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Proof Committee Hansard

**HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PETITIONS

**Reference: Petitions presented up to 1 December 2008**

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[10.53 am]

**MAHER, Mr Jason, General Manager, South Australia and Western Australia and Local Roads Branch, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government**

**SOUTHCOTT, Dr Andrew, Member for Boothby, Commonwealth Parliament**

**CHAIR**—Welcome. Although the committee does not require you to speak under oath, you should understand that this meeting is a formal proceeding of the parliament. Giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of the parliament. We will proceed to questions now on the petition of the feasibility study of rail options for Adelaide.

As we have Dr Southcott present here, he may want to ask any questions on behalf of the petitioners. I believe you have the ministerial response in front of you, Dr Southcott.

**Dr Southcott**—I do not have it right in front of me.

**Mr Maher**—I might have it.

**CHAIR**—Just to give the doctor enough time to read the ministerial response, I will ask a question on the feasibility study of rail options for Adelaide. How often are feasibility studies on various types of rail use conducted?

**Mr Maher**—I am not sure I can give you a precise answer on that. I think they would be conducted on an as-needs basis.

**CHAIR**—You might want to take that on notice.

**Mr Maher**—I am happy to.

**CHAIR**—What methods exist for public involvement in such reviews? You might have to take that on notice as well.

**Mr Maher**—In the context of this study, a reference panel has been formed. The purpose of that panel is to ensure that industry, government and community views are captured by the study. That reference group has met twice so far, on 25 August and 3 February, for the study.

**CHAIR**—Thank you, Mr Maher. Dr Southcott, do you have any questions on the ministerial response?

**Dr Southcott**—I would like to ask if the terms of reference have been finalised.

**Mr Maher**—They have.

**Dr Southcott**—On what date were they finalised?

**Mr Maher**—I do not have the precise date on which they were finalised but I understand they were provided to the committee as part of the minister's response. You should have got a terms of reference document.

**Dr Southcott**—So they are the final terms of reference?

**Mr Maher**—That is my understanding, yes.

**Dr Southcott**—Have the draft report on the analysis of the east-west rail freight task along the Melbourne to Adelaide and Adelaide to Perth corridors, and the detailed assessment of the current rail alignment from Murray Bridge to Adelaide been completed?

**Mr Maher**—I would have to take that on notice.

**Dr Southcott**—On what date was the consultant GHD appointed for this feasibility study?

**Mr Maher**—The minister approved the funding for the consultancy on 22 December and the minister announced the appointment of the consultants on 19 February. There is a media release on the minister's web site.

**Dr Southcott**—Is there any reason why it took two months between appointing and announcing?

**Mr Maher**—There was some time lost over Christmas. That was the department's fault. There is a process that the department needs to go through in appointing consultants. These consultants were engaged from the department's panel of experts. There is a process that the department has to go through, so some time was lost over Christmas. The delay was the department's fault.

**Dr Southcott**—I have no further questions. Thank you very much.

**CHAIR**—Does any member have any further questions on this petition in front of us? There being none, we will now go to the petition on the intersection of Old Pitt Town Road and Boundary Road. In the minister's response of 2 February it has been stated:

Projects recommended by the Panel will shortly be submitted for my consideration and approval.

Can the department provide more specific advice about the timetable for consideration of various projects under this program, and when and how the outcomes of consideration are advised?

**Mr Maher**—Primarily, how those arrangements are advised is a matter for the minister. In terms of the timing, I expect the outcome of the process that was described in the minister's letter to occur shortly.

**CHAIR**—A very short letter.

**Mr Maher**—Yes. I cannot give you a precise date.

**CHAIR**—A month? A year?

**Mr Maher**—I cannot give you a precise timeframe.

**CHAIR**—This year?

**Mr Maher**—Shortly.

**CHAIR**—Fine. Are there any other questions on this petition that is in front of us?

**Mr SIMPKINS**—I assume by the minister's response that this is a New South Wales problem?

**Mr Maher**—It is a New South Wales project.

**Mr SIMPKINS**—I am trying to work out from that response whether the minister is saying, and the department has told the minister, that New South Wales has it in hand. It has been considered for New South Wales black spots, so the Commonwealth does not need to be involved? Is that the way?

**Mr Maher**—No. The project has been put forward by the New South Wales consultative panel as a project they are proposing to the minister for funding in the 2009-10 program, and that is a decision that the minister can take and announce as part of the 2009-10 program.

**Mr SIMPKINS**—This reference to the New South Wales Black Spot Consultative Panel is the Commonwealth black spot program but the New South Wales panel?

**Mr Maher**—Correct. The way the program works is that projects are nominated by anyone. They go through a consultative panel process which is state based. They have the state based road agency so the RTA is part of this panel process. They put forward a priority list of projects to the minister according to the program's criteria and the minister then makes decisions around what projects would be funded based on that advice.

**Mr SIMPKINS**—I am not familiar with the area whatsoever, but these are all local government roads?

**Mr Maher**—Correct.

**Mr SIMPKINS**—Does New South Wales itself have a black spot program?

**Mr Maher**—It is difficult to answer. They do not have a program called the black spots program. Does New South Wales fund projects based on safety agenda or criteria? Yes, I am sure they do. I could not comment on how large that is or how that operates.

**Mr SIMPKINS**—It would be interesting to know. I am not an expert on roads or anything like that, although in my electorate we have a lot of road issues. But it is always interesting to see whether the New South Wales government considers this a priority. I am sure it is a very important road that needs to be sorted out.

**Mr Maher**—They clearly do because of the extent to which the RTA has put this project forward to the Australian government via the black spots program. They have said that this is a priority project for us in the 2009-10 black spots program.

**CHAIR**—As there are no further questions on this petition before us, we will go to the next petition. It is regarding passing lanes on Bucketts Way. This petition, as members are aware, was presented by Mr Baldwin, the member for Paterson, on 4 December. I would really like to thank the department and the minister for such a very quick response. I feel that the minister, in his reply, has virtually covered all the concerns of the petitioners, but I would also like to stress—because this public hearing will be going upon the website—that in his response to the petition the minister stated:

The local Councils in the area may also wish to contact the Hon Michael Daly MP, NSW Minister for Roads, seeking NSW Government funding towards this project, as Bucketts Way is classified as a regional road and as such is eligible for NSW Government funding which has been provided previously for the upgrade of this road.

I hope that the petitioners will also lobby their local councils to put a bit of pressure on the Hon. Michael Daly, Minister for Roads. Do we have any questions on Bucketts Way?

**Mr BROADBENT**—Bouquets Way! No, I do not. It is a very unusual road in that it is apparently a favourite of locals—as a shortcut from somewhere to somewhere—that I was told to drive on. I would recommend to most people that they stick to the highway.

**Mr ADAMS**—What is this historical aspect of the name? Does anyone know that?

**Mr Maher**—I am afraid I do not.

**Mr BROADBENT**—It has major use for what you would call nearly a local road. Is that how you would describe it?

**Mr Maher**—I would describe it as a local or regional road.

**Mr CHESTER**—In relation to the minister's response saying that, since 2002, the Australian government has provided around \$24 million toward road improvements along Bucketts Way, can you let us know a little bit about how that was spent? Was it on these overtaking lanes, which the petitioners seem keen on? What were the time frames? Is that work completed, or is some of this money still on the way and flowing through the system?

**Mr Maher**—The money has been spent. I would like to correct the minister's response: it is actually \$22 million, not \$24 million.

**CHAIR**—That is the second paragraph?

**Mr Maher**—Yes. You will see that \$20 million has been spent over four years under the Roads of National Importance program. I do not have the figures, but that was in addition to some state government spending, as well. The contribution of the Australian government was \$20 million under the Roads of National Importance program. That work finished around two years ago. There were also several projects under the Strategic Regional Program, primarily in the Gloucester council area. Again, I do not have details of those projects with me, but I am happy to take that on notice.

**Mr CHESTER**—On the same theme: was that intended as part of a staged process where the \$20 million would get a certain amount of projects done as part of a five- or 10-year plan to upgrade the road? Is there an ongoing process planned for the improvements of this road, or was this only ever intended as a \$22-million-dollar project?

**Mr Maher**—I would be happy to take that on notice, but I could not comment on that here today.

**CHAIR**—Can you advise us of some of the improvements that have been made to Bucketts Way?

**Mr Maher**—I am happy to take that on notice and give you a list of what projects specifically fell under the \$20 million and the \$2 million. I do not have that with me today.

**CHAIR**—That would be appreciated, because that will also be going up on our website so the petitioners who signed the petition can look at it. Do we have any further questions on Bucketts Way?

**Mr SIMPKINS**—My question is broader than that. Can you provide us with figures on federal rail infrastructure expenditure over the last 15 years?

**Mr Maher**—I will have to take that on notice.

**Mr SIMPKINS**—Absolutely. I would greatly appreciate that.

**Mr Maher**—I was not expecting a rail question.

**Mr SIMPKINS**—Pull it out of your back pocket!

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much for coming before the committee today.

**Mr BROADBENT**—Jason, we are going to go away and find out the origin of the name ‘Bucketts Way’.

**Mr ADAMS**—Or maybe you could do that, Jason!

**CHAIR**—And some of the members might even go and drive down Bucketts Way!

**Mr BROADBENT**—It is a great drive.