

Wednesday 5 December 2018 - Legislative Council - Government Businesses Scrutiny Committee B - Metro Tasmania Pty Ltd

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

GOVERNMENT BUSINESSES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE B

Wednesday 5 December 2018

MEMBERS

Ms Armitage (Deputy Chair)
Mr Armstrong
Mr Dean
Mr Farrell
Ms Howlett
Ms Rattray (Chair)
Ms Siejka

IN ATTENDANCE

Hon. Jeremy Rockliff MP, Minister for Infrastructure

Ministerial Office

Mr Vince Taskunas, Acting Chief of Staff

Mr Adam Foster, Infrastructure Adviser

Metro Tasmania Pty Ltd

Ms Megan Morse, Chief Executive Officer

Ms Anita Robertson, Company Secretary

Mr Michael Harris, Chairperson of Metro Board

The committee resumed at 10.33 a.m.

CHAIR (Ms Rattray) - Thank you very much for joining us today. We invite you, as always, to provide an opening statement, and then open it up for questions.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I will keep it as brief as I can, Chair. Thank you for acknowledging the importance of Metro Tasmania to Tasmania. To my right, the Chair of Metro, Michael Harris, and the CEO, Megan Morse.

CHAIR - Welcome, and congratulations.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes, welcome to both. Anita is in the back if we require her assistance.

After taking responsibility for the Infrastructure portfolio in March this year, I have thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to become more familiar with Metro and its operations, and that continues.

Public transport has been acknowledged by yourself, Chair, as a crucial part of our overall transport system, helping to increase connectivity and reduce traffic congestion.

Metro connects people with work, school, health services and community events. In 2017-18, there were over 8.2 million individual journeys taken with Metro. This follows five consecutive years of patronage growth for Metro and reflects the organisation's efforts to increase and improve the passenger experience and provide a reliable, safe and efficient service.

Metro again offered the successful free before-7 a.m. promotion from 29 January until 23 February this year to help reduce back-to-school congestion and increase Metro's capacity during peak travel periods. As a result of this promotion, Metro recorded a 10 per cent increase in patronage by adults before 7 a.m. compared to the same promotion period in 2016, with a 26 per cent reduction in instances of buses reaching their full capacity. There was also very strong growth in interaction with the promotion on social media compared to 2016, which reflected the community interest and appreciation for the initiative.

The accelerated bus replacement program saw the first delivery of new buses into the Metro fleet in 2017-18. The new buses have distinctive black front and rear bumpers. A number of them are now in service, both in Hobart and Launceston, offering vastly improved passenger comfort and capability over the buses they are replacing.

As you would be aware, the buses are built here by Elphinstone in Tasmania. I have had the opportunity to inspect the buses myself. I assure the committee that it is a world-class product. For those of you familiar with Elphinstone, this is not a surprise. They are an asset to the north-west and to Tasmania. It is not just Elphinstone that benefits from this investment, but the many local companies in the supply chain ensuring that buses are fitted out with locally produced content.

Wearing my other hat as the Minister for Advanced Manufacturing and Defence Industries, it is very important we recognise local manufacturing capability and invest in that capability when we have the opportunity to do so. The advanced bus replacement program is an excellent demonstration of this.

Metro has been tasked with the implementation of one of the Government's higher profile election commitments in the form of the Hobart-Bellerive ferry service. Hobart is ideally placed to host a commuter ferry service. That is why the Government has committed some \$2 million to

the establishment of this service. Legislation to allow Metro to operate a ferry service was passed earlier this year, receiving unanimous approval in both Houses of parliament.

Metro Tasmania is now undertaking an options analysis to ensure the specification and supporting infrastructure of the service will align with Hobart's transport needs. This analysis is being performed by a leading transport consultant, MRCagney.

As part of the analysis, community forums were held in both Hobart and Bellerive to ensure that all interested parties had a chance to have their say on the service. Metro also ran online surveys to collect broad community feedback. I look forward to receiving the final report later this year.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge the years of service of Mr Michael Harris as Chair of the Metro Board, and acknowledge his service to the Government more broadly, including most recently as the independent chair of a group hearing of the Tasmanian Fire Service Act.

Mr Harris has today been announced as the new ACT Auditor-General and will commence that role in February 2019. Mike, we congratulate you on that. Thank you for your exceptional service to Metro and to Tasmania.

Mr Harris has been the Chair of the Metro Board since 2013 and has overseen a period of strong patronage growth, network revitalisation and fleet upgrades. He leaves Metro well positioned for the transport challenges of the future. In my time as minister with the responsibility for Metro, I have appreciated Mike's wise counsel and his enthusiasm and passion for public transport. On behalf of the Government, I wish Mr Harris all the very best in his new role.

I commend the Metro Board, its Chair, the Metro executive team and all the Metro drivers and employees for what has been an excellent year. I have met a number of them as I have travelled to the Burnie, Launceston and Hobart depots. They do a great job operating a public transport service day in, day out, all through the year. I know I speak on behalf of many Tasmanians who are appreciative of the service Metro provides to the community.

Thank you very much.

CHAIR - Thank you, minister. The committee would also like to express its best wishes for the work of Mr Harris and also wish you all the best in your new role in the ACT. I am not sure that you will enjoy it as much as Tasmania, but you never know. I will ask Ms Armitage to begin the questions.

Ms ARMITAGE - Thank you, Chair, and thank you, minister. My first questions relate to the replacement of the fleet to comply with disability standards. I noticed that under the anti-discrimination law, the entire fleet is to meet disability standards under accessible transport by 2022. In 2016-17 you entered into an agreement to buy low-floor buses that are wheelchair-friendly. I am just wondering what the status of the program is against the budget, how they are going and are they on track to achieve 100 per cent of buses with low floors by 2022?

Mr ROCKLIFF - My understanding is that we are on track, and I will throw to Megan in just a moment. Our commitment is for 100 buses. That is a \$31 million investment. When we

last launched a bus in Launceston, there were also questions about disability access. All the new buses most certainly comply with the Anti-Discrimination Act. They have a low floor. It is a \$45 million total contract price. They are very much compliant. It is a necessary and good thing to comply with the Anti-Discrimination Act. My understanding is that all the buses with those specifications are rolling out on time and they are a very good product.

Ms MORSE - We are delighted with the progress of the accelerated bus replacement program to date. The twenty-first vehicle was delivered under the program in Launceston earlier this week, so we now have 17 vehicles in service in Hobart and four vehicles in service in Launceston. Even just those 21 vehicles have made a significant difference to our DDA compliance. Prior to the first of these new vehicles entering the fleet, we were fully DDA-compliant on Sundays only across our three networks. We are now fully compliant across Saturday as well and we are making very steady progress. We are knocking on the door of 70 per cent and we will be well into the 80s by the early part of next year and will be fully DDA-compliant.

Ms ARMITAGE - Is it helping with patronage numbers, do you believe?

Mr MORSE - Indeed. I guess all of those elements feed in -

Ms ARMITAGE - And you are seeing some trends?

Ms MORSE - Yes, they feed into patronage. There is a wide range of Tasmanians who find boarding a bus difficult. Whether that is someone who uses a mobility aid, whether it is young families with prams and so forth, there is a wide range of Tasmanians whose access to our public transport system is enhanced by low-floor vehicles. We are looking forward to reaching 100 per cent compliance, but we are delighted with how much progress we have made over the first year of the program - 100 per cent on time in terms of our delivery so far.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Low-floor buses were used to deliver 65 per cent of services statewide in the six months to June 2018. Metro is on schedule, as Megan has said, to have 100 per cent low-floor accessible buses by early 2021, well ahead of the target of December 2022. More to your question as well, there has also been some implementation of additional measures to support passengers living with disability and those experiencing other access challenges by convening three regional consultative forums that regularly engage with 27 community groups to collaboratively identify and remove access barriers. These improvements allow Metro to better meet the transport needs of people with disability, their families and carers in order for them to participate fully in community life, which is the reason for your question. We will continue that rollout and that is exciting for many Tasmanians.

Ms SIEJKA - As the buses are being introduced, and you mentioned at first only Sunday was fully compliant, do you take into account which particular routes are prioritised to bring in the compliant buses and how do you go about that?

Ms MORSE - I am happy to respond to that. Certainly, wherever possible, our wheelchair-accessible and low-floor vehicles are allocated to our higher volume routes. In the Hobart and Launceston context, our Turn Up and Go corridors denote frequency and patronage. Our Burnie network has our highest level DDA-compliance, as we had some renewal in the fleet in the three years prior to this program commencing. We are very mindful of trying to maximise

the availability of those vehicles and how we have achieved a level DDA service-compliance that has exceeded the capacity of our fleet.

Ms SIEJKA - There would be routes that primarily service aged care homes, Southern Support School and like places. Do you prioritise those areas?

Ms MORSE - We do; with reference to our earlier comments, access challenges are very widely experienced throughout our communities, so it is not necessarily limited to specific geographical locations, but instances where we know someone is travelling with Metro on a regular basis who has particular requirements. It is the part of the beauty of Tasmania - we are connected enough to our community to know where some of those allocations are going have more impact for people who want to travel with us.

It is such a good news story for us over the next couple of years, in being able to say it will be every bus on every service every time - it is a very different proposition to having to check a timetable to see whether it will be a low-floor vehicle or not.

Ms SIEJKA - Absolutely, I am aware there are wheelchair-accessible buses, but many elderly people also need the low buses simply to be able to get on. There are huge possibilities in ensuring they would be prioritised on those buses.

Ms MORSE - Absolutely.

Mr DEAN - Probably about 10 years ago we were told Metro would be moving towards gas and electric as we have seen in Adelaide. I am not sure how far they gone in Adelaide and some of the other areas. Is there any move in that direction? What are the new buses powered on and what is their economy rate?

Mr ROCKLIFF - In terms of environmental standards, the new buses are world class.

Mr HARRIS - Euro 6 diesel engines.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Further to this we will get some detail for you, the important thing to recognise from the new buses is they can be retrofitted with electric engines. I will not say easily, but there is a space for them. The diesel motors can come out - and Mike will correct me if I am not right - the electric motors can come in easily. There is quite a difference in price. My understanding is an electric bus today would be around \$900 000 to \$1 million whereas our newer buses are around \$450 000.

We are waiting for the technology in regard to storage and capability of electric buses and we have some challenging terrain and range. Electric buses work best travelling on average, around 18 kilometres per hour. Tasmania's routes are, on average, about 27 kilometres per hour.

Mr DEAN - Is that the speed of the bus?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Speed of the bus on average. We waiting for enhanced technology before we would consider retrofitting electric engines. Cost, storage, range and terrain are our challenges at the moment. We are on track to look at this.

Mr HARRIS - There are trial electric buses operating in Adelaide at the moment, manufactured by the same company who manufactures our buses. They have technical challenges at the present time. The technology is developing and is still classified as developing technology and price is a considerable factor. Range is an important factor. Frequency of recharge is another issue. Size, weight and batteries, storage capacity factors and terrain here not entirely electric vehicle-friendly at present.

Mr DEAN - The economy rate of the new motor is obviously significantly better, I take it.

Mr ROCKLIFF - It is. As the Chair said, Euro 6 standard diesel engines are the lowest emitting diesel engines on the market at 94 per cent less nitrogen oxide and 96 per cent less particulate matter emissions than the buses they are replacing; a big improvement.

Mr HARRIS - Absolutely world class.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Hats off to Metro. Despite the challenges of where electric vehicles are at the moment in terms of buses, that foresight to be able to retrofit in the future is commendable.

Mr HARRIS - In terms of economy rates, we are operating at 38 litres per 100 kilometres. When we did the business case for the fleet renewal, we assumed we would achieve 40 kilometres per 100 litres. We are doing better than that at the present time.

Mr DEAN - What is happening to the old buses? I take it that with the new buses coming in the old ones are going to be sold?

Mr HARRIS - Sold on the second-hand market.

Mr DEAN - What is the return to the state? Are we doing okay with that? If they are on the market here in Tasmania, I would think there would not be a great demand for them. What is the position? What sort of return are we getting?

Mr HARRIS - A lot of them go into school bus fleets. They are very sought-after vehicles. Some of the articulated buses end up on blocks of land as moveable shacks, for want of a better description. Our vehicles are extremely well maintained through their life. Despite their age being above 20 years - some of them are approaching 30 years - they are still very well-maintained engines. Resale value -

Mr DEAN - Roughly what value are we getting for them?

Mr HARRIS - It varies depending on the bus.

CHAIR - I think Megan has the answer.

Ms MORSE - They are being disposed at quite a mature age, consistent with our earlier remarks. Their writedown value is fairly low by the time they leave the Metro fleet. They have varied in price between \$24 815 plus GST to \$3261, depending on the type of vehicle being disposed, how many kilometres it has done in service and the condition it is being released in. Some of the vehicles have proven to be more valuable to our business as parts. We have a significant number of this vehicle type in our fleet over the next three years. In some instances,

rather than disposing through resale, harvesting parts from the vehicle has proven to be a more economically viable strategy for us. They go to a range of places.

Ms HOWLETT - Minister, as far as patronage figures are concerned, can you tell me what they are for 2017-18?

Mr ROCKLIFF - In 2017-18 Metro enjoyed its fifth consecutive year of patronage growth with, as I said before, 8.20 million first boardings. This equates to a total patronage growth of about 1.6 per cent across the state on a like-for-like basis. Of this increase, adult patronage is a standout, with full-fare paying adult journeys growing by over 7 per cent this year alone, and over 16 per cent in the last two financial years.

This growth can be attributed to the launch of the new Hobart network in January 2016, which was a simplified zone fare system implemented in January 2017, and a range of ongoing improvements Metro has made to improve customer experience. Increasing Metro patronage also helps to take cars off the road and reduce traffic congestion. We are all aware of those challenges, particularly in Hobart. The increase in Metro's adult patronage for the year equates to 120 000 additional journeys made by bus, which is an important and valuable contribution, of course, to congestion reduction.

By increasing patronage Metro is helping to contribute to more connected, liveable communities. It is good to see that more Tasmanians are embracing travel by bus and enjoying the excellent service Metro provides.

I have toured the site at Hobart which was very interesting for me for a number of reasons. Yesterday I was there looking at the park-and-ride facility. I thought it was a big carpark next to a shopping centre when I first saw it, but the park-and-ride facility was full and looks like it is working well. I guess it can also signal future opportunities.

Mr ARMSTRONG - Excuse me, where was this?

Mr ROCKLIFF - The Springfield depot.

Mr HARRIS - The corner of Springfield Avenue and Main Road.

Ms SIEJKA - I am sure this would apply to other regions, but in the Clarence and Kingston regions in particular - with increasing traffic volumes - is there potential to have more park-and-ride? In the Clarence region it was suggested perhaps near the Cambridge Airport has the potential for another park-and-ride being introduced. Is this something that might be explored in the future?

Mr ROCKLIFF - In terms of exploration?

Ms SIEJKA - People can park-and-ride anywhere, as Mr Farrell told me.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We are somewhat reliant on local councils for the provision of space for park-and-rides. We do not set out to invest in land ourselves if we can avoid it.

Ms SIEJKA - It would require a number of parties working together, so it would require some leadership.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We have had some discussion with Kingborough Council in relation to the park-and-ride facilities there. I am not aware we have had any with Clarence yet, have we?

Ms MORSE - Our door is always open and you have highlighted the notion that it is usually something done collaboratively, so they obviously need to be in attractive locations within our network. As both Michael and the minister have highlighted, the availability of land is normally either a local government or a state government partnership.

We are increasingly aware it is not only motor car drivers we are attempting to accommodate through park-and-ride. We are increasingly mindful of the ability to co-locate ride-and-rides with cycle parking. Certainly, at the moment Kingborough is the only local government that provides bike parking as well as some car parking, for people who want to then access the public transport network for the balance of their journey.

Mr HARRIS - Our door is always open.

Ms MORSE - But again our door is open.

Ms SIEJKA - I would suggest for the Clarence Council region there is potential to explore this and they would be keen to further this.

Ms HOWLETT - In relation to those figures for 2017-18, you would have had a considerable customer feedback from those figures.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes, we have. We have a satisfaction survey and this confirmed that the vast majority of passengers are happy with the services Metro provides, which is good and I commend the Metro team. Eighty per cent of respondents were pleased with the service provided by our drivers and over 70 per cent of respondents were satisfied with the route directness and coverage, travel time and fares - high numbers, which is good. Nearly half of respondents used the bus to link to study and more customers identified work and shopping as their reason for using public transport than before.

That is suggesting Metro's ongoing network development is better meeting the needs of commuters. Importantly 84 per cent of respondents are satisfied with personal safety in relation to Metro services. As safety is Metro's priority, this is the feedback we are very pleased to receive.

In the financial year 2017-18 Metro delivered three safety campaigns focused on respect, giving way to buses and pedestrian safety, and implemented innovative and industry-leading safety reform for which it was recognised and should be congratulated as the inaugural winner of the Tas Bus Safety Award, at the annual conference. I attended the annual conference and congratulate Metro. Those survey results point to good satisfaction from customers; no-one is resting on their laurels about continuous improvement, but those results are a reflection of the entire organisation, both at executive level and, of course, our drivers and employees.

Mr HARRIS - One of our recruitment strategies is to actually recruit potential drivers who express an interest in customer service and customer satisfaction. That is one of the key elements to our recruitment process, and that is reflected in our survey results as a consequence.

Ms HOWLETT - How many female drivers would you have?

Mr HARRIS - Not enough.

Ms MORSE - Our workforce make-up is about four men to one woman, and we have found that matrix difficult to move. In saying that, our board is equally represented. Our executive has had more women than men on it over recent times, so we are certainly making progress in some areas of our business. But particularly in our operator workforce, we would certainly love to see a higher percentage of women behind the wheel at Metro.

Mr HARRIS - Each of our last four intakes has had at least one female amongst the intake. We are making progress, but it's hard work sometimes.

Ms MORSE - They are big numbers to shift, with a four-to-one imbalance at the moment.

Mr ARMSTRONG - What time do the buses start of a morning, and what time do they finish of a night with the last run? How do you handle security and safety, not just for the passengers but for the drivers when most likely late at night, I would say, would be the biggest issue? Not so much of a morning, but late at night. How do you handle the safety?

Ms MORSE - I might lead off. Our hours of service vary a little bit in each of our networks and on different days of the week. We start a little bit later on weekends, for example, but we also run further into the night on a Friday night and on a Saturday night than we do on weeknights and Sundays.

Our Hobart network wakes up the earliest and runs the latest, with Launceston having the next biggest span, and Burnie having a slightly smaller span again. That is reflective of the size and complexity of our networks. Those parameters are actually set by State Growth as our purchaser, so those decisions about span are determined by contract.

In terms of safety -

Mr ARMSTRONG - What time does your first bus go on the run?

Ms MORSE - I might have to take that question under notice, I'm sorry. Is it the very first bus?

Mr ARMSTRONG - Yes?

Ms MORSE - It's in the vicinity of pre-6 a.m.

Mr ARMSTRONG - That's okay. Just a ballpark.

Ms MORSE - Yes, I'd have to take that under notice. On weekends, we are on the road past midnight on Friday and Saturday nights. We run a 25-hour day on Fridays and Saturdays, which always confuses people a little bit when we talk about the twenty-fifth hour.

As to safety on our vehicles, I guess like in many organisations and many contexts in community life now, CCTV is a very big part of the passive surveillance we provide within our networks. Each of our vehicles has eight CCTV cameras on it in key locations within the vehicle. We have a very clear line of sight for our drivers; we also have a very clear line of sight in the

areas where our buses are most frequently damaged by other road users. For the ability to understand how an incident occurs, the location of those cameras has been very deliberately chosen. That is a key strategy for us.

As the minister had said, we have certainly been very active in our business in talking to our community about the importance of people behaving in a safe and appropriate manner, whether that is towards other passengers or towards our operators. We have a very high sense of duty of care to people who are out in the network.

At the core of those questions would be those strategies.

Mr HARRIS - We also have constant radio contact between every bus and a base. We have radio rooms in Hobart in constant contact with all buses on the road, and the same in Launceston. The Launceston base covers Burnie as well.

Ms MORSE - In Hobart we have a memorandum of understanding with Tasmania Police where we have two members of Tasmania Police allocated to Metro - 'Metro police', I guess is how we refer to them within our business. They provide an excellent service to us in being based with us in Springfield and being very responsive to us. The attribution of those officers to our business ensures that there are able to respond in a timely fashion to any incident that might occur. They are a very important liaison to us in other areas of the state or for other instances the Metro-allocated police have not responded to. That relationship with the police is very valuable to us.

Mr HARRIS - They will sometimes travel on the buses in plain-clothes if we have incidents occurring on a regular basis. If they need to track those things, they will actually ride on the vehicles and, if necessary, act on the vehicle as well.

Mr ARMSTRONG - You touched a while ago on the fact that some of your buses were up to 30 years old. What would be the age of your buses? How many buses are that old? How is your replacement program moving to -

Ms MORSE - We did have five articulated vehicles, the double-length buses, that had exceeded 30 years of service. Many people will have ridden on them, perhaps getting to school. They were withdrawn from service in this last financial year. Our average vehicle age is now quite rapidly decreasing. The vehicles being replaced with new buses are the oldest vehicles in the fleet. I think under 17 years of age is our average vehicle age. We were well into the 20s - 23 years - is an average vehicle age prior to the accelerated bus replacement commencing.

As the minister and Michael acknowledged earlier, that is a real testament to the skill and the ability of our engineering team. You can only keep a bus on the road that long if it has been carefully maintained. There are a range of benefits to us as a business in terms of the vehicle age decreasing. We have talked about fuel economy and emissions. Breakdowns are an increasing consideration as vehicles age, as well as driver and passenger comfort. We are delighted to see the vehicle average age coming down.

Mr ROCKLIFF - It is worth looking at the workshop in Hobart, and the ongoing maintenance. There is always a bus being attended to.

Ms MORSE - It is a fascinating place.

Mr HARRIS - What they can do with engines is remarkable.

Mr FARRELL - I am really conscious of the time we have with you. I will try to roll a few into one, if I can.

The employee profile in your annual report indicates that the majority of your employees seem to be in the 55 to 59 age group. It also indicates that in the years of service, the majority are zero to five, then it drops off quite sharply, six to 10. You also mention the focus on mental health. I would like some more detail and how you are managing it. What is causing it and general feedback from your driving staff?

Ms MORSE - In terms of our employee profile, Metro is no different to many other public transport operators. A reasonably high percentage of our workforce join Metro as their second or sometimes even their third career. Often the age at which people commence employment with us is a little more mature, which is reflected in their years of service. If you joined our organisation at 55, the likelihood of you working for us for more than 10 years is potentially diminished by the age of which you started.

Having said that, I had the great privilege of being in our Burnie network last year and celebrating someone who had achieved 50 years of service with our organisation. We have a significant number of employees who have had a very long tenure with Metro. Again, to some extent, that is also consistent with our age profiles.

Mental health is something we are very mindful of as an employer. It is also something that our workforce has been willing to talk to us more about in recent years. We have strived to respond to that. We have adopted a range of strategies, many of which are about destigmatising the ability to talk about something being a bit not right and how we might respond to people.

We have a very constructive relationship with our EAP provider, an external, completely independent, confidential service. They are onsite with us once a month, passively within the depot, building relationships, having quite informal conversations with people. The literature suggests this increases the likelihood, when the time comes and somebody wants to talk about something, they are more likely to pick up the phone and initiate that kind of conversation. Again, there are obviously a range of strategies. That is the top level of those responses.

Mr FARRELL - What is the level of lost time injury? Do you have many staff going off with either physical or mental health issues?

Ms MORSE - Yes, obviously we love to send everybody home in exactly the same state as they arrived with us at the beginning of a work day, but consistent with the age profile, we are a workforce very vulnerable to musculoskeletal injury, so strains and sprains are a very common part of operating a vehicle. That is an area we talk about mental health and wellbeing in terms of both physical wellbeing and fitness for work and the mental health strategies we talked about earlier. We are very mindful of trying to keep people as fit for work as possible.

Mr FARRELL - With issues like repetitive strain issue, you have drivers sitting for a long time doing repetitive work. What management processes do you have to minimise this and it been considered with the new bus design?

Ms MORSE - Absolutely. With the repetitive nature of our work, we obviously have a range of agreements of how long operators are on the road, before they are entitled to a break and an ability to get up and move around. In terms of ergonomics, we are certainly very mindful of particularly seated posture, and the layout of our cabin was a key consideration in commissioning new vehicles. We had a very consultative and collaborative process regarding the vehicle cabin configuration.

Mr HARRIS - We sent some of our drivers to Queensland, before the prototype was built, so they could have direct input into not only the design of the seat but also the design of the cabin layout and their operating workplace.

Mr FARRELL - With the growing traffic issues, in particular in Hobart, this impacts on Metro as an organisation running timetables and obviously the stress levels on the staff and planning future infrastructure. What are Metro's ideas on the proposed underground bus shelter?

Ms MORSE - From a congestion perspective, we are enormously pleased we made the renewal and the investment in our network in early 2016. From a Hobart perspective, our network is standing up extraordinarily well to the increase experienced in congestion over the intervening three years, but it is certainly a consideration for us. At the moment, Metro has limited protection from traffic, so we are stuck in the same traffic as everybody else, which is not ideal. In terms of performance we are actually seeing improvements in our on-time running, which we are enormously proud of, given the challenges for us on a daily basis with congestion. Obviously, our business is very committed to getting people where they want to go on time, so we are mindful this can be a factor for people operating our vehicles and operator stress. As the minister referenced earlier, our business is absolutely safety first. We make it very clear we would love to stay on time, but it is not always going to be possible and safe driving and safe operation is at the forefront of our decision-making.

Metro is always excited to hear people talking about public transport infrastructure and the underground interchange is obviously public transport infrastructure on a grand scale. We have experienced a reasonably significant amount of disruption in the CBD interchange over the last 12 months consistent with the construction underway there. To be protected from this would be lovely, but again we appreciate those kinds of projects require much consideration, examination and considerable, careful planning. We will be absolutely delighted to be a part of, but we appreciate we are at a fairly early stage of what could be a reasonably robust discussion about what that might look like.

Mr HARRIS - A significant degree of planning needs to go into consideration of travel patterns around the city. The ferry service will have an impact on passenger movements and the development of Macquarie Point will also start to change the traffic patterns and the pedestrian traffic patterns around the city. There is a broader discussion to be had about how we move people around the city as well as through the city.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I have an answer for Mr Armstrong about the first bus. I am advised that the first bus is at 5.35 a.m. from Gagebrook into the city on weekdays.

Ms ARMITAGE - Times that buses leave leads me into my next question about something I asked in 2016, and it does not look like anything has changed. I will ask again. With regard to the Launceston network review, in 2016 I mentioned Hadspen and the lack of services to Hadspen. You were talking about safety first and I realise that is to do with drivers but also I have

assumed it is to do with passengers. The bus that can get children to school from Hadspen was leaving at 7.39 a.m. Hadspen is approximately 10 minutes from Launceston and most of the schools have a policy that no-one is to be on the school grounds before 8.30 a.m. I do not think there are too many that allow them to be there earlier. Quite a few children from Hadspen go to John Calvin School and they were getting to school at 8.06 a.m. I mentioned that to Mr Wiggins at the time and he said he would take it on notice and arrange a meeting with the school. I am just wondering whether that happened and whether something occurred to sort that out.

Ms MORSE - I am happy to start with that response if you would like. Metro undertook a fairly extensive amount of planning ahead of potential renewal in our Launceston network across 2016 for potential implementation in 2017. That network did not proceed to implementation at that time but given the close proximity of the changes that State Growth is intending to make under Project 2018, Metro was asked to hang onto that work and to roll that work into the planning that State Growth is undertaking for change in the network next year. There has been extensive planning undertaken; there has been extensive consultation. We are very mindful that this is a particular consideration in relation to Hadspen and Calvin .

Ms ARMITAGE - The children getting to school at a reasonable time and not waiting around for a long period.

Ms MORSE - That is right. We are acutely aware of the 30-minute window that schools provide for supervision before that first bell rings. Metro is only one of the operators that State Growth purchases services from, but we understand the rationale of wanting to make efficiencies across a range of other operators in addition to Metro, and that will be best achieved by all of us making those changes consecutively next year.

Ms ARMITAGE - That is fine. There were also issues raised with regard to transport from Hadspen - which is in in my electorate and one of the outlying areas that has fewer services than some of the others. I think St Leonards in Mr Dean's area is another one.

Mr DEAN - Do not take services off us.

Ms ARMITAGE - Well no, you do not have any - they cannot take off what does not exist on a Sunday, and it is much the same at Hadspen. The point was raised when Mr Hidding was the minister and he acknowledged the fact that employment opportunities require transport. It is very hard for people who do not have a licence. I think at the time the first provisional licence often was at the age of 19 years and 6 months. Often people cannot afford it; they cannot afford a car. They cannot get transport with limited services at Hadspen, for example, on a Saturday, and there is no service at all on a Sunday. With a lot of development coming up in Hadspen and many areas - and they are proposing it will increase significantly over the next few years - what is Metro looking to do there to increase the services - apart from the school, for people coming in and trying to access work?

Mr HARRIS - I think the point needs to be made that we do not pick the service; the Department of State Growth determines where we send buses. It is not a decision that is within our remit to make. When it plans its networks, the Department of State Growth decides routes, times and kilometres and then contracts us.

Ms ARMITAGE - You have input, I assume?

Mr HARRIS - Sometimes, but not always. If we are asked, we have input.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I will take that up with State Growth directly, with my minister for Infrastructure hat on rather than Metro.

Ms ARMITAGE - There was a transport access strategy which was open for public consultation 2016. I assume that would have gone through the process now?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Almost to completion, is my understanding. I will take those specific issue, the concerns around Hadspen on notice.

Ms ARMITAGE - Having lived at St Leonards in the past, I know Sunday was a real issue for people who might have had part-time work, particularly younger people trying to get into the workforce. It was much the same situation as Hadspen, not being able to get into the city, but Hadspen has more difficulties because it is that bit further out.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Is the weekend the most problematic?

Ms ARMITAGE - Absolutely, apart from the school, being early. On Saturday there are limited services and on Sunday there are no services at all.

Mr DEAN - I am not sure whether it was Craig who asked questions on lost time injuries.

CHAIR - Yes, he did.

Mr DEAN - I notice in the annual report that you exceeded the target you wanted to reach by a significant amount. Are you talking about lost days through injuries?

Mr HARRIS - Lost time injury frequency rates.

Mr DEAN - So 14.5 days averages right across the workforce, is that right?

Mr ROCHESTER - Yes.

Mr DEAN - Why has there been a big difference from what you targeted and the actual?

Mr HARRIS - It has fluctuated quite a deal over the last three years. We were well in excess of 30, at one stage, about three or four years ago.

Mr DEAN - Is that 30 days per employee?

Mr HARRIS - It was an absolutely atrocious record. We got it down to zero at one point and we maintained it well below the industry average for a long time. Megan and Mr Farrell touched on some of the reasons. The nature of the work the drivers do causes a lot of leg and back injuries. We do not have what you would call seriously critical injuries, but we have a lot of repetitive type of injuries, which is simply the nature of the work being done.

It is a matter of great concern to the board. We have regular monthly reports on all aspects of work, health and safety, not just lost time injuries. We also have an intervention program for medical appointments. We have implemented a range of strategies through the People and

Culture Subcommittee of the board to look at ways of improving health within the organisation. Megan touched on the mental health strategy, which was an initiative introduced by the board about 12 months ago.

We have fitness encouragement challenges within the organisation to get people to contemplate their health a bit more, to try to get them fitter so they are less likely to incur repeat injuries as a consequence of the nature of the work they do.

Ms MORSE - The other thing we acknowledge is that we set ourselves a very challenging target. The target is below the industry average for the type of business we operate. We are stating our commitment and aspiration in trying to keep injuries and incidents in our workplace as low as possible. As Michael acknowledged, a range of things will occur.

Mr HARRIS - One of the reasons we report on it so publicly is to highlight the fact it is a commitment at board level as well as at an administrative level to improve the health and workplace safety of everybody. We share that information with our workforce on a regular basis so they are aware of what is going on as well.

Mr DEAN - Was the Free Before 7 service raised by anybody? Where does that operate? I think it is a free service, I understand, before 7 a.m.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes, I referred to it in my introduction.

Mr DEAN - What areas does that relate to and what is the patronage of that service?

Mr ROCKLIFF - The patronage of this service has demonstrated an increase between the 2016-17 and -

Ms MORSE - The Free Before 7 operates in the urban areas of our Hobart network, with reasonable proximity as opposed to the non-urban areas of Hobart. The promotion was designed from the outset to serve two purposes. As the minister spoke about in his earlier remarks, it was designed to give particularly our adult passengers, who certainly notice when all the schoolkids come back into our network in early February, an incentive to perhaps move to an earlier service where they will have a more comfortable trip on those first few days when our network is exceedingly busy as school returns. It is also a more reliable trip in terms of travel time given that there is often a spike in congestion associated with the back-to-school period.

The second objective the promotion has always had is the ability to signal to other road users that a spike in demand in the road network is coming up. The minister cited the figures of the social media reach of this campaign that more than 86 000 people saw that material on our website.

Mr ROCKLIFF - There was a 279 per cent increase in one year.

Ms MORSE - Phenomenal in the first year that we operated it. Again, the advice that we received informally from our colleagues at State Growth was that they had also seen a commensurate increase in people travelling their car-based journey a little earlier as well.

Mr DEAN - At the expense of being labelled parochial, when is it moving to Launceston?

Ms MORSE - We have proposed that to our contract manager. I guess at the moment the congestion that this city has -

Mr DEAN - Launceston is almost as bad as Hobart, I can assure you of that.

Ms MORSE - Obviously. I guess there would also be considerations of travel times in Launceston being a little bit shorter than they are in Hobart. It might not be exactly the same promotion, but we continue to put those opportunities to partner up to State Growth.

Mr DEAN - How long has it been operating in Hobart for?

Ms MORSE - This year has been the second year we have offered Free Before 7.

Mr ARMSTRONG - Is that for only a period of time?

Ms MORSE - It is. It usually commences on the first working day after Australia Day, whichever date that falls on in a given year, and it normally runs through until the end of February. That is the period where, as we described, the absolute peak of our back-to-school congestion is highest.

Mr ROCKLIFF - This year it is from 29 January until 23 February 2019.

Mr HARRIS - To be fair to our colleagues at the Department of State Growth, they compensate us for the lost fare revenue we incur as a consequence, so it really is a partnership between ourselves and the contract manager.

Mr DEAN - I have no problem with the service - it is good.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes, it is good, but you would like it in Launceston.

Mr DEAN - Yes. I think Metro should not be really run as a profit-making organisation, in my view.

CHAIR - It should be a department, but that is a discussion for another day.

Mr ARMSTRONG - I noticed here that 47 per cent of your users use it for study, 45 per cent for shopping and 36 per cent for work. I always thought it would have been a lot more for work. The park-and-ride is probably one initiative, but are there any other initiatives you are implementing to try to get more people to use the service for work?

Mr HARRIS - We are constantly trying to improve the service at all levels for all potential users. It is a combination of new buses that are modern, comfortable and up to date, new timetables, the route redesign that Megan mentioned for the Hobart network - and that will soon be coming to the Launceston network - and straightening the routes out and making them simpler and easier to understand and more direct. As an example of the Hobart redesign, we now have buses that start their run at the bottom end of Tranmere, come all the way through Eastlands, through the city, through Franklin Square and finish their run at the university.

You can actually get on a bus in Howrah and a single trip will get you to the university and anywhere in between, for that matter. Similarly with the routes coming along Main Road and the

Brooker Highway, they now pass through the city and go to other locations. You are taking away the need for people to move between buses - simplifying the routes, making the timetables easier, better quality buses, and understanding what our customers want and where they want to go.

Mr ARMSTRONG - That is advertised so people do know?

Mr HARRIS - Yes. They are components of trying to increase awareness about Metro services and encouraging people to use them. When you look at the adult first boardings and the increases in that patronage, a lot of people are using Metro to go to work.

My earnest belief is that over a short period we will start to see increases in those numbers that reflect the way we are trying to promote the service.

Mr ARMSTRONG - At-fault vehicle accidents per 100 000 kilometres. You do all your maintenance. Could you just elaborate? It is much better now than it was.

Ms MORSE - When we describe an incident or an accident, we describe any damage to a vehicle under that category. So, it does not always involve two vehicles engaging with each other. In some instances, given the size of buses, there is a small propensity to clip standing objects such as signs. It is easier to encounter a sign driving a bus than driving a standard-size vehicle.

We have done an enormous amount of work inside our business endeavouring to support our drivers. We are continuing to be very road aware and deliver a regular campaign each year. This year the theme was 'scan ahead, plan ahead', in terms of awareness - things in the environment such as other road users. We attribute a significant amount of the reduction in the incidence of accidents to campaigns fostering a high level of driver awareness within our business.

Mr ROCKLIFF - That is right. Metro defines 'accident' as any incident where something makes contact with a bus. This covers everything from a minor scuff that can be polished out, to a collision with another vehicle requiring major repairs. There has been a decrease, as Megan has said, in accidents from 2017-18 - 522 in 2017-18 and 753 in 2016-17; that is and largely attributable to improved management strategies and communication from the training department to bus operators.

Mr ARMSTRONG - Is it 10 a week?

Ms MORSE - Yes, but in context, we deliver 1600 services a day in Hobart alone.

Ms ARMITAGE - Like you said, it could be simply clipping a pole.

Ms MORSE - We do a lot of kilometres and on the road a lot.

Mr ROCKLIFF - There is improved reporting and data analysis with the management team; Metro has developed and delivered extensive accident-avoidance, defensive driver-training initiatives; campaigns that have affected a reduction in accidents and occurrences due to enhanced driver skills; and targeted training programs, including the production of a video of safe driving techniques. Metro has made continual improvements to the accident management process to assist in driver-operator accountability; improved the transport integrated management system for reporting and recording of accidents; reported vulnerable periods for crashes; and circulated a list

of new bus operators employed for less than 24 months. It reports on daily crashes, identifying at fault bus operators; it displays key performance indicators monthly to all employees - the results are highlighted and posted on notice boards, as are state crash locations to assist in awareness of those areas. So, all these improvement management systems are done to assist in bringing that down. It has come down considerably.

Mr HARRIS - It is like my answer to Mr Dean in relation to lost time injuries. We deliberately report on these things and encourage people to report on these things, in order to highlight it has to be improved. We use it as a tool at board level and through the organisation to encourage people to be more safe and to look after the equipment in a safer way. We regularly retrain people to achieve those outcomes. We deliberately report on it to highlight it so that we can improve it.

Mr FARRELL - I am looking forward more broadly with public transport. I think there is a tremendous opportunity particularly in Hobart - and there will be in other parts of the state later, but at the moment it seems to be with Hobart - in that regard.

The ferry proposal - and Metro put together a very good risk and impact document that I think illustrates it is taking it seriously - identifies that Metro is unfamiliar with the passenger ferry industry and associated consultancy firms are likely to be low pool of specialist consultants with local knowledge. That seems to be a bit of a stumbling block from the starting point. Is it Metro's intention to work with people like Incat and other locals that have had quite a bit to say about ferry services on the Derwent?

Mr ROCKLIFF - That would absolutely be the intention. We are very committed as a government to delivering on this commitment. We have provided some \$2 million to Metro to investigate and work up this initiative. Our first step, as you would be aware, was to amend the Metro Tasmania Act to remove any restrictions on the type of passenger transport service that Metro Tasmania can operate, and this has now passed into law.

To progress the operation of a ferry service, Metro is undertaking an options analysis to ensure that the specifications and supporting infrastructure align with Hobart's transport needs. There was a competitive tender process. Metro has now appointed leading transportation consultants MRCagney to undertake a study, which will include further consultation with a range of stakeholders and a demand analysis. We are very committed to ensuring that we and Metro cover all bases on what will be, in my view, very important infrastructure.

CHAIR - Do you have a time frame for that report?

Mr ROCKLIFF - The report to me is expected by the end of this month.

Mr HARRIS - It will be with the minister by the end of the month.

Mr ROCKLIFF - The Metro Chair has said it will be.

Mr HARRIS - We are extremely good at running public transport services. I can confidently say that we are the best at it in the state.

We do not know a lot about running a boat, but we do know how to get passengers from A to B, and it is our intention to partner with the best people we can from around the state to

provide the best service we can possibly provide. The most cost-effective way for us to do that is to partner with somebody who has experience on the maritime side of the things that we can marry with our experience in moving passengers from A to B, and integrating that into our broader network.

Ms SIEJKA - I saw that Taroona High School has been partnered with Metro to provide the young people with some skills about catching buses. From my previous work with young people, one of the things that is raised time and time again is that, generally, children and young people have a great fear of public transport. There is a whole bunch of positive aspects in terms of safety, usage and flow-on effects on traffic, and also school engagement. I was curious about why Taroona had been chosen when I know there are other schools, such as New Norfolk High and Sorell - those immediately spring to mind but there are a whole lot of other ones - that would really benefit from this work, much more so than Taroona, which is a very central school.

Ms MORSE - I guess there is a very specific answer why Metro did not work with New Norfolk or Sorell from the perspective that neither of them are in our catchment areas. They are not schools we provide services to.

Taroona High School is one of the biggest users of public transport services within Hobart. It has a very strong public transport culture. I guess Metro sees that it is in everybody's best interests to continue to foster that because of how much impact it would make if all of those students were taken-

Ms SIEJKA - Is there capacity to extend that further?

Ms MORSE - Yes, I will go on to explain how this service came to be.

We were approached by the school about our interest in partnering in this initiative. The school was prepared to make an approach to their feeder primary schools. That was very instrumental in those schools agreeing to participate in this initiative. It is first time we had ever done it. We wanted to get the runs on the board, having delivered it very successfully this year. We will look to extend it to a broader range of schools next year, but I highlight the notion of it being done in partnership with the high school was very instrumental in its being successful.

Ms SIEJKA - It is unfortunate, taking into account that the service does not run in those particular areas. There are greater issues in terms of continued school engagement but the capacity to catch public transport is one of the biggest issues. Years 11 and 12 have been extended but it becomes an issue even when it comes to college time.

Ms MORSE - The model is certainly there. We are a pretty collaborative industry. If our colleagues at O'Driscoll Coaches, the dominant provider in New Norfolk, were interested in talking to us about this, we would openly share our experiences.

Mr ROCKLIFF - The announcement today from Catholic Education might impact on timetables.

Ms SIEJKA - You would know that public transport comes up time and time again as one of the biggest barriers to continuing education.

CHAIR - Thank you. I will take that as a comment and not a question.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Chair, in reference to Mr Dean's discussion about lost time injury claims. The definition of lost time injury frequency rate is 'the number of lost time claims multiplied by one million divided by the total worked hours'.

Ms ARMITAGE - With regard to special buses, do you still have a free bus on Christmas Day?

Ms MORSE - We do not tend to announce that we will be free on Christmas Day, but it is usually the case. It is a lovely surprise for it to be a free trip on Christmas.

Ms ARMITAGE - It is nice to announce it so that people can get to visit friends who might not-

Ms MORSE - We operate a full public holiday timetable on Christmas Day. It usually is free.

Ms ARMITAGE - I think it is nice to announce it.

Mr ROCKLIFF - It is now announced.

Ms ARMITAGE - With regard to events, I noticed that we have the Nightrider and some others which cost \$2.

In the past, you have had a free bus after Festivale but you did not operate it last year. Is that likely to restart? Or are the reasons behind it ceasing?

Ms MORSE - As I understand it, the Festivale service is a charter. Often our free services are delivered in partnership with a commercial partner, but I can confirm our MAIB partnership continues strongly. We will be doing Nightrider as a \$2 flat fare again this year.

Ms ARMITAGE - But probably not the Festivale?

Ms MORSE - I am not aware that that has been re-chartered for this year as yet.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We can follow that up for you, Ms Armitage.

Ms ARMITAGE - Is the fare likely to remain at \$2? Are you looking to raise the price?

Ms MORSE - It has been that way for some time. It is a pretty easy fare to handle. There is a range of reasons we are excited about Nightrider. It is a key night where we are keeping people off the roads and on public transport. It offers a range of community benefits.

Ms ARMITAGE - And likely to stay \$2? Thank you.

CHAIR - I believe Project 2018 will commence in 2019. Will that impact on Metro's revenue seeing that you are funded for that service delivery?

Mr HARRIS - No, it is a contract arrangement between State Growth and all bus operators. We are in the throes of renegotiating routes, contract prices and so on at present. We are paid for

the services we deliver. To the extent the services we deliver change, our revenue will change, but we are still paid for the services we deliver.

CHAIR - There will be no financial impact?

Mr HARRIS - No.

Mr DEAN - We have covered 2018, which is good. School bus operators have been onto me about it and I have been asking numerous questions, as the minister would be aware of.

What is the ratio of female-male employees within Metro?

Ms MORSE - One to four - 80 per cent male, 20 per cent women as a workforce.

Mr DEAN - What are the complaints made against drivers? What are they and what is happening to satisfy those complaints, minister? What happens with complaints drivers make against patrons? Do we have any patrons not able to board buses?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I will take that part of the question on notice. Metro, like any organisation, will receive feedback, and complaints are received via email, phone and in person. In 2017-18, 81 per cent of complaints were closed off within 10 days, up from 62 per cent in 2016-17. That is a good response. Sixty-three per cent of complaints related to service reliability, 16 per cent related to driving and 12 per cent related to customer service. Metro received 17 complaints per 100 000 service kilometres in 2017, down from 21 in the previous year. Continuous improvement would be the word there.

Feedback from drivers and operators with respect to patrons -

Mr HARRIS - The majority of complaints are about buses running early, late, not running at all or in some instances, not following the correct route and things of that nature. The satisfaction rating with our drivers is and has always been very high. By and large people are happy with the people driving the bus, but annoyed if the bus runs late or runs early.

Mr DEAN - Have any of the drivers been threatened or physical actions against any of them?

Mr HARRIS - Occasionally. It is a matter we and the drivers take very seriously.

Mr DEAN - How many physical contact complaints in this last year?

Ms MORSE - Three. We had two minor assaults of contact being made with a driver and also spitting at drivers from time to time, which is highly regrettable when that occurs. With reference to our earlier answer in relation to the safety strategies we put in place, we do our utmost to support a driver who is experiencing an interaction with a customer not acceptable on board our vehicles, as quickly as we can.

Mr DEAN - What action is taken against these people, because it would be under video surveillance?

Mr HARRIS - Absolutely and Megan referred earlier to our arrangements with Tasmania Police.

Mr DEAN - Yes, she did, but it had to have been taken against those persons who had caused and created the problems.

Ms MORSE - Tasmania Police has a high success rate with being able to track down people involved in incidences with Metro with reference; particularly if it has occurred where we have footage, it makes it much easier to identify people involved. We have the capacity to prohibit people from boarding our vehicles. We do not take that step lightly, because we are in the business of connecting communities, but we have the option.

Mr HARRIS - We are also in the business of protecting our workforce.

Ms MORSE - Correct.

Mr DEAN - I think you would take on notice the number prohibited from using Metro services. Is that the one you said you would take on notice?

Mr ROCKLIFF - No, but I am happy to take that question on notice - how many people have been prohibited.

CHAIR - Thank you. We have encroached on the lunchbreak. We will need to call this. Thank you, minister, very appreciated; again, our best wishes to Mr Harris for future ventures, and thank you to the new CEO. We could spend a lot more time on all of our GBE scrutiny areas, but have a time limit.

The committee suspended at 11.50 a.m.