

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Tuesday 24 June 2008 - Estimates Committee A (Sturges) - Part 2

CHAIR - Welcome to the afternoon session of Infrastructure and thank you, Minister. Basically, I think we are finished with 1.1 and 1.2 -

Ms FORREST - I had a few other questions, Mr Chair, on 1.1. This is going back to the broad issues of 1.1. Are you able to provide copies of the State strategic plan as far as the road hierarchy goes? You mentioned earlier the northern and the Cradle Coast, and I understand this other one is not complete yet?

Mr STURGES - Yes.

Ms FORREST - The other two are?

Mr STURGES - Yes.

Ms FORREST - Including the road hierarchy?

Mr STURGES - Yes. There you go.

Ms FORREST - Which one is that?

Mr STURGES - This is the Tasmania's State Road Hierarchy for - which one is it?

Mr HILL - No, it is for Tasmania. I think what you are referring to is the northern, southern and north-west regional transport plans?

Ms FORREST - Yes, that is right.

Mr STURGES - I can give you both.

Mr HILL - That is not what the member is talking about. She is talking about the regional transport plans - the north-west is complete.

Ms FORREST - And the north?

Mr HILL - The north which is complete but I think about to be reviewed and the southern which is in progress.

Mr STURGES - They are publicly available. The southern one is close to finalisation. We can get you the two northern ones. Have you got them?

Mr HILL - That is the Northern Tasmanian Integrated Transport Plan and the Cradle Coast Integrated Transport Strategy.

Ms FORREST - Thank you. Last year's budget papers noted that there was collaborative work with TasPorts to ensure the land transport network is aligned with the long-term functions of the ports. What outcomes and plans have been developed and implemented as a result of this work?

Mr ADDIS - TasPorts have completed their strategic business analysis that looks at the long-term functioning and specialisation at various ports. That provided input for us in working through the strategic planning that we were talking about before we broke at lunch time. The point we were making earlier is that there is no one single document. There are a range of documents, and the Tasports stuff has formed an input to that. Just as the strategic planning system has worked with a whole range of other inputs, the demand side of the equation, the supply side of the equation and then looked at the ultimate configuration of a number of modes. That is the material that we were talking about earlier providing the separate briefing on.

Ms FORREST - Have you implemented any actual plans as a result of that collaboration or is it just the more broad-brushed stuff that you were talking about?

Mr ADDIS - It has been incorporated into the strategic thinking that I was outlining about the use of rail from the north-west and the south and upgrading of roads in the north-east.

Ms FORREST - In the Budget papers this year it states that the State Infrastructure Planning System would specifically be addressing issues of housing and affordability and the Early Years Foundation. How will the State Infrastructure Planning System specifically target and address those areas because they are pretty important areas?

Mr ADDIS - They are indeed. As part of broadening the application of that SIPS methodology to all the elements of government we are picking up the social dimensions. We are just working through the detail of that now. We have had preliminary discussions with Housing people, Justice people and a number of others to pick up those, but the detail is still a long way from being formalised. We can probably give you a little more information at this stage but not a lot more.

Mr STURGES - While Ms Russell is preparing, SIPS is a methodology that assists in the planning process; it is not a plan per se.

Ms FORREST - I am not saying it is -

Mr STURGES - I am just saying that because there appears to be a little misunderstanding around what SIPS is and what it does.

Ms FORREST - Under 1.1 the budget papers says:

'continuing development of the State Infrastructure Planning System with priority support to be provided for the areas of Housing Affordability and Homelessness ... and the Early Years Foundation Research ...'

Mr STURGES - I understand that; I was just explaining that SIPS is a method, a process, which Ms Russell can elaborate on now in relation to those matters you have raised.

Ms RUSSELL - Thank you, Minister. What we have done with the State Infrastructure Planning System to date has helped us to consolidate many layers of data into a consolidated policy and planning system, and that was primarily in the first phases of it. I have concentrated on transport areas. We collected data from the Freight Demanders survey that I was talking about

earlier. We collected information on travel demand. We have looked at forestry areas and we have a large amount of data on those.

We have also been able to collect census data from 2001 back to 1990 or thereabouts, so we have got about a 10- or 12-year span, and we are just about to make arrangements to put current census data into the State Infrastructure Planning System. That enables us to now use that and apply the same sort of methodology that we have been looking at in terms of our land use planning, say, for example, when we are looking at road corridor studies or freight movements, and actually apply that more broadly across government.

The potential is there, both in housing affordability and in some work with the Tasmanian Early Years Foundation, to look at the layers of data that we have within SIPS and to use that capability to assist them with their planning. In terms of housing affordability, land is primarily, as we understand it, around land use planning. The work that we would be doing with the Department of Premier and Cabinet and with Health would certainly bear a hand to that. Looking at target groups, because we have many layers of demographic information in the census, enables us to look at population trends and the aspects there that we can map against - say, for example, where housing is located.

Ms FORREST - Your involvement in that proposed release of land in various areas for affordable housing. The big issue at the moment is where are we going to build these new houses - however many new houses are we going to be able to manage to build with the current funding and the infrastructure that is needed to support them. Isn't that what this is about?

Ms RUSSELL - I need to make this point that we cannot tell people where the housing projects should occur. That is a matter for the departments and the priorities there. What we can do though is provide them with data and with patterns in terms of the census data that will enable them to do some informed analysis about where best to place any infrastructure or housing that they choose to undertake. Our role is about providing the data that they can use to analyse, because we have developed that capability for the transport task and we are now able to look at exploring how other government departments may use that.

Ms FORREST - Have you provided information to the Department of Health and Human Services because, as we understand from what has been said in the media at budget speech time, they are progressing the release of land and things like that to build new houses? Have you provided information to the department?

Ms RUSSELL - We are in the early stages of working with the department in identifying how what we have, in terms of the capability of SIPS, might best suit and support the outcomes that they are trying to achieve. We are in the early stages of working out what data we hold that might be useful to them.

Mr ADDIS - This is the point I was making earlier. We have had those preliminary discussions but we are still feeling our way a bit on both fronts as to what is useful and what is not and how best to put it together. That is really what SIPS phase 2 is about, and that is a minimum of 12-18 months to two years work. We have taken the first steps down that track but we still have a fair way to go.

Ms FORREST - Minister, what specific action has been taken to address the rail safety issues on the western line near Que River where we have had one recent and one not-so-recent

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

derailment. The department is responsible for the lines and tracks and under the rails, and I understand that the derailment could have been partly caused by problems with the line itself and not the rolling stock.

Mr STURGES - Penny Nicholls, the General Manager, Land Safety, is coming to the table. She would have had the reports on that.

Ms NICHOLLS - Under the Rail Safety Act accredited railways are required to report all train derailments, and that happened in the case of the one that you referred to. Pacific National is the railway operator and is required to undertake an investigation report of any incidents on their railway, and that was done in relation to that particular derailment. When an operator undertakes such investigation reports, the Rail Safety Unit within DIER receives those reports and looks in particular at the causal factors identified within that report and the safety actions that are being taken or proposed by the operator. The Rail Safety Unit considers those and then has discussions with the operator concerned to look at what remedial action might need to be taken, looking particularly at the safety actions to make sure that those issues, as far as reasonably practicable, do not happen again.

Ms FORREST - What actions have been undertaken on that line?

Ms NICHOLLS - I do not have the detail with me on the specifics of that particular investigation and what PN might have done and the safety actions.

Mr HILL - We can get some advice on that.

Ms FORREST - It was some time ago that it occurred.

Ms NICHOLLS - One thing I can add is that, as a result of some recent derailments, we had an independent rail engineer undertake a review for us of train derailments last year. That independent review did not identify any systemic issues or common causes that we needed to take additional action on beyond that we had from a rail safety perspective.

Ms FORREST - There have been two in that one location. When the second lot of carriages ended up down the bottom of the hill, there was the other lot from the previous one that were still there. It was too difficult to get them out.

Ms NICHOLLS - The rail track engineer who did that independent assessment had a knowledge of that previous one that you referred to.

Ms FORREST - I would like some feedback about what has actually been done on that line.

Mr STURGES - We will take that on notice and we will get some specific information back to you in relation to that matter.

Mr ADDIS - One other important point: We can provide information from a rail safety perspective, but work actually being done on the line is a little more difficult because the Emu Bay line is the one section of the Tasmanian Rail Network that we do not own. It is PN's.

Mr STURGES - Above and below.

Mr ADDIS - Above and below.

Mr STURGES - Just to get that clear, because there appears to have been some confusion again today with how rail operates in the State.

1.3 Road Safety

CHAIR - We will now move on to 1.3, Road Safety. Minister, do you have everybody that you need at the table?

Mr STURGES - I have Penny Nicholls, General Manager, Land and Transport Safety here.

Mr WILKINSON - When we look at the budget for road safety for this year of \$4.8 million and the budget for next year of \$6.4 million and compare that with registration and licensing which is nearly triple to double the following year, it would seem to me that our major focus should be on road safety. Yet the budget figures seem to place more focus as far as funds are concerned on your registration and licensing as opposed to your road safety. What do you say about that?

Mr STURGES - I will let Ms Nicholls respond in a minute, but we have also got the road safety levy which is anticipated to generate \$9.2 million this year which will go directly into road safety initiatives. I mentioned earlier this morning that we are spending \$187 million on road infrastructure in the State. There is certainly an element of road safety that is taken into account when those roads are constructed and maintained. Ms Nicholls, you might be able to expand a little more, but there are other elements to road safety expenditure.

Ms NICHOLLS - I wanted to make the point that the way the budget papers present it are not a true representation of funding for road safety. I would argue strongly that a lot of the activities that are being done by our registration licensing branch in relation to the registration and licensing of vehicles and drivers is substantially contributing to a better road safety outcome. A lot of the work that they are doing are producing road safety benefits.

Mr STURGES - A classic example is the novice driver reforms that are being introduced now -

Mr WILKINSON - That was interesting, because I know I mentioned about three or four years ago in this Estimates Committee that there should be these novice driver courses taken up. At that stage it was deemed 'no, not at this stage,' and a number of reasons were given. And now it seems to be taken on board as being an appropriate method. What has changed from four or five years ago to now in relation to the novice driving?

Ms NICHOLLS - Can I just get some clarification as to what course you are referring to?

Mr WILKINSON - Courses within the schools.

Ms NICHOLLS - Okay, in terms of the Road Risk Reduction program?

Mr WILKINSON - It was not that specific; it was just in relation to driver education within the schools. That was the question a couple of years ago. I am glad that government's attitude has changed because it seems that that has been taken on board now, and I just wonder why that is. Is

it because of any history you have seen that it is as effective as what was first deemed to be effective or what is the change?

Mr STURGES - The Tasmanian Road Safety Council is made up of representation from the Coroners Office, Tasmania Police, RACT, the Local Government Association of Tasmania, a community representative, and expertise is also at the table from the Monash University Accident Research Centre. Through the development of the Road Safety Strategy which was announced in June of last year, there was a degree of evidence that we needed to do a lot more in the area of educating novice drivers so as part of the package of novice driver reform we have introduced the school-based education program which is known as Road Risk Reduction. Let me just go through some of the elements of this. To date we have trained 120 teachers who are now qualified to roll out the Triple-R course - actually, I can table that.

Mr WILKINSON - Thank you. Does it form part of their school curriculum to do that, because I know when it was previously asked there was a real question mark about whether they could fit it into the school program?

Mr STURGES - At this point in time I am advised that around 64 per cent of all secondary schools offer the road safety education program using this Triple-R resource but it is very much up to the individual schools to determine whether or not they see road safety as important enough to introduce into their curriculum. But it is very heartening indeed to see that in the time that this has been in operation there has been over a 64 per cent take-up; 120 teachers have been trained; and through the road safety levy we also provide the funding for relief teachers while the teachers receive the training, so it is not an impediment to the school if they want to go away and undertake the training.

I have some points here that might be relevant. Triple-R is offered to all secondary schools and colleges through professional development workshops for teachers. DIER funds teacher relief for every staff member attending workshops through the levy. DIER road safety consultants introduce Triple-R to schools whose teachers are unable to attend professional development workshops, so they are available out there in the regions. As I said, 120 teachers and community education representatives have attended the Triple-R professional development workshops and approximately 64 per cent of all secondary schools offer road safety education using this particular program. Mr Chair, with your concurrence, I am happy to table this document which outlines the program titled 'Road Risk Reduction'.

In addition to Triple-R, schools are encouraged to use sources such as road safety statistics, information from the Magistrates Court, a web site, and media articles in the delivery of road safety education. I recently took my first bill through the House of Assembly which was to do with the electronic lights - what are they called?

Ms NICHOLLS - It was for the evidential provision of electronic signs.

Mr STURGES - Yes, but what are the lights called?

Ms NICHOLLS - The 40 kph speed sign lights.

Mr HILL - Electronic speed signs.

Mr STURGES - The electronic speed signs - thanks so much. During the debate the member for Bass, Mr Gutwein, brought up issues that were raised by the coroner in a recent report which he suggested should be compulsory reading for all school students. He requested that we look at incorporating that into the educational program we are rolling out. I gave a commitment at that time that I would go away and seek advice, which is what I did, and I came back subsequently and was able to advise the member that we will now incorporate elements of that coroner's report into the Road Risk Reduction program because there were certainly elements of that report that were very sobering indeed and I think students and young people need to have that brought to their attention.

From a government and departmental perspective, we actively encourage all secondary schools to undertake the road safety education program that is available.

Mr WILKINSON - Is that for years 9 and 10?

Ms NICHOLLS - Yes, but is also being used above that.

Mr STURGES - It was intended initially to target years 9 and 10 but we understand that years 11 and 12 are also engaging in that.

Mr WILKINSON - Can I ask what the difference is, because we spoke about the type of program you have been speaking about now four or five years ago and why it should be encompassed the education program, but the Government, for whatever reason, said no. I know the wheels of justice turn slowly, as do the wheels of government at times, but four or five years seems to be extra slow.

Mr STURGES - I think I can answer that, Mr Chairman. It might have had something to do with the progressive chairman of the Tasmanian Road Safety Council at the time.

Laughter.

Ms NICHOLLS - Our road safety consultants have been working in schools for a number of years now and they have had a variety of tools to work with students. As a result of a selection commitment with money in 2006 we were able to develop this resource material, so it was through the injection of that money.

Mr WILKINSON - Okay, thank you.

Mr STURGES - The Government will keep an open mind in relation to evidence-based measures that will improve road safety for our young road users and all Tasmanian road users, so where a compelling argument can be put and evidence can back that up, we will certainly keep an open mind.

Mr WILKINSON - The same thing was raised a number of years ago with the wire ropes down the middle of the roads and also the 2-plus-1 roadways. I noticed that wire barriers are now being considered. Are they going to be rolled out ?

Mr STURGES - Absolutely; in fact, the installation of flexible barriers form a significant plank of the road safety strategy which is focused on four key strategic directions including best-practice infrastructure, which involves the flexible barriers. What is behind the flexible barriers is

minimising the impact of a crash. Some 40 per cent of single-vehicle accidents in this State are due to the car running off the road and another 10 per cent are due to head-on collisions, so you could say that one in two crashes in this State are due to those reasons. The flexible barriers are about ameliorating the impact of that crash and minimising the consequences, dare I say, of people on the other side of the road, so they could potentially avoid a head-on crash.

The other three strategic directions are enhanced vehicle safety, novice driver reforms and safer travelling speeds, and we can talk later, if you like, about the trial in the Kingborough municipality.

Mr MARTIN - Motorcyclists believe the flexible barriers are dangerous. What is your view on that?

Mr STURGES - From memory, motorcyclists make up 2 per cent of registered vehicles on the road and account for, I think, over 15 per cent of serious casualty crashes. We acknowledge that the motorcycle riding fraternity have an issue with flexible barriers and we have a representative of the Motorcycle Rider Council on the Road Safety Council.

Mr MARTIN - Shaun Lennard.

Mr STURGES - Yes, he is on the council. What we are in the throes of doing now in the 2008-09 financial year through the road safety levy funds is implementing a trial of what are called 'stack cushions' and 'rub rails'. We are picking a couple of sites in the north and south where there is a high incidence of motorcycle crashes. In fact, I was trying to get hold of a stack cushion -

Ms NICHOLLS - It is on its way.

Mr STURGES - Someone told they had knocked off of the stack cushion. But I can show it to you -

Mr WILKINSON - Is it anything like a whoopee cushion?

Laughter.

[2.30 p.m.]

Mr STURGES - I will not go there. The evidence suggests that the issue for motorcyclists is not on straight roads but when they come down from 100kph or 80kph to a lower speed and come into a curve, for example at the Mornington roundabout. Is it the Mornington roundabout we are trialling it at?

Ms NICHOLLS - Yes.

Mr STURGES - And Mt Pleasant?

Ms NICHOLLS - We are looking possibly at the Southern Outlet for the rub rail. The stack cushions are being trialed at Mornington.

Mr STURGES - And at Mt Pleasant?

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Ms NICHOLLS - I think we may be also looking at them there in Launceston.

Mr STURGES - And Mt Pleasant interchange - we are getting there. So there are two sites for the stack cushion and one site for the rub rail. I am advised that these are very easily retro-fitted to the poles that hold the wire in the flexible barriers. I will pass that over for members to inspect.

Ms FORREST - Are they easily stolen as well?

Mr STURGES - I do not know, but it would be a bit like knocking off a first-aid kit, wouldn't it? I would be very concerned about that. We are going to trial it and we will see whether or not they do get stolen, but we are advised that they significantly ameliorate the injuries caused to motorcyclists when they come off the road. The rub rails are made of a very flexible low-tensile steel that can also be retro-fitted along the wire rope poles and also ameliorate the impact of a motorcyclist coming off.

Mr WILKINSON - When are they going to be fitted to the Midland Highway, for example?

Mr STURGES - Well, that is a very good question. In fact, during this summer we are committed to undertaking work in the Constitution Hill area. That will involve installation of wire rope barriers to the side and middle of Constitution Hill -

Ms NICHOLLS - I am not sure about Constitution Hill.

Mr STURGES - Yes - side and middle.

We have also put wire rope barriers up around Symmons Plains, which you may have seen recently. That is through the safer roads program and also funded significantly through the road safety levy. We are analysing crash statistics and looking at those areas where there is a high incidence of run-off-road or head-on vehicle crashes; they are the areas that we are targeting first with wire rope barriers. You might note that the Southern Outlet has recently had wire rope barriers extensively installed. That piece of road is synonymous for run-off-road crashes, and even though some commentators were saying that it was not necessary the statistics clearly showed that that piece of road very much needed the barriers put in. I am just reminded that almost immediately after they was installed there were two accidents on the Southern Outlet and those wire rope barriers - or flexible barriers, as they are referred to - certainly ameliorated the potential of serious casualty.

CHAIR - I want to make a point there. I notice that west of Launceston, for example, just west of Prospect near Beams Hollow there is quite a significant gap between the roads and a lot of people have questioned why road barriers would go there. I mean, there is probably about a 50-60-metre gap. Are there any statistics to indicate that it is a real road safety issue?

Mr STURGES - I would like to introduce to the table Peter Todd, Manager Roads and Traffic.

Mr TODD - Mr Chair, where was that location?

CHAIR - West of Launceston towards Beams Hollow; just west of Prospect coming through that area there has been extensive work done, yet the division between the two roads is quite

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

extensive. I would suggest there is a 50-metre grass verge gap between the two of them, so a lot of people have questioned why on earth all that capital expenditure would be spent there.

Mr TODD - As the minister indicated, we do a rigorous analysis in terms of where the crashes have been occurring, where we are seeing run-off-road crashes, and we are also looking at where the pattern is, so similar roads will get similar treatment. The analysis would have been that there is a risk there. Whether there are actual crashes right there I do not know, but we would have done an analysis to show that it was a place we needed to put a barrier to prevent people going right across. Wet grass can be pretty slippery, so that may be part of the analysis.

Ms FORREST - I had a question about the Road Risk Reduction program before we move too far beyond that. This is the first time I have seen this document but I notice there are outcomes -

Mr STURGES - If I may say to the member, it is publicly available; it is out there in the schools.

Ms FORREST - I am not criticising you, I am just saying it is the first time I have looked at it. There are student outcomes in it, which you would expect there to be. Have they been measured as yet? Have they had an opportunity to measure it and what have the outcomes been? Has it had an impact on driver behaviour or is it too early to tell at this stage?

Ms RUSSELL - At this stage we have not done any evaluation but we certainly intend to do so. We must realise that any programs such as this are long-term strategies and it may take some time before we see the benefits of this in terms of a reduction in serious casualty crashes.

Ms FORREST - How will you assess the success or otherwise of the program?

Ms RUSSELL - A lot of the assessment that we will probably be doing here is qualitative research. The program only started in 2006 when we got some funding for it. I think the first lot of seminars that we did were in December 2006 so we are waiting for the program to run a little while before we do some evaluation. As to when that evaluation will happen and the nature of that evaluation, we have not thought through that yet. It is likely to be some sort of qualitative research with teachers and students in particular.

Ms FORREST - One of the four prongs of the road safety strategy is novice driver reforms and programs. There has been a lot of comment made over the years by the Road Safety Council and various Infrastructure ministers relating to defensive driving courses, which are not necessarily novice driver programs but certainly can be. We are constantly told that research shows that this increases aggressive driver behaviours. Can you provide the research that demonstrates that to demonstrate that it is defensive driving and not advanced driving courses that that research relates to?

Ms NICHOLLS - The research that those comments are drawn from was done by Dr Ron Christie of RCSC Services Pty Ltd. I have a copy of that that I am happy to table. The RACV published a short paper highlighting that research and that is what we are drawing on.

Ms FORREST - Have you actually looked at the research that has been done yourself?

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Ms NICHOLLS - I have read Dr Christie's report, which was the literature research, but I have not personally gone through to the individual sources.

Ms FORREST - So how confident can we be that this research and the recommendations that are being made by government are based on defensive driving courses and not advanced driving courses?

Ms NICHOLLS - My understanding is that this research is widely accepted by every other jurisdiction in that this type of training can cause over-confidence and increase the risk for young drivers. There is a general view across jurisdictions that it would be irresponsible for government to mandate it for young drivers.

CHAIR - With respect, I think Ms Forrest was asking about the differentiation between the defensive driving course and the advanced driving course.

Ms FORREST - I would like to be pointed to the research that clearly shows that the evidence you are using is based on analysis of defensive driving course outcomes and not advanced driving courses, because I am hearing evidence, anecdotal and otherwise, that defensive driving courses do not have that impact but advanced driving courses do. I would like to see the research that you are basing this on.

Ms NICHOLLS - It is largely in there, but the defensive driver courses and advanced driver training are used largely interchangeably in the public arena. This literature research is showing that both defensive and advanced driver training courses do not appear to be effective for young drivers.

Ms FORREST - So has there been specific research done for -

Mr STURGES - If I may, just for the secretary's benefit, I will table a report entitled *The Effectiveness of Driver Training as a Road Safety Measure* by the RACV and written by Dr Ron Christie.

Ms NICHOLLS - Compiled from Dr Ron Christie's research.

Ms FORREST - Yes, from the literature research that he did. I understand what literature research is, but the question is: does the literature research identify the difference between defensive driving and advanced driving courses; and does it analyse them separately? Has that research been done?

Mr ADDIS - Mr Chair, we are only too happy to provide the additional research that we are relying on. We just do not have it with us. We can get it to the committee.

CHAIR - But to specifically answer Ms Forrest's question: Has the analysis been done on defensive driving courses as opposed to advanced driving courses? That is the issue.

Mr ADDIS - My understanding is there is a mixture of research that revolves around both to the point where there is some interchangeability - we will provide what we have.

Mr STURGES - Just to add to this point: As far as appropriate defensive driver training courses we do not have a closed mind, we are not opposed to defensive driving. The Government

does not have opposition to them. What we have determined in the road safety strategy is that we will target novice driver reforms through the introduction of an L1 and an L2 process and P1 and P2. After three months at the L1 stage they will be a very basic road handling driver - what does the test do? It shows that people can handle a car.

Ms NICHOLLS - It is the basic driving skills test.

Mr STURGES - Yes, basic driving test. Then they must hold their learner's licence for a minimum of another nine months, whereas there was no minimum prescribed time. All evidence shows us - and the evidence that I have received is through the Monash University Accident Research Centre - that experience behind the wheel and support of the driver trainers is a very effective tool in ensuring that we keep our young drivers safe. So as well as introducing L1 and L2, we are also producing supporting information for young drivers and their parents - all the adults that are training them. You might like to talk about some of the books that we are producing - the mentoring book or whatever it is called.

Ms NICHOLLS - The learner mentor program?

Mr STURGES - Yes, would you like to talk about the learner mentor program?

Ms NICHOLLS - As part of our novice reforms and using the road safety levy, one of our commitments is providing support for learner driver mentoring programs that are already offered in the community, and building on that to help disadvantaged young people to get their 50 hours of mandated driving.

Mr STURGES - And the supervisors' handbook, so we are putting a lot of resources in.

Mr WILKINSON - A lot of things are going on but a lot of things have been going on for some time. How are our statistics tracking? Are we better off as far as road accidents and the road toll is concerned?

CHAIR - And how do we compare with other States?

[2.45 p.m.]

Mr STURGES - Let me just say that the average number of road fatalities per 100 000 population in Tasmania we acknowledge is higher than the national average. But let me go through -

Mr WILKINSON - How much higher than the national average?

Mr STURGES - I am just going to go through some of those figures. Tasmania's fatality statistics are subject to volatility. One or two multiple fatalities can create sudden peaks in crash data. Serious casualties, combining fatalities and serious injuries, provide a more accurate measure of road safety. The number of serious casualties has decreased from 569 in 2000 to 372 in 2007, so in percentage terms that is a decrease of 34.6 per cent.

Mr WILKINSON - How is 'serious' defined?

Ms NICHOLLS - Serious injuries is at least 24 hours in hospital. When the minister refers to 'serious casualties', he is talking about fatalities and serious injuries.

Mr WILKINSON - Thank you.

Mr STURGES - So it is a combination. Between May 2007 and April 2008 the number of road fatalities per 100 000 population in Tasmania was 7.9 per cent. The national average was 7.4 per cent. Again, the small number of fatalities on Tasmania's roads means statistics can be subject to volatility. Serious casualties provide a more accurate representation of road trauma. The number of serious casualties has decreased between 2000 and 2007.

Just some road toll statistics: As at 31 May 2008 there have been 143 serious casualties, so that is a fatality and serious injury reported, compared to 182 for the same period in 2007, so that is a decrease of 21.4 per cent. As at 23 June, the number of fatalities is 25 - unfortunately there was another one over the weekend - compared to 28 for the same period in 2007. So currently we are tracking with a decrease of 10.7 per cent. So it is a modest decrease. We believe that the initiatives in the road safety strategy will go a long way to continuing to decrease the carnage on our roads.

Mr WILKINSON - Are you able to say the age groups in relation to those? There has been from time to time focus put on the under-25s? Are the majority of serious casualties still in the 25 years and under group or is there another age group which is predominant in those figures?

Ms NICHOLLS - There is still a predominant overrepresentation of young people, although with fatalities we are seeing the 30-49 year age group in particular starting to creep up again, which is a concern. But in terms of the work that we are doing and the analysis that we have done, the younger age group is our focus area, target area.

Mr STURGES - Yes. I was just shown some figures that are a couple of years old that during the period 1996-2005 young road users represented approximately 33 per cent of those involved in serious casualties. That is certainly unacceptable and overly represented.

CHAIR - Minister, when you talked about best practice infrastructure as one of the key planks of road safety, is all of your new road infrastructure built to best practice?

Mr STURGES - I will have to ask the general manager to answer that.

Mr TODD - All of our designs are to the Australian standards in the Austroads guidelines. We are part of that process to ensure that they do meet the requirements of those guidelines.

CHAIR - There are never any compromises, Mr Todd?

Mr TODD - You always have to take a balanced view, but we always have at the forefront of our mind that any infrastructure we build is fit for purpose and will deliver the safety outcomes we require.

CHAIR - The reason I asked that question is that, being on the Public Works Committee, we did a reference recently for the Lake Secondary Road.

Mr STURGES - Whereabouts is that, Mr Chair?

Laughter.

CHAIR - But as I understand it, some of that did not meet the Australian guidelines, what do we call them?

Mr TODD - Do you mean the Austroads guidelines?

CHAIR - The Austroads guidelines, yes.

Mr TODD - We utilise the Austroads guidelines in our design process and we ensure that the design fits that and will deliver the safety outcomes. There are always challenges, always constraints, but the guidelines are there and that is what we use.

CHAIR - I just thought from my recollection of that particular case there was a shortfall there somewhere.

Mr TODD - You can always go further. You can always build bigger and so on. We have to be fit for purpose and we make sure that what we deliver and what we build is safe.

Mr MARTIN - So there are no circumstances where your design would fall short of the guidelines?

Mr TODD - It depends what you mean. All of our designs are reviewed to ensure that they are safe. We will not construct anything that is not safe. But then again, no infrastructure is foolproof either, so it is a balance.

Mr MARTIN - I had a number of questions about the entry benchmarks, but they have been answered. My one remaining question concerns red light cameras which were introduced some years ago, then I think there was a legal difficulty and we stopped - I do not know whether they were uninstalled - charging people. In your current position and your previous position as chairman of the council, do you think red light cameras are important? And are there any future intentions to reactivate them?

Mr STURGES - My personal position in relation to the last part of your question is yes. In relation to the body of your question - and I am not trying to avoid the question - it is very much a matter for the Minister for Police to talk about. We are involved in infrastructure; they are involved in actually activating cameras and enforcing the law.

Mr MARTIN - Are they - the police?

Mr STURGES - Yes.

Mr MARTIN - Right, okay.

Mr STURGES - I am not trying to duck it, but save that for the Minister for Police.

Mr MARTIN - Just to clarify that - there are cameras installed but the police are not using them?

Mr STURGES - I do not know.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Ms FORREST - Permanent speed cameras like at the intersection in Longford onto the bridge?

Mr MARTIN - Red light cameras.

Ms FORREST - Oh, red light cameras, sorry. I thought you meant speed cameras.

Mr STURGES - With respect, it really is a matter for my colleague the Minister for Police. I would not want to sit here and speculate because it is his area.

CHAIR - Has the State ever considered lowering the speed limit from 110 to 100 kilometres an hour - and I am talking about on the Midland and Bass Highways? I recall when I was in New Zealand around about this time last year that the South Island is all 100 kilometres an hour speed limit, and there are big signs up everywhere which say, 'You are twice as likely to die at 120 kilometres an hour as you are at 100.' I just wondered, given some of the infrastructure problems we have on some of our roads, whether or not that is something that has been considered.

Ms FORREST - Queensland is 100 too, Mr Chairman.

Mr WILKINSON - It is both.

CHAIR - Yes, sometimes it is a mixture in other jurisdictions. But given the cost of fuel there would be an environmental saving by dropping down to 100 and probably the difference in time between Launceston and Hobart at 100 rather than 110 - by the time you take out the other speed limits - is maybe five or 10 minutes. I have not done a calculation.

Mr STURGES - That really is a good question. It is something that the Government in conjunction with the department are looking at very carefully. I will just step you through a trial that we are currently evaluating. We implemented this trial a little over six months ago - would it be about nine months ago now?

Ms NICHOLLS - It started in September last year.

Mr STURGES - In September last year in the Kingborough municipality we implemented a trial called KiSS - Kingborough Safer Speeds. The whole concept behind that trial was reducing travel speeds. The Kingborough Safer Speeds demonstration is about reducing rural speed limits based on harm-reduction principles. I hear what you are saying about the Midland Highway, but I think this has broader application, subject to evaluation. As I said, it commenced in September last year. The rural default speed limit in Kingborough was reduced from 100 kph to 90 kph on sealed roads and to 80 kph on gravel roads.

The Monash University Accident Research Centre - and we have a member of MUARC on the Tasmanian Road Safety Council - will evaluate community acceptance of the reduced speed limits and they will also evaluate any road safety benefits from the trial. I understand that there has been general acceptance of the KiSS demonstration by the local community. MUARC, as I said, is currently evaluating the first six months of the demonstration. It is also heartening that the RACT support reducing the gravel road default speed limit but they have issues in regard to sealed roads, so it goes to show that there is a divergence of opinion.

But having said that, the message that I want to get across is that there is clear evidence that lowering speed limits leads to reduced crash severity. There is no doubt about that at all. KiSS is the first demonstration in Australia of reduced rural travel speeds based on harm minimisation principles, so we are leading the nation there. As I said, the demonstration is being independently assessed by MUARC, and the speed limit changes have been well communicated through a range of media targeting to both locals and the tourists.

From my perspective as Minister for Infrastructure, I am very keen to see the outcome of MUARC's evaluation, because based on all the evidence that I have had put before me and that I have read, I think it clearly demonstrates that by reducing the speed you reduce the risk of serious casualty or injury.

CHAIR - Thank you for that response. And as much as I like doing 110 kph between my place and Hobart, I often wonder about that speed.

Ms FORREST - But not through Brighton, do you?

Mr STURGES - Let me say for the record that we are not announcing today a reduction of speed limits. What we are saying is that we are evaluating the trial. The road safety strategy is based on evidence and not emotion. Once we have evaluated the trial, we will determine where we go to from there.

CHAIR - The minister has a very open mind on dropping it down to 100 kph on the main highways.

Mr WILKINSON - If I can ask a question in relation to drinking. The road safety strategy action plan sets out a plan to trial alcohol interlocks. That is a matter that has interested me, and I wondered how that was going.

Mr STURGES - Stay tuned.

Ms FORREST - I thought you had information on that. You alluded to that in your opening remarks.

Mr STURGES - Stay tuned. An announcement is imminent.

Mr WILKINSON - Do you want to make it now?

Mr STURGES - I am not in the position to do that, but it does form a significant component off our road safety strategy.

Mr MARTIN - I think you just announced it.

Mr STURGES - It is in the strategy. I would encourage all members to get hold of the road safety strategy and the action plan that goes with it and familiarise yourselves with components of the strategy.

Mr WILKINSON - So it involves not being able to start the car if you are a certain blood or breath level, is that right?

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Mr STURGES - That is absolutely correct.

Mr WILKINSON - How does it work? When you get into the car, do they smell you from miles away and the car runs away? What does it do?

[3.00 p.m.]

Mr STURGES - The technology is quite remarkable. We are committed engaging in a trial and with your concurrence, Chair, I would like to table the Road Safety Strategy 2007-16 along with the action plan for the three-year period 2007-10.

Mr WILKINSON - Can I ask how it works?

Mr STURGES - You actually have to blow into it.

Mr WILKINSON - So it is like a breathalyser machine, a hand-held device?

Mr STURGES - Yes. Very simply, it is fitted to the vehicle and it could be a condition if you are getting your licence back after having been suspended for drink-driving or it could be a condition for whatever reason a magistrate may wish to impose.

Mr WILKINSON - Or if you as a concerned driver just want to fit one.

Mr STURGES - Absolutely.

Mr WILKINSON - Does that mean you have to blow into the machine every time before you can start your car?

Mr STURGES - That's right.

Ms NICHOLLS - You can also set the interlock so there is a rolling retest and you can do that after, say, five or ten minutes. That can be programmed in as well.

Ms FORREST - There is a way of getting around it, I would think, if you think about the devious ways of getting around stuff. I might be the person who has had too much to drink but my mate has not, so I could get him to blow into the bag and I am behind the wheel.

Mr HILL - No, you cannot just blow into it. If you are having it fitted to your vehicle you have to undertake training because it is a bit like humming and singing *Dixie* at the same time. It is not just a matter of picking it up and blowing into it.

Ms FORREST - So if you are drunk you will probably not be able to do it anyway.

Mr HILL -Exactly.

Laughter.

Mr HILL -And it is highly unlikely you would be able to train your sober mate, and he would have to be an absolute fool to do it anyway. So it is not as straightforward and as simple as people think.

Ms NICHOLLS -It can also be set up with programs so that if there are a repeat number of attempts are made to circumvent its operation, it can be immobilised and you would then need a service centre to come remobilise it. So it is difficult to circumvent. There are a number of safety measures involved.

Mr WILKINSON - Is it in any other States?

Ms NICHOLLS -Yes, alcohol interlock programs are operating in Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia and I think also at this point in time being considered in Queensland and Western Australia. There are a number of different types of programs through the judicial courts system and a more sort of administrative program.

Mr WILKINSON - It would be difficult to say, I suppose, but are there figures out yet to say whether that has been of assistance as far as reducing fatalities and serious injury?

Ms NICHOLLS - Research suggests that it has, and in countries such as Sweden these are being put into the vehicles by manufacturers and also being rolled out to a lot of public transport-operated school buses.

Mr HILL - They have mandated it in all public vehicles in Sweden, and the long-term vision in Sweden is that all vehicles will have alcohol interlocks fitted to them mandatorily.

Mr WILKINSON - That was going to be my final question. That must be something that the government is considering and no doubt will consider after the testing of the new machines within the near future. Is that correct?

Mr STURGES - We have to take one step at a time. The Road Safety Strategy commits to a trial of interlock devices. We are still working up the concept of that trial, which is imminent, and we will evaluate that and then determine the next step. We are quite sincere in our endeavours to introduce evidence-based measures that will make Tasmanian roads safer.

Mr WILKINSON - How many of the serious injuries have involved alcohol? You would have those statistics, I would imagine.

Mr STURGES - I know alcohol is a predominant factor. Just while the general manager is looking up those figures, speed, inattention and alcohol are the three predominant factors in serious casualty crashes in this State.

Mr WILKINSON - What I am suggesting is that if alcohol is a predominant figure which, to me, it would seem to be, the Government should look post-haste, just like Sweden, at installing these machines in all cars and legislating for them to be installed prior to driving.

Mr HILL -I do not think Sweden is doing it immediately. They are requiring that all cars manufactured from a certain date have it fitted with a plan that over a replacement cycle of the vehicle fleet they will get to a point where all cars will have these fitted, so that could possibly be a 10-12 year plan.

Mr MARTIN - Have you checked the price of them roughly? Are they hundreds or thousands?

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Ms NICHOLLS - I have been told a figure that unfortunately I have not retained.

Mr HILL - It is in the hundreds. The main cost is in the servicing of them.

Mr WILKINSON - Have you got those statistics, please, in relation to figures?

Mr STURGES - Yes. Just before she gives them, we have allocated \$100 000, again from the road safety levy, to undertake this trial. Have you got the figures there?

Ms NICHOLLS - Yes. Of the 300 serious casualty crashes during 2007, the major crash factors were inattention, which was 17.1 per cent; excessive speed, 16.1 per cent; inexperience, 12.1 per cent; and for alcohol and drugs, alcohol was 11.9 per cent and drugs, 7 per cent.

Mr WILKINSON - That is a significant figure, isn't it, which with this installed, could reduce the road safety toll quite markedly.

Ms NICHOLLS - Particularly if you then take into account that the research says that one in every two drivers detected drink-driving has at least two prior drink-driving convictions.

CHAIR - Now of course we have the capacity to test for drugs as well. Is the technology there for what we will call a drug interlock as well? Is it down the track? You do not know?

Ms NICHOLLS - No.

Ms FORREST - It has been suggested to me that it would be of value to novice drivers to require them all to undertake a first-aid course because with a lot of the crashes that occur, if someone first at the scene has the capacity to manage that person their outcomes can be better. Is that something that the Government would consider?

Mr HILL - I think this has been looked at before and I think there are some serious issues in relation to mandating that everyone undertake first-aid courses because the expectation is that if they are at a vehicle accident scene they would have to do something, whereas I do not think it is proven that everyone in that situation, even with training, would necessarily be capable of providing the right treatment.

Ms FORREST - It is not as if they have to do something, but at least they are given the capacity to know what to do if they felt they could.

Mr HILL - I think a whole range of liability issues would come into the equation if you made it compulsory that everyone had to do that. At the moment everyone has a requirement that if they are at the scene of an accident they have to stop and render whatever reasonable assistance they can.

Ms FORREST - The point is, though, that the more assistance is considered, the better the likely outcomes for that casualty are.

Mr STURGES - The member raises a valid issue here. What we are able to do as a Government is within the bounds of reason. We were the first State in the country to mandate the 50 hours learner driver training and we have introduced this basic driver assessment test after the first three months. There are a number of other driver knowledge issues that we are implementing

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

which are technologically based, so we are putting our money where we believe we will get best value and the issue -

Ms FORREST - Prevention is always better than cure, obviously.

Mr STURGES - Mandatory first-aid training would naturally come at a cost and it is not something that at this point in time is in the Road Safety Strategy. There have been a number of very good suggestions made but we developed the strategy after a lot of consultation with key stakeholders after getting our hands on a lot of evidence to determine what direction we should go in. As I say, it is a 10-year strategy. We have that supported with action plans so we can measure along the way whether or not we are achieving our objectives. We believe that we have a very firm foundation on which to move forward and we will continue to roll out the Road Safety Strategy. As I said, on the way through we will listen to good ideas and where it is possible to implement them, for example, the coroner's report in relation to the Road Risk Reduction program, we have taken that on board and are including that in the training material for the schools. So we hear what you are saying but, at the moment, with the money available, we are targeting the training of novice drivers and providing support material for those who are supervising the trainee drivers.

Mr WILKINSON - May I ask, one serious accident or casualty - is that how you describe both the 24-hour period in prison plus serving prison in hospital?

Ms NICHOLLS - It is grievous bodily harm, I think.

Laughter.

Mr STURGES - Getting back to my point, what is the approximate cost of one of these serious injuries to the community?

Ms NICHOLLS - It is huge, major; I am just trying to think of the -

Mr WILKINSON - I know there is a figure floating around in relation to that cost and it is significant.

Mr STURGES - If we can get our copy of the strategy back, it is in there. We will dig it out for you.

Ms NICHOLLS - It is \$12 million for a 27-year-old permanently incapacitated person. In here is the human capital figure.

Mr WILKINSON - Whilst you are getting that, what I am saying is that when you look at the offset of that as opposed to putting these alcohol interlocks into vehicles, it seems to be money well worth spending.

Mr STURGES - I have no argument there, but we need to go through the process where we can evaluate and get the evidence to determine where we go to with it next, but I am certainly not arguing with the concept you are putting forward.

Ms NICHOLLS - Yes, I have that now. Using what we would consider to be the conservative human capital method, it has been estimated that road trauma costs the Australian

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

economy \$18 billion per annum, and using that approach it is estimated that road crashes in Tasmania costs the State on average nearly \$500 million a year. Just to add to the previous comment, recent Tasmanian figures indicate that the cost of an 18-year-old male with acquired brain injury as a result of a road crash would be \$12 million in care support and medical fees over his lifetime.

Ms FORREST - Do you also have a figure for a death? You have to count loss of productivity as well.

Ms NICHOLLS - That is covered in the human capital costs but not separated out.

Mr HILL - They are not actual costs to the government, they are a cost the whole community bears, including the education that that person had and their learning potential et cetera.

CHAIR - I think we have given road safety a good old thrashing. Are there any other questions - Mr Harris?

Mr HARRISS - Minister, I realise that this would be in the province of Police and Emergency Services but have you considered any encouragement of your colleague to implement double points days over holiday periods as a road safety measure?

Mr STURGES - I have actually answered that. I think it needs to be understood that the Road Safety Council assists government in the development of policy going forward. I am not sure if the member was here when I indicated that we have representation from the RACT, MUARC, Tasmania Police, et cetera.

Mr HARRISS - Yes, I was.

Mr STURGES - Double demerit points were introduced in NSW and Western Australia following an increase in crashes during holiday periods, but the crash stats in Tasmania do not indicate that we have those types of peaks during the holiday period. Roads to tourist destinations may have higher traffic volumes but other roads generally are quieter than normal in holiday periods. I can say, however, that the Tasmanian Road Safety Council is currently investigating the issue of double demerit points and is going to advise whether or not they believe it is a viable option for Tasmania. It is not something that we have a closed mind to but we are using the deliberative and investigative processes of the council to come back to government and say, 'We think there is merit' or 'We do not think there is merit'. So at the moment that is a matter that they have on their agenda and I will await their advice which I will weigh up when I receive.

[3.15 p.m.]

Mr HARRISS - Have you sought any funding from the Rudd Government with regard to the installation of wire rope barriers on the National Highway?

Mr STURGES - A classic example is Constitution Hill where there has been a contribution from the Federal Government.

Mr TODD - We are providing a central barrier on Constitution Hill, the scene of a tragic fatality some time ago. That is being funded, in the main, by the Federal Government and is a project of around \$5.6 million which also includes the provision of audible line marking along the

entire length of the Midland Highway. All the other projects that are Federally funded, for example, the Bass Highway duplication to Penguin and Ulverstone, the Dilston bypass and other upgrade projects on the East Tamar Highway are having barriers included as part of those projects where it is appropriate, whether they be centre barriers or side barriers. So they are being funded by the Federal Government as part of those projects.

Mr STURGES - Just as an aside to the member, with the introduction of the road safety levy which goes for five years and started on 1 December last year, we took a conscious decision that we are not going to worry whether the road is under local, State or Federal government. Where evidence suggests that we need to get in there and put flexible barriers up or do what we can to ameliorate the impact of road crashes, we are going to put that money in there. We believe that this issue transcends politics and arguing between local, State and Federal governments but of course I will be tapping on the door of my Federal government colleagues to ensure that we get our fair share of funding here in Tasmania. In fact, I am off to an Australian Transport Council meeting in a matter of weeks. So that is the state of play.

1.4 Registration and licensing -

Mr HARRISS - Minister, a significant concern that you would be aware of all around the State - and I have been made aware of specific instances - is the delay in driver licence testing. I understand that in Launceston some applicants have been waiting for six months for a driving test and that is after they have undertaken driving school assessment where their instructor has said, 'You are ready to go', but the State Service authority is not. What is the Government doing to overcome what seems to have become this huge problem? In years gone by, when the coppers would do the testing in regional areas, there was no backlog.

Mr STURGES - Let me say first and foremost that we want our police out and about undertaking their core responsibility of keeping Tasmania safe and orderly. I accept that there have been problems with testing delays. We have recently authorised the employment of an additional 4.5 FTEs and two part-time employees. This includes the permanent appointment of an additional driving testing officer and two part-time officers on the west and east coasts.

Ms NICHOLLS - Yes, those are part-time.

Mr STURGES - We are going to try to get some of those DTOs out into the regional areas. I am advised that driver testing demands vary due to a range of factors including schools and university holidays and variation in pass rates, which of late has been lower than normal, even though I take your point. We are considering options like authorising other people such as driving instructors to undertake driver testing, but that is not something we are looking at implementing in the short term.

Ms FORREST - Where are the four full-time positions going to be?

Mr STURGES - They will be spread around the State.

Ms FORREST - 'Spread around the State' sometimes means three in the south and one in the north so I just want to be sure.

Mr STURGES - Just while the general manager is getting that information, I have some information here which may be of interest to members. If we could test all applicants who have

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

booked for a test now, around 23 per cent would not be eligible to do the test because they have not reached 17 years of age or have held their licence for less than six months, bearing in the mind that the new novice driver reform requires 12 months. We are actively encouraging candidates not to book too early. From 1 July 2007 to 31 May 2008 those who failed statewide did so either because they did not turn up with their log book, their test car was not roadworthy or they did not show up for the test, so around 9 per cent of those who failed caused the waiting period to grow. Quite frankly, they wasted driver testing officer time .

Mr WILKINSON - Surely one of those can be fixed fairly quickly. If you do not want them to book their test too early, surely you can say they are unable to make application until they are a month away from their seventeenth birthday, or something along those lines. I would have thought that was easily fixed.

Mr STURGES - We are looking at issues around that. Another thing we are doing is introducing online testing. I do not think we are far away from getting the driver knowledge test online, so novice drivers can go online before they do the practical and theory test to make sure that they are, no pun intended, up to speed with the knowledge. That also gives some of the more mature drivers, those of us who have had our licence for some time, the opportunity to go online and assess our theoretical knowledge of the road rules. That is not far away from happening. Do you have those figures?

Ms NICHOLLS - There will be one in the south and that will predominantly cover the Hobart-Rosny-Glenorchy area. There will be 1.5 in the Launceston area and 1.9 will be in Burnie and Devonport. We offer our driver testing officers the flexibility to move around those areas.

Ms FORREST - There is still 0.4 missing.

Ms NICHOLLS - I think that is covered by an additional resource in the Launceston area.

Ms FORREST - Bearing in mind that the new novice driver training and licensing regime will involve two tests, is this adequate? We already have a backlog of up to six months in Launceston and the north-west.

Ms NICHOLLS - There is another five planned and we are just assessing that.

Ms FORREST - All full-time?

Ms NICHOLLS - Yes, five FTEs. We are reassessing at the moment as to when they would come on board. At this point in time we are anticipating around July 2009 but at the moment we are working on whether we need to bring them on earlier as part of a full assessment.

Mr STURGES - There is another point I would like to make and that is that there is a mechanism in place where somebody desirous of undertaking a driver test that jeopardises their prospect for employment or ongoing employment can make a case and priority will be given in that situation.

Mr MARTIN - Just on that point, I am sure you would be aware, given the electorate, that many young people, especially from disadvantaged backgrounds, find it really difficult to complete the required log of hours through no fault of their own. They have no-one to take them

out in the car, which then impacts on their ability to get into the workforce and also be socially connected with the community. Are there any strategies from the Government to deal with that?

Mr STURGES - Yes, absolutely. Again, I encourage members to have a look at the Road Safety Strategy. Contained within that is recognition that not only do we need to invest in best-practice infrastructure but we also need to invest in processes that will assist younger drivers coming from socially and/or economically disadvantaged areas. I know only too well some of the problems that young drivers in my and your electorate are confronting.

What has actually happened now - and we intend to continue to roll this out on a broader basis - is that a number of schemes have been established through the Community Road Safety Partnership program that links volunteer supervisory drivers with these younger drivers in the areas of particular disadvantage. The Road Safety Strategy Action Plan provides for a resource kit and provision of seed funding to assist other programs to be developed, so there is that funding available.

Mr MARTIN - So there is more money for more programs?

Mr STURGES - Well, we want to get more partnerships going out there through the Community Road Safety Partnership program. We have organisations like Lions clubs, Rotary clubs, schools, local government -

Ms NICHOLLS - Councils; Turn Right and Top Gear, Brighton and Glenorchy; Gearing Up in the Huon Valley; Ready Set Go in Rokeby; Rules for Work in Launceston; and I think Be Ready, which has just started in the last few months in Sorell.

Mr MARTIN - I am familiar with some of them and they do a great job and address the issue but there need to be more.

Mr STURGES - Absolutely, and we recognise that. We will do all within the bounds of reason to assist in the establishment of more Community Road Safety Partnership agreements out there and, as I say, seed funding has been made available in the Road Safety Strategy. It is an issue that is certainly factored into the development of the strategy and it was also an issue that was factored into not increasing the mandated 50 hours. Bear in mind that the 50 hours is a mandated minimum. With respect, some drivers require a lot more than 50 hours behind the wheel before they are ready to get their licence. I have some data here provided by driver testing officers and they have advised that some of the reasons that candidates have failed the test include that they just do not know the road rules and are ill-prepared or that they are pushed into doing the test by parents who want their child to get a licence so they do not have to taxi them around, therefore genuine applicants who are ready to be tested suffer by having to wait longer.

This is why we need to look at increasing the level of DTOs. The number of novice car learners has increased, and these are just indicative figures so they are not spot-on. In June 2005 there were around 16 000 novice car learners; in 2006 there were 16 500; in 2007 there were 19 300; and as at 31 May 2008 there were 22 000. These figures match the demographic increase of 16- and 17-year-olds so there is an increase in younger people out there with their learner permits and we are very mindful of that. I understand that interviews are happening, if they have not already happened, for the employment of the 4.5 FTE DTOs.

[3.30 p.m.]

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Ms NICHOLLS - They are finished.

Mr STURGES - So suffice it to say we will have them on the road ASAP.

Ms FORREST - Rising fuel costs have also had an impact on these drivers getting their 50 hours because it is a bit much for a lot of families to say, 'We will just go for a drive because it is raining today' to give the learners an opportunity to have experience in the wet. Not that you can fix that problem but it is an issue that makes it more difficult for them.

Mr STURGES - If you want to talk about driver testing, just for members' information, the pass rates across the regions in 2007-08 were 50 per cent in the south; 57 per cent in the north; and the member for Murchison will be very pleased to hear it was 65 per cent in the north-west.

Ms FORREST - If my three all pass the test first time that will push the stats up beautifully.

Mr STURGES - This represents a difference between the lowest and the highest pass rate of 15 per cent. Inconsistencies are improving due to a range of strategies including frequent driver testing, moderations, peer assessments, and an increase in on-road and paper-based audits, so we are moving to try to address the issue but I guess the strong message that needs to be given today is that learners should not really book and undertake the test just to see how they are going.

Ms FORREST - Minister, you mentioned the figures for the pass rates in the south, north and north-west. It would be interesting to see whether the north-west learners actually spend more hours behind the wheel because I assume some of them would because they travel longer distances. For the kids who travel up to Smithton and Burnie to school it is a lot slower trip than for fully licensed drivers. I used to let my kids drive to Hobart and back and it is a long way at 80kph - it takes nearly five hours each way - so those kids might actually be getting more than the 50 hours and getting greater experience on a diversity of roads, whereas perhaps in the south they are only just getting the 50 hours. Has anything like that been looked at?

Mr STURGES - Not that I am aware of.

Ms FORREST - Someone is nodding behind you.

Mr STURGES - The answer to your question is no, but what the member does is reinforce what the strategy is suggesting and that is that experience behind the wheel is a major factor in the quality of outcome we get for young drivers. I also acknowledge the member for Elwick's point that there are areas within the State where young drivers are finding it very difficult to get access to the 50 mandated hours of learner driver training.

The committee suspended from 3.32 p.m. to 3.45 p.m.

CHAIR - Minister, before we go to Mr Martin who had the next question I think under the rules we have to make a decision whether we want to take a dinner break and then start again after seven. I think the way we are going we okay and could work just a few minutes past five o'clock with your good grace and consent.

Mr STURGES - I have always been a man of grace.

Mr MARTIN - I think that is a very wise decision.

CHAIR - Said the monkey.

Mr STURGES - What time are we targeting?

CHAIR - We will see how we go. It is now 3.50 p.m. so we might finish at 5.15 p.m. or something like that. Does that seem okay?

Mr MARTIN - Just a quick one to finish off the subject we were on, I understand the Federal Government are looking at providing a free one-hour professional lesson with a parent or a guardian. Does the State Government have any intention of trying to maximise the benefits of that or any strategy to capitalise on that?

Ms NICHOLLS -Not in terms of matching the Keys to Drive initiative which is one free lesson if the person who is attending their lessons is accompanied by a parent or a supervisory driver. We are looking at the Keys to Drive program and how that can complement and work on with the broader novice reforms we are proposing. We have had initial discussions with RACT and Driver Safety Services who are trialing Keys to Drive in Tasmania later this year with the potential for that to be rolled out early next year. They are developing a web site and some educational material and we are talking to them about how we can best ensure, with the work that we are both doing, that they can complement each other to deliver that road safety outcome.

Mr MARTIN - Has the Government given any consideration to bringing in compulsory vehicle checks at times of registration renewal to ensure the safety and roadworthiness of cars?

Mr STURGES - Yes, I have something on that. I understand there is a perception that the introduction of annual motor vehicle inspections is not necessarily a good thing, but the evidence generally shows that the proportion of crashes associated with mechanical defects do not vary significantly where there are compulsory inspections. We had a look at it and estimated what the cost of an annual inspection would be to the Tasmanian community. Currently the estimated figure for all light motor vehicles would be \$45.5 million, with light motor vehicles five years of age or older, \$35.2 million. The estimated cost of all light motor vehicles and transfer of registration would be \$11.8 million.

Inspector prior to transfer of registration has more a consumer protection than a road safety benefit. The consumer protection benefits would be limited if the inspection was limited to a road worthiness check, which may not reveal any vehicle reliability or performance shortfalls. Basically the crash data for 2007 shows that crashes due to mechanical defects contribute to only 2.1 per cent of total car crashes. Looking at serious casualty crashes - and we have defined that before - mechanical defects contributed to 4.1 per cent of those crashes, so with respect, our position is that the idea of compulsory vehicle safety checks is really a simplistic solution. Bringing a vehicle in for inspection once a year does not address how the vehicle is going to be used for the rest of the year. The high cost to car owners of annual testing in the Government's opinion cannot be justified. Road worthiness inspection and transfer of ownership would only have a limited benefit as only those vehicles that are sold would be inspected each year. So we have looked at it and for those reasons we do not intend to go down that path.

Mr MARTIN - On a cost-benefit analysis I would agree.

Mr WILKINSON - In relation to what you are saying with the vehicle testing, one of the silly things seems to be when you purchase a new car interstate. I know a fellow who purchased a new car in Victoria at a significant sum just recently, brought it to Tasmania and registered it here, but it had to go over the pits to see whether it was a suitable vehicle. So he had to get it tested although it was a brand-new vehicle worth in excess of \$100 000 and he had to bring it to Tasmania to get it registered and pay to get it put over the pits to see whether it was okay, which seems to me to be a waste of time and money for all concerned.

Ms NICHOLLS - I will get this checked but my understanding is that those checks are not a full mechanical check but more for vehicle identification.

Mr STURGES - And that there has not been a 'cut and shut' on the card. I can speak personal experience, being a member of the French Car Club, that we regularly have to do that.

Ms NICHOLLS - My answer was largely correct. It is an identification check to make sure that the vehicle being presented is actually the vehicle that has been registered or brought from the mainland.

Mr WILKINSON - But there is still a sum of money that has to be paid for it, isn't there?

Mr STURGES - Yes.

Mr WILKINSON - If he had registered it on the mainland, then he would not have had to go through that process, as I understand it.

Ms NICHOLLS - It would have to be reregistered here.

Mr WILKINSON - The only time he would have to do it is when he has to be reregistered here.

Ms NICHOLLS - Yes, which is generally three months, I think, after it has been moved to a new jurisdiction.

1.6 Traffic management and engineering services -

Mr WILKINSON - This relates to cost-effective safety improvements to reduce the incidence of road crashes and provide specialist technical traffic management and engineering solutions, so the budget papers say. Does this area deal with traffic signals and road signs and line marking et cetera? In relation to traffic signals, there are flashing lights at schools which I understand you are bringing into being. How many schools are involved with that at the moment?

Mr STURGES - We have three at the moment but over a period of three years there is going to be some 700 signs installed at 240 schools.

Mr WILKINSON - One of the complaints I have heard fairly frequently, and I know people normally know where schools are, but people who are new to the area do not see the school signs as well as they should. They finish up going through them, they are fined and they create danger,

which is the more important issue for young kids. But the signs are not well seen and people often complain to me about that.

Mr STURGES - Are these the static signs you are referring to?

Mr WILKINSON - Yes.

Mr STURGES - Put very simply, there are two prongs to the Government's installation of flashing signs at schools. First and foremost, they are to absolutely make it clear to motorists that school is in and that it is school time, so the signs are flashing, but also just as importantly they are there to protect the safety and wellbeing of our kids. It is something the Government is very much aware of that there have been incidents where members of the community have not been aware that it was a school time and they had not seen the static sign, so we are about addressing that with the flashing 40 kph signs. This, too, is being funded through the road safety levy. So as well as, most importantly, making the environment safer for our children as they go to and come home from school each day, it will also make it a lot clearer for motorists when they are in that school zone area.

Mr WILKINSON - What happens is that normally there is increased activity around the area. Drivers are keeping their eye on the road, which they should be, and also, I suppose, keeping an eye on both sides, but because the major activity is in and around that area, they are looking ahead as opposed to the side where the signs are.

Mr STURGES - The installation of electronic speed limit signs will occur at 240 Tasmanian schools and I think that is going to be 700 signs. We also intend to install variable speed limit signs on the Tasman Bridge and the approaches to the bridge. We are also intending to install initially on the Midland Highway around the Constitution Hill area weather warning system signs that will flash up and let people know if it is inclement or foggy or whatever the case may be. We believe this is a great initiative that the road safety levy is providing the funds to achieve and we will continue down that path. Once we have evaluated the variable speed limit signs on the Tasman Bridge and the approaches we will look at installing them in other areas around the State and also signs to warn motorists of driving conditions.

[4.00 p.m.]

Mr WILKINSON - How many black spot areas are identified that have not had anything done in relation to remedying those areas at present?

Mr TODD - There is a State black spot program which is targeting 34 projects. They have been ranked on the road safety outcomes and the benefits based on crash history and are being rolled out over four years. I think we are into year two of that or maybe going into year three of that program. Those projects are rolling out on local government roads. We also have the Federal Black Spot Program which is an annual program of \$1.16 million to address black-spot sites.

Mr WILKINSON - So there are approximately 34 black-spot sites at the moment in Tasmania that have not been addressed - is that right?

Mr TODD - No, they are the projects that have been identified.

Mr STURGES - The State Government made an election commitment of \$2 million over four years to the State Black Spot Program. The MAIB have contributed \$3.65 million over three

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years from 2006-07. As the General Manager of Roads said, there are currently 34 local road projects provided with State funding. Some \$1.15 million of MAIB funds has been spent on installing safety barriers on State roads. In fact I chaired the State black spot program until just recently, and it is also important to note that some local councils are contributing to traffic-calming measures in identified black-spot areas. We will continue to work with local government and the MAIB to target high crash locations.

Mr WILKINSON - How many are there at the moment that have not been addressed in any way?

Mr TODD - We are continually reviewing the crash statistics and we prioritise those sites. There is always more that can be done but the program the Government has implemented here is addressing a number of them.

Mr WILKINSON - How many are there?

Mr TODD - I do not think we actually have a list that says, 'These are other ones', but -

Mr STURGES - We have areas identified as high crash locations but not necessarily identified as black-spot areas per se. I am not trying to play semantics with words here but where we undertake the analysis outside of the State black spot program, as I said before in relation to the installation of flexible barriers, where the data clearly shows - and this is being interrogated on a regular basis - there are patterns of crashes and incidents, we will take measures to install flexible barriers or introduce some form of best-practice infrastructure.

Mr WILKINSON - If I can give you an example, a number of years ago there was a black-spot area at lower Sandy Bay and they put the traffic signals in there at the shopping centre. That was a black spot area for a number of years and nothing had been done. What I am trying to ascertain is how many of those areas there are out in our community at the moment where nothing is being done. I think it was five years before anything was done with that one.

Mr MARTIN - I am sure there used to be a list. I used to see them in my previous capacity.

Mr STURGES - Yes, I think the secretary might want to make a comment.

Mr ADDIS - You are right. The reality is we can always do a hell of a lot more and particularly in some locations. The way we work it, because of the usual problem of limited resources, is to say, 'Well, what funding have we got available at both national and local levels?', and from that work backwards to see what are the highest priority needs. There is not a list of black spots that when the funding comes up suddenly move down the list. It is a case of, 'Here's the funding. This is what we can afford, so let's make sure that we get the highest priority'.

Mr MARTIN - But you have a wish list from local government, don't you?

Mr STURGES - Yes, we do, absolutely. In consultation with local government we determine the priority areas based on their wish list.

Mr MARTIN - I suppose the question the member for Nelson is asking is how long is the list and what is the value of the list that is yet unaccounted for?

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Mr ADDIS - That is my trouble. I am not trying to dodge the question, but the list can be as long as you want to make it.

Mr HILL - Depending on the criteria that you set for intervention.

Mr ADDIS - Yes, criteria and significance.

Ms FORREST - Anywhere there has been a crash, probably.

Mr HILL - I think it would have to be true to say that the situation has vastly improved since this money has become available through the Commonwealth Government and then additionally through the State Government and the MAIB. I think Tasmania is no different to other States, where the emphasis is now moving from black spots to what they call 'grey spots', so the risk profile of the sites that are being looked at is lower than was previously the case and is moving away from specific spots to stretches of road, as with the fencing. So it is moving away more from saying, 'Here is the accident history' as opposed to doing a risk profile on sections of roads and finding out which have the highest risk profile and addressing those situations.

Ms FORREST - Going back to the variable speed limits for a moment, I appreciate that there is the flashing light one on Spring Hill or Constitution Hill - one of those hills we drive past on the way to Hobart all the time.

Mr STURGES - That is a warning sign.

Ms FORREST - You have talked about other weather warning signs related to fog and ice. Will consideration be given at all to wildlife, particularly on some of our country and rural roads where wildlife is a significant problem at dusk and dawn, and having a variable speed limit for that time of day to reduce not only the risk to the wildlife but also the risk to the cars that swerve to avoid them sometimes? Some of them are quite big and can do significant damage to a car.

Mr TODD - That is not something we have addressed in terms of technology. We have developed some signs that warn people that there is more wildlife between dusk and dawn.

Ms FORREST - But what about actually varying the speed limit at those times?

Mr TODD - That is not something we have looked at.

Mr HILL - I think there is a project in the north-west on the way to the west coast where a speed limit was introduced for night-time driving as a trial. It was on the road out to Marrawah, I think.

CHAIR - Cradle Mountain Road has some.

Ms FORREST - That is only one area. There are a number of other areas. All of us have rural electorates where we have experience in our own vehicles, but I have had representations from people in various areas of the State highlighting that issue and wondering if it is a possibility for the variable speed limits around those times.

Mr TODD - It is difficult to identify exactly where wildlife will be.

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Ms FORREST - Where the bush comes right up to the edge of the road would be a pretty good idea.

Mr TODD - That is true, but it would be difficult to do. I am not sure of the benefit, notwithstanding what you have said, but it is not something we have looked at specifically. I am not sure that varying the speed limit would necessarily result in that. I think people need to take care and clearly just after dusk and early morning is probably the most appropriate time, but I am not sure that lowering the speed limit per se would improve that outcome.

Ms FORREST - At Cradle Mountain they did more than that. They put little animal shelters on the side of the road and the traffic calmers were much bigger. If you had representation from a community that felt that was an issue, would you look at it?

Mr ADDIS - Sure, we would look at it but, in all honesty, with the limited funds we have, I think what Peter is saying is that there are much higher priorities where we get a bigger bang for our buck. It is not that what you raise is not an issue; you are right, it is. If you hit a kangaroo at speed you do all sorts of damage.

Mr STURGES - But again, the variable signs we are talking about here are electronic signs. You are talking about static signs. What we need to do is take a strategic approach to this issue. We have identified areas where we want to install the variable speed limit signs and warning signs. As time progresses we will certainly be moving further in but this is just the start of the process. We believe that those main traffic groups identifying as high-crash locations and high-volume traffic routes are the areas where we should be focusing our investment in the first instance. The member makes a valid point but at this time we are unable to spread the funds as thinly as that.

CHAIR - I want to ask a question regarding the Adopt a Highway program. I am not too sure which output it falls into but would you accommodate a question here, Minister?

Mr STURGES - I will always accommodate a question from the Chair.

CHAIR - That is good. As you know, it is a program which was introduced from California some years ago and many voluntary groups in Tasmania have taken that role on. For example, as you are probably aware, Minister, the Ashley Youth Detention Centre looks after one of the roundabouts near Deloraine. There has been quite a bit of consternation amongst volunteer groups that they may now have lost that role so could you comment on that?

Mr HILL - Certainly the program is not dead; it has been reinstated. We have appointed an agent to undertake that work.

Mr STURGES - The general manager has some details.

Mr TODD - Certainly we are committed to the Adopt a Highway project. We have had some issues over recent times in terms of safety for those people on the side of the road who are volunteers and we appreciate the work they do. So we have gone through a process of looking at that and we have now engaged Conservation Volunteers Australia to help us re-establish that program. They are setting up training in the three regions to reinvigorate the program which will kick-off in the new financial year. They will be working with the groups to train them in the traffic management that they require and the safety aspects of working on the side of the road. So

we are conscious of the safety of both the volunteers and the road users to make sure that that is right.

1.7 Passenger transport -

Mr HARRISS - I do not have anything to ask about apart from an update as to the program now in place ready to go with regard the school bus transport and so on.

Mr STURGES - It is a week away.

CHAIR - That probably comes under the next output group.

Mr STURGES - Yes.

Mr HARRISS - Doesn't passenger transport go across both?

CHAIR - It could well do. Minister, could you introduce Mr Pauley to the table?

Mr STURGES - I welcome to the table Mr John Pauley, General Manager, Passenger Transport Policy.

CHAIR - Do go on, Mr Harriss.

Mr HARRISS - Where are we at with the program? We will get to the 4 per cent improvement in the bus age in a minute.

Mr STURGES - Do you want a background to the review of the core passenger service review and what has occurred?

Mr HARRISS - No, I do not think so.

Mr MARTIN - Three years of consultation completed in December last year.

Mr STURGES - That's right. I will hand you over to the general manager in a minute. Let me put on record clearly that those students, whether they are rural, urban or urban fringe, if they qualify for concessions, will travel free to school and home. Correct?

It is not about hitting the battler, as has been claimed. The Government will still significantly subsidise bus fares. This is about providing access to passenger transport, not just during school hours but outside of school hours. University students will be able to travel at a 50 per cent concession all week, all day. It is about providing incentive for bus operators to upgrade their vehicle fleet and in fact, I think we have 100 new buses?

[4.00 p.m.]

Mr STURGES - There are 85 newer buses, a lot of them are smaller, coaster-style buses fitted with seatbelts making them a lot safer. I will hand over to the General Manager to give you an update and we will answer your questions.

Mr PAULEY - As the Minister said, the review's report was released in December last year and since that time we have been working on implementation. We have an implementation team

in the department. The first phase of implementation is issuing about 277 new service contracts for the operation of rural school bus services. All but about eight of those contracts have been signed and are operational. The operators of those services are getting the benefits of a more equitable payment structure, plus the communities across Tasmania are benefiting from incentives for upgrading buses. Right across the State we have had a lot of investment in buses since October last year. There are 85 to 100 new buses in the State, including about 20 brand new small buses which are fitted with seatbelts.

The other aspect of the new service contracts for those operators is the indexation arrangements for them. Under the old index arrangements, if we had had the fuel price increases we are having at the moment those operators would have been waiting about five months to get the benefit of those fuel price changes coming through to their contracts. At the moment they are about two weeks behind the fuel prices at any one time.

Since February we have been looking at the next phase, which is the introduction of a more equitable fares regime, particularly for school students and also at introducing an improved concession regime for tertiary students. At the moment school students generally pay a very low fare but as soon as they go to post-secondary training, many have to pay the adult fare. If you live more than more than 40 kilometres from your TAFE institution, you get a 30-cent fare, if you live 39.9 kilometres or closer you pay the adult fare.

Ms FORREST - So you walk a hundred metres and catch the bus from there.

Mr PAULEY - No, because it is based on where you live, not where you catch the bus so you cannot walk a hundred metres down the road. One of the big changes that is coming through from 1 July, is that full-time university students, TAFE students, students at the Australian Technical College, the Australian Maritime College will all be entitled to a half adult fare for all of their travel. That is going to be a huge benefit to a lot of students, a lot of tertiary students across Tasmania.

Mr MARTIN - It is equitable for everyone.

Mr PAULEY - Yes, it is equitable for everyone. It is a distance-based fare but our analysis showed that most of the tertiary students live with a reasonably comfortable commuting distance. The controversial aspects of the review's recommendations relates to student fares for high school, primary school and college students.

The situation we have at the moment is that the fares are a bit all over the shop. Not because it is the only place it happens, but an example I use is that up on the north-west coast a student coming from Smithton to school in Burnie will pay 30 cents bus fare. If you live a little bit closer you pay nothing; you get a free bus ride from about Rocky Cape in. As soon as you get to Somerset you are paying a Metro student fare and as you go through, if you are coming into Burnie from Ridgley, again, you get a free bus ride. If you go out the other side, if you are up around Cuprona, suddenly the fare depends on what school you go to; if you go to an independent school you get a 30-cent fare, if you go to a State school you pay \$1.20 and if you live in Penguin you pay a \$1.20 fare if you go to Burnie High School, but if you go to an independent school you pay a 30-cent fare.

That dog's breakfast exists right across the State. Anne Herbert, who is the project manager for implementation, and I have been talking to communities right across the State and people do

not like the fact that they are going to have to pay a fare in some instances. When we have looked at it, already on the fringe in the urban areas, about 70 per cent of the travel is on a fare-paying service and the remaining 30 per cent of students are getting free bus travel. That is not taking account of the concession arrangements that exist.

When we looked at the introduction of fares for students we started to come up against some interesting issues and they really started to revolve around youth travel. What we found is that children, particularly in the near urban areas, were getting very good trips to and from school, but if they wanted to do anything else they were basically paying half the adult fare for their travel. So the new fare regimes are really about a student fare that applies to all their travel including going to and from school, coming into town on the weekends, participating in after-school activities and participating in the community during school holidays.

Mr STURGES - It is also about providing improved passenger transport services for the whole community, which I want to talk about; where there is duplications or no services to some areas and recognising the demographic change in a lot of our communities around the State.

Mr PAULEY - Yes. We are just starting a process which is, I suppose, the third phase of implementation which is finally filling in the missing gap along the north-west coast between Devonport and Ulverstone so people living at either end will be able to participate in a whole range of activities, and also looking at more objective measures around urban areas in Tasmania, removing ad hoc approaches to the provision of bus services in urban areas and looking at introducing proper Metro-style or urban-style services for all those urban areas that warrant it.

Ms FORREST - Looking at that service between Devonport and Ulverstone again, with the potential change of the Mersey Hospital - we still do not really know what is happening there - some services are no longer provided at Burnie as is happening currently. Is the Metro service going to adequately service the needs for passenger transport between those two communities?

Mr PAULEY - We had a meeting in Devonport yesterday between Metro and Phoenix Coaches who will be providing the general access service. Those two companies are going to be working hand in glove to provide a seamless service from one side of the coast to the other. So you will be able to buy one ticket and go from Devonport all the way to Burnie -

Ms FORREST - And to the other side of Devonport, like Port Sorell, Shearwater, all of those people?

Mr PAULEY - I sort of like to take one step at a time. Let us fill in the missing link and once we have the missing link - because at the moment you cannot get between Devonport and Ulverstone easily.

Mr STURGES - John, you might want to talk about what happens with the fare revenue.

Mr PAULEY - The fare revenue that is coming from that is looking at upgrading buses right across the State. We will moving over the next five to seven years to full DDA compliance for our general access services right across the State and in the same way that we have an improvement in the bus fleet for rural school bus services, we are looking at getting a vast improvement in the fleet for those student-only services which are moving to fare paying.

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Ms FORREST - With the rural school bus services there have been issues in some areas of buses not taking the students right into their towns and dropping them off some distance from their area. How is that being addressed under this?

Mr PAULEY - Under the new service contracts the specific incident that you mentioned -

Ms FORREST - At Stanleys turn-off. I will mention it.

Mr PAULEY - a bus will go all the way into Stanley. Those children will no longer be dropped off at the turn-off when there is a third bus.

Mr STURGES - I think that is a relevant point, John, that also should be touched on, that it has been many years since some of these contracts have been reviewed other than financial adjustments to the contract and this gives the opportunity to refresh and make the contracts more appropriate. But again it provides consistency and that is what it is intended to do.

Mr PAULEY - All the contracts are performance contracts and operators will have to meet performance standards.

Ms FORREST - How are you going to measure those performance standards? How are we going to ensure that students in some of these more remote communities actually get to where they are supposed to be going? How are you going to track that and ensure that it actually happens?

Mr PAULEY - We are looking at fitting vehicle tracking technology to all the contract buses so that we will know that they have actually done the contract that they are meant to do.

Mr STURGES - And that will form part of the contract, too.

Mr PAULEY - Yes, and that is part of the contract.

Ms FORREST - That sort of thing will be reported in the annual report?

Mr PAULEY - We will be able to report against compliance with the contracts in our annual report, which is something we cannot really do at the moment.

CHAIR - Through you, Minister, to Mr Pauley - I actually had a briefing on all of this from his team which was very good but there are still a couple of anomalies left there, I think, in terms of the fees for students in particular areas. One I have cited is the Hagley Farm School which is a large school and because it draws a lot of its students from Hadspen and the Education department mandates that all those students go to Hagley Primary School whereas they used to have a free service and now they have to pay. That is one anomaly and, might I suggest, and there may be more. Have you had further discussions with those people?

Mr PAULEY - Minister, would you like me to answer?

Mr STURGES - I have a brief on it but I think you could pick it up.

CHAIR - Okay, that is fine.

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Mr STURGES - As long as you get the information.

Mr PAULEY - Hagley Farm School is one of about 13 similar services in Tasmania. The bus services do not discriminate between whether somebody goes to a State school or somebody goes to an independent school and we have a number of examples right across the State where students who live in an urban area are making a trip out of an urban area to get to school. You have indicated that is where those parents are told they have to go to school. I have had plenty of discussions with parents who are sending their children to an independent school who consider that is the most appropriate school for their education.

Wherever we draw a boundary we are going to have people who are just one side of it or just the other side of it and the boundary at Hadspen has been drawn objectively based on ABS data. At the moment, Hadspen really gets the best of all possible worlds. It gets a full Metro service. If students are going to Prospect High School they have the residual pre-school bus to Prospect High School. If they are choosing to go further into Launceston they have a 30-cent fare. If they are going the other way to Hagley Farm School they have a free bus.

If we were to say to the parents at Hadspen that they are a special case, we would be saying basically to every child who lives in every urban centre in Tasmania who travels on a bus to the nearest school that they are also the same special case. Nearly half the children who catch a bus to school are on a fare-paying service already and a lot of those children are going to their closest State school. The question that the review is faced with in framing its recommendations is whether it is better to put money into continuing cheap travel or to develop better bus services with better buses to deliver a better service, not just to young people but also to the whole community? That is the position we have ended up with in removing these inequities.

CHAIR - But the point I was making in this particular instance is that for primary-aged kids at Hadspen the nearest school is perhaps Summerdale at Prospect which I think is the largest primary school in the State - overflowing - and there is no capacity to take those kids. Therefore they have to go out to Hagley. That is the point I am making and up until now they have had free travel. Is that correct?

Mr PAULEY - Yes, and children who live in West Hobart who are not within walking distance of either West Hobart primary schools also catch a bus and have always had to pay \$1.20 to get to their closest primary school that the Government says they have to go to.

Mr STURGES - Whilst I hear what the member is saying those who qualify for a concession will travel free and those who are being asked to pay a fare are making a contribution. John might want to talk about the contribution factor in relation to the fee that is attached to travel.

Mr PAULEY - Yes. The cost of their journey each day from Hadspen to Hagley under the new service will be about \$13 a day - that is the cost of providing the bus service - and the maximum that any single child will have to pay for that will be \$1.80. A lot of people have the impression that buses do not cost very much but there is a large contribution of about \$13 per day for those children.

CHAIR - I appreciate that fact.

Mr PAULEY - To contrast that, the cost of taking a child to school on a Metro service is about \$2.50 a trip or \$5 a day, to which an urban child is contributing about 50 per cent of that

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cost. The only place the review has ever had any concerns about the paying of fares is where people currently get free travel where other people elsewhere in the State doing exactly the same sort of journey pay a fare. Where we are moving from free travel to paying a fare - not a fare that is higher than anyone else's but just in line with everyone else's - we have these concerns raised.

CHAIR - Yes.

Mr STURGES - I think it is probably also worth talking about the overlapping of services and the fact that this is going to allow us to streamline services to the area. Whilst I acknowledge that this is controversial and that a change of this nature when you have been receiving free travel, is difficult to come to terms with, this is going to allow us to provide incentives for newer buses to come on the run. There is currently a situation where there is overcrowding on some buses while others have low patronage. It is about getting some balance around access to travel and it has been based on the assessment of the demographic change and we believe that it is a fair and reasonable expectation, given the fact that there are many thousands of Tasmanian students every day paying to get to and from school or making a contribution to their trip to and from school.

Mr PAULEY - We are in negotiations at the moment with the operators around Hadspen going into Prospect and also going back to Hagley, and with the introduction of the new contracts we will see an increase in the number of seats that are available for children because they will be factored into the new contracts and also a significant improvement in the quality of the buses.

CHAIR - Can you provide a list of the other hot spots, if you like, if I can call them that?

Mr PAULEY - We had concerns raised at Legana and we are working with that community. We have concerns raised in Kingston and Blackmans Bay where you have some terrific anomalies. The children who go to Taroona High School as their local high school pay \$1.20 on a Metro bus. The children from Kingston and Blackmans Bay who come up to Taroona High School get that same journey for 30 cents. When the children who go to Taroona go to Hobart College, again, they keep on paying \$1.20 yet the children from Kingston and Blackmans Bay suddenly get a free ride all the way up to Hobart College.

CHAIR - Same at Bagdad and Bridgewater.

Mr PAULEY - There have been a few concerns raised in the Bridgewater area but then you explain to parents that this means they no longer have to run a taxi service to come in and get their children for after-school activities. All those children who are coming into the city for their schooling are the ones who are mainly affected because the children who live in Bridgewater or Gagebrook who go to Bridgewater and Gagebrook schools are already paying the Metro student fare or travelling on a free pass. Basically, the people who live further out from Bridgewater who are bypassing the Bridgewater schools to go to schools in the northern suburbs are currently travelling for free. Again, people are going to express concerns but we have to think about a fair system.

Mr STURGES - It really is about getting a contemporary bus service for kids to go to and from school but also more broadly providing a contemporary passenger service, particularly to these outer urban fringe areas around the State.

Mr MARTIN - I think from memory there were over 100 recommendations in the review. Have the recommendations been prioritised and costed? Has the Government adopted all of the

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recommendations or just some? Is there a report or an implementation plan that can be tabled or accessed?

Mr PAULEY - The majority of the recommendations in the review are being funded by reprioritising of inefficiencies in the system. For example, with the rural school bus contracts, we have compensated about 35 or 36 contracts which has led to an annual saving of about \$1 million and that money is being ploughed back into the system.

Mr MARTIN - Is there a list of what recommendations have been adopted?

Mr PAULEY - The only recommendation that we are not working on implementing is that relating to having a special investment program for identifying the purchase of new large buses on certain routes.

Mr MARTIN - Every other recommendation in the review has been accepted by the Government?

Mr PAULEY - Is being implemented and has been accepted by the Government.

Mr MARTIN - What is the time frame for implementation?

Mr PAULEY - We are working on a three- to four-year time frame.

Mr MARTIN - So is there a rollout plan?

Mr PAULEY - Our rollout plans are, first of all, to get all the new service contracts in place and that process is about one-third complete at this stage, with the remainder of the contracts being offered over the next couple of months. From then on we will be working with communities across the State over a time period to upgrade their bus services and create a greater relationship between the bus operators and their local communities as we move forward.

Mr MARTIN - Are there documents we can have tabled?

Mr PAULEY - We can table our plan showing the way forward.

Mr MARTIN - Is there any new money in the budget for this?

Mr PAULEY - There is no new money in the budget. As I said, we are able to implement these recommendations by recasting the way the existing budget has been spent. For example, the current contracts make no change to contract payments based on the age of the bus that people use, so operators have tended to use as old as possible buses they can get away with. Under the new contracts the contract payment is related to the age of the bus that people use, so we are able to use some savings in capital money that was implied in the contracts to upgrade those contracts where there are newer buses. We are also looking at duplication and overlap and inefficiency is also contributing significantly to the implementation of our recommendations.

Mr MARTIN - Recommendation 3.13 states:

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

'It is recommended that where children meet the current criteria for access to a student fare and also meet identified socioeconomic criteria, they are eligible for free travel on all urban bus services.'

I take it that has been accepted and is being implemented?

Mr STURGES - Yes, absolutely.

Mr MARTIN - Fantastic - very good.

Mr PAULEY - And that is implemented right across the board.

Mr STURGES - This is about equity and consistency. Some feel as though they are being disadvantaged but it is about getting that balance and mix right and we think we have done that.

Mr MARTIN - It is about the kids who need help getting the help and that is terrific.

Mr STURGES - I stress again that those who qualify for concessions in this State will not pay to get to and from school; that is an absolute given. We are just asking others who can afford to make a contribution to make a small contribution to that trip. As the general manager said, outside of school hours there is a significant benefit now where there is concession travel available for students at all times.

Ms FORREST - We might see them using it more and less parents running them around.

Mr PAULEY - The way the services are being restructured, if you looked at almost any urban fringe service across the State, there is a hole in the timetable in the middle of the day, which means that children who have a half-day of school either have to stay at school for the whole day or go into a mall somewhere and perhaps get into a bit of mischief. We are looking at filling those holes in the timetables. Secondly, a lot of children and people in part-time employment cannot actively involve themselves in the work force because there are no later services for them to get home, so we are also filling those holes in the timetable as a priority. So that all these communities will end up with a much better timetable for the same overall cost to government.

Mr STURGES - It really is about enhancing the overall access to bus services in the State.

Output group 6 Transport Subsidies and Concessions

6.3 King Island Shipping -

Ms FORREST - I note that the Bruny Island ferry and Furneaux Shipping relate to contract payments, whereas the King Island shipping refers to contingency arrangements to assist King Island residents with shipping services in accordance with the partnership agreement with the King Island Council. I notice that in the budget paper there is no increase in this provision. I am sure these are unrealised payments anyway because generally the boat does not sink, so it is usually not called upon. Particularly in view of the rising fuel costs, if the boat did sink or was off the route for a period of time, and the obligation is there to meet the need of the island, would this money be enough?

[4.45 p.m.]

Mr STURGES - We would put in a rail bridge. Sorry, I should not be flippant.

Ms FORREST - A rail bridge. Fantastic. I could hop over on the train.

Mr STURGES - I will ask the manager of infrastructure policy to respond.

Ms RUSSELL - Until March 2007 Patrick Shipping provided a fully commercial weekly shipping service from Devonport to Melbourne via King Island and since around 2001 the volume of the freight that has been carried to and from King Island has grown significantly. It is now basically a commercial shipping service and so the provision of the money in this particular output group is generally directed around provision of subsidies for, for example, other shipping services that are not on a commercial footing to meet that community service obligation.

Effectively the shipping service is a commercial allocation so that contingency money, if you like, that allocation, is to ensure continuity for the service in the event of disruption.

Ms FORREST - That is what it says. Is \$49 000 enough? The ship could have a major breakdown. It could sink - let us hope it never happens but effectively it could be out of service for a long time. Would \$49 000 be enough money to restore that service for a period of time? You would have to get another ship to do it.

Mr STURGES - The secretary might make a comment here.

Mr ADDIS - The provisional amount has moved around a little bit over the years. It has shrunk. The answer is that it depends very much on what sort of remedial action needs to be taken. On a couple of occasions where we have had to rely on the contingency fund it has been adequate because we have been talking about funding the cost of providing tugs.

On the other hand, if there was a serious breakdown along the lines that you are talking about and the service could not be continued for some time, there are contingency arrangements in place to assist with the sourcing of additional shipping. The point is costs are going to vary depending on the circumstances. Treasury has assured us that in the event of a particular set of circumstances provoking costs greater than the contingency amount there will be assistance there. It is a safety net amount.

Mr STURGES - Just for the record, I can say on behalf of the Government that we are committed to ensuring the continuity of the shipping service to the island.

Ms FORREST - The point I have made is that generally this money is unrealised debt; it is there just in case.

Mr ADDIS - It is a provisional amount. It is a contingency fund.

Ms FORREST - Yes, that is right.

Mr STURGES - Dare I say we have another contingency plan.

Ms FORREST - Yes. I am sure you are happy to reveal the contents of that one - I would hope - or the risk analysis you have done related to that. If this money is sitting there and is not spent, which generally it is not - on occasion it has been - is there any capacity for the King Island Council to negotiate an agreement to see if funds can be made available to residents to access the Tasmanian mainland by air in view of the terribly increasing costs at the moment in access on and off the island? I will get to this under grants and subsidies as well because it comes under there as well. Currently the King Island people are experiencing a terrible lack of reliability and timeliness with the existing service to Tasmania. It is a bit easier to get to Victoria. There are no passenger services on the boat. If that money is not spent, is there any capacity to look at providing it to facilitate that sort of service for King Islanders?

Ms RUSSELL - That allocation is provided for freight services to the island so I think what we are talking about there is passenger services to the island rather than the freight service that that contingency allocation is provided for. I think in terms of whether passenger transport services are subsidised that really is a question -

Mr ADDIS - It is a separate policy question altogether.

Ms FORREST - I will ask it again under grants and subsidies, if that is all right.

Mr ADDIS - In short though, no, we are not going to be providing freight contingency moneys to subsidise passenger transport.

Ms FORREST - Can I ask another question along the same lines when we get to grants and subsidies? That is it from me.

CHAIR - We will move onto 6.4.

6.4 CSO: Payment to Metro Tasmania Pty Ltd -

Mr MARTIN - I have some questions but I think they have been answered under the core review except, given the answer to my question about the implementation of all the key recommendations and the cost of that, I notice the CSO payment is not very significant in the forward Estimates. Given the increase in petrol costs and so on, if all the recommendations of the review are being implemented I am surprised there is no CSO cost increase.

Mr STURGES - I can give you what I have and then if John wants supplement it, I am sure he will. The CSO payment relates to subsidising commercial fares to support a full range of Metro services to pensioners, students and the unemployed. We will be offering Metro a new service contract with the Transport Commission. The contract is going to be for five years with an option of a second term of five years. The contract will be performance-based with performance standards focused on service delivery, passenger safety and comfort, vehicle management and loading, and service development. Services will be provided in accordance with the agreed urban service standards. The contract will fix the boundaries of Metro's urban services.

I know we are coming to the amount of money but I want to put all this in perspective. Some areas will be serviced by Metro under separate urban fringe new service contracts recognising the demographic change around the State and those contracts will be offered for Brighton, South Arm, Seven Mile Beach, Ulverstone and Wynyard. What we are about is treating Metro the same

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as every other operator of core passenger services. So perhaps the general manager of Passenger Services could talk now about the financial contribution and reasons behind that.

Mr PAULEY - When we look at the indexation from year to year, Treasury tend to be a little conservative on their indexation and, rather than trying to predict things such as fuel prices five years hence, they look at an underlying rate of indexation based on past experience. If we get periods of rapid increase in things such as fuel prices and they flow through, we make a separate application to Treasury to top these contracts up as they flow through.

Mr MARTIN - That will be forthcoming? You will not have to cut services?

Mr PAULEY - We have never had any trouble in the past in getting these. I think Treasury's view is they would rather be conservative in the forward Estimates and then top us up rather than go the other way around.

Mr STURGES - We are about providing not only equity but also continuity of service, so we would never contemplate withdrawing. But certainly there will be rearrangement of some Metro services. As you probably know, the Door Stopper service, depending on demand, is rearranged and varied but the core services will remain.

Mr MARTIN - The withdrawal of the service from Chigwell, for example, has been a bit of an issue.

Mr STURGES - My understanding is that it has not been withdrawn but there has certainly been a variation and a reduction in the frequency of the service. That is basically assessed on demand. Certainly, and I have been personally across this, I have had constituents raise the matter with me. The Door Stopper service still operates out there but not on the level of frequency that it once was because, quite frankly, the figures did not justify it.

Mr MARTIN - It was one of the most highly serviced areas of Hobart.

Mr HILL - Metro are going through a process - they started in Burnie, they have done Launceston, they are now starting in Hobart - where they are readjusting their services based on performance criteria rather than an historical time table. What they found in Burnie when they did that is an increase in patronage because instead of having routes that were highly circuitous they had routes that were more direct and more frequent. People had to walk a little bit further to get the bus but there were more buses. That is the direction that they are intending to go.

Mr MARTIN - At the GBE Estimates with Metro, I have raised issues in the past about the fact that there are suburban areas such as Chigwell, Lutana and a few others up - I suppose it is the same all around the State - that have no service after 7 p.m., for example. They have told me that if they cannot afford it with the CSO payment they get from government, they refer us back to the Government. How do we explore the domain for services, especially after hours?

Mr PAULEY - With the service reviews, the span and frequency of service that communities get is really based on their socioeconomic status down at quite a small level and we are finding that, as we go through that process, those areas that actually warrant a more frequent or a greater span of timetable are getting that. That has meant corresponding adjustments in other parts where those services perhaps are not required.

Mr MARTIN - How do you work out when there is demand and how much demand there is for services after 7 p.m. in, say, somewhere like Chigwell? Do you survey?

Mr PAULEY - There has been a lot of work done over the past four or five years on how to develop performance standards for Metro that I can table if you like - the Metro service standards.

Mr MARTIN - Yes, that would be good.

Mr PAULEY - So you can see for yourself and, basically, it is looking at ABS statistics, what the community looks like and that starts to address the nature of the service, but I think it would be best if I just tabled the performance standards.

Mr MARTIN - Yes, thank you.

6.6 Urban bus service -

CHAIR - One question I have there, Minister, and that is in respect of rapidly rising fuel prices. Metro alternative fuels, you have noted in other capital cities that many of those, for example, in Perth, Sydney and Brisbane, have gone to CNG. Is there any movement here in terms of that?

Mr HILL - That is a matter that Metro have fully investigated and the conclusions of their investigations was they could not possibly justify the capital expenditure to set up CNG. Their preference is to look at other alternative fuels.

CHAIR - Like biodiesel.

Mr HILL - And ethanol. The buses that they buy, which are all Scania, are particularly suited to using ethanol and biodiesel.

Mr STURGES - But certainly I have met with the CEO and the chair of the Metro board and they are not sitting on their hands in regard to this matter. They are looking at alternate options for fuelling the buses and I am very heartened that they are, dare I say, looking at a significant paradigm. shift in the way in which they operate and in a way in which they deal with the issue of climate change going forward and, of course, the increase in fuel costs.

Grants and Subsidies

Ms FORREST - The grant and subsidy pensioner air travel subsidy for the Bass Strait islands: I am sure members would be aware that the cost of air travel to and from both islands is significant and there is no increase in this line item, I believe, in that area. I do not think there is a reduced number of pensioners or eligible people on the islands, particularly King Island. They often have to fly via Melbourne. They have to go via Rex to Melbourne and then to mainland Tasmania, often at more than \$400 a ticket for convenience and for access. Most of the elderly people, particularly, on the island and a lot of people on disability pensions and things like that have to use that service because their small Tas Air flights cannot cater for their needs getting on and off the planes. Is this really putting enough money into this to ensure that these pensioners will receive the subsidies they require?

[5.00 p.m.]

Mr PAULEY - These subsidies are based on the amount of travel that is undertaken by people who are eligible for concessions. The \$8 000 represents the historical amount that is being claimed.

Ms FORREST - With rising fuel costs.

Mr PAULEY - If there were more claims and it was to increase this, it would be similar to the answer I have in relation to rapid rises in fuel prices for the bus contracts. That department, because the nature of this item, is in a position where it can apply for additional funding from Treasury to cover any expenses above what is already in the forward Estimates.

Ms FORREST - Is there likely to be any consideration - and the minister might like to think about this one - for families trying to get on and off the island? If you have a family of three or four children it can cost you almost \$2 000 to get off the island.

Mr STURGES - I am not trying to stifle debate but you might like to have a discussion with Mr Pauley outside of the committee and put forward some of your ideas.

Ms FORREST - I would like to hear what the Government's view on that sort of a proposal would be.

Mr STURGES - At the moment aged pensioner residents of Bass Strait islands are entitled to an air fare subsidy when they are travelling between Bass Strait islands and Launceston or Hobart. It is not an issue that is currently being contemplated by the Government but I am certainly prepared to listen to the issues that you raise - without making a commitment, but it is a matter that you bring to the table. It is a matter that I am not just going to close the book on. I would be more than happy if you wanted to have a talk to Mr Pauley and give him some details. We could undertake some analysis and see where we go as the next step in the process. But it is not something that I will rule in or out. Certainly I am prepared to listen to the matter that you raise.

Capital Investment Program -

CHAIR - In regard to the Capital Investment Program, we have quite an extensive list of new projects like the Bagdad bypass. Could the committee please have a breakdown of what is the Commonwealth component of those and the State component, please?

Mr STURGES - Yes. It is in budget paper 1 in table 7.5 on page 7.22.

CHAIR - That is all I wanted to know.

Mr MARTIN - Minister, I understand that all States and Territories are compiling an infrastructure priority list which will go to Infrastructure Australia for potential funding in March next year, 2009. Can you give us an understanding of what projects you are considering in partnership with Treasury?

Mr STURGES - Certainly. Ms Russell.

Ms RUSSELL - Thank you, Minister. We have been participating in a process with the Commonwealth that is effectively providing a high-level appreciation of our infrastructure

capacity across not just transport but also the water, energy, ICT, telecommunications sectors. We have been working with other government departments and the deputy secretary, Mr Bob Rutherford, has been coordinating a working group in our department, which is effectively responsible for submitting a picture of Tasmania's infrastructure across all of those sectors to the Commonwealth by 30 June. The focus of that audit is not just on the traditional areas that we have looked at, say, for example, the AusLink corridor studies, but the Commonwealth has indicated that the key focus of the audit is on productivity and nationally-significant infrastructure.

Mr MARTIN - Is that list available to be tabled?

Ms RUSSELL - We have not developed the full complement of the report and that is subject to the Cabinet process.

Mr MARTIN - It has to be in by 30 June?

Ms RUSSELL - Yes.

Mr STURGES - We are working to a tight deadline. A key message that I want to give in relation to this is that it is about ensuring Tasmania's major transport networks and intermodal facilities support export growth, value adding and continue to grow the freight task. That is why I go right back to the beginning. We believe that we need to have an appropriate mix of road and rail freight in the State.

Mr MARTIN - Is it possible to receive it after Cabinet?

Mr HILL - I am not sure because we understand that there is a COAG agreement amongst the States, the Territories and the Federal Government in relation to the information that will be provided.

Mr STURGES - Subject to getting advice in relation to the COAG agreement and any other, dare I say it, agreement that may be in place, I am happy to share whatever information I can in a timely manner with the honourable members of this committee. If it can be done I will do it but, if there are reasons that preclude me from doing it, then I will not be able to table it.

Mr MARTIN - Fair enough. Have you taken on board in the development suggestions from the private sector as well as the government departments?

Ms RUSSELL - We have had some very high-level discussions with the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Because this is, I suppose, the first stage in what we think is a longer process going forward, they have indicated that to date they have not added any particular high priorities. What they were very keen for us to emphasise is the productivity in the nationally-significant infrastructure that Tasmania contributes to the national economy. That is the strong message that they have asked us to put forward in the audit process.

Mr MARTIN - Assuming this goes through Cabinet on 30 June and you get it in, you can guarantee that Tasmania has done everything we have to do to get our share of the \$1.3 billion funding?

Mr STURGES - Yes, absolutely. I will continue to promote Tasmania's cause wherever and whenever I can with my Federal colleague, Minister Albanese. I have met him once already and I will be meeting him again in the very near future so be assured that we will be doing all we can to get our share of that funding. It was rather heartening in my initial conversation with the Federal minister where he indicated that he intends to reduce the barriers of hurdles and hoops of fire that we were required to jump through before where States can put a substantial case and will be heard.

I commend the department for the work they have undertaken in consultation with the Chamber of Commerce. We will be pursuing this with a fair degree of vigour because we are about promoting Tasmania and growing the freight business within the State.

Mr MARTIN - I congratulate the Government on its \$1.5 billion funding over four years for infrastructure. Unlike other States though, I do not think we have this strategic infrastructure plan. Is the Government considering developing one or is this part of what you have done?

Ms RUSSELL - We have taken a conscious decision not to publish a State infrastructure plan so there is no one document that actually is entitled to start infrastructure plans.

Mr MARTIN - Why?

Ms RUSSELL - Referring back to the minister's earlier comments earlier in the day, if I may, about the framework approach that we take, it is very important that we have all modes of transport working as efficiently and effectively as we can and, for that reason, we have not concentrated on a mode-centric approach at all which past infrastructure efforts may have concentrated on. So we are about getting the balance right across all transport modes.

I think it is fair to say that the regional plans that we tabled earlier and the other southern investment transport plan, which is under development and will be released later in the year actually gives a very good appreciation of the regional priorities because the regional priorities were seen as a way to capture differences and similarities across the regions.

Mr MARTIN - So are you saying that three regional plans have to be put together to be a State plan?

Ms RUSSELL - No, I am not saying that. I am suggesting that the regional plan structure actually provides a clear guidance and priority for regional priorities in those three regions, which is where the southern plan is concentrated.

Mr STURGES - Yes, and correct me if I am misleading here, but I have only had one quite significant briefing on the State Infrastructure Planning System and I was very impressed indeed. It is a system, so you can overlay data over those three plans and have a look at how they interface. You can have a look at other issues associated with freight movement. There is a whole range of data that is captured. What I can offer now is to arrange a briefing for honourable members of the Legislative Council to get a better understanding of what the State Infrastructure Planning System is all about.

What it is about is not just developing a document in June of 2008 and then that document cannot grow, it is about having provision for a living process to be amended in a very timely manner. So I would make that offer available to honourable members to have a look at it because,

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to be quite candid, when I hear of SIPS I thought that it was just a process through which a plan was developed but it is certainly a lot broader than that.

Mr MARTIN - I would probably welcome the briefing if it were not 5.15 p.m. I probably would not mind spending a couple of hours on this right now but I would not -

CHAIR - We will talk about this and sort it out later.

Mr MARTIN - I would not mind a briefing on that.

Mr HILL - If the member is after what the investment in infrastructure strategy is for the coming years, then we do have a document that we can table which is a draft document.

Mr MARTIN - Yes, that would be useful but I am looking for a bit more.

Mr STURGES - Yes, I will be happy to talk to you for a couple of hours too, or have other people talk with you about this. The State Infrastructure Planning System is a very comprehensive and quite a marvellous process. I was quite astounded at what it can do in relation to a whole range of matters - looking at freight movements, looking at demographic change, looking at a whole range of matters that affect our social and hard-core infrastructure in this State. So, if honourable members should determine, through their committee deliberations, that they would like to get further information there is a small brochure here which overviews the State infrastructure planning system. Perhaps members would like to have a look at that and then determine whether or not they would like the offer of a briefing at a convenient time.

Ms FORREST - I notice that \$2 million has been allocated has been allocated to jetties as part of the capital investment program. I notice that Southport jetty is mentioned in the papers here, but are there other jetties and what are the time frames for the work? In particular, the member of another committee was keen to hear about the Triabunna and Coles Bay jetties but I am interested in which other jetties are earmarked for some upgrade or maintenance.

Mr STURGES - I tried my best to hear the member, I am sorry. We have a commitment to rebuild the Southport jetty with \$1.450 million; a rebuild of the Bridport jetty, \$600 000; a rebuild of the Nubeena jetty, \$450 000 and if the member wants any further information, I introduce to the table the CEO of MAST, Mr Colin Finch.

Ms FORREST - So Coles Bay and Triabunna jetties do not get a guernsey at the moment?

Mr FINCH - The Triabunna jetty is owned by the Glamorgan-Spring Bay Council and is not a MAST facility or a government facility. Coles Bay jetty is managed by the Department of Environment, Parks, Heritage and the Arts and again, is not a MAST facility. But I understand that Parks and Wildlife are intending to restart the process of the reconstruction of the Coles Bay jetty.

Mr WILKINSON - The licences for boat owners is a fairly new process. How is that going? Has there been a marked increase or is it fairly static?

Mr FINCH - When you had to pay for licences, which was in 2003, and we withdrew the permanent unpaid licences, there was a reduction in the number of licences. But since then the number of licences in the system has gone back past that number and has exceeded it. We have

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issued more than 2 000 new licences in the past year and there are now over 45 000 licence holders in Tasmania.

Mr STURGES - Mr Finch, you might indicate where that revenue goes?

Mr FINCH - All the money from licences goes into the construction of new recreational boating facilities and last year we spent \$1.008 million on recreational boating facilities. That is materials and concrete, not labour or MAST staff time, that is all contracts that were let. That included quite substantial assistance from the Commonwealth Government, local councils and Hydro Tasmania.

Mr WILKINSON - One of the functions was to ensure safe operations of vessels. What have you been doing to do that?

Mr FINCH - The most significant initiative that the Government took was to introduce the compulsory wearing of life-jackets back in 2001. In the years from 1987 to 2000 there were somewhere in the vicinity of 60 fatalities with an average of three per year. That was heightened probably because there were 12 fatalities in 1999-2000. The long-term average then was two per year and since then it has halved to one per year. Obviously, you have some years that are better than others. In the last calendar year we had three fatalities and this year we have had none.

Mr WILKINSON - In relation to the policing of that, I am out a bit in my boat and have not been pulled up yet.

Mr STURGES - I am not out as much as I would like.

Mr WILKINSON - I have not seen many people on the east coast. Is that because that is not an area of focus or, alternatively, is it because they just have not been able to get to that area as yet?

Mr FINCH - No, enforcement is done by both the marine police and local police officers in various coastal locations and MAST has three on-water compliance officers whose main job is education. I know from the number of infringement notices issued that the police are very active everywhere and the complaints we generally get are that they are too active. Particularly on the north-west coast we had an issue where they thought that the police were overly zealous and I know that the police have attended to that.

Mr WILKINSON - You say there has been an increase in infringement notices. That is obviously because people have infringed the law as it now stands so you should not have to apologise, I would not think, for over-zealousness if they are coming forward with people who are breaking the law.

Mr FINCH - No, we made no apology at all.

Mr WILKINSON - In relation to the Prosser River barway it was a real problem earlier this year, as you are probably aware. What is happening in relation to that?

Mr FINCH - I understand it is still a problem. Obviously it is a natural phenomenon. Some years ago, and I am thinking -

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Mr WILKINSON - About four years ago they tried to change the watercourse.

Mr FINCH - Yes. Parks and Wildlife did some work to the mouth of the river primarily to protect Raspins Beach. It had a consequential benefit of improving the channel into the bay out of the river but since then it has deteriorated. It ebbs and flows as most barways do. At the moment it is not good, there is no question about that.

Mr WILKINSON - But that has been the case now for probably four to five months.

Mr FINCH - Over the long term the entrance to the Prosser River has been a problem and the solutions to that are quite expensive and also quite invasive. It will probably involve building large rock retaining walls which are not only expensive but also do not look particularly attractive. The other alternative is just to keep dredging the port and it is a recreational area which has had a long-term history of sand movement. I understand that Parks are looking at it. It is more of a concern to Parks, although it has not been involved in any of the studies or work that has been done.

Mr WILKINSON - There was a good boat ramp put into the Prosser River, as you are aware, but that is not used now because people cannot get out in most tides. That being the case are you considering putting in another boat ramp in an area where people can get to fairly easily because the other one nearest to that is up in Triabunna?

Mr FINCH - That is about eight kilometres away and in some parts of the State eight kilometres would not be seen as too far to travel, but I understand there is a lot of pressure in Orford and the Triabunna area for recreational boating facilities. We have not had any approaches through the recreational boating fund for people to do work on the Prosser River at Orford. I am not sure that the fund is really intended for that purpose anyway. I cannot say that this year that we have had approaches other than by phone from people who have wanted us to do something at Prosser River.

Mr WILKINSON - What about Shelley Beach? There was a problem there with landowners concerned about traffic going past their front door. The actual boat ramp changed to some degree but you could probably put a surfboard in there and that is about it at most times.

Mr FINCH - That ramp was managed six or seven years ago by Glamorgan-Spring Bay Council. The two ramps, from recollection, are about 18 metres apart and the council rationalised that, in conjunction again with Parks who were concerned about four-wheel drives driving up and down the beach and particularly in summer time there are small children swimming there. They felt it was a safety issue which they have managed but the ramp is just an off-beach ramp with all the limitations that entails. It is certainly not suitable for large boats.

Ms FORREST - In relation to jetties generally, you made the comment that the jetties that are not under MAST's jurisdiction and there are a lot of them around the State like Stanley and Smithton, for example, which are owned by Hobart Ports. There are concerns that if Hobart Ports decides to divest itself of the adjacent land, what happens then? A similar thing happened with Naracoopa jetty where the land that butts up to that was sold off. Wynyard Wharf is owned by the Wynyard Council or the yacht club or someone there. Do we need a tidy-up of the ownership of jetties and that sort of thing around the State to make it easier to manage?

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Mr FINCH - We have almost the same with the road network - there are different owners of different parts of the road network. From time to time people say it would be nice if just one person were managing it. That has never actually come to pass. There are good reasons why TasPorts might retain the facilities that they do.

Ms FORREST - It is not on the agenda? Is a review of all jetties and the ownership and streamlining of some places on the agenda at all?

Mr STURGES - That is a question for the minister.

Mr FINCH - It is certainly not something that has been discussed at government level.

Mr WILKINSON - One thing that will be discussed, it would seem, and my final question is in relation to the sale of fixed assets on page 21.4. It says 'The increase of sale of goods and services reflects an increase in sales of fixed assets in 2010-11 reflects anticipated disposal of two patrol vessels' and the figure we have is \$40 000 for the anticipated sale - \$20 000 each maybe - and yet the purchase of new ones is \$909 000.

Mr FINCH - Is it police or MAST?

Mr WILKINSON - No, it is MAST. It reflects upgrades in marine radio network, telephone, boating weather services and patrol vessel replacements.

Mr FINCH - We will be disposing of two vessels. It is quite likely that they are written down, they are only, one is a 4.2 metre Quintrex and the other is a five-metre runabout.

Mr WILKINSON - I see.

Mr FINCH - Their written down value is about \$20 000. When we are talking about the purchase of other assets we are not just talking about the replacement vessels but a whole lot of other equipment which is quite substantial. I could probably give you a full list of what we are intending to acquire in terms of assets in the next twelve months.

Mr WILKINSON - That would be interesting, thank you.

Mr STURGES - We are happy to do that.

Mr FINCH - Partly that is because we run on accrual accounting and a lot of our new facilities are capitalised. In the case of recreational facilities it gets complicated because sometimes we hand them over to councils in which case we write them off and sometimes we put them on our books in which case they are capitalised and sometimes we are still negotiating about the disposal of the asset while we are building it so I am not exactly sure where that number - our accountant would be able to tell me where the number came from.

Mr WILKINSON - 21.4 it helps.

Mr STURGES - I have made a mental note. It covered it well.

CHAIR - Minister, thank you very much for your -

Ms FORREST - Special capital investment?

CHAIR - I thought we had done that.

Ms FORREST - No.

Special Capital Investment Funds

Ms FORREST - The north-west tourist road that has been proposed for \$23 million - I think that is generally supported by the community. There are some concerns about the road itself being the best option but that is not what I want to discuss. The majority of the roads that would be upgraded under this money are Forestry roads. The question is, who will be responsible for the ongoing maintenance of this road once it is developed?

Mr STURGES - I will just go through this issue because I anticipated there would be questions. The State Government has allocated \$23 million to develop the road and the tourist infrastructure. Most importantly, \$1 million has been allocated for 2008-09 for planning and consultation into the planned north-west tourist road because I understand there are some differing opinions in the area.

The State Government will manage the project that involves the upgrading of existing roads, nature trails, visitor facilities and interpretive services at key sites to provide a unique nature-based tourism experience. The exact route of the road is to be determined by further consultation with key stakeholders. Forestry Tasmania has presented a proposed route to the Circular Head and Waratah-Wynyard Councils. The Cradle Coast Authority has developed a Tarkine tourism master plan. I do stress that further consultation and planning is required.

Let me say that the State Government is committed to developing key tourism infrastructure. Access is the key to realising benefits from strong tourism interests and sustainable development. We will work closely with Tourism Tasmania and other key stakeholders. Funding in 2008-09 is allocated to carry out proper planning and public consultation to establish the best route and facilities. Nothing has been determined. We will go through a consultative process, unless the deputy secretary has anything further to add.

Mr PETERS - No, you are right. The State Government will manage the project. The route that has been talked about, the Tarkine link road, to talk about the various ownerships of the parts of that proposal, that is necessarily what is going to come out of it because the consultation and planning has not finished.

Ms FORREST - At the end of the day, \$23 million has been allocated to a tourist road and the road will occur and grow somewhere within the Tarkine region and it will involve roads that currently exist, otherwise you would not do it for \$23 million. Who will be responsible for the maintenance and upgrade of those roads once it is in place?

Mr STURGES - The State Government will manage the project. There is \$1 million that has been allocated in this 2008-09 Budget to allow for planning and, most importantly, consultation to be undertaken. That is where we are at at the moment but the general manager may be able to add to that.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Mr TODD - Minister, I understand that maintenance ownership would be part of that consultation process and that is how we would manage it. That all needs to be determined.

Mr STURGES - We are not trying to avoid the question. We are committed to allocate that \$1 million in this year's Budget to undertake a proper planning and extensive consultation around the proposal for the Tarkine link road.

Ms FORREST - This time next year when I ask the same question you will be able to tell me who will have ownership of that road and be responsible for the maintenance?

Mr STURGES - I am sure the member will have significant input into the consultation process. We have committed \$1 million in this Budget to undertake a proper planning and consultation process in this area. We believe there is going to be significant tourism benefit but we also understand that this needs to be dealt with in a balanced, measured and sensitive way. That is why we are engaging in a planning process and consultation with key stakeholders.

CHAIR - Minister, thank you very much for your forbearance today and tonight. Thank you very much to all your staff and advisers for the inputs they have had today.

Mr STURGES - It has been my pleasure, Mr Chair. I would like to place on record my appreciation of the support I have received from department staff and agency staff from MAST because a tremendous amount of work goes into preparing for these Estimates. I would also like to thank the staff in my office.

The committee adjourned at 5.33 p.m.