**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING,
TRANSPORT AND CITY SERVICES**

(Reference: Inquiry into the procurement and delivery of MyWay+)

Members:

MS J CLAY (Chair)
MS F CARRICK (Deputy Chair)
MR P CAIN
MS C TOUGH

PROOF TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

THURSDAY, 27 MARCH 2025

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Secretary to the committee:
Mr J Bunce (Ph: 620 50199)

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

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WITNESSES

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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 9.20 am.

ORLOVA, MS ANNA, Private citizen
VICKERY, MS ALEXANDRA, Private citizen

THE CHAIR: Good morning and welcome to the public hearings of the Standing Committee on Environment, Planning, Transport and City Services for our inquiry into the procurement and delivery of MyWay+. The committee has received close to 150 responses to our call for submissions on this inquiry, including more than 100 web form submissions. These submissions have been immensely helpful.

Over the next day and a half, the committee will hear from public transport advocates, community groups, accessibility experts, IT specialists, NEC Australia, the ACT government and users of public transport. This morning we are hearing from some of our individuals about their experiences with MyWay+. Thank you for coming in.

We would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on, the Ngunnawal people. We would like to acknowledge and respect the continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and our region. We would like to acknowledge and welcome any other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be joining us at today's event or who may be streaming from somewhere else.

We are recording and transcribing with Hansard and publishing that, and we are also live streaming, and we actually have quite a lot of interest in this inquiry. If you take a question on notice, please say, "I will take that question on notice." That helps our secretariat track down answers. We may not have any questions on notice. If anybody asks you something that is outside your experience, it is okay to say, "That has not come up for me." You are just here to speak about your submission and your own personal experience.

We welcome Ms Vickery and Ms Orlova. Thank you for joining us. I will talk about the obligations and responsibilities for giving evidence. We are covered by parliamentary privilege here, and there are certain obligations with that. Witnesses need to tell the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and might be considered contempt of the Assembly. Could you please confirm that you have read and received the privilege statement, that you understand it and are happy to abide by that?

Ms Vickery: Yes.

Ms Orlova: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Great; thank you. As I said, if anybody asks you a question, you can say "I think" or "I remember". That is always fine, and you can also say, "Sorry, that did not come up for me." That is absolutely fine. Ms Vickery, I understand that you would like to make an opening statement. Is that okay with the panel? Would you like to make your opening statement now?

Ms Vickery: Sure.

THE CHAIR: Please go ahead.

Ms Vickery: I was born and raised in Canberra and I have been a regular user of the public transport networks here since 2016, when I was in high school. While there are so many things to applaud about the new MyWay+ system—the ability to use the debit cards and the potential for live vehicle tracking being at the front of my mind—there were so many issues on the rollout of these systems that none of these really properly registered to me.

I am a Gen Z student. So I was particularly excited to see how the MyWay+ app would function. It was the key feature I was looking forward to testing when I signed up to be one of the pre-launch users. However, the app was not made available to me, at least before the public release, and to be honest, I find it borderline non-functional. The route planner is bizarre; the app does not let you interact with your account directly; the bus stops are difficult to register and occasionally just disappear entirely from the app, for me; the real-time stop information is a little non-intuitive and sometimes quite inaccurate, in my experience at least; and sometimes the app will just shut down and refuse to open for extended periods of time. This is not even mentioning the QR code feature, which I am sure a lot of the people yesterday have talked about already. If I, as a motivated zoomer, am struggling with interacting with the app, I suspect something went rather wrong in its rollout overall.

I will note as a student at ANU, where many of us rely on the public transportation but where many also leave Canberra entirely over summer, that the communication and knowledge about the MyWay+ rollout seemed particularly challenged. My perspective on the effectiveness of MyWay+ communication as a whole might be biased, but many around me had a rather difficult time understanding the process for and completing the transfer between the two systems.

I love Canberra's public transport system and I want it to be great. But, from an outsider's perspective, the MyWay+ rollout process felt almost politically motivated, as if it was brought out too early to keep to a promised timeline rather than giving the product the oversight it deserves.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Vickery. That is excellent feedback and provided a very valuable insight. I might start with the first question. You were in the user-testing group.

Ms Vickery: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Did you have the opportunity to give any feedback prior to the launch date about that user-testing?

Ms Vickery: I sent them several emails, but I never received any confirmation or response. I asked a number of questions in the emails and they never got back to me with responses for those questions. I am not really sure what happens there, to be honest. Their communication was patchy at best.

THE CHAIR: We have had some feedback from another person in that user-testing group and it certainly matched your experience. Did Transport Canberra send out a

survey or any kind of systematic thing to all of the users saying, "How did the test go?"?

Ms Vickery: No; they did not. They sent an email two weeks later than I was led to expect, telling me when to get the card. They would send out daily emails at midday telling you buses you could catch between 6 am and 3 pm that had the systems on them. So you only had a certain number of hours each day. These are not exact numbers; it is just from memory.

They would send you an email 10 am or 11 am telling you which buses you could catch in the morning and early afternoon. I was not able to catch any of them, because I had classes which I needed to be around for at certain times. There were no surveys; it was mostly just very long emails with bus route numbers. That was most of their communication.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much.

MS CARRICK: My understanding is that NEC advised the government to run a parallel system with the old and the new system, and then the government thought that that would be confusing so they just went with, "Cut the old one off and we will introduce the new one." But they only introduced three buses with the new system on them—hence, the chasing around trying to find the buses that you could test. With the three buses—and then they put a fourth one on—that had the new system, how were you able to test that and what did they expect you to test? Did they give you any directions?

Ms Vickery: They just told us to tap on with the cards that they told us to collect. My assumption is that they were just hoping that one of the 200 of us would have a timetable that aligned with theirs. The route selection seemed a little bit bizarre to me, but I am sure there was some logic for it behind the curtain. There were no further explicit instructions given about it.

MS CARRICK: They left the actual implementation of the readers on the buses until September, which was quite late in the system.

Ms Vickery: Yes, there was a while at the start where we were told we were testers and then they did not give us any further information and we were not doing anything. I assume it was just delays with the initial rollout that meant the testing process started later than they initially planned, but I do not know.

MS CARRICK: That was the same with testing the debit-credit card too. That was not completed and commissioned until 21 November, and they went live on 25 November. So there was no time for community testing.

Ms Vickery: I was never given instructions to test the credit-debit card thing; that was not passed on to me.

MS CARRICK: It was not part of the testing?

Ms Vickery: No.

MS CARRICK: Because they just did not have it ready in time. It appears that the system was launched before proper user-testing was done—or, at least, community user-testing was done.

Ms Vickery: That is what it felt like.

MS TOUGH: On the user-testing, you mentioned in your statement that you did not get the app until just before everyone else.

Ms Vickery: I got it at the same time.

MS TOUGH: You got it same time; so you did not get a chance to test it at all?

Ms Vickery: No, which was kind of disappointing. I was looking forward to that. I did get to test the web portal they had. I think I noted at the time that it looked like it was optimised for mobile phones, but I was aware that they were also developing an app. I asked how those were going to interact, and they did not respond. But there was no app testing.

MR CAIN: Thank you again for your volunteering to be a user and also to come before us. What kind of feedback were you able to provide as a result of your user-testing?

Ms Vickery: The only thing I could really provide consistent feedback on was the web portal, because I was not able to intercept any of the bus routes that ran and they gave me nothing else to test. So I could give them feedback on the layout of that, how much it made sense and how easy it was to access various things. That is about the limit of what I could tell them, I guess.

MR CAIN: So, just to confirm, was the submission you provided to us, the web form, that your user-testing feedback?

Ms Vickery: That was after several months of using it after the rollout as well.

MR CAIN: What sort of response did you get to your feedback?

Ms Vickery: During the user-testing period?

MR CAIN: When you did your user-testing and gave your feedback, what sort of response did you get?

Ms Vickery: I got no response.

MR CAIN: No response?

Ms Vickery: I do not know if they even read it.

MR CAIN: It would be nice if you knew that much at least.

Ms Vickery: Yes.

MR CAIN: Thank you.

MS CARRICK: When you were asked, with your user-testing, to tap on and off, that was not with a debit-credit card. Was that with one of the new MyWay cards?

Ms Vickery: Yes. They asked us to pick them up a bit earlier and then use them when we got on the buses. But I could not catch any of the buses.

MS CARRICK: You were given the app to test, too. Did that have the—

Ms Vickery: I was not given the app.

MS CARRICK: You were not given the app at any time? So it was just reading the card?

Ms Vickery: They gave us the web portal so we could register the cards to our accounts. But the web portal is a separate feature from the app. I do not think it should be, but it is. So they gave us access to that and then they gave us the card. That is what we got.

MS CARRICK: Okay. And then there was limited actual feedback and communication between the testers and the directorate about it. Presumably, testing was supposed to be done while the system was free. But there was no testing really done aside from trying to find the three buses where you could tap your card to get on.

Ms Vickery: Yes; that was most of it.

MS CARRICK: Thank you.

MS TOUGH: Ms Vickery, in your submission you talked about the public education campaign being quite poor. Can you expand on that? Also, in your opening statement you mentioned that ANU students did not have a lot of information. Can you talk about what you experienced and what could have been done better?

Ms Vickery: Everyone I brought it up with in conversation was not sure what they were meant to do. At the ANU in particular, a lot of people were away during the intensive period—"It's free now. We're going to push everything." A lot of people left when the transition stuff was happening, so the information transfer was even more difficult. People saw the signs and knew that MyWay+ existed, but so many people I talked to thought they could still use their MyWay cards. There was the fact that a new transition was happening. I do not know which part of the communication rollout went wrong. People who got to talk to Transport Canberra representatives in person always seemed pretty down with it. Representatives rocked up to a couple of the uni events and had a stall there. That was very helpful. People did not know what was happening and, I guess, were not too bothered to try to look into the limited information available on the website to try to work it out either.

MR CAIN: Welcome Anna. Your submission is not public. Nor was your name, by the way, but now it is because we are live-streaming in public. So, given that some committee members have a copy of your actual submission, are you happy to publicly declare your experiences with the new system and why your experiences led you to put

in a confidential submission, but here you are at a public hearing? Maybe you could explain the concerns that brought you here.

Ms Orlova: My name is Anna Orlova. I am an ACT resident and I am also a user of the MyWay+ system. I use trams probably three times a week, and I am a digital accessibility specialist. I have been working in this area for the last eight years. I hold current certification from the International Association of Accessibility Professionals. I want to bring your attention to multiple barriers which the MyWay+ application and portal is posing for people with disabilities. In Canberra, around 80,000 people identify as living with disabilities. That is one in five people, which is a significant number of people. Many of those people use the public system and many of those people use the MyWay+ application and MyWay portal.

From a legal perspective, we have at least three documents which mandate equal digital access for people with disabilities and people who use assistive technologies. If we are talking Australia wide, we have the Disability Discrimination Act which mandates that people with disabilities should not be discriminated against and they should have digital access equal to people without disabilities. Also, the Disability Discrimination Act states that digital content should be WCAG compliant. WCAG stands for Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, which is the international standard. Everything digital should be compliant to WCAG. Also, at a local level, we have the ACT government web accessibility policy, which basically requires the same: equal digital access and compliance with WCAG standards. In the contract between the ACT government and the vendor of the MyWay+ system, there are also requirements about compliance with WCAG. Unfortunately, it did not happen.

The MyWay+ application for iPhones and Android phones, as well as the web portal, have multiple barriers for people with disabilities and people who use assistive technology—for example, screen-reading software, which is used by people who are blind or have low vision, or for any other reason, such as English as a second language. I will give just a few examples. For a start, there are multiple colour contrast issues in the application and the portal, so it is hard and sometimes even impossible to read some texts or some icons which are meaningful. You have to see them to action them. That means that accessibility was not considered during the design stage of the project's development. There are also some other issues. For example, there is the MyWay+ logotype, and this logotype has a text alternative equipment image—a figure of the equipment image. Text alternatives in digital accessibility are very baseline. It is very basic accessibility which should be implemented.

Then we go to what is blocked. If you use the MyWay+ portal on your mobile phone and you are also a user of a screen reader—for example, iOS VoiceOver—you cannot do anything. You are blocked. You cannot top up your card, you cannot set up auto top-up, you cannot link your card, you cannot buy a card, you cannot apply for a concession—you cannot do anything. You might be wondering why. Because the hamburger menu button, which opens the menu where you can do all those things, is completely inaccessible. You cannot focus on it and you cannot activate it. It is complete blocked. So, if you use a screen reader, you cannot do anything. You have to ask for help from your family, for example, or from friends. All people with disabilities want to live independently. It is a right to live independently, and now they are forced to ask for help. This is an indication that accessibility was not considered during the

development stage of the project.

Having the MyWay+ application and portal in this state of complete inaccessibility puts the ACT government in a quite unpleasant risky and costly position, because now the ACT government is facing legal risks. People with disabilities can sue because they cannot use the application or the portal. This causes reputational damage, because now everyone knows that the ACT government is not treating all people equally. Also, we have a financial problem. We already spent $70 million on the application and the portal, and now all these accessibility issues need to be remediated, which basically means complete redesign and complete redevelopment of the whole thing, which is very costly. It should be audited and all the accessibility issues—I mentioned just three, but I expect there are 50 to 100 accessibility issues—that are identified during an audit should be fixed.

If accessibility is considered from the start of the project, which is normally considered when you are planning, when you are designing and when you are developing, it would be much cheaper. Now it is live and the cost of remediation rises exponentially. Now it would be probably 30 times more expensive to fix, rather than doing it from the start.

MR CAIN: Thank you, and thank you for being here and bringing your concerns to us. Are you aware that CANAXESS gave a presentation?

Ms Orlova: Yes. I know Ross Mullen. I wanted to make the same points.

MR CAIN: Were you able to watch that yesterday afternoon?

Ms Orlova: Unfortunately, no.

MR CAIN: He made some other points. You are obviously aware of him. We were hearing the same message yesterday as well. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: In the hearing yesterday, we asked the contractor about this issue because we are pretty concerned about accessibility. It has been raised by a lot of people directly affected. They indicated that they might be compliant sometime in the middle of the year. I asked them whether Transport Canberra had said, "This must be compliant by this date," and they said, "Oh, no. We are scoping and trying." Do you think that is an acceptable response, that there is no date by which these problems will be fixed?

Ms Orlova: I do not think so. They should be compliant on the release date, when people start to use the system. There could be a situation—for example, they have some constraints, such as they do not have enough resources or capacity to fix it. But at least the critical issues, like I explained about the hamburger menu button—issues which have critical and high-severity impacts on users with disabilities—should be fixed before release. And they should have some plan—"Okay. We will fix critical and high-severity issues, and at this time we will fix the rest." There should be a documented plan.

THE CHAIR: Absolutely. These obligations have been around for about two decades, so it is quite surprising that a new system is launched that does not comply. There is a Disability Reference Group for Transport Canberra. There are 80,000 people in

Canberra who live with a disability. These are the sorts of issues that might have been raised by any expert stakeholder in the field or by any user. Do you think these are the sorts of things that people might have raised if they have been asked?

Ms Orlova: I think so. First of all, there should be testers. User research should also be done, not only by ordinary users but also by users who have certain types of disabilities and users of assistive technologies. It is the normal way of developing software.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Orlova. That was excellent. I have another question, Ms Vickery. I am a bit concerned. You mentioned some difficulty in registering student discounts. Do you think people have managed to get their student discounts recognised? Were there any troubles with that?

Ms Vickery: I have helped a couple of people do it, but some people just gave up and accepted the adult fares. They were not able to get things registered. When I did it during the initial web portal phase, it was easy enough for me. There was no form of verification that I was a student. It was just accepted. It is unclear to me whether it is still the case that you can claim a tertiary discount without proof. Some people had difficulties when they tried to register a card. When they reloaded the website, it was not registered properly, so they could not associate their debit cards to the student discounts. They just use a debit card and do not get the additional features.

THE CHAIR: That is concerning because it sounds like there might be some people who are entitled to a discount and we are not sure whether they are receiving their discount or whether they have been given information about how to do that. Does that sound like an accurate statement—that we actually do not know?

Ms Vickery: I reckon a fair number of people would be in that boat.

THE CHAIR: Have you seen any communications on campus or have any of the groups from Transport Canberra proactively found out whether people are getting access to their discounts?

Ms Vickery: I imagine they would be doing that at their market day stalls, although I have not heard it in person. My best recommendation for it going forward would be to at least go to the middle-of-the-year market sessions for the start of the next semester at UC and ANU and have a big poster showing the steps of how to do it.

THE CHAIR: That sounds very sensible.

MS CARRICK: Is the issue about accessing the student discount arising on linking a MyWay card to the account and linking a debit or credit card to the account? Is it for both of those payment methodologies or just one of them?

Ms Vickery: For the people I have talked to about it, it has just been about linking a debit card. When you buy a MyWay card, in the process of doing that, you can show your student ID and get it applied then. I have heard that works for some people. The cases I have heard about are debit card related.

MS CARRICK: Similar to linking a debit card to an account, I have heard that the

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account does not show transactions. If you want to see your own bus usage, it does not show it in the account.

Ms Vickery: It kind of does but not completely or very well. I am not sure whether it is time limited and only shows you transactions within a period of time. When I have checked, it has only had a partial record of my trips.

MS CARRICK: Interestingly, some people do not see anything, so it seems to be a bit hit and miss. Some might see a partial record; some might see nothing.

Ms Vickery: Yes. I have no idea.

MS CARRICK: Do you think that, when the system was implemented, the objectives of what they were trying to achieve were very clear? They seemed to try to introduce a lot of functionality. Do you think that was necessary or that the objectives the new system was trying to achieve could have been clearer?

Ms Vickery: I think their communication was not good about what they were expecting of the transition. It is difficult to reach the audience of an entire city—everyone who would use the system. A lot of people were confused about what they could use to pay, even though that is supposedly one of the main points. It was one of the main points in their advertisements, but the way it was set out in the advertisements meant it was still not communicated. Many people tried to use the old MyWay card to tap on. The whole QR code thing was a mess that is still not fully resolved. People will try to do that and then it takes three minutes and holds up the rest of the bus. So many of the buses, even with the scanners, were not operating properly at the start. That led to additional confusion about what could work. People would try to scan on with their MyWay+ card or their debit card and it would not work for reasons unrelated to the card itself.

MS CARRICK: Do you think that people were primarily after a debit or credit card payment methodology, but then they tried to introduce so much functionality and it did not work?

Ms Vickery: The idea of live tracking was pretty appealing as well, but the debit card thing was the biggest draw.

MS CARRICK: Do you think that, because of the difficulties, the reputation of the public transport network and people's desire to use it has been impacted?

Ms Vickery: Yes. It is my understanding that it was rough for elderly people. It has been rough for families with children, which is another major demographic. It was rough for university students. These are three reasonably sized cohorts that were all in difficult situations with the rollout. Opinion has definitely been hurt in these areas.

MS CARRICK: People are back in their cars because of anxiety about trying to access the system. Interestingly, NEC advice at the beginning was to run the systems in parallel so that people could use the old system, work out the new system that was being introduced and then transition across to the new system. That may have worked better than the hard cut-off, which just confused everybody when the new readers came in.

Ms Vickery: Maybe. I think it would have led to fewer people getting scared and disillusioned with the whole thing, although there probably still would have been a fair bit of confusion with the communication about what was going on, to be honest.

MS CARRICK: Perhaps they would have had more time to use the old system and work out that there was a new one that they had to transition to. Anyway, the whole thing does not seem to have worked very well. I assume NEC has implemented these sorts of systems before and knows how to best do it.

MS TOUGH: My question is for both of you. I am wondering about your experiences with using the QR codes through the app—whether you were a user of them or are still a user of them or tried them and no longer use them.

Ms Orlova: The QR code was a nightmare. That is why I ordered a physical card, because I was not able to stand it anymore. I was holding up people behind me. I tried probably six different readers across the tram station. None of them worked. Also, another issue is that you tried to scan and it did not explain exactly how to put your phone in that niche. Sometimes it was trying to pick up my credit card. I did not want to use a credit card; I only wanted to use the QR code. Somehow it picked up my app wallet. Also, sometimes it said I could not generate the QR code because I did not have internet, but I definitely had internet on my phone at the time. Sometimes I scanned and it sort of scanned but there was no feedback. There was no green tick and no sound, and, when I went to the next reader, it said, "You already scanned. What do you want?" That is why I decided to go to a physical MyWay+ card, because it was unbearable. From a screen reader perspective, the QR code is not usable. If you are a screen reader user and you generate it, you do not know that it is generated.

Ms Vickery: I looked at the QR code feature in the app when it came out. It looked bad. Then I saw it in use on the first day. I saw it hold up the line for about five minutes with one person trying to scan it, so I did not use it.

THE CHAIR: Ms Orlova, to follow up: I think you said you ordered a MyWay+ card on 12 of January.

Ms Orlova: Yes.

THE CHAIR: How long did it take to arrive?

Ms Orlova: Two months.

THE CHAIR: You ordered your card on 12 January—

Ms Orlova: Yes. I added stuff on Facebook—that physical cards are not available at newsagencies. I thought I would be clever and ordered it online. I ordered it on 12 January and I did not hear anything. Then I created an incident report at Access Canberra, asking Transport Canberra, "What is happening with my card?" There was no reply. I checked the status of my request, probably a month later, and it was not assigned to anyone, so I am not quite sure how Access Canberra is working. Nobody cared about my request at all. Then I did the submission. After my submission was done, someone called me and asked, "Have you got your card?" I said, "No." The

person said to me, "I will send it tomorrow." I finally got it after two months.

MR CAIN: Anna, you said you would prefer to use a QR code rather than your debit card. Is that correct?

Ms Orlova: Yes, because there are all those identity thefts. I had my identity leaked by Optus and Medibank. I do not want to share my credit card details. Also, my preferable way of paying is through an American Express card and that is not accepted in the MyWay+ system.

MR CAIN: I have a general question for you both. We heard yesterday that someone would have appreciated a digital MyWay+ card as a way of accessing and paying for public transport. Some were happy to use their debit card or credit card. Some only wanted to use the QR code. To each of you: if you had an announcement presented to you today that said, "We're going to change the MyWay+ system. We have a faster and more efficient way to access public transport and paying for it," what would each of you, as users, choose out of all the options that would be available, including the ones I have just mentioned?

Ms Orlova: I would probably still stick with a physical card, because that is how I got most feedback, but I would prefer the green tick to be more prominent and the sound to be clearer so that I know I scanned.

MR CAIN: And to put money on at your choosing, to top it up or have an automatic top-up.

Ms Orlova: Yes, because I am also getting a discount.

Ms Vickery: I would also choose a physical card, although there is one drawback: it is quite difficult to track the balance using a physical card. On the old system, when you scanned it, it would show the balance on the card. It does not have that anymore. I have been caught out when I had no money left on the card without realising it. Apart from that one drawback, I would prefer a physical card all the way. It is just easier to track expenses.

MR CAIN: Even with the old MyWay physical card, you could create an automatic top-up from your account. That would be something you would be comfortable with?

Ms Vickery: I eventually established an automatic top-up. It took me several tries. In the first couple of tries, it did not seem to properly register through the web portal. I got that working in the end. Seeing the balance would still be helpful.

MR CAIN: Is your choice of a physical card connected with concerns about digital information being accessed by others outside of the user portal or is it just a more convenient way for each of you?

Ms Orlova: Probably both. It is convenient, plus I am quite scared about those thefts of my personal data. It has already happened to me twice. I do not want to go through it again.

Ms Vickery: Bank cards have a lot of information written on them, on the outside, so taking them out in public where people can just read that is not something I am super keen on. And there is the potential of other sensors being around. I would prefer a separate thing to have the information stored on it.

MR CAIN: You might be aware that we heard from a couple of IT students yesterday.

Ms Vickery: Yes—the other ANU kids.

MR CAIN: Patrick and Shaun, who are—

Ms Vickery: That was not good. The news has been passed around campus.

MR CAIN: Unfortunately, they were benevolent penetrators of the system and they made sure that what they discovered was not made available elsewhere. It has been interesting. Thank you for your feedback.

THE CHAIR: Can you tell me what top-up options you are using at the moment?

Ms Vickery: I use the auto top-up at the moment.

Ms Orlova: It is the same for me, but I agree with Alexandra that it would be great to see the balance, even if you have auto top-up. Not all people want auto top-up. Also, many people are quite wary about direct debits. It is very hard to stop those direct debits once they are set up—for example, for a gym or other stuff, if you do not want to use it anymore. To cancel direct debit is a nightmare.

THE CHAIR: Yes. You cannot top up at vending machines, can you? We do not have vending machines, so the only way you could top up is by using your account.

Ms Orlova: I think so.

Ms Vickery: That is my understanding. You can do the anonymous top-ups through the web portal as well. That is my understanding at least.

THE CHAIR: Awesome. I thank both of you so much for coming in. That was excellent. We are getting some very interesting evidence in these hearings. It is really good to hear directly from people using the system, particularly two people who are both using the system and have expertise for different reasons. Thank you.

Ms Orlova: Thank you for having us.

Ms Vickery: I really hope they fix it.

Ms Orlova: Yes. I really hope it will be accessible, at least at some time in the future.

MR CAIN: That might be one of our recommendations.

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Ms Orlova: It is a shame to have this situation.

THE CHAIR: Yes. Accessibility is pretty dark. Thank you

Short suspension.

BUTLER, MR LACHLAN, Chair, Belconnen Community Council

THE CHAIR: Welcome, Mr Lachlan Butler, from the Belconnen Community Council. Thank you so much for joining us today. I will run through the privilege obligations, rights and responsibilities. Witnesses must tell the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be considered contempt of the Assembly. If we ask you a question that is outside your experience or what your members have told you, you can just say, "That's outside my experience." It is absolutely fine for you to say, "Here's what I've heard," or "I remember." All of that is fine. Can you confirm that you understand the implications of the privilege statement, that you have read and received it and that you agree with it?

Mr Butler: Read, received, understand and agree.

THE CHAIR: Excellent. I will start with the first question. I was extremely impressed, as you have done a bit of a survey to back up your submission, haven't you? Can you tell us a little bit about that?

Mr Butler: Yes. We did a survey over the December-January period. We had over 170 people respond. A lot of that was outside our normal community council membership base. It was quite interesting, regarding the results that we got back. It does not limit our ability to comment on improvements that have happened in the last month or so, but it was interesting to hear about the community's genuine interest, feedback and what they wanted from MyWay+.

THE CHAIR: It is certainly a high response rate to any survey through a community council. Were you surprised at the level of interest?

Mr Butler: We have been slowly increasing our responses to surveys over time. We have been trying to incorporate more digital methods. We have tried to have topics in ways that interest people and get their involvement. But I was quite surprised by how quickly we got the 170 responses. That was in a week or two weeks.

THE CHAIR: That is excellent. What were the sorts of things that you heard? Were there any common themes or threads?

Mr Butler: Generally, people were a bit disappointed and very frustrated with how the rollout occurred. The MyWay+ product is quite all-encompassing. It has been put forward as this big solution to transport, but is it solving the problems that people actually have? I think that is the question that needs to be asked. And what problems was it solving? One question was: "What were the features that you were most keen for?" Really, there were just three: pay by card and, by extension, by phone; instantaneous top-ups; and live tracking. That is really what people wanted.

THE CHAIR: We have had a lot of other features that perhaps are not working.

Mr Butler: Definitely. With the journey tracking, there are a lot of interesting features in there, but they are so half-baked that they should not have been released until they were actually working. The journey planning one is quite interesting. I do not want to

dox myself, but I am on the R2 route. I can walk for five minutes, get on the bus and get to work. When I put it in, I thought, "Okay, let's see what the MyWay+ app can do." It suggested driving to my bus stop, which was a two-minute drive. It recommended a motorcycle. It then recommended driving to the park-and-ride in Kippax, then catching the R2. It finally recommended walking to the bus and catching it.

THE CHAIR: With the survey, you asked people to rate it. Have I read this right? There was an average rating of 2.1 out of five, and a lot of people gave it one star.

Mr Butler: Yes, a majority of people gave it one star, with the total average being 2.1. Communication was one of the clear problems that people identified.

THE CHAIR: You are spending time doing surveys. Why do you think it is important to do surveys and ask users what they think about the service?

Mr Butler: Fundamentally, they are the people that are using the MyWay+; they are the people that we want to get using MyWay+, whether they are a bus user or not—sorry, a public transport user. There is no light rail in Belconnen, so I always talk about buses. These are people that we either want to keep on buses or people that we want to get onto buses. They are the people that use it, at the end of the day, so it has to work for them.

PTCBR spoke yesterday about how it should not occupy your brain capacity whatsoever. You should just think, "I need to catch a bus." You should not be worrying about how you are actually going to pay for it or how you are going to use the app.

MS CARRICK: Could you tell us more about the issues with the app? People definitely want to be able to get on the bus, top up their card and track the buses to know when they are coming. As far as the app goes, what do you see as the major issues with that?

Mr Butler: More qualified people may have spoken about the accessibility issues there have been with the app. At the end of the day, with the MyWay+ app, most people will be using it to access their digital card or digital QR code; I am hopeful that they will get rid of that one.

It should be simple and easy to use. Because there are so many features in there, it makes it complicated, harder to learn and harder to understand how to use it. When all the features do not work, it is impossible to know how it is meant to work. It should just be a simple matter of opening it up and using it straightaway.

MS CARRICK: Do you think that the objectives of the project and the scope were clear at the beginning? From what I can work out, there was not any community input to what the scope of the project would be, and the government and NEC have developed the product without community input. We have now ended up with this huge journey planner that incorporates the healthiest option first. Do you think that the whole scope of the project was done for a people-focused objective?

Mr Butler: Definitely not. Realistically, I think most people thought, "A new ticketing system; we'll be able to pay with a card, we'll hopefully be able to transfer funds in and

not take two to five business days. It will just work." We did not have too much input into it—not that we had the opportunity to do so. I thought that the project was relatively self-explanatory—a simple, easy ticketing system, people focused, get it out the door, and modernise what we are doing here in the ACT.

I am in my 20s and I am a tech enthusiast. I studied software design in college. If someone should be able to understand how the MyWay+ app works, I would be reasonably up there. I do not know how most of it works. It is definitely a case of mission creep.

MS CARRICK: Yes, the scope.

Mr Butler: The scope, yes.

MS CARRICK: Scope creep, yes. As you say, if you cannot understand it, for the elderly community, many of whom are not necessarily IT savvy, it is very difficult for them, and it causes anxiety about trying to use the network.

Mr Butler: Definitely. One issue that came up in the survey was that people were saying, "I'm afraid to use a bus because I don't want to be shouted at or judged; that's too stressful for me." They just decided not to use the bus network.

MS CARRICK: It was even hard for people to understand what the payment options were.

Mr Butler: Yes, tap-to-pay is not very clear. If you talk to someone on the street, they say, "Yes, you tap with your MyWay card." "Tap-to-pay" does not imply a new service, which is the bank card payment. The communication was definitely poor in this system, with the rollout.

For me, it is the corflutes they put up that said, "MyWay+ now launched" or "Now here," and it listed three features that were not really available. It listed tap-to-pay, which does not really give you any information. It said live tracking, which was not available. The third one was journey planning; as I said, it told me to drive to my local bus stop and catch the bus. Those corflutes, in my opinion, should have been taken down that day or the next day and replaced with accurate signage.

MS CARRICK: Or easier to understand.

Mr Butler: Easier to understand, accurate information is really important. Someone emailed us last week, saying, "I consider myself pretty smart, but this thing makes me seem dumb." The most recent update on the Transport Canberra website is from 22 January, excluding one post about how to use the QR code. And that one does not even mention improvements to MyWay+ which are desperately needed.

MS CARRICK: The transition was strange because there were only three buses that had the readers on them, and the user testing group had to go and find those buses on the routes they were on. Presumably, you had to drive to get to the route where the test reader was. The testing was pretty poor. The people doing the testing did not get to test the debit card because that was commissioned only four days before it went live. Really,

the people focus and trying to work with the community were fairly non-existent.

Mr Butler: I definitely agree. We appreciate that Transport Canberra came out to one of our public meetings the week before the launch. We definitely appreciate all government entities coming to speak to us and to the community. The tricky thing was that what we heard on that night did not match what happened the next week, in the launch.

MS CARRICK: Do you have any idea why they went live on that date, with the condition of the system?

Mr Butler: I could speculate on many different reasons, which probably would not be too appropriate. They definitely should not have made it a hard launch on that day. At the very least, they should have changed the communications in such a way that it was a soft launch.

MS CARRICK: Do you know how long before the launch date, 25 or 27 November, they committed to that date?

Mr Butler: I am not too aware.

MS TOUGH: I am interested in feedback on the QR codes, people that use them and what they have reported, and whether anyone has reported that they have persisted with using them or whether the feedback is a general no.

Mr Butler: Most of the survey responses that we got were in that January period, when they were definitely not very functional. From our survey responses, I would not be able to provide too much of an answer on that. I put $20 in my MyWay+ account because I really wanted to use the QR code, and I still have $20 in my account because I cannot get the QR code to work.

MS TOUGH: Do you know if there is a way of getting—I do not know whether you have looked at this—that money back off the account; or, once it is on there, it is just—

Mr Butler: It is a question I have been asking myself and I have been meaning to look into it, but the gambler in me, the optimist in me, is thinking, "No, the QR code will work next time."

MS TOUGH: You have not tried it again?

Mr Butler: I have tried it a few times. Every time I have caught the bus, I have tried to use it, and everyone in the line of people behind me is thinking, "Can this guy just get on the bus?" I then change to the card on my phone and use that.

MS TOUGH: When you go to use it, does it automatically try and open your digital wallet on your phone?

Mr Butler: I have not had that issue. I am the guy that goes through every setting on my phone, so—

MR CAIN: We did hear yesterday that when some people used the QR, they found that their other cards were opened up.

Mr Butler: Especially with Android phones, you can have it so that your card always works; you do not have to do something to activate it. I have friends that have an Android phone; they just tap. If they try to tap with the QR code, the card is always active and, because the card was the only one working, that is what worked.

MR CAIN: We heard yesterday as well from a couple of IT students who did some penetration testing and, fortunately, quarantined their results because they were accessing other people's information. Is that something that would concern you as well, and the Belconnen Community Council?

Mr Butler: Definitely. It was a question that was raised in our public meeting the week beforehand, and the assurance that we got was, "We follow all the strict government regulations and whatnot on that." I thought that the matter was rested—not that any security matter should ever be rested, but that was a question that was specifically asked a week before the launch and we were told, "Security is topnotch."

MR CAIN: Following up on the consultation side of things, when you did your survey in December-January, did you feed that back to the department once you got it?

Mr Butler: No, we did not feed it back, primarily because one of the things we are trying to do is expand the number of people that engage with our surveys. The recent surveys we have done have really focused on trying to remove personalised information and make it very clear to people that it is a volunteer community group that will advocate for you; it is not just all going to be handed to the government.

With data from surveys, you have to be quite sensitive with it. The ABS require that you cannot have groups of less than 10. If you have a bunch of eight people that say they are under 25, you have to combine them with people under the age of 34. We are very cautious about not wanting to have our own data privacy issues on our end.

MR CAIN: In representing the Belconnen area, apart from giving your submission to us as a committee, have you lobbied the government, post the rollout, to express, through a submission or otherwise, your concerns and the feedback that you were getting, or have you taken the committee opportunity to do that?

Mr Butler: Our main method is through this inquiry and this committee here, but we have reached out to Minister Steel about a range of transport-related issues. If a conversation were to happen, we would be talking about MyWay+.

MR CAIN: Including MyWay+?

Mr Butler: I do not think we specifically included that, but that would be one that, in a meeting, we would, of course, raise.

THE CHAIR: You have pointed out that Belconnen is a really large district. We have over 100,000 people. We have no light rail. Buses are pretty important for a lot of people out there, and you have noted that nearly a quarter of them are not running on time.

Also, the live tracking is not really helping us. Can you run me through the impacts of this?

Mr Butler: Yes. It is a genuine impact because, as you said, Belconnen is the largest district and the R2 specifically is a very long bus route, and it is the worst performer out of the rapid routes. I think that one goes down to 67 per cent with respect to being on time. It does have a meaningful impact, because if it is every 15 minutes and you cannot see that a bus has come eight minutes early, you are there waiting, and the next is five or 10 minutes late, it genuinely makes you not want to do it.

That is why, during the transition period, I stopped using the buses, because I could not, at my desk, say, "Okay, this bus is eight minutes early or five minutes late." I could not time it. Instead of my route taking an hour to get home, it would take an hour and 30 minutes. The hour was barely tolerable. The hour and a half just turned me off it.

THE CHAIR: Ninety minutes is not a service; I agree. People were excited about live tracking. What did they expect from live tracking or what did you expect from live tracking?

Mr Butler: I think people expected it to be at least as good as it was before, on the original MyWay system. Before, I used it through third-party apps; they made it quite accessible and quite usable. I always expected it to be at least that good.

THE CHAIR: The new system is not integrated with third-party apps; they have been blocked out, haven't they?

Mr Butler: Not yet. They have not shared the data with third-party apps, which is one of the things that we recommend in our submission, because the MyWay+ app is terrible, especially with the live tracking.

THE CHAIR: If Transport Canberra is going to fix the live tracking in a way that is usable for people, what does that live tracking need to do?

Mr Butler: They need to open up to third-party apps. If they want people to use the MyWay+ app, it should just be good. They should not be forcing people to use it as the only option. Allowing third-party apps would mean that people could have a choice as to which app they want to use. If people happen to like the MyWay+ app, they are welcome to use it.

THE CHAIR: It would probably need to show buses that have already gone, for instance, buses that are running early, and buses that have arrived and left, so that you know that the bus has just gone.

Mr Butler: Definitely. I have used the MyWay+ app recently and I have opened it up to try and use the live tracking thing. I cannot see recent buses very well, or I cannot find the current bus. It is generally just a mess. As I said before, I should be one of the people most able to use it. It is easy to think that accessibility is just nice to have, but, for so many people in our community, it is a necessity. Even for the people that do not need it, making things more readable and more usable is a benefit.

THE CHAIR: With respect to our nearly 80,000 Canberrans who are living with a disability, we have heard from quite a number of them in this inquiry. With the features in the previous system, you could find out, for instance, if a bus was wheelchair accessible and you would know if the bus had just gone; particularly if you are visually impaired and there might be three at the bus stop, you need to know which one you are after. Those features have all gone under this new system, haven't they?

Mr Butler: Yes. I am not in the business of bashing public servants, but I would definitely be curious to know how many people on the project team use public transport, because there are so many features and aspects to the design of this that make me convinced that they have never caught a bus.

They have changed this one, but the display screens in the buses had the origin of the bus as the first listed stop. You get on a bus that says, "Fraser—west Fraser, R2," and you think, "Okay, great." You get on it, you look at the top and it says "R2 Fyshwick." You think, "What's going on here?" It is just incredible how poor some of the things that are very much within the control of Transport Canberra have been.

THE CHAIR: We have also lost the labelling of a bike rack on a bus, which has been raised by a number of people who use the bus when their bike has a puncture or when the weather is poor; we have lost quite a bit in that live tracking.

Mr Butler: Especially if your journey is a 15-minute or 10-minute bike ride before you get on the bus, or after it. You do not want to get there, find out that you have actually just missed the bus and the next one does not have a bike rack.

MS CARRICK: The account balance being a feature on the reader is no longer there.

Mr Butler: That was one of the smaller features that came up in our survey as well. It is a quality of life thing; you do not have to think about what is on your balance. You can just get on the bus, you tap on, it works, you tap off, and you think, "Okay, I've got eight bucks left."

MS CARRICK: "I have so many trips left before I have to top it up."

Mr Butler: Yes. The thing with public transport is that it will rarely be the quickest option, but it needs to be made much more convenient. You cannot have to think really hard about how you are going to pay for it and have always in the back of your mind whether or not you have money in your account. It just needs to work.

THE CHAIR: Turn up and go.

Mr Butler: Exactly.

THE CHAIR: Mr Butler, thank you so much for your time. Again, we appreciate your contribution on the council, and thank you for your excellent submission and your excellent survey. I will put it on the record that you appear to have done a better job of getting user feedback than the actual project itself, so well done on that.

Mr Butler: Thank you. Any time.

THE CHAIR: We will suspend until 10.30.

Short suspension.

WALTERS, MR COLIN JOHN, Chair, Inner South Canberra Community Council

THE CHAIR: Welcome, Mr Colin Walters, from the Inner South Community Council. Thank you very much for joining us from ISCCC. We always appreciate your detailed and considered submissions. I will remind you of the protections and obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege and draw your attention to the privilege statement you have been given. Witnesses must tell the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and might be treated as contempt of the Assembly. Can I get you to confirm that you have read that statement, you understand it and you are happy to abide by it?

Mr Walters: Absolutely.

THE CHAIR: We have received your submission; thank you. We are not doing opening statements. We will start with Ms Carrick for the first question.

MS CARRICK: I would like to ask you about the importance of project planning, whether the procurement team appeared to do a good job on it and whether they managed the risks properly.

Mr Walters: The key point here is having a thorough risk management system, which any large projects would have. This one is relatively small in terms of the ones that have come a cropper in recent years, but we have had a whole succession of projects which have fallen over or not delivered what was promised and wasted an awful lot of public money. You probably do not need me to remind you what they are, but there is the new Action project, the human resources IT project and, most recently, the health record project. If you add up what seems to have been lost, it comes into tens, if not hundreds, of millions of dollars.

We are concerned, because one of the top issues in the inner south is the rates and the way that they have been shooting up. Obviously, we have high-value properties; so that tends to bump up the rates. Also, the government has piled the rates onto units. If you happen to live in a unit in the inner south, like I do, you have really caught a big increase. Between 2016, when my apartment building was built, and 2024, my rates have gone up 158 per cent and, in that time, CPI has gone up 27 per cent. You might look at me and say, "He can afford that"—and you are right. But there are an awful lot of people who cannot. People on fixed incomes tied to CPI increases have to find that money, and there are a lot of elderly single people—widows and so on—and it has really hit them. So the contributory factors to the government's financial woes, as described vividly by Joh Stanhope and Khalid Ahmed—I do not need to remind you of that—are very important.

As to poor project planning—sorry to rather slowly get onto your answer—I was before this committee about 18 months ago, and I pointed out the apparent lack of any decent risk management for the planning system, which is undergoing huge changes. I think the lack of a decent risk management system—

MS TOUGH: Sorry to cut you off, Mr Walters, but I am just not sure going over other things that are not part of the MyWay inquiry are quite relevant to the MyWay inquiry.

Chair, we only have 20 minutes with Mr Walters—sorry.

THE CHAIR: Sure. We might bring you back to MyWay, but thank you so much.

Mr Walters: I am saying that risk management is highly important. There is an international standard and, if you use it properly, you identify all the risks in advance and you have a management plan to actually manage them and you take stock regularly in stages of what is going on. That is what appears not to have happened here. I am not terribly surprised, because, in response to some of the other recent problems, we have the government is procurement reform program and the blurb on that does not even mention risk management.

Risk management should be at the forefront and the centrepiece of project management. All the problems I am hearing—having been brought back to MyWay, quite rightly— should have been avoided if there had been enough risk identification in the first place. This goes for all the other projects too. You have to be rigorous about identifying the risks, which can be difficult from politicians particularly, because you have to acknowledge that there are downsides for what you want to do.

We have a lot of huge projects in the pipeline. We have still have the rest of West Basin. We have light rail stage 2b. We have a possible theatre development. I do not know what has happened to the stadium. Unless the government gets a grip on risk management and applies it across the board properly, thoroughly and honestly, the territory faces enormous problems unless it gets this right. So we are unapologetic in actually making it a bit of a centrepiece of our submission. You need to go up a level and say, "What links this to the other projects that have fallen over?" That is our answer.

MS CARRICK: The system went live. It is not clear what was driving the launch date. There was functionality that was not properly tested—because it did not work on day one. Obviously, the user-testing was not adequate. This is a part of risk management. Do you have any views on the implementation in the context of providing a system that was focused on the needs of the users, the scoping of it in the first place, and the user-testing to mitigate any risks of functionality not working?

Mr Walters: I have noticed from the other submissions you have had that a number of the testers have complained about the fact that their views were not listened to. I do not have any direct knowledge of that, but I am sure those people are telling the truth. In terms of scoping the thing out, the point we have drawn attention to is the impact on older people. You would have thought that the priority groups, older people and the disabled—and I read in the papers about the evidence you have had on that—if you were doing a proper risk assessment of this project, would actually be put at the top of the list of people you need to try and help. The problem has not gone away yet.

I have with me a MyWay card, which I got from the garage in Manuka—and I have with me the old card. Older people are still required to carry two. When older people get confused quite easily anyway—and they are not up with the software like Lachlan— they need to be told simple messages. I still do not understand why the seniors card cannot have be imprinted on the back of the MyWay+ card, just as it was on the old card. Why couldn't that have been done? There is no functionality on the old seniors card; so it would not interfere with the functionality on this thing.

But the indication of where the government has got to is that, as from July, seniors who do not have a new card or have not managed to conquer the QRs and all the rest of it—which very few of them would be able to do—they will be turned off the bus. The over-70s and, outside the rush hour, the over 65s, travel free. You are going to get turned off the bus for not having a card, when you would not have had to pay anyway. What a bizarre outcome. You have to wonder how that has come about.

Apparently, there was a risk register. If I were on your side of the table—and you have the minister and his troops coming on next—I would say, "Who saw that risk register? Which of these problems were on it? Which were missed? Who signed off on it?" If you look at the government's evidence, there are five levels of committees that were responsible for this project—which I would say is about three too many; a confusing management structure. Who signed off on the risk plan and did they seriously look at it and anticipate some of these problems? Did the minister see it? If I were the minister—it is easy for me to say in my dotage, because I will never be one—I would have asked to see it. I think the minister should see the risk management plans on all these major projects. That gives the minister the chance to ask, "Have you thought about older people? Have you thought about the disabled?"

MR CAIN: Although, if the minister does not see it, he can say, "Well, it was in the hands of others," obviously.

Mr Walters: I did not quite catch that, Mr Cain.

MR CAIN: Sorry. If the minister does not see the plan, or does not want to see it, that means he does not have anything to answer for.

Mr Walters: Why don't you ask the minister? I do not know.

MR CAIN: We might do that.

Mr Walters: Certainly from my experience with politicians, they do not want to hear bad news. I have been a private secretary to half a dozen ministers in the UK. I do not think they are any different here. But if they are a good minister, they will say, "Tell me the truth. Let's go through this carefully. I do not want to be taken by surprise."

THE CHAIR: You mentioned the impact on seniors. We have had a submission from COTA that indicated they got 3,000 phone calls from their members. Do you think there was a lot of confusion from seniors in Canberra about this new system?

Mr Walters: The curious thing about COTA is they told me they put a submission in, but I cannot find it on your website.

THE CHAIR: It will be published shortly. We just received it yesterday. They have lodged it, but you will not have seen their submission yet.

Mr Walters: I have not had the benefit of reading their submission. I have talked to them, and they said that they did point out some of the problems to the government in advance. I would have expected them to do that, and I would expect the government to

take notice.

In terms of old people, it comes from our committee and what they have heard from people and how they get button-holed and all the rest of it. We got a visit from a member of the management team before go live, and he could not really explain in simple terms what old people were expected to do. The fact is that there was very little information on the initial release. It has improved now, although it has the problem I explained to you and I think the real cliff will come in June or July when people get to that point. I am not surprised that they were confused. Older people are not particularly IT savvy. I am not, although I have run big IT projects in the past—but that is the past; it is not now. So I am not surprised they were confused, really, particularly, for example, when they have tried to get a card and it ran out. My wife has been trying to transfer her balance, and she has been told it is going to take a couple of weeks. That is even now. The problems are not over.

THE CHAIR: No; thank you.

MS TOUGH: In your submission, you talk about the New South Wales Opal card system. Given there have been quite a lot of issues quite recently in New South Wales with that Opal card system, I was wondering what particular features of that system you were interested in—whether it was the connectivity of a bigger system or whether it was the tap and go, the tap on and off functions. What was the interest in the Opal system?

Mr Walters: I do not think people thought it was any better than the ACT system, to be perfectly honest. They would just like it to be interoperable. That affects us in the inner south directly, because people think of us as Forrest and Deakin and all those rather swanky places, but we include Oaks Estate. The Oaks Estate does not even have a bus. One of our members pleaded with me to assure you that the bus service is very valued in the inner south. It really is, and it will continue to be after light rail, which will not be much use to us. The bus service is valued.

Oaks Estate does not have an ACT bus. If someone there wants to get to a medical appointment at, say, the new medical centre that the government is building in Griffith, they have to get a Queanbeyan bus into Queanbeyan, change onto a Queanbeyan bus to come into Civic and then change onto an ACT bus to get back down to Griffith. People really would like to see that integrated. The Oaks Estate are really forgotten people—and we are about to say something about that. So that is one aspect.

The other aspect is that people come up to me say, "It is only a small country; why can't we have the same card that works in Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne?" Having seen all the problems with this rollout, I realise that that is like asking for a Rolls Royce when we would be happy with a small Holden, to be perfectly honest. It comes up again and again. You would think that, at some point in the future, surely that is going to be possible. Then you can think about linking it up with other places. It is only a piece of plastic with a bit of code on it. Why doesn't it work in London? Why doesn't it work in Singapore? They have the same system with the same-sized piece of plastic. But I realise that that is a bit unrealistic in present circumstances. It would be nice to get this one right—learn to walk before you can run.

MS TOUGH: Thank you.

MR CAIN: So we have just had a submission from the Belconnen Community Council—and thank you for being in the gallery and observing the Belconnen Community Council submission. What is the feeling from the inner south community members, the residents? What kind of public transport system do you think they want that would encourage them to use public transport? What would actually work to get that community to take up public transport?

Mr Walters: I would say two things: more buses and, secondly and importantly, the real-time information. I was asked to make the point to you by a young woman with a small child who works in Russell. She depends on getting the timetabled bus back to Griffith in order to collect the child. So it is really critical sort of timing. the NXTBUS application, which has been stood down, was fine for that. You could tell whether the bus was coming and, if it was cancelled—and they have to be cancelled sometimes— you could ring for an Uber. Now, she is in the dark. She stands at the bus stop and does not know whether it is coming in 10 minutes or half an hour. So she does not know what to do. So it is not just the luxury of having that piece of information; it is really important. I think those are the two things: more buses and some real-time information.

MR CAIN: Thank you for putting your submission in to our committee and being bold enough to come and appear before us. Have you, on behalf of the council, lobbied the government directly on these sorts of general issues as well as the MyWay+?

Mr Walters: I think putting in a submission is lobbying the government.

MR CAIN: Yes.

Mr Walters: We have plenty of other things on our plate—we are about to put something major out on the Oaks Estate, for example—and you have to pick and choose. But I hope the government is listening to all of this anyway.

MR CAIN: Someone is, yes.

Mr Walters: Incidentally, when I spoke to the ABC—when the call for submissions first went out—the reporter there said, "There are only four submissions." There is not now; there are about 110. So you can see the level of concern.

THE CHAIR: We have over 150. Some of those submissions, like Belconnen Community Council—

MR CAIN: Confidential.

THE CHAIR: No; it was in the press release. Some of those submissions are based on surveys of 170 people. So it is quite a large number.

Mr Walters: You have some very good submissions. Having lived through any number of these inquiries, I thought there were people with much more expertise than me who have given you some really good comments.

MS TOUGH: I am curious as to whether anyone has reported using the QR code.

Mr Walters: I did not quite hear.

MS TOUGH: I am curious to know if anyone has reported using the QR code.

Mr Walters: It is mostly elderly people that have talked to us—and most of those would sooner fly to the moon than use a QR code. It is a problem when you are developing IT systems. A lot of the time you are doing IT systems where you are dealing with one bunch of IT experts or another. In this case, you are interfacing with the public, and you need to take into account the demographic of the public. Lachlan, who is pretty savvy on IT, said that he struggled with the darn thing. If people came to me and said, "I am struggling with the QR code," I would say, "Well, don't do it; use some other method."

I have noticed, by the way, that the government says that it had a high take-up of the credit card option. That is fine, but how much of that was due to the fact that people could not use the QR code or could not get a code and all the rest of it? I would have thought quite a lot of people would have done that, because I would have said, "Well, if you cannot make this work, it does say you can use a Visa card and so on," which was a good fallback. But I do not think these people particularly want to put yet more little sums on their visa card.

MS CARRICK: One of the issues is that, if you want your account information, the debit-credit card is not necessarily linking properly with the account information. So it does not matter which option you look at, something does not seem to be right.

Mr Walters: It does seem that there is no shortage of problems with this new system. I do not think it is a hanging offence for the people who have been working on this— the programmers, the lower-level people. The faults in this lie at the higher level—the way that the thing has been managed and the way the risks have been managed. I say that because I have been responsible for a few big systems. People toil away and they do what they are asked to do, and often non-experts do not appreciate the level of complexity when you are trying to join a new system up to legacy systems.

Having tried doing that here in Canberra, it is a fact that at the commonwealth level, at least, with some of the older systems, the documentation is missing and they have been added to over the years—like the 1955, 1956, 1957, 1958 and 1959 Ford. How it all links together is a matter of trial by error half the time. Unless you can find some old bloke who actually worked on the initial system, you are going to try plug it all together and then cross your fingers it does not blow up in your face. That is just part of doing this stuff.

MS CARRICK: Mr Walters, would it be fair to represent the risk management as: when issues were raised, they were not put on the risk register and investigated for mitigation?

Mr Walters: The question is: what was on the risk register? I do not know. There is a reference to its existence in the government evidence. I have not seen it. I think a very good question is: what was in it? Maybe the government will take that on notice and

give you a copy, and we can all have a look at how much and how often it was updated and what action it led to.

THE CHAIR: It is not at this stage a public document. But I imagine there will be some questions about it. That is probably as much as we can say about what is on the risk register.

MS CARRICK: This conversation had led me to think that, as the issues were identified, they were not put on the risk register and investigated—it seems.

Mr Walters: It should be a public document, by the way, and it should have an independent monitor. Those are two crucial things if you are running a big project.

THE CHAIR: Mr Walters, thank you so much for coming in. Thank you for your points. I apologise if we look a bit one-sided on the information at the moment, because there is information that is not public. But we are listening very carefully to all of these tips about external monitoring and questions for the risk register. That has been really useful, and the information in ISCCC's submission about governance has been excellent. I trust by the end of the hearings, there will be a public report in which there will be more information in the public domain than there currently is—if that is of any assistance whatsoever. Thank you so much for your time this morning. The parliament looks forward to further submissions from the ISCCC on other matters.

Mr Walters: I wish I could say I look forward to writing them—but there you go.

Hearing suspended from 10.50 am to 11.04 am.

STEEL, MR CHRIS, Treasurer, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, Minister for Heritage and Minister for Transport

McHUGH, MR BEN, Deputy Director-General, Transport Canberra and Business Services, TCCS

STURMAN, MS JUDITH, Executive Branch Manager, Transport Canberra, TCCS

VALTAS, MR JULIAN, Executive Branch Manager, Cyber Security Centre and Chief Information Security Officer, DDTS, CMTEDD

WHITE, MR MARK, Executive Branch Manager, Transport Canberra and Business Services, TCCS

THE CHAIR: Welcome, Mr Chris Steel, Minister for Transport and officials. For the officials, before you first speak, please confirm that you have read, received and you agree with the privilege statement. I will remind you of the protections and obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege before we proceed. Witnesses must tell the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated as a serious matter and might be considered contempt of this Assembly. We have a camera here that is filming for the ABC. Is everybody comfortable with that? Excellent. We are not doing opening statements, so we will proceed straight to the first question.

MR BRADDOCK: The evidence from other submitters is that the MyWay+ app and system do not comply with the Disability Discrimination Act and it appears it will not for another six months. Is the government of the position that it is noncompliant with the Disability Discrimination Act?

Mr Steel: Under the contract that we have with NEC there is an expectation that it meets the WCAG 2.1 standard and I will hand over to Transport Canberra to talk further about how we have been working with NEC to make sure that they perform the terms of their contract.

THE CHAIR: Sorry, minister, I might get you to confirm the privilege—

Mr Steel: I acknowledge the privilege statement.

Mr McHugh: I have read and understood the privileges statement. Thanks for the question, Mr Braddock. I apologise; I am a little under the weather and my hearing is not great, so if I have to ask you to repeat the question, that is why.

So when we prepared the contract for going to market for this system, we defined in that contract the compliance with accessibility standards for a range of components of the system. I think there was even four specific subcomponents in there that required compliance to be delivered within the delivery phase of that contract. The contract is split into two primary parts: a delivery phase and an operations and maintenance phase. The operation and maintenance phase is executed at the point when the deliverables have been provided and completed. We are working with NEC at the moment through the final phases of the delivery component. I do understand NEC, in their response yesterday, expected that could take up to six months. We are working towards a midyear or earlier end of the delivery phase and then moving to operations and maintenance. That would be on the basis that accessibility has been complied with as per the contract.

MR BRADDOCK: So just some clarifying questions. If the system is currently—

because it still under the development phase—not compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act—

Mr McHugh: It will be.

MR BRADDOCK: —but it will be once it achieves that operational maintenance phase?

Mr McHugh: Correct. It would be considered partially compliant. Some of those elements may be compliant. For those familiar with the act, some components of compliance are very much black and white, and then there are others that are open to assessment and some more subjectivity, and that is primarily where the focus at the moment is, refining that to ensure how we will know it is compliant when it is compliant. NEC have engaged an independent accessibility consulting firm called Get Skilled Access. They were engaged earlier this calendar year. They will be auditing all of the components of the MyWay+ system provided by NEC and will be providing a report that supports their submission for completion of the delivery phase, including the compliance with the WCAG requirements.

MR BRADDOCK: This system went live in November. It is currently March, which is potentially six months fully operational. The maintenance phase is to commence, and hopefully compliance is achieved then. Why was the decision made to allow a government system to go live which was not compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act, freezing out some of the most vulnerable parts of our community for a period of 11 months or so?

Mr McHugh: The decision to go live with the system was based on the assessment that the system met, I guess, minimum operational requirements at the time. We did consider accessibility in that assessment. We have been consulting for almost two years now with an accessibility reference group that has representations from various stakeholders within the community who have been presented with the development of the system at a range of phases. We will go to that a bit later if the session allows in terms of our stakeholder engagement piece and how that was undertaken. They were presented with the system in its various stages of development and provided feedback and supported with solutions to those at the time. It is, and has always been, our commitment to have a fully compliant MyWay+ system at the end of the delivery phase and we still are committed to achieving that.

MR BRADDOCK: So what feedback did that disability reference group provide in terms of knowing it will be 11 months when this system basically would shut out, to an extent, some disabled users?

Mr McHugh: I am not sure I would agree that it has shut out some disabled users. I think the feedback we were provided with was more around the refinement of the interactions with the system, some of which might move away from accessibility and more into user experience. We should understand these are two very different things. A lot of the feedback we have received from the community where the term "accessibility" has been used would be considered technically a user experience issue more so than an accessibility compliance issue. We have taken all of that feedback and we have triaged it into those categories to make sure we are focused on our compliance

before we then move into the user experience benefits that we also are committed to achieving for the community.

MR BRADDOCK: This committee has had evidence from various disabled people during its hearings, from people who are shut out from certain functionalities, such as the ability to use the app, to top up MyWay+ and so forth. Are you gaslighting their responses in terms of their inability to interface with this program?

Mr McHugh: Absolutely not. Every user has a different experience and I would not be speaking on behalf of everyone in saying that it is accessible for all, but the commitment in the contract and the commitment from the project is to make sure that it is compliant with the standards, the accessibility standards.

MR BRADDOCK: Yes. I need a moment to collect my thoughts.

THE CHAIR: Can you confirm, is MyWay+ currently compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act?

Mr McHugh: The current version of the system that is operational at the moment is not and that has been acknowledged by NEC in the hearings yesterday.

THE CHAIR: No, that is fine. Thank you. You have noted there are a lot of issues. The issues that have been reported to us, just during hearings, not even in submissions, have been that people in wheelchairs cannot tell if their bus is wheelchair accessible. They do not know if their bus is running on time or if it has just left. This has presented particular problems for people with mobility issues and visual impairments. People, particularly with visual impairments, English as a second language, or other reasons that they have basic accessibility needs, cannot pay for their bus on the website. Do you think those are user experience issues or core accessibility issues?

Mr McHugh: I am sure some of those are core accessibility issues.

THE CHAIR: It certainly does sound like it. The contract requires, as every ACT government contract requires, the contractor to be compliant with all legislation. This contract obviously is not. The contractor has not delivered a legally compliant service. Minister, can you tell me what briefings did you receive and what questions did you ask about this aspect of the service, particularly given your experiences in the past with providing a bus service that was not meeting basic accessibility requirements?

Mr Steel: Well, firstly, the current buses do meet accessibility requirements. Secondly, in relation to the discussions that were being had with the community, particularly people with mobility issues and other disabilities, I established the Accessibility Reference Group in Transport Canberra in the lead up to the MyWay project. One of the purposes of that committee was to consult on the development of the MyWay+ system, as well as other issues and projects that Transport Canberra has on foot, including the procurement of new buses. So that was certainly intended to bring into the conversation community voices from a variety of different viewpoints—not the only people in the community, and we did not want to make that committee feel like they needed to represent every single person either, but certainly a useful committee to actually engage with in the development of a system, and that has certainly occurred. I

will hand over to Judith to talk a little bit about the engagement.

THE CHAIR: We have a brief on the FOI register of 25 November. I think that was the go live brief. That is the last public record. I am sure there were meetings. Can you tell me from that brief or from the meetings that were happening at the time, did anyone raise accessibility concerns with you on day one, or did you ask?

Mr Steel: There were some broader accessibility issues that I think were discussed. You would probably note on that brief that there was a discussion as well. It was not just the written brief—that was not the sort of be all and end all of the discussion about go live. It was actually one of the last points of discussion ahead of go live. There had been multiple points of discussions and briefings about the development of the project in its final phase, noting that caretaker mode, I think, ended in November as well.

Obviously I had previously been the minister and involved in the early development of the system as well. Certainly the focus of that brief is on the core operational elements of the system, and there was assurance given that those critical elements were ready to go live. A previous decision had been made by me to slightly delay the project to enable some of those features to be further ready, such as the installation of the hardware on buses. Certainly it was my expectation, given that it was in the contract, that NEC would be meeting those guidelines, and it still is the expectation that they will meet them within the transition phase that we are currently in under the contract.

MR CAIN: So minister, we have just heard that every user had a different experience. We have heard from users and user testers over the last day and this morning as well. It would seem that the MyWay rollout has, indeed, been a case of "My way to hell", for many. So why did you allow this thing to roll out with so many obvious faults that were apparent to simple users, to unsophisticated bus travellers? Why did you allow this to roll out with so many faults obviously just waiting to appear?

Mr Steel: In our submission, through the inquiry we have provided information on the range of issues that presented in relation to—

MR CAIN: No, that is not my question, minister.

Mr Steel: I have not finished answering your question, if that is okay, Mr Cain. I will go to some of those issues. As NEC mentioned yesterday, some of those issues were unexpected and presented when—

MR CAIN: Why were they unexpected?

Mr Steel: They were issues that were not identified prior to go live.

MR CAIN: And why was that?

Mr Steel: Well, because they were unexpected issues. We have provided some information in our submission about those specific problems. Some of those did present on the day of launch but there was quite quick rectification, as would be our expectation under the contract that we have with NEC, on some of those problems.

MR CAIN: What was the failure?

Mr Steel: Those are listed in there in some detail. I am happy to go into each of them if you would like, thank you.

THE CHAIR: Ms Tough?

Mr Steel: Sorry, I do not think we finished answering the question around what those specific issues were.

MR CAIN: No, I do not need to hear that. I am happy to go to Ms Tough.

Mr Steel: Sorry, that was the question, so maybe if I can suggest that the committee looks at the—

THE CHAIR: If you would like to list them for the record—

MR CAIN: We do not want a lengthy answer.

Mr Steel: Well, it is right at the end of the submission. So if you have not read the whole submission it is right there, and it outlines the key major issues that presented and how those have been resolved. There are some issues that have been raised where we are still undertaking work with NEC to address those issues. Generally, the experience for people—as I have been using the bus system and from what we have seen in the data that has been presented thus far—is that people are using the new functionality of the system in the way that it was intended. It is a functional system.

MR CAIN: We had a period of real concern and chaos. You have not addressed that.

Mr Steel: People are using—people are successfully—

THE CHAIR: Mr Cain and minister, I am going to remind everybody that Hansard cannot keep an accurate record of the hearings if more than one person is speaking at once. Minister, if you can conclude.

Mr Steel: Yes, thank you. So people are using the system in the way that it was intended, tapping on and off with their credit and debit cards, including the use of those cards on their mobile phone, and also using the new MyWay+ cards to tap on and off public transport as well. Most people's experience, I think, has been quite good since some of the day one launch issues have been resolved and noting that this inquiry is in March and is obviously taking place some time after those issues were resolved. I am not surprised that we are hearing that people's experience on day one and two and so forth of the rollout was not what we hoped it to be, and we certainly agree with their point of view on that, but a large number of the issues have been resolved.

There are some other issues that still are in progress, and we are working through those. Some of those relate to the user experience issue. We certainly want to reassure the committee that for any submissions that have been put into the inquiry where they have raised some of those issues, we have collated all of that feedback and we will be looking at how we can address it, triage those and work with NEC to improve the user

experience.

THE CHAIR: Good to know.

MS TOUGH: You said that NEC have engaged a third party to do their audit. If the website and everything else comes back as noncompliant, that is all on NEC to fix before the end of the contract? It is all NEC's responsibility?

Mr McHugh: Yes, so the contract requires NEC to provide a compliant system, not just the website and the app, but the full system.

MS TOUGH: The full system.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, were you aware that the app and the system would be noncompliant on the go live date in terms of the DDA?

Mr Steel: No. I can hand over to Transport Canberra around the issues that were raised with them prior to go live, but certainly it was my expectation that it would meet the guidelines and the requirements that we have under the contact with NEC. Obviously there is now further work to do, and I am assured that because they are undertaking that independent assessment, they will get that done. Yes, ideally that would have happened from day one, but obviously it has taken longer. It is important to note that the same sort of feature still remains under the current system as with the old system MyWay, which is that people can go into one of the vendors, pick up a MyWay+ concession card and use that without engaging with the web accessibility, but it is still our expectation that the web accessibility is there.

MR BRADDOCK: So to try and clarify, you were operating under the expectation it will be compliant from day one?

Mr Steel: No, that they met the contractual terms that were put forward. Certainly whilst a number of those have been addressed, there is clearly issues that have presented themselves based on user feedback. We are very much open to receiving user feedback as we move through this transition phase and make sure we improve the accessibility as much as we can. There are different levels of accessibility as well, and we are hoping that we can achieve a higher level of accessibility as improvements are made to the app.

MR BRADDOCK: Did you ask whether the system would be compliant and accessible from the go live date?

Mr Steel: It was my expectation that it would be accessible as per the terms of the contract, and that was what I was certainly operating off; that we had contracted with NEC for them to be compliant with the current W3C web contact accessibility guidelines 2.1 across device types in relation to the mobile app and the MyWay+ portal, which is the website.

MR CAIN: And who gave you that assurance?

Mr Steel: It was in the contract so I was assured–

MR CAIN: Who gave you that assurance?

Mr Steel: It was in the contract.

THE CHAIR: Sorry, minister, I think the question was: did you ask? Is that a question you can answer? Did you ask?

Mr Steel: It was part of the contract so it was my expectation that they would meet their contractual terms, and that was known to me before the go live date, and because we had undertaken quite—I knew that Transport Canberra was engaging with the accessibility reference group as well while the development of MyWay+ occurred. Ms Sturman can provide some information about that if you are interested.

MR BRADDOCK: NEC Australia in their evidence yesterday said they were having almost daily meetings with Transport Canberra. Did they raise with Transport Canberra that this system would not be compliant with the DDA on its go live?

Mr McHugh: I would have to go back through our meeting records but—

THE CHAIR: Would you like to take that on notice?

Mr McHugh: Yes, I think that would be the appropriate response.

MR CAIN: It is surprising you do not know. So minister, who gave you the assurance that the system was okay to go live?

Mr Steel: Transport Canberra.

MR CAIN: Do not tell me it was in the contract. We know that. Did someone give you that assurance?

Mr Steel: In terms of the system, the broad system, Transport Canberra.

MR CAIN: Transport Canberra gave you that assurance?

Mr Steel: Yes, and as described yesterday—

MR CAIN: Who was the responsible officer for that assurance?

Mr McHugh: That would be me, Mr Cain.

MS CARRICK: My question is about the delivery phase as opposed to the operations phase. In the contract there was a start date, but what was the finish date in the contract for the delivery phase?

Mr McHugh: We might take that on notice. There was an original delivery phase date that moved, subsequent to variations being applied to the contract throughout the delivery phase. There were a number of variations and that date changed. There is no one answer. We can take that on notice and share those dates with you, unless someone else has them available.

MS CARRICK: When did you decide on the launch process, as in the transition in the system? There was free travel and the readers did not come until September. There were only three readers. The user testing was very limited. How did you decide, with limited user testing, that the system was ready and what the launch date would be?

Mr McHugh: If we go back to the very beginning, we put out to market a request for tender and, in that documentation, we identified general areas of response. The tenderers then submitted their proposal on how they would deliver and achieve the objectives and the requirements set out in the contract. We obviously went through a tender evaluation process and selected a preferred partner, and, in that case, adopted their delivery model. It was publicly known that it was going to be a multiphase rollout. We subsequently engaged a new project director and his first task was to do a risk assessment of the delivery phase of the project, the program and the schedule, and to identify any potential risks that existed. The original multiphase rollout was based on some assumptions that we had at the time, based on public information around the shut-off of the 3G network. As people know, the old MyWay system was reliant on the 3G network to operate and manage transactions within the system.

The multiphase rollout was originally planned to run for about 20 months. It was identified, through that risk assessment process, that there could have been a period of up to 12 months where we would not have been able to collect fares because of the 3G cut-off time frame. There were a number of risks around that. More importantly, the risk assessment identified that trying to operate two systems on the one network was going to provide significant confusion for customers and, potentially, inequity, depending on what system was operating on a bus and who was asked to pay for what. From a clear communications perspective, having a single cut-over period, turning one system on and turning the other system off, was the preferred delivery methodology. It also shortened the time frame for the technology installation and gave us better control over the impacts of that part of the project's delivery phase. Those recommendations were put through our project governance and we agreed, with negotiations with NEC, to change from a multiphase cut-over to a single phase cut-over.

MS CARRICK: NEC advised to do the multiphase—to have the two systems running in parallel.

Mr McHugh: In their tender response they did, and that was based on the assumptions at the time. What we learnt was that that became problematic for a range of reasons. We then negotiated with them to change it and they agreed that the new approach was a lower risk option for the community and for the project.

MS CARRICK: It seems weird because, from what we have heard, there has been great disappointment and frustration in the rollout. There appears to have been limited user testing, because there were only three buses with the new readers, and, for example, the debit and credit card system was not commissioned until the 21st, or when it went live on the 25th or 27th, so there was no time for any user testing. The user group tried it and let you know that there were issues with the system. Did it go into a risk register and were those issues investigated, mitigated and fixed? Obviously, they were not fixed, because there were so many issues.

Mr Steel: There are a couple of parts to your question. First, it is important to clarify what the user testing process was, because I think there is a bit of confusion around it. There was the community user testing process, but other user testing also occurred in relation to the operation of the system. I will hand over to Transport Canberra to address that and we can then address the other parts of your question.

Mr McHugh: I will give a high-level response and then I will ask the team that managed the user testing process to answer. I want to acknowledge that, absolutely, the user testing process did not deliver us the information in order to make a decision around go live, to avoid some of the issues that we found. We apologised to the community for that. That is an acknowledgment from the project and the directorate that our user testing phase did not provide us with the information needed to make a more informed decision. Unfortunately, it was only post go live that the realisation occurred. We absolutely acknowledge that.

If we were to do it again tomorrow, our user testing phase may also include a more formal user acceptance test process rather than the community engagement consultation and user testing phase that we used. We had demonstration buses—the three that you talked about—out on the network and running for a number of months. They were doing multiple things, and testing was part of that but not the only part of that. Those buses helped the smarts behind the ticket management system to learn our network, learn where the stops were, learn where their own networks were, and to feed all of that data back in. It was also a promotional opportunity to get the community aware that this new system was coming and introduce them to what that technology was going to look like.

The next part was to allow people who were involved in the testing team at the time to test that system out on the road. That was the first part. The second part was when we brought in the community testing group. It ran when we turned the old MyWay system off and then turned the new system on. The number of buses with the technology rapidly increased over that user testing phase as we installed it. Mark or Judith may want to add some more detail to that testing.

THE CHAIR: Ms Carrick, is there particular detail that you want? I am also tracking supplementaries from Mr Cain, Ms Tough, Mr Braddock and myself.

MS CARRICK: It is more about addressing the feedback from user testing. It seemed to be limited. What we have heard is that emails went to the user testing group, but there was not really any advice, apart from tapping on. Then, when they did try to raise issues about access to the app, connecting a debit or credit card to an account and tracking, those issues were not really addressed.

Ms Sturman: I am happy to start the conversation. I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. The user testing was expected to be a phase where we engaged with accessibility reference group members, the public and other groups that we knew would be interested in being involved. Typically, user testing is quite transactional and is a confidential process that allows scientific-type testing to be done on the systems. We entered into the process with the volunteers, and Mark can talk at length about that. We had a good number of volunteers. I think that what you just described, Ms Carrick, is about interaction with the project team. That probably did not answer—and I am not at all blaming the user testers—the technical questions that we were looking for, but it

raised other feedback. We did take on that feedback and we included it in how we went forward. I might move to Mark.

THE CHAIR: We might move to supplementaries. Mr Cain.

Mr Steel: Sorry—can we provide more information? We certainly have not addressed the user testing undertaken with NEC. We have not addressed what the scope of the testing was and what the purpose of the testing was from a technical standpoint, in addition to the additional feedback. There are a few things to add.

MS CARRICK: That is okay. We have limited time, so I do not want to spend it all. If you read the submissions from the user testers, we were not getting—

Mr Steel: But they were not the only user testers. Mr White has some information on that.

THE CHAIR: Minister, I am sorry, but we are going to run out of time. You take that additional information on notice. We will go to committee members' questions. Mr Cain.

MR CAIN: I am happy for you to take this on notice, in light of what you have just offered: your evaluation of the user testing, what the flaws with it were, what needed to be done differently, and why it was not done in the first place.

Mr McHugh: We have a record of all of the feedback, and we would be happy to collate and share that. Also, it is separated into critical issues to address before go live and other issues that were more related to subjective views. They are in our system, so we would be happy to provide that.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr McHugh. I confirm that you will take on notice the collated feedback of the user testing—all types of user testing, including community user testing.

MR CAIN: Make sure to add your own evaluation of why it went wrong—why it did not deliver you the information you needed to have the confidence to go live.

Mr McHugh: That will not be captured in that dataset. That is a separate question, but I am happy to take that on notice as well.

MR CAIN: Thank you.

MS TOUGH: Mr McHugh, you touched on the 3G network shutting down as part of the reason that the transition period happened when it did. Can you explain how significant that 3G network shutdown was in determining the transition and planning for the go live date and when everything occurred?

Mr McHugh: Thanks for the question, Ms Tough. It was absolutely significant—as it was one of the major considerations—because the old system, not just the MyWay system but also the NXTBUS journey planning system, relied on that technology. We would potentially have been without any communications with our customers for an

extended period. As I said, the multiphase transition—over potentially 20 months, as in NEC's submission, and we hoped to shorten that as much as possible—could have provided an extended period where customers were not clear on the system they were to use and where their buses were on the network. We decided that it was better for our customers and our community to shorten that period to the single-phase cut-over as soon as we could. To answer your question in short, the 3G expiry was one of the critical elements of that decision.

Mr Steel: Regarding the date, if I recall correctly, originally the 3G system—Optus 3G—was meant to be shut off in August 2024. A decision had already been made based on the risk around the single phase transition, but, later in the program of work to develop the project based on that single phase transition, a decision was made by Optus to extend the shut-off time, which I think was to October.

MR BRADDOCK: The validator activation issue was identified by a stakeholder and raised with the government and the minister's office four times before the go live date. Why wasn't that addressed? Was it identified as a critical issue as part of that testing process?

Mr McHugh: I will throw to Mark White for the technical answer, but we were aware that there was an issue with validators functioning consistently on some routes and some stops, particularly in and around interchanges. It was not seen as a critical issue to stop go live. In fact, some of that feedback was shared directly with me by a particular stakeholder group. Mark White was then asked to ride a bus and test the validation activation on the bus, and we could not replicate it. So we were seeing some inconsistency, but our user testing was showing higher percentages of activation than we thought necessary for go live at the point we made the decision.

MR BRADDOCK: It was not borne out by the actual go live.

Mr McHugh: We have been tracking validator activation since go live on a daily basis. A number of updates were made to the system that have improved that, and currently the automatic activation rate is in the very high 90 percentile range.

MS CARRICK: Mr McHugh, if you have been tracking that on a daily basis, are you able to provide that data in some form, whether it is daily or weekly? Can you provide a dataset for us?

Mr McHugh: Yes; we are definitely happy to do that. We can provide a dataset on that. We will take that on notice.

MS CARRICK: Did you track it before go live? If you tracked it after go live, did you track it before go live?

Mr McHugh: I am not sure.

THE CHAIR: If you can provide the dataset and explain what the dataset is, that would be excellent.

Mr McHugh: We will take that on notice, Ms Clay.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much.

MS TOUGH: Some submissions have suggested that a more timely and cost-effective solution for a new ticketing system would be to leverage off an existing contract with another jurisdiction, and the most common one that keeps coming up is the New South Wales Opal system. Was this considered as an option by the government? If it was, why was the decision made not to just connect to Opal?

Mr Steel: That is a contract that Transport for NSW has with a particular provider. In Transport Canberra's submission we have outlined the range of procurement processes that we undertook leading to the final tender, where we contracted with NEC Australia. In fact, we did—and it is noted in the submission—engage with another government in relation to potentially leveraging off their existing ticketing solution. When people experienced the Opal card system before MyWay+ was introduced, they were certainly impressed with the ability to be able to tap on with their credit or debit card as part of that system. With the next generation ticketing system, we had absolutely always sought to enable that functionality, and that functionality is working really well in MyWay+. It has been embraced by the community. As NEC mentioned yesterday, until the school term started this year, it was the preferred way to pay for public transport in Canberra. That shows that it is delivering what we set out to achieve through the system. It is functioning well. I will hand over to Mr McHugh to talk about the procurement decisions.

Mr McHugh: Thanks for the question. It should be reassuring to know that we have experts in this type of thing operating within our directorate, and we have had experts in ticketing systems employed by Transport Canberra long before I was around. Those experts engage at national level with ticketing expertise organisations and groups, as well as at an international level, and they are constantly scanning to see what the greatest ticketing solutions out there are for us. Through processing the development of our request for tender documentation, we described what we saw as the best solution for Canberra. In considering what else was available in the national market, we spoke to our colleagues in other jurisdictions about where they were at with their systems. In fact, as the minister suggested, we engaged in negotiations with another state for a period.

The Opal card, as is on the public record, is fast approaching its use-by date, so, if we had taken a decision to potentially quickly hop on board with them—and it would not have been easy; there would have been detailed contract negotiations between states—we would now be in a situation where we would be trying to replace that. As I said, the knowledge that was developed and built up within the organisation gave us the confidence to design a system like MyWay+, put that to market and have market respond to that, and we saw a very positive response from market when we went to tender for that system.

MR CAIN: Minister, how effective do you think your public awareness campaign was?

Mr Steel: There are always things we can learn, and we are interested in any recommendations and findings from the community and how the community experienced the transition. This was quite a significant change for the community, and,

regardless of how the transition was done—whether there was a hard switchover or not—it always would have required the community to take action in order to, at some point, transition to a new ticketing system, and the new payment options that would become available to people to use would need to be understood. An extensive communications campaign was rolled out, and our submission has provided quite a lot of detail in relation to that, including some of the collateral for you to look at.

MR CAIN: Have you evaluated the effectiveness of your community awareness campaign?

Mr Steel: We certainly included the committee inquiry as part of an evaluation, so, if you have feedback and findings, we will certainly take that into account.

MR CAIN: Minister, we have already heard that people did not understand the change and they did not know how to get new cards. Could you provide the cost of the community awareness campaign?

Mr Steel: We would be happy to provide that.

Mr McHugh: Yes; we can take that on notice.

MR CAIN: Are you planning to do an evaluation of your community awareness campaign?

Mr McHugh: We already have a report on the reach and the various elements of the campaign and the number of people we engaged with. I think the submission covers some of that.

MR CAIN: Could you provide that report to this committee?

Mr McHugh: Yes; I will take that question on notice.

MR CAIN: Thank you.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, the government has repeatedly stated, in its submission and in your comments in the chamber, that no access had occurred to users' data in the MyWay+ system. The committee heard evidence yesterday that there were at least two incidents where access to a user's personal payment information had occurred. Does the government finally accept that there has been access to users' data on the MyWay+ system?

Mr Steel: I will hand over to Mr White to respond to some of the evidence that was provided in the earlier hearing as well.

Mr White: Thank you, Minister. I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. With regard to those two disclosures, Mr Braddock, they clearly made a claim that was actually part of the protocols that we followed, including being able to take the claims and test for replicability. NEC were actively and immediately engaged once notified through the appropriate channels. A researcher conducting that may well have discovered their own PII and may have theorised that they would be able to access

more. We acknowledge their PII, and the NEC system certainly noted and logged their access. The rectification work on what led to that disclosure was performed and undertaken very rapidly and subsequently closed off that vulnerability.

MR BRADDOCK: Their evidence was very clear. They did not just access their own information; they accessed information of multiple other users. Do you accept that access happened?

Mr White: Mr Braddock, we have not seen any evidence of that at all.

MR BRADDOCK: The evidence was provided to the hearing yesterday.

Mr White: Again, that is not evidence of disclosure of PII. It was evidence of how they would go about that.

MR BRADDOCK: Are the back-end logs of the system able to track when a user has accessed another user's information in an unauthorised manner?

Mr White: Back-ends of most systems, and particularly contemporary and very modern systems like the MyWay+ system, all have fail-safe systems to record all points of access. The question that you have asked—which is specifically: does it log where a user has accessed another user's information—is a very detailed and complex question and I cannot give a definitive answer. Further, those logs and the proactive security systems in place were actually proven to the Chief Information Security Officer of the ACT, who is sitting to my right, and members from DDTS who were performing a test and a probe themselves. They were actually identified by NEC and were excluded. That is an example for you that not only those logs, which are reactive control measures, but also proactive control measures around cyber security were in place.

Mr Steel: Mr Valtas, do you want to add to that in relation to that specific responsible disclosure?

Mr Valtas: Thank you. I have read and acknowledged the privilege statement.

What Mr Mark White said was that we had performed some validation of the vulnerabilities that were responsibly disclosed; that is correct. And there were controls put in place that prevented that access when we tried to do some testing. It was also detected by NEC, which gave us confidence that there was both logging in place and some controls that were able to be put in place to prevent access to those vulnerabilities.

MR BRADDOCK: Up until today, the government was only of the view that Mr Fulham's access had happened. Why should we believe that the government knows who has accessed users' information on the MyWay+ system?

Mr White: As I said before, the back-end controls that you referred to, Mr Braddock, identified all points of access.

MR BRADDOCK: But obviously you did not identify Mr Reid's access, and he stated he accessed other users' personal information?

Mr White: Again, I think I answered that question previously when I said that the question you are asking is of an extremely complex nature, and it is so specific that I cannot answer it unequivocally.

MR BRADDOCK: No. It is a very simple question: has any access in an unauthorised manner to other Canberrans' personal information happened on the MyWay+ system? I am finding it concerning that the government cannot provide a clear answer on that.

Mr White: Mr Braddock, not that we have seen any evidence of.

Mr McHugh: We do not have any evidence or record. Mr Braddock, NEC yesterday answered this question on behalf of their system, and that is the advice we have received, and we will share that advice that they have not got evidence of a breach of data on their system.

THE CHAIR: We have seen evidence of access by Mr Reid. That does not appear in any of your reports or logs. Can I check, Minister, if you have chatted to the Information Commissioner about whether any of the evidence this committee has received might be a notifiable data breach? Have you taken advice on that?

Mr Steel: The advice from Transport Canberra is that there is, at this stage, not a notifiable breach in relation to that. If you can talk of the notifications that have been provided to the appropriate channels, I think that is important.

THE CHAIR: No, that is okay. The question is, and I am happy for it to be taken on notice, have you taken advice from the Information Commissioner about this or have you taken advice from the GSO about this?

MR CAIN: Yes, take it on notice.

Mr White: Again, I believe that Mr Valtas would probably be the best placed person to answer that question, specifically on how our policies relate to our relationship with the OIC.

THE CHAIR: It is not really a policy question.

MR CAIN: We do not want to hear about policies.

THE CHAIR: It is whether you have specifically taken advice from the privacy information commissioner or the GSO on this. I am very happy for you to take that on notice, and that is probably best. Mr Cain?

MR CAIN: This is possibly for Mr Valtas or Mr White. You are aware that in the transition period, I think in late November, there was a tool available to users to transfer their balance from their old MyWay card to the new card.

Mr White: Yes.

MR CAIN: Are you aware there was a period of time when that tool was available when individuals could access other people's cards, and their balance, and transfer that

balance at their will? Are you aware of that?

Mr White: Yes, we were aware of that. That was an identified vulnerability, Mr Cain, and it was reported to NEC, and a control was put in place to limit that.

MR CAIN: How long was it before that flaw was fixed?

Mr White: Once we were notified of that flaw, it was commenced being repaired within two hours, with that work completed within 26 hours.

MR CAIN: During that period when an individual with sufficient knowledge could access other people's balances and transfer them, how much money was transferred from MyWay cards to accounts other than those of the account holder?

Mr White: Zero amount, because the functionality was disabled whilst NEC undertook the work.

MR CAIN: That tool was made available with a clear vulnerability, which you have just acknowledged. Who gave the approval for that tool to be released and issued to users so that they could have a convenient way to transfer their MyWay balance to the MyWay+ card? Who gave that approval, when the tool was obviously flawed?

Mr White: Mr Cain, I do not believe that it was obviously flawed. It was identified to us, post event. And, again, like other vulnerabilities that are identified in multiple systems, when those vulnerabilities are brought to our attention, we act upon them. So the risk assessment—

MR CAIN: So you are saying that an—

THE CHAIR: Mr Cain!

Mr White: Allow me, Mr Cain. As the committee has been informed, the cybersecurity risk assessment that was undertaken certainly did not identify that that was a high-risk area.

MR CAIN: You called it not a flaw. So you are saying that the ability of someone to access a MyWay+ balance and transfer it illegally to another account is not a flaw?

Mr Steel: Sorry; Mr Cain, that is not what he has said. I have to step in here to correct the record. I would ask you, Chair, to step in because—

MR CAIN: There seems to be a real denial—

Mr Steel: Mr Cain is verballing the witness.

MR CAIN: of the problem

THE CHAIR: Mr Cain!

Mr Steel: He is verballing—

THE CHAIR: Mr Cain! Minister! Please, both stop talking. We will speak one at a time. Right at this second, the minister is speaking, and he will be brief. Please continue.

Mr Steel: That is not what Mr White said. I ask you to look at the *Hansard* in relation to that. I think he has addressed your question. No, there was not a specific risk, a high level of risk, that was later identified as an issue. We acknowledged that it was an issue, and it was quickly rectified and resolved.

MR CAIN: It was identified by someone outside the ACT government—someone who had the ability, as many would have had, to access a MyWay balance and transfer it if they wished. You are just saying that that is a vulnerability?

Mr White: Mr Cain, I will refer to the information I provided in the in-camera session that related to the processes and protocols that we follow when we are alerted by members of the community to vulnerabilities, systems vulnerabilities.

MR CAIN: Who signed off on this tool for it to be released to users?

Mr McHugh: I will take that question. Before we do, I want to provide some reassurance that NEC have monitored and tracked every transaction that has occurred in this system and have been able to identify whether any inappropriate access or transactions have occurred. In cases where attempts may have been put through the system, they have been able to stop those.

I want to provide a level of confidence to the community and the committee that NEC are monitoring and validating every transaction that happens in the system, particularly around transactions between the old MyWay account and the new MyWay account. There are system protections in place to protect people's information and their funds within the system.

THE CHAIR: Mr Cain, do you have fresh questions, because we have further questions from the committee?

MR CAIN: I have one supplementary on this. You were saying that there was a tool available, and that you withdrew soon after you became aware of a vulnerability. My question is: why was this tool approved to be released to the community if it had such an obvious vulnerability?

Mr McHugh: We would argue that it was not such an obvious vulnerability. It was identified by someone with a high level of technical knowledge and expertise, someone who is studying IT science at university.

MR CAIN: And there are probably—

Mr McHugh: And they appropriately—

MR CAIN: There are probably a million people out there who have that ability.

THE CHAIR: Mr Cain.

Mr McHugh: They appropriately disclosed that information to us, and it was managed in accordance with national cybersecurity management protocol.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr McHugh. We have finished with that question. Mr Braddock?

MR BRADDOCK: Why did the cyber assurance process of a leading IT security company not identify the vulnerabilities identified by these first-year ANU computer science students?

Mr McHugh: The short answer to that question is that the scope of work that we engaged CyberCX for did not go to the granular level that the individuals who have made submissions were operating under. I would acknowledge that, if we were to do this again, the CyberCX engagement may be broader than the original scope of work for which we engaged them.

MR BRADDOCK: Is that the normal standard of cyber assurance that the ACT government conducts on IT programs that interface with the community and hold their personal and payment information?

Mr Steel: I will hand over to Mr Valtas to talk to that.

Mr Valtas: Thank you for the question, Mr Braddock. The normal process for change and release management of new systems is to engage with vulnerability management or penetration testing. We understand that there was a level of penetration testing conducted pre go live of the system.

MR BRADDOCK: Obviously, not to the extent of scope which these first-year students were able to conduct?

Mr Valtas: Penetration testing can be part art and part science. It does not always reveal the same type of vulnerabilities when different parties conduct those types of exercises. Certainly, it did form the view that we needed to do more extensive testing, and we worked with Transport Canberra and NEC to ensure that we did comprehensive testing following that.

MR BRADDOCK: If this is the standard cyber assurance applied to ACT government ICT projects, what is the risk in existing systems across the ACT government of vulnerabilities such as this?

Mr Valtas: As I said before, when we do new releases, we undergo vulnerability management testing. When we have a third party, often we have some level of restriction. We are not conducting the tests ourselves. We seek assurances from the testing that they have performed or the third-party testing that they have performed. Certainly, for the majority of systems that we are hosting, we are conducting our own testing, or we are conducting the relationship with a third-party supplier to conduct that testing on our behalf.

MR BRADDOCK: But if the scope is not sufficient to pick up these types of

vulnerabilities, you have not answered the question as to what risk we have for our existing systems.

Mr Valtas: I would say that any software is not free of defect, and vulnerabilities appear in any major software product globally. The work is not exhaustive. You could get three different parties to perform this type of testing. We do as comprehensive testing as we can feasibly run with these exercises. Our history in the ACT government has been good. We respond rapidly, should we find any vulnerabilities exposed through exercises or responsible disclosure.

MR BRADDOCK: Part of the learning is: we should have done further testing, expanded the scope of the cyber assurance process. Is that something that needs to be applied across the board in terms of ACT government systems?

Mr Steel: Just to clarify the issue of scope, I think that was a specific reference by Mr McHugh in relation to the CyberCX work. The penetration testing was further work, and that could have picked up a range of different issues in relation to the system. Is that correct?

Mr McHugh: Yes, it is. That is correct. NEC conducted at least three instances of additional penetration testing—one prior to go live and two post go live. As Mr Valtas also reported, these things did find other elements which, again, we have attended to or are attending to, and it is typical. I support Julian's experience there, in that you can conduct multiple testing, perform the same testing with different vendors et cetera, and end up with different results.

MS CARRICK: My question is about timing. When the government knew that the 3G network was to be closed on 28 October 2024, why wasn't the system launched before we went into caretaker for the election? Why was free travel needed over the election period?

Mr Steel: I think we have just addressed that. The original shut-off date was actually in August for Optus. They made that publicly known and known to the government. That informed decisions made in the prior year in relation to the project time line, including the phase of fare-free travel, with a hard switchover under a single-phase approach.

MS CARRICK: I still do not understand, if it was August, why it wasn't ready for August.

Mr McHugh: Is your question about why we went live when we went live, and when the shut-down period started?

MS CARRICK: And why wasn't it before caretaker?

Mr McHugh: We were apolitical in terms of designing the program for the system, to have it delivered in the most efficient time frame possible. When we did the review, and the negotiation for the change of schedule and approach with NEC, that landed us with a go-live date or the start of the cut-over—the start of the fare-free period, as you have referenced—in the third quarter of 2024. It was completely unrelated to the

pollical cycle. It was about the most efficient way to deliver the system.

MS CARRICK: Can I ask why a fare-free period was needed?

Mr McHugh: Because we had to physically decommission the MyWay system before we could physically install the MyWay+ system. We did not have the ability to collect a fare on a bus or on a light rail platform for the period whilst one piece of technology was being physically replaced with another piece of technology.

MS CARRICK: Unless, of course, one went with the NEC proposal to run dual systems.

Mr Steel: No, because of the 3G shutdown. The old system ran off the 3G network, which was being closed down, originally from August; in fact, it was even earlier than that, I think, when—

Mr McHugh: Earlier than that, yes.

Mr Steel: there was an original earlier date, prior to August as well. It ran off the old 3G system. You would not have been able to run key features of the old MyWay system and NXTBUS if the 3G network was not operating. That informed the decision to manage that risk by looking at a single phase, or a hard switchover, approach which was a decision that was made in late 2023 by the project team.

MS CARRICK: It is still not clear to me why the whole thing was not ready before caretaker.

Mr Steel: It was not being driven by the election cycle. It was being driven by how we could get the new system ready, based not only on the project time line and the time that it would take to deliver such a project, but also on managing the risk around the 3G shut-off. The 3G shut-off just happened to occur at about the same time as the caretaker mode and the ACT election.

THE CHAIR: We have come to the end of our—

MS TOUGH: I have a very short substantive question that could be taken on notice.

THE CHAIR: State it for notice, then.

MS TOUGH: I want to know whether, since the rollout of MyWay+, it has discouraged any people from taking public transport—whether there has been any change in numbers regarding usage.

MR CAIN: Take it on notice.

THE CHAIR: That is to be taken on notice; thank you.

Mr Steel: Yes.

THE CHAIR: On notice, it might be useful—let us check what data you guys keep—

if you could give us bus usage data each month for the last 12 months. Could that be answered?

Mr Steel: The answer is no because the system was shut down and there was no patronage data for the fare-free period.

MS TOUGH: The period before the fare free and then—

Mr Steel: We can look at what information we can provide, but it will not be for the entire period. There were disruptions in the data.

THE CHAIR: Okay; thank you. That brings us to the end of our session for today. On behalf of the committee, thank you very much for your attendance. There have been a number of questions taken on notice. If you can provide answers to the committee secretary within five business days of receiving the uncorrected proof *Hansard*, that would be much appreciated. We will now close the hearing.

The committee adjourned at 12.06 pm.