



PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

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Question Without Notice

12 October 2017

NEWCASTLE TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) (14:37): My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. Given that the chief executive officer of Keolis Downer this week admitted that the privatised Newcastle bus system is not world class as he promised, will the Minister admit that the Government's privatisation has seen bus services go backwards?

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Infrastructure) (14:38): I can assure the member for Wallsend—having met with Keolis Downer representatives in the last fortnight—that the organisation is looking to make some changes to improve services. In fact, the member for Swansea and I had a meeting the other day and I committed to her that I would take a consultative approach to the services being provided by Keolis Downer. The company has only been there since July and is bedding down a completely new transport system. It has been consulting with the community about how it can enhance services.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Port Stephens will come to order.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: This franchise happened when patronage on Newcastle buses decreased in the order of 13 per cent over the past five years.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Port Stephens will come to order.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Ultimately, there will be a terrific turnaround. While I have been asked a question about Newcastle, the heart of change relating to Newcastle transport is the rollout of light rail and the subsequent revitalisation of the city, which is going incredibly well. There is no doubt that the \$2 billion in private sector investment in Newcastle is because this Government had the guts to lift the heavy rail line and look for more modern modes of transport, and that has led to enormous change.

As usual, the people who opposed the redevelopment were the member for Newcastle and the member for Wallsend. Nevertheless, the Government will continue to invest in Newcastle. This Government is a government for all communities across the State. I notice the Opposition is talking about cancelling projects. I can assure Opposition members they will not be in government so they

will not be cancelling anything. The bottom line is that the Government's infrastructure program in regional areas of New South Wales such as the Hunter and—

Dr Geoff Lee: Parramatta?

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: —and Parramatta is very important. One point I would make about members of the Liberal and Nationals Government is that we understand regional New South Wales.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Keira to order for the second time.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: We know that the people of New South Wales do not want former Prime Minister Howard's gun laws, and the effort he made in conjunction with Tim Fischer, reversed by the Labor Party getting into bed with the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party. That is what we do not want to see occurring in regional New South Wales.

The SPEAKER: Order! I point out to the member for Rockdale that the member for Port Stephens is waiting for silence to state her point of order.

Ms Kate Washington: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. I fail to see the relevance of the Minister's ramblings on gun control versus the very important issue of the privatisation of buses in Newcastle and the service that is being delivered, which is far from world class.

The SPEAKER: Order! So far the Minister has been relevant. I will continue to listen.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: We are talking about regional New South Wales, and the last time I looked the Hunter was in regional New South Wales. Regional people do not want to see the Labor Party in bed with the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party and unwinding some of the most important gun law reforms the nation has ever seen. We do not want to see semi-automatic weapons return to our communities, which Luke Foley, in bed with the Shooters, is supporting. That is the issue for the people of Murray and Cootamundra.

Ms Kate Washington: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129.

The SPEAKER: Order! I said earlier that I would listen further and I have. The Minister is straying from the original question. We would all appreciate it if the Minister returns to the leave of the question.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: The Deputy Premier pointed out that buses backfire when they are run by the unions and the Labor Party. It is a bit rich for Labor Opposition members to be asking about private sector bus operators. There are some tremendous private sector bus operators in electorates such as Cootamundra and Murray but the Labor Opposition wants to nationalise their businesses. The comms are asking questions about the State Transit Authority [STA] when they are about to nationalise the bus services in electorates such as Cootamundra and Murray, and they will do that in cahoots with the Shooters.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Port Stephens to order for the first time. If she continues to interject, she will be removed from the Chamber. The member for Gosford will come to order. The member for Gosford will cease interjecting. Interjections are disorderly at all times.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Yesterday the representative of the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party in this House said, "Don't call me a Shooter", and has not returned to the Chamber since. Obviously, there are a few issues and he is preparing a few statements. I am surprised that the Leader of the Opposition is not writing them for him. But the point is that we will see the provision of great things when it comes to the delivery of bus services in Newcastle in the same way as we see

tremendous bus services being delivered by country operators across the State, particularly in electorates such as Cootamundra and Murray.