

RADIO TALKBACK SUMMARY

9-10am

Thursday, 3 August 2023

FIVEAA

Tom Koutsantonis, Transport, Infrastructure, Energy, & Mining Minister [& Callers] (FIVEaa 9.10-

9.31) Barricades to be installed outside Black Forest Primary School / Torrens to Darlington Interconnector / Review into the driver training system / Renewing accreditation to drive chauffeured vehicles / Caller Q&A

(Pantelis: Starting off, in the studio, happy to take your calls ... Tom Koutsantonis, Transport, Infrastructure, Energy Minister ... heard Penbo in Breaking at Eight this morning ... talking about a barricade to go in on South Road outside Black Forest Primary where there's been some car accidents.) Two ... very dangerous car accidents have broken a barrier on the footpath there ... at the traffic lights ... Jayne Stinson has been doing a lot of work down there with the parents and the school and the Department have been working very closely and out of the Torrens to Darlington project we're going to be funding a brand new concrete barrier to protect these kids as they're coming out. *(Pantelis: ... That's going in immediately?)* As fast as we possibly can. We have to keep the kids safe ... so we have to work very quickly to get this done. *(Pantelis: Does it bug you a little bit – okay, it's important, no questioning ... needs to happen to keep kids safe – but the road's going to be ripped up in a couple of years, a year?)* I'm not sure that section is. Either way – we're resurfacing a lot of South Road now. Has to be resurfaced [unclear] last I think 15 years. So the parts that aren't being touched are being given a new surface ... So we are starting the works. We're doing a lot of demolition. So there's a website you can go to on the Infrastructure Department's website which shows you the parts of the roads that will be affected and the parts that are staying. So some parts we'll have a tunnel underneath, other parts are being ripped up altogether. We're not touching those. *(Pantelis: Okay. The tram bridge has to go, doesn't it? And that's only 15 years old.)* About 15 years old. It's not wide enough. The plinths at either end are not wide enough to deal with the tunnels and the gaps so we're going to have to take it down ... we're also doing Marion Road and Cross, separating those as well. So we'll be doing three of those tram crossings simultaneously. So yeah, it is an expense. But traffic volumes are growing. We're the last city in Australia working on a grid network and people are noticing. If you're coming in to work today on South Road, Unley Road, Goodwood Road, Marion Road, you'd be seeing what's going on. We need to build this very quickly. *(Pantelis: The traffic is only slowing down ... repeated annual surveys by the RAA – down to what, 20km in peak?)* The North-South Corridor is 20km an hour. That's not an efficient city. *(Pantelis: No ... should we have gone ahead with MATS in your view ...)* No. MATS Plan was visionary but it had all of us in the western suburbs living in the shade underneath roadworks and I'm not sure that would have been the type of city we want to live in. It would have cut swathes through suburbs but I just think it was far too expensive and it estimated a much larger population for Adelaide. *(Pantelis: I've vented since you were in here last on a couple of issues and one is kids getting their drivers licence. Where I paid \$460 for one exam which included a driving licence, the next one we did in our own car and that was \$330. And then Linda Jackson came on, the President of the Driving Association, whatever it is, for driving instructors, and she said she charged \$200 ... she said you should have shopped around. I dealt through the instructor who was teaching my son.)* You raise a common problem that a lot of parents are facing. We're hearing a lot of evidence of people charging up to \$400. That is an extraordinary amount of money for a drivers licence test ... I sympathise ... that is way too much money. ICAC did an investigation into driver accreditation training and they found a lot of issues. The previous Government attempted to tackle it and was unsuccessful in the Parliament. We're looking at it now. My Department has finalised a review and it made recommendations to me about changes we need to make. I have to say, anyone

paying more than \$200 is paying too much. *(Pantelis: They're being ripped off.)* I think they are ... and there are a lot of good people in this industry who are seeing cowboys do extraordinary things, make extraordinary profits, and it is not working. And I am very keen to clean this up, to make sure that our kids are safe when they're being driven and trained. There's been a lot of reports on sexual assault, a lot of reports of bribery. This has to be cleaned up. Because ultimately these kids drive on our roads. We want to make sure they're being trained properly and when they're being trained, we want to make sure that they're safe and there's someone who's training them that's not going to do anything to hurt them. *(Pantelis: Indeed ... but it's been let loose.)* It's a deregulated industry, you should not be deregulated, it needs to be regulated ... *(Pantelis: Back in the old days it was simple wasn't it? You go along, go to your motor reg do the test and away you go.)* That's right. Look, we're asking people to enter a deregulated system for training to achieve a regulated license. So, it's not working. Now, there are some operators who are doing absolutely the right thing who will be saying 'well hang on, just apply more enforcement' but there needs to be a level of regulation here and we need to work out exactly whether or not we bring it all in-house, high vis drivers ... or whether we apply a level of regulation over the top, work out what the actual cost is and make sure we've got feasible businesses out there who can make money. *(Pantelis: Well, there should be a maximum charge for instance, should be capped.)* I think something like that absolutely something we should consider, but once the reforms are agreed upon by the Government we'll go out and consult with industry, so not to panic anyone in the industry right now, we will consult with industry and all of the accredited offices and make sure that they all know what's going to go, give them a chance to give me some feedback and we'll proceed with a reform process once the Cabinet's agreed. *(Pantelis: Alright. Sandy at West Lakes ... morning.)* **(Caller Sandy: Good morning ... I have a little problem with a street in West Lakes that has been renamed from Brebner Drive to Troubridge Drive because of all the new development that's gone on since West Lakes Football Park has closed. Now, the Council told the Department of Transport a month ago early last month that this road has been renamed to Troubridge Road [sic] but there's three huge, great bridge signs on Frederick Road, great big green signs that's still pointing to it as Brebner Drive, so now there's a small Council sign saying Troubridge Road [sic] and three big signs saying Brebner Drive. I have people coming to me like taxi drivers delivering people that go down where your big signs are and they're looking all around, and they can't find Brebner Drive because it is not there. ... The Government told your Department a month ago and got a reply that the signs should be taken down by mid-September. Why can't it happen?)** That is a very, very good question and I will fix this up for your today, Sandy ... *(Pantelis: That level of bureaucracy must be frustrating hearing things like that.)* The people in the Department are really conscientious. It's just the system is so large, that's what it is. It could be some logistic things, it could be that we've outsourced making any signs and we're just waiting on their arrival, it could be as simple as that. I don't know what it is but I know that my Department is listening to this because they monitor everything I say and I know that they are working frantically as we speak to find out where these signs are and I'll knock them up as quickly as possible. *(Pantelis: Go on, say jump.)* [laughter] *(Pantelis: Larry at Salisbury Downs good morning.)* **(Caller Larry: ... my question is ... lines on the road, we've got the South Eastern Freeway the South Road overpass there, from Regency Road all the way up to the Salisbury exits there there's hardly any paint on the roads, both lanes on both sides north and west you see, so just impossible to see some of those lines and there's also other intersections in and around Adelaide that are totally woeful ... need to be updated and painted and such.)** That's a very good point. So, where was it exactly Larry? **(Caller Larry: The South Road overpass, the new section that was the big bridge that was built over -)** Just past Regency Road? **(Caller Larry: Yeah, from Regency Road all the way up to and beyond to have the outbound painted because the inside lane there's hardly any paint on the road that you can see, even in the dark, even a blind man can't see.)** Ok, no worries, leave that with me I'll get onto it straight away, thank you Larry.

(Pantelis: ... Accreditation – I vented on this a couple of weeks ago, regarding trying to get my accreditation back up and running. Used to drive hire cars, buses, years ago and still have people in the industry who ring me saying can you help, can't get drivers at the moment. So I thought okay, I'll go into that ... but I found after I thought I renewed my accreditation last year, did all the hoops ... medicals, national police check, working with children check – sent it all in. Apparently I didn't respond to an email saying do you want to go ahead with this – what do you think I was doing ...) For the listeners' benefit, Matthew told me about this and I did a deep dive into what actually occurred and what we are unable to do is to harmonise – the base licence you need to have any of these other licences is a drivers accreditation ... so what Matthew was doing is adding a licence on top of the drivers licence and those two expiry dates are not harmonised. For our system which is relatively old, it's very hard to harmonise. So there was some confusion about whether or not we needed to extend your drivers licence in order for you to get the full maximum value and for whatever reason, it's not done automatically. *(Pantelis: Which is nonsense. I've sent in everything ...)* Yeah, so what happened to Matthew has probably happened to other people as well ... he had to go off and pay for all these checks again and has basically paid twice for the cost of one new reaccreditation which is very expensive – how much did it cost? *(Pantelis: First time, \$300 ... it's a lot of money.)* So the Department is now looking at this to try and work out whether we can harmonise it. The problem we've got is that our systems are not necessarily well calibrated. Everyone thinks the Government has everything at its fingertips – these systems are very hard to use. We spend a lot of time protecting against hacking. So updating the systems is very hard but I'll absolutely get back to you as fast as I can about how we can fix this. *(Pantelis: It needs to be fixed because it will have happened to so many people and the delays in the system ...)* And I can't get bus drivers ... the economy is basically at full employment, cost of living is hurting, people want to work, and people are trying to get their accreditations and they can't ... *(Pantelis: Debbie at South Plympton, morning ...)*

(Caller Debbie: ... Just two things – I'm really glad to see the upgrade of Marion Road and Sir Donald Bradman Drive ... it was 2009 when that young girl Hayley was killed by the truck driver going around the corner and nothing was ever done to fix that situation ... on the driving licence thing – I booked both my sons through that last year. My first son was actually racing supercars out at Mallala before he got his licence so he was very confident. He only ever needed one go at everything. It still cost over \$1,000 for him to get his licence with a decent driving instructor who I got through word of mouth because I was not putting my child in the car with a stranger ... it was really expensive, so I'm sure some people go for a cheaper option ...) I think the problem here, Debbie, is that there are some people who are not kosher who are also very expensive ... and I think what Matthew's uncovered on the program here is what ICAC uncovered, which is that there is a lot of cowboys in the industry who are making the really good people look bad. So you're right – parents are anxious about leaving their kids ... because they don't know ... and it's important we have proper, appropriate checks and balances here and also look at cost. So paying \$400 when the industry average is \$200 means you're paying twice and getting the exact same service. And sometimes people are not passed, so they have to do it again ... I'm not really interested in stepping into the training aspect, but the final test, I think the Government needs to get involved. *(Pantelis: Debbie, thank you for the call. Marie at Seacliff ...)*

(Caller Marie: ... In regards to when people go for their licence in South Australia – I'm amazed that you get your licence over here for an auto and you can drive a manual. In other states if you get your auto licence you can only drive an auto and a manual you can drive both. I'm amazed here ... when my kids went for their licence there were only two instructors who taught manual.) My dad made me learn from manual ... ***(Caller Marie: My daughter, I wanted to give her my manual car. They went through the clutch pretty fast learning how to drive it ...)*** ... I am not keen on changing that. I think if you get a driver's licence you can learn manual. I don't think I'd want to accredit just for manual or just auto, I think that's a bit too onerous on people. But it would be nice for people to learn on manual but I fear that that is going away ... *(Pantelis: Can you buy ... new manuals?)* I

think you're at the point now where if you are buying a manual you're either buying a very expensive luxury vehicle or you're buying a commercial vehicle. *(Pantelis: Marie, thank you. Matt at Gawler ...)* **(Caller Matt: ... Just want to talk about the section of road between Gawler and Wakefield at Kudla. My understanding is that Tony Piccolo's office has been in contact with the Department regarding the state of the road whenever it rains ... there's a water over the road sign on Main North Road that now has grass overgrowing, it's been there that long. Are there any plans to fix that section of road? It's horrendously dangerous ...)** What's it called again? **(Caller Matt: ... Main North Road at Kudla.)** ... There's grass growing over the road? **(Caller Matt: No, there's grass growing over the sign that's advising that there's water over the road. Whenever it rains, the majority of the road is underwater. I'm not sure if there's a drainage issue or what ... but we are doing 30-40km an hour through this section of road ... anytime we receive a bit of rain. And there just don't seem to be any plans to improve it ... it's horrendously dangerous ...)** I'll be back on this program relatively soon so what I'll do is I'll speak to Tony Piccolo when I get off air, because he's always harassing me about one thing or another. I'll check this out. I think I have got something in my mailbox on this ... and I'll get back to you. **(Caller Matt: Thank you Tom.)** *(Pantelis: Thank you Matt. So that would be a 90km section of road I would think ...)* Could even be 100, I'm not sure. *(Pantelis: ... So certainly you have to slow down for water on the road. That can't be good for traffic ... and all the rest ...)* Our maintenance team is listening so there you go. *(Pantelis: Just on the tram bridge coming down ... how are trams going to operate? Your CEO recently said they'd be running between Glenelg and Marion Road and in the city from Goodwood or somewhere.)* That's right, we'll run shuttles. *(Pantelis: How are you going to service the trams that are going to be stuck in the city end?)* That's going to be very difficult ... but I think people realise, like with the Aquatic Centre – we are trying to build a better service by grade separating traffic from trams. And there's more to be done – there's Morphett Road to be done as well, ultimately. So I think people get the inconvenience. It's going to be difficult but my guys will come up with a solution to this problem. *(Pantelis: So the key question is – are you going to keep trams running in the city without a city depot?)* That's right. *(Pantelis: Okay, so you'll find a way ...)* We will find a way. *(Pantelis: Okay. Lots more I wanted to ask including an email here from Peter who says "Why are stops in the city multiple stops with the same number, so when you go to the app and you want to put in stop B1 to see when the bus is coming, you have to choose between five?")* I've been texting my chief executive while I've been on air about this, and he has given me an explanation which I will interrogate when we get back. They say they try and split the city into blocks and corridors so we don't get the same number on a single bus route. However, I see your point. *(Pantelis: That doesn't help passengers ...)* Exactly. So R1 – there's five R1s. But they're at different spots around the city. So I completely agree. There should be R1A, R1B. *(Pantelis: Or just R2 or R3 ...)* That's right, let's just simplify it ... I'm pretty sure we can fix this quickly, so I'll get to the bottom of it. I have to say, I wasn't aware of this problem until you raised it so thank you, I'll fix this. *(Pantelis: ... If you're trying to put in a stop, would it matter?)* Like you said earlier off air, what if there's an incident at a bus stop and you call police and they say where are you and you say R1 and they say which R1 ... *(Pantelis: That's nonsense ... Monty Python stuff ...)* [Laughter] I think it's more *Utopia*. *(Pantelis: ... Tom Koutsantonis, thank you very much for your time today. Look forward to having you back. Lots of callers we didn't get to but hold your fire, the Minister will be back.)*