the time. That is going to be of enormous benefit to our inquiry. Was there anything you wanted to add before we finish?

Ms Leigh: No. Much like the Queensland Conservation Council, I appreciate the opportunity to speak before the Committee.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you for coming.

The CHAIRMAN: Our next witness today is Dr Paul Mees from the University of Melbourne.

PAUL MEES, examined:

The CHAIRMAN: Dr Mees, you have come a long way to be part of our inquiry today. Thank you very much for making that effort. For our records, would you please state your full name and position with the university.

Dr Mees: My name is Paul Mees. I am a lecturer in transport planning under the Urban Planning Program, which is in turn part of the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning at the University of Melbourne.

The CHAIRMAN: Would you like to begin with a short statement?

Dr Mees: I thank the Committee for the opportunity to speak today—and not only because it gratuitously gives me an opportunity to attempt to publicise my book on urban transport planning and which I referred to in my submission. My publishers have told me that I have to be absolutely shameless because normally no-one buys academic books. Although I do not make any money from the royalties, it would be a shame to go to all that trouble of writing it and not have anyone read it. So I put a picture of Gregory Peck and Ava Gardner on the front cover getting off a train in Melbourne in the 1959 end of the world movie *On the Beach*, partly because they are the sorts of people you would never think of as users of public transport.

Mr SULLIVAN: That is because they are dead.

Dr Mees: Only one of them is dead. Gregory Peck is still alive, although he is a bit older than he was in the film. I had the opportunity to give evidence to the Public Works Committee in 1997 when it conducted its inquiry into the South East Transit Project. In fact, I met Mr Stephan and Mr Healy at that time. I think you have a copy of the report I prepared for that Committee at the time. Apart from the fact that I was a little more rushed for time this time than I was last time and therefore did not have time to write a new one, I did not actually need to once I reviewed events since the last time, because very little had changed. But I think it is important to start by accentuating, as I said in that report and my brief covering letter to this Committee, that one of the reasons why I like to come to Brisbane to talk about transport planning is that, while there are problems here as there are elsewhere, unlike a lot of other places in Australia, including, I am afraid to say, my own home town, there seems to be a bipartisan desire to do something about it and a commitment to back that with the necessary public funds. Quite frankly, that is not the case in probably the majority of other capital cities in Australia.

In particular, I think the Integrated Regional Transport Plan for South East Queensland process is a very impressive one, because it has done the sort of thing that I often tell my transport planning students that transport planners ought to do more often, in that it looked into the future and said, "Let's think about what would happen if the current trends continued." Not to put too fine a point on it, the answer would be: more travel by car and less of everything else. And let us think about the consequences of that trend both in terms of how much money you would have to spend to accommodate it and what it would do to the environment and for the sorts of people that the last witness was talking about—that significant portion of the population that does not have the ability to drive themselves around by car all the time. Everyone agreed that that should not be allowed to continue, that the trend would have to be changed.

Some quite ambitious but I think achievable targets were set for changing those trends to try to give people more flexibility to do things other than just travel everywhere by car. It is very rare to see that done anywhere in the world let alone in Australia, and certainly south-east Queensland, I think, is the most advanced example of that particular approach to transport and land use planning anywhere in this country. Back in my home State, if they look at trends and project them into the future and see there is going to be more traffic, they say, "Well, that shows we are really going to need a lot of roads." Unfortunately, things have not really advanced much since the 1950s.

My concern is that, while the targets have been set in place—and it seems to me from the sort of funding talked about in the documents that the budgets have been set in place as well—some of the basic ingredients that will be necessary to get the sort of shift in travel patterns that would be involved if those targets were achieved were not really on the agenda in 1997. They still seem not to be at the core of transport planning or at least public transport planning.

That is my principal message to the Committee: those sorts of things ought to be. The sorts of things I am talking about are integration. It is a buzz word; everyone loves it. We are all in favour of integration. It means all things to all men and all women. Genuinely integrated public transport systems, however, are relatively rare outside Europe. The main place where you seem to find them is Canada.

I have looked at Canada a lot in my research and I was interested to see that the Brisbane City Council looked to Canada as well. It seems to me that when the Brisbane City Council looked at Ottawa its advisers looked at the wrong part of Ottawa. Ottawa, like most Canadian cities, seems to me to have achieved an integrated public transport system. And in other Canadian cities they have trams, trains, buses and ferries—the whole caboodle—in which these things operate as if they were a single system run by a single organisation and planned and coordinated by one mind. In the case of Canadian cities, they are in fact owned and operated by single organisations. They have a very traditional approach to these things. In Ottawa there is one public transport agency and it owns all of the vehicles, employs all of the drivers, does all of the capital and carries out all of the works itself, which is not the sort of approach we have had in Australia, where we have traditionally had different organisations. The problem here has been that those different organisations have tended to compete with each other instead of to compete with the car. South-east Queensland is by no means the only example of this.

I discussed Melbourne in my book. To some extent Melbourne was for many years an even more extreme example of it than Brisbane is now, because we had the tramways board and the railways competing against each other and we had a totally unregulated private bus sector so the private buses competed against each other and the tramways and the railways, and they were very successful in competing against each other. But in the meantime the car came along. Because public transport was not providing that flexibility that the car provides, people were always obviously going to go off and use their cars for a certain amount of travel once they became available. But I think in Melbourne they used cars for much more of their travel than they needed to simply because public transport was not providing a flexible alternative. Flexibility and integration are two concepts that, if used properly, go together.

The previous speaker talked about there being an overemphasis on the 9 to 5 commuter travelling to the central business district. That is a problem for public transport, because increasingly those people are a dwindling minority of the travel market. They are very important but they are steadily declining in relative importance because, firstly, work travel is not growing as fast as other types of travel. Ironically, the fastest growing type of travel is the one in which you get in your car and chauffeur someone else to their destination. This tends to be done primarily by women and the people being chauffeured tend primarily to be their children or sometimes, increasingly, their elderly parents. That is the fastest growing trip in Brisbane and all other Australian cities. That should ring an alarm bell, because that says there is something wrong with our public transport system, if we are turning ourselves into public transport operators, for example, for teenage children, who in many cases would prefer to go around by themselves; after a while it gets a bit embarrassing to have mum take you everywhere. Mum would also, I suspect, frequently prefer to occupy her time with other things than driving the kids around. I think we may have some solid evidence on that.

Mr SULLIVAN: Is that why the biggest selling sticker is "Mum's Taxi"?

Dr Mees: It is available 24 hours a day. Another one I saw said "If a woman's place is in the home, why do I always seem to be in the car?" Non-work travel is growing faster than work travel. People who are in the work force are increasingly working more flexible hours and, in many cases, longer hours. As parliamentarians, you would understand that the strict 9 to 5 starting and finishing time is pretty much a thing of the past. Even in my job in the academic world there are very few people who come in at 9 and go home at 5. But our public transport system is planned as if they were the only people who travel. So the other 90% to 95% of the travel market, if you like, is increasingly poorly served by radial public transport systems that all compete with each other to carry people to the city centre in peak hour.

Flexible public transport systems take the opposite approach. Instead of pouring resources into, it seems to me, wasteful and unnecessary duplicated services, in any attempt to serve that part of the travel market the services should be coordinated so that we do not spend

more money than we need to serving the commuter markets, thereby freeing up resources to provide this additional travel for the sort of diverse and sparse travel that we heard about from the previous speaker, and that can be off-peak travel, travel to work destinations outside the city centre, people who do not work 9 to 5, people going to hospitals, shopping centres and that sort of thing. In order to do that, though, you need to have a comprehensive public transport system where your network is laid out in such a way that all of your origins and destinations are served.

Since you will not be able to provide a single route that connects everyone's home with everyone's destination, you have to make transfers really easy as well. It seems to me that that was in fact the lesson that we in Australia should be learning from Canadian cities such as Ottawa. Instead, what happened—and I think it was just a coincidence that the consultant picked was the person who designed the busway system in Ottawa—is that he said that the lesson to learn from Ottawa is to build a busway system, which I do not think was the issue at all. I think the real thing they had to teach us was the value of planning and integration. It seems to me that we are still yet to learn that lesson not just in Brisbane but in other places also.

At least in Brisbane people use the word "integration" a lot. I am encouraged by that. But it seems to me that the next challenge is to actually make integration meaningful. That means that you need to have integrated route structures, timetables and fare systems. An integrated fare system is one where you do not have to pay to transfer from one mode of travel to another; you pay according to how far you travel, not according to how many times you transfer. Let us face it, people do not like transferring; it is inconvenient. If you charge them for it as well, it is like adding insult to injury. But in Brisbane at the moment we do that. I understand that even the so-called integrated ticketing system will continue to do that. It will just make it easier for you to pay the additional fare that you are going to be charged for transferring.

I think the major challenge is to transform what Brisbane has now, which is like most other Australian cities, namely, a whole series of individual components that collectively could be turned into a single system but are not now. There is a Brisbane City Council bus system, a Queensland Rail system and there is going to be a light rail system as well. And there are a dozen or so private bus companies that do not really constitute a system at all. It seems to me the challenge is to knit those things together into, as I say, an integrated system and one that is genuinely integrated—where the word really means something—that provides that sort of flexibility. There is a problem: if we put too much effort into commuters, we are not looking after the interests of people without cars; if we put too much effort into them, we will miss the commuters and the roads will fill up. However, you can do both, if you have a genuinely planned and integrated region-wide public transport system.

The European models suggest that you do not even have to go all the way over to the Canadian system of nationalising everything and having a single organisation doing everything. It does seem that it is possible to bring in a planning and funding agency to which the lower level agencies are subcontractors, whether that be the Brisbane City Council or Clarks Buses down in Logan. They can be made contractors to a central planning agency so you can have the benefits of having one entity doing everything without having world war III on your hands, which is probably what you would have if you tried to get it to physically run all the buses, employ the drivers and so on. Since there are some advantages to be gained in subcontracting in terms of costs, perhaps it is cheaper to do it that way, too. I am not sure. But it seems to me that is the main challenge, anyway, and that is my main message today.

Ms NELSON-CARR: How important is it to have that sort of flexibility and efficiency? What would happen if we do not have it?

Dr Mees: If we do not have it, in this region the trends of the past will continue, which is that public transport carries a smaller and smaller share of total travel and makes less and less contribution to providing transport for people without cars but at the same time consumes more and more public expenditure in the process of doing so. It seems to me that that is not getting value for money out of the system. But the consequences on the roads are increased traffic and the environmental problem associated with that. For the majority of trips people make in greater Brisbane at the moment it is not a question of public transport being less convenient than the car. Public transport really is not an option in any substantive sense for those people.

I was just looking at the Brisbane Public Transport Directory. I note that in the whole of Brisbane there is only one bus route that runs more frequently than once an hour after 7 p.m.,

and it runs every half an hour. For many people there comes a point at which you say that a service is so infrequent that it has stopped being more convenient than the car and it might as well not exist for most people. There is a lot of research on that. But an hour is certainly on the other side of it; many of them run every two hours.

The first problem you get is an unnecessary amount of car travel, because people are in a sense forced to use the car for a lot of trips. One of the consequences of that as well is that, if you try to do anything to restrain the use of the car, whether it be through the sort of road pricing that I gather a witness this morning talked about—economists seem to favour that sort of thing; those of us from the urban planning side are perhaps a little more pragmatic—or looking at measures such as restricting car parking and that sort of thing, it is very hard to gain political support for measures like that if people cannot see that there is a viable alternative way of getting around.

So you get the environmental problem and also the equity problem. I think we forget about that, because the hidden side of the equity problem is not just people who cannot get around at all but the people who cannot get around unless their mum, daughter, or, on rare occasions, dad or son drives them everywhere. There is an issue there in terms of dependency for the person being driven everywhere and perhaps a lifestyle issue for the person spending their whole life driving people around, as we mentioned before. Unless something is done about that problem, no matter how much capital is spent, the fundamental difficulties will continue.

Mr HOBBS: Queensland Transport in its submission describes two approaches to gauging public transport efficiency. One of those is total productivity measures and the other is data envelope analysis. Are you familiar with those measures? Do other Governments use them, and what measures should the Government use to benchmark the performance of south-east Queensland's regional public transport system?

Dr Mees: I must admit that I did not know about data envelope analysis until I read the Queensland Transport submission. Total productivity factor and that concept, which is something that attempts to measure in some way the outputs of things like bus services and compare them with cost of providing the inputs, is a fairly common one. It has its uses, but I think it also has its limitations. What it tends to measure from the passenger's point of view is inputs to public transport. So you get a figure that says cost per bus kilometre run. For example, you tend to find that private bus companies, in general, cost less to provide a kilometre of bus service than public bus agencies do, but in general the vehicle will not be as good and the route is less likely to run in the evening or on Sundays.

I have talked about the Brisbane City Council services here. Nevertheless, people who live just beyond the BCC boundaries would think that they had died and gone to heaven if they got bus services like the council provides. I think it is just one part of the efficiency equation. It is a very technical measure of efficiency in producing, as I say, a kilometre of bus service. What it does not answer is broader efficiency questions such as: is the bus company being subsidised to compete with the subsidised rail service running half a mile away? That, it seems to me, is a genuine efficiency question as well and this notion of total factor productivity does not pick that up; it just tells you how much it costs the bus company to drive the bus for a kilometre.

When you are really trying to measure the effectiveness of the system, what you are really looking at is measuring the effectiveness of the outputs as experienced by the public and how they compare with the amount of money that the public puts into the system, both in fares and also in terms of Government subsidies. When people want to measure these things, they always want to be able to reduce it to a number because then you can do a sort of league table in which you give everyone a rating. A lot of the public transport service quality issues are much harder to reduce to a number. Vehicle kilometres, for example—the total number of kilometres buses travel—might not really tell you because if they are all busy duplicating each other serving the central city and none of them are providing local or cross-suburban services, they might be providing a lot of bus kilometres but not a lot of mobility for the population. The real test I think you want to make for the population—and this is much harder to reduce to a number—is to what extent does the public transport system as a whole make the usage of cars for travel an option rather than a necessity?

There are numerical measures that you can use that hint at an answer to that sort of thing, but ultimately I think it is a humanities type assessment rather than a science department

assessment. So I think you will never get a single number that captures all of that. Questions like what percentage of the population lives within walking distance of a public transport service that runs above a certain frequency to midnight every day of the year—that sort of thing. I have tried a few of those things. What you often find is that, when you compare cities where the same number of bus kilometres are run, you can get quite different results in terms of the percentage of the population that has access to what seems to be a reasonably good standard of public transport service. For example, in Sydney there are more bus and train kilometres run per head of population than in Toronto in Canada. Yet if you ask what percentage of people in Sydney live within 400 metres' walk of a bus service that runs at least every half hour until midnight every day of the year or a train service that does the same thing, the answer is less than half. In Toronto it is everyone, but they actually provide fewer bus kilometres overall, but they are much, much smarter in the way they plan, locate and integrate those bus kilometres.

Total factor productivity does not measure any of that, unfortunately. While it has usage as part of assessing efficiency, it is really only a very small part. Then there is the other question of how does this compare with the subsidy that you provide as well? While I do not think anyone argues that you do not need to subsidise public transport in cities like ours, I think we still have to make sure that we are getting value for money for the subsidies that we do provide.

Mr STEPHAN: You have touched on a little bit of what I was going to ask you, which was: could you put the problems that you have identified in some sort of priority?

Dr Mees: I think I would put first the lack of overall planning and integration because, in a sense, most of the other problems are subproblems of that. I do think, though, that the one I would put as No. 2, which is really actually one of the causes of No. 1—and we have heard about this from a number of the other witnesses this morning—is the tendency to adopt engineering solutions to things that are actually planning, management and organisational problems. I would argue as examples of that the integrated ticketing project and the busways project. They both seem to me to be examples of that tendency.

To go back to No. 1, as a consequence of the lack of overall planning and integration, we get things like very poor service frequencies, particularly outside the morning and evening peaks and particularly on bus services, even in the Brisbane City council area but even more so in the outlying parts of the region which are served by private operators. You get irrational differences in service standards. I am not very good at the geography of this, but Inala and Oxley have BCC-style services, but if you go on another mile there is basically no public transport at all because there is a private operator who provides a very, very minimal level of service indeed. This is not to say that the private operators are morally bad people or anything; it is just that the structure of the industry is such that one little private operator who is only serving an outer suburb cannot deliver more than a bare minimum of standard service.

There is very poor local and cross-suburban public transport. To the extent that public transport works well, it works primarily well in terms of serving radial travel, particularly towards the city centre. For example, a few years ago the Great Circle Line bus route was introduced. That was certainly an improvement, but that is one cross-suburban bus service. There are a couple of others. There are a number that go to university as well. Fully integrated public transport systems have a grid or a net-like structure where every 800 metres there is a radial route and every 800 metres there is circumferential route, and they operate to equivalent service standards in the sense that they all run frequently, they all run at night and they all run on Sundays. They have to, otherwise they cannot connect with each other. Obviously the radial routes are the ones that are likely to run with rail, light rail, busways in cases where they are needed, or articulated buses. The other ones are run with smaller and cheaper to operate vehicles, but the fundamental concept is equivalent service levels for all types of travel. That is how you get your flexibility. So that is something that is missing.

The next one is particularly poor feeder services to the rail system. I think the IRTP found that only 7% of rail passengers come to the station by bus. I think that is the lowest figure in Australia. In general, Australia does very poorly at this, but to the extent that I can tell because the figures are hard to get, Brisbane has the lowest figures in Australia. By way of contrast, in Canadian cities with rail systems it is generally around 70% or 75% of passengers who come to the station by bus, compared with 7% here. That really ends up meaning that outside peak hour, only people who live within walking distance of stations use the rail system. No wonder the

patronage is so sparse and they cannot afford to run frequent services or have staff on at the stations so people feel safe. So the rail system underperforms because the bus system competes with it instead of feeding people to it, and that prevents it from really fulfilling its role. The thing that rail works best at is as a rail bulk carrier of people. That is where its greatest level of—

Mr SULLIVAN: But you would have to marry that up with the Park & Ride figures, which may have been a major factor in Australia but not in Canada.

Dr Mees: I did put the figures somewhere or other in a paper I did for the PWC a couple of years ago. For Brisbane 7% arrive by bus, 19% by car, and 74% walk or cycle, and basically that would be 73% walk and about 1% cycle. It is true that we have more Park & Ride facilities, but even Park & Ride is not as ideal an access mode as walking, which is obviously great because it is good for you. Not everyone can do that if they live too far away. If you have to have a car to drive to the station, then the system is not helping people who do not have cars.

In terms of pollution, a lot of the pollution from your car comes from turning the engine on when it is cold. So if you drive to the station and then take the train, it is obviously better than driving the whole way, but you do still produce a significant amount of the pollution that you would have produced if you drove the whole way. While obviously we do not want to discourage people from parking and riding, in a system where it is the major access mode—and here at least relative to buses it is—I think that is potentially a problem. It is a very, very minor access mode in Canadian cities, but the main difference is not with walking but with the feeder services.

The other thing that using buses as feeders to rail enables you to do if it is done intelligently is that you then have a base load of patrons that you can build cross-suburban and local services on. If you can cleverly design the systems so that the routes to the extent possible serve both functions, it is possible to do that. The Canadians have put a lot of effort into it. There often are not enough passengers just travelling across the suburbs to justify a good service on a route that only serves them. However, if at least on some of the route people are using the bus service to get to the station to catch the train as well, then you are doubling up different types of passengers and making the overall thing more economical to operate.

That was taking too long. I am sorry about that. That was also a subpoint to the idea that the rail system is prevented from operating as effectively as it could, and Brisbane has a very extensive rail system by world standards largely, I think, because of the fact that not only are the buses by and large not feeding passengers to it, but in many cases they are drawing passengers away from it by operating in parallel to it.

Mr STEPHAN: Could you give the Committee any information as far as who we could contact for advice?

Dr Mees: It seems to me that when we do benchmarking properly, what we try to do is—I think in some stages in Australian public administration, particularly down in Canberra, benchmarking came to be a device where if you could find someone who was doing something more cheaply and meanly than you, you cut your own services to match theirs. This might be a subjective judgment, having lived in Victoria for the last little while; I am not sure. The private business concept of benchmarking is you try to find the best in the world and see whether you can be as good as them. Xerox, who invented benchmarking, did that. They found out what their best rivals were doing and tried to come up to their standard.

It seems to me that the best people at dealing with these problems seem to be Europeans and Canadians. I think there is something to be said for us increasingly turning to them for advice, but we have to make sure that we get the right advice. As I say, I think with Ottawa we copied one part of the recipe—not what I think was the best part or the part that was most relevant to us. So I do think there is something to be said for us trying to look critically rather than just copying the first thing that we see they do—what the best public transport operators in the world do.

Unfortunately, there is not a lot of positive benchmarking to be done with public transport operators elsewhere in Australia on most issues because, in many respects, they have similar sorts of problems to Brisbane with one exception, and that is that Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth and as of 1998 Canberra at least now have genuine multimodal ticketing systems where you do

not have to pay to transfer. I think Brisbane can learn from them. By and large, I think international best practice is probably found overseas.

Ms NELSON-CARR: How do you think Governments could address these planning problems that you have been talking about at length?

Dr Mees: While I was doing the research for my paper in 1997, I actually came across this old report from Wilbur Smith and Associates from 1970 in which they identified 30 years ago most of these problems that I have talked about and said that you need to have a single agency to plan, integrate and fund all of the different modes of public transport because that is the only way you will get them working together as a system.

There was an agency set up in the 1970s and abolished in the 1980s which did not really do that. It attempted to persuade them voluntarily to coordinate with one another. They did not. With some modifications, the recipe of 30 years ago still seems to me to be valid. The initiative probably does have to come from the State level, because the Brisbane City Council is one of the competing operators. It would be expecting too much of human nature to expect them to recommend a system in which they start voluntarily feeding passengers to the railways which, to some extent at least, are their competitors. The State Government holds the purse strings. These subsidies, by and large, ultimately come from the State.

If the State really wanted to set up an integrated system and compel people to be part of it—it would not be compulsory; it is just that you would not get your subsidy unless you were. That is how they did it in what seems to me to be the best European systems in places like Munich and Zurich. They kept the existing operators, but at the State level they said, "We pay the subsidies. The new rule is that if you want to get a subsidy you have to be part of the process of planning and integration."

Mr SULLIVAN: Can you give us a model that south-east Queensland may be able to follow? If you were to say that you recommend the Committee look most closely at this model, what would that model be? What functions and structure would you see within this single transit authority?

Dr Mees: It might sound funny to suggest such places that are so cold and so different looking from Brisbane, but I think you could do a lot worse than look at the model employed in Zurich. They have a thing there with one of those dreadfully long German names called the Zurich Verkehrsverbund, ZVV, which I think translates as transport community. It was actually a German idea. It was pioneered in Hamburg in the 1970s. They had the same sort of problem we have here. They had a city agency that did all the public transport. The city grew out into the suburbs and all of a sudden they had the State railways, suburban councils and private bus companies in on the fray. They needed some way of integrating them together. They did not, as the Canadians tend to do, abolish all the other organisations and just have one group that does everything. There is a lot to be said for that in terms of simplicity at least, but in south-east Queensland it would be a very big organisation and there would be a lot of people who would fight to stop it.

What you get with this German model that the Swiss have perfected in the way that the Swiss tend to do, particularly in Zurich, is that the existing operators still have a role, but their role now is to be part of a coordinated system rather than to compete with each other. One of the main things that has to change is the way in which the revenue is allocated. Interestingly enough, and Mr Stephan might remember this, I was present for the evidence given by Mr Cos Sita, the owner of the company that runs the bus service that goes from the airport into the city and then down to the Gold Coast. He is from Melbourne. They set up an embryonic version of that in Melbourne in the early 1980s. He said that the way to get coordination is that there has to be some kind of pooling of the revenues. As long as every operator is out to earn as much revenue as they can by getting as many passengers for themselves, the incentive is always going to be, "I'm going to carry that guy all the way into the city, not to the station, because I earn more revenue by carrying him into the city."

An essential part of this is that the revenue is pooled which enables you to cross-subsidise services. I would not say this if I was an economic rationalist, because apparently you are not supposed to cross-subsidise anything anymore. But I am not an economic rationalist. There will always be some routes that are more remunerative than others. In good public transport systems, they use the super profits from the best routes to enable service to be

provided on the ones that would otherwise be uneconomic. Frequently the way it works is that the feeder bus is sort of like a loss leader for the rail system. The rail systems in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver make operating surpluses every year, but they would not be able to do that if it were not for the fact that they are a loss making feeder bus services.

Mr SULLIVAN: Can you just add a couple of other places that you think are worth noting. The first is Zurich.

Dr Mees: I would put Zurich and Munich as my top two and then Hamburg, because they inaugurated the concept in the first place. But I think Munich and Zurich copied it from them and ended up doing it better than they did.

Mr SULLIVAN: In about five dot points, if we were to institute a single transit authority in south-east Queensland, what would you see as the key features of that structure?

Dr Mees: I think the first is that it would actually have to have control of handing out the operating subsidies. It would also need to plan the construction of capital works. It would have to have the purse strings for those. It would need to run a system of pooling of revenue for the reasons I outlined before. This is no personal reflection on them, but I do not think you could simply staff it by seconding people from the existing agencies. It is human nature to get used to operating in a particular way for decades and decades and it is hard to change. That is not to say that they should be banned, but people who are at least one step removed from the way things have traditionally operated would need to be reasonably key in that as well.

Mr SULLIVAN: Knowing what you know, you would not have to abolish the Brisbane City Council's bus network, but it would become a coordinating factor. This group would work with QR, bicycle networks and those links and say to the different components, "You will drop out of this because rail is covering that. You will move to this area which is not being serviced. You will change the network to do such and such."

Dr Mees: That is right. Those operators would be like subcontractors, in a sense.

Mr SULLIVAN: Thank you.

Ms NELSON-CARR: In relation to the integrated ticketing project we have, do you think that this system will fix the problems with the current ticketing systems and achieve the best outcome for public transport users? If not, why not? What should an integrated ticketing system provide to encourage public transport travel?

Dr Mees: The answer to your first question is "No" based on what I know about it. You do not need a smart card system to have a multimodal fare system. We know that because Adelaide has had one since 1972. Melbourne, Perth and Canberra all have them without that as well. What you need is a system in which the revenue is pooled so that you can make transfers free. What is currently being proposed for Brisbane is effectively a continuation of the current practice where you have to pay extra if you make a transfer, but it will be made easier or more convenient for you to pay that extra fare because you can do it with a smart card instead of money.

A smart card is like a credit card that you can use on buses, trains and trams. That is not the main issue. The main thing that irks people is having to pay to transfer, because it is the operator's fault if you have to transfer, not the passenger's fault. It does not seem to me that you are able to get a system of free transfers, because that also involves cross-subsidies, unless you have an arrangement to pool the fare revenue. In terms of expenditure, and possibly even in terms of person hours of effort, establishing an arrangement of that kind would be cheaper than spending what sounds like a substantial amount of money on this sort of thing.

There is the same problem in Sydney. They will not take on the task of pooling the revenue. They are also being sold a smart card idea by their engineering people which is not really solving the problem. When Don Dunstan introduced free transfers in Adelaide in 1972 they did not have any of this technology. There was just a very crude, old machine on the bus that would print the time on the ticket. The standard pattern for a multimodal system is that you have zones, usually concentric zones radiating from the city centre. Perth has eight of them and Melbourne has three. You can mix and match depending on what your objectives are. You pay for the number of zones you go through. In general, the ticket is valid for how ever many hours they think it is likely to take people to complete the journey. Sometimes it is 90 minutes or

perhaps two hours, given some of the longer trips here. You can transfer 23 times if you want. You pay for the distance you travel rather than for how many times you have to transfer.

There is no need for high-tech smart cards in order to bring in a system like that. What you need is the sort of integration I talked about before and in particular the pooling of the revenue. What it basically means is that the feeder bus to the station is free. From a passenger point of view, so it should be because it is less convenient to take a feeder bus to the station than it is to walk to the station. An economist would say, "But the people who walk to the station are cross-subsidising people who use the bus." The passenger does not see it that way at all. They see it as, "I'm lucky. I can walk to the station. I don't have to take the bus." That is the difference between the focus on the economist's approach to the problem and the approach that puts the passenger at the centre of the exercise. That is the issue. I do not think the current proposal is dealing with it.

Mr SULLIVAN: I have one question following from the transit authority question. What other avenues are open to Queensland Transport to get operators to coordinate the services if we do not have this overarching single authority?

Dr Mees: There is the approach of trying to get them to do it voluntarily which, by and large, does not work. You can get a certain amount of coordination. If there is a big shopping centre next to the station and the bus company runs a bus to take people to the shops which can also be used to get to the station, you can usually talk them into coordinating the times with those of the train because it is no skin off their nose. You can get that low-level coordination just by encouragement or even by making it a condition of their franchise or their receipt of subsidies. But the more difficult type of coordination where you ask them to divert resources from the parallel services that compete with the rail system in order to provide better feeder and local services is one that is very hard to get them to do in the absence of a coordinating and funding body. It is not in their private economic interests. You can get them to do coordination that is profitable but you cannot get them to do coordination that is unprofitable because they are businesses, they are not charitable organisations.

The CHAIRMAN: I have one final question. In your view, what impact will the GST have on public transport?

Dr Mees: The tax package as a whole, unfortunately, will probably have a negative impact on it. This is one area where the economists are right: if you have two things in competition and you make one of them cheaper and the other one more expensive, you will get a movement from the one that is made more expensive to the one that is made cheaper. Unfortunately, the net effect of the package is that for the ordinary citizen it becomes more expensive to use public transport and somewhat cheaper to buy and possibly cheaper to use cars. There is some irony in this. The Federal Government in its greenhouse strategies and so on has talked lots and lots about the idea of using economic instruments to encourage people to conserve energy.

There are a lot of economists in Canberra. Economists always reckon that the best way to fix things is not by planning, as I and my friends in the urban planning field think, but by changing the prices of things to reward good behaviour and punish bad behaviour. As far as I can tell, the GST package does the exact opposite of that. It rewards behaviour that is not good for the environment by making it cheaper and punishes behaviour that is good for the environment by making it more expensive. However, I do not want to make it sound like there is no hope. In the final analysis, quality of service, convenience, frequency and those sorts of things are probably more important to passengers than price, but they would work better if we were getting the pricing signals right as well. Unfortunately, I think the tax reform package is doing the exact opposite.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

Mr SULLIVAN: I am not a gambling person normally, but I am prepared to put money on the fact that the price of cars and the price of petrol will not be cheaper.

Dr Mees: I have a sneaking suspicion that the one you can rely on is public transport going up. That is right. Cars staying the same price will probably not be good for us either.

The CHAIRMAN: We are almost out of time. Is there anything further you would like to add?

Dr Mees: Yes, and it relates to this idea of having some sort of regional transit agency. One thing I was interested in at the PWC hearings two and a half years ago was the fact that the pooling revenue concept was actually volunteered by a private bus operator, and that is Mr Sita from the Gold Coast company. Seeing as the rail line had just been extended to the Gold Coast, for once it was his operation that was being undermined by competition rather than the other way around, as is usually the case, of rail being undermined by bus competition.

That says that, although in a system where people are paid for taking passengers off each other, it is not in the private interests of operators to integrate. That does not mean that they would necessarily all be opposed to trying to set up an integrated system like this. Some of the private bus operators are operating on such thin margins and have been struggling for so long to make a living out of what is really very slim pickings that you might be pleasantly surprised at the extent to which, if it was done in a consultative way, an exercise like this would gain their support. Basically, there would not be any private bus operators in Melbourne now if they had not set up a central revenue pooling system. Twenty years ago when this was started, they were on the verge of going broke because of the lack of integration. They were fortunate enough that one of their own was given a study tour to Europe and observed these Verkehrsverbund springing up in these German-speaking cities and came back and told his colleagues about it. As a result, they agreed to be part of the unified system.

While the last attempt to do this did founder on intra-organisational rivalry and that sort of thing, I would not want people to assume that you always have to get that kind of outcome. We all watch Yes, Minister and do get a bit pessimistic about the chances of changing things, but I think in this area we might be pleasantly surprised at the areas from which support would come if the process was handled right.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Dr Mees, for the very big contribution you have made to this inquiry. Thank you for coming to Brisbane today. Certainly we look forward to seeing you further in the future.

The Committee adjourned at 12.45 p.m.

The Committee resumed at 1.49 p.m.

BARRY EDWARD MOORE, examined:

MICHAEL GERARD SCANLAN, examined:

The CHAIRMAN: I welcome representatives of Queensland Rail. Would you like to begin with an opening statement?

Mr Scanlan: Thank you for the opportunity for Queensland Rail to make some further comments to our submission. We appreciate the opportunity. We would be happy to answer any questions or provide any additional information you may require.

The CHAIRMAN: This afternoon we would like to concentrate on the areas where Queensland Rail's views on public transport appear to differ from the views of Queensland Transport, as set out in your submission.

Mr STEPHAN: From Queensland Rail's perspective, what are the main problems with the south-east Queensland public transport system? Can you put these problems into some sort of priority?

Mr Scanlan: The first priority really is in terms of integration of services. There is very limited evidence of integrated services at the moment. It has been quite a number of years since the last integrated interchange was built, at Enoggera. There has been some recent work, of course, with setting up Citytrans, which is the joint venture between BCC and Queensland Rail to progress integrated services further. A number of services have been set up by the operators. I might address those later, if you wish. They have been set up on a commercial basis, with a few exceptions, where there is a bus/rail coordination tending to be more in the outlying areas, for example Surfside on the Gold Coast and the Bribie Island Coaches connection at Caboolture. The first one is really the lack of service integration.

I think a second problem relates to the framework in which transport planning is carried out. The time frame perhaps is somewhat shorter than it should be, given that in the future this region will approach the size that Sydney/Wollongong/Newcastle currently is. There needs to be a much longer-term visionary direction so that we have the capacity and the corridors for the future to allow public transport.

There is another problem, I guess, in terms of the current competitive framework, where the contracts we have with Queensland Transport do not deliver the outcome of integration. They are mode specific, which tends to encourage the operators to do what is in their interests rather than what would be perhaps in the best interests of integration.

The CHAIRMAN: Given the problems you identified in your submission, what do you recommend to address those problems and perhaps enhance the public transport system in this region?

Mr Scanlan: First of all, we believe some positive steps can be made with integration. There are a couple of symptoms. First, there is a reasonable amount of parallel running, where we have bus routes and rail routes running in parallel. That may be valid in a number of circumstances. We believe there are opportunities to provide a superior service to the community at large by being able to have well coordinating services with waterproof-type connections between rail and bus, ferry or whatever at the appropriate interchange point.

Also, the interchange has to be where there is an advantage, time wise. For example, a bus route all the way to the city or to some other point in the area has to be longer than having an integrated path. The most opportunities for integration tend to be more in the mid-distance. I will not say they are in the outlying areas, but certainly it is unlikely if they are very close to the CBD. But there are opportunities. For example, rail does not have a good connection down to this end of town, but there is an opportunity for a much better connection for a bus operation which stops quite frequently and is more convenient for people travelling. Certainly there are opportunities like that throughout the whole area. Given that rail has limitations in that it is a radial network, it is not completely flexible, unlike other forms of transport.

Mr SULLIVAN: In your submission you comment on the opportunities to expand the rail network to the Greenbank/Camira area. Has QR examined the feasibility of services in this area and how they might link in with other services?

Mr Moore: Since corporatisation of Queensland Rail our responsibility in that regard has changed a little bit. Transport planning essentially rests with Queensland Transport. However, obviously we have a significant interest in those sorts of matters. In relation to the possible Greenbank extension, we have done some preliminary analysis as to how it may work. Obviously, as with most other public transport, it would require some subsidisation of service. It is really, I guess, in the court of Queensland Transport to decide whether or not that is the right way to go in terms of the correct mode—whether it be rail, bus or whatever. Similarly in relation to Springfield.

Mr SULLIVAN: Also, in your submission on page 5 you state—

"Modal competition and a focus on operator efficiency rather than system efficiency are regarded as key constraints to improve effectiveness and increase public transport patronage."

Can you give the Committee examples to demonstrate these problems, where operator efficiency rather than system efficiency seems to hold you back? What might you suggest to overcome those problems?

Mr Moore: The way we see it is that public transport needs to operate as a system in order to provide a viable alternative to the car. As Mike has indicated, obviously rail is constrained as to where it may go. To get to all parts of the region in south-east Queensland, you obviously need to make use of the best modes. In that regard, we see that you need to use both bus and rail to enable particularly cross-town trips to occur. Queensland Rail operates its radial services. The bulk of patronage generally travels radially and there is less incentive for the bus operators to provide the cross-town movements which are so lacking in the current system.

Mr Scanlan: We believe that each operator will do what is in their best interests within the framework they operate. So if their contracts do not have incentives or inducements to encourage them to integrate with other operators, then it is unlikely that there will be an outcome that delivers a good integrated service which is user friendly as well.

Mr SULLIVAN: If in fact the focus is on the operator efficiency and you are looking at this network here and that network there, the only way to get above that or to break out of that mould is to have an overarching transit authority which sets the parameters and helps coordinate that. Obviously no individual operator, whether it be QR, BCC or Clarks buses, will voluntarily give up their share of a market or their share of revenue without there being some overarching legal authority to say, "This is the way you must do it if you are going to work within our system." Has QR looked at the notion of working within a framework of an overarching transit authority and how that might work?

Mr Scanlan: I believe we have in the past. Perhaps I can take one step back. There has been recent consideration of how integration can be progressed. In the time between December and February there was a concerted effort between Brisbane City Council and Queensland Rail to look at, between the operators, what opportunities there are to integrate the services. The advantage the operators have is that they understand their markets and their capability to change their operations to coordinate with another operator.

We believe that, initially, there will be an issue in terms of funding. Currently, there is only a limited level of funding available, but to carry out integration well, there needs to be a dedicated and continuing program of funding. To address specifically the question, I guess there are two ways. In a sense, Queensland Transport has the overarching role in that they have the portfolio responsibility to issue contracts. The nature of the contracts can drive the behaviour, depending on the terms in which the contracts are written. Certainly, there is another option. I guess from where QR has come from, we have seen that the CityTrans joint venture, which has recently been established, could be expanded to include other operators.

Certainly, through the integrated ticketing project that is under way, there are a number of complex issues that are yet to be addressed. Probably the most significant one will be the commercial issues associated with uniform fares. That is only one part of integrating the services. It is useful if the ticketing is integrated, and that can be performed electronically or by separate pieces of paper. We believe that is going to work, but we need to focus on the services being integrated and not just having a ticketing system which will, in the short term, apply only to a small percentage of intermodal users.

So I guess that, in the early 1990s, QR took a position that QR could, or had the ability under its legislation, to actually perform an operating role—at an operating level—and integrate with other operators. Then it leaves Queensland Transport at a more strategic level to provide, say, a single contract in which the joint venture body might operate.

So I think that it is just the nature of the joint venture. Certainly, there can be a metropolitan transit authority like there was in the late 1970s to early mid-1980s, or equivalent. There is some advantage with the operators being heavily involved, because they have the market contact and the market knowledge. I guess if the pricing incentives are right, you can get the right outcomes. It is a question of whether it is necessary to have a new body or give the most recently established body, CityTrans, the opportunity to earn its stripes. That is assuming that sufficient funding is provided for them to have a fair go.

Ms NELSON-CARR: On page 6 of your submission it states that there is considerable potential for a more cooperative approach between the various providers of public transport services but for this to occur the State Government, as the major purchaser of transport services from transport operators, must promote an environment which encourages such a cooperative approach. Would you be able to tell us what Queensland Rail believes is required for the Government to create an environment to support cooperation?

Mr Scanlan: It is, I guess, an elaboration of the previous comment in that the contractual arrangements need to have the incentives in place for it to happen, or at least the requirement for it to happen. I think that the operators need to be able to work in the detail on a no-prejudice basis so that they can understand how we can connect markets and which ones are going to make sense. Then it is a case of saying, "Well, okay we can perform a trial, establish whether the market is really there or not, and then in that period determine the cost structures, the revenue and the costs and A, whether any support is needed from Government to make it happen or, B, if it is, a reasonable expectation of a process that will lead to ongoing funding."

Ms NELSON-CARR: Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN: Page 7 of your submission discusses integrated ticketing, the integration of fares and dealing with the disparity between rail and bus fares. It states—

"The introduction of an integrated fare system as part of the integrated ticketing package presents a dilemma from which there is no easy answer and is one of the reasons why integrated fares and ticketing have not been achieved in the past." Do you have any suggestions as to how the Government or operators can solve the problem of fares integration?

Mr Moore: I think as we say in our submission, it really is a difficult one. It is a different issue if you are coming from a greenfield site where you can just create the fares and move on from there. We are coming from an historical basis whereby QR fares were a little bit lower than bus fares. To then try to unify those fare levels in a common fair structure will certainly provide winners and losers to the passengers. I guess that politically, wherever you have losers, you have difficulties in implementing.

I do not know that you can easily achieve a uniform fare system across south-east Queensland. The alternative may be to look at individual services where the integration of services actually occurs and assessing what can be done with the relevant fares between those existing services as they stand now. That may well mean providing a discount for a joint bus/rail operation as we do in some locations already.

Mr Scanlan: Just as Barry was saying, each operator has formed their own basis for their fare structure. It may be at two-kilometre breaks or it could be at five—it could be on any different basis. The commercial issues will be the most difficult. We fully support integrated ticketing. It is only the commercial issue that is holding anyone back. If the Government decides that it is great for all the fares to be at a certain level, then that means a number of the operators can say, "Well, okay, we are not sure that patronage will grow at 5% per annum. Therefore, we really want some additional funding support to give us the comfort that this will give us the same financial return or at least that we are no worse off than we are currently." We believe that that is the most difficult issue. The technology, we believe, is available. That will not be a problem. It is more the commercial issues.

Ms NELSON-CARR: On page 4 it says that the busway network has been designed as complementary to existing rail services and will be constructed in non-rail corridors. So how do you envisage that busways will complement existing Citytrain rail services?

Mr Moore: Can you just give the reference to that comment?

Ms NELSON-CARR: It is page 4 of the submission.

Mr SULLIVAN: It is the Queensland Transport submission.

Ms NELSON-CARR: I am sorry, the Queensland Transport submission, yes.

Mr Moore: I am not familiar with that one.

Ms NELSON-CARR: No wonder you could not find it. The busway network has been designed as complementary to existing rail services and will be constructed in non-rail corridors. I just ask you: how will the busways complement the existing Citytrain rail services?

Mr Moore: I guess we may not totally agree with that. The south-east transit busway is located roughly parallel to the existing Beenleigh line, I guess, a few kilometres away. It may well serve a slightly different catchment but, I guess, it does have the potential to detract patronage from the existing rail system.

Mr Scanlan: Perhaps further to that, certainly, the busway actually runs in the rail corridor in Vulture Street through to the South Brisbane area, which does have an impact in terms of the future capacity of the railway. I think we took a position where, provided we had at least four tracks, we could see a reasonable future. But if we took a very long-term view, I guess the busway infrastructure could be turned into something else if additional capacity was required. But there is some parallel running. We are not aware of the process that Queensland Transport used to evaluate or to look at all the options and see whether there was a more efficient integration. For example, we do not quite understand whether a large number of buses—I have not read their submission in detail, but I understand in one area there is something like 150 buses per hour mentioned—if they feed into the city, I suspect that is going to cause some congestion problems and other problems. So whether there was an opportunity that we are not aware of to perhaps coordinate with the rail line somewhere further from the city and leave as much space available in the city—

Ms NELSON-CARR: Thank you.

Mr STEPHAN: Dr Paul Mees of the University of Melbourne states in his submission that a busway has been constructed along the entire rail corridor and, in one instance, the busway itself was carrying a right of way for the whole of the length. Will this be actually part of the area to accommodate that process? Can you confirm that planning of this nature is not going to be complemented with the existing rail services?

Mr Moore: I guess I do not fully understand the point, to be quite honest.

Mr STEPHAN: In this instance here, the railway is, in fact, going the full length of the track.

Mr Moore: Right. And we are running a busway, apparently, in parallel?

Mr STEPHAN: Yes.

Mr Moore: As we say, we are not privy to the detailed planning that went on to establish the south-east transit. I guess that we do have some concerns about it detracting from our patronage levels. So just how it does integrate is yet to be proven.

The CHAIRMAN: Further to that question, I think there was a suggestion in that submission that, in the case of the planned western busway, for some of its length that rail track will actually be removed to accommodate that. Can you confirm that that is being planned?

Mr Moore: We are not privy to that planning. That sort of planning is done in Queensland Transport, not Queensland Rail.

Mr SULLIVAN: Even if it was affecting a Queensland Rail corridor or rail track, you would not be aware of that?

Mr Scanlan: I believe that Queensland Transport would involve us at some point, but we are not privy to, I guess, the initial planning and the initial thinking. I am sure there are exceptions where we have been well advised and well informed, but certainly I am not aware of them

Mr Moore: I am not aware of the busway proposal suggesting that tracks be removed in the western corridor. We are aware of the light rail proposal to use existing heavy rail tracks.

Mr SULLIVAN: Might you be able to follow that up and perhaps talk with the research director and furnish the Committee with some information?

Mr Scanlan: We will be happy to follow up in case there has been some liaison at another part of Queensland Rail.

Mr SULLIVAN: Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN: I have one further question in a similar vein. On page F-6 of the same Queensland Transport submission, it states that the Brisbane Light Rail project is being deliberately planned to run on narrow gauge to allow for possible future expansion onto the heavy rail system. Is that technically feasible?

Mr Scanlan: We have done some work which suggests that it is not easy. We understand that there is a substantial extra cost to provide for that option. Nevertheless, I can understand the sense in at least providing for it at some point in the future. For example, hypothetically, if the population demographics of a particular line changed and there was a very low level of demand, then it may make sense to run a light rail system, rather than a heavy rail system, but we suspect it is not that simple. When light rail vehicles are interspersed with heavy rail vehicles, they have very different characteristics.

Firstly, there needs to be established whether there is the capacity on the corridor to be able to run the vehicles. So that is the first question. The second question is there are some technical issues. The signalling system operated by Queensland Rail is reliable for rail vehicles in certain axle load ranges and we need to be sure that any additional vehicles that run will be able to operate in the signalling system. That is not to say that they will not, but it needs to be established.

Also, as I say, there is an enormous difference in capacity with mixed vehicles of different operating qualities. They do consume more capacity. Also, there are some technical issues to be addressed in terms of platforms. Generally, light rail vehicles are designed for passengers to exit at street level, whereas heavy rail vehicles are designed for people to exit at platform level. So there will be some technical issues to be addressed to be able to accommodate both people exiting at street level and people exiting at platform level. So we would expect there will be a cost penalty for that level of flexibility.

The CHAIRMAN: Queensland Rail's submission expresses reservations about the feasibility of a proposed light rail service between Capalaba and Indooroopilly running partly on the heavy rail network. Are they similar concerns there or are they different concerns?

Mr Scanlan: We do have some concerns and we have conveyed these to Queensland Transport and we have offered to undertake a capacity study to demonstrate to them the impacts of having the different vehicles operating. We have offered further to do that work to assist in their understanding of the issues.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Mr SULLIVAN: I will move to a totally different area, the notion of accessibility. There are two elements to that issue. We understand that making Citytrain fully accessible must be a major challenge because you have got to share the network with freight services which have rolling stock of different sizes and shapes, which can make the platform configuration difficult. In its submission, QR states that it has developed a 20-year plan to comply as far as possible with the Disability Discrimination Act. Can you outline the elements of your QR access plan for the Committee and can the Committee be provided with a copy of that?

Mr Moore: In terms of disability accessibility to the rail network, as we say, we have prepared a 20-year action plan largely in line with the draft standard of the DDA access to public transport. It is essentially providing access onto platforms and between platforms at stations. It also involves improved passenger information systems at platforms for the disabled—and the disabled, of course, includes the blind, or sight-impaired, I guess. It also involves things such as tactile tiling along the edge of platforms and at entrances to stations and on stairways. It also will involve some modifications to rolling stock. The detail of that is still being determined, but things

like the door handles on existing or older EMU type rolling stock do not currently adhere to the standards set up in the DDA draft standards. So those sorts of things will be looked at as well.

The DDA draft standards require that those matters be addressed over a 20 year period, as we understand it. We would get funding for that sort of work through Queensland Transport as part of our current Citytrain Government Service Agreement with Queensland Transport. They are funding effectively the first seven years of that program and have allocated \$46m.

Mr SULLIVAN: What are some of the main elements of that? The problems caused by platform height that are below the floor height of trains is one obvious problem. Accessibility to platforms and between platforms. What are some of the specifics you are doing?

Mr Moore: In terms of the platform height, the current draft standard, as we understand it, allows for what we call assisted access between the platform and the trains. That, therefore, means we can use a train guard or station staff to use a ramp from the lower level platform up to the level of the rolling stock. That, therefore, does not require the platforms to be raised to the level of the rolling stock, although ideally that would happen, and in most of our new design work we are designing the platforms at the higher level. The new platforms at Central Station are an example of that. Essentially, throughout the network it would be a very significant cost to raise all platforms and it is physically not possible on curved platforms because it leaves a bigger gap between the train and the platforms. So the assisted access which the draft standards currently allow is the way we are going at the moment.

Mr SULLIVAN: Access to platforms?

Mr Moore: Access to platforms. I guess to the external platforms it is basically via ramps or lifts. To internal platforms where you have got to cross tracks, it would also be generally via lifts because we found that the gradients on the ramps are too great to make a sensible footbridge possible, given the height that they have got to go up to.

Mr SULLIVAN: This Committee had the chance to look at some platforms some time ago at, for example, the Morningside ramp complex. It is almost like a multilevel car park, but there is a specific question I want to raise with you on access with lifts and it is linked in with the safety aspect. As you are aware, part of the safety aspect—passengers' safety—is the perception of feeling secure. Why has Queensland Rail gone to enclosed lifts and rather unfriendly corridors as opposed to the more open glass, perspex type areas? A perfect example, Mike, you would know from the north side, is Eagle Junction Railway Station. Compare that to, say, the new Mount Gravatt bus station where the clear, open glass screenings have specifically been designed so that there are not hideaway areas, so that people feel more open, more secure, so that lighting permeates. Yet we are currently building at Virginia Railway Station and have just built at Eagle Junction lifts that are totally enclosed, very coffin-like in their feel and very heavy metal enclosed walkways between them and it is very user unfriendly.

Mr Moore: I would have to take that one on notice, I guess, but I think in some instances we do, in fact, have the glass lifts. I think the Gold Coast railway stations essentially have glass lifts. The Roma Street Station has glass lifts. Why the difference, I just cannot answer.

Mr SULLIVAN: That, again, was a source of amazement. Having completed an inspection with QR a few years ago to the first stage of the Gold Coast railway, again, it is a very open area and yet just in the last couple of years those on the north side are being built in this very enclosed way. It is almost as if the recommendations in our former submission about passengers' perceptions of safety were looked at and it was then said: "Well, let's build one that will really make them scared." We have some people from the north side who are visiting here. I am sure Mr Carter and some of his colleagues would use that area. You have then got the Wooloowin Railway Station which has an extremely long ramp to the platform which again makes access difficult. I was a bit flippant before, Mike, but is it possible to get some response back?

Mr Scanlan: Yes.

Mr SULLIVAN: Because it just goes against all the commonsense planning and if there is a technical reason, let us have it, but otherwise it is just building an environment that is not friendly.

The CHAIRMAN: Is it possible for the Committee to obtain a copy of that access plan?

Mr Scanlan: Yes. We have the document that is included in the Government Service Agreement. There will be some variation. It will give you an exact schedule out of the contract, but there will be some variation based on, how would you say, reassessment of priorities where it may be perhaps due to other work going on or a realisation that the priorities need to be changed. So there will be some minor variations, but not major variations. We would be happy to point those out in a covering letter if you so desire.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much for that. Queensland Rail is a major provider of public transport in this region. We have heard this morning from different groups who have highlighted the need for better services in different areas. Have you any ideas of ways that Queensland Rail could improve their services with regard to public transport?

Mr Scanlan: We have approached Queensland Transport for some additional units to operate on the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast and they would have services facilities such as toilets. We currently are performing some modifications to some older rolling stock which was used in long distance service and the door operation was assisted in that service. Now they are not suited to operation in, for example, the Sunshine Coast. They are not ideal as they currently are, so we are undertaking a trial testing of an improved automated type door operation or a semi-automated operation. We also have a current contract for 30 new units; I think we are about somewhere near halfway through the delivery schedule. That will allow us to improve the service level.

The main focus, I think, recently has been trying to introduce a better service time to the outlying areas so that we can improve the travel time and also trying to maintain the service frequency, of course, in the more inner suburbs as well. At times, it is a juggling act, but the aim is to try and have a program of upgrading service to meet the growth that is coming, particularly on the Gold Coast corridor. I think in the last—I am not sure if it was the calendar year or the financial year, there was approximately 12% growth, which was well beyond our expectations and hence our request for additional rolling stock to meet the demand.

Longer term, the Sunshine Coast has some limitations because of the infrastructure. North of Caboolture to Nambour is predominantly single track with passing loops. It is near saturation level. There are two projects. At the moment I believe Queensland Transport is about to do some studies relating to the first area—Landsborough to Caboolture. That is looking at improving the alignment and taking some additional land to improve our alignment, which will allow faster running time in the future and also duplication, because it does not make sense to duplicate on the current alignment, which in a lot of areas is quite poor. So the idea is that we would progressively duplicate. As we duplicate, we increase the capacity and we are able to offer better service levels.

Certainly, we are aware that that is a major issue for Sunshine Coast residents and we are keen to progress that. Queensland Transport has done studies for both the extensions from Robina to Coolangatta and also to Maroochydore from Beerwah. Again, that provides growth opportunities and improved services. In the short term, we have been endeavouring to provide improved service by supplementing with additional buses, for which the Queensland Government has provided funding support. That is more of an interim step to supplement the available rail services.

Similarly, on the Gold Coast we would be keen to improve the service level. We have some weekday services where we do not run a service every half hour. Again, additional rolling stock would help us to increase our service level there. The rest of the system is based primarily on the available demand, which is more triggered by the loadings on the services. That gives us the opportunity to target particular time zones so that we can add services to relieve the overcrowding and, ultimately, we will come to a point where we need to increase the service frequency across a broader range.

The CHAIRMAN: In the outer areas and the beaches, are there moves to coordinate the bus times with the train times to make it easier for people to commute?

Mr Scanlan: Yes, there is that intention. Certainly, Bribie has been completed. I believe that is quite a good service, with common ticketing for both the bus operation and the rail operation. We are certainly aware that the Sunshine Coast and Gold Coast could have some improvements with better coordination. That is certainly a focus for us in the near future. Probably the most immediate focus for the Gold Coast is that we believe there is a market that we have

not tapped well, because the current operation is tortuous for the most southern beaches. It is quite a long trip.

Mr SULLIVAN: There have been some significant improvements with respect to things such as the help buttons, better lighting and the small kiosks at suburban stations, which give them a more friendly feel, more like a little shopping centre rather than an isolated area. The repainting of Brunswick Street Station made it a lot lighter. Previously, it was dark. Can you provide the Committee with some figures for reports of incidents before these upgrades on the network and since? As occasional rail users, it strikes us that there is a much more passenger friendly approach at those stations that have had upgrades. We would be interested to know whether the mere presence of things such as the help buttons and the kiosks have led to a decline in reported incidents and, if so, to what degree. I do not expect you to have the figures, but if you could provide them that would be helpful.

Mr Scanlan: We would supply whatever we have available. For example, recently, I think two stations have had lighting upgrades. Dakabin was certainly one of them. We could perhaps have a look at that. In respect of individual stations it is very difficult, because often the numbers are small, to know whether it was a change that was random as opposed to a direct linkage to the initiative.

Mr SULLIVAN: It would almost have to be a case of comparing a basket of stations that have had upgrades with those that have not. We could compare the incidents in the previous four years with the current four years where that has been done. I think that would give us some trend figures.

Mr Scanlan: We would be happy to. If there are any differences in reporting or anything that might unintentionally bias the figures—for example, if the reporting has been especially good over the past two years whereas it may not have been as good because people fail to report assaults or whatever—we will make a note of anything that we are aware of.

The CHAIRMAN: That brings to a close the Committee's questions for Queensland Rail. The information that you have given us is valuable for our inquiry. Is there anything further that you would like to add?

Mr Moore: The Queensland Bus Industry Council's submission quoted some figures in relation to subsidies to the operators of various modes. For example, they quoted a \$283m subsidy per annum to Queensland Rail in the contract between QR and QT. They stated that the Brisbane Transport subsidy is \$30m and that private buses are getting \$14m. It is probably fair to say that we really need to be sure that we are comparing like with like when we quote those sorts of figures. The \$283m figure quoted is not just the operating subsidy to QR but includes a substantial capital component for things such as the Disabled Access Project, the Intermodal Interchange Project, the Safe Station Security Project—those sorts of things. The capital component of that \$283m is over half that \$283m amount. So if you bring that back to an equal operating component, say, it is roughly \$140m. But in addition they quote the figures in terms of subsidy per passenger.

The cost of operating a service depends on how far you take those passengers as well. Citytrain's average journey length is something of the order of 20 kilometres, whereas we understand Brisbane Transport's average passenger journey is something like six or thereabouts. There is a factor of three in terms of the difference in distance that we are carrying our passengers. If you take those factors into account, it compares the subsidies on a more equal basis, but the way it is quoted in the QBIC submission it appears that we are getting so much more per passenger.

Mr SULLIVAN: Do you know the average length of bus operators' trips?

Mr Moore: No, I could not say.

Mr Scanlan: I might reiterate that at the bottom of page 5 there is reference to the previous studies which had concluded that the South East Queensland Transport Study, which is on the bottom of page 5 of our submission, and also the Public Works Committee report both recognised the importance of bus/rail integration. That is certainly a major focus for us. We believe we have made reasonable progress in the outer areas and we can do better. But that really needs to be progressed. The single greatest concern is that there needs to be a level of funding to set up the infrastructure, and we will do our best to operate the services so that there is

no or little additional funding for operation required by Government. We believe that is the best way we can deliver value to the travelling public. It is not necessarily going to be CBD focused. I would like to reiterate that. We do have another proposal which is not fully developed. Certainly, Queensland Transport is aware of it, as is Treasury. We are looking at the potential for a very high speed operation between Coolangatta and the Sunshine Coast and also including Toowoomba, which is basically saying, "We need to be visionary now for the future so that we do not squeeze these options out." It draws the people closer in time zones which, of course, allows a lot more flexibility with employment, should employment centres move over time.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much for your contribution to our inquiry and for your cooperation. We appreciate it. Thank you for being here.

The CHAIRMAN: The next witness this afternoon will be Mr Brendan Horne from the Cerebral Palsy League.

BRENDAN PATRICK HORNE, examined:

The CHAIRMAN: We welcome you to our hearings this afternoon. For the record, would you please state your full name and your position within the Cerebral Palsy League of Queensland.

Mr Horne: My name is Brendan Horne. I am the General Manager of Disability Programs within the league. I manage and oversight all of the services the league provides.

The CHAIRMAN: Would you like to begin with an opening statement?

Mr Horne: I would. Thank you for the opportunity to have a say about the issue. It is a pretty important issue for us. As an organisation, we have a big investment in transport. The league is a pretty large organisation. It provides services to 1,500 children and 700 adults with cerebral palsy and related disabilities in Queensland. We have regional centres in Rockhampton, Hervey Bay, Toowoomba and on the Gold Coast, so we are very much concentrated in the south-east corner of Queensland and focused on a lot of the areas that the inquiry is particularly concerned about. We provide a range of services for children and adults. In our children's services we provide therapy, support and equipment and we provide in-home and community support to families in all of those regions. As I say, something like 70% to 75% of the populations that I suggested are concentrated in the metropolitan area as well.

In the adult area we provide a range of services—adult accommodation support services, employment services, day services and therapy and other specialist and equipment services. The league has been in operation in Queensland for about 51 years. We have a strong track record in terms of providing and developing services. The kinds of services that we offer have changed markedly over the past 10 to 15 years at the instigation of the various Federal and State Governments.

Since the disability services legislation changed and was brought in in 1986 the league, like most service providers, has gone through major change as an organisation. The thrust of those sorts of changes has been to move from institutional and centralised operations to very much community-based operations that are supporting people in their home communities. Therefore, I guess transport has become very problematic and crucial to the effectiveness of those sorts of programs that we have been moving towards.

If I look at our agency about 10 years ago, largely, the total service that we offered was really a central accommodation service at Fig Tree Pocket—65 bed residential and 45 bed children's residential in New Farm. To date, we have closed the children's residence and we are only providing support to children in the community and in their own homes with their families. We have gone through a long process of downscaling the adult residential facility and looking at other preferable options and more appropriate options for people to live in the community. We currently have 30 people still resident in that residence in Fig Tree Pocket, but we are providing support to over 100 adults in their own homes and living situations in the community.

We have a very large population of people with high support needs who are living in the community who obviously have major issues to do with access to transport to provide them with a quality of life. It is one thing to place a person out in the community; it is another thing to provide them with the support to access the normal things that we take for granted in the community.

Mr SULLIVAN: The social infrastructure that enables them to do what most people take for granted?

Mr Horne: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: We will turn to some questions.

Ms NELSON-CARR: Obviously efficiency and effective transport is very critical for people with a disability. Do you know whether you can measure the effectiveness and efficiency of public transport?

Mr Horne: How would we measure it?

Ms NELSON-CARR: Yes.

Mr Horne: I am not an expert in public transport. I guess my particular focus and where I would be best served in input is really the kind of programs that we offer are very much community access programs; they are about trying to look individually at an individual person and trying to look at what their goals are and how they want to access the community. I guess the transport is just a means—an essential means in some senses. You did mention the issue of cost, but it is an essential means for them to realise those kinds of goals. I guess the realisation of those goals is the test as to whether the transport component of that has an important part to play in that.

At the moment transport is a great obstacle to people. If you look at some of the programs that we offer, such as our adult day service or our employment services, the cost and the impost on those programs and the budgets of those programs to enable people to access the program are such that it certainly reduces the operational budgets. For instance, last year one third of the budget of one of our supported employment services went on the cost of transport to assist people to access that particular facility. If we have adequate, effective and cost-effective public transport, then we would have a lot more resources to give direct support to people to start planning the services. Instead of transport being an adjunct to the program, it is becoming too much of a crucial part that is absorbing too many resources.

Ms NELSON-CARR: Would that be your only complaint about transport addressing the needs of people with a disability?

Mr Horne: They are just services issues, but in a broad sense I think the whole issue of quality of life that people have—people with higher support needs I suppose in some instances are very dependent on taxis at the moment. I think in the submission we have detailed some of that. Taxis are very limited in the resolution of the sorts of problems that they have in their lives. The availability of accessible taxis is very limited in the morning peak hour periods when they are all prebooked for school attendance, etc. All of those large blocks of time are problematic for people in accessing transport. There is a deal of inflexibilities and costs in design and in performance. Often the standards are problematic as well. Certainly the transport arrangements that people have, particularly as you get out of the city, become far more problematic.

Ms NELSON-CARR: I was going to ask you that.

Mr Horne: In the city area we have an employment service, a work site, where we have 15 clients, some of them with reasonably high support needs. A lot of those people use public transport—train and boat—a whole range of means of accessing that. That is one of the success stories in terms of public access. It is a bit of an isolated incident. In a lot of our other areas public transport does not in any way deal with it. This year we are going to downsize. Because of financial problems, we are having to downsize our own bus fleet from 13 to 9 buses—to explain some of the problem—and we are having to stagger the times of attendance of some of our programs in order to fit within those financial constraints.

In order to do that, I guess it means that you are putting transport as such an important issue because of its limitations; it is restricting the options and choices that people have in terms of when they can come and go from programs. It is really arresting the kind of flexibilities that people have and the possibilities of doing more with programs because we do not have choices. We run community access programs and we would probably be running far more programs from people's homes and assisting them to access the community with support but we have limitations in doing that because of the availability and the quality of transport.

Mr STEPHAN: What does the league consider to be the main problems with the transport system? Could you put some sort of priority on those problems?

Mr Horne: In a broad sense the crucial issue is really to have a uniform and quality accessible transport system. What are the priorities? At the moment we cope with our own resources. We have bus fleets that we manage, as I was suggesting. In my belief there is not going to be any immediate resolution. It is a big cost, I realise, of trying to solve a totally inaccessible transport system. I guess it would be good if there was some planning and targeting around particular high need areas and that, if we were going to have a staggered approach, somehow or other there was a more total plan and strategy adopted so that we could have a program with solutions in an area rather than piecemeal. At the moment it is a bit piecemeal in the way we are trying to adopt the—

Mr STEPHAN: Do you get enough drivers for your vehicles?

Mr Horne: Yes.

Mr STEPHAN: There is no problem there?

Mr Horne: For us to have drivers? It is opening up another Pandora's box, I suppose. The league currently runs a children's transport service where we had a Government contract contracted by the Department of Transport. We have been in the business of providing transport for children to schools for probably almost the life of the league—probably 40 to 45 years. Recently the Department of Transport put that contract to public tender and the league lost that public tender for purely financial reasons. We simply could not compete with two commercial tenderers. I think that has a very substantial implication for us as an organisation. It means that the total financial viability of our total transport operation is certainly put into question. It has meant that we have had to downsize our adult transport services because of the loss of that contract. The contract was decided purely on commercial grounds without looking at the broader ramifications, I don't think. The broader ramifications are that the transport out of hours was also used for other community groups—disability groups—to access and to use the charter operations, etc., as fully accessible vehicles.

If I was going to put a point across to you—we were quite peeved and have been peeved. Parents are quite angry at the drop in the standard of services that they are going to receive with the commercial contracts. But certainly from our point of view, the big picture of what is happening to people with a disability across-the-board has been a casualty to a pretty short, narrow view of what is a best commercial outcome for two or three tenders in the deal. That has meant that some of the intermediary solutions that we have—until you get a broader transport plan in place, if that is the object—we certainly have been quite compromised as an organisation and we are able to provide a lesser transport solution to a lot of our clients because of the commercial decision that was taken by the Department of Transport.

Mr SULLIVAN: Can I ask a quick follow-up question in relation to that? The words "integration" and "multiuse" have come through today's hearing. Can you provide the Committee with some of the details of the change that that loss of contract has meant, what use of the vehicles was occurring and what service was being provided to people beforehand and what is happening now? Could you provide those details?

Mr Horne: I certainly could provide those details in written form later on.

Mr SULLIVAN: Yes, that is what I meant—at a later date.

Mr HEALY: I am sorry that I was not here for the start of your presentation. I have read your submission, though, and I found it very interesting. I certainly have an understanding of what the league has been able to achieve in relation to transport, particularly in my area up in Toowoomba. You may have answered this question before, but I notice that in the submission the three areas of main concern to you were the physical design, availability and safety. Can you just expand a little bit more within those areas on what initiatives would make the existing public transport system more inclusive. I know it is pretty broad—

Mr Horne: I will take them one at a time. I am not an OT and I guess, in a sense, there are probably a lot more people in my organisation who are far better equipped to answer this. Some of the concerns about the safety factors, for instance, include the fact that the bus systems do not have clamping arrangements for wheelchairs once they board the buses. There are concerns about the issue of the level of trains in terms of the platforms, direct access and the need to bring ramping on at 45 degrees. There are constant complaints that come in that need to be rectified. If you run them through one at a time, in terms of—

Mr HEALY:—availability.

Mr Horne: I guess availability is really an issue of more buses that are accessible. I know there is a plan to move from 20% and to move on in the strategic plan for buses, etc. That cannot happen soon enough in terms of a lot of our people.

The actual taxi systems at the moment, as I said, cause a great deal of problems in terms of their availability. I think I mentioned some nitty-gritty things there about how the design and the modifications of taxis do not allow people to carry wheelchairs anymore. If you have a person with a wheelchair and you get into a normal cab, they shove it into the boot. The boot is half taken up

by gas bottles, etc., so it dangles out the back. They put a bit of rope around your wheelchair and it gets chipped and bent by the bonnet going up and down. These are some of the issues that are just piecemeal, that show a real lack of it.

There is an issue of training people. The taxi system is far more important to us at the moment in a real sense until something is done at a more macro level. Training of taxi drivers, I think, is really important—people sitting down and not being sensitive to a lot of the issues that are there for people. In an extreme sense, one wonders sometimes at the screenings and security issues to deal with who gets a taxi driver licence.

You are putting people with high support needs and children, in many instances, in pretty vulnerable situations in relation to getting lifts to and from school by operatives other than ourselves, who have historically done it. What are the standards? In relation to the control of our buses, we go through an exhaustive process of screening people, of getting police checks and of training people comprehensively in attitude towards knowledge of disability. We ensure that they have first-aid certificates. We look at the individual needs of each individual child with seating. That is swept to the side when looking at the cost issue. Taxis have a long way to go in looking at the standards.

In relation to maxi cabs, I think there are some standards in terms of securing things like wheelchairs, etc. My wife has some mobility problems. On the subject of putting a wheelchair in maxi cabs, if a person happens to have a suitcase they place in the cab, the suitcase floats around the whole damn cabin. They are supposed to be purpose designed for people with disabilities. It is like going through a vitamiser. If there are rules, they are certainly not applied in a lot of instances. It is a bit of a horrid ride, I have to tell you. Get in one of them and go for a ride. There is an issue of standards, quality and training of people that we really have to have a good look at.

In relation to that, in the 10 years I have been involved with the league there have been a couple of instances where—and I do not want to sound alarmist and say it happens all the time—women clients have been harassed by taxi drivers. We have had to be involved in pretty serious consultations with the taxi companies and supporting people in going to the police and through that process. Unless there is some sort of safeguard when dealing with people who are very vulnerable who have intellectual disabilities and certainly some communication problems, some times they are very much at risk. There has to be some sort of standard imposed on the whole exercise.

The CHAIRMAN: We understand that access is a very important issue to your organisation. This morning we heard the suggestion that the cost of having a carer travel with disabled people and elderly people is a problem and that maybe a concession could be made available for the carer. I think that is going to be very difficult to enforce, but would that type of assistance help your organisation?

Mr Horne: I think that is essential for a lot of people in accessing the system. It would not be possible for a lot of people to take particularly long range transport without a carer to support them. We have heard about problems on airline flights and how people cope with those issues. A lot of people do need carers. There should be some allowance made for that.

The CHAIRMAN: Would that overcome some of the problems you are encountering with public transport?

Mr Horne: It would certainly make it more accessible. Even if there is a fully accessible bus system, they have to get from their homes to the bus in order to access the bus system. Some of them would need carers and support to do that. A lot of the people we deal with in modern times are people with high support needs. Looking at the Cerebral Palsy League, 15 or 20 years ago the people we dealt with, even the people we had in residence, were only marginally disabled compared to a lot of the people we deal with today. We have people with considerably high support needs.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Mr SULLIVAN: I do not want to diminish the concerns you raised before, but I always feel good when a maxi taxi arrives for me because I have generally found that the maxi taxi drivers are a more caring group.

Mr Horne: Right. As I say, I would not like to slam all taxi drivers. There are some very caring people. I was making the point as to what standards are applied.

Mr SULLIVAN: I take your point, too. Something that has struck me is the change in design of wheelchairs from the fairly simple freewheeling ones to those that then have the batteries on the back to now the larger, longer and heavier motorised scooters. Is that third category posing a problem that the previous categories did not? Are the scooters able to be accommodated in the maxi taxis to a similar degree, or is their increased size and weight limiting access?

Mr Horne: We do have a number of individuals in employment services who do have scooters. I have not heard of any major problems with them getting access to public transport and what have you. They usually cope quite well. A number of those are in the city, from my recollection. I do not know of any problem. I have not heard of any problem in accessing maxi cabs with scooters.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you have any further information you would like to give us? I think we have gone through all of our questions.

Mr Horne: I go back to the point I made before. A broad, accessible transport system is really an essential precursor to people having a quality life, far more so for people with a disability. They are often on limited and restricted incomes. A lot of the children are from single parent families. They are not really in a position to afford some of the taxi arrangements. Even with taxi vouchers and subsidies it is still a huge impost on people and it does restrict their lives. Restricted incomes restrict the number of times they can access the community. How many times can they go out and how can they afford it when they are looking at half the taxi fare, even with vouchers, to go back and forward? You cannot do much on a restricted income. If you are limiting people to that high cost alternative, you are making decisions about the restriction on the quality of the life they are able to lead.

Mr SULLIVAN: I ask a very quick question which may be able to be answered with a one word answer. In terms of multi-level access, do people that you deal with prefer ramps or lifts?

Mr Horne: I think the lift. With ramps you have to look at the angles and the fatigue effect of the length of ramps.

Mr SULLIVAN: You have confirmed what we have heard elsewhere. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much for coming. It is excellent to have input from your organisation into our inquiry. Thank you for your contribution.

Mr Horne: Thank you.

The Committee adjourned at 3.09 p.m.

The Committee resumed at 3.33 p.m.

ADAM PEKOL, examined:

BRETT McCLURG, examined:

The CHAIRMAN: I welcome representatives of the Institution of Engineers in Australia. Your submission raises many valid questions for the Committee to consider during this inquiry and we are grateful for your assistance. We welcome in particular the institution's interest in non-engineering solutions. Would you like to begin with a short opening address?

Mr Pekol: Yes, thank you. We are here today representing the Institution of Engineers. Just to give a bit of background, in Queensland the Institution of Engineers represents about 9,500 professional engineers across the State covering various disciplines—civil engineering, structural engineering and chemical, mechanical and electrical engineering—with membership ranging from student members through to full members and fellows of the institution.

Brett and I are both members of the Transport Panel, which is a sub-unit of the Institution of Engineers. It is a locally based, south-east Queensland group of about a dozen professionals practising in the area of transport and traffic engineering. Our membership in the Transport Panel is drawn from the private sector—both Brett and I work for private consulting firms in Brisbane—and also from the public sector, that is, the Main Roads Department and Queensland Transport, as well as from academia. We have a number of representatives from the various universities. We even have a couple of transport operators on the Transport Panel.

It was the Transport Panel which was basically given the task of responding or putting together a submission to this Committee. There was a group of us from the Transport Panel who put that submission together. So what you are seeing, I guess, is the views of a cross-section of professionals involved in the planning, management and operations of transport. I think it is important to say that the Transport Panel does not represent, I guess, what the community might think of as a traditional engineer—that is, those people who go out and build roads and build bridges, etc. We are more interested in the planning of infrastructure or the planning of services—both the hard and the soft sides of engineering.

Mr SULLIVAN: What does the Institution of Engineers think is wrong with the public transport system in south-east Queensland and what would you nominate as the most important issues in order of priority?

Mr McClurg: As we said in our submission, we went through a couple of issues, but I guess the key one—we have not put them in a priority order yet—is the competing markets for public transport. That is, should public transport be focused on capturing a large slice of the travel market to satisfy the objectives of the IRTP or should it be accommodating the disadvantaged users—those on lower incomes, people with disabilities, the elderly and possibly the tourist market? There is a definite competing interest in both of those fields, because they are going to be wanting different pricing structures, different service levels and so forth.

Mr SULLIVAN: But it is not a matter of just saying, "We want to hit a target in the IRTP." There are certain targets in the IRTP because there are certain things happening in society. So where does your institution see the whole transport/public transport societal sort of arrangement?

Mr McClurg: We think there are a couple of issues there. One is that the public transport system can easily be tailored or constrained to a desired living structure, quality of living or state of living, but the other harder part is to balance that with the state of living that we want. We may choose to have urban sprawl because that is the lifestyle choice the community makes. The question is: do we make the public transport system such that it prevents that from happening or do we in fact adapt the transport system such that it accommodates urban sprawl? From that point of view, I think there is a real society element in terms of our choice of how we want to live and how we want to travel.

Mr Pekol: I think it is fair to say that we often find that we get mixed signals from the community. Quite often in the press we hear calls for greater use of public transport and for better public transport services, yet on the reverse side of that people are choosing to live and locate further and further away from established public transport services—basically because the land is cheaper, they can get their quarter acre block and there is room for them and their families to grow. Sometimes the messages we get can conflict with one another.

Mr SULLIVAN: I notice that in your submission you say that if the IRTP targets are to be met it is necessary to target the major private car users and those that can make the transition from the private car to public transport. That indicates to me that you recognise there is an over-reliance on the private car and that if something is not done that is going to lead to some problem. Do I read your views correctly?

Mr McClurg: I would agree with that. There is a definite need to plan for the public transport now, before we get to a dire situation in terms of traffic. If we are to meet the objectives of the IRTP—those objectives are reasonably high—then we are probably looking at accommodating a large slice of the market, as opposed to just getting a smaller increase. From that point of view I think the commuter market is a high end.

Mr STEPHAN: Given the problems you have identified, what would you recommend to address these problems and to enhance the region's public transport?

Mr McClurg: One of the key things we believe in terms of trying to meet the targets of the IRTP and obviously encouraging public transport is that there needs to be some system of measuring and monitoring how the public transport systems are operating now and how successful any previous or current measures put in place to encourage public transport are. Without some quite heavy and strong data collection and data assessment, we are not really going to be able to see whether our strategies are actually working to achieve the objectives we want.

Mr Pekol: We as an institution believe that there is a role now to take a more holistic view of how budgets are directed towards particular transport projects. We feel that there is a greater need for comparing the benefits and the costs of expenditure of, say, building a road. We need to be able to evaluate whether that is the best way to spend that money or whether we should be spending the money not so much on another road project but on a completely different project, such as providing more bus services or providing new rail services, and so on.

I think what has happened a lot up to now and what still goes on today is that, whenever any assessment is made as to whether any particular project should go ahead, that assessment is based on the do-nothing option: "Either we will do nothing or we will do this project." Sometimes a comparison is made—"We will do project A or project B"—and both of those projects might be a road project. I guess what we are saying is that we need to cast that net wider and say, "Maybe project A is a road project and maybe project B is a public transport project." Right now, there is not a lot of evaluation or comparison done to say that that bucket of money would be better spent doing something completely different from what we first thought. It is about coming up with that evaluation framework that cuts across just one or two particular modes.

Mr STEPHAN: Do you have enough support to go down that path?

Mr Pekol: The challenge is coming up with a technique that can stand up to scrutiny and that can compare apples with apples, if you like, across the different projects.

Mr McClurg: It goes back to the decision-making process: asking the question, "What do we need to satisfy this particular objective or this particular travel market?", and then looking at the options—is it a new roadway or is it a bus system?—rather than starting off with the answer being, "We need a new bus system. How do we build it? How do we design it?" As Adam said, it is about what is the best solution with X amount of money to be spent.

Ms NELSON-CARR: In your submission you talk about institutional arrangements that make the region's public transport system less efficient. One of these arrangements that you mention concerns ownership of public transport and the conflict that arises between the social role of public transport and the financial interests of the operators. Can you explain what you mean by this conflict and give some examples of tangible effects?

Mr Pekol: I guess it picks up on the point Brett was making earlier. The majority of public transport operators operating in south-east Queensland are private bus operators. There are a couple of larger publicly owned organisations, such as Brisbane Transport, who run the buses, and Queensland Rail. Even those organisations are being more and more driven by a corporate philosophy and are being required to reduce the amount of loss they make in serving a particular market. They are really going to be focused on maximising their fare box revenue or, on the other side of the equation, reducing the cost of providing their services. So they are going to provide the minimum service required to satisfy their contract obligations, which might mean that they do

not provide the best service that they possibly could to meet some of the disadvantaged groups than might otherwise be possible.

What we also find is that the problems manifest themselves—that sometimes you get competition between alternative modes such as bus and rail where there are two services running almost in parallel competing for the same market. You might argue that a better way to allocate the money in a global sense is to let one service serve that market and then put that second service somewhere else where there is no service. So rather than have one market with two services, you have two markets each with one service for the same total cost. That way the benefits get spread more uniformly across the region.

The CHAIRMAN: With regard to the management of public transport, a number of submissions to this inquiry have flagged the need for a regional transit authority to oversee public transport in south-east Queensland. Does the Institution of Engineers support that suggestion? If so, what benefits would you see coming from such an arrangement?

Mr Pekol: Both Brett and I are a little bit young to remember the years of the MTA—Metropolitan Transit Authority—which had a brief few years of life in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Suffice to say we know enough from talking to other professionals who have been around for long enough to know that that idea was tried and, for whatever reason, was not as successful as would have first been hoped. So for that reason, as an institution, we would caution against heading down that path, unless the reasons why the MTA failed when it was first tried were properly understood and it was clear that those same reasons would not cause a new organisation to also fail. Basically, we would urge that we learn from the mistakes of the past.

Having said that, we do believe that there are some benefits in a more coordinated planning of public transport in the region. I think that we acknowledge that there is an opportunity for a bit more balance between the public and the private sector in this regard insofar as the private sector could probably operate public transport systems very efficiently, just given the very nature of their organisations—the corporate nature in which they operate. Having said that, if we throw the field open to total competition, we will start to end up with more of the problems that I discussed previously in answering your question in terms of competition in the same market, whereas it might be better to spread those services more uniformly across the region.

So it seems to us that maybe the way to go forward is to have some sort of regional authority, which plans the services in such a way as to ensure coordination of services—that the trains meet the buses, that the buses meet the buses—but that the people who operate them might be the private sector. Now, that might mean going away from this concept of what is called area contracts where, for example, Brisbane Transports define an area, or gets given an area in which they can run all their bus services, and they basically can operate with a certain amount of freedom and nobody else can operate, but Brisbane Transport are very limited in operating services outside that area. Maybe the model that we should be adopting is, instead of having area licensing, we put together packages of routes and these routes have been predefined so that they do meet up with one another and coordinate in a logical way. But then the private sector gets the opportunity to tender on those routes and then run those routes in the most efficient way possible.

You could conceivably come up with a package of routes, some which are very profitable and some which are less profitable, but that way the operator who gets that package makes some money on the profitable routes and can help subsidise and continue running the least profitable routes, which might be in there to meet some of those social obligations—servicing areas with high populations of elderly people or high populations of people with low car ownership.

The CHAIRMAN: So you would suggest then that if a transit authority were formed it would have to be on a different scale to the one that failed previously?

Mr Pekol: I am not sure if a different scale is the right word, but certainly I think there would have to be some sort of public/private sector cooperation involved there—leaving the operation more in the private sector, but using the public sector more for the coordinated planning aspects.

Mr HEALY: Gentlemen, in your submission you make an interesting point in the form of a question that you pose. I will just read that question: "To what extent does the premature political

endorsement of specific projects such as the Pacific Motorway and Brisbane light rail reduce the need for and scope of any subsequent rigorous analysis of potential impacts and benefits?" So that is about mixing politics and transport policy. Now that you have posed the question, I would like you to answer it.

Mr McClurg: One of the feelings in that was that if a political decision is made to proceed with a particular project then, as we were talking about before, it is very difficult for any assessments of that to come up with the answer, "No, that is not the right solution", when we would see that maybe the best thing is to say, "This is the objective", or "This is the demand that we want to serve; what is the best way to do it?" Rather, it appears that we are getting political decisions saying, "This is the best way to do it", or, "This is what we want to be our end product", not, "This is what we want to be our end objective or demand to be served." I do not know whether that answers your question, but I think that we are saying that we would like to see that the objectives be why a project gets on the ball rather than being the project finality.

Mr Pekol: Call a spade a spade, I think the Pacific Motorway is a classic example of a political decision—to build that eight-lane road when you have a rail line running parallel to it. You really do have to ask yourself why we are building an eight-lane road when we are trying to support public transport usage. Why are we making it faster for people to commute to the Gold Coast and Brisbane and vice versa?

Mr HEALY: The same could be said for the busway.

Mr Pekol: That leads on to what I was going to say. As a profession, what we get left with is an eight-lane freeway. What are we going to do with it? With a bit of prodding and poking and pushing people in the right directions, we can chip away at it and maybe a couple of those lanes, instead of being dedicated just for cars, we could shift at least some of them to public transport use. Maybe some of them, instead of being purely for cars, we can set them aside for high-occupancy vehicles—vehicles with three or more passengers in it. This has not happened, but maybe we could say, "This lane is only going to be for long-distance coach services and semitrailers and trucks carrying goods", which really drive the economy of the region, not commuters who live on the Gold Coast in canal estates and come to work in Brisbane. That does not help our economy at all.

Mr HEALY: But do you not agree that, if the infrastructure is there, the adaptation can be there later on rather than having to add on to existing infrastructure, which could cause enormous problems down the track with further resumptions?

Mr Pekol: That is true, except the experience is that it is very difficult once you build a piece of infrastructure and open it for use A to then come along years later and revert it to use B. All the literature from overseas experiences and even locally points to problems with that. I will give one example of the transit lane that has been constructed on the northern part of Brisbane. It has been in operation for probably a year now on Kelvin Grove Road. It is a Brisbane City Council controlled road. They widened the road, removed some houses and removed some trees—which was very topical at the time; some big old fig trees were going to be destroyed but they got them relocated—and they put in two transit lanes. For the first few weeks before they got the line marking done, the lanes were open to all traffic. A couple of weeks later, the city council came along and actually implemented what they had always planned to do and turned them into transit lanes, and there was not an insignificant outcry from the motoring public and from the motoring organisations that represent the motoring public. That was just after two weeks' use as a general traffic lane. I think that you will find that it will be very, very difficult to come back years later on the Pacific Motorway, when the traffic volumes are twice as high as what they are now, and then say, "These two lanes are no longer available for general use, we are going to turn them into transit lanes", or bus lanes, or whatever. It would be very difficult.

Mr SULLIVAN: Just following up on Graham's very easy question, it strikes me that you are saying then that, when the political announcement has been made that this project will be part of our plan, or our scheme that is coming, the assessments of those tend to be skewed, or tend to be difficult to be implemented by engineers because you have been told, "This is what is going to go ahead", and you seem to indicate in your submission that that then poses problems—that projects may receive a softer than usual impact assessment.

Mr Pekol: That is one way to look at it. I think that it is fair to say that not every political decision is a poor one on technical grounds. I think that we are saying as a committee that

sometimes those announcements are made slightly prematurely. What can often happen also is that some benefit can sometimes come from it, because it means that if a project is teetering on the edge of being justifiable on technical grounds, it does mean that the people involved in the project work just that little bit harder to find other ways to add value to the project to get it over the line, if you like. So you can actually end up with a better end product that way.

Mr SULLIVAN: What about the other side of the coin? Have there been occasions when there has been the political announcement of a transport project but that has not proceeded due to the subsequent impact assessment statement?

Mr Pekol: I personally cannot think of any that have been publicly announced and not proceeded with, but I have been personally involved with several that have been suggested at officer level and analysed at officer level and then discarded because they did not get over the line. But generally, if it is a more bottom-up approach rather than top down, what you often find is that to convince the next level of management up, including all the way up to the politicians who make the final decision, you generally need the numbers to back up your recommendations, anyway.

Ms NELSON-CARR: A number of submissions, most notably the submission by Dr Mees or the University of Melbourne, suggests that the real priority in south-east Queensland is not to build more infrastructure or hardware but rather to make the much harder task of making the infrastructure we have work better by tackling the software issues like coordination and integration of services and seamless ticketing. Do you agree with that?

Mr McClurg: To a degree, yes. I think that, particularly in this day and age, we should be looking at technology—to take advantage of it—maybe in the way of integrated ticketing systems. It may also be in the way of better performance monitoring of the public transport systems. I would definitely agree that there are technology solutions available and that they may well be more advantageous than purely road-building solutions.

Mr SULLIVAN: Could I just follow up? What you said just at the end there about depending on whether it is a bottom up or top-down project depends on whether there could be potential problems. How do you think that those problems that you enunciated could be overcome? What process do you think would be best to ensure that that sort of problem did not occur?

Mr Pekol: It is a difficult question to answer. We live in a democracy, after all. All of the members of the Committee represent vast constituencies, some of which have particular needs. I guess in an ideal world those sorts of needs would be compared against competing needs from within the same area or even other parts of the State, if we are all competing for the same number of dollars, and then some sort of evaluation could be undertaken so that we can say, "This money would be better spent in this project because it benefits areas A, B and C versus another project elsewhere."

Mr SULLIVAN: That could be a comparison of good, too good or too bad a project. I thought that your concern was that a political decision is made before the technical decision is made, and there are difficulties then in the profession assessing the project in light of a political decision already having been made.

Mr McClurg: Can I just add on to that? One of the issues is the assessment: is it a technical engineering assessment or is it a planning assessment? Although we are representing the Institution of Engineers, as Adam said at the beginning, our transport panel has just as much planning emphasis as it has engineering emphasis. It may well be that, once a decision is made to proceed with a project, the engineering assessment does not particularly have too many problems, but I guess what we are saying is that the planning assessment may well have not been done as thoroughly, and that is the one that will make the decision as to whether it be a public transport project or a roads project. I think it is fair to say that often we get given the project, not given the objective.

Mr SULLIVAN: So is one possible solution here to have that overarching single transit authority which coordinates the planning?

Mr McClurg: It does not necessarily have to be that, but it can be that projects are considered from the planning point of view of: "We want to transport X number of people from

here to here. What is the way to do it? Is it public or private transport or whatever?" rather than, "We want to build a new road."

Mr STEPHAN: Do the engineers receive training during the courses to help them understand the software issues in the transport area as well as in the technology area? Would you agree that this is an area that perhaps could be looked at and improved?

Mr Pekol: The Committee raises a good question and it is a good point. Engineering education to date predominantly has focused on the hard solutions, the physical solutions: the bridges, the roads, the rail lines, etc. Often in relation to the other areas where improvements and benefits can be derived—integrated ticketing, service coordination, intermittent services, etc.—very little formal education is given to those types of solutions, particularly at undergraduate level. There might be a certain number of postgraduate courses that people can go on to once they have specialised in a particular field, such as public transport planning or public transport operations.

Certainly, the majority of engineers who have been turned out by our institutions have very little training in those more softer type issues. However, the only point I will add to that is that—and you make a comment about technology solutions—the area of technology solutions, such as intelligent transport systems and the like, is gaining increasing recognition in all of the courses being undertaken by most of the institutions in south-east Queensland. So that is one area where we can say that at least the young graduates are being exposed to the possibilities and their eyes are being opened to the possibilities that those sorts of technological improvements can have to both the existing systems we have in place and future systems. So that is a start, but it is only half the answer.

Mr SULLIVAN: I still think every undergraduate should be made to go to a public meeting where there are 400 people yelling at a politician.

Mr McClurg: The only thing I would add to that is that the transport profession does not consist of just engineers; there are a lot of planners and non-engineers in that profession. In fact, the Institution of Engineers, I guess, recognises that and has set up affiliations with the Australian Institute of Transport Planning and Management. Those bodies give us the exposure to planners as well as engineers. As Adam said, it is the after graduate training that you receive either on a job or through those associations or through specific courses where those things are.

The CHAIRMAN: We are out of time. You might like to finish off for us by giving us an overview of what you think is the biggest problem facing public transport and how you would overcome it?

Mr Pekol: Just to recap on a couple of key points made in our submission, it focuses on two things, we think. One is some sort of evaluation framework so that we can compare apples with apples across projects, not just within mode but across modes, but then also some rigorous way of assessing the benefits of those projects in years to come, whether they be public transport projects, as Brett mentioned earlier, or road projects so that over a number of years we can say with greater certainty that for every dollar spent on this type of project we will yield commensurate benefits.

Mr McClurg: If I can just add, one of the other points that was raised in our paper that we have not raised today was that as well as looking for the big picture solutions as in Statewide or city wide, we need to look at smaller, more locally based initiatives that might start to build up our public transport usage from a small level and a local level and then start to see the experiences that we get, the benefits that we get on smaller, local projects. We may end up doing a lot more smaller and cheaper projects rather than one large project that we hope to cover the whole of the city.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much for your input into the inquiry. We appreciate your involvement in the inquiry. You are the last witnesses for the day. So I now declare the hearing closed. Thank you for your attendance.

The Committee adjourned at 4.06 p.m.