



PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT

Petitions - Discussion

17 May 2018

NEWCASTLE TRANSPORT NETWORK

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) (17:08):

The Newcastle bus privatisation experiment is a failure. First there were problems with service delivery. Without warning, hundreds of services were cancelled, leaving many of our commuters stuck. Then there were staffing issues: Workers did not receive pay and entitlements on time—in some instances, not for weeks. Then came the rollout of the new timetable and routes, which was nothing short of a catastrophe for Wallsend commuters. During the first stage of the new timetable, phone calls flooded our office—as they did in Newcastle—as well as emails and messages from frustrated commuters.

We saw school students stranded because the bus never came. We saw people lose jobs because they could no longer get to work on time. In the months since, it has become worse. Short-term inconveniences have metastasised into serious problems. One woman called my office reporting that without the 111 service to take her from her home in Waratah to medical appointments and social engagements, she has become increasingly isolated and her health has suffered markedly. One young man, who has autism and is reliant on schedules, saw his world up-ended when the two buses he used to catch to work became four—throwing his schedule worryingly out of whack.

Hundreds of people have warned that the new timetable has forced them off the public transport network altogether. They are driving now and exacerbating the congestion crisis, which paralyses the Wallsend to Newcastle route, pumping more greenhouse gases into the air. Is it any wonder that we were able to gather more than 1,500 responses to a survey on problems with the new network? Is it any wonder that Hunter members were able to gather enough signatures to have this petition debated in Parliament not once but twice? Is it any wonder that we have people volunteering to travel down to Sydney to support us? I thank them.

I acknowledge those in the gallery who have come down to show the Government your frustration. I thank you for taking the time to do so, and I apologise for our running late. I also thank my union colleagues. I acknowledge that some of the services have been positive—let us keep them. I have been calling for a review of public transport in Wallsend for some time

but it has not happened. I also acknowledge that Keolis Downer has initiated a review of the network but it is a tiny Clayton's review—we want a complete and comprehensive review of all of our services for the people of Wallsend and Newcastle. Wallsend needs it.