



**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

WEDNESDAY, 26 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

Submissions, answers to questions on notice and other documents, including requests for clarification of the transcript of evidence, relevant to this inquiry that have been authorised for publication by the committee may be obtained from the Legislative Assembly website.

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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 9.39 am

HEMSLEY, MR RYAN, Chair, Public Transport Association of Canberra

JELACIC, DR AMY, Deputy Chair, Public Transport Association of Canberra

THE CHAIR: Good morning, and welcome to the public hearings of the Standing Committee on Environment, Planning, Transport and City Services inquiry into the procurement and delivery of MyWay+.

The committee received close to 150 responses to our call for submissions, including more than 100 web form submissions; in addition, I note that a number of organisations did their own surveys. We have had a really high level of response to this inquiry. Those 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, of course, users of public transport. This morning, we are beginning with the Public Transport Association of Canberra.

We would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands we are meeting on, the Ngunnawal people. We wish to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region. We would like to acknowledge and welcome any other Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders who might be joining us in this room, or who might be Zooming in from somewhere else.

The hearings are being recorded and transcribed by Hansard. We will be publishing the transcript, and we are broadcasting and webstreaming live. When taking a question on notice, if you can use the words, "I will take that question on notice," that would be extremely helpful.

We have ABC here today. They are filming. They are not filming our notes; they are only filming the proceedings. I will check that there is nobody here who is uncomfortable with that? We will proceed on that basis.

We welcome the Public Transport Association of Canberra. Ryan and Amy, thank you so much for coming along. Can you each confirm that you have read, understand and agree with the privilege statement, and the rights and obligations set out in that?

Mr Hemsley: I confirm that I have read, understood and agree with the privilege statement.

Dr Jelacic: I have read, understood and agree with the privilege statement.

THE CHAIR: The privilege statement outlines that witnesses must tell the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence may be treated as a serious matter and may be considered contempt of the Assembly.

We are not having opening statements. We will go straight to questions. There are a number of them. I will hand over to Mr Braddock.

MR BRADDOCK: I am interested in PTCBR's communication with the government about the validator activation issue in the lead-up to the launch. Reading through your submission, you had a meeting on 13 November where, apparently, Transport Canberra asserted that it knew about the issue and that a fix was imminent; again, three weeks before the launch; then one week before the launch, with the minister's office; and, finally, one day prior to the launch, when Transport Canberra appeared not to know about the issue. Is that the full extent of PTCBR's communication with the government about this issue? Why wasn't it addressed, despite being raised multiple times by you?

Mr Hemsley: This was a complete summary of our interactions with various arms of the ACT government on the validator activation issue. The reason we did not pursue it further in the intervening time is that, as you said, we were assured on that first day, on 13 November, when we were advised that the launch was scheduled for a few weeks time, that that issue would be fixed.

There was certainly a lot of chat within PTCBR about what to do as we approached the launch date, and the issue still did not appear to be fixed. We considered a range of other ways to get the word out there, including a potential media release, drawing attention to the fact that we were not convinced that the system was ready for launch. Ultimately, we decided against that approach because we did not want to interfere with people's first experiences of MyWay+, on the off-chance that it was fixed on launch day and everything went smoothly. Obviously, that did not occur. We still stand by the approach that we took. Certainly, we would like to have seen this issue dealt with, as we were told on 13 November that it would be.

MR BRADDOCK: I would have thought that, after raising it four times with the government, you had fulfilled your duty as a stakeholder, and what we saw was one of the most fundamental issues on the day that it went live.

Mr Hemsley: We would like to think so. Certainly, we were very conscious of the fact that this was a new system. We did not want to tarnish its reputation before people had had an honest opportunity and chance to use the system firsthand. Ultimately, we would like to have seen it fixed earlier. There are always opportunities to look back and say, "I wish we'd done this; I wish we'd done that." Ultimately, we did what we thought was right at the time, and it is regrettable that the system was not fixed in time for the launch date.

MS CARRICK: NEC proposed a 20-month transition period, with MyWay+ operating alongside MyWay. Would it have been preferable to run both systems at the same time during the transition?

Mr Hemsley: The question that arises when we see that information is that there is a lot we do not know about it. For instance, we know for a fact that there was a hard cut-off for when the MyWay system would stop working, and that was when the 3G system was switched off in September 2024.

The question that came to mind when we heard that is: how early could we be rolling out the MyWay+ equipment? Would it be working backwards, 20 months prior to September 2024? Would that necessarily have meant the system was operational in time for the final switch-off of the MyWay system?

These are questions to which we do not presently know the answer, and we would certainly like to know more about that 20-month transition period, to get a better understanding as to whether it would have potentially resolved some of the issues we saw with that hard launch day on 27 November 2024.

Dr Jelacic: In considering what we perceived to be quite poor messaging and communication from ACT government, and specifically from Transport Canberra in relation to introducing a new system, our confidence in the ability to manage the relatively complicated undertaking of phasing out and phasing in concurrently is something that we would not feel is within current capability.

MS CARRICK: It seems that the view of NEC and the government was to have maximum flexibility about the way to pay. Would it have been better to stick with basic functionality, add the debit or credit card first and keep it simple, and perhaps add functionality as it went on?

Mr Hemsley: Yes, without question. The entire messaging around MyWay+ was that it was a simple way to plan and pay. Ultimately, anyone who experienced that first day knew that it was not a simple way to plan and pay. The journey planner sent you on a ludicrous journey involving buses, taxis, three-hour walks et cetera to get to your destination. The QR code was not simple. It continues not to be simple. It is, in fact, cumbersome, complicated and incompetently implemented.

As we outlined in the first part of our submission, one of the things that we were repeatedly told by members of the public, prospective and current public transport users, is that they were looking to pay with a debit or credit card. That was it. They wanted that functionality; anything else was extra.

The idea to make this bigger than Ben Hur and develop whole mobility as a service approach was not something we would have recommended to Transport Canberra, if they had come to us and asked what our members thought the new MyWay+ ticketing system should look like on day one.

Dr Jelacic: A point worth making here, and something that we have discussed quite extensively within PTCBR and its membership, is that there is real confusion regarding how NEC and Transport Canberra have interpreted people's desire to be able to pay by bank card. I think that has been interpreted as a yearning for a high-tech solution and a yearning for public transport to be quite cutting edge or whatever. Really, people just want to tap and go, because that is what they can do at the shops.

That technology is at a stage now where it is sufficiently advanced and sufficiently easy to use that it is a basic, easy option. People are not asking for apps; people are not asking for really complicated things. Going to Ryan's point, people are not asking for what is called mobility of the service, which integrates different transportation types and makes it quite complex in many ways through using technology.

We believe that public transport has to be simple and easy, a low-cognitive activity, and that is where bank card tapping comes in, not as a high-tech thing that people are seeking, because they are not.

MS CARRICK: In Sydney, people just use a credit card. It is so simple, and that is what we like. Would it have been possible to use the existing MyWay and add the functionality of the debit or credit card to the ticketing—or is that too simplistic?

Mr Hemsley: There is a risk here with us talking about technical issues which are slightly beyond our purview. Certainly, we know that, with the Opal system, which is the ticketing system used in Sydney, because it was run by Cubic Transportation Systems, and Cubic had developed an add-on to their ticketing software in London which enabled people to tap on and off with a credit card, introducing that functionality into Sydney was a relatively simple affair.

I do not know enough about the system that was used with the MyWay system to say whether it was a technically simple or technically complicated approach that would need to have been taken to introduce that functionality. Regardless, there was no reason that it had to launch on launch day with a million different ways to pay, quite a few of which did not work as intended.

There was an opportunity to introduce functionality, as you alluded to earlier, incrementally over time, with launch day involving a dedicated travel card and your bank card. The idea of launching all of this at once, none of which really worked, was probably not the correct approach, and certainly not the approach we would have recommended.

MS TOUGH: I am interested in what comments PTCBR has received from members on the introduction of debit and credit pay in the new MyWay+ system, and whether users are reporting, if they are using debit and credit, whether it is more convenient than the previous system.

Mr Hemsley: It is definitely more convenient. Certainly, it was the thing we heard about most often in the lead-up to MyWay+. Certainly, before people were aware that it would be a feature of MyWay+, it was the number one requested feature of any new ticketing system. We see that from the data. We know that more than 50 per cent of public transport trips are now paid for in Canberra using a credit or debit card, so the clear demand for that option is evidenced by how people now pay for public transport trips.

Certainly, we heard these calls in the lead-up to MyWay+: “Why don’t we just adopt Opal?” or “Why don’t we just join the Opal system?” When you drill down into where that desire comes from, it is very much about saying, “We’d like the ability to pay for a public transport trip using a debit or credit card,” and having it be a low-cognitive activity, as Amy alluded to earlier. Obviously, that was a very requested feature, and the fact that it was requested is evidenced by the fact that people are now using it as probably the most common way of paying for public transport in Canberra.

MS TOUGH: I think it was in the submission, and you mentioned it just before, that it was not quite clear that you could just tap on and tap off with your credit card on launch day. How would you suggest improving the promotional materials in the public information campaign to better inform regular users that that was one of the main features that you could use?

Dr Jelacic: It is probably as simple as refining the messaging to focus on short slogans that communicate that quite directly. Cities, including Sydney, will have the logo for Visa and Mastercard on turnstiles and so on. We have discussed that a little bit with Transport Canberra leadership, and I believe there are some moves in the background to introduce that.

The focus on flexibility in communications, which came up earlier, was very well intentioned, but it ended up acting in unintended ways because, with so many options, people became quite confused about that. Instead of focusing on flexibility, which is quite abstract and confusing, there should be direct messaging that communicates to people, “When I get to the bus, what can I do? Put it to me simply.” That is all people wanted and needed.

Mr Hemsley: The poster advertising “MyWay+ is coming” is still somewhere near my bus stop, in the grass. It needs to be put in the bin somewhere. I often walk by it, and I am reminded of what the messaging was in the lead-up to the system. In regard to the matter of using your bank card, it just says, “Tap to pay.” What does that mean? I tapped to pay using the old system. Under the old MyWay system, I tapped to pay. It does not say anything there about using your bank card.

We note in our submission that once it became clear that people did not know that this was a feature of the system, even after it had launched, the tone and content of the communications from Transport Canberra suddenly improved markedly, right down to saying, “Hey, you can pay using your bank card.” It seems that that should have been something which came up much earlier in the communications campaign, as opposed to afterwards.

I also note that, with respect to the MyWay+ app itself, all of the advertising in the lead-up to the launch of MyWay+ implied, “Download the app, this is a great app, you’re going to love this app.” That app does not actually specify that you can pay for your public transport trip with a debit or credit card. The only option for paying that features prominently in the app, or indeed in the app at all, is that you can use the QR code; so you cannot be surprised when people download the app, as you told them to do, open the app, as you are expected to do, to use your new MyWay+ public transport ticketing system, and use the feature they are told to use.

In that respect, it should not be surprising that the QR code was overused during those early stages of launch, and we would have expected, given its prominence in the app and the prominence of the app in the communications material, that the QR code feature would be better developed than it was on launch day and, indeed, than it still is today.

THE CHAIR: I might supplement on that. We have had this topic up a couple of times now, and you put a really good description of the project from 2016 to where we are now, which was very helpful. It sounds like PTCBR did not ask for a lot of the features that were provided. It sounds like users of public transport were not asking for those features. You suggested some very sensible questions for us to put to the minister about: “How did you scope this and what were the recommendations? Where did all of these extra features, which were quite complicated, poorly communicated and did not work on launch day, come from?” Have I characterised that correctly?

Mr Hemsley: I would say so.

THE CHAIR: But it was not coming from the members that you are speaking to—they were not putting a push on Transport Canberra from 2016 to now for all of these features?

Mr Hemsley: No. You can understand the desire to have all the bells and whistles and have the greatest, latest and flashiest new tech. We have been late to the piece as far as developing new and interesting ways to pay for public transport is concerned. Obviously, more cities in Australia now enable you to pay with your bank card. Sydney being one of the first in Australia to introduce that technology, and Sydney's geographic closeness to Canberra, meant that it definitely felt like we were more laggard in this space than we probably were.

Certainly, there are still quite a few public transport operators in Australia which do not let you use that technology. But it does feel like there was an effort to say, "If we are going to be taking that next incremental step, let's take all the steps at once. It is not just bank card. Let us do all the other bits and pieces and wrap it altogether in a neat package." Obviously, not all of them were sufficiently developed in time for launch day, which does lead us to believe that potentially that might not have been the most appropriate course of action, given the actual wants of public transport users as far as functionality is concerned was very minimal by comparison.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

MR CAIN: Thank you for your submission. It was very helpful and remains so. You have a section "Poor engagement with the Public Transport Association of Canberra", and you felt you may have had some value-add during the development of this. Just as a bit of background, what level of engagement has the Public Transport Association had with the government where the government has actually invited you? I am keen to know what the history of your engagement is and whether the lack of, in your view, here is a bit out of sync with that or business as usual perhaps.

Mr Hemsley: We are Canberra's leading public transport advocacy group. We are obviously a non-partisan users group made up of all sections of the community. We have been engaged with the government on a range of matters over the years since we were established in 2017. In each of those instances, we believe we have contributed useful feedback which has helped inform government policy on public transport and make it better for passengers.

The fact that the biggest change to the passenger experience in Canberra's public transport network, basically since the introduction of MyWay, did not involve early engagement with our association is something we found surprising. It meant that, as you say, a lot of the features of the new MyWay+ system that were introduced were established by a process that we had no visibility of. When the sounding exercise went out, we had no idea what was going to be in that document when it was released. By the time we had engagement with Transport Canberra on what MyWay+ was going to be, the contract with NEC had been signed and the scope of works had been established. It was very much a case of, "Here is what we are going to introduce to you", without

our input being involved in what that was. It was a system designed for public transport users without the input of public transport users. In that respect, it should not be surprising that it did not really meet their expectations.

MR CAIN: Without going into the detail, what was the character of your engagement? What other things had you been engaged with prior to this that would indicate your level of disappointment and surprise?

Mr Hemsley: It was not so much that we strongly involved ourselves in scopes of works previously but more that, if you are introducing a new next generation ticketing system, the needs and wants of passengers must come first. That is basic 101, in that, when it comes to introducing your policy, you want to, to an extent, co-design that new technology to ensure that it is meeting the expectations of passengers. It is not just that our association was not involved. If there had been some parallel process that Transport Canberra had run—indeed, they may well have; we do not know—like, “We appreciate your views, PTCBR, but we are actually going to run our own process with public transport passengers, because we believe that will give us a better representation of views across the public transport users in ACT,” we would disagree with that assessment, but we would at least acknowledge that, “You are trying, and you are actually interested in the views of public transport users in the development of this project.” We do not believe that component of the consultation process took place.

So it is not just that they did not engage with us; it is that we have no evidence to date that they engaged with public transport passengers at all in terms of determining the scope for what MyWay+ ended up being.

Dr Jelacic: Could I add to that very briefly?

MR CAIN: Yes.

Dr Jelacic: We have contrasted this with the community engagement that we see across different agencies and different areas of government. The one that I am most familiar with is the public engagement that Infrastructure Canberra—previously, Major Projects Canberra—has run to do with the various stages of light rail. We receive a very high level of engagement with officials in Infrastructure Canberra. I personally am the PTCBR representative in the community reference group, which is a regular high-quality forum for engagement that has regular attendees from across the community.

MR CAIN: And government engagement?

Dr Jelacic: Excuse me?

MR CAIN: Government engagement as well or—

Dr Jelacic: That we do?

MR CAIN: Yes. Is that something the government—

Dr Jelacic: In terms of meeting with the minister?

MR CAIN: Yes.

Dr Jelacic: Yes

MR CAIN: Yes; so government recognises that?

Dr Jelacic: Yes. That is the level and quality of engagement that we receive in other areas.

MR CAIN: It is a pretty big project, that one.

Dr Jelacic: That is why it was quite surprising to receive very little in terms of MyWay+ engagement.

MR CAIN: Hence, why do you think you were not included in public engagement on this?

Mr Hemsley: At the end of the day, again, I would broaden the question slightly: why were public transport users not included in the design of this new system? The answer is: we do not know. Possibly it is that Transport Canberra and NEC thought they knew better and took the Steve Jobs approach of “Don’t ask people what they want; give them what they want.” What that meant is we were given a system that we were told we would love and that there would be all the bells and whistles, it would be a simple way to plan and pay and mobility as a service—insert whatever marketing buzzword you like here. But the issue is that that is not actually what people were asking for. It would not have taken very long in consultation with public transport users to figure out what they actually wanted. We think that a primary reason that MyWay+ has had such a rocky start is that it was designed without the actual views of public transport users in forming its scope and ultimate design.

MS CARRICK: I note that, in the NEC’s submission, they say:

... NEC worked with Transport Canberra in defining an approach for in-field operational testing with the goal of getting feedback from stakeholder groups during testing. This provided useful information used to improve system configuration, improve stakeholder communications or address defects exposed during operations.

Why do you think that NEC and not just your group but all users have such a different view about the consultation and the user testing?

Mr Hemsley: I have no idea, quite frankly. It is not up for debate. It was not a good user testing undertaken with MyWay+. That is evidenced by the litany of issues that were present on launch day and are still present today. I think the idea that there was a comprehensive, user-centric design process that was undertaken through MyWay+ is farcical.

MR CAIN: Obviously, if this had been a minor change to the public transport regulatory scheme and environment, you might be less surprised that you were not consulted. But, given the level of your previous engagement, I can understand why you are a bit surprised that you were not involved with this one. That is a comment, I guess.

Is that a comment you agree with?

Mr Hemsley: Yes, probably.

Dr Jelacic: Yes. At the end of the day, we are not technical experts in app development, route planning—all the different moving parts that go into creating a public transport system. We are very much aware of that and we are not trying to be the experts. But we are trying to—and I think succeeding—offer a very considered user’s perspective. In all elements of a public transport system, how users interact with getting on and off and paying is the coalface of the system. Yes, to your point, that does seem to be perhaps the key area in which you would have a user’s representative group consulted.

MR BRADDOCK: Your submission talks about how the MyWay+ app and website do not meet web content accessibility guideline requirements, which I find particularly interesting given that is a contractual requirement between the ACT government and NEC. How did you come to that conclusion and what is the impact of that failure to meet those guidelines?

Mr Hemsley: We understand that there will be another witness later today who will go into more detail, as to the areas where it fails to meet those web content accessibility guidelines. How we found out about it was feedback from our users—people coming to us and saying, “I cannot use this piece of software because of reasons A, B and C.” It was becoming very clear to us when the app was launched, when the port was launched, in the lead-up to the system launch on 27 November that it simply was not up to scratch in the accessibility space.

I would also note that it is not just inaccessible for people who need the web content accessibility guidelines met; it is also just hideous. It is a very ugly piece of software. It is a very ugly user interface. It is not intuitive. It is not fun to use. It is not easy to use. So, straight off the bat, we knew something was deeply wrong with this—and it did not surprise us at all, given the total lack of effort that had gone into making this an easy piece of software to use. It also failed to meet all these other guidelines as well.

It was through that initial reaction of, “Whoa; this is terrible,” that we then went for a deeper look into where it specifically failed to meet the requirements of the contract. That led us to the web content accessibility guideline requirement that is outlined in the contract with NEC.

MS TOUGH: Have any of your members reported any improvements in the accessibility of the app and website since its initial launch, or is it still pretty much the same?

Mr Hemsley: Very minor changes. Overall, it is still not meeting those requirements. That is as detailed also in one of the submissions that is been put to the inquiry, I understand.

MS TOUGH: Do you know if the previous MyWay interface was accessible?

Mr Hemsley: God no; absolutely not! The old NXTBUS website was archaic—absolutely. I think it is still up, actually, if you want to find it. You can appreciate that

a website that has been around since 2011 might not necessarily be up to scratch. But you would expect that a brand new system, developed in 2024, would meet the requirements that all ACT government websites are required to meet. Again, it is specified in the contract that there was a baseline level of competence that we expected to, I guess, deliver that with respect to the portal and the app that was not met and still has not been met in many respects.

THE CHAIR: We have had a number of accessibility problems with our buses, have we not? In 2022, the ACT government was found to be not complying with the Discrimination Act for the old Renaults, and that problem continued for a long time. Do you think there might be an ongoing problem with Transport Canberra or with our buses and the government's ability to make sure that they are accessible and meet basic requirements?

Mr Hemsley: I think it is interesting. In the case of the buses, obviously, it was an older MyWay system that had not been upgraded in years, but a brand new website was coming. MyWay+ is the equivalent, as if you were delivering new buses that did not meet the Disability Discrimination Act. That is the equivalent of what has been delivered with MyWay+. It would absolutely fly in the face of policy that has been in place for 20 years. What really struck us is that it was not just an old website which had been around for a little bit too long and had not been upgraded to meet current and modern standards; it was delivered afresh, in full knowledge of what was required, and it does not meet those requirements even now.

THE CHAIR: We have had a number of issues raised regarding cybersecurity—and I will probably look at the issue flagged about personal information. We have had submissions from governments saying there were no notifiable data breaches and that there was a problem that was patched and that the only information that was accessible was the information from the individual. We have had some submissions from other individuals suggesting a different story. I confess, right now, I am still confused because MyWay launched on 27 November and the government seems to think that issues were resolved on 11 December. I am not 100 per cent sure what happened between 27 November and 11 December. Do you have clarity over whether this system was secure?

Mr Hemsley: I think it probably goes back a little bit before then. Again, not wanting to tread into technical territory, of which we are not equipped to necessarily describe in detail, we would note that the MyWay+ portal launched weeks ahead of the actual launch date of 27 November. So there was the opportunity for people to be putting in their personal data into the MyWay+ portal. We know this, because, for quite some time—in the first few weeks since the portal was launched but prior to the actual launch of the system on 27 November—it would not let you attach your credit and debit card to your account. We were quite annoyed with that, because it was obviously a feature of the new system. If you want, you can still tap your credit and debit card off without having it linked to your account, but you do not have visibility over your trips. Indeed, in my case, I have had my credit card attached to my account since before the launch and I still have not had a single trip recorded to my account.

So there is a whole bunch of stuff going on in the back end that we do not have visibility of. We would certainly encourage the committee to ask the more technically-minded witnesses who will be appearing today and tomorrow to expand a little bit more on the

weaknesses of the behind-the-scenes component of MyWay+.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

MR BRADDOCK: The government seems to contend that the only access to Canberra's personal payment information was by Mr Fulham. Are you aware of any other instances where Canberra's personal information was accessed by another member of the public in an unauthorised way?

Mr Hemsley: We have been informed by our members, who are, again, more technically minded than those of us on the committee, that it is not true that only members of the community have accessed their own data. Again, I am very careful in my wording here. I do not want to be telling mistruths to the committee, but I would encourage that line of questioning to be carried through to other witnesses today, some of whom may be in a better position to answer the specifics of that question. Certainly the idea that people have only accessed their own data does not appear to be the case based on the information we have been provided.

MS CARRICK: Do you understand why the system was signed off by NEC and the government when it was not ready?

Mr Hemsley: No, genuinely, it is baffling. In fact, I know there is on the Transport Canberra disclosure log—we did come across a brief on 25 November, received in the minister's office, which goes into getting it ready for launch. It essentially says, "Are we going to go ahead with this system?" There is quite a bit of it that is redacted, so we do not know 100 per cent what the government knew was not working on the day. Having spoken to Transport Canberra at 4 pm the day before launch, and then not being fully aware of the validated activation issue still being present, leads us to believe that they were not fully across the extent of the problems with the system that were present prior to launch. Subsequently they then demonstrated that themselves in full view of the public when the system launched in the state that it did on the 27th.

MS CARRICK: Had they advertised the free period and then the date of launch earlier? Were they locked into that free period and date of launch, those timings?

Mr Hemsley: I would that is suggest put to Transport Canberra. Again, this has come to our knowledge through pre-emptive information requests that we have only been familiar with over the past week; I think one thing we understand is that there was a huge chunk of the communications campaign for MyWay+ which could not be undertaken due to the caretaker period, and it all got squashed into that last little bit after the election, but before the launch in November. So we understand that there were shortcomings in the communications campaign that came about as a result of the timing of the system launch over that election period. But again, we would encourage the committee to ask Transport Canberra for more information about that and the extent to which it really kneecapped Transport Canberra's ability to provide comprehensive detailed and continuous information about the new system in the lead up to the launch.

MS CARRICK: Reading through the submissions, a lot of people feel like their confidence in the system has been damaged. Do you think that public transport users' confidence has been damaged and that some people have gone back to the car due to

the frustrations with using the system?

Mr Hemsley: We know people have. In fact, one of the issues which is still present is the matter of Seniors Cards for instance. We have received reports through our committee that there are some people who are so confused by what they need to do in order to access the free public transport, that as a senior they are entitled to, that they are just not willing to touch public transport as a result. So we know for a fact that there are people who are confused about the system, even in its current state, and that they are unwilling to use public transport for fear of getting it wrong, again, because public transport for them has become a high cognitive activity. They have to think about what they are doing in order to catch the bus: not even in terms of actually where the bus is going to go, but just getting on that bus in the first instance and that first step for them has become a more stressful experience than it ever needs to be.

MS CARRICK: Possibly causing them anxiety about catching public transport.

Dr Jelacic: I might add to this. There has been a lot of discussion about the impact on seniors, which is very important. I would also encourage the committee to follow up with—I know you have some members of the community who are appearing who have made submissions regarding their families and their children. We know that school drop off is a real horror show around many schools, and families around the community do not feel particularly confident about using MyWay+ as a family and how they administer a card for their children. We know that group-based or family-based ticketing is a feature that will be incoming, but again, to your broader point, the uncertainty that that creates is something extremely impactful that is very hard to repair or walk back from. We, as an association, view that in the context of all the service problems we do have with provision of public transport in the ACT, and with all the bus problems and other bits and pieces that you are all very aware of, that the problems with MyWay+ have really compounded those confidence issues. So yes, I am very glad that the committee has raised that specific point.

MR BRADDOCK: So coming back to the Transport Canberra brief to the minister dated 25 November, noting, of course, the redactions, does that, in your view, accord a full, accurate and truthful state of the situation prior to go launch, considering also what PTCBR had raised with the minister's office in that period?

Mr Hemsley: No.

MR CAIN: So the lack of trust that you have seen out there in the community, particularly amongst our seniors, is that driven by concern about what is happening to their private data, primarily, or what other features are producing that?

Mr Hemsley: The private data thing is a very new thing. I think certainly prior to the stories that have come out in the media recently, that was not a consideration. It was one we were aware of. We have had members come to us say, "Look, we are quite concerned about some exploits we have discovered in the MyWay+ system and we have passed them on to the relevant authorities." But certainly we think that, at this stage, the primary area where MyWay+ has impacted public confidence in the system is just their ability to pay for a ticket. I suspect quite a few people were burned on that first day, when they were all trying to use the QR code and it was not working. Again, they

were doing what they were told to do; they were doing what the app told them to do; they were doing what all the communications material suggested they do, and it was not working. I think that was a fundamental breach of trust between Transport Canberra and passengers using Transport Canberra services, and I think that is going to take some time to recover from.

MS TOUGH: About the QR codes: have any of your members detected any improvements in the QR codes since that first day, and are the issues more prevalent at certain times of the day or is it just all the time?

Mr Hemsley: It is all the time. There have been minor improvements. The first one was obviously shrinking the size of the QR codes, but the issue is the QR code itself is just far too detailed. A simple QR code with far less information in it would be faster to read. I think again, without wanting to go into the technical details of it, the fact that it has so much information in it means the reader takes more time to scan it than is required in the contract, for instance. Yes, it made it easier for people to scan the QR code, but the scanner itself, the validator, still takes far too long to actually register the QR code.

One thing we have repeatedly emphasised with Transport Canberra is that where QR codes on digital devices are required—anyone who has caught an airline flight in Australia would know the QR ticket is a feature you use, you just put it on the scanner when you are boarding your flight. The app increases the brightness to 100 per cent, so it is readable. That is one thing we have insisted that Transport Canberra needs to investigate and implement as a matter of priority and there has been no movement on that at all.

The reality, and looking at this from a broader perspective, is that the QR code ticket needs to go. It is never going to work as intended. It is just far too complicated, it is far too cumbersome, and it is never going to provide that seamless, low-cognitive activity that people really need when they are actually just wanting to pay for their public transport fare. The fare payment itself should be the simplest component of a public transport journey. The QR code complicates that needlessly.

Ms Jelacic: We do note, too, at the annual report hearings the other week, I believe Ben—he did indicate that there is a new digital something being worked on. So that is good, but, again, back to one of our main themes, why was the QR code pursued in the first place? We have heard various answers from Transport Canberra and NEC about that, and we are not terribly impressed with them.

Mr Hemsley: We would very much be interested to know from Transport Canberra and NEC why the QR code was chosen as the preferred digital token. Again, it was not something anyone asked for. A printed one is a slightly different matter. Obviously, if you are using a scanner, and eventually when the ticket vending machines come online—whenever that is, noting that they are still not operational—having a QR code printed feature is more reasonable and will be a much easier thing to scan than the digital one, where obviously phones are different and screens are different. It is always going to be complicated for the reader to read a digital QR code compared to a physical one. Definitely, the digital QR code feature has to go.

PROOF

THE CHAIR: Amy and Ryan, thank you so much for your time today. Thank you for your submission and thank you for all of your member feedback and your work, which is voluntary and tireless, and always high quality. Thank you so much. I do not think we have taken any questions on notice. So, we look forward to speaking to the rest of our witnesses.

Mr Hemsley: Thank you, chair.

Ms Jelacic: Thank you for inviting us.

Short suspension.

GORHAM, MS KYLIE, Senior Product Manager, NEC Australia
MESSENGER, MR MARK, Head of Smart Transport ANZ, NEC Australia

THE CHAIR: We welcome the witnesses from NEC Australia. I remind you of the protections and obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege. Witnesses must tell the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be considered contempt of this Assembly. Can you both confirm verbally that you have read, understood and agree with the obligations in that pink privilege statement?

Mr Messenger: Yes, I do.

Ms Gorham: Yes, I have.

THE CHAIR: We are not inviting opening statements. I understand that you would like to table a statement; is that correct?

Mr Messenger: We had prepared one.

THE CHAIR: Yes, that is fine. We have tabled that, and we will accept that as a submission to our committee. We have ABC here. They are filming. We are broadcasting and streaming, anyway, for the public record. Are you happy for ABC also to film and record?

Mr Messenger: Yes, we are.

Ms Gorham: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. We will start with questions from Ms Tough.

MS TOUGH: Thank you, NEC, for coming along today. In your submission, you described the solution purchased for the MyWay+ upgrades as “off the shelf and not a bespoke product”. What was the performance of the solution in cities in which it had already been rolled out, such as Christchurch?

Mr Messenger: Christchurch has been operational for a period of three to four years. The scope of that solution is primarily providing a real-time passenger information system, fleet management and interchange solution. It has been operating effectively during that time.

MS TOUGH: Were there any issues with the deployment of the new system, in regard to integrating with the ACT services, that you have seen in Christchurch, or were there things used that were learnt from Christchurch?

Mr Messenger: Christchurch was a—

MS TOUGH: Or in another city; Christchurch is the first one I could think of.

Mr Messenger: No, it was a different situation because it occurred during COVID, so there were quite different challenges that do not really apply here. They did not have

the same need to integrate to the city services that was required here in Canberra. One of the primary integrations that Ms Gorham may talk to is integrating with the ACT Digital Account. That was a new experience for both us and the ACT government. That proved to be challenging for both parties.

Probably the primary lesson we learnt in the Christchurch rollout was around how to manage the rollout remotely during that period—manage remote staff, remote users—which did not really apply to this situation.

MS TOUGH: Ms Gorham, could you elaborate a bit on that integration between MyWay+ and the ACT digital system?

Ms Gorham: I can. The integration between MyWay+ and the ACT Digital Account is intended to create an opportunity, in the first instance, for Canberrans who want to sign up and register an account with MyWay+ to do so utilising their existing credentials and the management of their private information inside the ACT Digital Account, without needing to have a separate and replicated or duplicated record in MyWay+.

In the first instance there are elements of convenience for the people who already have an account with the ACT Digital Account to be able to utilise that to access and log into MyWay+ accounts. In the second instance it creates a protection for them because their information is retained inside the ACT Digital Account and it is not duplicated in another system.

Longer term, and one of the reasons why it was an important integration for us to have in place before we launched MyWay+, is that there are opportunities for deeper integrations. For example, a person's concession eligibility in the future may well be maintained and accessed through the ACT Digital Account record, rather than being separately maintained in MyWay+. That service is not yet available, but the integration has been put in place so that, when it becomes available, it is a more seamless transition to create that enhanced environment.

MR CAIN: What was your intention in providing the QR code as part of the rollout? What were you hoping that would achieve, and what consultation did you do to say that that was an important part of the rollout?

Ms Gorham: The introduction of QR codes as a method of payment in transit ticketing systems has increased over the last five-plus years. It is not necessarily intended to replace any existing ticketing technology but to augment or enhance it.

It creates an opportunity for the transit agency to have a simple distribution method, to give a token, which is what we call the tool that you use. When you are presenting your MyWay+ card, your Visa or MasterCard or your QR token, you are presenting it to a reader. It represents your right to travel and it represents a method to recognise each individual transaction.

The QR code itself, from a transit agency perspective, offers convenience in distribution. People can immediately have access to it, once they have logged into their account. There is no requirement to go to a retailer or to go out and actively purchase a

card. It also allows people who do not want to use their Visa or Mastercard to have an option that is simpler to get their hands on, if you like, and to use their account-based ticketing account.

The QR token in itself is intended to be one of many choices that people have. This is fundamental to not only a normalisation in the industry but also an objective that Transport Canberra had, which was to create options for their customers, so that passengers could choose which method they wanted to pay with and not have that determined by a lack of opportunity. The QR token is not intended to be central to the ticketing system, but it is an aspect of the different types of options and the ability to be flexible to the customers' preference.

MR CAIN: What consultation had you done to indicate how much of our community would be reluctant to use a debit or credit card? Given most of them have probably had experience of the New South Wales system, why provide a complication, as part of a much broader rollout of options, as you said, that obviously ended up not working very well?

Ms Gorham: We did not take a position that Canberrans would not choose Visa or Mastercard. Going to our expectation, they have actually embraced it, which is pleasing, because it is a convenient option for them.

The QR token is an opportunity to access the funds in the stored value balance in the MyWay+ account, as opposed to using a Visa or Mastercard. Within our community, there are many people who feel comfortable with using their Visa or Mastercard and to know that they have funds available whenever they need to pay for the things that they pay for each day.

There are other members of our community who do not have that facility available to them. They still need to be able to have what we call an account in the ticketing system where they deposit funds into the account and then the funds are drawn down progressively, as they travel and are charged for their travel. The QR token is simply another method of accessing that account balance alongside the MyWay+ card.

MR CAIN: Who made the decision not to have a simpler approach to start with—for example, a credit or debit card? Who made the decision to say, “No, we need something more complicated as well,” which ended up not working out very well?

Ms Gorham: The decision as to the implementation was taken ultimately by Transport Canberra, but with the support of NEC, in terms of making sure that we addressed that objective that they had, which was to create options for people. Again I would like to highlight that the QR token is one of a number of methods that people have to pay for their fare. They are not required to use it, and for some people it will not be their preference.

MR CAIN: What has been the uptake of using the QR as opposed to other methods?

Ms Gorham: To date we have had an uptake, across the lifetime of ridership and fare payment from the commencement on 27 February, at seven per cent of riders using the QR token on a daily basis. That is across the total cohort of passengers. Until the end

of January, the balance of ridership was almost evenly split between MyWay+ cards and people using their Visa or Mastercard.

Since the beginning of February, when students returned to primary and secondary school, we have seen those numbers shift. I will refer to my notes, in order to give you the correct information. Since that time, we have now seen that split trend more towards the MyWay+ card, as we would expect. We now see 50 per cent of payments being paid for with the MyWay+ card. I have here seven or eight per cent on the QR token, and the balance are on the Visa or Mastercard.

MS CARRICK: With the app, it leads people to the payment option of the QR code. Is the app bespoke? We have heard that the system is not bespoke. Had the experience in other jurisdictions led to more clarity in the app around the different payment systems available?

Ms Gorham: The app itself is not bespoke to MyWay+. The app is a white-labelled product, so it is a product that exists in the marketplace and is used around the world, and it has been personalised for MyWay+. That personalisation includes its orientation geographically, to be representative of the services, the locale, the maps and so on of Canberra, as well as the personalisation sought by Transport Canberra to reflect the community's ownership of the app with respect to being branded as MyWay+. It is also offered through Transport Canberra or the ACT government's stores within the Apple App Store and the Google Play Store.

Those elements of the app themselves have been personalised for Canberrans, along with the QR token itself. The QR token is not, within itself, bespoke. The only bespoke or personalised element of it is its integration into the ticketing system, to receive the information that is stored in the QR token that allows for it to be recognised at validators on board the buses and at the light rail, and for it to be related to the person's account. It is the content inside the detailed technical data of the QR token that is personal; the token itself is not.

THE CHAIR: Mr Cain asked about consultation done with public transport users. As part of this project, did you conduct any consultation with public transport users in Canberra?

Ms Gorham: NEC did not independently conduct consultation. We did support Transport Canberra a number of times at different stages of the implementation in their engagement. Our support was, for example, in providing information, materials about the solution that would support their communications documentation, as well as creating an environment in which a user group was able to do an advanced utilisation of the system prior to the launch and to give feedback through Transport Canberra.

THE CHAIR: Did Transport Canberra give you the results? Did they give you what people said from that? Did you get the information fed back to you?

Ms Gorham: Yes, Chair, they did. We received feedback from Transport Canberra after their own review, which was intended for us to make adjustments to the system, to reflect the outcomes that they had learnt from their stakeholders.

THE CHAIR: Has any of that information been put on the public record yet?

Ms Gorham: I apologise; I am not aware of the extent of the information that has been made public.

MR BRADDOCK: I have a question about the decision-making for the transition from the old MyWay to the new MyWay+, and whether that should be a phased approach or a hard switchover. What recommendations, advice or input did NEC provide to the ACT government about that transition?

Mr Messenger: When we originally put forward the transition plan for transition from MyWay to MyWay+, we put forward a recommendation to have a phased implementation over 20 months. The rationale for that at the time was based on two key factors. One was that the existing 3G network was due to switch off in late 2023. The second factor was that, in our opinion, a smoother transition would be to have the MyWay and MyWay+ system running parallel for a period of time to smooth that transition out.

During mid-2023, Transport Canberra brought in new program management. We undertook a joint review of the program, and some of the decisions made earlier and some of the risks. Some of the decisions that influenced the phased rollout of the information gap had changed, and it was now determined that the 3G network switch-off would happen at a later point, in 2024, so it was not going to be a driving factor for needing to be put on part of the solution.

I believe that Transport Canberra did some research around messaging for the transition from the MyWay to MyWay+ system and determined that it would be more efficient to have a single-phase switchover. Rather than the extended period with both systems running parallel, it would be less confusing to the public to have the MyWay system turned off and MyWay+ to be activated; it would provide an easier message to the public.

On that basis, we looked at what a revised program would look like, to get a single-phase rollout. We provided that program back to Transport Canberra and the change request was put in place at the end of 2023 to move down that path. There was basically a joint engagement by both organisations to take the feedback of Transport Canberra to smooth the process and to work out an appropriate implementation plan.

MR BRADDOCK: What advice did NEC provide to the government about what functionality was or was not going to be available on the go-live date, as you led up to that implementation?

Mr Messenger: Throughout the program, we were providing feedback to Transport Canberra as to what functionality would be live at various points. There were changes to scope through the program. Those scope changes created trade-offs about what functionality needed to be at go live, versus functionality to be delivered later. We provided an ongoing narrative to the government as to what function would be available at go live and what would be delivered at later points.

MR BRADDOCK: The government was aware that certain functionalities would not

be available from the go-live date and decided to proceed, anyway. Is that a fair assessment, from your perspective?

Mr Messenger: We jointly provided the recommendation to government to proceed without that functionality being available, yes.

MS CARRICK: What was happening during the free travel period? Presumably, there was user testing, but why do you think things did not go so well on the go-live date?

Ms Gorham: Ms Carrick, I will take the first part of your question, if that is okay, and then I will ask Mr Messenger to take the second part of the question. The first part of your question went to what was happening during the period when fares were free after MyWay had been turned off. During that time, people were travelling for free—that is correct—and the equipment to be used for MyWay+ was being installed on buses. During that time, there were NEC personnel in Canberra actively testing the system. We had a daily list of buses that already had our equipment installed on them and what trips they were taking, and we travelled on those bus services. Our observations on board the buses were not only limited to the ticketing solution; we were also observing the onboard signage to ensure that it was accurate and timely, and we gave feedback to our teams if any refinement was required in the configuration in order to support that.

Also during that period, we supported Transport Canberra by providing them with MyWay+ cards which they distributed to a group of community testers that they selected and coordinated with to increase the volume of people utilising the system, in a similar manner to the way that the NEC personnel were doing. Their feedback was collated by Transport Canberra and then shared with us.

MS CARRICK: Was the old MyWay reader still there while that was going on?

Ms Gorham: Often it was there, but it was turned off.

MS CARRICK: The second part of the question went to why you think it did not go so well on the launch date.

Mr Messenger: I will comment on the MyWay readers and then I will answer your question, if that is okay, Ms Carrick. Regarding the transition on board the vehicle, we were removing the existing NXTBUS and MyWay system and completely installing the new MyWay+ system. There was a plan to have it installed on up to 80 per cent of the buses before go live. We were testing the next generation: MyWay+.

Going to the question about go live, we admit that go live was not as smooth as it should have been, and we apologised for that. There were a couple of factors that contributed to that that were largely unexpected. We had not foreseen the number of people that would require cards through the retail network that we put in place. Around 27 agencies at the time were not sufficiently stocked to support that uptake. We have since addressed that and there are now close to 45 retailers across greater Canberra that support the distribution of cards, as well as the management of concessions and top-ups.

The second issue was that we had an unexpected network outage on one of the routes

on the day of launch that impacted light rail. We addressed that on the day of launch, but that would have impacted people's expectation and experience on the day of launch. We also had some load issues on the system that caused unexpected performance. It did not show up in testing. We addressed that. And there were obviously the QR token issues, which were referred to earlier, that caused a sub-optimal experience. We took on the feedback from the public and our own experience of observing people using the QR tokens on the network and made some changes to the design of the QR token on the MaaS application—Mobility as a Service application—to improve scan performance, and we also addressed some issues around the performance of the reader itself. They were addressed in the first week of launch. There were a number of issues that were largely unexpected and were not shown through testing. We mobilised to address those during the launch period.

MS CARRICK: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: I want to clarify for the record: before 27 November, was your recommendation to Transport Canberra that it was ready to launch and they should launch on 27 November?

Ms Gorham: Chair, I will take that question because I had daily engagement with Transport Canberra at that time. We met daily. We discussed this issue on a daily basis for some weeks, and prior to that on a very frequent basis as well. Those issues were addressed day by day, rather than at a point in time.

THE CHAIR: There was no conversation in which somebody asked, "Should we launch or shouldn't we launch?" That was something that Transport Canberra did and they did not discuss it with you?

Ms Gorham: We had a list of elements to the solution that we wanted to be satisfied were ready. As we worked our way through that list in the lead-up to the launch, as more of them were ready, we were able to feel more confident about the launch date. Ultimately, there was a meeting at which there was a discussion about whether the readiness level was sufficient, and it was jointly agreed that it was.

THE CHAIR: I am sorry to ask all these questions, but it is fairly crucial. We received evidence at the previous hearing that there was a briefing to the minister on 25 November. A lot of that briefing has been redacted, so I am not sure what is in it, but there was obviously some decision on 25 November. Do you recall what you said on 25 November? Had you seen all of the errors that were reported to Transport Canberra? We know all of those errors were reported. Had all of those errors been reported to NEC by 25 November? Were you aware of all of the problems?

Ms Gorham: We are aware of the feedback that we received from Transport Canberra. We have no visibility of its completeness, but we have always had a very strong and transparent partnership with Transport Canberra. We have no reason to believe that we were not aware. Each of the items that was presented was worked through jointly and assessed, and then there was a recommendation to government, given by Transport Canberra, after our joint review.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

MS TOUGH: I have a quick question about the QR readers during the user testing phase. We heard from PTCBR earlier that, since the date of the launch, the size of the QR code has shrunk to make it easier. Did the time that it took to scan come up in user testing, as well as how hard it was for some phones to scan?

Ms Gorham: It is quite a change for any group of passengers. There is a long history of using smart cards before using QR codes. The methodology by which the QR code is read by any QR reader—not specifically for MyWay+—takes longer. As you can imagine, it is a camera, so it takes a moment to focus, then it takes an image, and then it has to interpret the image. Smart cards are naturally much faster. People have great familiarity with speed, and also, to a certain extent, there is the muscle memory aspect of presenting a smart card—the previous MyWay card, for example—to a reader. People develop a practice and a habit, and anything that deviates from that seems very strange to them. When QR codes are introduced in transit, it takes people a little bit longer to get used to it. It is acknowledged that it takes a little bit longer to read each time. The experience will not replicate perfectly with that of a smart card.

In addition to the QR tokens being made smaller, we adjusted the configuration to increase the window of time in which they would be accepted, to reduce the possibility that they would not be accepted because of expiry of time. We also introduced an additional screen to give feedback to the customer to let them know that their QR token had expired and that their phone did not have a connection to the internet, so it could not automatically be refreshed. Some people do not have that facility on their phone—that they always have data available to them. If people have data and the ticket expires, the code would refresh naturally, but those who do not have data at the time are given a reason and what to do. Those are some of the immediate changes that we made in the app to improve people's understanding of its use and what to do if it is not working as they expect.

MS TOUGH: Thank you.

MR BRADDOCK: I have a question about cybersecurity. A number of submissions raised concern about that and potential access to Canberrans' personal payment information. Firstly, do you keep any log within the system to ensure that you can track whether any unauthorised access has occurred?

Mr Messenger: I will take that one, if that is okay, Mr Braddock. We operate the system under ISO 27001 cybersecurity principles. As part of that, we monitor access to all data within our system, both at the edge of the system and also when users interface with the system itself. We track data access and can track when people access the end points of the service as well. We do keep those logs.

MR BRADDOCK: Are you aware of any instances where unauthorised access to Canberrans' personal payment information has happened?

Mr Messenger: We have had some observations reported through the Australian Cyber Security Centre. It was reported to Transport Canberra through them and then to us. We investigated those and responded back to Transport Canberra. We operate under the Australian cybersecurity guidelines which require us to report any issues to Transport

Canberra, and they manage disclosure.

MR BRADDOCK: Regarding design and development of the system, there seem to be a couple of flaws. Firstly, the NEC system trusted the user's browser and did not follow standard API structures. How can you ensure security of the system when those practices were not followed?

Mr Messenger: It is probably not appropriate to comment in this forum about the design of the solution where it relates to cybersecurity issues. I am happy to take that on notice or to respond through Transport Canberra in the appropriate forum.

MR BRADDOCK: Thank you. I will explore that with the committee later. Has NEC complied with part 8 of the contract, which sets out cybersecurity requirements for this system?

Mr Messenger: Yes; we have.

MR BRADDOCK: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: I have just confirmed that we can take a confidential submission on that point. If any member has questions that might go to that issue, they could send them to our secretariat so that they can frame the questions and receive confidential answers.

Mr Messenger: That is fine with us. If appropriate, I remind the chair that, regarding our obligations under the contract, we have to report these sorts of issues through Transport Canberra, so we will respond through them.

THE CHAIR: Sure.

MR CAIN: I am sure they are watching.

Mr Messenger: I am also sure they are.

THE CHAIR: Tell me if this is straying into the same territory. Given that some cybersecurity issues were reported, did you conduct extra testing?

Mr Messenger: Yes; we did.

THE CHAIR: Excellent. Where do we see the details of that?

Mr Messenger: We provided that to Transport Canberra and the Australian—

THE CHAIR: We could ask Transport Canberra if we want to see the details of that extra testing?

Mr Messenger: That is right; yes.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

MS CARRICK: There were issues with basic functionality, such as tapping on the next

bus and the account balance. When were those sorts of issues addressed, such as the account balance and connection of a debit or credit card to an account?

Ms Gorham: Ms Carrick, I will take your question. Your question has several parts. It is true that there have been additional enhancements to the system since it went live to address some of the early feedback that we received during the launch period. Those things have been largely dealt with and have been improved. They are the sorts of things that may not be necessarily noticeable to every user, but those who were affected have been contacted through Transport Canberra and their accounts have been addressed. In general, we have responsibility to deliver all of the features in the contract, and we continue to work with Transport Canberra to plan the delivery of those. They will be progressive. At this point, there are no parts of functionality that we expect to not deliver.

MS CARRICK: Will a debit or credit card be linked to an account so that people can see transactions from the use of a debit or credit card?

Ms Gorham: The debit or credit card transactions appear in everybody's account today and always have. A person who uses their debit or credit card to pay for their fares can see the record of their journeys in their account. The account will show a record that they have been charged for a journey. For example, if an adult travelling in peak hour pays \$3.32 for their fare, they will see that appear in their account as an individual line item. However, it will not be deducted off their account balance, because they are not paying with their account balance; they are paying with their credit card. The place where a person will see an entry for their ultimate payment for journeys at the end of each day, where they used a credit card, is their personal bank account. We have no insight into that and there is no intention to provide that sort of information in a system like this. A person will see their daily transactions and the journeys they have taken, and, at the end of each day, we will send a charge through to the bank and they will then see it in their bank account.

MS CARRICK: Thank you. That is not the evidence that we have heard—that debit and credit transactions appear in the MyWay app account—the digital account.

MS TOUGH: I have a question about future functionalities. In section c) of your submission, you talk about some future functionalities that will come at some point, including having a family account with multiple cards attached to it. When do you expect these extensions to be completed? And what other functions are coming in the future?

Ms Gorham: Ms Tough, I can take your question. We understand that family group functionality is important for families in Canberra. I can advise that it is at a stage now where it is being tested by Transport Canberra. We have largely completed the feature and its readiness, having completed our own testing. Transport Canberra are now managing a process where they have a test group that has access to the feature to test it in the real world. We look forward to their feedback so that we can finalise the feature and make it available to the broader community. It will be Transport Canberra's decision as to when it will ultimately be launched, but we are supporting them by delivering it as quickly as we can.

The features that follow that are intended to support ease of access for users to manage and maintain their account. One of the next important features will be what we call a delegated user—a person who is able to sign into another person’s account on their behalf and either view and/or maintain that account. We see this as an important functionality for parents and people who may care for someone who may not have responsibility for their own care. That may be a more senior person in their household, and so on. That functionality is adjunct to family groups. The priority is funding, to ensure that students, children and others are able to access bus services without being denied. Secondary to that is the additional support that is sometimes needed when somebody wants to manage a person’s concession status in their account, for example.

MS TOUGH: Thank you. In part c), you also talk about the transit management system and support for drivers. Is that also something that is in the works?

Ms Gorham: Our transport management system was live through a period prior to the launch of MyWay+ on 27 November and continues to be available. That capability in MyWay+ provides drivers with services at their station while they are driving the bus, including turn-by-turn navigation on routes. They also receive feedback with respect to the other onboard systems. For example, they have indicators that let them know when people have tapped their card or their token at the validator. They have visibility of that as well. Those features have been in place for some time. Our product, the platform, is intended to grow as Transport Canberra’s needs grow, as it will through the completion of the initial contract’s scope.

MS TOUGH: Thank you.

MR CAIN: I am interested in the nature of the contract you have with Transport Canberra. What are your current obligations under that contract going forward? What is the intended term of your engagement? And what functions are you required to perform?

Mr Messenger: I will talk about the contract in general terms. It is a 10-year contract. Our obligations are to deliver the technical scope of the solution and then maintain and operate that for a 10-year period, and, through that 10-year period, to continue to enhance and extend the platform as part of the product roadmap we have for the underpinned products that provide part of the solution, as well as through feedback from customers where they have asked for more features. In addition to that, we are managing the retail network that provides the card distribution network for all of the cards throughout the Canberra region. We are also managing the maintenance and support of all the devices that make up the front-end interfaces for the Transport Canberra system. Effectively, we are providing the system infrastructure that underpins the MyWay+ ticketing system for the 10-year period.

MR CAIN: What is the value of that contract?

Mr Messenger: It is not appropriate for me to talk about that in this forum. It is commercial in confidence.

MR CAIN: Is that something you can provide to the committee in confidence, as the chair has indicated?

Mr Messenger: That is fine. I think the final value is on the public record.

THE CHAIR: It is on the Contracts Register, isn't it?

MR CAIN: If it is on the public record, why can't you state it now?

Mr Messenger: Sure. The total value is about \$64 million, at this point.

MR CAIN: For the record, how far are you into the 10-year contract at the moment?

Mr Messenger: We are in the first year of operation at this point. The 10 years of operation commenced at roughly the time of go live.

MR CAIN: Again for the record, that was when?

Mr Messenger: That was on 27 November.

MR CAIN: Thank you. What kinds of audit arrangements are you aware of that will review the conduct and performance of your contract?

Mr Messenger: We operate under a KPI regime. We need to report performance against KPIs on a monthly basis. They will also review the performance of NEC against the contract on a regular basis and will provide feedback to the government through the contract management framework we have in place.

MR CAIN: Who is doing that audit?

Mr Messenger: It will be done by Transport Canberra. I understand there is an external audit party as well that will review what has been done.

MR CAIN: Are you aware of who Transport Canberra are engaging to do the audit of your contract?

Mr Messenger: No; we are not.

MR CAIN: Have any audits been conducted thus far?

Mr Messenger: There has been a project audit conducted as part of the go-live process.

MR CAIN: Are you able to say what the conclusions of that audit were?

Mr Messenger: We understand, based on feedback from Transport Canberra, that they recommended that the project was in a state to go live.

MR CAIN: When is the next audit and what is the nature of that?

Mr Messenger: I am sorry, Mr Cain, but I am not aware of that at this point.

MS CARRICK: I am not sure whether you have read all the submissions, but there

were a lot of issues raised. There were over 150 submissions. Did you feel any pressure from Transport Canberra to sign off on saying that the system was ready to go live?

Mr Messenger: No; we did not feel any pressure. We discussed the status of the system throughout the testing program and the period of going live. We jointly, with Transport Canberra, made the recommendation that the system was in a state to go live.

MS CARRICK: Thank you.

MR BRADDOCK: Is the MyWay+ system satisfying the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1, given that it is a contractual requirement? I note that submitters seemed to have a contrary view.

Ms Gorham: Mr Braddock, I can take your question. I am aware that parts of our solution at the moment do not meet those guidelines. It is a requirement of NEC to finalise our compliance with those guidelines throughout the finalisation of our delivery.

MR BRADDOCK: What would be the time frame for that delivery?

Ms Gorham: We are expecting to finalise those requirements progressively over the next six months.

MR BRADDOCK: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Where you are not in compliance with your contract, have there been any penalties or consequences? Is there a discount on the contract fees, for instance?

Mr Messenger: We have a period to complete the contract itself. The contract is not yet complete. We are aiming to complete all of those items, as Ms Gorham said, over the next six months.

THE CHAIR: So, under the contract, as it is drafted, you are completely compliant because you are not yet required to provide full performance?

Mr Messenger: We have not yet completed the scope of the works. Yes; that is right.

THE CHAIR: Completion of the scope of the works occurs on which date?

Mr Messenger: The target date we are aiming for, for the first phase of completion, is the middle of the year.

THE CHAIR: You say “the target date”. Is that not set in the contract?

Mr Messenger: No. The dates in the contract move, based on scope changes. We have had some scope changes that mean that final dates will move based on those scope changes in the program, in agreeance with Transport Canberra.

THE CHAIR: Is there any point at which government can decide whether there is a contract breach or is it a constantly shifting change-of-scope conversation?

Mr Messenger: That is probably a question for Transport Canberra. We cannot really comment on that.

THE CHAIR: It probably is. That is a fair point. Thank you very much. That brings us to the end of our session. Thank you very much for joining us. One question was taken on notice. We will send it to you in writing when our members have sent us the information. Our secretariat will let you know what the status of that will be, in terms of confidentiality or publication. Please feel free to pick up the phone to talk to James and explain any sensitivities so that they can be resolved. That is probably the only loose end from this hearing. Thank you for your time today, and thank you for your expertise and for assisting us with our inquiry.

Mr Messenger: Thank you very much.

Hearing suspended from 11.06 am to 11.19 am.

FULHAM, MR SHAUN, Private capacity
REID, MR PATRICK, Private capacity

THE CHAIR: Welcome, Patrick Reid and Shaun Fulham. Thank you very much for your time today. I will remind you of the protections and obligations afforded under parliamentary privilege, and I draw your attention to the pink privilege statement that we pre-circulated. Witnesses must tell the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated as a serious matter and may be considered contempt of the Assembly. Can you both confirm verbally that you understand and agree with those obligations?

Mr Reid: I have read and understood and agree to the statement.

THE CHAIR: Thank you both very much. We are not inviting opening statements. Thank you very much for your detailed submissions. We have read them. They were excellent. I am going to pass my first question over to Mr Braddock.

MR BRADDOCK: Thank you, Chair. The government is stating that the only instance where Canberrans' personal payment information was accessed was when Mr Fulham reported it. Are you aware of any other instances where personal information may have been accessed on the MyWay+ system?

Mr Fulham: It was stated that I only accessed my own data; this is not true. In order to thoroughly check that it was not just a mere coincidence or anything, I did check surrounding user IDs—the first couple, like zero and one. However, I did not save any data outside of my own, and a very, very small amount of Mr Reid's data with his consent. I did not save any other Canberrans' information.

Mr Reid: Can I continue on from that? I also did my own set of investigations into this vulnerability once I became aware of it. I did check a significant number. I made 10,000 requests to the server for a "fare media" end point. This was to see, "Does the server respond to a large number of requests, and does it detect that this is suspicious? If you use a suspicious IP from a VPN, does it block it?" The answer to all of these questions is, roughly, "no". I have since deleted all of the data that came from that.

MR BRADDOCK: Does this form the basis for your statement that this is a notifiable data breach, and the ACT government should have notified persons whose data was accessed?

Mr Reid: I am under the impression that the government does not know what data has been accessed, and unless they can prove that only a specific subset of data has been accessed, I believe that it should be notified.

MR BRADDOCK: NEC in evidence this morning suggested they do have logs of access, although they seem to have no indication of anyone accessing someone else's data. Why are you of the contrary view?

Mr Reid: Well, I made requests of the end points. I know the IP addresses came from VPNs because I made those requests, because they came from me, which means that if NEC is saying that those requests did not happen, or they have not seen those requests, I do not believe that they have investigated thoroughly enough.

MR BRADDOCK: Can I just confirm the details that you think were vulnerable? Did they include full name, a phone number, email address, home address, password hash and salt, full MyWay+ card number, CVV, and the first six and the last four numbers of the credit and debit card details? Is that correct?

Mr Fulham: That is correct, but it did also include the expiry date of the given credit and debit card details.

MR BRADDOCK: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Ms Carrick?

MS CARRICK: I was wondering about your views on the scope of the project and whether implementing a simpler system that did the debit/credit card first and then added functionality as it went would have been more appropriate?

Mr Reid: I do believe that it is the case that simplicity is always better, both in terms of making sure that the software you are writing is simple, and you are not introducing unnecessary complexity, which introduces bugs, but also in terms of additional features—additional features means additional surface area for bugs and the possibility for security vulnerabilities to become apparent. So, yes, simplicity is better.

Mr Fulham: Yes, I agree.

MS CARRICK: And do you think as public transport users that the multiple ways to pay are necessary? What are your views about the QR code and whether it should be kept?

Mr Fulham: My view is that the QR was not a good idea. I think it is probably a good idea for paper tickets that will be available at ticket vending machines; however, as a digital means to tap on, I do not think it is a good idea. I do, however, wish that there was another way to tap on using your account balance with your phone or whatever, such as having the ability to add your MyWay+ card to your digital wallet, such as Google Wallet or Apple Pay.

This is being done in other jurisdictions by other companies; however, it is not particularly common here in Australia. I think it is Victoria that allows you to add your public transport card into Google Wallet, and I believe that is the extent of what is available in Australia. I do think it would have been a good idea here in Canberra.

Mr Reid: I have personally only ever used the physical MyWay card because I find it is the most reliable, and I have seen people having issues with other methods.

MS TOUGH: You said in the submission that when you found the security concerns you reported it to the federal government, and it was fixed in a fairly short turnaround. Would you say that was a reasonable time for that fix, between reporting it and knowing that it had been fixed? Can you confirm what you understand that turnaround time was?

Mr Fulham: I do believe it was a relatively quick turnaround time. I do, however, wish

that the communication to me regarding that did happen sooner. I did not receive any confirmation from the Australian Cyber Security Centre until about a week afterwards, and that was only after I sent a follow-up email to them.

MS TOUGH: But they had fixed it within that week? They just had not bothered to—

Mr Fulham: No; my understanding is that it was not fixed in that time. I do remember checking before sending that follow-up email, and I do believe it had not been fixed at that time.

Mr Reid: My understanding is that the last time we saw the security risk being accessible was around 12 December, and the first time that it became inaccessible was 15 December, so it was probably fixed somewhere within that timeframe, at least on the public facing.

MS TOUGH: Thank you. What was the date you first reported it?

Mr Fulham: It was 6 December at one in the morning.

THE CHAIR: I apologise if this is going to sound repetitive; I am just trying to get it really clear for the public record for a bunch of us who are not very technical. I am not challenging anything; I am just trying to restate. It sounds like you reported what you saw as the vulnerability, and it sounds like NEC has a data log that does not show those vulnerabilities. Is that right?

Mr Fulham: That is not my understanding. My understanding is that NEC was saying that they are unaware of any active exploitation of the vulnerabilities in that period, not that the vulnerability did not occur.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. So everybody accepts that this vulnerability exists; what is in contention is how many people used it.

Mr Fulham: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Have you had any information about what testing they did to check proactively, besides you good citizens who reported it to the correct people? Did they tell you how they checked that nobody else had accessed it?

Mr Reid: Nothing beyond the statement that they did a risk assessment with CyberCX.

THE CHAIR: And what was the period of time from when you were monitoring? How long do you think this vulnerability existed? The system was launched on the 27th. We have had previous evidence saying that elements of the system were up before then. How long do you think the vulnerability might have been around?

Mr Fulham: The particular vulnerabilities I found, I believe, probably would have happened from the date that the system was first up, so probably when user testing commenced.

THE CHAIR: User testing.

Mr Fulham: I do not know that for sure; however, given what I found, it would make sense it would seem that long.

THE CHAIR: This is not up to you to answer, but it sounds like user testing up until 15 December is the period of time during which the vulnerability existed.

Mr Fulham: Yes, approximately.

THE CHAIR: Thank you so much. I will hand over to Mr Cain.

MR CAIN: Thank you for your submission and your interest in this important inquiry. Why did you even think to have a look at the security of this system?

Mr Fulham: When I was using the system, I had auto top-up set up so that whenever it automatically tops up your account balance, it sends you a notification email. In this particular email, down the bottom it normally has a link to the MyWay+ portal; however, in this case it had a link to the development server, so that is what prompted me to look further.

Mr Reid: For me, I saw some reports from members of the community who claimed their MyWay card reclaimed the balance on their MyWay card, and they got multiple error messages, and then later in the day they got multiple times credited that account balance. This led me to try to investigate, “Why did they get credited multiple times?”, and that led to the security vulnerability that I reported.

MR CAIN: What expertise do you feel you had to go further with those concerns? Can you tell us what are you currently doing? What gave you the capability to actually dig in and find out a bit more information?

Mr Fulham: Obviously, we are both computer science students; however, previously I have worked on personal projects that have dealt with the potential of handling user data, so I have done my own research prior and learning what the standards are for this and how I should go about this so that data is not accessible by other people. Then I applied that learning to my research.

Mr Reid: From my point of view, all of the ways that you discover security vulnerabilities are the same as debugging problems with your own applications that you build. So if you have built applications with one specific set of technologies, you will already have part of the skillset required to test or identify potential security risks or bugs in existing software.

MR CAIN: How concerned were each of you about what was happening to your own private data as public transport users?

Mr Fulham: Extremely concerned. It is a vulnerability that I found that I think, given industry standards, should not have occurred in the first place. I remember when I first saw this that I was flabbergasted about how serious it was.

Mr Reid: To clarify, I believe that the vulnerability that Shaun found is, arguably, one

of the worst-case scenarios that you could have had with the system in terms of a kind of security vulnerability that you could find. I do not think that there would have been any, arguably, worse vulnerability.

MR CAIN: I want to thank you both for having the nous and having the initiative to look into something that I am sure from a government messaging point of view was, “Don’t worry everybody, everything is okay.” So I want to thank you for digging in and bringing this to our attention; it is much appreciated.

MS CARRICK: Agreed.

THE CHAIR: Yes, from all of us, thank you, and for your bravery in coming up now in here. Mr Braddock?

MR BRADDOCK: The ACT government is claiming they did due diligence by cyber testing with a national and international leading cybersecurity firm. Are you able to explain why the weaknesses you found may not have been identified as part of such testing?

Mr Fulham: My understanding is that CyberCX was engaged to perform a risk assessment, the scope of which we do not know completely. We do not know if they did, for example, any penetration testing or audit of the code itself, so we do not know the specific details of what happened and, therefore, do not know how it led to them giving the green light.

MR BRADDOCK: I will reframe the question: what testing would you have advised the ACT government to have done before going live with the MyWay+ system to ensure we are protecting Canberrans’ data?

Mr Fulham: Penetration testing would be probably what I would have recommended; however, given what I have found, I would now also recommend a complete audit of any code of the system.

Mr Reid: So just to clarify, when Shaun says “penetration testing”, what he is referring to is that you get a group of people who are well-versed in common vulnerabilities in systems and you sit them down and you say, “Hey, hack this X amount of times; try and find as many vulnerabilities with the system as possible.” They are trying to be the kind of hackers who are trying to get into the system, but they are on the inside and in the organisation so they can provide reports directly to the developers.

MR CAIN: So it was not to take advantage of the system but to bring it to the public’s awareness?

Mr Reid: It generally happens inside, so it is more taking advantage but doing it inside, so that you know how it can be taken advantage of, and you can fix it.

MS CARRICK: So-called white hat hackers, as against the black hat hackers.

Mr Reid: Yes, white hat hacking is a colloquial term for it.

MR CAIN: What would you do with that information? Once you have this group knowledge about, “Wow, there are problems here,” what would you do with that?

Mr Reid: It then gives you enough information to be able to fix those problems and potentially change some design decisions about how it is being implemented, to make sure it is more secure prior to it going live.

MR CAIN: In this case, given what you have found out, what did you do, apart from putting in your submission to us? Is that what you have done?

Mr Reid: When I initially found the vulnerabilities, I sent my report directly to the Australian Cyber Security Centre, as they have a method whereby you can report to them, and they will pass that along to any relevant agencies. They also recommended that I send my report directly to DDTS, which I subsequently did.

MR CAIN: What has been the Transport Canberra and City Services response?

Mr Reid: I have not received any communication from TCCS or NEC. My communication has only ever been with ACSC or DDTS.

MR CAIN: When did you send that to Transport Canberra and City Services?

Mr Reid: I did not go directly to TCCS. My understanding is that that was what ACSC were going to do. They told me that they had notified the relevant organisations.

MR CAIN: When was that?

Mr Reid: I sent my report on 6 December. I sent a follow-up email on 12 December, and I got my initial response from ACSC later that day.

MR CAIN: On 12 December?

Mr Reid: On 12 December.

THE CHAIR: We have had some advice from a good source that, in situations where you are developing an app like this, you both get the right contractor to do a good job and hopefully code it well, and you get an independent certificate from somebody else. Does that sound like the way that these things should usually be run? It might be outside your expertise, and it is okay if it is.

Mr Reid: Yes. My understanding is that that is probably what they were hoping for, from engaging with CyberCX; however, obviously, it has not worked out.

THE CHAIR: Is there anything in particular—you may not have seen independent certificates; I do not know whether you are familiar with that—that you think an agency or a committee should look for—not the person who has developed it but the person who has certified the system? Is there anything in particular that they should look at? Perhaps they should look at this penetration testing and a few features like that?

Mr Reid: Yes. Generally, you would look for someone who is well respected within

the industry. My understanding is that CyberCX is relatively well respected in the industry, but it may not have been engaged in the relevant scope to undertake penetration testing and so forth.

THE CHAIR: That has answered my question beautifully. What job they have been asked to do is probably the relevant question. Mr Braddock, do you have a question?

MR BRADDOCK: Yes. It is about your assessment of the MyWay+ system and where it does not meet industry standards in terms of cybersecurity. Can you explain to the committee a bit further as to where they have not achieved those standards?

Mr Reid: While there are not any particular formal standards that they would be in violation of, in terms of general practices, for example, one of the technologies they are using is called Microservices, which gives the claim that all of the systems are segregated and that nothing has more access to particular data than it should. However, I believe that their specific implementation of this technology has been a significant contributor to the fact that the vulnerability exists.

Mr Fulham: Just to provide some more clarity on what that means, I understand that, with the way that the back end of the MyWay+ website is structured, you have the portion that is responsible for data processing; then you have the portion that is responsible for actually checking that the user should have access to that data.

On the MyWay+ website, when you ask, “Can I see my account balance?” it goes to the authorisation checker. It says, “Is this person who they claim to be? Should they have access to this data?” They then forward it to the actual data processing back end, and that feeds it forward.

The actual vulnerability was that you could skip sending requests to the authorisation server that checked who you were and, instead, send them straight to the back-end server, which meant that there was no checking as to who you were because it was assumed that you were coming from a trusted source, so they did not bother checking who you were—checking if you should have had access, and that kind of thing.

MS CARRICK: With that technology or those controls in the code, if it is not a bespoke system, shouldn't they have all been sorted out in the systems that NEC had implemented elsewhere?

Mr Reid: My understanding is that there were portions of it that they had developed prior. However, there were parts of the system that were developed for MyWay+ that they potentially intend to resell to other customers; therefore, it is not bespoke in that sense, and some parts of the system had not been matured in other jurisdictions.

MS CARRICK: You had to integrate them with the ACT Digital Account?

Mr Reid: Yes.

Mr Fulham: I believe that this is relatively old code, in terms of it having been around, and it has matured a lot. My understanding—and this goes to speculation as to how NEC structures their deployments—is that each deployment is independent from one

another, if that makes sense. Part of that is that you need to configure the deployment. You need to say, “This is where I want the servers to be; I want the API to be accessible on `api.mywayplus.act.gov.au`.”

That kind of configuration changes, depending on jurisdiction. To an extent, that configuration involves a lot of copy and paste and, if you copy and paste wrongly, there is a chance that you would introduce security vulnerabilities like the one we found. Even if the system is not bespoke but it has been tested in the past, that is not necessarily a guarantee that it will behave perfectly in the ACT government’s environment or a new deployment’s environment.

MR CAIN: With something that has been tested and proven to be safe six months ago, what is your understanding of how safe that might be six months later, or now, given the continually evolving IT environment where people are testing things all the time and coming up with new ways to do so?

Mr Fulham: This is heavily dependent on the way that you architect your systems. It is a combination of how much complexity you have, what has been discovered recently in the cybersecurity landscape and that kind of thing. If you deploy a standard system, there is no particular way of guaranteeing whether or not it will be safe in the future. There are different practices that can make it more or less long-lasting. If you do not make any changes to your code, it is unlikely that you will introduce new security vulnerabilities, but security vulnerabilities might be discovered in existing software that you are already using. If it is deployed on a Linux server, there might be a vulnerability on the Linux code, or there might even be vulnerabilities on the bare metal; the silicon that it is running on might have silicon vulnerabilities, or there might be vulnerabilities in your application stack.

You can often reduce the chance of these vulnerabilities and make a system more resilient for longer without the need for constant maintenance by reducing the number of technologies. But there will always be new discoveries of strange behaviour, and that strange behaviour can often be exploited as a security vulnerability.

MR CAIN: What is the answer, to keep on top of that, in simple terms?

Mr Fulham: In simple terms? Basically, every system that you deploy, no matter how it is structured or how it is built, will have security vulnerabilities that will become apparent, even if you make no changes to it.

MR CAIN: You need people to test it before it goes out into the community.

Mr Fulham: And you need to keep on top of the latest general industry news and update it as new things come out.

MR BRADDOCK: I am interested in your opinion in terms of a further critique of the QR code readers and how long they take. I wonder whether a digital MyWay+ stored value card in your Apple wallet or your Google Wallet might have been a better way to approach that particular problem rather than a QR code. Do you have any views on that?

Mr Fulham: I believe it would be less temperamental and more stable, yes.

Mr Reid: I did touch on this in answer to a previous question. I do believe that being able to store the MyWay+ card in Apple Pay or Google Wallet would have been a much better solution than the QR codes.

MS CARRICK: I want to ask you a bit more about the user testing. You were both user testers for the system. Did you deal with NEC or Transport Canberra? What level of contact did you have with them?

Mr Fulham: We primarily dealt with TCCS. All of the emails were signed by Mark White; I believe that was his name. The frequent daily emails were, “Here are the buses that will likely have MyWay+ equipment installed on them today. If you’re catching these buses, you can expect to be able to tap on.”

In terms of the online systems, we were given an email—I forget the exact date—where we were asked to sign up for the MyWay+ online system and we were given very specific things that we should check. We should check creating an account, linking your MyWay+ card and exploring the customer portal.

In addition, this email said, “At this stage testing is focused on these specific functions. We will notify you as soon as additional testing activities become available.” As far as I am aware, unless I missed an email, we were never told to test any additional features of the online portal. Those are the three features that we were told to test, and that was my assumption of all we were testing, right until the go live.

MS CARRICK: Did you provide responses to TCCS about your findings during the user testing that you did?

Mr Fulham: I provided some feedback in terms of my card not tapping on correctly or tapping off correctly because the readers were not working, and in terms of other bits and pieces. However, I did not get particularly good responses and the issues did not seem to get fixed, so that discouraged me from providing further feedback.

Mr Reid: All the issues that I had, which primarily involved the card readers saying, “Out of service,” were already known by other community members. In particular, I know that PTCBR had already forwarded on these issues, so I did not forward on that feedback, as I knew that they should have already been aware of the issues.

The only other thing that I had to comment on was that not all of the bus drivers on the routes that had MyWay+ were even aware that user testing was taking place. I know I had to explain at least once that user testing was taking place, because the bus driver said, “You don’t need to tap on.” When I said, “I’m a user tester,” they had no idea what I meant.

MR BRADDOCK: Can I please confirm something? You were saying that, due to the poor response from the ACT government to your previous feedback, that dissuaded you from providing further feedback?

Mr Fulham: Yes. I received, “We have heard your response.” It was a one-line email.

THE CHAIR: This might step outside your experience, but I am now increasingly concerned about all of the digital projects that ACT government is running. Have you or your colleagues been user testers or have you done any of your own testing of the HR, HRIMS or any of the other ACT government digital projects?

Mr Fulham: I have not personally done any testing with any other systems. However, I think most of my criticism of the security of MyWay+ lands more so with NEC than the ACT government as a whole.

THE CHAIR: That is the most reassuring thing I have heard in this session so far. Ms Tough, do you have a question?

MS TOUGH: My question is similar. Are the flaws that you found common to the service hosting the MyWay+ website? Are they a known issue with that service or is it something that you think is only MyWay+ related? If you do not know the answer or if it goes beyond your scope, that is fine.

Mr Fulham: Whilst they are using industry standard deployment technologies, the specific vulnerability came from the overlap between the weird way that they designed their system and a problem with their configuration when they deployed it. I do not think that would happen again in another government service because of how weird it is.

MS TOUGH: That was MyWay+ specific?

Mr Fulham: I believe so, yes.

Mr Reid: It was a fairly niche vulnerability in how it explicitly came about. It was a fairly niche problem.

MR CAIN: On the report that you sent to the Australian Cyber Security Centre, what response did you get from them to indicate to you that they were going to send that to Transport Canberra and City Services?

Mr Reid: I will get that specific—

MR CAIN: On 12 December, you got a response from them?

Mr Reid: Yes. On 12 December I received an email that said:

We appreciate your time and effort in notifying the ACSC of this vulnerability. We have notified the organisation in relation to your report. The ACSC recommends you advise ACT government, if you have not already. Here is the contact email that might be helpful. Thank you for contacting ACSC. Kind regards ...

There was then the name of the person I was in contact with.

MR CAIN: Have you had any further communication from the Cyber Security Centre?

Mr Reid: Not in relation to whether it had been fixed or who they had explicitly contacted. My only further communication with ACSC was in regard to their advice around timing for publicly disclosing what I found. In that case, they told me just to ask DDTS.

MR CAIN: Did they dissuade you from publicly disclosing this?

Mr Reid: They did not dissuade me from that.

MR CAIN: They suggested that you advise Transport?

Mr Reid: They suggested that I ask DDTS what their advice would be.

MR CAIN: Did you do so?

Mr Reid: Yes. I had cc-ed DDTS in that email where I asked for ACSC's advice, and they did respond. They said that they had not had anyone raise any issues with it, but they did ask to push back the date that I had initially set for publicly disclosing it. In that case I did agree that that was okay with me, in pushing back that date.

MR CAIN: There was no other communication from the department or the Australian Cyber Security Centre?

Mr Reid: Not since then, no.

MR CAIN: Have you done a public disclosure?

Mr Reid: Yes.

MR CAIN: Is this really your public disclosure?

Mr Reid: I had made a blog post on my website on 21 February. This was then mostly shared by word of mouth. It was also posted on a couple of places like the r/CanberraMyWay+ thread. I do know it was posted into there. However, it only gained traction after the *Canberra Times* article.

MR CAIN: What did you actually say in that blog?

Mr Reid: It was mostly details of how I came about finding it, and I made sure only to include any details that I knew were no longer actively exploitable.

MR CAIN: Similar to what you have told us in your submission?

Mr Reid: Yes. In my submission I linked specifically to that blog post. I did not go into many details in the submission itself.

MR CAIN: We might ask the minister why there was no communication subsequent to that. This would make a great movie, by the way!

Mr Fulham: For clarification, I do not think that the government necessarily need to follow up, in terms of saying, “We have fixed this vulnerability,” or commenting further beyond that. I think that it is fine for them to say, “We have forwarded it; it will be dealt with,” and then be done with the communication.

MR CAIN: Just to confirm, you have not heard anything from Transport Canberra and City Services?

Mr Reid: No, there has been no communication from TCCS or NEC directly to me.

MR CAIN: Even though they are aware that you have lodged this report?

Mr Reid: To an extent, yes. I am aware that cyber.gov.au, the cyber commission, tries to anonymise security reports as much as possible.

MR CAIN: Do you know whether they did that? Do you think that the Australian Cyber Security Centre identified you, or are you not sure?

Mr Reid: Let me just check the communications I had with them.

MR CAIN: I am interested in whether Transport Canberra and City Services are aware that you are the individuals behind that report or not.

Mr Reid: In the details provided to me, they did say, “Your report will be forwarded and provided anonymously, and we will not provide your contact information to identified victims unless you ask us to.”

MR CAIN: But now you are not anonymous, are you?

Mr Reid: Not anymore, no.

MR CAIN: I look forward to what you hear from Transport Canberra; feel free to let the committee know.

MS CARRICK: Have you continued to test the system for vulnerabilities and do you think there is any potential for further ones?

Mr Reid: I have only done a little bit since then. I have not found anything else, though, since then. There were some concerns that I had that were not included in my public report, and that I did include in my initial report to ACSC. These were not actively exploitable. However, down the line, if a mistake is made, they could end up being actively exploitable. However, to my knowledge, anything that I have found is currently not actively exploitable.

Mr Fulham: In terms of my personal capacity, I have done some exploration of the mobile app in terms of what the mobile app does. If there is anything particularly out of the ordinary there, I have not found anything, but that does not mean there is not necessarily anything there to exploit. It could also mean that it is clean.

THE CHAIR: This has all been volunteer time, hasn't it, including the user testing

group?

Mr Reid: Yes.

Mr Fulham: Yes.

MS CARRICK: After your experience of the IT side of it and actually using it, testing it, and getting on the bus, do you think that it has damaged the confidence of public transport users across Canberra?

Mr Fulham: It has certainly made it less convenient for me. In terms of an actively missing feature which makes it harder for me to use and feel less confident in using the public transport system, the third-party app that I use to provide real-time bus tracking cannot currently provide real-time bus tracking because that is only provided to SkedGo, who is the contractor specifically for the bus tracking. That has meant that it is more difficult for me to know where the bus is, if it is running late or running early, which makes me more likely to miss the bus, and I have missed the bus a couple of times because of that.

Mr Reid: My understanding, though, is that TCCS has said that the real-time data feed will be available for third-party apps. However, there has not been any update on that since then.

THE CHAIR: Thank you for your time today. Thank you for your time spent on looking at this issue and thank you for your admirable efforts at reporting everything through the correct channels. We appreciate your work in trying to make Canberra a better place. Not everybody would have gone over and beyond in the way that you have. Thank you for coming along today and watching democracy happen.

We have not had any questions taken on notice. We have had excellent evidence, written and verbal, today. By all means, if anything else comes up when you hear other witnesses or anything like that, you are welcome to get in touch with the secretary. We are chatting to the minister tomorrow. That might be interesting. Feel free to jump in and watch, if you would like to. We will now break for lunch.

Hearing suspended from 11.58 am to 12.59 pm

MULLEN, MR ROSS, Director, CANAXESS

THE CHAIR: We welcome Mr Mullen from CANAXESS. Mr Mullen, I remind you of the protections and obligations afforded to you under parliamentary privilege. Witnesses must tell the truth, giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be treated as contempt of the Assembly. Can you confirm that you have received, read, understand and agree with that privilege statement?

Mr Mullen: I have, yes.

THE CHAIR: Excellent. We are not doing opening statements; we will go straight to questions. I am going to go to Mr Braddock for the first question.

MR BRADDOCK: Mr Mullen, your submission states the website does not comply with the Disability Discrimination Act. We heard from NEC Australia this morning, who said that it probably will not for another six months, at least. How did we get to the situation in 2025 where a government website does not comply with the Disability Discrimination Act? What do they need to do to ensure it does comply?

Mr Mullen: That is the surprising thing. WCAG is not a new thing; it has been around for 20-something years. Governments understand that they need to make their websites and apps accessible. There is an ACT government policy requiring adherence to WCAG, which is Web Content Accessibility and Guidelines—broadly, a set of testable technical details. Also, a vendor has in their contract adherence to WCAG. So, on a paper at least, there are two bookends of compliance.

But it would appear that there has been no-one checking that—no independent verification or assessment—what is being proposed by the vendor is in any way accessible. Also, on the government side, a procurement of this platform would indicate that there were no technical experts who understood how to make sure a vendor is providing something accessible.

MR BRADDOCK: In your submission, in the appendix, you list a range of accessibility defects. Are these what the government would need to address in order to be compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act?

Mr Mullen: They are just a tiny subset. The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines has 50 testable criteria. I would suggest that, for this platform to be made accessible, every page of that portal would need to be assessed against those guidelines. This would then indicate the barriers which could be fixed. For example, in my submission, I mentioned that first name, last name, password, confirm a password, email, mobile and enter mobile number are unlabelled controls. What that means is that, if you are navigating with a screen reader in a non-visual way—so if a user is blind—you will not be able to understand what those input fields require.

That is a very narrow protest of failures, but I would be recommending assessing the whole application for adherence to WCAG. Out of that, that would then find a range of potential barriers which would be fixed.

MR BRADDOCK: Is six months too long to achieve DDA compliance, or should they

be aiming to actually achieve that sooner so that all members of the community are able to utilise the app and the website?

Mr Mullen: That is a difficult question. In some ways, six months is not long enough, because what has been built now means that, if your identifying accessibility defects, they would need to be remediated, which means that it might not be fixed in a suitable or robust way. Fixing it sooner for the better is wonderful, but then, if it is a fast fix, it might not be a robust fix. I would always push for immediacy in fixes but making sure what is being assessed is accurate and those fixes are long term and robust.

MR BRADDOCK: Is it appropriate that the ACT government release an app and website which are not compliant with the DDA?

Mr Mullen: No. It is been 20-something years since the release of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. All the other ACT government web assets—websites and apps and web apps—would attempt to adhere to these guidelines. But it feels like it has been, at best, a tokenistic attempt to making sure it is accessible.

I understand it is a very big platform with lots of moving parts. But, when you have something written into a contract, requiring conformance for people with a disability gets used, and then it is released with none of those checks, it does not give you much confidence. Even having looked at two pages, my thoughts are that, if those two pages are not accessible, then all the pages are not and the apps will also not be accessible. This is the just the very thin end of the wedge. It indicates that there are far-reaching problems.

THE CHAIR: You mentioned that there are people who can certify or check. How does that system work? Is there somebody who certifies compliance?

Mr Mullen: Yes. It is a range of independent vendors who understand how to assess web accessibility against these guidelines. A technical participant, a web accessibility expert, would look at all the HTML code underpinning those websites and make sure that they are no things failing. It is a bit like a developer role—understanding technical things and how to fix it, but also framing it through that disability and accessibility lens.

THE CHAIR: I have some pretty deep concerns about accessibility and public transport. This is the latest iteration that we have seen. We also had a number of Renault busses that were meant to be disability compliant by 2022 and were not, and we have had continued problems from people with different abilities accessing public transport. Can you tell me the impact that this might have had on your members and maybe how many Canberrans you think might be affected by this negatively?

Mr Mullen: That is also difficult to question, as the disability community tends not to be that vocal unless there are significant barriers. So it is hard to put a number on it. But, even if it affects one user or 10 users, that is a barrier which would need addressing. It is hard to determine impacts. But, based on the issues which we have identified, the impact for those cohorts of vision-impaired users, would be high. That means that, if a blind user attempted to navigate it with a screen reader, they would have a next to impossible task of even loading up value onto the MyWay+ card.

THE CHAIR: To state the obvious, people with visual impairments might need to use the bus more than people who do not have visual impairments. They might be the sorts of people who maybe are not driving, for instance. So I imagine it would be more important to make sure that a public transport app and website service people with visual impairments. Does that sound like a reasonable assumption?

Mr Mullen: Correct; yes. People with disabilities often have fewer opportunities to travel and have limited funds. So they would rely on public transport more. Whilst there are mechanisms, such as attending a shop to get your MyWay+ card or read only in store, that is not necessarily a suitable workaround when, pretty much, if you are able, you can navigate fine but, due to your disability, you are then hindered. I think that is unnecessary when these guidelines have been around for some time. It is not a new thing; it is an embedded process of making sure websites are accessible.

MS CARRICK: I assume that the procurement processes would have a checklist that said that accessibility for the web and the apps was to be done and it was part of the contract. Would it be the case that the ACT government has just simply not prioritised accessibility even though it was part of the contract, part of the procurement and would be part of normal procurement processes in a checklist?

Mr Mullen: That is hard to determine. My thought on the procurement side is that, whilst there was a line item indicating that the asset must be accessible, there is no-one with the necessary technical background assessing what is being produced. The vendor might say all the right things, but my assumption is: do not necessarily believe everything that is said. A vendor might have the best will in the world to deliver an accessible product, but, if you believe a vendor, you are sort of allowing them to mark their own homework. You would need some independent verification that they have done all of this, this is the assessment, we have read it and we can understand what they have done. At this point, it would appear they have been taken at face value and there is no-one confirming what is been delivered is actually accessible.

MS CARRICK: It seems that is a failure of the procurement team, because a procurement team should make sure that they have the expertise to cover a whole range of issues. Accessibility, as you say, has been around for a long time. So that should be one that they should have covered.

Mr Mullen: I would agree.

MS CARRICK: Another question is about user testing. Are you aware of whether they had different demographics—people with different disabilities and abilities—doing user testing?

Mr Mullen: I understand that there is an ACT Disability Reference Group, and people with disabilities provide feedback to government. But, if that user group was canvassed for their opinions, it would indicate that there are a range of barriers—technically, what I have seen has not been accessible. Also, if that were assessed by this user group, they would also indicate that. So, even though there are users with disabilities to test against, it would appear that that has not happened.

MS TOUGH: I know the guidelines have been around for over 20 years—and I note

that in a previous role I have looked at them. Is it common for governments, either ACT or otherwise, in Australia to have websites that are not accessible on the day they go live?

Mr Mullen: No. Overwhelmingly, all websites must be accessible. So, even though there are instances where parts of a site might not be accessible, overwhelmingly, it is a case of people's best endeavours to make sure that at least some effort has gone into it and there is a demonstration of accessibility, usually with an accessibility audit, which, would highlight barriers which can be fixed at a later stage.

MR CAIN: I am interested in your communications with government regarding your concerns. Did you reach out to the department expressing your concerns as per your appendix?

Mr Mullen: I have reached out to the minister, the opposition minister and the independent. That has just been the level of my reach-out. So, even though I understand Transport Canberra had provided their email—through the feedback of Minister Steel—I never personally reached out, other than to those members.

MR CAIN: When did you do so?

Mr Mullen: That would have been late December-early January.

MR CAIN: What responses have you received?

Mr Mullen: Basically, “Thanks for letting us know. We will reach out to the transport directorate,” and the opposition inviting me to lodge a submission.

MR CAIN: Which you have done. So there has been nothing further from the government or any government agency?

Mr Mullen: Not at this stage, no. I had reached out to the vendor. But I understand how large organisations work, and my email would be one lone voice amongst a sea of other voices. So I did not necessarily think it would be appropriate if I reached out that way.

MR CAIN: Obviously, if they thought, “He has some good ideas,” that would actually go to the contract delivery and they would have to talk to government anyway.

Mr Mullen: Yes.

MR CAIN: So in late December you reached out to the directorate?

Mr Mullen: No.

MR CAIN: And the minister?

Mr Mullen: The minister only.

MR CAIN: The Minister for Disability or the transport minister?

Mr Mullen: The transport minister.

MR CAIN: So you reached out in late December to the transport minister, and the response you got back was, “Thank you for reaching out to us,” and that was it?

Mr Mullen: Yes, and that they would forward my concerns to the transport directorate.

MR CAIN: And you have not heard anything from the directorate?

Mr Mullen: Nothing since, no.

MR CAIN: When did the minister get back to you in response to your late-December email?

Mr Mullen: That would have been, I think, early to mid-January.

MR CAIN: And since then you have heard nothing?

Mr Mullen: Nothing; no.

MR CAIN: Okay; we might ask the minister about that.

MR BRADDOCK: I am just curious. Do you have an opinion on the payment methods available under MyWay+ such as QR codes, credit cards or debit cards, and how accessible they are for people with disabilities?

Mr Mullen: A debit and credit card, I do not believe would have any challenges, but a QR code for someone who is non-visual would present difficulties. So if a QR code were the only payment method that would be a challenge, but as there are other methods, that would appear to be appropriate. What is most challenging though is, even though the web form accepts credit and debit cards, that form has not been built with accessibility guidelines. So if you are navigating it, whilst you might be able to enter in your correct card number, you will not get an indication if it is right or if there is validation issues attached to it. So even though you can use those cards fine, there is no feedback on the website indicating whether it has gone through or not.

MR BRADDOCK: As part of that, are there any recommended avenues you would suggest for input from people with disabilities on the MyWay+ system and as part of its development or its user testing to ensure these issues were identified before it went live?

Mr Mullen: One of the most prominent and easy methods for user feedback is an accessibility link on the actual page, soliciting feedback if a user is experiencing issues. It might be as simple as an email address, but not having that mechanism means that, if a user is experiencing difficulties, what is the avenue? It is hard for them are to reach out, unless they know the individuals or a suitable email address.

THE CHAIR: Is that link on there the last time you checked? Is there an accessibility link?

Mr Mullen: I do not believe there is, no.

MS CARRICK: My question is about the on board access, actually being on the bus. I understand that the on board messaging is not available yet, for example, a screen where you can see the next bus stop or an audio about what next bus is coming; the whole journey planner. A lot of the functionality potentially is not accessible either. I guess that is more of a statement, is it not? Yes.

Mr Mullen: Yes. So with what I understand, yes, as you mentioned, there is no personage or no audible feedback, which means if you were vision impaired on the bus, you would not necessarily know where you are and you would have to rely on the passengers around you. So once again, yes, there is a mechanism around that, but it is having to do the effort themselves as opposed to hearing or seeing.

THE CHAIR: Yes, that is difficult. I am slightly speechless about how this has been rolled out. I am going to throw it to you, Mr Mullen. There is a couple of things I would like to ask you, but please, I want you to tell us what you think is most useful for this parliamentary inquiry to hear.

I am interested in whether people in the disability community at the moment feel like they are getting real time updates about what buses are suitable for them to catch. I am also interested if there are any basic project management steps that you have observed on other projects that should have been followed, or if you have some general advice about how to do a project differently so this does not happen again. Please just tell me whatever you think is most useful for us to hear.

Mr Mullen: So from my understanding with people with a disability the mechanisms around fixing the site are not adequately announced. I understand, through the media, the vendor has said, “We are looking at updates,” but other than reading the *Canberra Times*, that has not really been serviced well enough.

As for making sure things like this do not happen, there is several things which I would suggest. If it has been assessed, request the assessment report and make that public. If it has not been assessed, independently assess the entire MyWay+ platform. So that is websites and apps. Make sure the assessment is independent of the vendor, and so ensure there is no bias. Lastly, test the platform with people with disabilities. There is a well-established ACT disability reference group who often provide advice to government. All of this means that there is a far less likelihood that what is being built will be inaccessible, and also understanding that, whilst accessibility is a technical thing which developers can fix, developers do not necessarily have the expertise and understanding.

So once again I would suggest relying on an external accessibility agency who would assess it through an accessibility lens, making sure that what is being built here is accurate because once it is released, remediating and fixing all those issues is significantly more expensive and it is less robust. The best way of building in accessibility is right at the very beginning. All of the requirements are worked out that then informs the build and that then makes sure it is accessible. So multiple levels of conformance. Then once it is released, there ought to be low to no issues because all of those other points have had accessibility assessed.

Having been built, its function has been tested to make sure it works, but it was not adequately tested with users. Then it has been released. It would appear there was no user testing and no understanding of accessibility, and for the amount of money which has been paid it is disappointing. I understand there is a lot of moving parts but once again accessibility and disability is not a new thing, it has been around for quite a long time, and I would imagine prominent vendors are aware of these requirements.

THE CHAIR: Are you a member of the disability reference group?

Mr Mullen: I am not, no.

THE CHAIR: I will ask you this, but you might not be able to answer it. I am wondering if the disability reference group was involved in this project. I can ask the minister. You may not know.

Mr Mullen: From what I can tell, I would imagine not. If they were involved early enough, they would have indicated a lot of these barriers which we have identified. So I do not know, but my assumption is possibly not.

THE CHAIR: So it is a good question for the minister?

Mr Mullen: Yes.

MS CARRICK: Which disability group was involved? You know, any? Did they ask any to be involved? My question is—if the people in the disability communities experience is that the website is not accessible in the app, and when you try and get on the bus the payment system has not been working, and when you are sitting there, you do not know when or where the stop is coming up and when to get off—do you think it has damaged confidence in the system, in the public transport network, for the disability community?

Mr Mullen: It does because it is that issue again, where whilst there are all these disability guidelines, it seems that they are not important enough to implement. So it feels tokenistic where, yes, people would appear to talk about disability and making sure it is accessible, but they are not following up. I guess one word is fatiguing. It is fatiguing having these same conversations and discussion points. I do not necessarily think people intended to make it inaccessible, it is just that there have not been the required processes in place for making sure that what has been built is actually accessible. I can sympathise with a larger project. I have been on many myself, but for the amount of money spent, I would have expected more. I would have hoped that it would have been much more accessible than what it was.

MS CARRICK: Also, there is that sort of fatigue about not being implemented properly, not prioritising the needs of the disability community, but also then we have heard that some demographics can feel anxiety about actually using the network, like the seniors, because if you know that you are going to have difficulties just trying to pay and get on, then it deters people from actually catching public transport.

Mr Mullen: Yes. So more and more with this, a push towards digital means that the

marginalised of the community are often excluded further if it is not implemented appropriately. I guess much more broadly is the ageing of the population. If it is all digital first, online first, then there is no safety net for people who are less digitally literate. The older population do not necessarily feel confident with using a digital app, but if it is their only mechanism, that is a further anxiety again. I can understand progress needs to happen, but it seems to not be bringing everyone along. It is only progressing the most capable and leaving behind more and more of the community.

MS TOUGH: I know you have touched on it a bit throughout other answers, but I am just wondering, by not being accessible, what impact does this have on the community more broadly? What are the flow-on effects from the website and the app not being accessible?

Mr Mullen: At the user level it just makes it harder for people to catch public transport, but much more broadly, it does not instil confidence in government services. Where there is a mechanism to make things accessible, but that is not followed, it may well undermine people's confidence: "Why should I use this when it is not built for me?" It is identifying again, I guess, that the people with disabilities are not important enough for this digital asset to be built correctly. It is just reinforcing that again and again. So even though there are attempts to support people with a disability, it feels tokenistic at times where people talk a lot about it, but it is not followed up.

THE CHAIR: All right, I think we may be at the end. Mr Mullen, before we wrap up, I will check, we have had the ABC filming during some of this, was that okay?

Mr Mullen: That was, yes.

THE CHAIR: Excellent. Thank you so much for your evidence. This committee is very, very sorry if people with disabilities have been made to feel less important. We are really, really grateful for your evidence and for your appearance today. We have covered some extremely important issues and thank you so much.

Mr Mullen: Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: We will now break until 1.35.

Short suspension.

DONNELLAN, MR ANDREW, Private capacity

THE CHAIR: We now welcome Mr Andrew Donnellan. Thank you for joining us. I remind you of the privileges and obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege. Witnesses must tell the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated as a serious matter and may be considered contempt of the Assembly. Can you confirm that you have received that statement and that you understand and agree with the obligations?

Mr Donnellan: Yes; I acknowledge that I have read and understand the privilege statement.

THE CHAIR: Excellent; thank you. We have a camera from the ABC who are filming.

Mr Donnellan: That is fine.

THE CHAIR: That is great. We are not doing opening statements; so we will proceed to questions from Mr Cain.

MR CAIN: Andrew, can you tell us a bit about your history with MyWay? You became a user-tester. Why did you volunteer for that?

Mr Donnellan: I signed up for the user-testing program after it was promoted through the Public Transport Association of Canberra. I have been a member of PTCBR for a while—although, I must stress that I am appearing in my personal capacity, not representing them. They promoted through their channels. Obviously, they understood that a number of their members were going to be interested in participating in a user-testing program—and they were correct. I registered my interest for the user-testing program before that launched last year.

MR CAIN: You have outlined your experiences and your concerns. What about security of your data? Was that something you had some concerns about and evidence for that?

Mr Donnellan: At the beginning of the user-testing program, when I first expressed my interest in it, it was not something that was particularly on my mind. It was something that became more of a concern to me after having experienced the web portal functionality and having played around with it a bit, noticing that this was not what appeared on its face to be a particularly high-quality piece of software. After I had become aware that certain people, who you heard from earlier today, had been poking at it was when I started to be quite concerned.

MR CAIN: Where did those concerns lead you? Or did you just feel that there were others doing that?

Mr Donnellan: I should disclose that I know Patrick and Sean, who appeared earlier today. I was speaking to them while they were poking at things and finding issues. But that was not something that I was personally doing. I was giving them a bit of advice on how to talk with the cybersecurity centre.

MR CAIN: Would it be right to say that your concerns were that you were a user-tester and things just did not work as they should have?

Mr Donnellan: Yes. My concerns during the user-testing program were primarily around functionality and usability and the fact that the system did not appear to have had a great deal of thought put into it as to how users interact with it and there were also the reliability issues that it faced when the launch day came around.

MR CAIN: Can you tell us a little bit about user-tester experience? You have your experience and you provide feedback. How does your experience get into feedback to the government as an official user-tester?

Mr Donnellan: In some ways, my experience of the user-testing program was a bit like a microcosm of the whole project. When the testing program launched, we were advised that we were accepted and then we were advised at a later point that we would be issued with MyWay+ cards for use on buses. That email eventually went out, and I proceeded to go to the office to go and pick it up and was told, “Actually, the cards are not ready yet; we sent the email about too early. Come back tomorrow, please.” Once those cards had been issued and the testing start date came around, we got an email basically saying that, as far as feedback goes, that there were going to be surveys to collect feedback from the user-testers and also that we could email them if we had issues. As far as I am aware, those surveys never happened. I do not recall ever receiving a survey.

As to my feedback to TCCS, which is provided as an appendix to my submission, I admit that I sent that quite late in the process—quite close to the date of the launch. The reason I had waited so long was that I anticipated that there was going to be a survey in which I could provide that information, and that never happened.

MR CAIN: Did you provide this appendix feedback on 22 November?

Mr Donnellan: That sounds correct, yes.

MR CAIN: That is in your appendix.

Mr Donnellan: Yes; that is what it looks like.

MR CAIN: Did you get a response?

Mr Donnellan: I did get a response. To their credit, every time I have emailed them with feedback, I have received some kind of acknowledgement and sometimes with comments about particular aspects of which they were in the process of addressing. So, clearly, there was someone on the other end of that email inbox who was making sure that the project team was made aware of that feedback coming in. The top concern that I raised in my feedback to them was that the validators do not activate at the right times—and everyone learnt that the hard way on launch day.

MR CAIN: Would you say you got comprehensive responses to your concerns?

Mr Donnellan: They were not comprehensive; they were like: “We acknowledge your

concerns. Here are a few that we are particularly concerned about and are working on. We acknowledge the rest; they are on the list.” I admit my feedback to them ranged from quite significant issues to other issues which were less significant. So I did not expect every element to be immediately acknowledged.

MR CAIN: Thank you.

MR BRADDOCK: Did you conduct any tests on the QR code functionality?

Mr Donnellan: We were told to access the mobile app pretty late in the game. I cannot remember the exact dates or whether I actually bothered to try the mobile app before the launch date. Actually, I definitely did test it before the launch date, because I noted in my feedback to them that I did test the QR codes. I am just looking at my submission again, to remind me of my own timeline.

MR BRADDOCK: You said that, very late in the piece, you tested the MyWay app and you provided the feedback via the submission. Is that correct?

Mr Donnellan: Yes, that was feedback I included in my email to them of 22 November.

MR BRADDOCK: As part of that user-testing, was there any testing done of payments with credit or debit cards?

Mr Donnellan: I am not sure we were ever explicitly instructed to test that functionality.

MR BRADDOCK: Okay.

Mr Donnellan: Although, I should add that, when I say “instructed to test the functionality”, when we were issued with cards, we were just told “start testing”, with no explanation of what that meant, other than to go on buses and try tapping it.

MR BRADDOCK: That was going to be my next question. What were you testing for, if not for the major user functionality interfaces with this new system?

Mr Donnellan: To this day, I do not know what the intended outcome of the testing program was. We were initially sent an email saying, “There are two buses currently fitted with validators that will be operating any one of these dozen different routes over the next 48 hours, or whatever; try and catch one”—which is not terribly helpful advice. Then, if you do happen to find one, what are you supposed to test? I did encounter buses with the MyWay+ demonstrator branding, where I got on and was immediately told by the driver, “The validator is not working.” So I am supposed to just tap on and tap off? Am I supposed to note anything about that experience? None of that was made clear to us.

MR BRADDOCK: Thank you.

MR CAIN: Feel free to come when we examine the minister.

THE CHAIR: I just want to confirm that you were asked to do user-testing but

Transport Canberra did not have any systematic way to collect feedback on that from you and the other user-testers?

Mr Donnellan: Not that I am aware of. If they did, I must have missed it.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

MR BRADDOCK: In your submission you say that, despite the fact that we are in March and it was released in November, the functionality to connect credit card accounts to your MyWay+ account still does not seem to be in place. Have you provided feedback about that? Have you received any feedback from the government about that and why that functionality is not yet available?

Mr Donnellan: The functionality is supposed to be available. When the system launched, people were complaining that linking credit cards to your online account was working very unreliably. I remember at the time trying to link my credit card and having to try several times before the accounts linked. I do not know whether that was just a system load issue or something like that. I got a new credit card a couple of months ago and I have been trying to link that to my account ever since, and I can confirm that, as at midnight last night, I still cannot link it.

Have I provided to feedback to TCCS on this? No, I have not—because I have better things to do. But I can get away with that because I am an adult who does not have a concession fare. Just tapping on any old credit card is fine in that regards. If you have a concession account or you need to link it to some other functionality of the system, obviously, you need to be able to link that—and there is evidently still some reliability issues. I am not sure how widespread they are or whether there is just a problem with my account, or something like that, but—

MR BRADDOCK: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mr Donnellan, I am pleased to hear that you watched the cybersecurity evidence we got this morning. Do you have ongoing concerns about cybersecurity with MyWay or with other things that you have seen on this project?

Mr Donnellan: I have reviewed the issues that Mr Fulham and Mr Reid have raised and publicly disclosed. I refer to a paper by Steven Christie of the MITRE Corporation, which is a US national security research organisation, from 2007, entitled *Unforgivable vulnerabilities*. This paper starts by saying:

For some products, it's just too easy to find vulnerabilities. First, find the most heavily used functionality, including the first points of entry into the product. Then, perform the most obvious attacks against the most common types of vulnerabilities. Using this crude method, even unskilled attackers can break into an insecure application within minutes. The developer likely faces a long road ahead before the product can become tolerably secure; the customer is sitting on a ticking time bomb. These "Unforgivable Vulnerabilities" act like canaries in a coal mine. They are beacons of a systematic disregard for secure development practices. They simply should not appear in software that has been designed, developed, and tested with security in mind.

To me, that is a perfect description of issues that can be found in an hour of poking around by some undergrads.

I would also note that there are some documents that have appeared on the TCCS FOI disclosure log in relation to ministerial submissions that were made relating to MyWay+. There is a brief in there that is largely redacted that shows that a local company had made inquiries of the minister with regards to some security related issues. As far as I know, they have not come forward publicly about that, but it does seem to me that there could be potentially more things there or potentially someone else has independently found what Mr Reid and Mr Fulham reported.

THE CHAIR: That is quite comprehensive. Do you have any other concerns about the cybersecurity? It has probably been fleshed out.

Mr Donnellan: It is pretty clear to me that the nature of the vulnerabilities that have been publicly disclosed implies that the security auditing that was done on the system was insufficient. I have tried looking on the Contracts Register to see whether there are any details we can find about the work that CyberCX did for TCCS, and I was unable to find that. But it is not clear to me whether that work was properly scoped or whether the right people worked on that. More broadly, it also shows that there is something wrong in NEC. These bugs should not have happened. I do not know whether there is a policy response that you can recommend, other than hiring a contractor who has a basic degree of competence.

THE CHAIR: Sage advice. Mr Braddock?

MR BRADDOCK: The government are saying they did due diligence with the testing of the app by CyberCX, yet that did not find the vulnerabilities that Mr Fulham and Mr Reid found. Is that a concern for you, in that even a cyber assurance test did not identify such basic vulnerabilities?

Mr Donnellan: It would depend on what the scope of that engagement was. Were they engaged to do a proper penetration test? Were they engaged to do a white-box or black-box code review or testing? That is all ultimately down to what they were. It does concern me that no process identified this before launch day.

MR BRADDOCK: Should that be the scope of testing for the ACT government to implement in IT upgrades for projects such as this?

Mr Donnellan: In particular, when we are talking about projects that are public facing and that are collecting data from members of the general public, we are not just talking about a small internal application with a limited scope for information and disclosure. We are talking about an internet facing, public facing, application here.

MS CARRICK: My question is about scope, too, but it is around the number of different payment options that were deployed straight up. Do you think that was too ambitious? Should they have just stuck with adding a debit or credit card to the system? What are your views about that ambition of having such functionalities straight up?

Mr Donnellan: Yes, it did seem to me that there appeared to be an insufficient

understanding that the new payment method that people really wanted was credit and debit cards. The marketing certainly did not emphasise that adequately. I know people who were seeing the marketing and still asking, “Hey, does this mean you can now use your credit card?” “Yes, that’s the main takeaway you should have.” But that was not what they were getting.

Perhaps it was a bit ambitious of them to be looking at launching with all of these features without having properly studied what people actually wanted and how people wanted to use them. When TCCS made public presentations about MyWay+ last year, they were also raising potential future use cases, such as the use of QR codes for mass events—sporting games and things like that—as a method of issuing transport tickets that were integrated with large public events. I think it is a great goal to have the ticketing system to support that. They said that was a topic for further down the track. But if it was that kind of potential advanced or niche-use case that was driving them towards emphasising QR codes, that might have been the wrong emphasis.

MS CARRICK: It sounds like they were not very clear about the objectives of what they were trying to achieve at launch, compared to future functionality.

Mr Donnellan: Yes.

MS CARRICK: With that implementation, they were to have a 20-month transition, with MyWay operating alongside MyWay+. Do you think that would have been preferable? NEC did advise the government to run both at the same time, while they transitioned, but the government decided to have the fare-free time and then implement MyWay+.

Mr Donnellan: I would have to see more of the details of what that NEC proposal involved to make any real, informed comment on that. I understand the government’s concerns around customer confusion and running those two systems simultaneously. It does not seem to me to be an inherently unreasonable approach to want to do a hard cut-over to the new system.

The aspect of the transition that concerns me more is that I would probably have had people signing up for accounts, buying their cards, testing their cards and getting feedback on how the system worked through a broader switching on of the system, while still giving people a couple of weeks fare free to get used to it without having to worry about the money. That seems to me to be the most obvious suggestion that I would have had for the government as to how they should have managed that transition better. I could go either way on that longer transition versus a hard cut-over.

MS TOUGH: I am curious about the user testing program. Did the group of you that were doing it have any communication between you at all, to know what other people were experiencing, and to share that informally?

Mr Donnellan: I certainly knew a few other people who were in the testing program, by virtue of my involvement with PTCBR. No, there was not any method for testers to communicate. It was also the case that they required people to sign a confidentiality agreement.

MS TOUGH: You said in your submission, in the appendix that you provided to Transport Canberra, that you used the QR codes. Having chatted to some of the other testers, do you know whether using the QR codes was common amongst testers, to test them out to know where the hard-to-use parts of the QR codes were?

Mr Donnellan: The testing of the mobile app was coming towards the end of that testing period. Yes, the feedback I heard from people that I spoke to was not good, having regard to the QR codes.

MS TOUGH: At the start, the testing was just of the physical card, was it?

Mr Donnellan: It was just with the physical cards.

MS TOUGH: They encouraged testing of the app and the QR codes?

Mr Donnellan: Yes. As time went by, they advised people to download the app and also to log into the online account.

MS TOUGH: You would have only done that over a short period of time?

Mr Donnellan: Over a shorter period of time, yes.

MR CAIN: As a user tester, going through this experience, are you inclined to volunteer for another similar opportunity?

Mr Donnellan: It might give me some interesting stories to tell! I do not want to impute any kind of bad faith on the part of the TCCS officers who were running this. I appreciate that they were managing a very complex project to a tight deadline and they had a lot of things on their plate. There were definitely some improvements that did happen as a result of responses to user feedback. There were definitely improvements that I noticed, for example, in the online portal. There were changes to the user interface that improved things a bit. From that perspective it still had some value, but it did feel like it was a very confusing experience overall.

MR CAIN: You are not an uninformed user, by the sound of it.

Mr Donnellan: Sometimes.

MR CAIN: What are the top three things that need to be different about that experience to encourage people to be involved?

Mr Donnellan: I think it is about proactively gathering feedback. There needs to be an emphasis on surveying people and reaching out to them proactively to get their experiences, rather than relying on the testers to figure out how they want to express their feedback and make the decision to express that feedback at particular times. It needs to be made more clear what the goal of the testing is, in terms of both what testers should be doing that contributes to the testing outcome that is desired and what the overall point is. What types of data are they trying to collect?

There needs to be an effort made to design the way that these programs work, with a

view to how the testers are going to participate in that. There should be no emailing of people and saying, “Watch out for these two bus serial numbers, and I hope you find one of them this weekend.” That is not terribly helpful. From that perspective, it would probably be useful to get TCCS staff involved in being user testers as well.

MR CAIN: They may feel that they cannot give honest feedback.

THE CHAIR: I want to check that I understand something. You were given serial numbers for buses. Were you given the route numbers and the times? There is something in your submission with some of the information, and you said it was confusing. I admit that I read it, and I found it confusing. I am trying to find out how you knew which bus to catch.

Mr Donnellan: If I go back to the initial contact that they made, on 3 October 2024, it said:

Dear applicant, we would like to provide an update on your participation in the MyWay+ systems testing. Below you will find important information regarding buses and routes to assist with the testing process. Bus No 812 and 813, route 3, 5, 6, 7, 57, 60, 66, 80 and 81, date 3 to 4 October.

MR CAIN: You could have been in which part of town?

Mr Donnellan: Those buses finish on one route and move on to the next. They can be an R4 and then change to be a 71 or something like that. I am not exactly sure what I was supposed to do with that information. After the testers raised concerns about that, in the following days, they did provide information that included specific runs and specific times. But I did not always find that those times matched the reality of the buses where I was seeing the new readers installed.

THE CHAIR: You were doing this as a volunteer?

Mr Donnellan: Yes.

THE CHAIR: No-one was paying you for this; thank you.

MR BRADDOCK: I will test you, Mr Donnellan, in terms of being able to be quick in your response. You recommend that the government make a plan available for the release of real-time data to third-party applications. Can you try to give a synopsis, in two minutes, as to the importance of that?

Mr Donnellan: The importance is that people are familiar with a variety of third-party applications that are very useful for getting around town. Before the shutdown of the previous MyWay system, I frequently used AnyTrip, which is an application developed by one guy named Ken in Sydney who is enthusiastic about this kind of thing. I find it works better than the official MyWay+ app, with respect to general usability and functionality; with the exception, of course, that it no longer has the Canberra data feeds available.

Other people use NextThere and various other applications. Of course, Google Maps

and Apple Maps are the apps that people travelling from out of town will naturally be inclined to use, if they want to navigate our bus system. These apps tend to work better than my experience of the SkedGo-provided MyWay+ app, with respect to general functionality and providing a workable map. When you click on a bus stop, you do not have the list of routes change every 20 seconds while you are staring at it. It is a real shame that we do not seem to have a plan for delivering that API data to them.

THE CHAIR: Excellent. Mr Donnellan, thank you so much for coming in. Thank you for your evidence. Thank you for your testing and thank you for expressing yourself so very clearly. We did not take any questions on notice, I think. You will get a copy of the transcript, and you are welcome to give us any feedback on that. I hope you watch the rest of the proceedings with interest.

Mr Donnellan: Thank you, Madam Chair.

THE CHAIR: We will now take a break until 2.20 pm.

Hearing suspended from 2.05 to 2.20 pm

RAVI, MS RADHA, Private capacity

THE CHAIR: We welcome Ms Ravi from the Australian Multicultural Action Network. Ms Ravi, I need to remind you about the protections and obligations afforded to you by parliamentary privilege. Witnesses must tell the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence is considered a very serious matter and may be treated as contempt of the Assembly. Have you read and understood the obligations in the parliamentary privilege statement and are you happy to abide by them?

Ms Ravi: Yes; I have read them.

THE CHAIR: That is great. We are not having opening statements, so we will jump straight to questions. Thank you very much for writing to us. It is great that we got your submission. It is really important that we hear from organisations and a range of people in Canberra who are using the system. It is an essential role of the Assembly to make sure that we are hearing the voices of Canberrans who are using the MyWay+ system. We have heard about a lot of problems with the system. I am particularly interested in hearing from you about how you think these problems have impacted seniors and some other vulnerable groups—perhaps people for whom English is a second language or new Canberrans. Can you run me through the impacts of some of these issues?

Ms Ravi: Yes. Some of our members fall into those categories. I can say that, from the day it was implemented, there was a lot of confusion because what they needed to do was not very clear to them. Especially, there was talk about the app. They said, “Are we meant to get the app now or can we just get the card? Is my old card going to expire? Will I have to buy a new card?” And then, on day one, there were no cards available. For them, it was a bit of a panic moment because they rely on public transport a lot—a lot more than others do. They found it really difficult because communication to them was through somebody in their family who could explain what it is about, and, if that person was not clear about the whole process, it was really hard for them to explain to a senior person what they needed to do. There was that confusion with the senior cohort.

THE CHAIR: Did you get a lot of phone calls or emails? How did you find out about this confusion? Were people raising it with you?

Ms Ravi: Yes. In our meetings and in casual set-ups, we asked them: “How did you go with the rollout?” My father-in-law was here when it happened and he found it really confusing and said, “Can you drop me somewhere? I can’t take the bus.” It took us a while to get an understanding of the process. Then we asked his friends and others in his cohort: “What is going on? Are you all finding the same issue?” There were degrees of issues. Everybody had their own understanding of it. People who could get their hands on a card were much better off. But we were trying to sell it to them, saying, “There is an app. You can start using the app.” Honestly, even I have not been able to use the app properly. It is a hard sell, trying to get an older person to understand what to do with their card and app. Mind you, they all have good phones, so they all are very interested in using the app, but it did not work out, so they went back to the old system. We asked them to start using the cards. Then there was the other issue of the old card and the new card not mapping. For a while it did not work. Over time, it became all right, but, during the first few weeks, it was quite difficult.

THE CHAIR: Do you feel that, from that experience in the first few weeks, people who could abandon the bus system did? I imagine that, for a number of people, it was their only option. From that really rough start, do you think a number of people are not using the buses anymore because they found it so confusing and it made them anxious?

Ms Ravi: I would say that they have started to use buses now. They started to use the cards again. The app may not have gone really well for them. That part has probably dropped off a lot more. Everyone just got a card and they are doing what they used to do.

THE CHAIR: That is great. We have heard very similar feedback about the app from a lot of people. We will get some feedback from the people who have used the app and why the government decided to have the app. Would your friends, family and members have been happy to just use a credit or debit card or a MyWay card? Were they asking for an app or would contactless payment have been what they needed?

Ms Ravi: There are variations. People of a younger age all want to use the app. It is what everyone uses for everything these days. They all want an app, but then use of the app is not easy. The card readers are not meant for the app, especially with the QR code. You have to keep the phone at a certain distance for it to recognise that there is a QR code, and, by the time you determine the distance, you have 20 people lined up behind you. There is a lot of pressure in that sense.

THE CHAIR: Quite stressful.

Ms Ravi: The failure is in the card reader and reading of the app, but I do think people are keen on using the app, if the app does what they want it to do. If it was just about tapping on, such as how you use your phone to make a payment, absolutely—why not—but it is not. You have to hold it in a certain position for it to be read by the machine. It did not work for a long time.

THE CHAIR: It did not. We have also had some feedback from witnesses suggesting that, if there was going to be a QR code, it would have been better if it was just a printed QR code rather than a QR code on a digital device. A printed QR code might have been easier.

Ms Ravi: Yes. A printed QR code would be all right. You could just stick it on to the back of your phone or something and then show it. That would be good. I also found that connecting the app with a credit card was not working at times. It also happened to me. I think it was on 4 February that there was a glitch in the system and the QR code scanner showed that the card had expired. I made the payment. It accepted the payment. The payment went through, but it never showed on the MyWay card. Despite many calls to Transport Canberra, I still have not got that money on my card. They have said a company is working on the IT system—NEC?

THE CHAIR: Yes—NEC.

Ms Ravi: I was supposed to get a call from them. I have not received a call from them. This happened on 4 February and we are at the end of March now. In almost two

months, I still have not heard anything from them. It is not as much about the cost; it is the fact that, despite many calls, there has not been a response on those things.

THE CHAIR: On 4 February, you tried to pay and it did not go through to your MyWay card or from your credit card?

Ms Ravi: It went through. When I got onto the bus, it showed that my card had expired, but the bus driver was nice enough and said, “Just carry on.” At the first chance I had, I tried to make a payment online. The payment went through, but it never showed on my card. It shows there is a pending transaction on the MyWay card, but it has gone through on my credit card. I have been calling them ever since and saying, “Either cancel the transaction or bring the money forward. Do something about it so that I do not need to keep calling you every now and then,” but I have not had a response.

THE CHAIR: You were told NEC would call you and they have not done that?

Ms Ravi: Yes. People at Transport Canberra have been really nice, but, if it is an IT system that they have forwarded to another company, I have not heard from them.

THE CHAIR: Was there any targeted engagement before it launched? Did Transport Canberra reach out to the whole community or to your group or other groups to have a chat or do any specific education about what was going to happen?

Ms Ravi: No. There were online videos circulating, saying, “This is what you will be able to do.” We all watched them and it looked quite comfortable to use, but, on the day, there were lots of issues. The smoothness on the videos did not translate into actual usage.

THE CHAIR: Maybe we should have had the people who made the videos too!

Ms Ravi: We heard from our community that they should have done it in a phased manner—maybe in a particular area first to see whether that worked before they started rolling it out to everyone. They could have handed free cards to a few people. There were some suggestions that came through saying, had it been done that way, they could have picked up some issues.

THE CHAIR: Excellent suggestions. Thank you.

MS TOUGH: You touched on a few of the things I was going to ask. I am interested in the interactions you have had with seniors, the CALD community and other people who might be a bit vulnerable—those who do not intuitively know what is going on. What specific challenges have these users faced? Have there been information campaigns to help them? You said that your father-in-law is now a bit more comfortable about catching the bus. Was there government communication to get him to the point where he was getting more comfortable and using it more? What did people first experience and where are they now regarding the use of buses?

Ms Ravi: Let’s go back. At the moment, they are okay. They are able to tap their cards the way they used to. It is a free ride for a lot of aged people, so they are not worried as much about having to pay, because they know that it is going to be free. It is less about

the money; they just worry that their trip has not been recorded and that type of thing. I think initial communication to them was that it would be a very easy and smooth transition—"You don't need to worry about it." Their only concern was: "Do we keep the previous card or do we get a new card?" That was not very clear to anybody. But, once they got their card, there was not much of an issue, I would say. There was not much communication targeted towards seniors. Whatever we got, we translated it for them, knowing that they are the main users of public transport. We explained to them what would happen and what they needed to do, to the degree that we understood it. We were able to say something around that, but there was no specific communication to the CALD seniors. There are a lot of seniors groups, and there could have been a presentation done with those seniors groups. For pretty much every community, such as the Indian community and the African community, there are seniors groups, so it could have gone to them as a quick demo of what may happen and how to use it.

MS TOUGH: Regarding the communication that was put out, did you come across much in languages other than English?

Ms Ravi: Not a lot. There was not much put out, other than in English. I think I saw a few of them, but not a lot.

THE CHAIR: When you have looked at Access Canberra or other websites, have you noticed whether there are options for TTY, interpretation or translation? Do you think that has been obvious to the CALD community? If they look at something and it is in a language they do not understand, is there clearly something to click for a translation?

Ms Ravi: Generally there is.

THE CHAIR: Was there for MyWay+?

Ms Ravi: I did not notice. We did our own sessions about MyWay+, so I probably missed it. That would be good. Seniors love to talk, so, if anybody wanted to come and show something, they would have loved to hear from them. If there is something new coming up and somebody comes to talk to them, they feel that they have been consulted and informed. We would have heard if there was something that they had noticed.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

THE CAIN: Thank you for your submission, and the one from Ravi Krishnamurthy, of course.

Ms Ravi: This is actually my submission. I am just representing myself here today.

THE CAIN: Regarding the seniors and the vulnerable community that you are in contact with through the work of the Australian Multicultural Action Network, do you think they are feeling comfortable using public transport and the new technology?

Ms Ravi: They are quite forgiving. They will be saying, "I did not do very well at the beginning, but I am comfortable now. I am able to use it now, in the same way I could use it before." They did have issues and were struggling, but now I think most of them are back to using public transport.

THE CAIN: Are they providing AMAN feedback on that experience? In your representative function and recognising that you are in a very active advocate and multicultural network, are you getting much feedback from the community as they are going along this journey—literally a journey?

Ms Ravi: Yes; we do. They talk about a lot of aspects about transport—not just MyWay+. They talk about a number of other issues that they face. They are able to use the card now. They will probably never use the app; they will use the physical card. Some people in the community understand how the QR code works. Most do not. They still rely on people helping them when they get onto a bus. If they do not understand, then someone—usually a member of the public—will be able to help them. They still very much rely on that or members of the community who are with them on the bus and can translate for them.

MR CAIN: We have certainly heard throughout the day that the feature that perhaps people were looking forward to was to tap on and tap off with their credit or debit card, and the QR code and the app almost seemed to be irrelevant and, because they did not function, it created a negative experience on something that could have been so simple. In your opinion, would it have been much simpler just to roll out the tap on and tap off with the credit or debit card than to try and add all these other features that ended up not working very well?

Ms Ravi: Yes, absolutely. I think that would have been the simplest way to do this, by just having tap on and tap off. Also, it is not so much the seniors; as I said, seniors have a free ride, so they probably do not worry about the money aspect of it. It is the other CALD members, who might not always have a credit card option which is connected to their MyWay card. That is one thing that we find leads them to avoiding public transport—having a credit card associated with the MyWay system.

MR CAIN: Of course, there was a point reached where, with the MyWay card—because I had this experience myself—when I asked whether it was still working, it was no longer available to work, even though I still had money on it. My credit card did work. I am not a frequent public transport user. It was interesting to me that the MyWay system, which, obviously, people are familiar with, got cut off at a point, rather than allowing it to continue until people were educated, trained or had time to take up other options.

Ms Ravi: Yes. There were many issues. One was that there were no cards available on day one, and I think they were not available for a long time, which is why people had to get the app on their phone; then the app did not work. It was a case of thinking, “What do we do now? We don’t have the card and we have an app that doesn’t work in the way it is supposed to work.”

It is not easy to know all the nuances of the QR code process, in that you have to generate a code. Do we hold that code open? Do we close that one? Do we need to tap off when we get down? Those things were not very clear at all. That is why I say that seniors will probably never use that feature because it is hard for a normal person, and explaining it to a senior in a different language is much harder—10 times harder than that.

Those are some of the major issues. The major issues are the QR code, because it does delay everybody. It will not work. I think the normal readers were not working; the bus drivers would then say, “It’s not working, just get on and sit there.” There were lots of free rides for a lot of people.

I have been told—I have not used this—that the GPS part does not work in the app. A number of people tried to use it, but they said that it is hit and miss. Sometimes you get it; sometimes you do not get it. You cannot track where the bus is. It is meant to tell you where the bus is, which would be very helpful for seniors, but it does not; it is not very reliable.

THE CHAIR: We have heard a lot of reports about the unreliability of that tracking.

Ms Ravi: Yes. I know that seniors really want to know, “How far is my bus? Where is it, and how long do I need to wait?” If they are travelling from Gungahlin to Tuggeranong, they want to be able to plan ahead and see how many buses are involved. If the app is not reliable, they would try to go to Transport Canberra—a person in the city—and ask them. They might not find somebody. I do not know whether there is a person there who can tell them anything anymore.

MR CAIN: If you get further feedback from people in the community that you are in contact with, please let the committee know. Thank you, to you and your husband, for the work that you do through AMAN, and particularly for our CALD and senior communities. It is much appreciated.

Ms Ravi: I appreciate your putting this together. It is good that we are able to explain the issues that we are finding in the community.

THE CHAIR: Before MyWay+ rolled out in November—this was coming for a long time—did you have contact with Transport Canberra? Have they spoken to you about it, maybe a year out? Was there any proactive outreach program going on?

Ms Ravi: I remember there was some discussion that happened before and there was a presentation, I think, at one point.

THE CHAIR: At one of your meetings?

Ms Ravi: I think it was online—a Teams meeting where they talked about what is coming up.

THE CHAIR: Okay, that is good.

Ms Ravi: Yes, I remember that one.

THE CHAIR: A lot of what we are hearing is the absolute difficulty or impossibility of using a system that was not working, but there is also a layer of anxiety, a fear of, “Will it work or won’t it work?” Some of that might have been addressed with better communication earlier on.

Ms Ravi: And better testing. I am sure there was testing done, but it is about whether there was any feedback provided by the testing team, and whether that feedback was accepted; I do not know. I am in IT and I can see that there is a lot of testing failure in this whole process. I wonder whether proper testing was done or not, and whether any issues that were noticed were addressed.

THE CHAIR: We have had a lot of feedback about the testing, and we will put that to the minister to find out. We have certainly had a lot of people who were involved in testing and a lot of people who were telling us what testing should have been done.

Ms Ravi: Yes, absolutely.

THE CHAIR: A question that we have not yet asked the minister, that I hope we will have time to ask, is whether there were people from different communities involved. We have had trouble regarding people with different abilities. There does not seem to be very good information from people with disabilities that was fed into this. I am not sure what information was fed into this from people who were seniors and people from the CALD community.

Ms Ravi: I feel like there was no acknowledgement of issues, when they noticed that there were issues happening and people were struggling. There could have been an acknowledgement, saying, “We know that there is a problem, and we’re trying to look at it, and these are the things that have already been notified to us.” At least that would have reduced the anxiety that you were not the only one, and it never got down to that level at all. We never got to hear from anyone of importance who said, “We know that there is an issue that is happening currently.” There was not much communication leading up to this. It was not positive communication, if there was anything at all. If there was anything, it was just to say, “MyWay+ is coming,” and there was bus advertising saying that it was coming and that it would be the best thing ever.

There was a bit of anxiety, with people thinking, “If it’s going to be rolled out all at once, will it be okay?” It turned out to be not so much, because you could not get the cards from day one. I thought that maybe they could have given us—maybe a few people—free cards initially, just to try it out and see whether it worked. I am not sure how it was rolled out.

THE CHAIR: There were some excellent suggestions there regarding free cards and geographic testing. They were really good ideas.

Ms Ravi: Or even a special time for seniors. If seniors were identified as a cohort, they could have done one week of trying it out between 9 and 11: “Give it a try, see how it goes and let us know if you find any issues.” Those people are very clear, and they will be able to talk straightaway. They will tell you what they do not like or what they like about it. With a stakeholder group like that, they should have done a specific one just for them. That would have eased some of the issues later.

MS TOUGH: Nearly everything I wanted to ask has been covered, so this will be a pretty short question. One of the things you touched on was the online linking process between credit cards and accounts. We have heard today from some people who are still having issues with linking cards to their accounts. Have you received similar

feedback from people, or is everyone that reported they had an issue early on okay now? Are they still having issues? What are you hearing about that reporting—

Ms Ravi: It is a mixed bag. Some people are choosing not to link their credit card and they are doing, every time, a single transaction. They are also hearing that it is not working, so they are avoiding it. Some are braver and they say, “That’s okay, we will connect it.” A lot of people are saying, “We are finding it hard,” because of the unreliability. Sometimes it happens; sometimes it does not. It is based on everyone’s risk appetite. Some want to do it; some say no.

MS TOUGH: One of the things we are hearing most commonly is that people just want the ability to tap on and off with a credit card. Are there people who are just tapping on and off with a credit card and who are not linking with the MyWay app now; they are just using a credit card or debit card?

Ms Ravi: I do not think many people are using a credit card or debit card. They are using the MyWay card, and they are putting money on the MyWay card in the way they are used to doing it. They are not comfortable with the way it has been set up. It is not very clear; even the online one is not very nicely laid out. A lot of our members are saying that it is easier just to stick to what they know. In future, if it changes, they will be able to adapt to that. For now, because it is still within the first year, they just want to sit it out and see how it plays out.

MS TOUGH: Yes, and just topping up the balance as they need to.

Ms Ravi: Yes; small balances, so that it does not—

MS TOUGH: Yes, does not run out.

THE CHAIR: Mr Cain?

MR CAIN: I do not think I have any other substantive questions. I think you have covered the concerns very well.

THE CHAIR: I have asked my questions. Ms Ravi, is there anything else you want to tell us that you think we should know about?

Ms Ravi: No. I have been looking at my notes. I think that was the thing—moving from MyWay to MyWay+. A lot of the questions were, “So what is changing? Why are we changing from MyWay to MyWay+?” For our members, we said that it was about having improved technology, they would be able to use their phones and connect their cards. It is not so much for the seniors group; as I said, they do not pay that much, so they are not really worried about the credit card connection.

MR CAIN: Apart from your submission—and I thank you for it—has AMAN had contact with the government to express concerns prior to this inquiry process?

Ms Ravi: Not as a group, no. Individually, people may have, but not as an organisation. We saw this as an opportunity to provide our feedback as an organisation.

MR CAIN: You or your husband were not user testers; were any of the people you have been in contact with official user testers?

Ms Ravi: No, not official user testers. We were not in that one. We just used the system—used the public transport.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much for coming in. Thank you for helping us with our inquiry. We have had a lot of evidence. As an IT professional, there was quite a lot of evidence given about the IT aspects, so that has certainly been opened up. Thank you for providing some different aspects about how it affects the CALD community and seniors. It is really important for us to hear how it is affecting different groups. We will now suspend the hearing.

Hearing suspended from 2.50 to 3.51 pm

FITZPATRICK, MS HEATHER, Private citizen
HARWOOD, MS MADELEINE, Private citizen
LANGLEY, MR BEN, Private citizen

THE CHAIR: We now welcome some of our Canberra community members for our next session. We are covered by parliamentary privilege at the moment, and that comes with rights and obligations. Witnesses must tell the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be considered contempt of the Assembly. Heather and Madeleine, can I check that you have both read, received, understand and agree with the pink privilege statement about those rights and obligations?

Ms Fitzpatrick: Yes.

Ms Harwood: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Excellent. We are not doing opening statements. We will go to Mr Cain for questions.

MR CAIN: This might sound contradictory, but you have both lodged web form responses. Given that format, I invite you to describe your experience and why that experience was so concerning for each of you that you decided to put the form in and agree to be in a public hearing.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Sure. I will start. I am a regular user of the buses. I have low vision, I use a cane to get around and I do not drive. So it is very important for me to have a useful bus network and a regular bus network. The rollout of the MyWay system was, I think, rushed and too fast because the system was not ready. The buses were not ready, the app was not ready and all sorts of things just have not come along. At the commencement of the rollout, the app had issues with linking accounts. The QR code either did not work or only worked once, and so you had to close it and open it again to get off the bus.

It was just annoying, especially when you are trying to juggle, in my case, my cane, my bags and all that stuff—and having a phone in my hand. It was just annoying. Also, having to scan it under that little scanner thing was a process. So, in the end, I opted for a physical card, and that brought in another issue in that the physical card does not notify the drivers that, as a vision impaired user, I am allowed to have an attendant, which means that we have extra conversations with drivers, who may not understand that this person coming with me can just come along; it is not that they have to pay as well.

On the buses, the voice announcements on the buses have yet to return. Voice announcements are critical for the low-vision community to be able to know which stop is coming next and which one is after that. Some of my friends have actually missed their stops and have had to go to the next one and turn around and come back because they got distracted for a moment and did not get the stop that they wanted. That one is really annoying for me—that there are no voice announcements.

Secondly, the TVs in the buses showing which route you are on and what the stops are and all that are really busy. They are like a PowerPoint presentation—full of stuff.

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Sometimes, if you are standing a few rows back or a little bit back from the front, you cannot possibly see all the detail that they are trying to show you. But bring back the voice.

MR CAIN: We might just pass to Madeleine now. There will be plenty of opportunity to say other things.

Ms Harwood: I use the bus every day to get to and from work. I have persevered with the QR code reader. I cannot actually do it on the back of the bus; I always have to enter and exit out of the front of the bus. The QR code comes with its own issues and the app comes with its own issues. You have no way to track the balance of your account through the app. You have to log in and go through all this hoopla just to see how much you have. There are no warnings about when your account is running low. You kind of have to manually do it—considering they have also gotten rid of auto top-up using a bank account. So, if you have an account that you want to debit money from that does not have a card connected to it, all that functionality is now gone.

The big thing for me about the QR reader is that your personal wallet pops up—the digital wallet on your phone pops up. I do not know what in the system, when you are trying to scan a QR code, is making your digital wallet and your bank cards activate. This is, I guess, a huge security issue, because you do not know what it is capturing during that.

MS TOUGH: Do you mean like when you go to some places to pay your phone, your phone knows to open the wallet—like, when you have the QR code and you have it next to it, it is doing that same thing to your phone and opening the wallet?

Ms Harwood: Yes, without me touching any buttons. I will put my QR reader underneath the code and then my digital wallet with my bank cards will all pop up and activate.

MR CAIN: That is a bit scary.

THE CHAIR: That is a new one.

Ms Fitzpatrick: In the beginning, it used to try to go to my wallet, even though I have free travel. Luckily I do not have any bank cards in my wallet. It was disconcerting to have this thing go to another app.

THE CHAIR: Madeleine, you tried to get help with setting this up, didn't you? What happened when you tried to reach out for help?

Ms Harwood: Sorry; I never actually got through.

THE CHAIR: Did you call? What happened?

Ms Harwood: Yes, I called. The wait times were too long and, because I am a worker and a full time employee, I could never actually get through to try and set it up. I persevered for over a week to try and work out how to create a digital account. I downloaded the app. I tried to use the app to make a digital account, but the app actually

had something wrong with its functionality where you cannot actually create the digital account through the app even though it says you can. Then you have to go through a web page. It was a mess.

THE CHAIR: Then, when you called, could you leave a message and get a call-back or it was just engaged?

Ms Harwood: No, it was just waiting. I do not remember now. It was November and it was just like waiting messages.

Ms Fitzpatrick: When we called, the wait times were quite long. But, luckily, I had time to wait.

THE CHAIR: Heather, I am particularly disturbed about your evidence. We spoke to CANAXESS this morning about disability compliance. We have heard a lot of evidence that there has been some very basic things that have been in place in legislation for 20 years and this system does not comply with them. We heard a lot of information about how this affects many people with disabilities, particularly those with visual impairments. I wonder if you might just run us through some of your other experiences. We have not yet spoken to the minister. We have not yet put to him who in the disability community tested this and who certified it. Would you like to weigh in on any of that?

Ms Fitzpatrick: As a secondary thing, I am also the president of the Canberra Blind Society, and my friend Graham Downie has been involved in the process of trying to get this to be accessible and usable. He has many comments about the system, and he is frustrated because comments go in and then nothing happens.

One of the things that is also very annoying is that real-time buses is not active for every bus every time and that that information is not being released to third parties, such as NextThere and Moovit. I use NextThere. It is accessible; it is easy, it is really good—except, now, they have a note at the top that says, “Canberra’s not releasing their real-time information; therefore, we can only give you the scheduled time.” It helps a lot if you know the bus is actually coming, first off, and actually where it is on the route when it is coming. You can plan accordingly to get to the stop on time. You can also plan at bus interchanges and stuff to be, “Oh yes, he is likely to be the second, third or fourth bus along,” and you do not have to be stressed thinking, “Oh, is that the one? Is that it down there?”—so being able to check to see what is happening and which bus it is, because they do not all come to the head of the platform sometimes before heading out.

THE CHAIR: I did not realise until now that you are the president of the Canberra Blind Society.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Yes, I am doing this as an individual.

THE CHAIR: That is okay. Are you aware of whether anybody who is visually impaired was asked to test this service? Has that come up? Have you heard of anybody who was involved in the testing?

Ms Fitzpatrick: Aside from Graham being involved on a testing basis—

THE CHAIR: He was in the user-testing group?

Ms Fitzpatrick: He was in the user-testing group and he still is doing things. He was nominated by the Blind Society as being someone who has opinions and is not unable to spread them. He and I are on very much the same page. So it has been really good that way. There are lots of other people that I know from the Blind Society that are having real problems getting around now—and it is stressful. If you have to be concentrating the whole time you are on the bus to make sure you do not miss the stop, it makes it very hard on you and it is tiring.

THE CHAIR: It certainly does—and a number of people who are catching the bus because they have a visual impairment may have limited options when it comes to how they can travel around Canberra.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Yes. I do not drive; I either walk or I take a bus.

THE CHAIR: So, if it does not work, it is pretty isolating.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Yes. The good thing about real-time is knowing that, “Yes, the bus is actually coming,” because sometimes, for whatever reason—it is broken down or whatever—it is not coming. So that is very important.

MS CARRICK: You said you persevered with the QR code. A lot of people have mentioned that people just wanted a debit or credit card to tap on like people do in Sydney with Opal. Did you end up persevering with the QR code?

Ms Harwood: Yes. I am still using the QR code. I strongly dislike it but, as I advised in my feedback, I did not think it was right that, as part of the implementation, we had to pay for a new MyWay+ card, because it was not our choice for the new system. I only had my MyWay card for four months at that point, because I decided to transition from driving to buses. So I really stuck to the QR code for that reason—that I did not think it was right that we were getting charged for something that we did not have any control over.

Also, when I am in Sydney, I do use my debit MasterCard. But, again, it is hard to keep a track on how much you are actually spending, because, due to the way you tap on and tap off, there will be a holding charge and the actual charge will not come through for a few days later. So there is no way to real-time track how much you are spending on public transport. In a cost-of-living situation, it is important to be able to monitor all your expenses in and out.

MS CARRICK: Yes, because it is not giving you your account balance. I understand that, because people cannot see their account balance, it is not getting topped up and people are just getting on for free. Have you noticed that people are getting on for free because they do not have any money on their app?

Ms Harwood: Yes; it has happened to me. I thought my account was down. I leave to go to work at 6.30 am. I thought something was wrong with my app but, because there was no way to see the balance once I was on the bus to further investigate, I was like, “Oh, I actually do not have any money in my account.” But, yes, I have noticed people

do not tap on and off. Sometimes it does come back to the fact that they have tried their app or it is failing, and there is no reason given as to why the tap has failed. So people are trying to do the right thing in most circumstances, but there is no feedback in place to actually show the reason.

MS CARRICK: I guess if people see others not paying—and it goes on for months and months—I guess it is tempting.

Ms Harwood: It is very common. I leave to go back through the school rush time and I have noticed an increase in the number of people not tapping on or off. You can just see the frustrations in the drivers because the drivers want to also be able to have that data there to show when buses are filled so that services can be adjusted accordingly.

MS TOUGH: I was going to ask about what Fiona asked about, but just reading through what you submitted, you mention that the government should have employed a system being used by other jurisdictions. We have heard this morning that Christchurch uses something created by the same company, but there are different things used in Canberra to those used in Christchurch. Were there particular parts of what other jurisdictions have used that you have liked that would have been good to see here, or was it more just something that could have easily been implemented?

Ms Harwood: Honestly, something as simple as just a digital MyWay+ card that I could have put in a wallet.

MS CARRICK: Like a digital wallet?

Ms Harwood: Yes, a digital wallet. I could control it and tap on using it. Opal has that now, I am pretty sure, as well—a digital Opal card.

MS TOUGH: Yes, that has been raised earlier in the day too. People have got their physical, new MyWay+ cards; people are tapping on with a credit or debit card, or their phone with their digital wallet; and whether they could have a digital card too is something that has come up. I was just curious about what you liked from other jurisdictions.

Ms Harwood: I think just the digital. Because, again, as I think I said, the QR code does seem like such a specialist piece, and I would be interested to know, out of the \$75 million it cost for this new system, how much the QR code cost to get implemented.

MS TOUGH: And you said you can use it at the front of the bus, but it is not working at the back of the bus.

Ms Harwood: Yes.

MS TOUGH: I say that as I look at the back of the bus right through that door right now!

Ms Harwood: The interesting thing about the QR code is that, like any QR code, it is so sensitive; it has got to be read. So if the shadows are incorrect on the screen—I have sat there with my hands around my screen, tilting it, lifting it up a little bit, lifting it

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down a little bit. I have probably at times stood there for maybe two minutes to try and get this QR code to actually scan. Again, I have given up on the back of the bus because if it is not the right distance, and if it is not scanned perfectly, it will not work.

Ms Fitzpatrick: I even found that when I was at the front of the bus when I was trying to use the QR code. It was not a simple stick it under the reader and go, which is what it should be.

Ms Harwood: And some of the bus drivers now do have little outlines so that you know exactly where to put the QR code.

MS TOUGH: Is that on every bus or just a few of them?

Ms Harwood: No, just a few of them.

THE CHAIR: That is only being done by the individual bus drivers?

Ms Harwood: Yes, maybe. The bus drivers definitely understand and share the frustration we feel when we are standing there.

MR CAIN: Obviously, they do not want frustrated customers on their bus either, because that is not a good environment for them.

Ms Harwood: Yes; and it is not the bus drivers' fault.

Ms Fitzpatrick: But they are bearing the brunt of it because they are there.

THE CHAIR: Welcome, Mr Langley. Thank you for joining us.

Mr Langley: My sincere apologies for being late.

THE CHAIR: Not a problem. You were probably late on the bus! It is fine. We have a privilege statement because witnesses are protected by privilege, and there are rights and obligations. Witnesses must speak the truth. It is quite a serious matter to give false or misleading evidence, and it may be considered contempt of the Assembly. Have you read and understood that, and do you agree with that statement?

Mr Langley: Yes, I have read and understood it, and I agree with it.

THE CHAIR: Excellent, thank you. Mr Cain?

MR CAIN: You picked the right person for the type of question I am asking. Thank you, Ben. Noting that your web form submission is confidential—meaning it is not publicly available, but we have access to it—just for the record, for the sake of the hearing, do you mind saying what your experience has been with the new system? Why was it of such a degree of concern that it led you to lodge a submission through the web form and then offer to be here?

Mr Langley: My experience is as an ordinary commuter. I commute on the bus daily from the Woden area into the central parliamentary area. I have been a long-term

believer in public transport in the ACT. Before this, I was at the university and used it extensively. I worked in a student welfare capacity and saw the real bonuses that expanded public transport has made in the lives of people.

I felt compelled to take these steps because I saw the erosion of trust in the public transport system that this rollout had brought. Personally, I saw the inconveniences and challenges that it was having in my own life, and I felt that as a public citizen I should do my part to give feedback. It is constructive criticism to hopefully see it improve and reach the potential that I believe Canberra's public transport, and in this specific case the ticketing system, has.

MR CAIN: What are the top three things that annoyed you the most?

Mr Langley: Specifically, about the rollout—and I think some of the things I might touch on are the things that have subsequently been addressed to some extent—I think it was a lack of communication. And when there was communication, things were over-promised and underdelivered. When these things were eventually rolled out, the perception I have heard when I have chatted to people has been, “Oh, this is missing.” I would say, “Well, it is here now, but I can understand when you tried it”—tapping up your thing online.

I think one of the main things that I would say, if we are going to go for a top three, would probably be accessibility. The fact that it is quite a complex system, and I would say in some ways needlessly so, and with the technical issues. I have talked with people. There is quite an elderly community around where I am. I chat with people while I am waiting for the bus. They talk about how they really struggle with it, and they almost gave up on it.

The failure of information—the stuff that would have been included on NXTBUS and things like that. There is a real information gap. It is still, I would say, less competently delivered than the previous system was.

The last one is the failure to read the cards. This is a big one, especially with the talk there has been about reintroducing penalties for not tapping off: the ability to be able to tap on and tap off and to be able to rely on that.

MR CAIN: Sure, thank you.

THE CHAIR: Heather, I am keen to check-in with you. You came in with some notes. Is there anything in your notes that we have not covered?

Ms Fitzpatrick: There is one more thing.

THE CHAIR: Yes, please.

Ms Fitzpatrick: When you do open up the app, the MyWay+ app, and you are checking which bus is coming next, and you are standing at the Woden bus interchange waiting for your 73 bus to go south, and it is one second after the scheduled time, it disappears from the app, whether or not the bus has arrived. You cannot check to see if the bus is there; you cannot check to see what is going on. It totally disappears and says, “No, no

you have got to wait another half hour for the next bus.” There is no noticing whether or not the bus is actually gone, and that, I think, is linked to the “next there” and to the ability of knowing where the buses are and what they are doing.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Madeleine, I think you mentioned you had trouble topping up your account?

Ms Harwood: Yes. I cannot set up auto top-up anymore because they have removed the functionality to do an auto top-up by bank account. You can only work via card. I do have a card, but because I am a little bit into my security, I do not keep a lot of money on that card; I transfer as I need to. So I cannot set it up that way, because I have no way to track or to know when an auto top-up is going to occur. If an auto top-up does occur, it could overdraft my account and I will get charge penalties from my bank. Just removing simple functionalities that used to exist has really caused big issues.

Another example that I was given was of a friend that has two kids, and they wanted to go on a tram ride. She did the right thing; she has one card, there are three of them, and she said, “I tapped on three times, but I do not know whether that actually tapped on three times, or I was tapping on, off and tapping on again.” Even for things like that, when you have young kids and maybe it is a one-off because you are doing an exciting adventure for the day, it does not work because there is no information.

THE CHAIR: And then when you call you do not get through.

Ms Harwood: Yes.

THE CHAIR: I will pass over to Ms Carrick.

MS CARRICK: Do you think it would have been a better way to implement the system to run both systems in conjunction, or when the new one came in that there had been a grace period of three or four weeks of a month while everybody was getting used to it and they did not have to pay while practising? Do you think there was a better way to implement it?

Ms Fitzpatrick: Yes.

Mr Langley: In that direction, I have seen statements that reflect that there was this idea that we needed a load to test the robustness of the system. I agree with the position you are putting forward that getting this as a dry run would have been a better way to undertake this stuff, given that the IT contractor did not seem to be prepared for even a small-scale rollout.

Ms Fitzpatrick: And the number of buses that have the equipment versus the ones that do not—it is confusing when you get on the bus ready to tap on and it says that it is the old equipment, or it has got a big sign on it saying it is out of order.

Ms Harwood: I think the biggest question for me as a consumer is this: why did the system need changing? We know it was being upgraded, or it was being worked on to be upgraded over a number of years, but there was no reason given as to why that occurred and why it needed to be done in two months, especially when the ACT

government had been paying someone for almost five years trying to try to upgrade the system. There are a lot more questions as why it needed to occur.

MS CARRICK: Do you think the objective of what they were trying to do was clear? What were they trying to achieve with so much functionality all in one go? Whereas, they could have probably done a debit/credit card and just incrementally updated things. Do you think that all that functionality that they tried to do was needed by everyone?

Ms Fitzpatrick: No.

Mr Langley: No.

Ms Harwood: The QR code—I only see a handful of people on the bus use it. Again, it comes back to what the cost was of putting it on versus how many people are actually using it as a functional ticket.

Mr Langley: And I think, obviously, significant development resources were put into the trip planner and route thing. I would note that Google Maps exists. It seems to be piggybacking off that data. Again, it makes me wonder whether this was too much area and not enough spread—that we ended up in this space.

I think, certainly, in terms of communication, it was not adequately communicated anywhere I can see—the reason that this was necessary and why we have to be in these spaces versus a smaller scoped project. I think for the debit card it was very clearly communicated as to why we needed that. But when it came to broader stuff, I still do not understand why certain decisions were made, and I think that is representative of the broader ACT community.

MS TOUGH: A brief question on any communications you saw in the lead-up to the launch on how to use the system. Obviously, from what I saw, everyone was being pushed to the app. Were you aware that debit/credit cards would work and of other ways of using the system?

Ms Fitzpatrick: I did not see ads for that sort of thing. Of course, the ads showed the QR code working, right away. It looked like it could be good; but, on reflection, regarding what used to be here, it would have been easy to add on one tranche of, “Let’s add on debit or credit cards and leave the rest of it alone, because it works.”

Mr Langley: I would agree that I did see some messaging. Again, I think that a lot of the functionality got lost, because there was so much to communicate. There were big chunks of text and it was a matter of thinking, if I passed by, “Okay, here it is. This is happening; that’s neat.” But the messaging did not quite cut through—at least for me and the people I communicate with. It was like a shotgun approach to stuff.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Yes, it is a big blob.

Ms Harwood: I did not find out until two days before it went live that it was going to be live. I saw nothing. I had to spend a couple of days driving in and not taking public transport, to try and sort myself out.

MS CARRICK: Do you think it has damaged the reputation of the public transport system amongst the community? Have they been put off a bit and are they less likely to use it?

Ms Fitzpatrick: I think there is some reluctance now. They have shied away from it: “It’s not reliable; it’s not going to work.”

Ms Harwood: Yes, I find people are now driving in more. People are avoiding public transport as best as they can. I have tried to work out ways to minimise my use of public transport. I have actually missed buses because I have been trying to scan my QR code. I either try and scan, miss the bus, or I just run off the bus and flag the next bus.

Mr Langley: The maps and the lack of real-time information have been my experience in the community. The failure to pay has stuck in a lot of people’s minds. They think, “I tried this once and it didn’t work.” A bigger one for me has been people saying—and I think it is a bigger problem with Transport Canberra—“I can’t rely on buses coming regularly. I used to at least be able to know where the bus was.” If it is running five minutes late, I know it is running five minutes late. If I have missed it by a minute because it came a bit early, I know that and I can live my life around this. That has really impacted a lot of people’s confidence in public transport and the ability to utilise it.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Yes, I heartily agree.

MR CAIN: We had some submissions and discussion earlier today about some acknowledged data vulnerabilities, where personal data is being able to be acquired other than for the purpose of travel. Is that something that would also give you some concern about using the system?

Ms Harwood: Yes. I read that, and it is also partly the reason why I do not use a debit card. I have always had concerns about using debit cards on systems where I do not know about the security. For me, it is a huge thing. We have had numerous data breaches across Australia in the last few years, and to know that a government system is not protecting users’ information is pretty appalling. I know we are going more digital, but when you start looking at all the systems, you start questioning, “If it’s accessible through this system, what data could people get to on other systems, such as the ACT Health digital platform?”

Mr Langley: Yes; 100 per cent. One thing that has really shaken my confidence is the technical primitiveness of the IT structure. When it was first launched, the website was not working. From a cybersecurity perspective, that really worried me because I was thinking, “If this is what I can see, what can’t I see?” It is an amazingly attractive target for criminals.

This is not the Commonwealth Bank. I presume, at least, that the ACT government does not have a budget for 50 cybersecurity guys sitting in an office and doing nothing else. The trouble with cybersecurity is that it is all about perceptions, from a user perspective. When you have a website that is not working, you wonder, “Has the other stuff been done?”

The other thing that I would raise with the QR codes is that, because they function so little, there is a real vector for human engineering there. If you put up a little poster that says, “Hey, your QR code isn’t working; scan this,” These issues with the rollout create a fractal series of vulnerabilities that, unfortunately, impact the safety of the ACT public.

MR CAIN: And there are other actors watching, to take advantage.

Mr Langley: Yes.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Yes.

MR CAIN: You do not have to answer this question. You are here as public transport users. If you are willing, are you happy to identify your vocation, profession or work? You do not have to answer that.

Ms Fitzpatrick: I am retired, but I did work in the public service, and now I am also heavily involved with the Canberra Blind Society, so I spend a lot of time going to and from events, going to their premises and helping people. I do rely quite heavily on the buses, and I did take the bus a lot when I worked.

MS TOUGH: If you do not want to identify where you work, you do not need to say anything.

MR CAIN: Of course; you do not have to answer the question.

Ms Harwood: Being a Canberran, there is a pretty high chance of knowing what I am.

MR CAIN: Well, you are on public broadcast, anyway!

Ms Harwood: Yes, I am a public servant.

Ms Fitzpatrick: It is a very small town.

Ms Harwood: Yes.

THE CHAIR: We are nearly out of time, but I might circle back to one issue. Heather, you are using a MyWay card?

Ms Fitzpatrick: I am. I abandoned the app.

THE CHAIR: Have you found that you are able to get money onto that MyWay card?

Ms Fitzpatrick: I travel for free.

THE CHAIR: How have you navigated that? You travel for free.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Because I have a vision impairment, I have a travel card.

THE CHAIR: Have you used the website?

Ms Fitzpatrick: I had to use the website to hook it up to my account to prove that I had a vision impairment and I did not need to pay. That was early on, and that was clunky and not easy. But once I got on the phone and talked to somebody, they were incredibly helpful, while being under the pump. They were very helpful and very knowledgeable. It is not their fault; it is just that there were thousands of people at once. I do not have to worry about topping up my card.

THE CHAIR: Have you had trouble finding information about the system in an accessible form?

Ms Fitzpatrick: No. I have not extensively looked. No, I have not, and I am sure Graham would tell me if there was.

THE CHAIR: That brings us to the end of our hearing. Thank you so much for your time and your submissions; that has been really valuable. It is essential for us to get the perspectives of people. We have heard a lot about a lot of things, and we have more hearings tomorrow, and possibly after that.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Have you heard new stuff—stuff you had not expected?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Ms Fitzpatrick: That is good.

THE CHAIR: I would say that, in every hearing, we have heard something we were not expecting.

Mr Langley: Can I add one thing? It was not in my submission, but I am someone who uses the hybrid cycle bus cycle, and the fact that there is no information on which buses have cycle racks is a bit of a frustration. It makes it really difficult to do what otherwise makes a really good commute in. Obviously, if the bus does not have a rack and the bus driver cannot let me on, I am sitting there for half an hour.

THE CHAIR: I am in the same position. I am usually riding and, if it rains, I need a rack.

Mr Langley: Yes, exactly.

MS CARRICK: It is probably the same for wheelchair access, too.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Exactly.

THE CHAIR: It is exactly the same for wheelchair users.

Ms Fitzpatrick: On NXT there used to be a little wheelchair beside information; for bikes, it was great.

Ms Harwood: I would like to say one more thing about the functionality of the app. The other thing that should also be considered is tracking whether a bus is full. I waited

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at the bus stop for over 15 minutes one day because three buses all came through that were full. I would rather have been in a nice, air-controlled environment instead of being outside in 35-degree heat.

Ms Fitzpatrick: I am sure that, as they tag on, you can tell the capacity of the bus.

THE CHAIR: For the number of failures to tap on, there would be a little bit of rubberiness, but you would certainly know whether it was nearly full.

Ms Fitzpatrick: We are hopeful that eventually it will work all the time.

THE CHAIR: Hopes and dreams on this inquiry! Thank you very much for coming in and thank you for your time.

Ms Fitzpatrick: No problem.

Mr Langley: Thank you for the opportunity.

Ms Harwood: Thank you for having us.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Hansard, for your long day. Our hearings are now closed until tomorrow.

The committee adjourned at 4.31 pm.