

THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE MANAGEMENT OF TAMAR AND ESK RIVERS MET AT HENTY HOUSE, LAUNCESTON, ON WEDNESDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2008.

Dr JACK KEITH EDWARDS WAS SWORN, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Finch) - Thanks very much, Jack, for making your time available to appear before our committee.

Dr EDWARDS - Thank you for the invitation to come and speak to you. You have my written submission and I would like to expand on that a little. My feeling is that the problems are difficult. We are dealing with natural forces and they are unpredictable. On top of that, we have Launceston, which is situated at the confluence of two significant rivers, the head of an estuary, subject to natural forces and tidal flows. We have built on a flood plain, some of which is below high tide level. It is all concentrating into this area. Nevertheless, other cities around the world - like London - are in similar circumstances. There is a limit, I believe, to what can be achieved. We cannot do anything about the natural forces; we can mitigate the problem but we can't control it. Over the last 50 years we had the Launceston Flood Protection Authority, which was a statutory authority. It did the planning and design work for the flood scheme. We had the Launceston Flood Protection Board, also a statutory body, which undertook the work. I was on both of those boards. In the early 1980s the Port Authority had a de facto responsibility for the river. Then the Tamar River Improvement Committee was formed, which the State took part in but it wasn't a statutory body. That was followed by. That was followed by UTRIA, which has now been replaced by the new flood authority. All of those units were low key, low cost but they were very effective in their way. The flood authorities for example had people seconded from various departments and instrumentalities. We had specialist Hydro people, Rivers and Water Supply Commission people, Lands Department, Public Works Department, the City Council and the Port Authority. That cooperation carried right through the whole thing, which was terribly important. There was really a will by the State Government to get in and help, largely due to the Premier of the day - Cosgrove and then Reece.

There were many benefits from the flood scheme, which unfortunately has been let run down. There were many tangible and intangible benefits, particularly from UTRIA. I think one of the most important things that came out of this was the research databank which was built up by the River Improvement Authority, and in particular Professor Foster's report of 1986. Doug Foster was a boy in short pants when we started the flood scheme but he was a very experienced and very knowledgeable man in this sort of field. I have re-read his report recently and he is spot on with many of his comments. He is very practical. The data that was prepared, particularly by Foster, is invaluable right up to the present time, though admittedly needs updating.

Also, UTRIA raised the public awareness of the value of the river in a different form to what it was as a port, with all the intangible things that happened, and also the development that has taken place particularly around Royal Park and the seaport. However for the last 40 years it has been plagued by low flood flows. It is 1969 since

we had any decent flooding. That was 100 000 cusecs and we have not had anything like it since. Also there has been a high siltation rate over that period. I think there is a message there somewhere: if you get floods you do not get siltation. The other message is that we have been given an opportunity to prepare for another flood, which will certainly come, and we must make use of that and get in and start doing something about it.

The management shortcomings as I see it of those authorities is firstly the restricted area of jurisdiction. The whole catchment is important, which covers - including the Tamar catchment - about 15 per cent of Tasmania, going right back to the east coast. The whole estuary right to Low Head is important. This is all following together into Launceston. Whatever authority is formed needs to have access and be able to manage that. For example, with a flood scheme - and Munro's report brought this out - there is a very slight risk in a very major flood that the Evandale Saddle could be overtopped and the North Esk would capture the South Esk. This is just a possibility but they are the sorts of things outside the Municipality of Launceston which need to be considered. If, for example, a barrage on the river were considered that would also affect areas outside the City of Launceston. It could affect siltation at Bell Bay and it would affect flows in the lower reaches of the river. So it is terribly important that the area covers the whole catchment and estuary.

The lack of statutory status I think is terribly important. There is no doubt with the flood authorities at least we could talk on an even playing field with departments. That is necessary as part of any new organisation. There was quite a lot of activity by the State Government in contributions - not financial, but practical. This has been one of the shortcomings of UTRIA and the new flood authority. There is limited active State involvement. It is all right to hand out a few dollars here and there but you need more than that. Given the expertise we have in Tasmania we could do the consulting. They are good enough to consult all around the world but not good enough to consult here. People like that, I think, we should incorporate. We were very lucky with the flood authority. We have senior people in the Hydro, Public Works and in the other organisations. It was a cooperative statewide operation. The State really has a responsibility in this.

Do not try to re-invent the wheel. Give it a bit of grease, perhaps, and change the tyres for different track conditions, but do not try to re-invent it. I am very concerned it does nothing to interrupt the new flood authority. The new flood authority has not made its mark yet but it must be allowed to get on with it and do something practical and get this flood thing under control.

CHAIR - Is that the wheel you are talking about, Jack, the new flood authority?

Dr EDWARDS - Yes.

Mr DEAN - If the single statutory authority was set up, would they have a responsibility and report to that single statutory State authority?

Dr EDWARDS - I would hasten slowly.

Mr DEAN - How would it work?

Dr EDWARDS - If you decided to set up a State authority, it does not need to start tomorrow. Just let it evolve from the flood scheme. Let the flood authority get in and start doing some work in protecting things. Like a sinking ship, stuff a few blankets in the holes against a moderate flood. Do not interrupt what they are trying to do, but it can evolve, I feel. If there is a policy that you are going to have a State statutory authority, there is no great rush to get it going. Let it work in quietly because a lot of the work that flood authority will be doing will automatically flow into that.

The single statutory authority must be allowed to evolve from UTRIA and the flood authority, so just go in quietly. Firstly, it must use all the existing research. There is a wonderful databank of research. You can have paralysis by analysis. You can spend too much time analysing things and you end up doing nothing. I believe that there is a need now. We have some good information and, no doubt, there is need for more, but the first priority is to get things moving based on the research we have done. It needs autonomy and it needs resources, and be instructed as a priority to establish a direction. That is the main thing we need now - a positive direction. This is something that might be an early thing that could be done, perhaps a little bit removed from the flood authority, in saying there is no way we can afford a barrage. There is no way we can do this and this is the direction that all the reports say we should go down so let us concentrate on that, but let us get on with the job. Above all it needs the right people to do it, people who know what they are about.

Mr DEAN - I am interested to ask how it would work. We have the current authority that has just been set up and we then have a statutory authority sitting on top of all of this. Would that new authority that is currently underway have a responsibility to that single statutory authority, because we did not.

Dr EDWARDS - I think it is a pity that this new flood authority was not a statutory authority. That is the crux of it. I still feel that way. It should be a statutory authority.

Mr DEAN - Just one authority, a statutory authority.

Dr EDWARDS - One authority, no other. The concern I have that is if you stay that now the new authority has not had a chance to get in and do anything.

Mr WING - Who should the present authority have been appointed by?

Dr EDWARDS - It should have been appointed the same way as the flood authority and the flood board, by the same company, and it should have had stipulated members. I think it was a good move then that the chairman was the city engineer of Launceston City Council. That meant that the city council took a leading role in it. It is a pity that that has not happened, but it has happened and my feeling is you have to accept things as they are. Let us just get in and fix the flood levees.

CHAIR - On this same point, what do you see as the difference between a flood authority and a statutory authority?

Dr EDWARDS - The statutory authority has the power to come up with the scheme, to go to Parliament, to get approval and then it is free to get in and do the job. Also, it is on a

level playing field with the other State authorities, it can talk on a level field with whoever there is now - Environment and Hydro and everybody else. If something comes up - for example, the Hydro dam - what is the effect of Trevallyn? In my innocence I think if the flood authority as a council authority went along it would not carry as much weight as a statutory authority would.

Mr WING - And no authority outside the city boundary as it is -

Dr EDWARDS - That is the critical thing. For example, up at the North Esk it does not overrule what used to be the DMR might want to do with building a bridge or something but at least it can cooperate with, advise and act as a whole team. Its responsibility is to consider the whole catchment.

Mr DEAN - If I might, Mr Chairman, I accept your position there of one single authority. However, if there is not one single authority, if the Launceston authority as is now set up continues and if one single statutory authority was set up, how do you see the reporting position being? How would it best operate, because the authority now set up is under the Local Government Act with a responsibility to local government, a responsibility to the Launceston City Council? How would you see it operating with the two authorities?

Dr EDWARDS - I do not know, to be quite honest. I wonder whether it would work. I think it would be better to say you are going to have a new authority in 12 months', two years' time and if the flood authority shows their ability, in discussions with the Launceston City Council Flood Authority let it evolve into that, perhaps quietly. If you have good people on this present authority - you might want to put in one or two others - they might say, for example, 'We are concerned about Evandale Saddle. Let's concentrate on that.' I think these things often can evolve if you get the right people, people who are prepared to work together. But as long as you have a direction - the big boss is the good Lord up there. He has to tell when it rains and he is going to tell us about the siltation. We just have to mitigate it because we cannot control it. I mean, man has contributed quite a lot with drainage and sewerage pollution and so on but that is a minor aspect of the whole thing.

Mr WING - In your report and in your evidence you have mentioned that the catchment area for floods is about 15 per cent of the area of Tasmania. You have also made another calculation, I think, about the percentage of the flood catchment area that is outside the Launceston City Council boundaries. Could you put that on the record?

Dr EDWARDS - It is very significant. I think it is about 90 per cent. I think the catchment from Launceston that flows into the Esk rivers and into the head of the Tamar, not further down the river, is probably less than 10 per cent.

Mr WING - Yes. It is clear from your evidence that you favour the single statutory authority being appointed by the State Government so that it has jurisdiction over all the areas that are relevant to both the flood and the siltation problem and the new authority appointed recently has jurisdiction only within the city council boundaries.

Dr EDWARDS - That is as I understand it. When I say 'jurisdiction', it is a cooperative thing. For example, the flood authorities had jurisdiction over the Launceston area but it could not tell the city council what to do. Its act was specific saying they have to plan a

scheme for the protection of Launceston from flooding. They come up with that scheme and report to Parliament and Parliament will say it's okay or it's not. If it's all right they'll give them some money and away they go and Parliament don't want to hear from them until they're finished. That is the way it has to be done.

Mr DEAN - I take it that you mean that that single statutory authority would have responsibility for the levees as well.

Dr EDWARDS - Yes, I am talking about flooding and siltation, they are both part of it. Siltation will increase the flood line but, on the other hand, a decent flood or even a moderate flood will scour some of it out but just how much we do not know. They are the sorts of things that need to be perhaps analysed and have been to a degree.

CHAIR - We saw that interesting newspaper coverage where it flooded a few years ago and sent the silt and mud out into Bass Strait.

Dr EDWARDS - It does not go into Bass Strait, it only goes down about as far as Nelsons Shoal and it oscillates. The whole sequence is that if you get a big flood it carries the silt down, it dumps it on Nelsons Shoal amongst all that beautiful rice grass and that rice grass holds it. Then, in between floods the first of the flood tide is of higher velocity than the first of the ebb tides so that the silt all comes back up the river and that is what has been done for the last 40 years. There is no doubt it's been an uphill battle dredging and I think that what they are doing is the only answer really. They just have not had any floods to help. I think it has been quoted that 12 months of their dredging could be cleared in two or three days by a flood. When we were dredging with the port authority we were dredging something like 250 000 cubic yards to 300 000 cubic yards of silt a year and we were just about holding our own. Then we used to rake when there was a reasonable flood and that would take the silt down to Rosevears but it does not go out. Virtually no silt goes out into Bass Strait.

Mr WING - And then it is washed back in with the stronger incoming tides and the outgoing -

Dr EDWARDS - With the incoming tide it runs off into the river channels down over the mud banks and that is where the rice grass is helping it, and Foster makes a comment about that. The high velocity on the small channel brings it up and dumps it, particularly in the Yacht Basin and then when we get a decent flood it deepens very quickly at the Yacht Basin but it needs to be a flood of - we could never rake under 14 000 cusecs which was a fairly decent flood. You have to have those floods. That is the natural cycle of things and if it does not happen the whole regime of the river will go back to what it was in 1800, which is worse than it is now.

CHAIR - You talked about those in your presentation about the flood flows not being as in the past. Over about the past 40 years we have not had the big amount of flooding. Do you think that the present siltation build-up is new siltation or is it old siltation that is in the river?

Dr EDWARDS - There must be more silt coming down the river than there used to be. Rivers used to be very clear, and they are very clear except at floodtime, and that was the case in my time. Now I notice when they have had a fresh coming down there is

certainly more silt coming down than occurred 40 years ago and that is due to more cropping in the catchment, more forestry. It must all have its effect. The whole Tamar Valley originally came from silt that was carried down over millions of years. That is where the silt has come from. Now, though, we have a valley from Launceston to Rosevears that is 60 feet deep in silt and there is a great trough fault that happened and it is like a big bathtub full of silt. It's like a big blancmange, and it just flows back and forth. You stand in one spot and it pops up in another. It is a very difficult area to work on but you have to work with nature.

Mr WING - So the same silt's been going backwards and forwards for decades?

Dr EDWARDS - It's getting ground finer and finer, and then man's activity working for many years - for 100 years, 150 years - we have poured more sewage into the river, there's drainage and all this. We've reclaimed the mudflats, we've reduced the storage of water up here, we've reduced the flow that is going out and I am not an expert on rivers but I have spent a lot of time on it. I have perhaps taken a more engineering/commonsense attitude to it.

It is a natural cycle and I always said a river is like a small boy; it has a certain amount of energy and if you stop it doing one piece of mischief it will get into another. It needs very specialised people, like this bloke, Foster, who is a master at this. That is what this new authority should be able to do and it's a long-term thing. It needs to go on in perpetuity.

Mr WING - You were a member of the Launceston Flood Protection Authority and the board when that was established in 1960. Could you, for the record, indicate the percentage of funding provided by the then State Government, the Launceston City Council and other bodies?

Dr EDWARDS - I am just talking in round figures here, guessing. The State Government put in 40 per cent, I think, the Launceston City Council put in 40 per cent and the Port Authority put in 20 per cent - something of that order.

Mr WING - I thought it was the State Government 60 per cent, the Launceston City Council 30 per cent.

Dr EDWARDS - I think you are right. The State Government put in more than the Launceston City Council.

Mr WING - I think it was double in those days.

Dr EDWARDS - That was about it. I am sorry, I am getting mixed up with it.

Mr WING - Do you feel that it is still appropriate for the State Government to contribute twice as much as the ratepayers of Launceston for a new statutory authority?

Dr EDWARDS - I think it is. That's a little bit outside my scope. I have a philosophy that money won't keep the water out. It needs physical work to keep the water out and we aren't doing the physical work. There is no use having \$39 million, for example, put

away and allocated for the last two or three years. It is probably now worth about \$30 million, if you tried to get the same amount of work, and virtually nothing has been done.

Mr WING - What would you like to see happening at this stage? What do you think is feasible?

Dr EDWARDS - I would like to see some emergency procedures to stop damage from a moderate flood, just the same as on a sinking ship you don't worry about polishing the brassware, you get stuck in and shove blankets and mattresses in the hole and get back to dry dock. That is what we need to be doing but we're not doing it.

If we get a moderate flood, we could very easily have \$100 million worth of damage.

Mr WING - Do you think it is feasible to do patch-up work now that could be effective?

Dr EDWARDS - Of course it is, yes.

Mr WING - Does it take a long planning time?

Dr EDWARDS - I'd say two good men and a wheelbarrow could fix it.

Mr WING - And the consequences of not doing that now?

Dr EDWARDS - With a moderate flood we could suffer damage. It's New Orleans all over again. We are talking, talking and talking and not doing anything.

Mr WING - What about the design of our flood levees now compared to New Orleans?

Dr EDWARDS - I went to New Orleans in the 1960s and a lot of the flood levees here were based on New Orleans and I have to admit some of them didn't work. But the point is they haven't been upgraded. Never did we expect these levees to stand without constant maintenance because if you build up so far, if you go too far the whole thing will settle. You have to build up very gently and you have to work with nature.

That is why you need a long-term authority with statutory powers to get in and perhaps be able to say to what used to be the DMR that when you are building a road there, make sure you do this or do that or use as a levy or that sort of thing. It needs a cooperative approach.

Mr WING - Thank you.

Mr DEAN - I have two questions, Mr Chairman. First of all, I want to go back, if I can, and revisit the position of the authority that is currently in place and if a single statutory authority was put into place on top of that. That local authority that now is in place could report to the single statutory authority, and the single statutory authority would then take responsibility for assuring that those things were accomplished?

Dr EDWARDS - That's more paperwork, to my way of thinking; it's another step. I can see it working; if you decide on a basic direction, we must cover the whole catchment, it must be a statutory authority and it must work with the present authority. The present

authority hasn't got the time to put its legs under the table yet. Let's see how they go under the joint venture arrangement. Sir Arvi Parvo was a very strong businessman and chairman of BHP at one stage. I can remember talking to him about joint ventures and he said, 'Joint ventures don't work in this State' so he didn't want to do it. That's what this needs to do, it needs to be a cooperative thing, and the State Government has to do more than just hand out money, it's got to show a bit of will too, that it's got a responsibility for this.

Mr DEAN - If a single statutory authority was set up, who do you believe should be part of that authority? How should that authority be made up constitutionally?

Dr EDWARDS - The city council, I believe, must play a very prominent role in it because it is the recipient of all the knowledge. But a lot of it is horses for courses; it depends what you're doing. If it's going to affect forestry, for example, then I think you'd probably want somebody from the forestry on it. It could be flexible. It was flexible with the flood authority when we did design work; we had the chief investigations engineer from Hydro on it. He made a wonderful contribution, tangible and intangible, but then when the design was finished, the investigation was finished and he went off I think the Rivers and Water Supply Commission representative came on who again contributed to the construction side. So again, it's horses for courses. If the whole problem is dredging, you pick somebody who's got a bit of dredging experience and knowledge.

Mr DEAN - And obviously representation from all the local governments that could be involved.

Dr EDWARDS - Not too many. I don't think you want more than four or five people who can get down and do something.

Mr DEAN - A small authority -

Dr EDWARDS - Yes.

Mr DEAN - with the power and the ability to get things done?

Dr EDWARDS - Yes.

CHAIR - And the funding.

Mr DEAN - And the funding. Well, it's getting the funding.

Dr EDWARDS - I've always found that if you know where you're going and you've got a good argument, the funding comes like that but you can't fix the problem just by dollar bills; you've got to know where you're going. The direction is important. Unless you get in and do something, everybody's got a solution. You've got to get a direction from people who know what they're doing and I come back to Foster. If you haven't read that report, you read it, it's pretty good evidence; it's not technical. But you need a direction to go and to get in and do it.

CHAIR - Jack, thanks very much. We have run out of time on that, but it was very informative and we appreciate very much the time you took to come and appear before us.

Dr EDWARDS - Thank you.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.

Mr FRANK DIXON, GENERAL MANAGER, AND **Mr ALBERT VAN ZETTEN**, MAYOR, LAUNCESTON CITY COUNCIL, WERE SWORN, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Finch) - Thank you, gentlemen, for your submission. We will give you the opportunity now to speak to your submission and then we will ask questions.

Mr VAN ZETTEN - Obviously our submission is fairly self-explanatory so we won't go through that. We believe it is unfair, and it has been unfair for quite a while, that the Launceston City Council feels the full brunt financially and otherwise, but financially obviously is a big consideration, for the obligation to deal with the Tamar River when, as we are all aware, while the estuary is definitely near Launceston, the Launceston City Council is not responsible for the river as such. I believe rivers are a State issue and therefore the State should take a big part in that. We are also aware that with the silt and flooding, the water coming through and down into the Tamar River, the estuary where we are situated, comes from a large area way outside of the Launceston City Council's responsibilities and area and therefore we believe clearly that it is a State Government responsibility. We are very supportive of a State Government authority for those reasons, to ensure that we can get the best outcome for the long term for the Tamar River, heading into the future. While council has over many years been willing to take the lead and we will continue to be involved - we want to be involved because we know it is an important part - we should not be the main drivers all the time, having all the responsibility for the river estuary.

Mr DIXON - In looking at the submission that we have provided, I might point to a couple of key facts that we need to consider. I have highlighted some sections. On the first page are some really important statistics. The Tamar estuary and Esk River's catchment is some 10 000 square kilometres - 14 per cent of Tasmania. When you keep in mind the Launceston City Council's boundaries, we occupy only 14 per cent of the catchment, so I think that is a very relevant issue in terms of consideration of whole-of-catchment issues. The other point that we make is that - and I guess that is why there have been heightened anxieties - we previously might have turned our back on our rivers but now we are very much rediscovering our rivers and are wanting to open them up and see them as an important part of Launceston, the region, tourism and all of those sorts of things.

The mayor has spoken about the problem being much larger than any one council could possibly deal with. We know that the issues that we confront here in Launceston in the upper Tamar area are not issues of Launceston's making. They are issues that go well beyond the municipality's boundaries and therefore that simple, single issue alone indicates that it shouldn't be Launceston City Council that bears the brunt of having to resolve those issues. The mayor has talked about the fact that there is no one single organisation that manages the whole of catchment and unless you manage the whole of catchment, there is no way that you can collectively deal with solutions. You also have absolutely no certainty whatsoever that there is guarantee in terms of a funding source. It is very much scattergun in terms of the current approach to funding the solving of the problems associated with such things as siltation and flood risk.

There is a point we make lower down that page, 'Why has Launceston City Council played the role that it has up until now and is continuing to do?' We are the organisation

that is the closest to the people and, whether or not it is fair that we should have carried on this role, we have done it. At no stage in the past or going forward does Launceston City Council say it has no responsibility. It is really a question of getting others to take their fair level of responsibility.

There are some fantastic programs that have been undertaken in the past and are being undertaken now to deal with a number of the problems that we have within the whole estuary. I need to make particular reference to the Tamar Estuary and Esk River, or TEER, program which is very much a cooperative effort between the various councils within the catchment and the State Government and is going to give us some vital information to advise on whole-of-catchment solutions to some of the river-quality issues, which is great but once you have the information then what do you do with it and who takes responsibility for it? Those are the questions that are unanswered at this particular stage.

You will also be aware that due to substantial community concern and because the council does feel it has a level of responsibility, the council has taken the responsibility to engage a siltation study. We have said we need to draw our breath and hear from a whole range of people in terms of what they see as solutions to the challenges of sedimentation build-up in the upper Tamar, with a view to saying: is the current regime the right to go or are there alternative regimes? Certainly the council has taken on the responsibility to conduct the study but it should not necessarily be the council that is responsible for implementing whatever is the recommended way forward dealing with that.

We then go on to talk about some of the levels of funding that the Launceston City Council provides; first of all an absolute indication of council's bona fides that it has been prepared to play its role in funding the challenges. You note in there a total figure in terms of the annual maintenance costs of that, \$562 000, our commitment to the \$13 million on the flood levee upgrade program and a one-off contribution of \$750 000, and then you see when you go further down we contribute \$100 000 annually to Tamar NRM that deals with the catchment issues and another \$30 000 towards this TEER program. So it is certainly a substantial contribution from the Launceston City Council and as the Mayor says, fair is fair. We deal with a very, very small part of the overall catchment and we carry the major burden of costs associated with remediation.

There has been reference to, I heard previously, the Launceston Flood Authority and certainly we have agreed to enter into the establishment of that flood authority established under the Local Government Act which ultimately, again, places the responsibility with the Launceston City Council. Whilst you have a flood authority that funds the authority and to the extent that you do not have commitment from other bodies, ultimately it is Launceston City Council's responsibility. It was the subject of an agreement that does relate to State and Federal funding for the levee rebuilding program but it is certainly our view, as the Mayor has indicated, that we see there is a better way for it to be done. Within the terms of reference of this committee, something that is a broader authority that has State Government ownership and overall responsibility is certainly a much better way to go so that we can ensure we adequately manage the whole catchment.

CHAIR - Thanks very much for that, Frank.

Mr WING - Would it be fair to say, summarising your evidence, that the City of Launceston feels that the State Government needs to have a major change of attitude towards the estuary and river problems, to show the main leadership and to take the main responsibility for solving the problems which come from outside the city council boundaries and are deposited within the boundaries in terms of flooding and silt?

Mr DIXON - I think that is a fair statement. As I said before, I believe the river is a State issue anyway, it belongs to the State not to the council, so they should have that responsibility and should be more than willing also with the catchment area. Either that or you amalgamate councils.

Mr WING - They are the only body that has authority for the whole area, which causes the problem.

Mr DIXON - They are the only one that could possibly have management control over the entire patch.

Mr DEAN - You have said that there should be a single authority controlling the lot. If the State were to go down the track of putting in a single statutory authority, could it work with the current Launceston Flood Authority? Can you see that as being a workable position?

Mr VAN ZETTEN - I think the two would work hand in hand; they would have to work together. I think it would be the one authority having the same responsibility -

Mr DEAN - I am not saying that is the best model.

Mr VAN ZETTEN - No, I am just saying that of course it could work. I am not for setting up a flood authority and then having another statutory authority. I would rather see the one, rather than have duplications. You get the key group of people who are the experts in their area and who can handle that. I think they should be able to handle both together very well.

Mr DEAN - If that single authority was set up, who do you think should make up that authority and, roughly, the numbers that ought to be on it?

Mr VAN ZETTEN - I am probably a little bit like Jack Edwards on that - smaller, within reason. I think seven. He was saying five. I think about seven is probably a good number for an authority. I think there definitely needs to be a representative from the Government on it. That is the difficulty I have now in that the Government sets up a flood authority but they want no responsibility and no part of it in any way, shape or form. I believe they should have a representative on there and then it should definitely be experts in the fields who should be on their committee, supported by somebody from council to have that balance.

Mr DIXON - Certainly Launceston City Council having representation is something that we would support because we do know we have a role.

Mr DEAN - If there is no single authority set up and no further funding from the State Government in relation to this, is there a calculation on what the costs could be against a ratepayer in Launceston to maintain this, to provide for siltation removal et cetera?

Mr VAN ZETTEN - No, we cannot do that yet because we do not know the extent of our study as to what the solutions are going to be and how much we are going need to have a solution. To maintain it as it is, is not adequate. We all know that. That is not the large expense. To me, the expense is going to the long-term plans to deal with this issue and that is where we have not done those exercises.

Mr DIXON - The other comment that I would make, as general manager responsible for advising council in terms of being financially sustainable, is that you ultimately operate within your means. There may be a gap between what you might like to do and what you are able to do. It is not a question of passing everything onto the ratepayer. I would not recommend doing that.

Mr DEAN - So to simply maintain the level that you capable of maintaining may not be the level that is necessary in all of the circumstances and may not provide full protection and all the other things that are necessary?

Mr DIXON - Correct. Under the current provision in terms of both siltation management and flood management, the body that takes the ultimate risk is Launceston City Council. Any additional costs at the moment are borne by Launceston City Council. The council needs to make a decision about what it can afford to do.

Mr DEAN - If things go wrong, in the way it currently is the Launceston City Council will be the one that will have all the blame levelled at it?

Mr VAN ZETTEN - It would definitely get the blame. We know that because we are close to the people. That is why the petition comes to us; it does not go to a State government.

Mr DIXON - I am not certain that is the case. I am aware because I do hear lots of comments from people saying that others need to take their fair share of responsibility in all of this. I do not hear currently that if there is a shortfall then necessarily Launceston City Council would be held accountable.

Mr VAN ZETTEN - But if they do not come in on the support then we will be blamed, because we are closest to the people. The Premier has made a commitment that, once we complete our study, he will support us in trying to get some State funding as well as Federal funding to help us with the solution. He is waiting to see what the results of our study are for the silt side of things. He has made that commitment and we will hold him to that commitment.

Mr DEAN - Obviously you see this as a matter that should be sorted out very quickly.

Mr VAN ZETTEN - Yes, very quickly.

CHAIR - I realise it is difficult with your flood protection authority. I imagine it has been a difficult process to select the right personnel to be on that authority. It has been over a period of time that you have taken to make those decisions. Do you have any time lines

now, an understanding of how long it is going to take for their work maybe to get nearer to conclusion? Do you have a conclusion in respect of the work it needs to do?

Mr VAN ZETTEN - They tell me five to six years. The work has started now; the meetings and getting the contractors have started. The building of the levees won't start until April or May next year.

Mr DIXON - There's something I need to address because it was mentioned in the previous discussion. The authority undertakes work on two levels. It has the strategic work it needs to do in rebuilding the levees and managing siltation, but it also has responsibility for maintenance programs. I think what might have been missed is that the council, previously by itself but now through the authority - but obviously the funding comes from the council - undertakes maintenance work as it goes along and does do remediation works. It is a cost-benefit analysis. You can't put a lot of money into remediation at the same time as you need to do major reconstruction works. It would be wrong to say that nothing is happening. In fact, a significant amount is happening in terms of remediation projects, repairing small sections and areas where there are perforations in the levee walls. So there are some works being undertaken. Will there be no protection until we finish the levees? That is not the case. We know there is substantial risk of inundation in the event of even, say, a one in 50-year flood, which is why we need to proceed with these works. Remediation works take place at the same time.

CHAIR - I was just trying to get an understanding of any sort of time lines you might have set in respect to the work that needs to be done by the authority.

Mr DIXON - It is probably within the next five years. It has only ended in terms of the responsibility of the authority. In terms of the specific project, which is the levee rebuilding program, it is within about the next five years that the project would be completed.

CHAIR - If this single statutory authority is the recommendation that comes out of these investigations, what are your thoughts on this flood authority being morphed into that statutory authority?

Mr DIXON - It makes sense.

Mr WING - It is encouraging to hear that the present Premier is showing some interest and preparedness to look at increased funding, which is appropriate. Would it be fair to say that previously the State Government has in negotiations obviously attempted to get out of these problems as cheaply as possible? Do you have that feeling?

Mr DIXON - The agreement we have entered into is an agreement. The last thing we want to do is play the blame game - the State could have done more or someone else could have done more. The most important thing is the good news, that we have three levels of government committed to rebuilding the levees and we have an agreement in place that at the very least has the State Government contributing in the long-term. Could things be done better going forward? Yes. Do we need to go back and talk about trying to get out of things in the past? I don't think it is helpful.

Mr WING - I have no doubt the city council negotiated the best possible deal but what I am asking you realistically is that it appears fairly evident that the State Government got out of that as cheaply as possible and is not contributing to the extent that we now agree is enough. From all the evidence this morning the State Government should have the major role. It certainly has not shown the major role when it is requiring the ratepayers of Launceston to contribute the same amount that it is contributing and the Federal Government is contributing. Is it not evident that the State Government in the negotiations tried to get out as cheaply as possible rather than looking at the problem and saying, 'We have the major responsibility. We are going to set the lead and we will contribute more.'? Isn't that the reality?

Mr DIXON - I am not willing to comment on motivation because I do not think I am in a position to talk about what the State's motivation was, whether it was trying to get out of things cheaply or otherwise. Ultimately we came to agreement on a solution. What I am saying on behalf of council is that the State should be prepared to carry more of the risk -

Mr WING - And financial responsibility?

Mr DIXON - and financial responsibility, and with it comes the financial risk.

Mr WING - I think you have really answered my question.

Mr DEAN - I smiled all the way through that process, having been a big part of those negotiations, and I know how damned hard it was getting to where we got.

Mr WING - It is a very courteous response.

Mr DEAN - It was not easy.

Just on the make-up of that authority, you have given the Chairman an answer there. So you are saying it should a relatively small number, six or seven you have identified. Do you see a need for representation from the other councils that are involved in this whole catchment area?

Mr VAN ZETTEN - No, I do not.

Mr DEAN - Inasmuch as some of the problems arise from their areas?

Mr VAN ZETTEN - No, because you are going to end up with a very big committee, a lot of mayors or representatives from local government and that is not what the committee should be about. You really need people who are experts in the field who know the engineering, the flood risk, the siltation. They are expert areas and we need those sorts of people to work together and come up with a very good -

Mr DEAN - This will be a matter if they go down that track, quite obviously.

Mr DIXON - Just further to that, whilst you can have an overarching authority, there are other mechanisms for engaging people who need to be involved and the TEER program and NRM, which has the membership of all the councils, are mechanisms where you can be delivering programs and have accountability to the authority so that you do actually

engage and involve all of the players who need to be involved but they do not need to all sit around the table.

Mr DEAN - It might be worth having on *Hansard* as well, regarding the original agreement that was in place between the State Government and the Launceston City Council in relation to the levees, as I understand it there was a requirement of the State Government to maintain fully levees in the Launceston City Council area?

Mr DIXON - That is correct.

Mr DEAN - As a result of the new process moving forward, that agreement has been withdrawn?

Mr DIXON - There is a new agreement that has replaced the previous one.

Mr DEAN - It is on *Hansard*.

Mr DIXON - That is right.

CHAIR - Just on that subject, regarding the establishment of an authority, if it is approved, if that is our recommendation, that is the difficult part, is it not, getting the right ingredients to make up the authority? As you have probably witnessed with the process of the Flood Protection Authority, it is who is available, who is willing to participate and how the people should be in respect to their qualifications and commitment to the project.

Mr DIXON - That is correct.

Mr WING - It is interesting looking at the statistics on page 1 of your submission that the catchment area is over an area of 10 000 square kilometres representing 14 per cent of Tasmania and the Launceston administrative boundary has an area of 1 400 square kilometres or just 14 per cent of the size of the catchment - two lots of 14 per cent in different areas. It may be - and I just invite your comment - that in view of that 14 per cent it would be appropriate for the city council to provide no more than 14 per cent of the cost of trying to rectify the river estuary problems and the State Government 86 per cent, less anything it may be able to recover from the Federal Government. Would that be reasonable?

Mr VAN ZETTEN - If you are going to do that then surely you would have to look at other councils as well. Why aren't other councils putting in?

Mr WING - That is for the State Government to determine, isn't it.

Mr VAN ZETTEN - I am just saying if it is 14 per cent in our area and so much in other areas, you can split it up that way, if you wanted to. I think that's really for the State Government to sort out. But yes to us having less involvement.

Mr DIXON - Regardless of who pays the balance, there's some logic behind your reasoning there.

CHAIR - Just a couple of acronyms for the benefit of *Hansard*: the TEER program is the Tamar Estuary and Esk Rivers program and UTRIA, which I think may have received a mention already, is the Upper Tamar River Improvement Authority.

I would like to thank you very much for taking the time to come and be part of this process. Hopefully we will bring forward some recommendations that you may be in agreement with. We can't promise many.

Laughter.

Mr VAN ZETTEN - I was hoping you could promise something. It's a pleasure because we believe it is very important for the region. And it's not just for Launceston City Council, it is for the region. I want to stress that because it is the whole region. People come from Riverside, the West Tamar and all over - from Prospect and down - and use the facility, and it's good that we can get it right for the region.

CHAIR - And people in the catchment areas, of course, who live and work in those areas who have an impact on what we do here as well.

Mr VAN ZETTEN - They're not as bad because their rubbish comes down to us, it doesn't go back to them.

CHAIR - Thanks again for your contribution.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.

Mr LAURIE CRERAR WAS CALLED AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Finch) - Welcome, Laurie. Feel free to address the committee and then we will ask questions.

Mr CRERAR - There are factors that have led up to where we are now. I still have weekly contact with past members of the Tamar Estuary Working Group, people like Dr Owen Ingles and Ian Routley. The key points are the following. Government departments within Launceston and particularly Henty House have lost staff who have not been replaced; this is in the last 10 years.

CHAIR - When you say in Henty House, do you mean government bodies, government agencies?

Mr CRERAR - Yes; agencies which are helping with river matters and planning matters. Both the Lennon and Bacon regimes have seen what appears to be withdrawal of government services and ostracising community support. The partnership agreements with State and local governments may be one cause of this ostracising. Local government was saying, within certain sectors over the last 10 years, that there were too many river groups. These are the facts as we know them to be. Since the mid to late 1990s and the success of the Tamar River environs projects not much has occurred - in fact zilch - to follow up the \$4.5 million establishment of the pontoons, Tamar Island, the walkways and the interpretation set-up. For example, Ramsar, the worldwide accreditation for wetlands, has not been followed through. We have a Kakadu within 10 minutes of the city and what are we doing about it? That has become a jewel. If you look at the visitors book run by the volunteers at Tamar Island some of those remarks in that book are exemplary. It blows me away every time I go in there and I read it, which I do probably once a quarter.

The Tamar River Festival was conducted by Russell Reid and the Northern Region Development Board. There was an ABC commentator of the year, I think he was called, who conducted public relations and led the charge in commentary and the sky rockets that went off and the opening of the pontoons. If you look at that era when the Tamar River Festival was running it seemed to glue the community together. Now there was all sorts of criticism as to whether it was the right time of the year or whatever, nonetheless it seemed to glue the river and the passions and things together. So I am raising this because we seem to have come unstuck.

Mr DEAN - Could I ask Laurie to give a little bit more information to the committee about this company and the organisation and so as background?

Mr CRERAR - I only have a couple of points to go.

CHAIR - Yes, and then we will come back to that.

Mr CRERAR - The overall score from the State Government and its agencies for environmental management within what we call the greater catchment area from St Marys to the Great Western Tiers to Kelso is two out of 10. Launceston council may be outside its core business but it seems to have stepped in to assist the State

Government. Its score is possibly seven or eight out of 10, but is it core business? One major question we might ask ourselves, finally, is: why has there been so much community opposition to the pulp mill? Answer: it goes against the pride and values that the Tamar provides to its many river-reached communities. Even Mr Lennon admitted on television during the upper House inquiry that probably the Tamar site was wrong. That is just the few points that I wrote out pre breakfast and I will put that in writing and pass that on.

CHAIR - Laurie, I will make a point there - and I think did as you were presenting your evidence - about there being too many river groups. Was that a good thing or a bad thing? Did that reflect just the love that people have for and the concern that they have about the welfare of the river, and probably that you can't have too many groups interested?

Mr CRERAR - I think it's a valid point because if your committee is going to consider a proposed structure, our considered view is that part of that structure should have a strong community depth to it and its regional positioning from St Marys to Great Western Tiers to Kelso will be the success of getting the structure right so you get a hands-on approach.

I think that we're scared about creating another quango, if you like, from a government point of view, but if that structure of a proposed authority is going to go back to basics and go into involved community groups, like the Landcare groups, it's because Canberra has changed that methodology of funding groups that the whole thing has fallen into a trough. Landcare was probably one of the greatest environmental advantages that this country had, nationally, and because of its funding implications, Canberra changed it to the new beaut resource management structures and if you look at the phraseology that went with resource management, it basically appears to be very heavy. I think some of that has lost its community agenda.

One good example of a community group still doing fantastic things in the Tamar is the Bonny Beach group. I think they are still operating as a Landcare group but Bonny Beach is probably one of the real jewels in the Tamar and beach restoration is one of those projects that were in the report for the Tamar environs. There has been no advancement to beach and foreshore reclamation at all - none in the last 10 years.

If you were a yachting or a boat person, where's the water, where's the toilets on selected pontoons? There are none. Part of this amenity aspect of having river systems like we have in this greater catchment area is the amenity facility, whether it's fishing or boating or whatever, or just going down by the riverbank, that Tasmanians are very proud of and it's the amenity aspect where the communities can help.

Mr DEAN - That wouldn't be a responsibility, would it, of a single statutory authority, if we had, one to provide all those things?

Mr CRERAR - No, but if they have an arm that engages the community, Ivan, it may well be that through working groups and projects they can help develop zones and foreshore, the riparian zones we talk about, but we haven't practised riparian zones, full stop. We have had this 20:20 vision plan for the last six years and basically nothing has happened.

Mr DEAN - Laurie, I think it is very useful for the committee and those reading to know something of your background in this area, just to establish your professionalism in this area that you're talking about.

Mr CRERAR - You want a little bit of my background, how I got involved in the river and so on?

Mr DEAN - Yes, and your expertise in that area, just for the purposes of *Hansard*.

Mr CRERAR - I still have a flame from when I first saw the Tamar in 1963 coming from Victoria, particularly coming from areas such as Preston and Collingwood where I was raised and educated. I drove down Muddy Creek hill and saw the Tamar for the first time and I have never lost that vision nor the passion. Driving along Rosevears Boulevard with my girlfriend's grandparents who lived at Gravelly Beach I felt as though I was driving through the boulevard at Kew. It was millionaire status. That is what I felt and I have never lost that feeling. We used to fish on the jetties, particularly Blackwall and Gravelly in the holidays and then in 1996 we settled in Riverside.

Mr DEAN - Do you have any professional background in it or is it just a personal position?

Mr CRERAR - My professional background is risk management in insurance. That involved running the Royal Insurance Group's engineering department. We did particular things in surveys for all sorts of industry groups, contingency planning, machinery breakdown, boiler explosion and loss-of-profits insurance. That is my professional background. My community background was through Apex, starting in the Trescott community centre, forming Friends of the Tamar to save Blackwall jetty.

CHAIR - Your fishing spot?

Mr CRERAR - Yes. My father-in-law said, 'You've done a lot of things, but what are you going to do about saving the jetty that I fish off?' We went to the Robin Gray Government and met Frank Madill. John Ramsay was there, who is better known as 'Rambo' in public service sectors, and he was there to protect Frank Madill. We gave him what-ho, but from that night on we became friends, and we are still friends. I have an enormous regard for the Government of that day that allowed us to have an input. We seemed to be at war with the port authority because we weren't happy with their withdrawal out of Launceston and they didn't do any rehabilitation on their withdrawal. They were pulling the jetties down and even burning some of them. From 26 jetties that used to be in the Tamar, if you look at its history, we went to zilch.

Working closely with local people, such as Graeme Beams, the West Tamar Council, John Ramsay helped to form that Tamar Estuary Working Group. That ran for about 12 years. It probably ran its day when the Federal Government changed that Landcare structure that I was talking about before. The State Government gave us the secretarial support and the moral support to create this estuary working group, which then went to the consultant - Trevor Budge - in Victoria and Budge drew up the Tamar River environs projects. If you are looking at the big picture, as your committee is, one of those things that you could model is what happened. How did the Budge report get to spending \$4.5 million on the Tamar's biggest environmental project? So if your committee can look at that as an example and say, 'How can we structure something for this great

catchment area?' then it might just well help your committee members look at that success. Because in the last 100 years that model - we will call it the Tamar River Environs Project - has probably had more success than any other.

CHAIR - Laurie, you mentioned something earlier about a community representative on the authority. Do you see that being necessary or could it be that the authority, if established, could in fact consult with the community and make sure they are in touch with the community through a body that might be established - Friends of the Tamar or something similar.

Mr CRERAR - It is a very good point because if you look at a proposed structure that your committee would be looking at it would be to have an umbrella structure of all the government agencies that exist at the moment. But within those government agencies you would have an arm. I could give you an example. We are saying to Launceston Council and NRM North at the moment, 'Where is the baseline study of sedimentation influences?'. It does not exist. We are talking about the examination of sedimentation: how it is made up; is it clay and silica together or is it different parts from different areas in the catchment? Is the zone from St Marys to the Great Western Tiers to Kelso the right zone? If we monitor those zones you could well have community representatives or groups being part of this umbrella - say, a catchment authority - and they could help with simple monitoring. That happens in the wet season and happens in the dry season, so we have this baseline study. At the moment we have nothing for the next generation or even the second generation coming through that says, 'This is where the sedimentation is coming from'. We have nothing. We have guessing. With global warming and the lack of flushing in those streams and upper estuaries we have more sedimentation influences. When we get some heavy rain this place could be shut off completely.

CHAIR - On this point do you think there is the opportunity with the TEER program - that is the Tamar Estuary and Esk Rivers program - and the NRM for people from the community to be involved with the health of the Tamar and the environment?

Mr CRERAR - I think their structure at the moment is bigger than Ben Hur because it has all the local government and all the government agencies but I see very little community representation in that structure. They have probably done it for a reason - to get going, to basically give it some clout, if you like - a government oomph. But I do not see much oomph coming from the community. There is one other thing: why has the Launceston council put its hand up to be doing things that probably the State and Federal Government should be doing?

Mr DEAN - That's a good question that's already been discussed. You were talking about sedimentation studies and really there has not been a lot done on that. You'd be aware that the Launceston City Council was currently undertaking sedimentation studies. They have engaged an organisation to undertake those studies, with some funding from the State Government and so on. So that is all being done. There have been previous studies on sedimentation as well, so I don't think it is fair to say nothing has been done on that. There has been a lot of work done on it and more work is being done to establish all of that. Do you agree with that or not?

Mr CRERAR - I think if you look at the scope - and we've got a copy of that scope that Geoff Brayford wrote - there's nothing wrong with the scope of the proposed study.

Mr DEAN - This is outside of the TEER program.

Mr CRERAR - We have a particular feeling that the consultants are probably not the right consultants for that study. That's just off the record, if you like.

Mr DEAN - It is on the record.

Mr CRERAR - All right; well I don't mind either way. I am here to speak the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. We would probably say of the consultant chosen for \$460 000 that we would expect more to be done for that money. If you look at the comparison, NRM are spending \$260 000, so \$460 000 is an awful lot of money and we still don't see the baseline study that the community needs within this greater catchment. It is not probably going to produce what we really need for the next two generations.

Mr DEAN - I don't necessarily subscribe to your comment, but I'm not going to get into an argument with it.

Mr CRERAR - I'm not being critical; I'm just saying there seems to be two different directions with those two studies. There is one line of opinion that's saying that the sedimentation is coming from the middle reaches of the Tamar, and we're saying you can't say that without doing a big baseline study over 12 months to determine where it's coming from. If we're right and some consultants are supposedly going to do a quick fix - that might be a term that some would use - then we don't want a quick fix.

Mr DEAN - You support, I think, the single statutory authority. That is something that a single statutory authority would focus on if it was set up and if it got control of the whole area and so on. It would be working with all of those organisations and would be taking from the Launceston City Council what it has already done to establish whether more needs to be done. I think that's what an authority would do.

Currently we have the Launceston Flood Authority, which is set up under the Local Government Act, and that is operative as of now. It was only put in place very recently, so I think they are organising themselves now and getting their meetings organised. Do you think that could work in tandem with the single statutory authority or do you believe there should be one authority taking control of the lot?

Mr CRERAR - I think the flood authority on behalf of the city council is a very prudent move because of the liability factors and other factors from a governance point of view. I don't see anything wrong there, so we fully support that. What is appearing to be lacking at the moment is that the State Government, because of the size of this greater catchment, should be involved in these studies, but they are not. Again, the council and NRM in a way are letting them off the hook.

Mr DEAN - I am sorry, the State Government are involved. The State Government have made a contribution to the current study that's being undertaken. They have made a contribution, the Federal Government declined, as you probably might recall from the press release.

Mr CRERAR - Well, that's fair enough, but where's the technical expertise? Here am I, what you might call an average person, listening to people whom I respect like Dr Owen Ingles and he is saying, 'Be very careful about these baseline studies because what we need is this sampling from a chemist.' The CSIRO soils division have a specialised scientific arm who can help with that. The monitoring that needs to be done, if you are talking about the greater catchment area, is going to involve sampling between the wet and the dry season. So that is over a period of 12 months. We do not see any evidence of that anywhere in these two briefs that sampling has to be done for that length of time. Therefore, we are going to get a short fix, not a long fix.

CHAIR - Did Professor Foster's report cover some of the issues that you are talking about?

Mr CRERAR - Not in this area that I have just spoken about. That comes from Owen and he is the person that I respect enormously. He is 85 years of age. He is on the Flood Authority board. He has an ethical approach and he is very concerned about this long-term baseline study and that, in fact, we are going to get a short-term solution.

CHAIR - Have you made a submission to the GHD studies?

Mr CRERAR - I have written to the Premier's office talking about our concerns. I have had a letter back from Michelle O'Byrne saying they will follow it up, but nothing has happened yet.

Our real concern is that we have a barrow load of reports. If you look at Geoff Brayford's study for the council, you have paid a lot of money out for other consultants who have added to the Foster reports. What has come out of those in this area of sedimentation is that it still has not occurred and we still do have that real baseline that the community needs.

There is one other aspect that your committee is probably going to stumble on. When you get into the sedimentation controls that are probably necessary to help this city from silting up, what are you going to do about riparian reserves in forestry coupes?

CHAIR - That is not a decision of this committee. That is not part of our terms of reference.

Mr CRERAR - No, I know. If you look at that landslip at the Great Western Tiers six or seven years ago, the yellow clay came through the South Esk and into the Tamar. That was a really good indication of how this catchment is affected by sedimentation from within the catchment area.

Mr DEAN - Are you telling us that a single statutory authority would be in the best place to undertake all of these things and ensure they are done, rather than what we currently have in place?

Mr CRERAR - The simple answer is yes. But that authority needs to be an umbrella authority so it groups the rivers and waters, the Esk Water Authority and councils, but more importantly it groups the community in a way that fashions a Landcare approach, if you like, to working within the catchment framework. I think Landcare is a very good example because if you speak to anyone in environmental area it was highly successful in the hands-on things.

Mr DEAN - You are satisfied with the current authority, the Launceston Flood Authority, and I think you were saying there is a real place for that as well. I think you mentioned liability issues in that area. How would you see that authority working with a single State statutory authority, if that was set up? How do you think the two would work? Could they work together in tandem, one reporting to other? Obviously the Launceston Flood Authority would be reporting to the single statutory authority. How would you see the best model there? Or should the Launceston Flood Authority be disbanded and the one single authority take it over and do it all?

Mr CRERAR - It is a very big question, Ivan, and it has some implications for the structure of the Launceston council. I think before you even decide what way the structure could be incorporated, Launceston council has to own up. Have they done too much in the past on behalf of the State Government and do they want that to continue? I would be reluctant to load the Launceston council up any more in the areas of these catchment things because I think they have gone away from core business already. The TasPorts authority have access to dredgers and work boats. When there is a flush of water they can bring a work boat up and use it with what they call a buck rake on the stern which they used to do when they were operating out of Launceston as a port. I think they shouldn't just be at Bell Bay. What is Launceston's port definition? It still has the sink lift which you guys helped save in the upper House when we came to you some years ago with previous members to keep that functioning because it was a vital marine service for the City of Launceston and the contractors that worked there.

It still has a port definition in our eyes. It is a service port. It services some of the biggest work vessels in the world and if you take the Tide Company that is operating out of Norway, they service all the big oil rigs and they have vessels that can pump cement down when they have a casing or a fire or an explosion. These vessels are serviced here. What are we going to do about that? Within that authority that you are proposing, what are you going to say? Is Launceston just for seaport people, for yachties, for rowers? You have a marine division, if you like, in serviceability in Launceston and at the moment you have a dredging operator who runs that facility and is also dredging on behalf of the Launceston council. Is that really the way the community wants it?

I think the community would question that the dredging is not necessarily Launceston council's responsibility. If you ran a census I am sure that the ratepayers of Launceston would probably say, 'It's costing us too much. We seem to be burdened with ongoing costs', and you only have to look at that silt pond reshaping that on the West Tamar side. Before you talk about resetting the new flood authority, Ivan, I think that someone has to look at the big picture and say, 'Okay, Launceston council is doing this on behalf of the State Government, is that the right way to go? And are ratepayers being loaded up with some of the costs?'

If you look at that little suction dredge, it is a peashooter. If you look at the big cutting dredges that used to operate in the Launceston area, we have had this problem ever since early settlement. The whole Invermay flood plain is a delta; it is part of the sedimentation influences over millions of years. That flood plain at Invermay goes in big wave patterns and some of those holes are over 120-feet deep.

I think Launceston's flood committee has to question whether we can afford to keep maintaining the flood protection system around Launceston when we have these big pockets 120-feet deep because those walls keep sinking with the sheer weight.

CHAIR - Laurie, in conclusion, would you like to say something in respect of this proposition that we have in the reference that a single statutory authority be established to look after the Tamar environs and the catchment areas?

Mr CRERAR - I think it is a step in the right direction but its structure would need to be very widely canvassed. If you look at the number of government agencies that are in the arena at the moment there does appear to be a need for an umbrella type of organisation that can help bring them altogether. At the moment you would not say it is a dog's breakfast but it is probably a dog's morning tea, whatever that might be.

Laughter.

CHAIR - TEER is giving the opportunity to a lot of representatives of the community, isn't it?

Mr CRERAR - I think cohesion is the answer. Cohesion is the operative word. There does appear to be a need for a more cohesive structure within the greater catchment area. How are you going to define your boundaries for the catchment? These are all things that no doubt the authority looks at but particularly for global warming and factors like forestry, agriculture, influences coming into the city precinct, it is not just the Launceston council's problem. Even though I think George Town, West Tamar and the ports are still helping to fund that program, what about Forestry; why aren't they funding part of it? That is why you need the baseline study. You could probably get a better funding program if you knew where the sedimentation was coming from or the influences of it.

CHAIR - We are starting to travel over previous evidence that you have given. We need to conclude now, if you do not mind, and, on behalf of the committee, thanks very much for coming in and taking the time.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.

Mr MACKAY KIDD WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Finch) - Mac, good morning and welcome. Thanks for taking the time to come in and give evidence. You understand the terms of our reference, I am assuming, about a single statutory authority. It would be a good thing to be established to look after the Tamar estuary and the catchment areas. Would you like to make a presentation to us first and then we will ask questions after?

Mr KIDD - As I told Don when the letter came, I never wanted to make any written statements or anything like that, but I was willing to give my views on the river.

CHAIR - We appreciate that.

Mr KIDD - When you say it wants one body to run it, of course the past everyone wanted to run it when there were already people running it. I'm only talking about the river, not the North or South Esk at the present time. There are two things that are a problem with the river: one is the water quality and the other is the mud. I don't know whether anyone else had any problems. You have MAST controlling who does what and whatever on the river. Going back 20 years when the water in the river was dead, the city council and the Port of Launceston conducted water sampling every three months at spots at Low Head, probably in the vicinity of the Batman Bridge, at Rosevears, a couple of spots in Launceston and one underneath Kings Bridge. They would take a water sample on top of the water, then they would go down so many metres and so many metres again. I am never too sure where this was done for the council because we only got the water and the samples for them and then they had it analysed.

Over the years the river died, even to the extent of killing all the reeds in front of my place. I should I have measured it, but I think I have 3 kilometres of river frontage. They all died off and wouldn't grow. That was when the sewerage plant at Newnham was pumping raw sewage in and all those sorts of things. I don't know who did it, but someone has to be responsible to maintain the water quality. As that has rolled on, the George Town Council and Temco built the new sewerage works at George Town, which stopped a fair bit of rubbish going into the river. Then I think Dr Bill Wood arrived here to try to solve Comalco's problem - he might have been trying to solve, I think, the air quality first but then he got into the water and they have cleaned their act up. Someone has to be responsible for that and the people responsible are those at the department of environment. You have one person responsible for the water and you don't really have anyone responsible for the mud. The mud would be an impossible position. Everyone is jumping up and down because of the mud in the yacht basin. If you have read Dr Foster's report, that is a problem we can't do anything about.

An example of that is that living where I live we had a waterhole. When I was young all the kids in Newnham would go down there in a horse and cart and go swimming for the day, and the water was clear. In that time, from when I was a child until now, the bank has eroded on an average of 15 metres. If you take 15 metres over 2 kilometres and multiply it by 1.5 metres, you have a heck of a lot of mud. Where did the mud go? I went down there this morning and had another look when the tide was out and contrary to everyone's belief - they reckon the river is muddy from one end to the other - you

could come down there in a pair of slippers when the tide was out and I could walk you 40 metres off the bank out towards the water and you would not sink into anything. When you go down on this gravelly base, one day you will see a slime all over it and then you will go another day and it is all washed away, so presumably it has washed up or down the river and then it has come back up again.

Also, in about the 1930s they build a stone wall in the Rowella area to stop the bank from falling into the river. It was when it was falling over that Dick Adams came to the port wanting to re-establish this. The port authority can't supply or do everything for everyone, otherwise there would be no infrastructure. So, in effect, if you were going to stop the mud you have to see the short bit they did down near the Charles Street bridge. They spent \$3 million for less than 500 metres. So it is a cost. I guess I am not the only person who has land that has been washed into the river. That is why I talk about the stone wall; it must have been washing in down there. So it would be absolutely prohibitive to stop that. So that is why, I suppose, the port carted it away many years ago and kept it reasonably good. But now they cannot do it, so what do you do about that?

Then I have a bit of a view on the new flood protection or the levee banks, where a statement was reportedly made, 'We are only interested in the levee banks, not the mud in the river.' If that is the case, if they build the levee banks then we will have to keep putting extra height on them every year as the mud comes up. But the mud is only a problem from the tail race. Rowers say, 'It is terrible down at Stephenson's Bend, you cannot go in a rowing shell down there because of the mud'. The channel is still there and people wiser than me in the port say that the channel moves back. That is why the channel was near where there was a pile and now it has gone away, so people get into trouble, but that is the movement of the channel.

Then there has been all the criticism about rice grass from various quarters. Perhaps rice grass could well be a saviour because if you do not have anything binding all this mud together, it might be bad in one respect but who knows what that is saving. Take the sand dunes at Bridport. They tried to consolidate them so they brought in marram grass. What happened? All the so-called experts said marram grass is an introduced species so you cannot use it. So what has happened to the sand dunes? They are creeping over now. Something that is seen as noxious could well be a help.

CHAIR - Are you pointing out that for all these issues in the Tamar estuary it is difficult to find a responsible body to take remedial action or to take responsibility for those issues?

Mr KIDD - No, I am saying there is a responsible body - the departments of Environment and Water, and then Parks and Wildlife, presumably, are responsible for riparian reserves and river edges. The people who are in charge, up to a point, do not police it. I took John Cleary, when he was minister of the Liberal Government, down the river and there we found an excavator in the river, digging himself a little cove into the riverbank. John Cleary said, 'What is that?', I said, 'That is an excavator digging a hole.' He said, 'Who have him permission?' I said, 'Presumably your department.' He said, 'We know nothing about that', so they are the things that go on. You need police on the water to be telling people where the problems are.

Mr WING - Who is now responsible for flooding and silt?

Mr KIDD - It all depends on where you want the responsibility for the silt to be.

Mr WING - No, you are saying that there is a body responsible for these matters.

Mr KIDD - UTRIA in effect and the city council are responsible for the silt in the upper reaches of the river. No-one is responsible for it elsewhere because I do not believe there is a need for anyone else.

Mr WING - Yes, but they had very limited funding. They did their best with the funding available but they had very few powers, and none outside the city council boundary.

Mr KIDD - They did not require powers. West Tamar Council were involved in it because of their short boundary on the West Tamar so that is why they contributed to it but it was really only a cosmetic way of trying to make it look a bit better. UTRIA changed from the Tamar River Beautification Authority or whatever it was.

CHAIR - Improvement Authority or something.

Mr KIDD - Yes; there have been three. There was an overall body that Clarry Pryor was the chairman of when everyone was involved to make the Tamar a bit more pleasant.

Mr WING - That was the planning authority, wasn't it?

Mr KIDD - No, that had another name. Anyhow, that is many years ago because that was the first lot of people I went to. Courtney was on that, too, along with Clarry Pryor. There have been many people wanting to take control of the river.

Mr WING - Yes, but there is no one body that has responsibility and control and funding to deal with the estuary and river?

Mr KIDD - No. Even the previous Liberal Government never gave any money whatsoever to UTRIA. They abandoned the whole lot. I was at the meeting where they abandoned it. Mrs Napier was the minister and I had to remind her about that one day in the paper when she was going crook about the Labor Party not giving any money. Funnily enough, she still invited me to her Christmas party. That was then left in the hands of the council and the West Tamar Council. The port authority was a contributor but then when the port moved down the river and only had its little area down there, they then contributed in kind with past knowledge of the river. It would take an enormous amount of money to rectify it and you would never make it like people's dreams.

Mr WING - We have to make recommendations about whether there should be a single statutory authority with powers over the whole area that is relevant to the Tamar estuary and the Esk River problems - flooding, siltation and any other problems. Do you think that is desirable?

Mr KIDD - I do not see any advantage in the lower reaches of the river. In the upper reaches there would be. When I talk about noxious weeds and things there are a lot of people who believe the Ribbons of Blue project was a semi-disaster, and knowledgeable people at that. Even though they were an introduced species and the roots went out into the river and all the rest of it they were probably still protecting the river bank a little in times of

flood. There is nothing there now so they all get washed away and the river will become wider. There will always be those sorts of things. They are blaming all of this for the silt coming down the rivers, but I guess there hasn't been much rain to bring much down over the last few years. Another interesting thing is why the willow trees are so slow coming out this year, where they remain.

Mr WING - Coming out?

Mr KIDD - With leaves. You think they're dead, and that's because of the high content of the salt in the river; there's no fresh water diluting it. That's not new either. Al Hutton, the man who owned Glasgow Engineering, a great yachtsman, anchored a yacht up for some months under Kings Bridge, and barnacles grew on it. Normally people take their yachts into fresh water to kill the barnacles, but they grew up there, so 40 years ago there couldn't have been much water in the river, but there was all salt going up there.

The danger of having one body is that you get people with all the best intentions but probably don't realise the problem.

Mr WING - But if you appointed people with the appropriate expertise and experience.

Mr KIDD - There's no problem or no need to have an expert down the river, but there is one down here.

Mr WING - Down where?

Mr KIDD - On the yacht basins.

Mr WING - An expert?

Mr KIDD - A need for an authority, which I think would be better. I guess if they knew that the water was going off or someone was doing something wrong in the river, they would direct attention to the appropriate government organisation.

Mr WING - So you are supportive of an authority to deal with the upper Tamar River problems. Would that extend out into the catchment areas?

Mr KIDD - Well, what authority could change what I've spoken about earlier concerning where I live? No authority could control all that up and down the river, I am quite sure of that.

Mr WING - The 15 metres sliding into the river; what caused that?

Mr KIDD - Wind and tide. Not even you three could stop that.

Mr WING - We're no Canute.

Laughter.

Mr KIDD - You've only got to look at the river when these strong southerlies we've been having lately are blowing. The tide's coming in, it's all churned up and all the water is brown, and the wind doesn't always blow from the same way.

Mr WING - Boats or ferries would be a contributing factor?

Mr KIDD - That was a contributing factor when the *Taroona* used to come up the river twice a week or whatever, plus all the other ships. That is virtually non-existent now. They changed the configuration of boats. That's why the *Odyssey* is successful, because it can get up and down the river quickly. Even though it looks like it's making a wash, which it is, it is not as damaging as the old ships used to be - if you had a surf board you could have surfed in on those waves. The odd tug that comes up to have repair work does look as though it's making lots of wash, but they are so rare now they wouldn't have any effect. If you get down there in the wind you see it blowing the waves in. It is a very wide expanse in front of where I live, so I believe that also helps. If you go down there you can see things falling in the river in front of your eyes. These waves undermine the bank on the riverbed, really, when there is only a little bit of water on it, and it just eats away and eats away and there will be a big overhanging thing like that and all of a sudden that will flop in.

Mr WING - That has happened recent times too, has it?

Mr KIDD - I don't go down there very often but I went there this morning, particularly for this, and I was surprised at the rapid decline in the river bank.

Mr WING - What do you think is the specific cause of that?

Mr KIDD - Just wind and tide.

CHAIR - Is that your property?

Mr KIDD - Yes.

CHAIR - Your own land?

Mr KIDD - Yes.

CHAIR - If you were to look to rectify that, who would you go to, MAST or Parks and Wildlife to stop the erosion?

Mr KIDD - No, you'd have to go to church, I think, and pray. That's about your only hope.

Laughter.

CHAIR - So you've never sought help or sought advice on what is occurring?

Mr KIDD - There is absolutely nothing you can do about it because you can't change the tide and you can't change the wind. I don't know anyone that can.

The world changes, doesn't it?

CHAIR - Anybody with superannuation would agree with you.

Mr KIDD - I was thinking of the North-West Passage. You have to look at the number of ships that got lost and were never sighted again going through there. Now the North-West Passage is open, and with the higher fuel prices, ships go around there three months of the year and they are saving a fortune for everyone. As I say, the world changes and I guess they can't make the North-West Passage freeze over on their own.

Mr DEAN - Once again, Mr Chairman, for *Hansard* - and you have given your personal involvement in the river inasmuch as you own property along the river - do you have any other expertise? You're on UTRIA too. For the purposes of *Hansard* we need you to establish your background as to river management and so on.

Mr KIDD - I was on the Port of Launceston Authority and UTRIA.

Mr DEAN - Right, so you were on the Port of Launceston Authority for quite a long period.

Mr KIDD - I did that for 25 years.

Mr DEAN - We will establish this for those reading *Hansard*.

Mr WING - You were Chairman for how many years?

Mr DEAN - Yes, and Chairman for how many years, sorry?

Mr KIDD - Thirteen years, I think. No, you had better make that 11 years. I had forgotten about the last three before Tas Ports.

Mr DEAN - Fine. That has established your background.

Do you think that the Launceston Flood Authority that has just recently taken over from UTRIA would be sufficient on its own to manage this whole area of the river, the siltation, the levees, the catchment areas?

Mr KIDD - They are going to have their hands full building the flood levee, aren't they? I reckon it's too big - if they're given the job of building the flood levee, they want to get on and do that. I only had it reported back to me that the new authority made the statement that the mud was only a secondary consideration. That is why I said that if they don't do something about the mud they will be forever building on the flood levee.

Mr DEAN - I can assure you it is not.

Mr KIDD - I know some of the people that are on there. I had better not say too much; I'm getting personal then, aren't I? I suppose it would be quite simple to say, 'Yes, they are given the brief to look after the yacht basin', but where are you going to stop it?

Mr DEAN - I want to expand on a question from the member for Launceston, Mr Wing. Because the problems associated with this river obviously occur from other areas outside

the Launceston municipal boundary, do you believe it would advantageous to have an authority that has the ability to look at and consider all of those wider areas?

Mr KIDD - I suppose I was negative when I said you can't do anything about the river from grammar school down. Why overload an authority when there is no need for it? The water quality is maintained. If I go and push a dead cow into the river, I am going to get shot if I get caught, aren't I?

Mr DEAN - Yes, you are.

Mr KIDD - This authority is going to catch me doing that, or someone else is going to catch me. You are on the council. If in the dead of night I drive up the road to Remount, can't be bothered putting the stuff on the tip and tip it onto the side of the road, how do you catch me if no-one sees me and I don't leave any identification? What do you do about it? You go and collect it yourself, don't you?

Mr DEAN - That is exactly what happens.

Mr KIDD - That is why I don't believe an authority can control it.

Mr DEAN - An authority might not be able to control it but it would have the ability to look at all of these issues, to get the information they require, the evidence that is necessary to try to establish what is happening, and then they would have a greater ability, I would have thought, to get financial support from the State and Federal governments to put into place the strategies that are necessary to try to counteract and get on top of all of these problems, rather than the ratepayers of Launceston.

Mr KIDD - They've had four reports on the river - the last one has just been done and that said what the one before it said, and it said the same thing as the two before that.

Mr DEAN - And there are two still being done - TEER's and the sedimentation one that is being done by GHD.

Mr KIDD - A comment was made that Professor Foster's report was good but there were no remedies. I thought he gave a remedy in the front - that was that you spend a lot of money or you do nothing. Out of that, it means you can't do anything about it. Why have a committee sitting on an impossible task?

Mr DEAN - You would be aware, would you, of the original agreement that was in place? It was a statutory and a legislated position where the State Government had responsibility, absolute and total responsibility, for the maintenance of the levees in and around Launceston. That was the position until this recent deed of agreement came into being, which rescinded that previous agreement. Do you believe that it ought to be a State responsibility to ensure the maintenance of the levees, for instance, and the flooding and silting issues in and around Launceston?

Mr KIDD - As far as the flood levee goes, if there is a major flood, whether the State Government wants to be involved or not, it is still going to be their responsibility.

Mr WING - And the Commonwealth.

Mr KIDD - It will be their responsibility, so if they want to have an insurance policy they want to get into the flood levee. But when we had the flood levee with the State Government - and I used to try to get my name in the paper or on the TV - I stood on the flood levee and said what a waste of time the flood levee was unless they dug the mud out of the river. I have always been on about that, because the mud would come up a metre but they hadn't put a metre on top of the wall. I reckon I said that 20 years ago or longer. As far as that went, the only one who got a good feeling out of that was me and no-one took any notice of me. That was back before they were removing the mud. If they want to build on a flood plain, there are all sorts of problems. I have learnt, too, that they don't build flood levees on the banks of rivers; they build them miles out so that the water separates. I will go along with you on the flood levee and the mud, but I won't go any further.

Mr WING - With a State authority?

Mr KIDD - With an authority. I suppose you need the policeman-type approach when you go up and down the river, to make sure farmers aren't ploughing their land and its all washing into the river, but I am quite sure farmers don't do that. They know their soil is precious. There is probably one thing that has changed there: many years ago when you ploughed with a horse or a two-wheel tractor you ploughed when the conditions allowed; now they have four-wheel-drive tractors and they plough when they should not be ploughing because they know they can go straight up and down a hill and plough in the mud and all the rest of it. They are doing things that, in my old-fashioned way of thinking, are the wrong ways of looking after your land.

Mr WING - And with irrigation causing more soil to go into rivers.

Mr KIDD - I imagine that could. Even though I say farmers want to look after their property, of course as the times get harder and they have to make ends meet they push the limits and that is, I suppose, why I am referring to a four-wheel-drive tractor doing things you could not possibly do 60 years ago or 50 years ago.

Mr WING - And forest practices causing more siltation.

Mr KIDD - I had better keep out of the forest practices debate. I would be better to stick to the things I know - or I think I know.

Mr WING - But it sounds as if you would be supportive of an authority having control over levees and silt and practices outside the city council boundary that could have a bearing on those two matters. Would that be right?

Mr KIDD - I will agree on that, with the force being on the mud, because the flood levees are a waste of time without an equal focus on the mud.

Mr WING - The river area is filled with mud, you mean?

Mr KIDD - It keeps filling up, yes. There is one argument, too. There are two large holes, one under the Kings Bridge and one outside - still water - very deep holes there than

never seem to collect any mud for some reason or other. I guess that must be tidal or something to that effect.

Mr DEAN - When you say the levees are a waste of time unless the mud is cleaned out, with Invermay being a metre and a half below high-tide level, I would have thought that the levees were critical, whether the mud is there or not.

Mr KIDD - The levees would be critical today but then in 12 months' time they have lost their ability because the bed of the river has built up. So if they have to build them so many metres above high tide or the high-tide level, it can come up a metre or more and go over the top of the levee. Is it cheaper to build a high levee or keep removing all the mud? But the mud will keep on building up. But there are probably wiser men than I who have worked out the levees.

Mr WING - It was worth seeing the upper ridges of the Tamar last night at low-tide level at about half past six or seven o'clock - masses of silt exposed.

Mr KIDD - That is where the UTRIA committee got off the tracks a bit too at one stage. They got muddled up with beautification, whereas they were supposed to be keeping the water flowing up and down the river. They thought if they removed some of the mud banks it would make the river look better because the water would be over the mud all the time. But that went haywire. I was part of that. It cut the flow down in the channel so the channel filled up. Now presumably the banks have filled up too. So they are the sort of things that we have to put up with where we live. If you right up the Thames, if the tide goes out you see these expensive yachts sitting in the mud. So they have not got rid of the mud out of the Thames.

CHAIR - I do not think it does anymore, does it?

Mr KIDD - Not if you go right up. No, they improved it.

Mr WING - Up to Oxford, near Oxford, do you mean?

Mr KIDD - They do say they sit in the mud up further when the tide is out and then the tide comes in. But then we have an area in the river in Rockhampton. They sit in the mud up there too.

CHAIR - Mac, we are aware of the time. We need to conclude your evidence. Is there anything you would like to submit to us before you depart in respect of our terms of reference and the appropriateness or desirability of establishing a single statutory authority for the Tamar estuary and its catchment areas?

Mr KIDD - As I said, one body would be needed for the yacht basin but then how do you put that into place? Every man and his dog has a different view of how to get rid of the mud or what they should do to be stopping the mud. There is no way of stopping it other than removing it and where do we move it to? That is going to be a bigger problem than getting the mud out. As years go by, what you can do today for a certain amount of money will diminish because you will have to cart the mud so much further to remove it.

Someone within the Government said this would be good stuff to put on salt-affected land and I said, 'Yes, I have 40 hectares on my farm'. They said, 'They should take it up there for nothing'. I said, 'Do you know where it is? It is 100 kilometres away up at Waterhouse'. You can imagine how much a truck load of silt would cost to get up there.

The bigger problem is knowing where to put it. In the meantime it is just a bandaid approach that UTRIA has been taking. I am not critical of UTRIA because I was part of it but it was only a bandaid approach. Then we had the experts putting up the wall at the Charles Street Bridge and what happened? That is about the third occasion they have put something up like that and put too much weight on it so it goes down and pops up the other side. So when you try changing the use of the land, I suppose, to something it was not meant for, we are in trouble.

CHAIR - Do you think that body you are talking about in respect of the yacht basin or that basin close to Launceston should be a statutory authority?

Mr KIDD - If they want to do anything about it, yes, there would have to be a body on the yacht basin - four of them looking after the yacht basin because what is going to happen to it now? Presumably the UTRIA money that the Government gave us goes to the flood levee people now. What happens there?

Mr DEAN - That same amount of money goes across to the new Launceston Flood Authority and it is CPI indexed, so that is \$150 000 plus CPI index that goes across to the new authority.

Mr KIDD - And that was not enough to keep the mud out of it, let alone be doing anything about a flood levee.

Mr DEAN - That is absolutely right.

Mr KIDD - I do understand why taxpayers at New Norfolk would not be very interested in our problem in the Tamar. That is another problem you fellows have. You got yourselves into this mess.

Laughter.

CHAIR - Mac, we thank you very much for coming and giving us your words of wisdom from vast experience of being involved with the Tamar River.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.

Mr MAX PLUMMER AND Mr BASIL FITCH WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Finch) - Thanks very much for coming before the committee to give evidence today. Basil, would you care to speak to us first and then we will ask questions.

Mr FITCH - Thank you, Mr Chairman. I firmly believe that one statutory authority is necessary to control not only the upper reaches of the Tamar River but the whole Tamar River down to George Town. I also believe strongly that this authority should have control over all rural areas where estuaries and rivers are feeding into the North and South Esk rivers. I have seen the problems through being on the Launceston City Council and the methods adopted and all the various bodies that have been in so-called control or less control and, in fact, I do not think anyone wants to be in control of the problem. Governments wipe their hands of it.

The ratepayers of Launceston are now picking up the tab for all the problems associated with the Tamar River. It was established many years ago that all the rural areas around Launceston, going as far away as Oatlands, up to the north-east area to Mount Nicholas, are feeding all their silt into the two main rivulets that come into the Tamar River. Having lived there all my life, I have seen the mouth of the Tamar by the Yacht Club just close up. Where once there was water right through the middle of the river at low tide, there is virtually no water there at all and you could walk across it, in my belief, even though I am not going to try.

This is where the problem lies, that they are feeding in the silt from plantations. I went to Myrtle Park water supply from St Patricks River and they had clear-felled at the Camden and replanted the plantations at Mount Barrow. With the first rain, the St Patricks River was red with this soil. I was invited up there to have a look at the problems. Of course there was nothing that could be done because everything involved in forestry it is a law unto itself, therefore councils have virtually no say in it whatsoever. There is now also high intensive farming and the high intensive farming and irrigation is also playing a major role in throwing the silt down.

The silt is coming down and, as the previous witness said, the silt is filling into the Tamar River but very little is being taken out. I believe strongly that if the government or statutory authority took the silt out it would make an entire difference. I go back to the *Ponrabbel* days. As soon as that went off the run, when the then PLA moved down to George Town, the council did not take up responsibility because of the cost of running it. No-one wanted to know it and of course very little has happened since then in cleaning the silt out. The amount being taken out each year is infinitesimal to what is required. In fact I made overtures that the dredge from Port Phillip Bay that is working there now, the *Queen of the Netherlands*, be investigated not only to come and do Scamander, St Helens and all these other areas that need cleaning out but the Tamar also.

That is the important point. If we get a deluge of rain like they have had on the mainland States, we will not have to worry about the swimming pool at Windmill Hill. You will put your tights on at Charles Street bridge and swim out to the bottom of Mowbray. That can happen tomorrow, believe me. I have seen the present flood levee where it has been a foot underneath the level of years ago, long before the siltation build-up. The first

critical thing that has to happen is to clean that river out. If it is not cleaned out it is fraught with danger - and I mean it.

Having said that, the river is such a delicate thing that, in my belief, and Mr Plummer will back this up shortly, people are interfering with it and not helping the situation one little bit, nor have these committees. The committees have done virtually nothing. It has been nothing more than a talkfest. This is where the problems of the whole thing lie. People must keep their fingers out of it because if you keep interfering with that river, apart from taking the siltation out and looking after the flood levee, you are again fraught with danger. This has been borne out by the *Lady Stelfox*. They built up a bank there for the *Lady Stelfox* for the hotel down there as a tourist attraction and it collapsed and fell in. Jim Henshaw, the engineer at the Launceston City Council, embarked on a program just over Charles Street bridge. They filled it up with a heap of rocks and within a few months the rocks had disappeared. As Mr Plummer will point out to you, if you make a displacement of silt then it is going to pop up somewhere else.

The latest one is a fiasco again. When we were on council - and I am sure Mr Wing would remember this - Peter Jordan was then our city manager. The flood levee at Charles Street bridge and along further right through to the wheat silos was considered to be adequate and of such strength that it would not require any replacement. The land behind it was then sold from the wheat silos up. I make no apology for it. However, I believe this committee again, whatever it is called, went forward and Errol Stewart got involved in it and, of course, now it is all beautification. They were looking at beautification but it is not beautification so much as interfering in the amount of \$40 million. I believe \$3 million is down the drain already on this other fiasco.

The whole thing, since the *Ponrabbell* finished and the PLA walked away with it, has been a total disaster.

Mr PLUMMER - I quite agree.

Mr FITCH - Then we have experts coming in and telling us we need a weir, a barrage or whatever they call them, all these sorts of things costing hundreds of millions of dollars but the silt is going to still come down behind whatever you block it off with. The silt is going to sit there. So what is the point in putting in place all these other fanciful things costing hundreds of millions of dollars when the silt is still going to come through all these rivulets from Oatlands back and it is going to end up there.

I have referred to Peter Jordan. He held a consultative process with Hydro and with all internal staff and they spent a week in the small committee room. They had all the boards right around the whole room. Away they went and they traced all the rivulets from aerial maps and that is how they established where all the water and silt was coming from. It was proven then beyond doubt where we were getting all this silt from but, again, no-one took any notice and no-one did anything. Peter brought it to the attention of council. The council was of the view, which has been expressed by Mr Dean to the previous witness, that it is a State government responsibility. If I and Mr Wing had been on that council with these new deeds they would never have been signed, I can assure you of that. We were adamant about the whole thing. Why should the ratepayers of Launceston take control of a river, even now with \$425 000 in a report. It is not the

council's responsibility to pay that money. It is the responsibility of the State Government and the Federal Government in this area.

Mr Kidd mentioned tipping things in the river. If I went down and built myself a little hut or something there to get ducks or whatever, the river authority would be onto me in a flash and say you are fined and pull it down. They control the river but as soon as it comes to silt and money the government do not want to know it, do they? The council have been the silly ones, or suckers you might say, in taking up the cudgel on these issues because you should never have got involved in it. The council should never be involved in that sort of issue.

The more you look at it, the more the problems are man-made. People must start realising how delicate this Tamar River is, bearing in mind that the whole of Invermay was a swamp. The Tamar River went up as far as Metro in Howick Street. It was all reclaimed land. Sand was taken to the sand hill, that is why it was called Sand Hill. Man reclaimed it all but are now interfering in these beautification programs. I believe strongly that more reclamation work can be done to beautify the banks of the Tamar River. I believe strongly that that still could be done. As for the silt being taken out of the river, Alderman Beams over the airwaves the other day said there was 30 000 tonnes or something in two holes down the river where they obviously tip it from dredging and people can go and help themselves. I thought it was a very good gesture of Alderman Beams but if I was on the council it wouldn't be given to people; it would be sold to them for their gardens and top-dressing. I would take it out to Churchill Park, which can do with another six foot all over it. I would also give it to Parks and Recreation for top-dressing sports grounds and ovals.

The whole matter has been mismanaged. The day that the *Ponrabbel* ceased, the whole problem started. I believe that if it was cleaned out tomorrow it would take a number of years - how many years since the *Ponrabbel* finished?

Mr WING - About 27 years probably; it was approximately 1991.

Mr FITCH - Yes, about that. The day it went out is when the problem started. I don't believe in all their airy-fairy, millions-of-dollar ideas going into the Tamar River. I believe it should be left in its natural state. In fact, I saw two paintings from the early part of the century when people were doing paintings and went around selling them house to house to make a quid. I saw two paintings of Cataract George from both sides of the river. All the vegetation was there. It was absolute magic. We don't want these airy-fairy ideas of putting dykes and barges and all this sort of stuff there. We want it left in its own state, less the silt. It's as simple as that. I believe the reclamation of some of the silt, such as happened under the *Ponrabbel*, could be done. Incidentally, I went down to have a look and the *Ponrabbel* is still down there, less its fittings.

Mr WING - Where was that?

Mr FITCH - Down at the wharf. Les Dick has it, I think. I firmly believe you must get the silt out and then you have breathing space for a number of years before it builds back up to any level. When we were on the council, Mr Wing, we had trouble in Forster Street; there were a couple of areas where the flood levee had sunk and we had to make

remedial work. I went crook again about the involvement of ratepayers' money. No-one wants to know the Tamar River and no-one wants to control it.

The other thing I must ask is about this flood improvement committee. Did I read in the paper the other day that some members were on it - the mayor?

Mr DEAN - The Launceston Flood Authority?

Mr FITCH - Yes, who is on it?

Mr DEAN - The mayor and the general manager and three to four other individuals - Dr Ingles, Dr Wood and Prof. Hardy from the Maritime College.

Mr FITCH - The reason I brought it up to question these people's competency. How many have any knowledge of all the hydraulics and what have you of all these issues? I certainly have not. I would not put my name up to go on a committee of such importance. That is why there should be a statutory authority from the government, and even they are pretty haphazard at who they put on, scratching backs and shoving them on these committees, instead of putting on people who are competent to do the job.

CHAIR - You mention the 'latest one' in respect of issues and the fiasco. Do you want to clarify what you mean by that?

Mr FITCH - That is the *Lady Stelfox* and the rocks that were put down there over the bridge. That has been built up. I had a look the other day and that is now built up and consolidated. Back when they put them there it was down to the riverbed, you might say.

Mr WING - Down at Ritchies Mill?

Mr FITCH - Yes.

Mr WING - That is where they were trying to spend the red money before it went out on 30 June?

Mr FITCH - But the rocks disappeared, so the issues are there. The latest fiasco regarded the rocks going in behind the piles and the pile are everywhere now.

Mr WING - For the same reason in each case. You put weight on the rubbery mud on the banks and it pushes down and comes up somewhere else.

Mr FITCH - Max has one to tell you about that.

Mr PLUMMER - I can go back to 1947 when I first started around the Tamar Rowing Club. The *Ponrabbel* was there and at low tide there was always water up against the banks on both sides of the river. Some of them used to row down and it was rough or the tide was against you and you tried to get out of the rough water. You would go into the banks and there was always water there to row on. I rowed until 1960 and then I coached to 1998, not continuously, though. It was about 1980 when you first discovered it, and I had come back within four years to see the deterioration of that river. The water was not

against the bank as it was before. It was three feet away, and as you went down between the pile and bank, you'd be in the jammer. That is how it went until 1998 when I last coached. I gave it away because there was no water to row on when you wanted it.

If you are coaching kids, like I did for a number of years, you have to get them on the water before they go to school or you get them on the water after they finish school. But the tide was a problem. When it started to sink, you never had the hours there to get your crew fit enough. When you are coming back up to the river, and I was coaching for the Tamar, you would get to around about where the *Odyssey* is now. You have the crew rowing along side you and when the blade comes out of the water, half of it would be covered in mud. Then you'd have to reach behind you and jack your motor up so your props are half in the water so you can get back. I thought, 'How am I ever going to get crews fit if I can't get them on the water?'. It's all right for students to row; they can take time off and they can get water and get in the channel at any time but you can't do that when you are coaching school or club sport.

But I did see what councils will do when they get into trouble. I worked on three sewerage treatment plants for Hinman Wright and Manser for this council. We did a big extension down at Teatree Bend - that would have been 17 or 18 years ago - on the weekend and we would come back on the Monday. There was this big concrete tank right alongside and it had black froth on it. A germ had got in it and it would stink. They pumped it straight into the river. They couldn't filter it or do anything with it because it was all contaminated so to get rid of it it went straight into the river.

To get back to coaching. Everyone in the morning does one thing; they go to the bathroom. We all do that. That riverside sewerage treatment plant could not, when I was rowing, take that heavy load. They could not break it down so it went straight into the river. That was dirty, stinking grey water that you would have to smell. That happened quite often because you would only see it when there's low tide. You would never see it at high because I put the spillway in there right on the edge of the bank. You could see it coming out when the tide went down but you couldn't see what was discharged when the water was high, but it went into the river, I expect.

There are two treatment plants that use the river to put waste in there when they have to. At the big Teatree one, we put a big digester in there at the end and a big chlorine tank, right down close to the river. I'd seen these fellows from the council come and get a glass and they would fill it out of the big digester and they'd hold it up in front of them to see how clear it was. But before you got to that stage, the slurry part must have been discharged, even before it got into the chlorine tank, where the settling beds are. A bit of the solids must go in there after the aerate it. They break it all down. It generally goes from one part of treatment to the rest and what comes out of the river is fairly clean, but when they get into trouble it will go into the river. I can remember Jack Edwards accusing the council once - he was the head at the marine board, or an engineer - of putting 30 000 tons of waste into the river. I think that was before we put all the big modern aerating tanks, digesters and chlorine tanks to break it down.

Finally I would just like to say about the river silting up that I agree with what Basil said. The *Ponrabbel* was there for one reason: to keep the river workable for all those boats that used to come up the river. I have seen them all, years in, years out, anchored there just loading cargo. But when that and the *Ponrabbel* stopped you could see it getting

worse every year. It was noticeable. If you happen to have a four-year break from coaching, like I did, you see the difference.

Mr WING - Do you remember when the *Ponrabbel* stopped?

Mr PLUMMER - I was talking to the little guy down at the end of the wall that dismantled it. I am sure he told me it was 1959.

Mr WING - It might be 1980?

Mr PLUMMER - No. That guy told me he dismantled it in 1959. That is why I went to ask him.

Mr DEAN - I think it finished about 1978 or 1980.

Mr PLUMMER - Regarding displacement of earth, I saw this happen on the railway line to George Town. John Holland had the job of putting the bridge over the North Esk River. They asked for workers experienced in form work. I did the northern and eastern abutment across the river and they had another gang doing that one. But when we started to come up with the walls for the big columns, the big steel beams to sit on to take the weight on the bridge, over this side they started to fill up with earth. We looked at it and it went down. The weight of all that dirt they put on there at the bottom could not hold it. So it spewed up big mounds on each side of the batter. What were the engineers going to do about that. There was about a fortnight and fill came in and they loaded that and they loaded that and that stopped it. It gets back-filled again and it could not lift there because they weighted that down. Just recently, talking about the piles I put around from North Esk to the green edge. I walked over there and I saw all this field - a big sort of block. I thought, surely you are not going to push that against that wall? Because that is where the displacement would have come again, and it did. You walk across the Charles Street Bridge at low tide and all the mud has gone underneath those panels and come up into the water. It could not do anything else because the weight of that field had to push it down. It had to go somewhere. So we would have unlimited panels inside.

Mr FITCH - In winding up, I repeat that this river is a delicate river. It should be treated as such. I believe man should keep his nose clean out of any major works or earthworks in the area. If we continue on the plane we are going then there is going to be a heavy cost to some people or some organisation somewhere down the track.

CHAIR - And in respect to the desirability and appropriateness of a single statutory?

Mr FITCH - Yes, definitely, and appropriate people to be on it. I would never agree to have people that are not qualified to be in such positions.

Mr DEAN - I think you're saying one single statutory authority. Could that work alongside the current Launceston Flood Authority?

Mr FITCH - No. The whole lot should be abolished and there should be one statutory authority funded by the State Government. Also, the city council should pull their nose clean out of this, as far as ratepayers financing studies and spending money, millions of

dollars down there, is concerned. This flood levee is going to cost ratepayers \$13 million. That's not peanuts if you take 26 000 ratepayers at \$600 a head.

CHAIR - Thank you very much for appearing today.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.

Mr STUART HALLAM WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Finch) - Stuart, thanks for making the time to make a submission to us on the appropriateness and desirability of a single statutory authority to be responsible for the Tamar and its catchments. Would you care to make a submission to us and then we'll ask questions as we go along? Do you have something prepared?

Mr HALLAM - Thank you, Chair, I do.

CHAIR - You are going to submit something to us in writing, are you?

Mr HALLAM - I have a copy for Mr Wing, a copy for the Chair, a copy for the secretary, and I brought a copy for Mr Dean.

CHAIR - We will table this, if you would like to talk to that, Stuart.

Mr HALLAM - Right. This is from me and from my business as well.

First of all is the governance of the river, which I suppose is what we are really here for today. The State Government should be responsible for the Tamar estuary and Esk rivers because the State Government's ownership of land in most cases is adjacent to the waterways. So whichever side of the river you look at, basically it's surrounded by crown land.

There is an inability of any other council or tiers of government to do so. The State Government already has a lot of departments and some of the departments that would need to be involved are the people who control the shipping and users of the river, environmental issues, planning issues, land ownership, surveying and mapping, financing the above, et cetera. All the expertise and categories of relative departments are within the existing State Government's existing structure. Therefore it would not require much extra effort on the State Government's part to be able to facilitate all the problems that needed to be addressed.

The siltation of the Tamar and Esk river systems in my belief is due to silt from the North Esk River stemming from bank erosion and the residue of industry - for example, Killafaddy. The silt from the South Esk River I do not think is very great at all, I think it is nil, because there has not been much flow down there in many years now and when you look at the flood that is coming down, it is pretty clean water that comes into the Gorge.

I believe there is some silt coming up the Tamar River and that would come from the bank erosions. I have a word here called 'floculation'. Not being an engineer or a surveyor, the word is a little bit out of my depth, but I have put it in here anyway. That, I believe, is where the salt and the fresh water meet, parts of it drop and form mould in the river -

Mr WING - Floculation?

CHAIR - How do you spell it?

Mr WING - F-l-o-c-u-l-a-t-i-o-n, I think.

Mr HALLAM - The flocculation that occurs is causing part of the silt to drop and that is inhibiting the flow of the river.

Engineering of the Tamar and Esk rivers levee system in my opinion is complicated and varied. The only report based on fact is the Foster Report which is not tenderable. Recent works on the South Esk River system - that is, the Longford flood levees and Panshanger levees et cetera - should be studied to gain or ascertain what value or contribution they may have.

The Trevallyn Dam contribution is also questionable but, to my belief, it may contribute to flood protection control and siltation control and flow into the affected areas. Algae bloom has become prevalent, for example, and with recent lack of flow into catchment areas there is just no siltation from the South Esk River.

The North Esk contains a lot of mud from Corra Linn down. River testing is required to substantiate this but from observation of this it would appear so. Dredging and levee banking of the North Esk would seem an achievable target through the use of bank silt excavation to raise the heights or put the mud back from where it came. A good example of that is Lucks Flats.

Creation of bank stabilisation in this area is critical. Stands of blackwood trees would be appropriate. They love the water, they love wet areas and you see them growing around all of our river systems on the banks and there would be other varieties that could be suitable for that, without having to use imported species.

CHAIR - Crack willows and so on.

Mr HALLAM - Yes. We would have natives. The standard melaleucas over there, for example, could be propagated and allocated elsewhere as well.

The levee system of Launceston, the confluence of the South Esk and North Esk rivers, is based on engineering work provided by Unisearch. S.L. and S.L. Hallam via Jack Newman and Associates, Architects, commissioned this report. Engineering of the levee system on the basis of silt removed and river channel established can be carried out relevant to siltation and surveying having been achieved. So what I am saying is that all the engineering of our flood levee systems of Launceston is based on a river cleaned out because at the time it was done in 1965 we had a lot of shipping coming in and out of Launceston and we had a fairly severe dredging program in place, so all the engineering has been done is based on a clean, free-flowing river.

One important aspect of the confluence is the entry of the North Esk system into the Tamar at the north end of the flood training levee system causing a venturi effect. This is a feature of the central system that is very important to drainage of the basin in the event of a one-in-100-year flood or greater.

CHAIR - That venturi process you are talking about is where the water comes down through the Gorge and then doubles back around near the Tamar yacht centre?

Mr HALLAM - No.

CHAIR - Please explain to me the venturi system.

Mr HALLAM - The venturi system is where water comes down through the Gorge, follows the South Esk River down through the Gorge, comes across and hits the flood-training levee system. It curls north out towards the sea - about 90 per cent of it goes north and about 10 per cent comes back into a back eddy - and as it comes off the end of the flood training system it is moving at a rate sufficient to draw the water out of the North Esk and continue on down. If you have a little starting dinghy and the boat half fills up with water and you get up sufficient speed, you open the venturi and it all drains out. It is the drag or force of water coming from the yacht basin and pulling out the water of the North Esk. It just drains faster.

CHAIR - Thank you. I thought you might have been referring to that little eddy that comes back in and around.

Mr HALLAM - No.

Regarding health, persons more qualified than myself would be able to provide information on this subject but on observation and conversations with other parties it would appear to be a very serious problem, particularly the North Esk and confluence areas. Several reportings of sickness stemming from these areas have been mentioned, and others not. Monitoring of this area in the past has been inconsistent and only occurred when cases have been reported, and not all have.

The introduction of rice grass some time ago is successful. Its stabilisation of the banks is questionable and its eradication, as much as possible, is desirable. It is a subject not spoken about much these days. Eradication methods, I believe, are either drowning or, alternatively, drying as the rice grass is intertidal. One approach or the other should be taken once consideration of the geography of the area is achieved. This project may be done over a period of years; in the first instance, significantly, silt ponds established on contaminated areas and the residue done gradually.

The Port of Launceston Authority established a dredging system using a combination of methods over a period of years to maintain shipping channels. These methods were severe and have contributed to the caving or the seepage of silt into the river systems. However, they did maintain a manageable river system and that still should be there, with the exception of siltation and minimal hard-rock invasion. On completion of the authority, the Launceston City Council promoted itself to the governance of the river. After several allocations of significant funding all efforts have failed to produce a satisfactory outcome, due largely to the lack of understanding and not looking at the big picture.

Method - Stage 1: removal of silt and surveying of river, beginning at some point past seaward -

CHAIR - So on the Bass Strait side where the water flocculates?

Mr HALLAM - Yes, that is where it should commence. Pump to face upriver into silt ponds. So start down below there, work our way back and work to a face and pump the mud into silt ponds. Silt pondings are to be land-based. Council and State Government's Parks Access Committee, Wildlife Wetlands and landowners, not farmers - please change that - are the considerations of this area here. What I am saying there is that these silt ponds should be put in areas where there is a lot of rice grass, where it is in close proximity to most of the mud that seems to be where the rice grass is. There are some landowners, I would imagine - Gerald Archer and a few others - who would have considerable areas there that may be made available and I think he would be very appreciative of those areas being re-established back into farmland or pasture.

I have made a little diagram of the type of dredge that would be required for a stage 1 operation. It is basically a little barge with a pump on the back. It has the top part of an excavator on the top, it has an extended boom and on the end of that boom there would be a suction or gravel pump. It would have a GPS for survey. There are many problems, for example, with the new North Esk rowing club and there should be an effort in this stage to determine how deep it is before we get to a good bottom. So for any future works this is all laid out and everybody knows exactly what they are doing from then on.

I put 'locally designed and constructed'. This vacuum method should also be appropriate for sand and mud removal in several other river systems in Tasmania - that is, the Prosser River, St Helens River, Mersey River, Scamander River; you can go on and on. I think once the Tamar is done to a satisfactory point then you could probably use the same method to do the other rivers.

Once that is all achieved, stage 2 is post survey. Excavate the channel if required. There should be the establishment of sumps in close proximity to the silt ponds - that is, put the sumps in the river so that any more mud that is coming down or coming up will fall into the sumps and you will quickly go back to that location and pump them out into the silt pond. That is a good way of maintaining the system, I believe.

There should be piling or hard edging of the bank levee system where and if required. This will give us the information that is required for the engineers to go ahead and come up with whatever they need to do in those particular areas.

Stage 3 would be the maintenance of the river system. It would be the monitoring of siltation with the beautification of the silt ponds and the return of the land to participants - that is, landowners or council. Create wet areas for bird life and so on.

To fund the stages and achieve the outcome desired will necessitate cooperation of all relative government departments with the assistance of private contractors to produce a big-picture plan focusing on the initial stages. Once these outcomes are achieved, a method of procedure will become clearer and a more accurate costing is possible. As documentation becomes available and correct methods et cetera are outlined then expressions of interest may be an appropriate method to finally produce an accurate costing.

Federal funding is desirable and approaches to local Federal politicians should meet with a healthy response once a true and proper, logical and sensible plan is presented. Local government funding will only increase the chances of interferences so should therefore be left to land-based activities - that is, access to parks and wetland areas et cetera.

Finally, a summary: the outcome of the three-stage method should be a river system appealing to the public, enhancing both private spaces, wildlife wetlands and participating landowners able to reclaim land lost to the river. A concentrated survey during stage 1 of the project will enable accurate decisions to be made for further activities. Removal of silt will also enhance the abilities of the existing flood levee system and give further information about works that need to be carried out. Health matters will dramatically improve, alleviating the risk to the population and users of the river, while commercial activities centred on the river will greatly appreciate a far more functional and aesthetic vista.

CHAIR - Good. Stuart, you have gone into quite a bit of detail there and thanks very much for that information. It is very helpful to hear your feelings about a possible solution to one of the problems of the Tamar estuary and the siltation issue.

We might now ask some questions just to extrapolate your information. Also, we will want to talk to you about one of our terms of reference - the desirability and appropriateness of a single statutory authority to oversee this management of the Tamar and the catchment areas. Perhaps we can get you to talk to that first and then we will ask some questions.

Mr HALLAM - The desirability of a single statutory body is paramount in my opinion because if you have too many cooks they are going to spoil the broth. I will use that wonderful colloquialism.

CHAIR - I think it was in my media release.

Mr HALLAM - Great minds think alike, Kerry. The State Government has all the necessary resources, departments et cetera and if it is all kept in the one concentrated area, that will have a far better chance than if we get bogged down with one engineer from a council going to another engineer or another council because, with this Esk river system we are probably talking about 30 per cent of the State.

CHAIR - I think it has been calculated at 15 per cent.

Mr WING - Yes, 14-15 per cent of the total land area.

Mr HALLAM - Yes, so it is pretty significant and it would involve a lot of councils as well. It would involve the Meander Valley Council, the Northern Midlands Council, the Launceston City Council, George Town Council, West Tamar Council, Break O'Day Council - whatever. So, it is a State government issue. It is not one particular council. So, if we get a situation where we are relying on this council to this bit, that council to do that bit and another council to do that bit over there, it is not going to work. We have to have one authority and that is it.

I think central to all of this is that the body that is in charge of it should have a very open and clear method of communication to all levels of governance and to the ratepayers and the constituents to give them a very clear picture of what is going on, so that the whole community gets behind the body and there is no interference or time wasting through insignificant areas that could or could not come up. So, the State Government has to put their hat on and get into this.

Also, I did mention in there a couple of other rivers. I was down at Triabunna the other day, picking up some lobsters and I had a look the Prosser River because I noticed on the news that it was in trouble. That is landlocked. The Scamander River is landlocked. There are always problems, as I think you probably would have known, back in your previous days, probably sending out search and rescue efforts down there to the St Helens barway, for example. I think, if this is to go through the State Parliament and you have everybody on-side because they are all getting a bit of effort from this - you know what I mean -

CHAIR - A benefit.

Mr HALLAM - Yes - a benefit - because if we design a dredge to do this down here, it should be borne in mind that, once this is done, it can be done in the other rivers that need it.

Mr DEAN - What is your view about the current authority that is now set up - UTRIA was there and that's now been disbanded and the Launceston Flood Authority has stepped in - simply as a local government authority? Does it have the ability to do what needs to be done? I think you are probably going to say 'no' to that.

Mr HALLAM - Most definitely, Ivan. Engineers will say that if you change the situation then you need another engineers' report so why get the engineering report in the first place? This is what has been going on - they have just been going around and around in a circle. We have to clean the mud out of the river first, do a survey while we are doing it so that every square inch of that river is on paper - the plan, the rise and fall of tide, the depth of mud, the whole thing. When it is all surveyed and the mud is out, then we involve the engineers because they then have something to work with. At the moment they are going around and around in circles

Mr DEAN - I don't disagree with that comment. There are a number of studies currently being done. The GHD study is now being done.

Mr HALLAM - I had a horrible feeling about that. I attended that and I did note that that study commissioned by the council was supposed to be independent. Well, GHD are already contractors of the council.

It was brought to my attention that the intent of the study was really to find a sufficient body of evidence to say that all that is required is to maintain a trickle out of the South Esk and the mud was just a natural situation.

Now that stems from engineers saying, 'If you dig a hole, all the mud is going to fall in'. That is fine, that is good. So you have that information so you put in sumps so the mud falls in and then come back and pump it out.

Mr DEAN - Take it one step further, Stuart. I suspect you'd be of the view that there is no real place for the Launceston Flood Authority and a single statutory State authority. Do you believe that there is a place there for two to work or not, or it should be just the one to control it?

Mr HALLAM - My understanding of the Launceston Flood Authority is one that involves the levee system. In that levee system there were several openings for public access et cetera, and in the event of a flood they would need to be closed. They would need to be shorter and closed to protect the city from flooding. But, also bear in mind this point about a one-in-a-100-year flood - I own a restaurant as you are probably aware of down there in Park Street sitting on the Esk there.

Mr DEAN - Yes.

Mr HALLAM - I am 1.7 metres above Australian height datum there. The flood - if we get enough rain to flood -

Mr DEAN - We will do, Stuart, no doubt about that.

Mr HALLAM - After we have filled up the lakes, after we have filled up all the dams, after we have filled up all the rivers, if that does occur then the middle of Launceston is going to flood because I have seen floods on the corner of Elizabeth Street and George Street. I have seen water going into shops, that deep. I have set mine on 1.7 metres above Australian height datum and it has been nowhere near flooding.

So there are going to be areas of the city inundated by flood before anywhere else and if there is enough rain it will flood Invermay anyway.

Mr DEAN - Yes.

Mr HALLAM - Now, what are we doing, are we keeping the water in or out?

Mr DEAN - That is an interesting point.

Mr HALLAM - What are we doing? Keeping the water in or out?

Mr WING - Keeping it out, initially, and then if it gets in they will hopefully be able to get it out again.

Laughter.

Mr HALLAM - But if it floods inside first then it can't get away because we've put up the levee.

Mr WING - No, that's true.

Mr DEAN - There are a number of pump stations in place in Inveresk, of course, which are there for the purpose of pumping water out.

Mr HALLAM -Yes, but it would still flood.

Mr DEAN - So you're of the view that just the one authority ought to be responsible for the management of all of this.

Mr HALLAM - No, no. One authority should be established to do the work that I've outlined in my presentation. Firstly, the removal of silt and surveying of the river so that we know just exactly what is there and what's not there. That should be done by the State Government, but the maintenance of the flood levee systems once they are created correctly - not the maintenance but the management, putting back the arm gates and the holdways for example - that should be done by the council. Those types of things should be council matters, the big picture should be the State Government.

CHAIR - Through this statutory authority?

Mr HALLAM - Through your statutory authority, correct.

Mr WING - And the funding too - the bulk of it by the State Government?

Mr HALLAM - My consideration is, having had conversations with some Federal politicians on this matter, as I outlined in the report there, that once they get a true, proper, sensible and logical approach to what they are doing, they will jump all over this and they will be only too happy to fund. I don't know, if you can get them to fund more than 50 per cent, well done.

Mr WING - You mean the State and Federal?

Mr HALLAM - I mean the State should apply to Federal for funding, because I don't think the Federal is too keen on funding council, because council haven't got control of the whole area. We have to start down the river and work our way back, otherwise we're just digging holes and the mud is falling in. That's the trouble with the Launceston City Council being involved, because they've only got one little area. They can't create a flow up and down the river for the ebb flow of the tide to carry the mud out; it's just not possible for the Launceston City Council, or the West Tamar Council or the George Town Council for that matter, to do it. It's got to be the overall State body.

Mr WING - And the ratepayers of Launceston shouldn't be required to fund anywhere near the same amount as the other two tiers of government, State and Federal? Would you agree?

Mr HALLAM - Yes. The Launceston City Council ratepayers, or any ratepayers of any council, shouldn't be hinged up with this. As I said, just putting in of gates and those types of things, once the silt ponds are established on the banks, they can then be turned into parks, or they can be turned into whatever we want them to be. But some wildlife wooded areas and some park areas would need access, so whichever council represents the municipality where they are should provide access to and maintenance of the parks, and so on.

Mr WING - We've been told that the city council area is only 14 per cent of the flood catchment areas. On that basis, do you think it's a reasonable basis for the ratepayers to

be paying no more than 14 per cent of the total cost of dealing with the estuary and the river problems?

Mr HALLAM - If we're talking about areas such as the Tamar Yacht Basin then the majority of the mud that's in there would have come down the North Esk, or some of it from up the river, but it's due to the banks caving in through constant dredging. I am sure the channel would be still there, albeit full of mud. When you dig out, it keeps on caving in. When Richard Fisher gets in, he's got a beautiful word. I don't know whether you've spoken to him yet -

Mr WING - Not yet. Later today.

Mr HALLAM - Well, look forward to his presentation because he's got some wonderful words to describe all this. It keeps on falling in, you see, so if you take out the mud, it's not going to be so bad but if you dig out the hard stuff then it will fall in.

Mr WING - I think it's been established that the other way that silt gets into the home reaches is at flood time, coming over the top of the Trevallyn dam. Then it goes down to about Freshwater Point and then gradually with the incoming tide being stronger than the outgoing tide it works its way back up to Home Reach.

Mr HALLAM - I can't agree with the bit about over the top of the Trevallyn dam.

Mr WING - Even in times of flood? We haven't had one for ages.

Mr HALLAM - No, even in times of a one-in-500-year flood, I still can't see that happening. The flow comes in down the South Esk and goes into the dam; the mud drops and by the time it gets to the dam it should be pretty clean what's going over the top.

Mr WING - Apparently quite a bit of it also goes over the top at major flood times.

Mr HALLAM - Apparently, but doubtful. I don't think so. The mud has to drop. It is dirt particles in water and they drop.

Mr WING - There is a fairly common view that it drops once it meets the salt water and then flocculates and drops down.

Mr HALLAM - Yes.

CHAIR - And the silt is suspended.

Mr HALLAM - I don't think the South Esk is distributing much. These stories of potato growers and tree farmers and those sorts of things, I don't think that is quite on the money. If you look at the rivers on either side, the water is always nice and clean. If you look at what is coming into the Trevallyn Dam, the water looks all right coming through Longford. The Longford levee bank system that has just been completed is going to reorganise the engineering of all that.

The fellow that I got involved with who was helping me and giving me all the information is the one who built those and there is 5 kilometres of levee system out there,

which engineers wouldn't have taken into account. In a big flood that is going to spread straight across Panshanger property. Well, it doesn't any more, it just comes straight down the river. With all those little engineering things something changes. Then rip it up and do it again.

Mr WING - It ought to be accommodated in the Tamar estuary then? More water to be accommodated?

Mr HALLAM - Yes, there should be.

Mr WING - Instead of spreading over.

Mr HALLAM - If we take out the silt we will have more water. The flow would be faster down through those areas than it would have been years ago when those levees weren't there. Those levees were put in there about four or five years ago.

Mr DEAN - For the purposes of *Hansard*, you are the owner of a restaurant that sits right on the Tamar River off Park Street?

Mr HALLAM - Yes.

Mr DEAN - How long have you been there?

Mr HALLAM - I bought that property in 1986.

Mr DEAN - Since you have been there has there been a continual increasing in the siltation?

Mr HALLAM - Most definitely. There used to be Etchell's, a yacht out on the yacht basin, it had roughly 1.8 to 2 metres clearance under it at low tide. Etchell draws about 1.8 metres and now it's sitting in the mud, so it has increased at least 2 metres in depth.

Mr WING - Over what period of time?

Mr HALLAM - It has been getting worse lately. It has increased more dramatically recently than in bygone years. One thing I would like to say about my restaurant is that I get the opportunity to talk to a lot of people. We sell fish - half the reason for visitors coming down to Tasmania is for fish and crayfish - and I get the opportunity to talk to a lot of people. About a week ago I was in my restaurant and there was a young couple. He was from New Zealand and she was from Burnie and they were living in Melbourne. They want to move to Tasmania and decided it was either Launceston or Burnie. They decided on Launceston but on seeing the river they changed their mind and they are going to move to Burnie. They just think it is a disgrace. At high tide I get the most beautiful comments but at low tide I get the world's worst comments.

Mr WING - And that is what it would have been last night. At low tide it was exposing a lot of silt.

Mr HALLAM - It turns tourists off.

CHAIR - Thank you very much for the effort you have gone to to be here today and for the submission you have put to us.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.

Mr GRAEME BEAMS, ALDERMAN, LAUNCESTON CITY COUNCIL, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Finch) - Thanks Graeme, for coming along.

Mr BEAMS - I felt I did have a duty after 14 years of chairing an authority to come here on behalf of the community and to say what I think perhaps could happen regarding the river.

I would sincerely hope that those with the power do act upon it because I do not come here knowing that it is just another meeting. I say that because over the years there have been numerous meetings regarding the Tamar River and numerous reports. I would like to think that this report will be the one that lays the foundations for a proper authority for the whole river. I see that authority as perhaps having three arms. One arm would be looking after the flooding, and not only of the City of Launceston. With climate change high on the agenda of this planet, this would include the lower reaches of the Tamar, such as Gravelly Beach and Swan Point. We do not know what is going to happen there; they are very low. I do not know whether the powers that be will look at the situation at Longford; we know for years that they have had some floods. This authority would need to cater for that by having perhaps a research arm. It would look into not only the health of the river but things that happen and things that need to be investigated. The most important one - though they are all important - is dredging, probably the topmost because we must dredge if we wish to avoid flooding. We all know that if we take the silt out of the river, particularly the channel, waters get away quicker and that allows the city to have breathing space, particularly in torrential rain.

I was at a conference recently and one of the chief executive officers of one of the river systems on the eastern seaboard made this comment. He said, 'I leave you here today with this promise. It will rain again. I can't tell you when'. He was from south-east Queensland and, boy, have they copped it. He must have had a bit of foresight about the millions of dollars of damage that has done. This could be replayed here if we turn our backs on the river.

It is going to need to be funded properly to do its tasks. It is unacceptable in this day and age that a large city in Tasmania, the only city that provides money for dredging in the State, provides \$250 000 and some other necessary funding for different areas that Parks attend to such as logs et cetera that occasionally get in the way. I really do not think that is acceptable to the ratepayers because the city council does not have any control or authority over the river. The river does belong to the State but there is also a higher authority over that, the province of the Commonwealth of Australia. To my way of thinking, the Australian Government has a role.

In the last couple of years \$1 billion was found for the Murray River. It may be a long and a big river and runs through a lot of municipalities but the Tamar River to Tasmanians is just as important and should be placed in the same category and on the same agenda. It appears to me that there is a little bit of favouritism, simply because that river has had so much written and so much spoken about it over the centuries since this country was founded. When I look at the third oldest city and find it is trying its hardest

to provide funds, with the assistance of the State Government, to keep this river viable, to me that is not acceptable.

Since UTRIA was reignited in 1989 we have set out to do exactly what the task was - to keep the channels clear and keep the waters flowing. We did that, I believe, reasonably successfully. We have had a couple of incidents where there has been a lot of water in the river. Although I am not an engineer, I think that dredging assisted the massive flows down Cataract Gorge. In the last few years we have not had them. I think the last flow was about four years ago in September. The flow was very fierce and it shifted approximately 300 000 cubic metres of silt in a few days.

If I go back to the 1950s and 1960s and before, you will find that the port authority was shifting anywhere between 200 000 and 300 000 tons of silt out of the river per annum. When one looks at that and when one looks at the money we received and the opinions that were written as to what we should do and the amount we should take out of the river, a minimum of 30 000 was suggested but we may be required to take 90 000 cubic metres. We were never given the funds to take 90 000. Doesn't that strike you as funny? Why would you do that? But they did it.

Mr WING - Sad rather than funny.

Mr BEAMS - Maybe someone was pulling our legs. But we accepted the challenge and I think we have done it successfully. The committee, in its wisdom, were able to get it widened a bit to look at the river edges, the beautification and the old derelict ships et cetera and try to do something about the North Esk. None of you in this room would like us to go back to 1990 because the South Esk River was a disgrace to all of us. Today, it is our pride and joy. It is the gem in the crown of Launceston with the Cataract Gorge and it certainly drives tourism. I speak regularly to business people around the river and they have indicated to me that it is an economic driver. I know, by talking to people in the Chamber of Commerce and elsewhere that it is a great economic driver for this city. Without it we would be much the poorer and I venture to say we would be going backwards as a city.

We must look after it and improve it. I do have some plans further on for North Bank that I believe will double the amount of people we get there now and the amount of investment in that area. That, in turn, will create an economic boost to our region, not only Launceston but also to the Tamar Valley, particularly with the wines now becoming part of the Tamar River and, of course, the tourist boats that use it.

The State has to have the will. I am not saying it did not have the will. I am very grateful for former Premier, the late Jim Bacon, because I had some private meetings with him in his office and, to me, he was always happy to assist with the money that he had available. It was said on many occasions, 'You remember, Graeme, you are vying with health, with education, with our nurses, with our police force, with our roads', and on and on. I realised that, yes, it was a pretty big task for me to asking for more money always from the State. But to his credit they did find twice, when he first came to power, that after a few months he increased the funding by \$40 000 per annum and again later that was increased by another \$40 000 per annum. I would have liked a lot more because I could see a bigger picture but I accept that we had somebody, particularly at that time - 1998-99 - trying to get our State moving forward again. Where do I see the money

coming from in the future? In my last report, Mr Chairman - and forgive me, I forgot it - I think this -

CHAIR - This is the UTRIA report?

Mr BEAMS - Yes, it is all being posted to you. I think Ivan was given his at the council the other day. I have made a call for the Federal Government to have input. I do not believe they can run away from it and say it is a State issue. I was very disappointed to hear the Federal member for Bass state that - I think it was perhaps in the papers some time back - the Tamar River was a State issue. It is not. As I have said to you, we are part of the Commonwealth of Australia. The Commonwealth might have States and those States have certain controls but those controls are always if necessary overridden - I have just talked about the Murray. So to my way of thinking, if we are to progress this matter, Mr Chairman, there has to be a concerted effort by all members of parliament in this State - both sides, three sides - and the upper House - your Legislative Council - to sit down and talk to the Federal authorities about this.

I cannot foresee what is going to happen expect to tell you that costs have started to escalate, particularly because we were under six-year contracts and they have just finished and we are entering new ones. I am not there anymore so the new authority will do that. I understand there is quite a significant increase in funding that will be required. The funding at the moment will take less silt out. That is what I am saying to you. So if we are to have the same funding and expect to take the same amount of silt out, we will not be able to do it. It will fall below the benchmark that was originally written by Mr Foster. I believed his reports were pretty much spot-on and they have been found to be spot-on by the latest inquiry that UTRIA was part of.

I might just add we decided to put some money towards this not only because we were frugal with our expenses and what we were doing but to take on board the comments of the community, from many, many people through the radio, through the written media so that some weight could be given to some of the suggestions and comments, criticisms that were made. Having heard the first draft of the report, I have to say I am not surprised. It pretty much comes up with what Mr Foster said and what we were working with. I do not know what the final outcome will be. Nobody knows at this stage. But I can tell you this: just like it will rain again, we are going to need to get the silt out of the Tamar River. It is not going to come out itself. It will need somebody with a lot of vision, foresight, get-up-and-go to ensure that it happens because I would not like to see a void that happened when the port moved down to Bell Bay, and we know that was the right move because of the major ships that come in and it is Tasmania's major port but there was a void for 20-odd years when nobody did anything. Of course, in that time all of you would be aware the silt ran amok. It went mad. I guess it is like a cancer; if you don't treat it, it will take over, and the silt took over. We started behind scratch, as the bike-riders say, and we have been trying to catch up ever since but because of the extra years of drought, particularly the last three years, we could see that it was getting on top and we were increasing our output of dredging to try to keep up. It was very difficult. I think in the last year in my report, that I didn't bring, or 18 months, we took over 180 000 out. We did three years, as recommended by Mr Foster, and better - almost four - so that is the point we have reached today.

I cannot stress enough that the Federal Government does have a role to play economically. If this city were to flood, the council would not have a hope of being able to refinance Invermay. People have put figures on it. My estimation in today's numbers could be anywhere between \$100 million and \$250 million, depending on how much damage it did and the cost of the infrastructure, and we know that does not just mean the roads; we know that means the powerlines, the telecommunication lines, the sewerage lines and the water lines. It means everything. Mr Chairman, I am aware of the time and I will move on.

I put it to you that a river is like a road. The State Government looks after the road, whether you have any thoughts or otherwise from Hobart to Launceston and Launceston to Burnie, and it keeps it in repair. I do not think it asks the Launceston council to look after a share down to Campbell Town or Campbell Town to do that because it owns it and it looks after it.

The Launceston City Council runs Aurora Stadium. It costs a lot of money but we pay the maintenance bill every year which is quite a few hundred thousand dollars - very high but we own it. The Tamar River belongs to the Government, State and Federal. Why should the ratepayers be asked to put in money to fund it?

I understand why it was done. It was done originally back in 1989 to get something done. Of course you move forward, you do not sit back on your hands or nothing would have been done and we would not have the river today and we would be the poorer for it. As I indicated, our city would be falling backwards; tourism possibly would bypass Launceston because it is tied in pretty much closely to the Cataract Gorge and the walk from the first basin down to the coffee shops around the sea port. That is how the development has occurred. Of course the GST that now is one of the key components of funding flows into State coffers.

I won't bash the State Government, as I have indicated. I think they have tried. The politicians in northern Tasmania have raised this issue; you yourself, Mr Chairman, on my behalf raised a couple of issues that we progressed. But they seem to stop and it is not for the lack of trying by northern politicians. They have sang out and rattled the can, if I can use that term, but it does not seem to go too much further than that. That is why I called, particularly in the north, for a bipartisan approach where we all get together, we go as one and we try to get the funding for it. If we don't then I am going to feel very sad for the Tamar River and I would think that I have wasted 14 years of my life in working not only to try to get it up to a reasonable standard - it was always a big ask. I guess it was like somebody wanting the Flowery Gully Football Club to become AFL premiers. You cannot do it if you do not have the funding available. So that is about where it is.

There was something I was going to finish up on. You would be aware - and I think it is incumbent on me to tell you - that many times I went to Canberra and paid the expenses to get funding for the Tamar River out of my own personal funds. I am not here to sing my praises, I am here to say I did not only say I had a commitment, I also put my money where my commitment was and I am pleased to say, and you are well aware, that my lobbying ended up with us getting \$3 million for hard edging and also a commitment from the Government of the day for \$6 million, and that commitment was again given to me recently at the luncheon that UTRIA had where the opposition has \$6 million available to enhance the river edges at North Bank. I think we did achieve something

and if one man can do that, I am sure 15 or 20 people can do a lot more and I hope they can.

CHAIR - Mr Beams, it might be a good time to open up to questions, but I just make the point that if you are looking for some recompense for that expense that you incurred, we are having trouble finding 20 cents for Mr Edwards for the money he lost over his snooker game, so if we cannot find his 20 cents, I do not think we are going to be able to help you out much.

Mr BEAMS - Mr Chairman, I would like to put it on the record that I will finance that 20 cents, as I have done always financially.

Laughter.

CHAIR - Some questions, please.

Mr DEAN - Graeme, with your background and your vast knowledge of the river and where we are going with the river and you are currently aware of the position of the Launceston Flood Authority, if a statutory authority is the way to go, a single State authority, should we still retain the LFA and if we do retain that, how would the two work together and how would the two fit in?

Mr BEAMS - Thanks, Ivan, that is a good one and I appreciate that. That is part of my umbrella before I came here today - three arms. You would certainly need that but you would increase its powers - well, it is a flood authority - to monitor, to keep an eye on the lower reaches. Why would you want one for down there? The Launceston Flood Authority ought to be empowered to look at other issues if need be. Remember, I did say, Mr Chairman, after UTRIA got going, we did ask for a widening with the Government to do some beautification works. Well, actually they meant tidy up some of the river areas. Whilst we did not spend money ourselves so much, we were able to facilitate projects through the various councils.

Mr DEAN - Do you mean that we should have just the one single State authority to do the lot? Is that what you are saying?

Mr BEAMS - To do the lot but it would have three arms. If you do not do that, you are going to have forever and a day another three or four groups out there - we have had Friends of the Tamar; that could still operate like the Rotary clubs do but I am talking about the research we have through NRM at the moment -

CHAIR - And the new TEER program.

Mr BEAMS - That ought to be in there because that is research and that could be in, Ivan, what you are suggesting but there would be an overall chairman. Let us stop any nonsense about it being part-time; it would want a secretary, a personal assistant and it would want one person, a chief executive officer, overseeing it. Then the committee would be called, as indeed committees are called because there is someone to do that.

CHAIR - How big a committee do you think it should be, a statutory authority?

Mr BEAMS - You don't need a lot of people but you would perhaps need various components of the river. I wouldn't put any more than a dozen on it, and I say that straightaway. You might need one from local government, one from State government, and you might try to get somebody from the Federal Government here in some way. You might look at the Hydro having somebody there, because of the dam. You would possibly want a couple of community people on there - I don't think you need any more. It needs to be can-do people with engineering experience, people that will get up and do something. Let's not have it if it is going to be a club. Did anyone here read the report on New Orleans? It was a club! They used to sit down and talk about their investments and go off for two-hour lunches.

Mr WING - You and UTRIA are to be highly commended for the very good work you did with limited funding and for your persistence over 14 years in leadership.

Mr BEAMS - Thank you, Don.

Mr WING - It is obvious from what you have said, and I think was obvious before, that you needed more funding and you could have done more if you had more funding. Would you have found it an advantage if you'd had more power, more authority to make decisions extending beyond the boundaries of the Launceston municipal area, as proposed by a single authority to be appointed by the State if that happens?

Mr BEAMS - Probably, but with power comes funding. They go hand-in-hand. We got \$40 000 extra about ten years back when we signed an agreement because we were a committee and then we became an authority. It was decided to send us down to Tamar Island instead of the tail ridge and to go out to Boat Bridge instead of this North Esk area. So for \$40 000 we got a lot of extra work put on us, but we didn't quibble about that. We saw it as goodwill and maybe some real money would be forthcoming.

I think you should not take any less than 300 000 cubic metres out a year. I think that would cost very close to \$5 million and it should be on a 10-year basis. Then there should be perhaps an ongoing inquiry at that time in assessing the work. It might be a peer group that is set up to assess what is done. To take any less than 300 000 cubic metres of silt out is really pointless. Even today we can see what is happening. The channel is closing but it is still available for the same amount of shipping that it once had. I noticed a very large ship - the *Sorrento* - has been coming here for a number of years to be refurbished. It was refurbished the other week and it sailed and it came up to Kings Wharf. So the channel is fine but it is the mud banks. That is what you need to attack next, I believe.

CHAIR - You referred a couple of times to Professor Foster and the dredging and the amount that he felt should be taken out. Did he say that 300 000 cubic meters should be removed? Are you suggesting that he put a figure on what should be removed from the Tamar basin to keep pace with the amount that might be coming in there?

Mr BEAMS - I will leave this with you.

'The average rate of siltation is estimated to be approximately 30 000 cubic metres per year, however variations in this rate from 10 000 per year to 90 000 cubic metres per year can be expected as a result of variations in river

flows. This is mainly related to the quantity of silt brought up the river by tides which play a crucial role in the rate of siltation. This can vary from 300 tonnes per tide - 600 tonnes a day - during low flood conditions to zero during minor freshets.'

With the funding available by the authorities at the time it was considered to fund for just over the minimum, which, as time went on, started to become unachievable. Because of this we were pretty hard taskmasters and we had some very good contract prices. On many occasions we were able to take more out. If you work it out, we took over 1.5 million tonnes in the 19 years we were operational. That is almost 100 000 tonnes a year.

Mr WING - I take it that you are in favour of the State Government appointing a single statutory authority to deal with problems associated with the Tamar estuary and the Esk rivers, on condition that it is adequately funded and that there are people on it with the requisite experience and expertise?

Mr BEAMS - Yes, that would be a fair thing but this hinges on the Federal Government being participants. I really must stress that because it will go nowhere otherwise.

Mr WING - In the three categories - flooding, research and dredging - with emphasis on those?

Mr BEAMS - Yes.

In conclusion, if nothing comes of this committee and if funding is not sufficient to keep the channel open, then northern Tasmania will be the loser. Eventually that will be Tasmania because in this era of travel, with bigger and bigger jets and more people coming to our State and cheaper fares, we could be off the visitation map. Also, how would the businesses beside the river today maintain their throughput and business? It is essential for the viability of our city, the economic viability of the Tamar Valley, that we ensure that this takes place and that the Federal Government becomes involved and stops running away from some of the outer areas of Australia that certainly need assistance - not handouts. They need assistance because it is far too big for a local council to be involved. I think, wearing my UTRIA hat for the last time, the council has done an outstanding job over that time in contributing about \$5.5 million of the approximate \$10.5 million or \$11 million that was spent on the river, the rest being the State and of course West Tamar Council. We thank them and the port for their contributions in the early days. They threw in about \$75 000, I understand.

Mr DEAN - It's a quick question, and has almost been answered in that explanation. To what extent do you believe that the Launceston City Council should be accepting the responsibility for the Tamar River, the siltation, the levees and everything else? To what extent should the ratepayers of Launceston pick up the responsibility for that?

Mr BEAMS - Very minor. I do believe that we need to be a party. If you asked me to put a monetary figure on it, I would perhaps say \$100 000 would be a reasonable contribution, and that would be certainly a lot down now, only because it allows us to have some say.

Mr DEAN - It's been suggested I think that only 14 per cent of the catchment area falls within the Launceston City Council area, so perhaps a reasonable figure would be 14 per cent of what it costs. A matching percentage.

Mr BEAMS - Yes. I am aware of that figure, and I just guess that I reached a figure that I thought it could. I don't really see it as being part of the Launceston City Council's budget, really. As I explained, I think succinctly, roads in the State are funded and maintained by the State Government, we fund our sports grounds and we may get grants. Why is the Launceston City Council, the only council in Tasmania out of 29, putting \$250 000 per annum into the Tamar River? It is a strain on ratepayers, and it's going to be a bigger strain in the future because a lot more will be required.

CHAIR - Graeme, a point to conclude on. We thank you very much for coming and giving evidence today. You are welcome to stay if you care to.

Mr BEAMS - I have to go out and earn a little bit of money to pay the 20 cents. Mr Chairman, thank you, I hope it all goes well with your meeting and I hope this meeting has wheels and it does progress because it is essential economically to this city, believe me.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.

Mr JAMES COLLIER WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Finch) - James, thanks very much for taking the time to join us here today. You know our terms of reference for the select committee. I am sure you won't have much trouble in making a presentation to us and then we'll ask questions of you.

Mr COLLIER - I understand the select committee is inquiring into the management of three rivers. I think it's generally accepted -

CHAIR - The rivers and the catchments.

Mr COLLIER - The rivers and the catchments. I think it's generally accepted that the river system is pretty sick anyway, so having said that I presume you've all had copies of my written submission. Could I just emphasise to you gentlemen - and Alderman Beams, I am sure would be most appreciative of this - how close my written submission is to Alderman Beams' verbal submission. I think I would like to emphasise that because we have a lot of ground in common. He mentioned the Murray-Darling, as I have done; he is very strong on the fact that any proposed authority should comprise the Commonwealth representative, as I have made the point in my written submission. So from two people, within a few minutes of each other, you are getting a very similar story.

Mr WING - You've obviously been working together.

Laughter.

Mr COLLIER - Would you like to go through my written submission, would you like me to read it out to you?

CHAIR - It's up to you.

Mr COLLIER - Well, I have other things as well but I just want to emphasise my written submission. I would also like to emphasise that I have stated that we do not just have a siltation problem, there is a whole heap of problems, one of which is very important and that is public health, which is being ignored at the moment. This river is seriously contaminated with E.coli, 20 per cent to 40 per cent in some sections. That is not just me saying that, that is from the Federal Government's State of the Tamar Report, which came out last July or August. We have serious problems and they need urgent attention.

As I understand it, we are here to discuss whether there should be a single statutory authority to replace what is currently in existence and UTRIA has now gone and has been replaced by the Launceston Flood Authority with the responsibility for siltation and flood management problems.

I think this problem, as I have mentioned in my written submission, is so big it should be taken out of the hands of the Launceston City Council. It is completely beyond them. It has proved, over the years, that they have known, as have the State Government, for 10 years that this river is pretty crook. I can give you a copy of the front page of the *Examiner*. I have three copies, one for each of you and I am sorry I do not have one for Mr Secretary so you will have to share it. So there we have it on record that the Tamar

and the upper reaches of the Tamar are pretty crook and those responsible for it have known for 10 years and today, the river is worse than it has ever been.

Mr WING - We have probably known for almost 30 years.

Mr COLLIER - I am sure if I did further research I would find it going back for a lot more than that. I know I can go back to 1996. This is graphic evidence that it was raised as a major issue way back in 1998.

Mr WING - There is a similar photograph but it had Alderman Chipp in it on the front page of the *Examiner*, in May 1982, with a very good photo of all the silt.

Mr COLLIER - I rest my case. If we do not do anything now, what is it going to be like in 20 years' time? As Associate Professor Brian Jones, Wollongong University, said, just a couple of years ago, the Tamar Basin will vanish. It really will, that is a scientific fact.

I will follow on from that and say that the Launceston City Council, through its management and senior executives, have expressed a negative attitude towards the river and its problems, seeing it as a little bit of housekeeping and expressing no desire or intention at all to rectify the problem. Here, again, are copies from the *Launceston Examiner*, where one of the council executives said, 'The river was always described as a narrow little mud-infested section. The council was operating a maintenance housekeeping program and was unable to solve the problem.' Further on in the article he said, 'We can't solve the problem and we are not intending to.' That reflects very poorly on the Launceston City Council and just seems to express a desire that the problem is beyond them and that they really have no intention of solving it.

Mr WING - Not necessarily the whole of the council.

Mr COLLIER - Whatever I say is not intended as a personal attack on anybody or any individual within or outside the Launceston City Council, which is why I am not mentioning names. I prefer to keep it as the Launceston City Council.

CHAIR - Sometimes, too, quotes can be taken out of context and it may not be what was literally spoken.

Mr COLLIER - No, but, of course, not being there, all I can do is rely on what is reported in the media and I was very sad, as were a number of other people when they heard that report.

The Launceston City Council have shown themselves to be technical incompetent and they have responded to the collapse of the retaining wall in the North Esk River which, as was mentioned earlier, was well over \$3 million. It has since fallen over.

Mr WING - The wall has fallen over?

Mr COLLIER - Half of it has disappeared. There is a small section remaining of the lower half. You can see what is left but that is about one third of the lower section. So, the public begin to wonder just what is going on. The wall was announced with a great deal of publicity and very close to its completion the top section fell over and I think it has

been pushed into the river. Various sections of it have been removed but that is \$3 million of public money.

Mr WING - Do you have any theory as to why that fell over?

Mr COLLIER - No, I don't, but I know certain people queried whether it should have been put there in the first place. Mr Ian Routley, a former city alderman and a member of the Tamar Estuary Working Group, queried whether the proper research had been done before the wall was even constructed, that there was some sort of fault line underneath the river there. So there were a number of queries about -

Mr DEAN - Mr Chairman, I want to butt in at this stage to say that this is a contracted position that the Launceston City Council took out with the State Government and that matter is currently being investigated by insurance companies and so on to establish the cause of it so you can't blame the Launceston City Council for something of that nature.

Mr COLLIER - I am not, but various people have questioned whether adequate research was done before it was even constructed.

Mr DEAN - Not necessarily by the Launceston City Council, that is the point I am making. There is an insurance investigation into it too.

Mr COLLIER - Okay. Certainly Ian Routley who is an ex-member of the Launceston City Council and a member of the Tamar Estuary Working Group was very concerned that inadequate research had been done into that.

Irrespective it has happened, it has fallen over. The cause is yet to be determined.

Mr WING - It was a muddy bank, wasn't it? I was told by an expert engineer some years ago, in the mid-1980s, that you cannot put weight on the muddy banks of our river system because they will sink and then come up somewhere else, and that expert is sitting in this room.

Mr COLLIER - I have heard similar reports too which, as I say, highlights or brings into query the confidence.

Could I also say the Launceston City Council in respect of the river and the river only does not have the confidence of the community as witnessed in this letter to the Editor.

Mr WING - Do you think the City Council does have the main responsibility?

Mr COLLIER - No. I think they possibly do maybe through what was UTRIA and it has now been put over to the Launceston Flood Authority but I don't think they should have ever been put in that position in the first place.

Mr WING - No, it is a State Government responsibility surely -

Mr COLLIER - Yes.

Mr WING - and they are doing their best in view of lack of government taking up the responsibility.

Mr COLLIER - Yes. As I said in my written submission, it really is beyond the scope of the Launceston City Council. It should be at least a State authority and it requires Commonwealth involvement for a variety of reasons, intervention assistance and funding, as I state in the report. It is inevitable.

As a follow-up to that, we have heard of about Professor Doug Foster's report. Can I please emphasise to you gentlemen that Professor Foster's report was 1986. We are in the year 2008. Things have changed terribly in the last 20-odd years. Associate Professor Brian Jones' report I think was 2003 and times have moved on since Professor Foster's 1986 report.

CHAIR - Do you think, Jim, that the GHD study that is being done now into siltation will bring us up-to-date with current conditions?

Mr COLLIER - Not so much the GHD but I am very hopeful that the NRM-TEER program will. In fact I have just been invited to attend a workshop on that on 17 December. So as regards the source and the causes of the sediment, I think we should be looking more to NRM. The GHD-Launceston City Council report may come up with more practical solutions, but before we can really solve it we have to find out what is causing it. It is like going to the doctor. The first thing he tries to do is diagnose you and find out what is causing your problem and until we do that, we are behind the eight ball.

CHAIR - Would NRM be making a submission to GHD in respect of this issue?

Mr COLLIER - I really have no idea. I am sorry, I don't. I would hope that they would be but I don't have any idea. I understand that part of their TEER program is to do a full study from catchment to the estuary to try to identify the source of the problem and the amount of it and maybe come up with some recommendations to solve it but basically that would be the GHD problem.

CHAIR - What you are suggesting is that could be a good supplement to what GHD is doing?

Mr COLLIER - They all work in with each other as this one works in with each other and it is good to see it happening. I feel very heartened that the city's rivers are getting so much attention now. It is fantastic to see it happening. It is great.

Mr DEAN - For the purposes of *Hansard* again, Mr Chairman, would Mr Collier give us a little bit of background in relation to his knowledge of the river, in fairness to all us. He has lived on the river.

Mr COLLIER - I still live on the river and I have been sailing on the river since 1973, apart from a 10-year break from 1992 to 2002 -

Mr DEAN - This is for the purposes of *Hansard* and getting it on the record.

Mr COLLIER - I understand - when we left the scene, as it were, we sailed off around the world but that is immaterial really. When we came back we found it was a completely different river to what it was when we left and that is the reason I got so upset. But we have been actively boating on the river since 1973 and I permanently live on the river. The river is my backyard.

Mr DEAN - I thank you for that.

Regarding the Launceston Flood Authority that has recently taken over from UTRIA, are you of the belief that there is a place for that authority to still remain in place if there is a single State statutory body becoming involved as well? Do you think the two could work in tandem?

Mr COLLIER - No, I think there should be one single authority with overall management. That is what I say in writing there.

Mr DEAN - Of the levees and the lot?

Mr COLLIER - Of everything - the overall management of the upper reaches of the Tamar River. If you have various little bodies, once again you will have the old problem of too many bureaucrats all fighting each other and it will achieve nothing. We want one single authority totally responsible for everything - flood management, siltation, pollution, water flow, everything. It is all in writing there.

Mr DEAN - I notice that you have indicated in your submission that there needs to be State representation on that and Federal representation. What other representation do you think would be necessary on that authority?

Mr COLLIER - There should be somebody from the State, local government and I think the local government representative should be from the Launceston City Council, the problem is in their area, and there should be somebody from the Federal but there should also be two members of the local community with experience on the rivers, be they boating, be they recreational of any description but two members of the local community, non-technical experts but users of the river. I estimate that there only needs to be five people. If you make it too big it is going to be unwieldy, keep it to five and they can have access to all the engineering and research facilities of the State Government that they need.

Mr DEAN - They can call on that as they need it.

Mr COLLIER - Exactly right. Keep it small and it will work far better. Expand the committee and there will be too much discussion going on and not enough action.

Mr DEAN - Thanks for that.

Mr WING - You have read the Foster Report?

Mr COLLIER - Only sections of it. It is very deep and involved and I would not profess to understand it all.

Mr WING - Yes, and I understand the point that you make that there have been a lot of changes since that was written, particularly in farming methods and forestry and matters such as that. Are you in a position to say whether or not the thrust of Professor Foster's report remains valid?

Mr COLLIER - I really cannot see how it can. There have been so many changes within Tasmania with forestry, with agriculture, with Hydro Tasmania and water flows and drought. There have been numerous changes in well over 20 years of Professor Foster's report that really we should no longer refer to it whatsoever.

Mr WING - I see. Even this morning three witnesses have referred to that favourably in matters that seem to be still relevant on the face of it.

Mr COLLIER - They are quite entitled to their views. People say to me that increased water flow through the Gorge will not make any difference from a technical perspective but, gentlemen, if you care to join me on the banks of the Tamar River, I will run a garden hose into the river and show you what just a little bit of water pressure will do. It is inevitable that an increased flow through the Gorge will instantaneously improve the situation of the Tamar River, and for the purposes of *Hansard*, I am now holding up a photograph showing what the Tamar Basin looked like when the power station shut down in 2003 and the water flowed through, and this all happened within a few hours of the power station shutting down.

Mr WING - Would it be much trouble for you to let us have one copy of that at a later date to take into evidence?

Mr COLLIER - I think you've all got one in your record, but I will send additional copies.

Mr WING - You would be aware of the authority that was appointed to deal with the pollution problems with the Thames River in London?

Mr COLLIER - Yes.

Mr WING - Do you have any detailed knowledge of that authority? I don't know the correct name of it.

Mr COLLIER - No, I'm afraid I don't have any knowledge. I do know that it has cleaned up incredibly over recent years.

Mr WING - Obviously it has been very effective.

Mr COLLIER - Yes, whatever they have done has worked.

Mr WING - Do you know of any other similar authorities in your travels around the world that have been appointed to deal with problems similar to those experienced in the Thames River and in our river system here in northern Tasmania?

Mr COLLIER - No, I'm afraid not, the reason being that I was in blissful ignorance of the true state of our river until I came back. If I had known about it before I left, I would have paid more attention to some of the rivers, which include the Mississippi, the Rhone

and the Rhine and a whole heap of them. We travelled extensively through the waterways of Europe but unfortunately I was looking at them from a different perspective.

Mr WING - In conclusion, I would like to encourage you to continue the good campaign you have been mounting consistently on this issue.

Mr COLLIER - Thank you.

CHAIR - Any concluding comments, Jim?

Mr COLLIER - I would just re-emphasise that the river is sick and it needs more than just sitting around a table and talking about it. It really is a health issue and, I am appalled, a human health issue. I am appalled that there is no big noise being made about this, that the river is contaminated. I am sure you all heard what Les Baker of Gunns released, that it is seriously contaminated above recreational guidelines. Something has to be done pretty drastically. My answer to that is that immediately the Gorge flow is increased it will wash all that contamination away. That is on the record and it needs serious attention in respect of that.

The WITNESS WITHDREW.

Mr ED RIVERS VINCENT WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Finch) - Thanks very much, Ed, for joining us and taking the time to come here today. You obviously understand our terms of reference. Would you care to proceed, give us some background - to save you asking the question, Ivan - of your involvement with the river and then make your presentation and we will ask questions.

Mr VINCENT - I have been a very keen sailor and boating person since for most of my life, particularly for the last 50 years. Since 1968 I have been a regular sailor on the river, much more so over the last eight or 10 years since I have become a resident of Launceston. I am currently a member and committee member of the Tamar Yacht Club. I am also involved in running their power boat licensing scheme there with Master accreditation and I am involved with assisting in the junior training program, yacht race management et cetera there. I am an active member of the sailing fraternity on the river but I am not here representing the yacht club.

I have had a look at the letter here and my understanding of what we are talking about is the headwaters and tributaries of the Esk rivers and the Tamar estuary and the land which those waters drain.

Since the early 1800s and probably prior to that, man's activities have impacted on the river and the estuary. In the early 1800s lands and rivers were under at least the nominal control of the governor and the colonial administration, which in those days of course was based in Sydney and after 1825 it was based in Hobart. With representative government starting in Tasmania in 1852 after I think the Constitution Act of 1850, control of lands and rivers passed to what is now the Tasmanian Government where it has resided ever since. Since European settlement many activities have affected the river system - transport infrastructure, ports were one of the very early ones, and dredging commenced in the river in 1859.

Mr DEAN - 1859 was it? Back very early.

Mr VINCENT - It was 1859, according to my research. Of course roads, railways and, more recently, airports have all impacted on drainage patterns, run-off et cetera into the river system. Of course you then have farming and forestry with land clearing and dams, horticultural and silvicultural practices which have all contributed in some way to the system that we have today. After that, of course, there was power generation and the principal impact on the system there was the Hydro with the dam building, power station construction and water-course changes being the effects of the Hydro development in the river system that we are talking about. And more recently, of course, there is the thermal power down at Bell Bay. All of these things have had some impact, some major, some minor, on the river system leading up to what we have at the moment.

On top of that there is urban development such as streets, buildings, stormwater, sewerage and potable water reticulation that have all added another layer of impacts to the river system. Then we have the various activities associated with other industries and with tourism. All those activities are, ultimately, directly controlled by State Government, or through State Government departments or through State Government

instrumentalities or business units, in the case of Hydro. So we have the Rivers and Water Supply, the Lands department, Resource Planning at Bell Bay et cetera.

I am told that there are 25 State Government departments or instrumentalities that have an impact on decision making within the area that we are talking about. I have no reason to believe that that is untrue. In fact, I am surprised that it is that few.

I am sure that each of those has acted with what they perceived, at the time, was the best intentions, the best interests of the community at large, but with a focus on their own priorities and it must, with the benefit of hindsight and current knowledge, be said that some of those actions were less than optimal. However, there was no effective authority that existed with the skills and resources to manage the activities on a system-wide basis.

I think we now have a system that is in crisis. The evidence I use to support that statement is that we have regular reports of high E. coli counts in the river, particularly over the summer, and not all these are relating to the Tamar, some of these relate to the North Esk and the South Esk. Algal blooms are now a reasonably regular summertime occurrence in the Esk rivers when they close the river for recreation and for collection of potable water.

We have dramatically higher levels of siltation and they have degraded the ability of Launceston's flood mitigation schemes to cope with the relatively minor flooding. The siltation has reduced recreational capacity in the river as well as impacting adversely on tourism, and that is a vital industry in our region and State.

As a community and as a State, we are becoming aware of the impacts of climate change and, as a community and as a State, we will be forced to make changes in many areas of our lives as the climate change progresses further. A significant number of those adjustments will have an effect on our river system as it will have in all the other river systems around the State and around the country. In order that any adverse effects of those adjustments that we, as a society, need to make are minimised, there will need to be an adequately skilled and resources management authority for the entire catchment area, in my opinion.

It can only be achieved at at least a State Government level. I would suggest probably it will involve some involvement on a Federal level as well.

I haven't gone into specific details about siltation or any of those sorts of issues.

CHAIR - The issues and the problems.

Mr VINCENT - They are symptoms, in my opinion, of a much bigger issue. They are not the issue, they are symptoms of the issue. The whole management structure of the area needs to be addressed so that you can then deal with those symptoms.

Mr WING - Do you happen to know of any other situations in other parts of the world similar to the problems that we have here, and whether any authority suggested here has been appointed there?

Mr VINCENT - Certainly I am aware of the Thames situation where they had huge issues in that river, particularly in the estuary, but also in its upper reaches, to some extent. That is very much a river that has been hugely impacted over many hundreds of years by human activity. I can remember seeing TV reports about mutant fish floating in the Thames, not that many years ago, and essentially the river was ecologically almost dead. Now that situation has been changed around. It is certainly never ever going to become a pristine original stream as it was 2 000 years ago, nor will the Tamar, but they have been able to mitigate a lot of the adverse effects by catchment management.

I have had anecdotal comments about some of the work that's been done in Europe in some of the streams. I don't know how effective that has been and I can't recall the actual names of the rivers where there is some management work involved.

Mr WING - Thank you for that, and for your submission.

CHAIR - We have heard from previous witnesses in respect of the change they have seen on the Tamar River. I'm just wondering if you could recount some of your visual experiences in respect of what you have seen occur since 1968.

Mr VINCENT - In 1968, and even as recently as a couple of years ago, there was a coarse sandy beach in front of the Tamar Yacht Club. In the last six or eight months that has completely disappeared from view. That's not uncommon; at the end of a set of rapids you will find that the heavier particulate matter drops out of the water stream. Often at the bottom of a set of rapids in any river you will find a little sandy beach.

Mr DEAN - But you would be aware, wouldn't you, that that sandy beach was actually carted in; it was not there previously. The beach wasn't part of that river system, it was sand that was carted in. I did have the reasons for it and I can get the background on that, but are you aware of that?

Mr VINCENT - I have heard that said, but I have also heard people dispute that. They believed the depth of sand was significantly greater than -

Mr DEAN - That whole river has been changed; originally the Tamar River ran up as far as the detention base in Margaret Street. That was where the river ran to. All of that has been reclaimed. There's a debate about the beach, but I think the evidence is even included in the history of the river as having been carted in for a specific purpose.

Mr VINCENT - Certainly I have dug into that, literally, and there is a substantial depth of sand.

CHAIR - If you go into the Gorge through areas, there is that sandy material within the Gorge itself. So I don't doubt that some of it would have travelled down and settled down in that area.

Mr VINCENT - As far as siltation is concerned, obviously in my period even, in the last six or eight years, the navigable channel at anything other than high tide is significantly narrowed. I have a mooring in front of the Tamar Yacht Club. Six or seven years ago I had a 30-foot boat which drew 5 feet. At low tide it would swing on its mooring it. Nowadays that mooring buoy is out of the water, sitting on the mud about an hour to an

hour-and-a-half below low tide. So we are talking about something in the vicinity of at least 2 metres of extra mud at that spot now than there was six to seven years ago.

CHAIR - Any other observations, Ed?

Mr VINCENT - That's pretty much the way all the way down to certainly Rosevears. There is much more siltation all that way down. I think there have been contributing factors there. Rice grass I think has had an effect. It stabilised the banks which is what it was put there to do but it has also crept out and I think it has restricted water flow except at times of high-water flow and I think that may well have had an impact on siltation.

CHAIR - Talking about the limitations, you mentioned there that you train the juniors, help with the junior program, are there limitations in respect of the times you are able to use the area near the Tamar basin?

Mr VINCENT - Oh yes. We would be able to run a junior program every Saturday seven or eight years ago. We would avoid an hour either side of low tide but we had an eight-hour, 10-hour window where we could operate. So effectively every Saturday we would operate junior training in that area. Nowadays we have a window of about three-and-a-half hours where we can operate junior training, and we are talking about boats that draw a very small amount of water. So to have that fall within daylight hours just does not happen every Saturday and that has meant that we have transferred our junior sailing to Beauty Point.

CHAIR - So you have relocated your craft?

Mr VINCENT - Yes, we still do run some sailing in town, Kerry, we run the schools' teams racing; we run six nights of that prior to Christmas and usually six or eight after Christmas. We run other sailing programs but instead of being able to run them on a regular once-a-week basis we are restricted to once a fortnight and sometimes missing a cycle because of the timing associated with that after-school program.

Mr WING - Has there been a health problem with students being in the water at any time?

Mr VINCENT - Yes. We have had reports of one of our junior members suffering a reasonably serious illness which has been ascribed to the quality of the water.

Mr WING - Has there been any significant narrowing of the channel particularly evident at low tide between the Tamar Yacht Club premises and the Tamar Marine opposite and in that general vicinity?

Mr VINCENT - Oh yes, the channel would be probably a third to a quarter of the width it was six years ago.

Mr WING - Thank you.

Mr DEAN - It has been said by some that because of the major changes that have been made to this river - that is, a big part of Invermay, Inveresk is on the flood plain area and that was originally covered by water et cetera, particularly at high tide - these changes are just starting to really manifest themselves now; it has taken a long time for that to occur - in

other words, the changes to Invermay, the recovering of all that area, the recovering of the area up to the Margaret Street Detention Base and all of this is now starting to manifest itself. Do you have a position on that?

Mr VINCENT - I think there is a lot of substance behind that. We have had a lot of development not only within Launceston but outside Launceston which has contributed to the situation we are now facing. Certainly Invermay and all those things contributed to that. Some of them have added silt and some have taken away silt. Some of them have moved it and all those sorts of things. The biggest causal factor, I believe, with the siltation, as opposed to any of other issues - and there are a lot of other issues as well - is that with the siltation, all these things were having an impact, but whilst the PLA was dredging, which it did from 1859 through until 1980 something or other, at the volumes that it was removing each year, siltation was not an issue because it was taking out 100 000-odd cubic metres of silt per year and sometimes more. Now we have various studies that have been done and they are suggesting long-term averaging of 20 000 to 30 000 cubic metres and that, probably on the basis of evidence that was presented at the time those studies were done, was probably reasonably accurate.

I think the biggest impact we have now is that with the dry weather we have had, essentially the drought that we have had for the last few years, that siltation coming back up the river is at a much greater level than 20 000 to 30 000 cubic metres. If you go and stand at Stephenson's Bend and watch the in-flow, the roll of the tide, you can see this wall of mud coming up the river.

Mr DEAN - Are you supporting the single State statutory authority to take control of this whole thing? Do you see that as a right way to go as opposed to the Launceston City Council and the Launceston Flood Authority that is currently set up? Do you have a position on that?

Mr VINCENT - Very much so. I believe that almost all the contributing factors to the problems that are on the river are ultimately State Government responsibilities and, as a result, it is disingenuous, I suppose, of the State Government to abrogate responsibility for cleaning up the mess to a local government.

Mr DEAN - I appreciate that. But do you think that there probably could still be a place for the Launceston Flood Authority which has taken over from UTRIA, as you would probably be aware, or do you think we need simply the one body with some State authority and power to do this because, ultimately, it would have responsibility for the levees and the maintenance of the levees as well as the siltation and the flooding and everything else?

Mr VINCENT - I do not see the Flood Authority being the ultimate authority. I see this as having an umbrella over the whole of the management of the catchment area. The Flood Authority needs to exist to look after those areas where it has particular expertise but it needs to operate under that State Government authority rather than being a little orphan off on the side somewhere.

Mr DEAN - Thank you for your comments.

CHAIR - That is fine evidence, thanks very much. Is there anything you would like to say to conclude?

Mr VINCENT - I think that will do me.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.

Commodore RICHARD FISHER, TAMAR YACHT CLUB, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Finch) - Richard, thanks very much for joining us here this afternoon. You understand the terms of reference. If you would like to present a submission to us now we will ask questions when you finish.

Mr FISHER - Thank you, Kerry, and thank you, gentlemen, for spending the time to hear what I have to say. The Tamar Yacht Club was established in 1837 and we are the oldest yacht club in Australia. We have a membership base currently, depending on how you count it, of around about the 750 mark. We believe we are probably the largest boating organisation on the Tamar River.

Currently we have facilities both in Launceston and at Beauty Point. Our Beauty Point facilities started out as a mariner facility for storing larger boats in water but in recent times we built a new club house facility there and we transferred all the focus of our dinghy activities downriver. That has been a strategic decision and it is a very important point, I believe, of the strategic decision of the Tamar Yacht Club to move downriver because we understand that the siltation problems will not be fixed in the short to medium-term future in Launceston.

CHAIR - So you would say it is because of silt in the Tamar Basin near your establishment?

Mr FISHER - Yes.

CHAIR - You have moved from there because of the limitations to Beauty Point?

Mr FISHER - Yes. I will also point out that it is part of our constitution that we will maintain a presence in Launceston. We have no aim to give up our premises in Launceston and we will always maintain a boating presence in Launceston. The financial impact, I believe, of the decision to relocate a lot of our sailing activities to Beauty Point would conservatively be in the order of \$500 000 to \$750 000 just in terms of building clubhouse facilities and providing transportation for various boats and dinghies that we run.

With regard to our Launceston facilities, we run a clubhouse there, which is a social-type clubhouse. We have bar facilities; we have a lot of conference facilities there. We run a slip yard for our members to service their boats and we are one of the few slip yards left on the Tamar River. I believe there are only two not-for-profit organisations running slip yards, those being ourself and the Port Dalrymple Yacht Club. I think that the commercial slip yards will find it harder and harder to operate not only because of the slip-yard regulations but because of the ability to access deeper-draught boats into the Tamar Yacht Basin. We figure we have two slipways. One we call the Traverse which we use to bring boats of about the 15 tonne to 20 tonne mark out of the water - the traditional racing yacht-type berth.

The other slipway that we run is our main slip which is a single-use-only slip. We are pulling out more and more fishing boats as it becomes more and more difficult for those commercial operators to access the other commercial slips on the river. We have jetties

and pontoons within the river and we are now starting to be severely hampered in our use of those pontoons and jetty facilities merely by the influx of siltation. We do have a dinghy-launching ramp. Again, we are hampered with that. Realistically we can only get a sailing dinghy in and out of the river probably two to two-and-a-half hours either side of high water. That in turn translates into us being only capable of using the river and yacht basin on every second week because of the nature of the tides moving forward by an hour every day. We used to conduct some keelboat racing in the yacht basin and Home Reach. That is now all but curtailed.

There is very, very limited opportunity to race keelboats. I might add that that has been even more severely hampered at the moment by the nature and method of dredging that the current dredging contractor is using with flooding pipes and so forth. Our only dinghy racing that we conduct in the yacht basin now is our schools team racing. That is a sporting activity that we offer to a lot of the schools within the area and we see that as a huge benefit to the schools. We are targeting the late primary into secondary school children and unfortunately again we can only get on the water about once every two weeks now with that activity. So if you consider that we can only probably sail for six months of the year at best, due to weather, and then take out half that again, then take a little bit of school holidays, the opportunity for us to deliver training and sailing into the schools is severely limited by the siltation of the river.

We used to conduct a lot of dinghy training on the yacht basin because it was safe and secure for young children to go out into. We now find that because of the large gaps of when they will be able to sail we do not deliver our sail training to the juniors in Launceston anymore. That is all conducted downriver and it is imposing costs on families. I am sure there are multiple families that simply cannot attend due to the need to travel every Saturday down there rather than being able to do it in Launceston. We have swing moorings in the yacht basin. The Tamar Yacht Club has the control of the yacht basin in terms of moorings on MAST's behalf. We also have a number of piles in the yacht basin and the swing moorings are limited to 30-foot boats and the piles are anything up to 45, 50-foot boats. What we have found is that less and less demand has occurred for the swing moorings due to the fact of the mud. The impact of the mud on the swing moorings in effect is that if a boat with a deep keel, a thin keel, happens to rest transverse to the wind as the tide goes out and it settles, it can have a huge adverse effect on the boat as the tide completely drains away. We can have boats falling over in the mud and so forth.

CHAIR - Can you explain this swing mooring?

Mr FISHER - A large weight on the bottom, with a chain and floating board, so it is just a traditional mooring, if you like.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr FISHER - As I said, we offer a number of piles in the river. In conjunction with UTRIA, about 12 or 18 months ago, we removed upwards of 50 piles north of the Tamar Rowing Club. We removed those partly, it would be fair to say, because they were starting to become old and decrepit but the primary reason for removal was that the demand, because of the mud in that area, had completely taken away the need to have those piles there.

The limited number of piles that we have left certainly have boats on them but the ability for club members to access their boats is probably limited to around about three hours either side of high water so not only has it become an inconvenience but, potentially, it becomes a safety hazard as well in that if somebody happened to be on their boat, stuck there when the tide is out and had a medical emergency, there is currently no way of retrieving that person from those boats. We, as a club, see that as a risk so the removal of the piles was a way of removing that risk issue for our club.

We, as a yacht club, strongly believe that a single authority is very, very appropriate for dealing with the Tamar River and the North and South Esk.

I would say that we have seen a significant build-up of mud and silt in recent years and that build-up prevents travelling all the way on slipways to the end of the carriageways.

I have already mentioned the current dredging regime that is taking place and the management of the boat that they are using severely limits navigation within the yacht basin, not only at low tide but even at high tide as well.

We do have safety concerns about people drowning in the mud. We have seen people fall from boats into the mud and there is no way of standing up in it. You literally have to swim in the mud, it is so liquid, and I believe that it may only be a matter of time before either a sailor or a rower is severely incapacitated or even dies as a result of encroaching silt.

Mr DEAN - It is an interesting area, that one, and others have raised it. I guess we've been lucky.

Mr FISHER - We've been very lucky. I can personally attest to about three years ago when one Sunday afternoon I was sitting in Trevallyn looking at the bend opposite the tailrace. It was dead low tide, and a jet skier lost control of his jet ski and ran probably 40 or 50 metres onto the mud on the inside of the bend and he literally had no way of getting off that mud.

Mr WING - So what happened there, Richard?

Mr FISHER - In that instance, we watched him try to swing his jet ski off it. We saw a large pleasure cruiser come along that literally backed up to the edge of the mud and they threw him a rope. I would have told the fellow to stay on his jet ski. They threw him a rope, they managed to tow him off over a period of half an hour and, actually at that time, the pleasure cruiser must have sucked mud into their exhaust or their water intake and that became another casualty of the mud.

So I do see it as a risk to drowning.

CHAIR - Is there any consideration by the person doing the dredging of your activities at the Tamar Yacht Club? Do they check with you as to what sort of activities you have going and whether they will be in the way or hamper what you are doing?

Mr FISHER - They have never checked on our activities, as such, but they have advised of the areas they are intending to move into. So they have certainly ahead what will be coming into this section of the basin but the area they are working in doesn't necessarily relate to the location of their floating or partly submerged pipes. They are working at the moment adjacent to Home Point but if have a look at the pipes, they head north right down almost as far as the synchro lift. They are certainly a navigation hazard. Only last weekend we had to shorten the Tamar Valley Classic to a pile adjacent to the synchro lift whereas ordinarily we would come through and finish at Home Point purely because the width of the channel was restricted not only because of the mud but because of the dredge and we deemed it to be an inappropriate risk to boats to come through there so we shortened our race because of that. That is the first time in 21 years that we have had to do so for that reason.

CHAIR - Was it the same reason 21 years ago?

Mr FISHER - That is when we started the race.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr FISHER - It would be fair to say that until recently the yacht club has probably viewed the Launceston City Council as the responsible authority that we should or shouldn't deal with in the case of siltation or anything to do with the river.

It would also be fair to say that the club has been noticeably quiet in relation to the siltation issues and I would say that one of the reasons for that is that by believing that the council was the responsible authority, they also happened to be our landlord in the slip yard -

Mr DEAN *laughing.*

Mr FISHER - This is the truth, Ivan.

Mr DEAN - Yes.

Mr FISHER - They also happened to be our landlord in the slip yard and we actively didn't want to rock the boat so to speak.

CHAIR - Even if it was sitting in silt.

Laughter.

Mr FISHER - But that is, in all seriousness, one of the reasons we have been actively quiet on the whole issue. It would also be true to say that we have been currently negotiating with our neighbour, Mr Hallam, regarding the possible purchase of some of his property and one of the key factors in considering that purchase is acquiring freehold title to land we currently lease off the Launceston City Council. Only three weeks ago the general manager of the Launceston City Council gave me the reason for not wanting to sell us the land as the possible outcome of the current siltation study was that they may decide to only maintain a channel width through the yacht basin and it would look bad if the council had sold the yacht club land and then subsequently removed access to the water.

The general manager of the City Council gave me that as the reason for that. So siltation is having a major impact on potential outcomes of negotiations between private landowners within the yacht racing.

Mr WING - Do you still see the City Council as the main body being responsible? I assume you don't from what you have said so far.

Mr FISHER - We believe that the siltation issues happen to be on the City Council's doorstep but we believe it is a whole catchment issue that goes far beyond anything that the City Council can deal with. So the City Council can really only deal with the outcome, it can't really go on and address the cause, and I guess that is the firm reason behind us agreeing that there should be one statutory body, State-based body, to deal with the issue because it is a whole-of-catchment issue, not just a local siltation problem. As a user of the river we can only deal with what we are presented with, we cannot go out and fix it, and I believe that the council can't go out and fix it either because it goes far beyond their municipal boundaries. Certainly from a ratepayer's perspective, surely it goes beyond what a ratepayer should reasonably be prepared to pay to fix.

Mr DEAN - That was going to be a question of mine to you. Do you believe that the ratepayers of Launceston have the means to address the problem?

Mr FISHER - I am not privy to the finances of council but I could only imagine that the impost, especially in the current climate, would be significantly high, especially given the nature of Launceston with our riverside hanging off the side of it and the Meander Valley hanging off the side of it, all contributing, in one way or another, to the siltation problem. But the rate base, I would suggest, compared to the population of the greater community is quite small.

Mr DEAN - That was going to be my next question. Should they be responsible for resolving a problem that is caused far afield and away from the Launceston City Council area? I think you have answered that.

Mr FISHER - I think natural justice says no.

I would like to, if I may, present a photograph. I do not know if you are aware of it. In my professional capacity I attended the Tasmanian Dairy Conference in Burnie on 8 October. There was a paper presented on natural resources by a member of TIAR, which is the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research. He was talking about catchment run-off as it related to the dairy industry. He presented this photograph and I thought it might be of interest to you. The background to the photograph, as he presented it, was that the photograph was taken after a major storm event, showing run-off along the north and north-east coast of Tasmania.

CHAIR - Do you know when, Richard?

Mr FISHER - No, I do not, I am sorry. I am sure that Bill could provide that information. This, by the way, was freely available on the Dairy Tasmania web site. If we start at the left-hand, you can see vast plumes of siltation coming off the Forth, the Mersey and Port Sorell. We get to Tamar and it is noticeably lacking. Along a bit further we get to Pipers River and Little Forrester at Bridport, all making significant siltation flows out into Bass

Strait. Here we are at the Tamar River that has a catchment, 20 to 25 per cent of the State, making little or no plumage. I can only concur from that that either the catchment does not produce siltation, which I think is highly unlikely, or that the siltation is being trapped somewhere.

Mr WING - That is at Freshwater Point, we are told. It does not go beyond that because it flocculates once it meets the salt water.

CHAIR - Richard, I did refer earlier, that was where we heard that the silt does not travel out of the Tamar River. But I referred to a photo that was published, I think, on the front page of the *Examiner* during a flood or during an excessive water period down through the Gorge about three or four years ago and it showed some staining from the Tamar River out into Bass Strait. Do you recall that photo?

Mr FISHER - No, I do not, to be honest.

CHAIR - Do any of the members recall it?

Mr WING - It may well have been this one because you need to look carefully to see that it does not come out of the Tamar here. I think most people would have had the impression from that *Examiner* photograph that it came out of all the rivers, including the Tamar, and the copy in the *Examiner* would not be as clear as this.

Mr FISHER - No, I remember, it was the Tamar that was the subject of the photo.

Mr DEAN - The Tamar was targeted, wasn't it?

Mr WING - Yes but I think probably wrongly. I think it is very similar to this photo because I remember seeing that.

CHAIR - Can we get a copy of that, please, from the *Examiner*?

Mr FISHER - Okay. I will say that I did not ask for permission to present that photograph but it is freely available on their web site. I do not know whether there is an issue with that?

CHAIR - That is quite okay.

Mr FISHER - I have a couple of other pieces of anecdotal evidence. During the cleaning of the tailrace feeder tube to the tailrace power station some years ago, I noted that there was clean water in the yacht basin, obviously being released down the Gorge, and it was possible at that point in time, even at high water, to stand on the jetty and see the bottom in the yacht basin and it was possible also to see fish actively swimming in the water, and that is something I have never seen in the Tamar yacht basin in my lifetime sailing there.

I heard the previous speaker touch on the health impact of the silt. We were presented with a major issue of health in terms of E.coli levels towards the end of last sailing season. You would recall that there was a fair bit of toing-and-froing in the *Examiner*. I know that council undertook some studies at the time and I believe they still continue testing. I would point out that, even though the levels of E.coli are made available on the

council web site, it is still up to the individual to interpret what they mean and determine whether in fact we believe it is safe or otherwise. Again, I believe that that level of information and that decision should be made at a State government level. The Tamar Yacht Club is not an expert in siltation. We are not experts in E.coli levels or anything like that and we need to know, yes or no, whether it is safe to proceed. I believe that should be a Health department decision, not even a council decision. The council's web site at the moment merely states the facts. It gives you no way of determining whether it is safe or not.

Mr DEAN - With a State single authority as such, a statutory authority, that could be done quite easily as part of the whole process, couldn't it?

Mr FISHER - Yes, I believe so. I see no reason that it shouldn't come under the guise of EMPCA. There is an act in place to deal with it. Surely it should be dealt with at a State level.

The other point I would make - and again it is anecdotal - my boat draws 2.4 metres and I notice that just in the last year we now have difficulty navigating anywhere on the Launceston side of Tamar Island, whereas previously we probably haven't had as major an issue as that. I can literally only get my boat to the pontoon of the Tamar Yacht Club one hour either side of high tide - and we draw 2.4 metres.

Mr DEAN - What is your position on the current level of dredging that is occurring within the basin and that area; what is the value of that?

Mr FISHER - I think the value of it is probably pretty insignificant. It is not even keeping up with the influx of siltation. I know that if you go around the corner into the North Esk, the Seaport basin is continually silting up. I notice that the owner of Seaport is undertaking his own dredging, but I believe that that dredging - and I may stand corrected - doesn't go onto dry land; I think it just releases back into the water flow, so that probably is insignificant. The current dredging regime is not keeping abreast of the influx of silt in the river.

Mr DEAN - I'm not sure that this committee is going to receive evidence from the person down there who is very close to all of that, but there is an application made, I think, for more covering up of the silt there.

Mr FISHER - I reiterate that the Tamar Yacht Club, one of the biggest users of the river, absolutely supports the concept of a single statutory authority to deal with the whole of the river and the catchments.

CHAIR - Richard, on behalf of the members of the committee, thank you very much for the time you have taken and the work you have done to prepare your case today. We appreciate that and we wish you well with your future at Beauty Point, which is in my electorate of Rosevears. I look forward to supporting the activities of the club any time I am called upon.

Mr FISHER - Thank you, Kerry.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.

Mr PETER NEILSON WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Finch) - Peter, thanks very much for taking the time to come in and give evidence to our committee. I suppose you are well aware of our brief about the need, or otherwise, of a single statutory authority. It is going to be interesting to hear your opinions and views, particularly to find out the perspective of the tourism industry, so if you care to make a submission to us and then when you stop talking we'll start asking questions.

Mr NEILSON - Okay. It was interesting to listen to Richard previously, of course, because they are some of the comments that I am sure everybody has been making today, so I will try not to go over some of those points that Richard brought up. I am here as the Chairman of the Launceston Tamar Valley Tourism Association, and I have to admit that the interest in what is happening on the river through the LTVTA is basically generated by myself as chairman and from the ability that I have had to attend a number of meetings recently and forums that have been held with regard to the problems that we are experiencing in the river. A lot of the reports that go to the LTVTA are via me and so my comments basically are about the type of information I have been providing to the organisation and to their agreement with the sorts of things that we have been talking about.

CHAIR - Did you say the LTVTA?

Mr NEILSON - Yes, the Launceston Tamar Valley Tourism Association. If you say it really quickly, it just flows off the tongue, and your past experience may help you with that?

CHAIR - I didn't know whether it was the Tamar Valley Tourism Association and that there was a Launceston branch.

Mr NEILSON - No, that's why it is called the Launceston Tamar Valley Tourism Association, without commas or dashes because it incorporates the whole valley area, but it recognises Launceston as the main gateway to the region itself.

We are particularly interested in what's happening on the river. I am particularly interested. I would imagine that some people who have been here today have probably said to you what I am about to say. I have fished on it, I have skied on it, I have wind-surfed on it, and I have swum in it for years, and to see the condition it is under at the moment is most disappointing. We have been through the processes through TEER reporting back to the LTVTA. We completely agree with what is happening and with the management plan that has been recently produced and circulated. It is with interest that I note that in many of the areas they are designated very high priority; in fact there's probably more VHs in there than anything else. I just hope that that is going to become part of your process here that says that we're getting to a point where it may be almost a point of no return because of all these priorities that are in this report, so we wholly support that and of course we do wholly support a single statutory authority that needs to take over. We are completely cognisant of the fact that we have a number of people who are helping at this stage, such as our councils, as we know, the input from the Maritime College, the University of Tasmania, the Hydro and of course Northern Resource

Management, and we do feel that with all these organisations coming on board we do need somebody who is going to provide leadership and management.

We support the Launceston City Council and future developments with regard to tourism on the opposite side of Seaport and through the Princess Wharf area. We do not feel that it is the Launceston City Council's responsibility for the siltation problem that we are experiencing at the moment and therefore the need for the single statutory authority which will bring everybody together to help manage and relieve the situation.

We understand the problems that we have incurred and particularly currently what is happening and I guess that is basically from my experience on the river and also what I have learnt whilst going to these forums, so just to remind you for a moment, we do understand the problem with the silt that is occurring. It flows through the system, it is flocculation, it is returning up the river and the ongoing and individual problem-solving consequences that we may have to look at, such as silt ponds on the upper reaches, will obviously be managed by other councils. The yacht basin itself with its dredging operation I would have to say I agree is ineffectual at this stage. I see as I drive past West Tamar every day how much moisture is lying on the top, and without telling anybody how to resolve these problems, I think there are areas such as drainage in the silt ponds that needs to be addressed because I think that the drainage can be enhanced quite considerably if we get more moisture out more quickly and of course the capacity of the silt ponds is what we have to look at through that area.

We are quite aware obviously of what the incoming tide is doing and we need to call on the Hydro to at least experiment to see that operating their turbines on an incoming tide may affect the flow further into the yacht basin and it may help the whole situation by keeping it out a little further and therefore maybe encouraging that drainage.

I understand that silt has not been included as a subject for the new flood authority to attend, however our opinion is that silt is a problem and particularly with the height of the flood levee itself, we believe that for every extra metre of mud that is out there we should possibly see an extra metre on the flood levee itself.

CHAIR - If I could just butt in there, please. I believe it will be part of their responsibility to ease the silt issue.

Mr DEAN - Absolutely. The Launceston Flood Authority takes over everything that UTRIA had, plus it takes over the additional responsibilities for the levees, the maintenance of the levees and to put the levees into a position of withstanding a one in 200-year flood, so it picks up all of that.

Mr NEILSON - Okay.

Some of my comments here have also been filtered through me from Rob Cassidy who is obviously a tourism operator and has had many years' experience on the river itself and who has also done a lot of modelling with regard to siltation problems inasmuch as its hardening and all sorts of experiments that Rob has done and in fact it became a paper that was produced I think for the University of Tasmania. I am not quite sure where that has finished up at the moment and I think Rob is probably an even better person who should have been here today instead of me, but that obviously did not happen.

CHAIR - He has done a lot of modelling with a big boat over many years, hasn't he?

Mr NEILSON - That is a big model boat, yes. Rob has done a lot of work in his garage and I also think at the Maritime College but I am not sure. I think it is the lack of modelling that we have seen that is not really helping us to make firm decisions and because of the question regarding the silt there is no evidence. Some people believe that if a flood occurs it is going to rip the silt out and get it out straightaway but no actual figures or modelling has been done to say that that may happen because, depending on when it comes down, depending on the condition of the silt, depending on the hardness of the silt, it can simply fly over the top.

Mr WING - It is likely to take at least some. It is a matter of speculation as to how much.

Mr NEILSON - Yes, and when it starts to take it. We were encouraged that there was more modelling to be done. I know we certainly have a lot of surveys that have been done over the years but not necessarily the amount of modelling that we should be doing to have a look at it, even with our silt, piles and things like that.

When we were talking about the holding plants, as I said, to look at drainage and all the rest of it, and also at the dredging facilities that are there - I think silt is about 2 microns; hair is about 10 microns in width et cetera - how do we keep it. It is a very, very difficult problem.

As part of the tourism association, what we see being benefits for local ratepayers also becomes very much a benefit for a visitor into our region here. So therefore I believe that the Tamar needs cleaning - there is no doubt about that. The Tamar should be seen as a jewel in the crown of Launceston. We only have to go back to the Launceston flag to see how important it has been in our history and we all know what the two ingots on the flag, don't we, Mr Chairman?

CHAIR - Of course, and I am sure you might want to enlighten the other two members.

Mr NEILSON - Two ingots, and they are actually flowing down the North Esk and the South Esk rivers joining the confluence of the Tamar. So, without going into a lot of detail, there are certain areas of Launceston, particularly tourism, that rely on the river, itself, and I believe that there is a much bigger capacity for us to be able to develop, particularly as I said earlier, in conjunction with the council's plans for further tourism foreshore developments et cetera that can only be an asset to Launceston ratepayers and visitors to this area.

There are things that are happening in the river, and I am not sure if you have had evidence of the proposed 250-berth marina at Gravelly Beach. These are, I believe, the types of things that we want to encourage - the use of the river, activities and better lifestyles, and by doing that, particularly up here in the yacht basin itself, we encourage more ratepayers so, in the long term, everybody should be winning, not only the tourism industry.

I don't think it's a problem where we can just look at the Tamar Yacht Basin, even though it is probably the ugliest part of the problem. We have to look at a whole area

from the upper regions right down to the lower reaches. We even saw during this TEER program, some of the photographs that were brought in by the Maritime College of seaweeds and coral that are absolutely beautiful, just right at the lower regions. We need to try to bring that further and further up the river, I believe, and therefore bring the Tamar River back to at least what it was before.

I am not sure about some of the comments that I have heard at times through council about, 'Well, why do you want to change it?'. The point is we have changed it and this is not what it originally looked like. We have changed it through development so we should be able to amend those changes and put it back to at least what it originally was with those sandy beaches at the yacht club et cetera. Have you seen the sandy beaches at the yacht club?

CHAIR - No, there is some conjecture about the origin of the sand down there. There is a suggestion that it was imported to create a beach there.

Mr NEILSON - Oh, really, I didn't know that.

CHAIR - As I have witnessed, up through the Gorge there is that sand - very, very small pebbles to some extent.

Mr NEILSON - Yes, gravel.

CHAIR - I can understand that it would gather there.

Mr WING - It used to be a gravelly beach as well, apparently.

Mr NEILSON - I remember Gravelly Beach as a child and the gravelly beach that was there.

Mr WING - And the sand?

Mr NEILSON - No, it was gravel. It was just small pebbles. In fact, would you remember a Mrs Waterhouse?

Mr WING - No.

Mr NEILSON - She used to be one of my travel clients years and years ago and this is just a quick story.

Mr WING - Not Pam Waterhouse?

Mr NEILSON - No, she was a client of a previous travel agent that I used to work for. She was born in Singapore and was raised in England, and every year she would travel backwards and forwards at the end of school, travelling P&O, and she became one of P&O's priority customers. We used to give her a berth in a four-berth cabin and pay for it and they would upgrade her to the best. Mrs Woodhouse lived in the Boag residence down at Legana. She used to tell me the stories of swimming down at Legana where the disused boat ramp is at the end of Jetty Road, every day of the year off the gravelly beach that was there. She has passed on now but she would be talking I suppose probably 50 years ago. So that change has been rather rapid compared to what has been

previously. I'm sorry if I bugged up the Tamar Yacht Club but anecdotal evidence like that tells us that the river was much cleaner. As I remember in my childhood as well, Gravelly Beach was a gravelly beach.

Mr WING - Reg Walker and others used to talk about diving off the Kings Bridge into the Tamar.

Mr DEAN - In fact, I am still seeing people do it. I saw someone doing that last summer on some of the very hot days.

Mr NEILSON - Some of the comments from Gravelly Marine also are interesting. Because we are not now dumping the silt into those larger pockets where we were further down the river the flow has gone back to a natural flow, and what David Girling down there is seeing is rice grass reseeding. That is, on the outside bends because that is obviously where the greater flow is. Whether rice grass is a positive or a negative for the river we will let the experts tell us. But things are changing already due to the fact that we are not handling or managing the silt as we have been in the past. Gentlemen, that is about it from me. However, we want to get the message across that certainly we see that one body has to be out there to manage.

We just do not see that each of these organisations that are involved can do it on an individual basis, or even teaming up with a couple and all those sorts of things. We want to see development on the river. We want to see that it becomes an attribute that Launcestonians and all River Tamar dwellers see and appreciate. We would also encourage the use of boat ramps - and maybe Parks and Wildlife and all the rest of it who tell me they manage the river, so where does the responsibility lie? - We encourage people to be able to put in their boat ramps off their river frontage houses so that they do have access to the river. After all, that is why they are buying residences in those areas.

Just to touch on Parks and Wildlife, I am reporting to you from the Launceston Tamar Valley Tourism Association but some of you know that I also have another new tourism development coming on board next year, which is a river activity. What I have been dealing with is access on the river. For that access I have to deal directly with Parks and Wildlife. So when people are asking is it the Launceston City Council or whose responsibility is it? It is Parks and Wildlife saying to me, 'You have to talk to us about the river because we manage it from the basin to the Batman Bridge', wherein lies the responsibility? Somebody is not putting their hand up.

Mr DEAN - MAST also do have a responsibility. I know they were involved in the washing that was occurring opposite Dilston. MAST became involved to stop that occurring by slowing down the speed of the vessels, so it is the Government again.

Mr NEILSON - Yes. MAST are obviously involved with safety primarily. If Parks and Wildlife are managing the ecosystem and telling me to get a \$40 000 survey done, they are taking responsibility for what happens in that ecosystem. The ecosystem is being ruined by the siltation process, so what are they doing about it?

CHAIR - With regard to tourism, do you think it makes much difference to visitors when they come to Launceston and they look into the river at low tide? Do you think that they would just accept that that is the natural way that the river is?

Mr NEILSON - No, I think they look at it and have an adverse reaction to it. You have to ask how many times does that happen. Not that often. The tide is coming in and out, obviously. It is at those low-tide areas, as you were talking about earlier, and there does not have to be a lot of water on top of it to look like it is only water, and you do not see the banks. I remember going to Cairns years ago before they completely revamped their little harbour and that is what it was: mudflats, and you just thought it was a mangrove swamp and not very nice. But that is the attitude, particularly now that we have Seaport here and the fact that we have built all our great developments, through the council, along Home Point and back to Ritchies Mill and all the rest of it. We have brought more people closer to the river so they can see it more often, and they see the problems more often as well. We don't get complaints about it from tourists.

CHAIR - On the subject of Cairns and what they did there, ecologically did they do damage to clean up what was going on there?

Mr NEILSON - I can't answer that question. What they have up there are a lot of backfill areas, bringing the height of the foreshore up so that it becomes more or less permanently covered. That is probably one of the other things we should be talking about today, the possibility of a weir that might help that situation. It is also talking about how many dollars we have and where we go - how big is the cake, how many slices can we get from it? Their situation helps them out because it keeps the tide more as a semi-permanent tide. That's not the right description, but it keeps the water level up so it doesn't always drain out onto those long flats. I know by witnessing what is happening at the North Esk Rowing Club, the problems we had to put a retaining wall into this type of position with the silt, it is not just like we are containing a normal river in England that we see so often. That is contained through walls on each side of it to keep the river flow natural. That is not the situation we have here because of our problem in finding bottom. I don't think there are a lot of easy, inexpensive answers to it. I would enjoy seeing a weir that went across there because there are other implications that help that situation as well if it could be incorporated into a bridge for access across the Tamar further up the river.

CHAIR - Backfilling is something we've done quite a lot of in the Launceston area.

Mr NEILSON - Do you remember when they put up those little ti-tree fences near Ritchies Mill some time ago, probably about 10 years ago now? That was done probably through a work for the dole scheme or something like that. It lasted a long time - days, in fact.

CHAIR - We had evidence earlier of backfilling up as far as Metro.

Mr NEILSON - Yes, absolutely.

Mr DEAN - You spoke on the impact of tourism and you covered it well. Having said that, I have spoken to people who delight in seeing some mudflats and the bird life that goes with that, so you get differing views and opinions in relation to this.

Mr NEILSON - I think you will always see mudflats. I don't think we are introducing a lot of new species of bird life into the valley itself. We know through the plans and the research that we have some endangered species in there, around Tamar Island - the green

and gold frog. There is quite a large ecology diversity out there, but you have to get out there as well to see it. It is a little bit like some other areas, it is there but it is only the small minority who get to see it.

Mr DEAN - You're right in the fact that the wildlife is critical to a river, though, and to tourism and so on. For instance, I have a block at Dilston and at the weekend there were five sea eagles in and around my block. You see people in boats out watching them.

Mr NEILSON - If you sat there and watched, as they do in these research papers, you will see wedge-tailed eagles as well. I am forever glancing up at the skies looking for birds. It is important and we have to keep that aspect. That is part of the tourism process as well. If you're on a river cruise and they can point out a sea eagle's nest, isn't it fantastic that you get to see one?

Mr DEAN - On the Launceston Flood Authority, and there has been discussion on that today, do you think that there is a place for that authority working in tandem with the single State statutory body? Do you think there should be one taking charge, responsibility and move on?

Mr NEILSON - I think you have probably hit the nail on the head. I think that is probably the way to go because it is there. There certainly are good people on the authority. As I mentioned before, I would like to see some more - and I guess it is a comment from Rob Cassidy - on the modelling so that we understand exactly what is happening rather than just reports that are cycled. It has taken the experience particularly of people like Richard who have been on the river for many years and have seen how it has waned in the good times and the bad times, the wet seasons and the dry seasons. That is the sort of evidence that needs to be included in these types of management documents as well.

I think you are right in the fact that we do have the beginning of an authority that is handling a very difficult situation and, of course, all Launcestonians want to see that rectified as soon as possible, but whether it is an authority that says okay, we do have further common areas in which we have to become involved. As you say, the silting may become part of that process now. If that becomes part of the process then bang, it is right, it is in deep with everything else that is happening around here and the solutions are up the river, on the river and down the river. So to see something like that happen I think would be an advantage, but we need more people on it.

The statutory authority will obviously be set up to be a fully managed full-time authority. I guess that is the main thing that we would like to get across, not something that sits every now and again and reviews on what has happened. It would be a fully managed organisation that looks after the whole exercise.

Mr DEAN - On that point then, Peter, what would be the optimum number to form an authority, particularly if it is going to be a full-time statutory authority.

Mr NEILSON - I would look into it, I would not guess at it. We have NRM and we have paid people over here who should really be incorporated into this exercise so it may need a CEO and maybe a couple of others who might be there to do the management. Do you say to NRM 'It is not you who are going to do it'? Even though they are a larger

authority than probably what we are looking at here, it is probably the most important point that they have to deal with.

Mr WING - That's the research, the investigation to determine the facts, but they don't have any power, they don't have any authority or jurisdiction to do anything and they can work in conjunction with them.

Mr NEILSON - They have to be included somewhere along the line. It is bringing these people together but I would see that you would certainly want some full-time management, probably at least a staff of three to five at this stage, which brings it all together. They have to write a program to be delivered in six months' time about how we are going to do it and it has to have agreement from councils to put in silt times, it has to have agreement from maybe the Launceston City Council to buy the dredge because it is affecting the yacht basin but it needs assistance from somewhere else to operate that dredge.

Go and put a big Seaport flag on it and ask Errol for a couple of hundred grand. As these things develop and as they come up, I think we should be looking at commercial opportunities that really hang off this exercise. It may be that land further down the river is reclaimed and it is opened for sale. So who owns it at the moment? It is crown land at the moment and it can't be used. Perhaps it is an opportunity to say to some larger organizations, local or overseas, that here is an opportunity for them to invest \$5 million, it gives us a capacity to go out there to buy two super suckers or whatever it might be, or to have more money to put in a weir and then when we reclaim this land in five years' time that land becomes theirs and they can do with it what they want, retail or whatever.

I still think that we are not thinking far enough into the future to be able to put those sorts of plans in place. I firmly believe that, without being disrespectful, these are not the people who will look at those types of areas as perhaps others would be looking at them. You know, private enterprise. I think we have to balance what happens within the statutory authority to ensure that we do not get a single-mindedness; we need to open it up for future visions and new developments.

Mr DEAN - Thanks, Peter.

CHAIR - It sounds like a conclusion to me.

Mr NEILSON - And I have concluded thanks, Mr Chairman.

CHAIR - Is there anything more you would like to add?

Mr NEILSON - No, just to say thanks for the opportunity and thanks, Nathan, because it was his help that got me up here today as I was a little late in applying. I hope I have made a little bit of a difference. I would be pleased to sit down and talk with you at any time.

CHAIR - Peter, thanks very much; we appreciate that.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.