



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

Rokeby Road – South Arm Upgrades: Acton Road Intersection

Brought up by Ms Butler and ordered by the House of Assembly to be printed.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Committee has the honour to report to the House of Assembly in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Works Committee Act 1914* on the -

Rokeby Road – South Arm Upgrades: Acton Road Intersection

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This reference recommended the Committee approve works to upgrade the intersection at South Arm Road and Acton Road in Lauderdale, to make it safer for all road users, by managing congestion at peak times, improving connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists and by improving connectivity from Acton Road to South Arm Road for motorists.
- 2.2 Traffic growth on South Arm Road has increased 3.2 per cent per annum in recent years and is expected to continue growing due to the extent of planned residential development for the Clarence Plains area. Traffic modelling, undertaken as part of the Rokeby Stage 3 Corridor Planning Study in 2020, indicated that without the proposed upgrades, travel time for the five kilometre section of South Arm Road, between Acton Road and Pass Road, would increase from six minutes in 2019 to 10 minutes in 2029; a four minute increase. The proposed upgrades, as well as other planned works, are predicted to reduce this increase to one and a half minutes.
- 2.3 As a result of the growth in traffic volumes and its function as a local access for Lauderdale Primary School and residential properties, the intersection currently experiences relatively long delays in the morning peak hour. This results in some drivers using short gaps in traffic to pull out, creating the potential for crashes. There are also inadequate facilities for pedestrians to cross South Arm Road safely to access the westbound bus stop. Furthermore, the nature of the intersection, and its location in a residential area and adjacent Lauderdale Primary School, limits connectivity for both cyclists and pedestrians.
- 2.4 The proposed works will include the following:
- replacement of the existing give-way controlled junction with a new signalised intersection;
 - dedicated turn lanes for turning movements into and out of Acton Road;
 - two lanes in each direction on South Arm Road to facilitate connection with future upgrading of South Arm Road further to the west;
 - two sealed indented bus bays; one in front of Lauderdale Primary School for eastbound traffic and one to the west of the intersection for westbound traffic;
 - footpath connections to bus stops via signalised pedestrian crossings;
 - two new bus stops complying with Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) standards, one of which will include a shelter and seats for citybound passengers;

- dedicated cycling lanes through the intersection; and
- new entrance to Lauderdale Primary School to improve access and service future bus models.

3 PROJECT COSTS

3.1 Pursuant to the Message from Her Excellency the Governor-in-Council, the estimated cost of the work is \$15 million.

The following table details the current p50 and p90 cost estimates for the project:

Item	P50 estimate	P90 estimate	Notes
Base Estimate	\$12,041,295	\$12,041,295	Works including investigations, design, community engagement, approvals, acquisition (including related compensation), project management and construction.
Contingency	\$2,386,051	\$3,786,051	Contingency 19 % - 30 % of base estimate.
Escalation	\$672,654	\$721,197	Escalation 5.6 % - 6.0 % of base estimate. Refer below for discussion.
Total	\$15,100,000	\$16,500,000	

3.2 The Department’s submission provided further explanation of the contingency and escalation allowances provided for in the project cost estimates:

8.1 Contingency

The contingency allowance provides for contingent events – that is events which may or may not occur. For this project, key contingent risk items include:

- *Additional utilities requiring relocation resulting in additional cost*
- *Tender prices escalate due to market saturation*
- *The extent of ground improvement works required is greater than anticipated*
- *Heavier rainfall than envisaged delays delivery of the project.*

8.2 Escalation

The escalation allowance is a provision in costs for changes in economic and market conditions over time.

Estimates of escalation are not intended to be precise forecast of future prices, they are approximations intended to represent the average trends for a large group of projects in a broad region.

The escalation rate for projects which are part funded by the Australian Government is determined by the Australian Government and is included in the project cost estimates as part of funding submissions from the department to the Australian Government. The Australian Government commissions considerable economic investigation in order to provide state specific forecast escalation, and the department has not diverted resources into challenging these Australian Government requirements. ¹

¹Rokeby Road – South Arm Road Upgrades: Acton Road Intersection: Public Works Committee Submission, 27 November 2025, Department of State Growth, p. 11.

4 EVIDENCE

4.1 The Committee commenced its inquiry on Tuesday, 16 December 2025 with an inspection of the site of the proposed works. The Committee then returned to Committee Room 1, Parliament House, whereupon the following witnesses appeared, made the Statutory Declaration and were examined by the Committee in public:-

- Scott Muirhead, Project Manager, Department of State Growth;
- Jacques van der Hyde, Project Manager, Department of State Growth; and
- Luke Middleton, Acting Manager, Transport Network Planning, Department of State Growth.

The following Committee Members were present:

- Ms Jen Butler MP (Chair);
- Hon. Dean Harriss MLC (Deputy Chair); and
- Ms Helen Burnet MP.

Overview

4.2 Mr Muirhead provided an overview of the proposed works:

...the project involves upgrading the intersection of South Arm Road and Acton Road in Lauderdale. The works include:

- *the replacement of the existing 'Give Way' control junction with a new signalised intersection - so... [installation of] traffic lights;*
- *dedicated turn lanes for turning movements into and out of Acton Road, two lanes in each direction for South Arm Road to facilitate connection with future upgrading of South Arm Road further to the west;*
- *two sealed indented bus bays, one in front of Lauderdale Primary School for the eastbound traffic and one to the west of the intersection for westbound traffic;*
- *footpath connections to bus stops via signalised pedestrian crossings;*
- *the two new bus stops to comply with DDA [Disability Discrimination Act] standards and a shelter for the westbound bus stop;*
- *dedicated cycling lanes through the intersection;*
- *a new entrance to the Lauderdale Primary School to improve access and service future bus models; and*
- *the extension of the existing carpark at Lauderdale Primary School.*

4.3 Mr Muirhead continued by outlining the options considered to upgrade the intersection, how the final design was decided upon, and the benefits of the proposed works:

...As part of the concept design development, an options analysis was conducted that considered three options for the Acton Road junction upgrade. There were two roundabout options that were investigated. One roundabout option focused on minimising acquisition of private property, so keeping as close to the current alignment as possible, however it resulted in disruption of traffic flows and difficulties providing access to Lauderdale Primary School. The second roundabout option improved those issues but required greater acquisition of private property and created access challenges to those properties as well.

The third option was the signalisation of the intersection, which the options analysis identified as the preferred treatment. This was due to improved pedestrian safety, reduced acquisition of private property, improved queuing and access to the Lauderdale Primary School, improved traffic flow in off-peak periods for South Arm Road, and future integration with the broader South Arm Highway upgrade, aligning with the earlier planning study in which intersection upgrade treatments were all considered as part of a multi-criteria analysis.

...

To briefly talk to the benefits of this Acton Road intersection: they are alleviating the congestion and maintaining travel time into Hobart CBD, improving connectivity to South Arm Road from Acton Road, improving safety for all users, and providing new opportunities for active and public transport, managing the congestion and safety at school drop-off and pick-up times, and making the intersection safer for motorcyclists, cyclists and pedestrians.

A benefit-cost ratio has been completed, with the BCR coming out at 3.7 with a discount rate of four per cent. That means that for every \$1.00 spent on these works, it's expected to get \$3.70 of benefit to the community. That's a strong result and confirms the value of the works.

4.4 Mr Muirhead also provided evidence on the materials used for the proposed works:

To quickly touch on the materials, it's broadly a road construction project. It has a service life of 40 years for the pavement, and for the bitumen surfacing a service life of at least 15 years. The materials, where feasible, would be sourced from Tasmania, pending contractors to be procured, such as aggregates to be sourced from local quarries, and road furniture sourced from local suppliers.

Need for the Proposed Works

4.5 In providing the Committee an overview of the proposed works, Mr Middleton outlined the needs for the works, which broadly relate to safety and congestion at the Acton Road intersection:

... South Arm Road provides a critical transport link which services adjacent suburbs as well as those further east. Traffic modelling undertaken as part of the Rokeby Stage 3 Corridor Planning Study undertaken in 2020, suggests that without the upgrade works, travel times for the five kilometre section between Acton Road and Pass Road will increase by four minutes, which is around 65 per cent, from six minutes in 2019, to 10 minutes by 2029. The works for the South Arm Highway upgrade are predicted to constrain the travel time increase to about 1.5 minutes.

The planning study also identified that the Acton Road intersection should be prioritised to address congestion and resulting safety issues. The Acton Road intersection currently experiences relatively long delays during the morning peak hour due to its function as a local access road for both Lauderdale Primary School and residential properties. As we experienced this morning, when there are events going on at the school, the queues are fairly significant, although exacerbated today by the roadworks down the road.

The delays experienced result in some drivers using short gaps in traffic to pull out, creating the potential for crashes. There are also inadequate facilities to enable pedestrians to cross South Arm Road safely to access the westbound bus stop. In fact, there are no facilities to enable pedestrians to cross the South Arm Road safely in reality.

4.6 The Committee sought further evidence on the Rokeby Stage 3 Corridor Study cited by Mr Middleton, and how the priorities of the broader upgrades program were determined:

CHAIR - ...My first question is around the strategy undertaken to rework that whole corridor through the South Arm Highway... Can you provide us with some information around the whole strategy and why this particular aspect of that strategy was earmarked to go first? There are different sections of... Rokeby along that path, I believe, that will be upgraded from two lanes to four lanes...

...

Mr MUIRHEAD - ...The Corridor Study, completed in 2020, considered the duplication from Pass Road through to Acton Road and a prioritisation exercise was done via a multi-criteria analysis. The first priority projects that came out of that study were the Acton Road junction upgrade and the Pass Road to Oakdowns duplication.

The reason why the Acton Road junction upgrade was included as part of the first priority of works was because it was forecast that in the 10- to 15-year period from when that Study was complete there would be considerable congestion at the current Acton Road junction if no further mitigation measures were put into place, which is why it was specifically called out in that Study to be prioritised, even though it is geographically separate from the Pass Road to Oakdowns section.

4.7 Mr Middleton also provided evidence on the high traffic growth in the area:

Mr HARRISS - In the Need for Works, it notes 3.2 per cent per annum in recent years of traffic growth and that suggests that that's high for Tasmanian perspectives. What is a standard growth rate? Do you know or not? I'm interested to compare it to what a standard growth rate is.

Mr MIDDLETON - It's generally between one per cent and two per cent across the state. Obviously, some roads have less than one per cent.

4.8 In response to matters taken on notice, the Department of State Growth (DSG) provided further data on the Level of Service at the Acton Road intersection. Table 2 provides the level of service during the morning peak at the intersection in 2023, and the projected levels for 2033 and 2043. For each year, there is the level of service impact under 'Existing Condition Worst Movement', which is what the impact would be if no works were undertaken, and 'AM Peak', which is what the predicted impact would be if the proposed works are undertaken:

Traffic modelling was completed based on the peak periods, to confirm Levels of Service and queuing during the morning peak and afternoon school pick-up and peak periods. The modelling identified that the worst case scenario, in both the current layout and the updated layout, is the AM Peak. Level of Service impact is defined in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Level of Service impact

Level of Service	Delay per Vehicle (seconds)
	Traffic Signals
A	10 or less
B	10 to 20
C	20 to 35
D	35 to 55
E	55 to 80
F	Greater than 80

Please see Table 2 below comparing the LOS of the existing intersection against the proposed upgraded intersection. This comparison is of the 95th percentile queue lengths in the AM peak. Please see Table 2 below SiDRA modelling results for the overall intersection LOS and 95th percentile queue lengths over time for all vehicles in both the AM and PM peak periods.

Table 2: SiDRA modelling results

	2023		2033		2043	
	Existing Condition Worst Movement*	AM Peak	Existing Condition Worst Movement*	AM Peak	Existing Condition Worst Movement*	AM Peak
Total Vehicles	1638	1638	2245	2245	3075	3075
Level of Service	D	B	F	B	F	C
95th percentile Queue length (m)	29	43	366	77	1513	178

* An overall intersection Level of Service is not available for the existing intersection performance as the average delay is not a good measure due to zero delays associated with major road movements i.e. South Arm Road traffic currently has priority. ²

² Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works Hearing – Rokeby Road – South Arm Upgrades: Acton Road Intersection – Questions on Notice, Department of State Growth response to PWC request for additional information, 2 February 2026, pp. 1-2.

Works Done to Date & Timing of Future Actions

4.9 Mr Muirhead provided an overview of the works done to date:

... the design of the project has progressed to a detailed design stage. The progression of design has included site investigations, heritage assessments, environmental assessments, road safety audits, and stakeholder consultation. All these investigations have impacted the detailed design, which has been referred to the Committee.

4.10 Mr Muirhead continued by discussing the timeline of the proposed works:

To quickly talk to the timings of future actions for the project: that includes the progression of land acquisition throughout January and February 2026. The current scheduled tender advertisement date is for late February 2026. The assessment of tenders and award of contract would happen between March and May 2026 - so, hoping to award in May 2026 - with construction likely to commence in July 2026, and roughly a 12-month construction period, so going through to mid-2027 - although we will know a bit more about that once the tenders from market do come in.

It should also be noted that there are some approvals that are outstanding that will need to be closed out before the progression to tender, which include the EPBC [Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act approval]... as well as confirmation of our project proposal report which has been submitted to the Australian Government for endorsement of the spending of that committed funding.

Design Options

4.11 The Committee sought further evidence on the design options that had been considered, noting the increased cost of land acquisition associated with a roundabout option cited by Mr Muirhead in his opening remarks:

CHAIR - *... around the roundabout options and what would have been - I think your first option was roundabout, but there was concern around the acquisition of adjoining landowners' property. How much more were we looking at for project costs for that acquisition? How much more would that have cost?*

Mr MUIRHEAD - *I don't have the specifics, and we probably don't have the cost estimate of that one, as it was built up to the level where we could compare acquisition costs against each other. But I would be able to say that they would be significant based on the concept outlines that were developed at that point, as in we do have partial land acquisition involved in this one. So it's been unavoidable given the putting in of two lanes in each direction, but where the roundabout had to sit, it was a significant increase compared to the design that we are on now.*

4.12 The Committee also heard evidence on the safety aspects of the roundabout option compared to the signalised intersection:

CHAIR - *Can you also explain to the Committee, for the record, the safety aspects of young people crossing roads with a roundabout as opposed to with traffic signals?*

Mr MUIRHEAD - *Yes. With the design that we are progressing here with the signalised intersection upgrade, it allows for signalised pedestrian crossings phased with the traffic movements so that you can ensure that pedestrians are walking across the road - particularly for kids and more vulnerable people who may not be as fully aware of their environment - that they are crossing on green, there is no way that road traffic can be going through there at the same time.*

With a roundabout option, you don't have that control. You aren't able to restrict the road traffic in those certain periods to allow the crossing. Of course, there are situations where that can happen. There are signalised roundabouts, but given the numbers in the situation, that wasn't seen as an appropriate solution in that area either.

- 4.13 The Committee also raised the decision to not include an overpass or underpass at the intersection for discussion:

CHAIR - *And an overpass or underpass, they're both referred to in the submission. Can you talk us through the decision not to have an underpass or an overpass as part of the project design?*

Mr MUIRHEAD - *Yes. It was brought up in the community consultation for that. The reason why it hasn't been progressed is largely due to the significant spatial impact it would have on Lauderdale Primary School itself. It would require restrictions on their available parking area and further back in towards the school, so that was a key reason why it wasn't seen as a feasible option when compared with a signalised pedestrian crossing.*

Stakeholder Engagement

- 4.14 The Committee sought evidence regarding the Department's approach to stakeholder engagement for the proposed works. Mr Muirhead confirmed that the level of feedback received from the public was adequate:

Ms BURNET - *My questions relate to stakeholder engagement. It probably goes to the appendix you have in relation to the consultation of feedback summary. I notice that there's only one Roads Tas Facebook page post. I'm wondering if you were satisfied with the feedback that you received in relation to this project?*

Mr MUIRHEAD - *I would say we are satisfied with the feedback received. That is the 17 emails and feedback forms across the information sessions, the school display and the council display. We believe that the feedback received is indicative of the broader community feel. I note your point on the one Roads Tas Facebook page. But it should be noted that there are also advertisements sent out - those are the ones that you can see there in the appendix in the newspapers, via Lauderdale Primary School newsletter and on our web page update, and unaddressed postcards to the nearby residents, which is the one we typically feel sees the most response because it directly addresses those that we think will be most directly impacted by it.*

- 4.15 Mr Muirhead expanded on the Department's response to the feedback received during the consultation stage of the project:

Ms BURNET - *I note that congestion, pedestrian and cyclists' connectivity and safety and design features seem to be the most urgent or the most prominent concerns. Did you take into account most of those concerns?*

Mr MUIRHEAD - *Yes, we did.*

Ms BURNET - *How did you take into account those concerns, because we only have a summary here?*

Mr MUIRHEAD - *The designs that went out to the public consultation were done on the prelim design. The designs weren't quite well developed. Most of the points that were in there, a lot of them included into our design such as pedestrian and cyclists connectivity and safety and design and traffic flow.*

An example of where we've made adjustments to our design, based on the consultation summary, is probably most notable in the changes we've made to property accesses.

Admittedly, that's more through our direct engagement with landowners, not necessarily the consultation period, but we were able to take on the feedback of - we initially had some changes to accesses done in a certain way that would have made functioning in that front area of the property not great for that landowner. We were able to adjust where the property entrance - where the driveway would run through for their property and make sure that the accommodation works that we were doing were appropriate.

- 4.16 The Committee then sought evidence on the consultation between the Department and the Clarence City Council:

CHAIR - ... It states here there was liaison with Clarence City Council. Was that in relation to the intersection or the strategy for the whole area?

Mr MUIRHEAD - Both. Specifically, what the stakeholder engagement that is referred to a lot in this submission is talking about this project specifically - the Acton Road junction. We have talked around this specific design with Clarence City Council. We are also engaging with Clarence City Council on the Pass Road to Oakdowns project which is currently in design. Correct me if I'm wrong here, Luke, but I believe they made comment on the initial planning study as well.

Mr MIDDLETON - Yes, they would have.

Lauderdale Primary School

- 4.17 The proposed works have a considerable impact on, and involvement with, Lauderdale Primary School, which is situated on the north-eastern side of the Acton Road intersection. The Committee heard evidence on a range of factors pertaining to Lauderdale Primary School and the proposed accessibility and safety improvements.
- 4.18 Mr Muirhead outlined the works planned for upgrading the school's carpark, and how the upgrade will improve accessibility:

Ms BURNET - Thank you. I was certainly impressed from the plans that it looks like there's greater clarity in how pedestrians would access the school via that carpark. Can you explain what you're intending there?

...

Mr MUIRHEAD - On the accesses for the school, there are currently three existing pedestrian accesses to the school within the site extent: one off South Arm Road, by the eastbound bus stop; and two on Acton Road, north of the existing entry to the school carpark. Post construction there's going to be four pedestrian access points into the school.

The existing access from the eastbound bus stop on South Arm Road will be upgraded with a new pedestrian gate provided that will match the new black picket fence at the revised boundary, and there will be a raised wombat crossing provided in the school carpark directing students to the footpath by the school.

A new access will be provided immediately adjacent to the new carpark extents in the approximate location of existing the school staff carpark. This access will have a new pedestrian gate provided at the revised boundary that will match the black picket fence and again, another raised wombat crossing will be provided in the school carpark directing students to the footpath by the school.

Then the other two existing entryways will remain unchanged but adjusted in location based on the intersection works.

- 4.19 Mr Muirhead also explained why the proposed works include the upgrade of Lauderdale Primary School's carpark, considering that the works are primarily focused on upgrading the intersection:

Ms BURNET - *Is it usual that that kind of work would be done by State Growth in relation to carpark upgrades? How does that work? If it's DECYP or another department?*

Mr MUIRHEAD - *In a very simple case, where our impacts on them would have been minimal and they were next to a road; it wouldn't be something that would typically be done in a road intersection upgrade. The reason why it is accommodated in the project is because of the significant impacts that we are already doing to their access and, because of the need to shift the location of the intersection, there was an opportunity for additional space. It is likely because of the existing state of the pavement in that school carpark, that the works would lead to cracking and it was likely that we would need to repave that area of carpark, regardless.*

Ms BURNET - *As a compensation?*

Mr MUIRHEAD - *Exactly, the same as if we impacted anyone's access driveway. Since we were going to need to do those works anyway, it is seizing an opportunity for that additional space and works already being done on site.*

- 4.20 Having discussed the large volume of traffic associated with Lauderdale Primary School, the Committee sought to confirm the number of students enrolled at the school, and whether the adjoining childcare centre had also been considered when assessing traffic volumes:

CHAIR - *Do you know how many students currently attend Lauderdale School?... And what the projection is for student numbers at Lauderdale School? I believe it has a significant population.*

Mr MUIRHEAD - *I can't talk to the projection, but as of March 2025, this is according to the DECYP... website, their enrolment figures. There are 686 students currently enrolled at Lauderdale Public School.*

CHAIR - *Was consideration of the entry and exit points for - I think there's a childcare centre behind the school. I think we walked past it this morning. That looked like it would probably attract quite a bit of traffic as well.*

Mr MUIRHEAD - *Currently, besides the access that we are upgrading into Lauderdale Primary School, the design is looking to maintain accesses to all other accesses that we are currently impacting. I suppose no upgrade or anything - more to maintain the access that they currently have and link it in with our upgrade works.*

- 4.21 In response to matters taken on notice, DSG provided the Committee with additional information in regards to traffic volumes, including data on the modes of transport used by students and whether out-of-school activities had been considered in traffic modelling:

Estimated that 80% travel by private vehicles, 15% by buses and the balance walk or ride.

...

Outside School Hour Care and Long Day Care are provided by a private child care operator (Discovery) in a neighboring [sic] private property to the school. The impact to traffic

volumes and congestion is accounted for within the existing traffic counts and is therefore considered within the broader traffic modelling.³

- 4.22 In noting the issue of traffic congestion in peak periods, the Committee sought to gather evidence regarding the accessibility and safety for buses utilising the upgraded carpark:

CHAIR - I had a question around the managing of congestion and the safety at school drop-off and pick-up times, and the turning bay for buses that are dropping off or picking up students from school. Is there room for a bus to be parked and another bus to access that turning bay?

Mr MUIRHEAD - Yes, I confirm there is enough room for two buses to enter that parking turn-around area simultaneously and one would be able to overtake the other. That is based on an analysis on a 12.5-metre rigid or a 19-metre articulated. It should be noted that it's pretty close for two 19-metre articulated. The analysis shows that, yes, it's possible and can be done.

CHAIR - We are dealing with schoolchildren and they sometimes make erratic decisions. If there is a footpath that they are meant to walk on, there's a good chance they may not stick to the footpath. Is there good visibility in that turning bay for bus drivers and other people in vehicles to be able to see any schoolchildren who may be straying from those walking paths?

Mr MUIRHEAD - As part of the analysis with our design vehicles being 12.5-metre rigid or 19-metre articulated, that assessment includes a safe-sight distance analysis. That includes safe-sight intersections to see cars coming and to make sure there's appropriate visibility for pedestrians as well.

- 4.23 Confirmation was then sought on whether consultation with bus providers had been undertaken to ensure the design of the turning circle was appropriate:

CHAIR - ...has there been consultation with the private school bus contractors that will be providing the bus service in and out of Lauderdale Primary School around the design of that particular turning circle?

Mr MUIRHEAD - Yes, there has been. That bus provider is Metro. Through consultation with them, they actually provided the advice that the bus turnaround point that's going into Lauderdale Primary should be designed to allow for a 19-metre articulated bus. Even though they're not currently going through that, it was their advice to allow for that future provision. So, there has been that consultation with Metro in the design stage.

- 4.24 The Committee received further evidence on consultation undertaken with private bus companies in the Department's response to matters taken on notice:

Some private bus companies do transport students to and from Lauderdale Primary School. These private companies have not been specifically consulted as the design bus considerations have been developed through consultation with Lauderdale Primary School and Metro Tasmania. Metro Tasmania and Lauderdale Primary School have been consulted to understand future usage and provision has been made for accommodation of articulated buses to future proof the site.⁴

³ *Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works Hearing – Rokeby Road – South Arm Upgrades: Acton Road Intersection – Questions on Notice*, Department of State Growth response to PWC request for additional information, 21 January 2026, p. 4.

⁴ *Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works Hearing – Rokeby Road – South Arm Upgrades: Acton Road Intersection – Questions on Notice*, Department of State Growth response to PWC request for additional information, 21 January 2026, p. 1.

4.25 The Committee then sought to determine how traffic would be managed during construction, and how access to the school would be maintained:

Mr HARRISS - One around traffic management during construction: do we know what that will look like? Is that designed by the Department or is that a contractor?

Mr MUIRHEAD - As part of the specification that goes out to the contractor, we include certain traffic management requirements that the contractor will need to adhere to around road access. For example, in the specification we have drafted for this project that talks about peak times and out-of-hours, a minimum of a lane in each direction needs to be provided on Acton Road and South Arm Road.

On contraflow arrangements, impacts that would require only one lane access on those roads would only be allowed in off-peak times. There's a requirement to maintain access to Lauderdale Primary School at all times and to allow for bus operations to flow through there at all times, as well as the public bus, and that appropriate pedestrian footpath connectivity is maintained at that time.

These are all requirements that we include in the specification. Then it sits with the contractor to put together their traffic management plan that complies with those requirements that are included in the specification.

CHAIR - As a subsequent question: will those traffic management plans be consulted with the school community? Will there be an opportunity for the community to undertake, say, car sharing or different ways of getting their children in and out of that school, or for large work to commence during school holiday periods and so forth? Will all that be articulated with that school community? It's a 12-month project; it's a long time with a lot of disruption.

Mr MUIRHEAD - Yes, absolutely. As part of the contract that will go out, Lauderdale Primary School is identified in our engagement plan as clearly a key stakeholder that needs to be worked with closely throughout the construction period. That will require the successful contractor to coordinate the staging of their works with Lauderdale Primary School, particularly around the works in the school itself and then on the roads. It's just about maintaining those access requirements and allowing for those peak drop-off and pick-up periods.

In terms of the strategies for the school to employ throughout that construction period, that will be something that will be a moving piece throughout the construction as the impact to the school will be different as it progresses. There will need to be a continual feedback loop between Lauderdale Primary School, the contractor and the Department all being on the same page about what the impacts are for the upcoming stages of work, and how they should be best addressed and making sure, as you mentioned, that they are all appropriately communicated ahead of time to [the] school, parents and the broader public for the road impacts.

Pedestrian Safety

4.26 The Committee heard evidence on the proposed works' broader improvements to pedestrian safety:

Ms BURNET - I might ask a question around the proposed works and the users. We've talked about the car volumes and delays in time. There was clearly congestion when we were there today with the activities at school and with the roadworks further down the road.

In relation to overall safety for vulnerable road users, what thoughts have been put into making sure that this is the safest road for pedestrians and this upgrade is the safest for pedestrians, pram users, bike riders?

Mr MUIRHEAD - I suppose if I bring it back to what I mentioned with that initial options assessment that was done when there was consideration of roundabout options and then we landed on the signalised junction upgrade.

A key factor of that was based on pedestrian safety, because it provided that signalised pedestrian connectivity across South Arm Road and across Acton Road as well. In terms of the design process generally, it's a requirement when we're going through our designs that we are considering all road users, which includes cyclists, pedestrians, motorcyclists, and public transport. So all those factors are specifically called out when we go through our safety and design workshops, which are workshops that we do at intermittent stages of the design process, to make sure that safety elements are addressed for each of those categories in the design.

Ms BURNET - The safety workshop - is that internal, or is that the Department, or is that with external stakeholders?

Mr MUIRHEAD - Depending on the project: for this project, I believe it included - for example, Metro was invited to the safety and design workshop. Depending on the complexity of the project, sometimes it is just done at the Department level with the relevant technical experts.

4.27 The witnesses also confirmed with the Committee the speed limits for the area:

CHAIR - ... The speed limit will be how many kilometres an hour? And there will be a dedicated 40 kilometres per hour zone area for the school, because it's close to a school, is that correct?

Mr MUIRHEAD - That's correct. So, there is the 40 kilometres per hour for the school zone. It's 60 kilometres per hour along South Arm Road posted speed limit, and posted speed limit of 70 along Acton Road.

CHAIR - Acton Road: has there been consideration to maybe having that at a 50-kilometre zone going into that intersection, and slowing down for lights? Has there been an assessment done on that?

Mr MUIRHEAD - As part of the design, what is factored going into that - although it is posted as a 70-degree, as you're going into that intersection, it's being considered as essentially an operable speed of 50 kilometres as cars naturally decelerate heading into that intersection. So you don't necessarily reduce your speed limits heading up to these intersections, as cars naturally do that. It's part of safe driver behaviour. I suppose that's why the reduction in speed limit isn't progressed along that area of Acton Road.

CHAIR - Right. So it will stay at 60 kilometres an hour, but 40 during school hours?

Mr MUIRHEAD - 70 on Acton and 60 on South Arm, minus the school zone still in place and the school zone unchanged to existing.

4.28 The Committee sought evidence on the traffic signalisation, its programming, and the intersection's DDA compliance:

CHAIR - ... the programming for those signal lights and how they will work, for the record, i.e. timing, whether or not they're sequenced or programmed for peak times or less times.

Mr MUIRHEAD - The sequencing of those traffic lights will be managed in coordination with our ITS team. As part of the works being complete there will be the detection loops included in each of the lanes and the Bluetooth link up so that all that data is available so that the phasing of the traffic lights can be done appropriately to manage peak times and off-peak times.

...

Ms BURNET - Again, on the signals: I note there's a slip road turning into... South Arm Road... Is that signalised as well?

Mr MUIRHEAD - Correct. That is signalised. So, all three - the slip lane, across South Arm Road, across Acton Road - are all signalised.

CHAIR - And they will be disability-friendly signals?

Mr MUIRHEAD - Correct. The intersection is all DDA-compliant and that talks about the width of the ramps, the tactiles and the timing, the phasing of the pedestrian crossing as well.

- 4.29 The Committee received evidence on the existing street lighting in the intersection, as well as the lighting upgrades included in the proposed works:

Currently there are only two light fittings at the intersection, one at the opposite side of the intersection and one opposite the school entrance, which provide basic flag lighting (warning that the intersection exists).

The lighting for the new intersection has been designed in accordance with Department of State Growth and Australian Standards. The design consists of 'double arm' light poles within the traffic islands and central median on each approach. Light modelling has confirmed that the design meets the standards for both the roadways and pedestrian areas.⁵

Impact on Nearby Properties

- 4.30 Mr Muirhead confirmed some nearby properties would be affected by the project, with eight properties subject to land acquisition and changes to property accesses:

... To talk to some potential impacts: there are several impacts that need to be considered with this project. We are impacting eight property accesses. Also, for those eight property titles, they will be each impacted by partial land acquisition.

- 4.31 In further discussing the impacts to nearby landowners, the Committee was advised on the progression of land acquisition required for the proposed works:

CHAIR - ... I had the impression from the submission that there may be some unresolved issues at this stage with the acquisition of property. Can you run us through where those negotiations are up to?

Mr MUIRHEAD - They're worded that way in such that the land acquisition hasn't been formalised at this point, so it hasn't been signed off by the Minister for Infrastructure or -

CHAIR - The Valuer-General?

Mr MUIRHEAD - Yes, exactly. In terms of the negotiations, we have developed our accommodation works, so the works that we're doing with all those nearby adjacent owners in consultation with them, but they have not all been signed off yet as we are still progressing the land acquisition formalities themselves.

There are no specific issues that have been raised, that have been called out, as an issue from landowners to the projects. The one that was mentioned before was the access arrangements

⁵ *Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works Hearing – Rokeby Road – South Arm Upgrades: Acton Road Intersection – Questions on Notice, Department of State Growth response to PWC request for additional information, 21 January 2026, p. 5.*

which we have made some changes to address. No, there were no particular issues. I suppose I've left it there as negotiation as they are not finalised as we're still working through that process with each of the landowners.

CHAIR - A corner site of the intersection is owned by government or Crown already. Is that correct? Can you run us through that?

Mr MUIRHEAD - Yes, that's correct. That vacant lot that you can see to the north-west side of the intersection, there are two titles there that are both currently owned by the Crown and managed via Department of State Growth. One, because we will be doing a lot of the intersection upgrade work themselves, will be going into that area. There's also an area off to the side. Basically, we wanted to make sure that there was enough space for us to shift across that we weren't going to be impacting Lauderdale Primary. It also provides opportunities, once the project is all approved and progressing - as you mentioned we've had to remove some trees - it does provide opportunities, and we have space there in the future for potential revegetation.

4.32 The Committee heard further evidence on the accuracy of the current cost estimates associated with land acquisition:

Mr HARRISS - ... The base estimate includes acquisition costs, noting - back on page eight - that ongoing consultation is with the Office of the Valuer-General (OVG) regarding that. How does that sit and are we comfortable at the moment that the right allocation's been allowed?

Mr MUIRHEAD - In the cost estimate that goes through, they do it based on looking at the total area that we're looking for acquisition and looking at the function of that area. As part of our cost estimate that gets put together we would look at what that particular style of land has been valued at, at recent projects. Whilst the OVG valuation is still outstanding for those items we have confidence that the estimate of those areas remains the same. We have confidence that the value of those areas hasn't changed to any significant amount from the point where this estimate was put together.

Mr van der HYDE - I'd like to add that the OVG is quite helpful nowadays in providing us with swift estimates ahead of the formal valuation, which helps a lot with the estimating of our projects.

Potential Noise Impacts

4.33 In his evidence, Mr Muirhead confirmed noise assessments had been conducted. These assessments had indicated there was no requirement for any noise mitigation measures as part of this project:

Noise has been considered throughout the works. Noise assessments have been completed, confirming that no noise mitigation is required for the works.

4.34 In noting the findings of the completed noise assessments, the Committee raised the potential noise impact associated with the removal of several trees on the southern side of South Arm Road:

CHAIR - ... I note that there will be trees removed, which have probably provided a noise barrier or a noise absorption for two of those adjoining landowners. I note that there have been noise investigations undertaken, but those noise investigations probably don't account for what it will sound like without all those trees alongside the road. Will there be subsequent noise investigations for those adjoining landowners after the trees have been removed? I think it will make quite a bit of difference to the residents there.

Mr MUIRHEAD - I will quickly talk about the noise, because I have a little more information on that based on the noise modelling and monitoring that has been done to date.

A noise assessment was done of the proposed upgrade. The project will realign the road closer to properties on the south side and, as you mentioned, those trees are coming out - resulting in - the model came out with an increase in traffic noise levels of one to two decibels for those sensitive receivers in that area.

Typically, changes in noise levels at that level would largely be imperceptible. This is based on the results of this modelling. For example, the noise modelling in the area identified that existing traffic noise level is between 50 and 55 decibels. So, that change was seen as fairly minor. The predicted change in noise levels is not expected to be perceptible, and so no noise mitigation works were recommended.

In terms of future noise monitoring, none have been scheduled at this point. In saying that, as with any of our road upgrade works, we are working with our impacted landowners, and if that noise issue, particularly with the reduction - I can't speak to whether that model actually factored in that reduction in trees; I'm not sure - so, if they're saying it is a perceptible noise difference, then that would be something we'd look to entertain.

...

Mr MIDDLETON - If I may, I should add that it's been proven that vegetation doesn't really reduce noise; it acts more as a visual screen which increases people's perception that noise isn't an issue. The vegetation has to be very dense to actually provide a small reduction. That's been proven time and time again. Those trees - whilst they've got big trunks, there's a lot of space alongside each of those trunks, so there's a lot of space for the noise to get through.

Relocation of Utilities

- 4.35 Mr Muirhead also noted the works would impact utility some providers' infrastructure and property connections:

We've also been working with utilities providers, as utilities connections to nearby properties will need to be altered and relocated accordingly.

- 4.36 Further discussions were had on the status of the planned alteration and relocation of utilities connections:

CHAIR - ..this question around TasNetworks and what kind of changes will need to be made to power lines, and whether or not you've booked that in with TasNetworks already?...

Mr MUIRHEAD - There are overhead TasNetworks cables that can be seen on the north-western end part of the intersection as well as on the south. These poles are required to be relocated. Essentially, they will be reallocated just back to allow for the widening of the roads on both sides. So they will more or less follow their existing alignment, just pushed back.

The coordination with TasNetworks, all the TasNetworks - the design has been completed and coordinated with TasNetworks, who have put through their works of offer and the easement plan required for one of the landowners. The works themselves, to my knowledge, have not been booked in yet but all the work on the design side has been complete.

Impact of Proposed Tree Removal

- 4.37 Mr Muirhead noted an initial assessment of the proposed removal of trees for the project indicated there would be no significant impact. He did, however, highlight

the Department's initial assessment was referred for review under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC):

As part of the environmental investigations for the project, impacts to swift and blue-winged parrot potential nesting and foraging trees were identified. An assessment was made against the EPBCA significant impact criteria, and it was determined that the project is unlikely to cause significant impact. However, the project has still been referred under the EPBC Act 1999 so that these assessment conclusions can be endorsed. We are expecting the outcome of that referral to come in on 6 January. It should be noted that if the results of that referral come back different from what we expected, then there will likely be some time impacts - but that isn't the expected outcome.

- 4.38 The Committee sought further evidence on the impacts of the tree removal on the southern side of South Arm Road, specifically the impact on potential swift parrot and blue-winged parrot habitat:

Ms BURNET - *On our site visit we were shown where the road will be widened on South Arm Road. Going to that southern aspect of the works and the South Arm Road widening, it looks like there's going to be five lanes, possibly six lanes across there at the widest point with signals, but the widening of the road will take out some of the trees. Can you explain in relation to the trees and the impact and trying to reduce that impact on swift parrot habitat?*

Mr MUIRHEAD - *Yes, I can. As a high-level summary for the trees, across the project there's 24 trees to be cleared. So that's various eucalypt trees. There are going to be eight that are able to be retained and protected on site with tree-protection fencing.*

If I can just talk to, unfortunately, why these have to be impacted: it is largely driven by the - as we are including the two through lanes on South Arm Road going eastbound and westbound, that increases the road footprint, and with Lauderdale Primary School to the north, that wasn't an intent to push too far north into that area, or east for Acton Road, so that pushes the road south, which does impact a lot of those trees.

As part of the design, there was an initial natural values assessment and arborist assessment completed to inform the initial concept design, and a subsequent update of assessments based on the detailed design, so that way we could account for the actual footprint and the potential disturbance footprint from the construction works themselves.

From this values assessment, the assessment findings found that for swift parrot, which are an EPBCA critically-endangered species, there's the 24 habitat trees - 12 are foraging trees only, and 12 are foraging trees with potential nesting hollows. There's also the blue-winged parrot, which is a vulnerable species for EPBCA. There's clearance of 12 potential nesting habitat trees of the blue-winged parrot. So, that's a total of 24 trees to be cleared with impact to potential nesting or foraging habitat. There were eight that we were able to avoid impacts through localised earthwork considerations, and we will be putting up tree-protection fencing for those during all phases of the work.

If I can just talk to that impact assessment for those trees: the significant impact assessment completed for the Acton Road intersection - the significant impact criteria concluded that the current design is unlikely to breach any EPBCA-significant impact criteria in relation to these matters of national environmental significance. The assessment against the significant impact criteria for the vulnerable swift parrot and blue-winged parrot concludes that the project will not have a significant impact to these species.

Part of the reason for that is these trees are very unlikely to be used for nesting. This is due to the proximity of these trees to a busy highway and school. In combination with the abundance of better nesting habitat in the broader landscape and the higher likelihood of competition from species with a greater tolerance for urban environments in these trees that we're getting

rid of, there's the Meehan Range 200 metres to the north that is a more suitable, I suppose, habitat.

As mentioned before in the opening statements, although the outcome of that study showed that we wouldn't have significant impact to those species, we still referred our self-assessment to DCCEEW [Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water] by the EPBC, and we are waiting on their determination to see if they agree with our self-assessment or not. We're expecting the outcome of that in early January - 6 January is the date.

Ms BURNET - If they want further information, then you will need to put that on hold?

Mr MURIHEAD - That's right. If they need - they might come back and say that specific controlled actions are required, and we may need to take some time to ensure that those controlled actions are adequately planned into the project, which is a potential schedule risk for the project. Until that outcome of that is there, that risk still exists.

4.39 The Committee clarified whether the trees identified as potential nesting or foraging trees had been used by swift parrots for habitat, and whether there was an alternative plan if the findings of the EPBC referral required the trees to be retained:

CHAIR - Do we know whether or not the swifties have actually nested in those tree areas before? Or is there the potential for them to in the future? Do we know if they have nested before?

Mr MUIRHEAD - Based on the surveys that were conducted as part of the natural - there was no evidence of existing nesting in those trees. It was more they had the potential to be nesting environments because they had hollows, essentially.

CHAIR - ... is there a potential plan B if it is found that those trees need to remain because they are potential nesting and that's what the results come back from the EPBC investigation? Is there a plan B?

Mr MUIRHEAD - I suppose the plan B would be making sure that we're taking the advice on from DCCEEW before progressing with the project and, if it comes as controlled actions, ensuring that it's similar to the environmental one. It's hard to plan out what that plan will be without knowing what the outcome of their assessment will be, or to say that the outcomes of that assessment will be; we will ensure they are incorporated within the management of the project before progressing to construction, certainly.

4.40 In response to matters taken on notice, DSG provided the Committee with further information on the trees identified as potential habitat for the swift parrot and the blue-winged parrot:

The natural values assessment identified potential habitat trees that would either be directly within the project area or that could have their tree protection zones (TPZ) encroached by more than the reasonable tolerance. The initial survey indicated that some of these trees provide a foraging source for the Swift Parrot, and in some cases, potential nesting habitat for Swift Parrots and Blue-winged Parrots.

A further arborist assessment was completed after the initial assessment, and identified:

- 31 Swift Parrot habitat trees
 - The project will impact up to 23 of these trees for foraging habitat, and 15 of those also have potential nesting features.

- No nesting features have been confirmed in the assessments completed, and it is deemed that there is a low likelihood of Swift Parrots using these trees as nesting habitats due to the high availability of habitat in nearby areas such as the Meehan Range and competition with other non-threatened species that are more tolerant to urban environments.
- 15 Blue-winged Parrot habitat trees
 - These are the same 15 trees identified with potential nesting features for the Swift Parrot.
 - The likelihood of Blue-winged Parrots using these trees for nesting habitats is considered low due to the high availability of habitat in nearby areas such as the Meehan Range and competition with other non-threatened species that are more tolerant to urban environments.

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4.41 DSG also responded to the Committee’s request to outline the decision-making process for acquiring land on the southern side of South Arm Road, where tree removal is required, rather than land on the northern side of the road:

*The land on the northern side of South Arm Road, where Lauderdale Primary School is sited, currently includes an important pedestrian route for students coming from Lauderdale along South Arm Road, which needs to be retained for the safety of the students. It also contains operational areas of the school which would have a high cost to relocate, or which would be impacted by noise, with potential to cause negative impacts on educational outcomes if the road was brought into close proximity. Therefore, the Lauderdale Primary School land and adjacent shared user path has not been acquired or used as part of the project so far as reasonably practicable.*⁷

4.42 The Committee sought further information from the Department regarding the outcome on the EPBC referral. The Department provided an update on 16 February 2026, and stated:

*[The] DCCEEW have now finished their assessment of our EPBC referral and have concluded that no controlled actions are required. This aligns with the self-assessment the Department of State Growth made.*⁸

Aboriginal Heritage

4.43 The Committee was advised that the Department is awaiting further findings of additional investigations into the proposed works impact on nearby Aboriginal heritage sites:

⁶ *Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works Hearing – Rokeby Road – South Arm Upgrades: Acton Road Intersection – Questions on Notice*, Department of State Growth response to PWC request for additional information, 21 January 2026, pp. 5-6.

⁷ *Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works Hearing – Rokeby Road – South Arm Upgrades: Acton Road Intersection – Questions on Notice*, Department of State Growth response to PWC request for additional information, 21 January 2026, p. 6.

⁸ *Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works Hearing – Rokeby Road – South Arm Upgrades: Acton Road Intersection*, Department of State Growth response to PWC request for additional information, 16 February 2026, p. 1.

Ms BURNET - ... I note that there's activities currently underway, additional Indigenous heritage investigation near Ralphs Bay. Is that in conjunction with Parks and Wildlife as well?

Mr MUIRHEAD - That's correct.

Ms BURNET - Can you outline what you're looking at there, please?

Mr MUIRHEAD - I can, yes. During design, an Aboriginal heritage assessment was conducted which included a regional search of the Aboriginal Heritage Register within the south-east region of Tasmania where the project is located. The search found that there are no registered Aboriginal heritage sites within the Acton Road intersection. However, there is a cluster of shell middens along the southern boundary of the Acton Road junction, the closest of which is approximately 50 metres from the project corridor that we're talking about. It's basically on the northern shoreline of Ralphs Bay, where those middens are in the register.

So, while initial assessments advise that there is generally a low potential for undetected Aboriginal heritage sites to occur within the intersection upgrade area, additional investigations will be required. These investigations will also be an input into the reserve activity assessment that we talked about, as it's some of those middens up in that Ralphs Bay Conservation Area that we're talking about, near the bioretention basin. That is still outstanding because it was kind of a secondary investigation. We're hoping to get the findings of that in early 2026.

CHAIR - Is there a plan B? Whether or not if this does end up becoming an issue for this project, is there a plan B?

Mr MUIRHEAD - It is very hard to determine, because it really is dependent on what artefacts are found. There are separate, I suppose, management strategies that need to be put in place, depending on what is found. I'm probably -

CHAIR - I'm just remembering that Brighton bypass area, with the middens there - trauma - insofar as having that plan B or an alternative, if it's found that that could be disturbed and really shouldn't be - if there is a plan B?

Mr MUIRHEAD - Well, I suppose, the key thing for us is once we get the results of that investigation, we will be able to determine what actions are required. Sometimes those actions are additional management plans in place in the construction period. Sometimes they need to be more extreme, such as adjustments to the design itself. It's hard to comment without the conclusion of them at this point.

Flood Mitigation & Bioretention Pond

4.44 The Committee heard evidence on the design of drainage facilities and culverts included in the proposed works, as well as the flood risk and mitigation for the site:

CHAIR - ... Can I get you to run through the flood mapping of the area and the drainage and the culverts, which are part of the project?

Mr MUIRHEAD - Yes, absolutely. Throughout the design development, we developed a suitable system for directing stormwater to the appropriate legal points of discharge. Near the area there are four legal points of discharge, which we are maintaining. These works are just connecting with the existing points of discharge. This involved consideration of where discharge is directed and increases in the flow or into the considerably more impervious pavement. So we need to address that.

The proposed intersection upgrade will provide a significant increase in the impervious area. To avoid the construction of an additional basin along Acton Road, the proposed stormwater

conveyance network will divert as much surface water as practicable down the South Arm Highway to an upgraded outfall into Ralphs Bay. The diversion of catchment flows is proposed to be achieved by incorporating new pits and pipes along Acton Road that will divert the road runoff back to the South Arm Highway for as large an extent as practicable.

Additionally, catch drains on Acton Road above the cut road batter will divert as much catchment as practical back to the South Arm Highway.

There will be two upgraded culverts to receive external catchment flows that carry water across the South Arm Highway carriageway and these are designed to cater for a one per cent AEP storm event. That's a one in 100 year. The proposed road drainage system will provide at a minimum, that it was one per cent AEP for those high stormwater structures. Overall, across the project, it will provide a minimum five per cent AEP drainage capacity and up to one per cent AEP in most locations, with the remaining overland flow accommodated within the road's drainage system.

Based on the flood modelling that was conducted - and we looked at the flood models developed by Clarence City Council as well, so we're working in coordination with them - no adverse flood impacts to adjacent properties are anticipated from the proposed design and the upgrades to the road drainage system that we're putting in with those pits and pipes along Acton Road. The culverts on South Arm Road are likely to generally provide improvements to the drainage system in the area.

Ms BURNET - Is there any inundation near the detention pond? Is there any likely inundation through, is that Ralph's Bay?

Mr MUIRHEAD - Based on the review, there's no likely inundation in that area, no.

...

Ms BURNET - I'm curious. You are preparing for a one in 100 year flood event or storm event. Is that the standard at the moment? Is that what we're catering to as a standard thing by DSG with these kinds of upgrades?

Mr MUIRHEAD - Yes. Your design flood levels change sometimes for the structure that you're designing for and the areas where it's at. For example, these major culverts that we're putting in where we're looking to divert the water across the road have a more stringent design criteria, so that one in 100 is standard. Whereas sometimes minor, if you're in a location where perhaps you might just have a swale drain on the side, it would be more common for that to need to comply with a less stringent criteria, whether it's a five per cent or 10 per cent AEP.

- 4.45 The proposed works include a new bioretention pond located in the south-east of the site, within the Ralphs Bay Conservation Area. The Committee sought evidence on the water quality requirements and utilisation of the bioretention pond:

Mr MUIRHEAD - The bioretention basin is new - it's not an upgrade of the existing. We are putting that in there to address water quality to make sure that we are maintaining our water quality requirements given any discharge into Ralphs Bay. The new bioretention basin is on the southern side of the South Arm Highway at the easternmost extent of the works prior to the outfall into Ralphs Bay. It's intended to treat the majority of the runoff from the paved road surface.

Ms BURNET - Does it articulate with any of the other properties? Will they use that outlet as well?

Mr MUIRHEAD - The catchment area to the north may include some of those surrounding properties as well, depending on the catchment that goes into the road.

What our modelling has done is largely to address the increase in the impervious area from the project. I can't talk too much to the runoff from other properties, but I know that it's adequate to account for where we expect the increase in runoff to come from the project.

Ms BURNET - What levels of requirement are you reaching for the bioretention pond to meet water quality requirements? It's a fairly sensitive area.

Mr MUIRHEAD - As you mentioned, it's located within the Ralphs Bay Conservation Area which is managed by the Parks and Wildlife Service. As part of that, we are doing a reserve risk assessment. We've submitted a reserve risk assessment which gets conducted by the Parks and Wildlife Service which assesses the risks of the work being done within the conservation area. They assess that as well and provide further approval that, 'Yes, this works and does not do any undue harm to the conservation area,' basically. It's also a part of our EPBC referral, so we talk about our drainage outflows. We talk about how the bioretention basin is there to allow the water quality to be at a certain level so that we're not impacting the waterways in that area or any species that live within that area.

4.46 In response to the Committee's request for additional information, the Department expanded on the impact on the water quality in the Ralph's Bay Conservation Area, and its engagement with the Parks and Wildlife Service regarding the proposed bioretention pond:

Modelling of the impact of water quality output to Ralph's Bay has been completed for the project based on the Department of State Growth Drainage Design Standards, the State Stormwater Strategy and the Clarence City Council Stormwater Development Policy. The modelling shows that despite an increased flow, the treatment provided by the bio-retention basin exceeds the design standards and provides an overall improvement to the quality of water entering Ralph's Bay when compared to the existing conditions. Please refer to Table 3 for the modelling results summary.

Table 3: Stormwater modelling results:

	Untreated		Design Performance		Post Development Discharge vs existing discharge	Performance against standards		
	Existing	Proposed	Existing	Proposed		Post Development Reduction vs Post Development Sources	Compliant (Y/N)	Comment
Flow (ML/yr)	4.0	7.9	4.0	7.3	Increased volume of water as expected.	-	-	-
Total Suspended Solids (kq/yr)	1320	2970	99	93	6% reduction despite 55% increase in catchment	96.9%	Y	Meets reduction target (80%)
Total Phosphorus (kg/yr)	1.5	4.0	0.6	0.3	50% reduction in TP compared to existing	91.6%	Y	Meets reduction target (45%)
Total Nitrogen (kg/yr)	8.9	16.7	7.5	5.7	24% reduction in TN compared to existing	65.6%	Y	Meets reduction target (45%)
Gross Pollutants (kg/yr)	55.8	211	0	0	Same as existing	100%	Y	Meets reduction target (90%)

Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service have been provided with a briefing by the project team, and a Reserve Activity Assessment has been submitted and is under review. The Department of State Growth and Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service are planning to enter an agreement for the Department of State Growth to licence and maintain the bio-retention basin to limit the impact to Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service.⁹

4.47 The Department provided the Committee with further information on the progress of the Reserve Activity Assessment review in a response dated 5th February 2026:

*The Department has yet to receive the outcome of the Reserve Activity Assessment that has been submitted to Parks Tasmania for review. The Department of State Growth have been following up on this submission via our design consultant, but Parks Tasmania are yet to commit to a date when the outcome will be known.*¹⁰

Funding and Further Upgrades

4.48 Mr Middleton provided the Committee with a summary of the funding arrangement for the proposed works:

The works are funded under the 2018 election commitments for State Road Upgrades (Southern Region) which has a commitment of \$11 million from the Tasmanian Government and \$44 million from the Australian Government. This \$55 million funding allocation covers two components identified in the planning study: the upgrade of the Acton Road intersection, which is this project, and duplication of the South Arm Highway between Pass Road and Oakdowns.

The upgrading of South Arm Highway between Pass Road and Oakdowns is still in the preliminary design stage. Design is not expected to be finalised until early 2027, with works not set to commence until mid to late 2027. Due to the feedback received from the community, this funding amount will also fund a pedestrian barrier to be installed on the northern side of South Arm Road from the intersection safety barrier east to Ringwood Road. This piece of work is looking to be fast-tracked for delivery in early 2026.

4.49 Mr Muirhead then provided the Committee with details on the cost estimates of the proposed works, confirming that current estimates indicate the works will be completed within the allocated budget:

To talk to the costs: the estimated cost of works is \$15.1 million - that's the P50 estimate - or \$16.5 million as the P90 estimate. These include contingency and escalation. For this project, the key contingent risk items that have been factored in include:

- *additional utilities requiring relocation resulting in additional cost;*
- *the escalation of tender prices based on market saturation;*
- *the extent of ground improvement works being required may be greater than anticipated, or there might be heavier rainfall than envisioned, causing delays to the project and therefore costs.*

⁹ *Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works Hearing – Rokeby Road – South Arm Upgrades: Acton Road Intersection – Questions on Notice*, Department of State Growth response to PWC request for additional information, 21 January 2026, pp. 4-5.

¹⁰ *Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works Hearing – Rokeby Road – South Arm Upgrades: Acton Road Intersection*, Department of State Growth response to PWC request for additional information, 5 February 2026, p. 1.

This cost estimate shows - under the \$55 million funding allocation - this demonstrates that the works are currently forecast to be delivered within the available budget.

4.50 The Committee sought further evidence on the funding arrangement, and whether the allocation for the second stage of upgrades is sufficient:

CHAIR - *With the \$50 million that's been allocated to realise that strategy in that whole road upgrade after this project's completion, will there still be enough funding to complete the other stages as well? I believe there's \$50 million and this is, hopefully, the \$16 million that's coming from that \$50 million. Is that correct?*

Mr MUIRHEAD - *That's correct. The project's being funded by the current \$55 million commitment via that 80/20 split that was talked about before. The Acton Road intersection is expected to cost \$15.1 million up to \$16 million, depending on contingencies. That leaves a bit under \$40 million available for the Pass Road to Oakdowns upgrade. Initial concept design cost estimates for the Pass Road to Oakdowns upgrade have indicated that additional funding will be required to complete that full extent of works under that. The Department is currently awaiting some updated cost estimates for the Pass Road to Oakdowns section based on the preliminary design, because there have been fairly significant changes between concept and prelim design, so we're hoping to, at the prelim design cost estimate, to have a better understanding of the extent of what the budget shortfall will be. We'll have to understand that in more confidence.*

4.51 The Committee sought clarification on the contingency and escalation costs included in the project's cost estimates:

Mr HARRISS - *... around the contingency and escalation. The contingency at 19 per cent to 30 per cent - is that high?*

Mr MUIRHEAD - *It is high. The reason for that high contingent amount is partly because the outcome of a lot of these investigations that we just spoke about are still - the outcome of them is still to be determined. Also, as mentioned in the opening statements, there's the standard contingent risk items around construction.*

Mr HARRISS - *The escalation: it mentions that the Australian Government determines the escalation in project cost estimates as part of funding submissions from the Department... [to] the Australian Government. Then it goes on to say that the Department has not diverted resources into challenging these Australian Government requirements. From previous projects, do we know how that sits with the escalations and percentages given from the Australian Government? Do they blow out or have they? Do we have any data on previous projects?*

Mr van der HYDE - *The projects that I've been involved in, it hasn't been consistently designed because it's quite situational dependent. It's difficult to say whether those contingency estimates from the Australian Government should be revised or not. Some projects have been quite within the contingency and escalation budgets. I am not too sure.*

Mr HARRISS - *No, it would be interesting to understand whether the escalation percentages obviously provided by the Australian Government get eaten into, I suppose.*

Mr van der HYDE - *It's quite seldom that we see the P90 estimates. We asked the Australian Government for 80 per cent of the P50 estimate to be released to us. Quite often I see us getting away with the P50 amount and not needing to access the P90.*

CHAIR - *It's your worst case scenario, isn't it, the high stakes.*

Mr van der HYDE - *Yes. Which tells me that we are not exceeding as often.*

Mr HARRISS - Standard is to get your P50. In this case the 672.

Mr van der HYDE - Correct.

- 4.52 The Committee continued the discussion regarding the escalation and contingency cost provisions associated with market saturation and conditions, and whether this factor had been duplicated:

CHAIR - ... I've noticed in the contingency 8.1 and then the 8.2 the escalation... There's market saturation in the contingency, but then there's also market conditions, which is part of the escalation costs. Is that a duplication? They're both to do with market conditions. It's in the contingency as well as the escalation. Is that a duplication or are they two kinds of market analysis?...

Mr MUIRHEAD - ... I suppose the difference is the item that's included in the contingent risk is more to identify a specific situation. If we had lots of projects going out right now, which would, regardless of price escalation of the industry at the time, it would mean that tender prices would come in higher because there's so much work going. So, it's a separate item than general price escalation that you'd see in the industry, it's to deal with a specific event.

CHAIR - It must be hard to differentiate when you're trying to figure out what's part of the contingency costs and then what's part of an escalation cost, and which buckets they would potentially come out of, I imagine.

Mr MUIRHEAD - It is true. Usually, the contingent risk items come out of our risk workshops. We would do a risk workshop in which you call out your specific risks that you think might impact your project. Then in your cost estimate you would put a specific budget against each of those key contingent risks. In this case it was called out as a contingent risk in our risk workshop, and then your escalation gets applied to the total estimate after you have factored in those contingent reasons...It's important to make sure that you don't have that duplication, which really comes down to your definition of what you put into your contingent risk.

Does the Project Meet the Requirements of the Public Works Committee Act?

- 4.53 In assessing any proposed public work, the Committee seeks an assurance that each project meets the criteria detailed in Clause 15(2) of the Public Works Committee Act 1914. Broadly, and in simple terms, these relate to the purpose of the works, the need for and advisability of undertaking the works, and whether the works are a good use of public funds and provide value for money to the community. The Committee questioned the witnesses who provided the following confirmation:

CHAIR - ... Before you leave the table, I would like to ask you some additional questions and if you can just answer, as the submitters, a yes or no.

Does the proposed works meet an identified need or needs, or solve a recognised problem?

WITNESSES - Yes.

CHAIR - Are the proposed works the best solution to meet identified needs or solve a recognised problem within the allocated budget?

WITNESSES - Yes.

CHAIR - Are the proposed works fit for purpose?

WITNESSES - Yes

CHAIR - *Do the proposed works provide value for money?*

WITNESSES - Yes.

CHAIR - *Are the proposed works a good use of public funds?*

WITNESSES - Yes.

5 DOCUMENTS TAKEN INTO EVIDENCE

5.1 The following documents were taken into evidence and considered by the Committee:

- *Rokeby Road – South Arm Road Upgrades: Acton Road Intersection*, submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, Department of State Growth, 27 November 2025;
- Department of State Growth response to PWC request for additional information, 21 January 2026;
- Department of State Growth response to PWC request for additional information, 2 February 2026;
- Department of State Growth response to PWC request for additional information, 5 February 2026; and
- Email from Scott Muirhead, Project Manager, Department of State Growth, with an update on the EPBC Referral, dated 16 February 2026.

6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 The Committee is satisfied that the need for the proposed works has been established. Once completed, the works will reduce congestion at the intersection and improve safety for all road users.
- 6.2 The signalisation of the intersection will result in improved pedestrian safety, improved queuing and access to Lauderdale Primary School, and improved traffic flow in peak and off-peak periods for South Arm Road. The proposed works will integrate with the broader South Arm Highway upgrades that align with the 2020 Rokeby Road Stage 3 Corridor Planning Study.
- 6.3 Without the proposed works, travel times for the five kilometre section between Acton Road and Pass Road would increase by 65 per cent, or four minutes, from six minutes in 2019 to 10 minutes in 2029. The upgrades are predicted to constrain this increase to 1.5 minutes.
- 6.4 The proposed works provide greater incentive for public transport utilisation by providing improved infrastructure, including two new, accessible bus stops, one for eastbound traffic and one for westbound traffic.
- 6.5 Accordingly, the Committee recommends the Rokeby Road – South Arm Upgrades: Acton Road Intersection, at an estimated cost of \$15 million, in accordance with the documentation submitted.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "J. A. Butler". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

Parliament House
Hobart
11 March 2026

Ms Jen Butler MP
Chair

7 DIVISIONS

7.1 In accordance with section 8(2) of the Act, the following Divisions were recorded:-

7.2 On the Question being proposed – That the Committee approves the Rokeby Road – South Arm Upgrades – Acton Road Intersection reference in accordance with the plans and specifications submitted;

The Committee divided.

AYES (4)

Ms Butler

Mr Harriss

Ms Rattray

Mr Shelton

NOES (1)

Ms Burnet

7.3 On the Question being proposed – That Chapter 6, ‘Conclusion and Recommendation,’ stand part of the Report;

The Committee divided.

AYES (3)

Ms Butler

Mr Harriss

Ms Rattray

NOES (1)

Ms Burnet

8 DISSENTING STATEMENTS

- 8.1 The Honourable Member for Clark, *Ms Burnet*, voted against the inclusion of the 'Conclusion and Recommendation' in the Committee's report.
- 8.2 *Ms Burnet* provided the following Dissenting Statement:-

Public Works Committee

Dissenting Report Rokeby Rd – South Arm Rd Upgrades

Whilst I understand that upgrades are required to help with road safety around a busy intersection adjacent to the Lauderdale Primary School, I also believe that with better planning and consideration, the unnecessary consequences of the project may be mitigated.

There are 3 main reasons of concern relating to this project:

1. The removal of mature eucalyptus trees
2. Aboriginal heritage
3. Runoff and contamination from the roadworks into Ralphs Bay Conservation Area

I also raise concerns about the original report and information then provided to Committee.

1. Regarding 4.37-4.42 Impact of Proposed Tree Removal

There are unrecognised costs in the broad sense of the term associated with the removal of trees that are not considered in the proponent's report. The removal of 23 mature trees for road widening is of concern because it may impact:

- The ability to source food for swift parrot and blue-winged parrots,
- The natural values of students who have used this area for outdoor learning,
- The natural amenity of this special area approaching Lauderdale and the spectacular Ralphs Bay

The 23 trees to be removed are all mature trees. Whilst they are not all necessarily old habitat trees (usually approximately 80 years old), they appear to be trees suitable for foraging (in the vicinity of 30-50 years of age). The felling of these trees means more habitat for critically endangered and vulnerable bird species will not reach maturity and adds to the increasing loss of roadside habitat.

The potentially unnecessary removal of trees opposite the Lauderdale Primary School, is adjacent to the Ralphs Bay Conservation Area. This not only has environmental value for swift parrot and blue winged parrots, but will be a loss of connection to nature for the school community. This cannot be replaced.

The value of the trees as important habitat and natural amenity does not appear to be considered. I am aware that Lauderdale Primary School students have had classes of bush kinder/Learning on Country under the trees that will be removed. These are used as an extended part of school activities for bush play, will be removed – forever. How does that impact on the school community who have been nurtured by these established trees over many years?

There have been recent reports of increasing rates of bullying in schools effecting both students and teachers.

From a former teacher at Lauderdale PS who has studied benefits of nature-based learning:

“Many educators are attempting to overcome their students’ nature deficit by taking their learning outdoors. Lauderdale school does this in nature area opposite the school.

Playing outside in nature increases children’s physical and mental health and research also shows that children’s academic performance is improved after time of learning in nature. All

areas of the curriculum can be covered in the outdoors, even in a small stand of trees, especially visited by beautiful and endangered birds.”

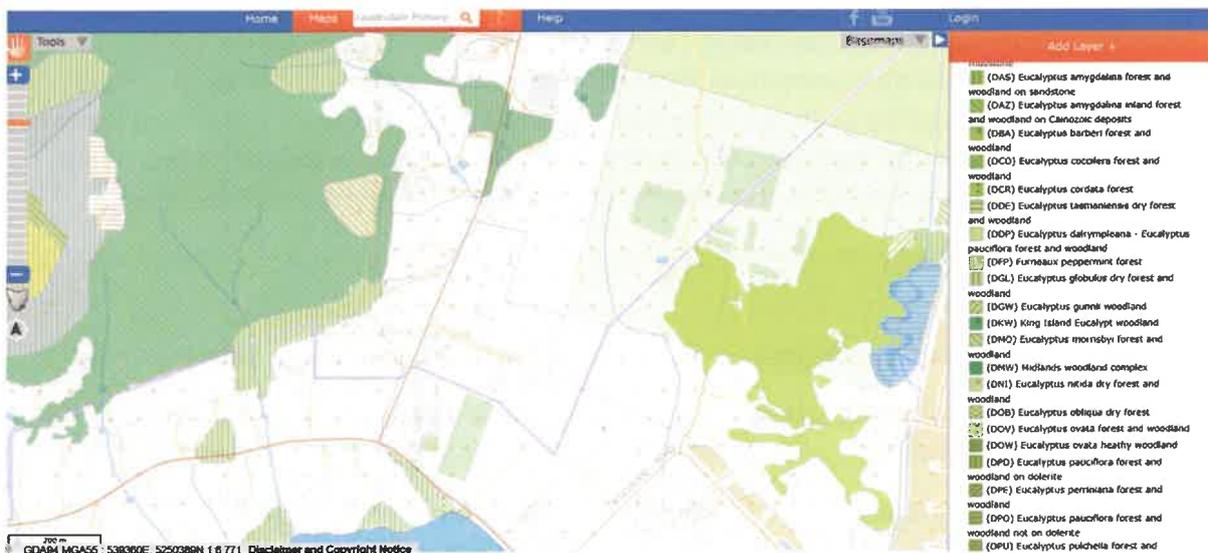
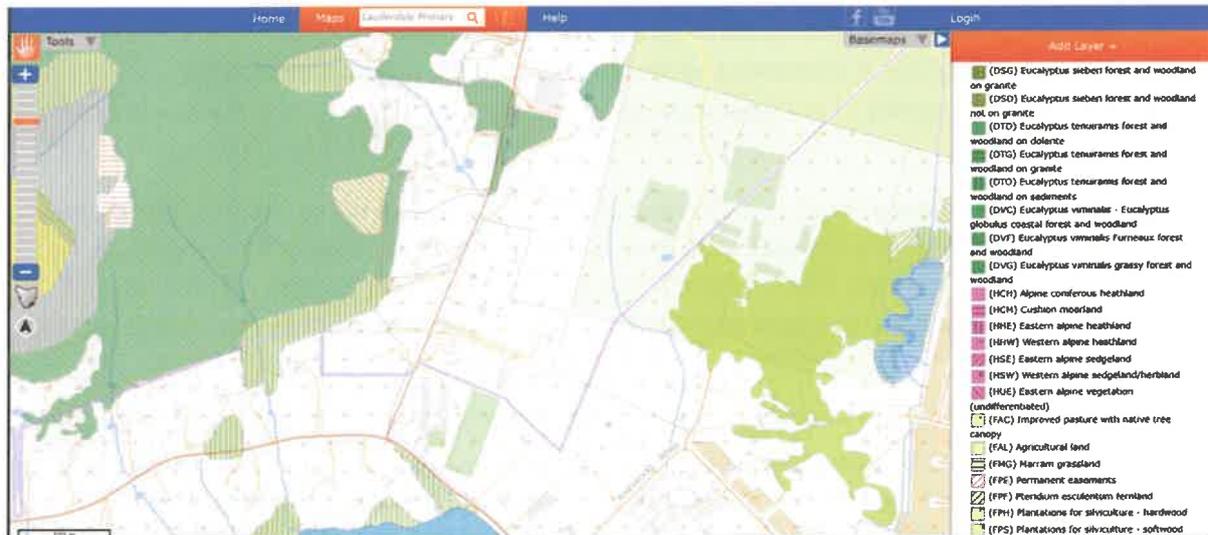
A better outcome would be to retain these trees for their natural value.

The proponent appears to regard the removal of 23 of the 41 mature eucalypts along the southern aspect of South Arm Rd as business-as-usual. There is suggestion that swift parrot and blue winged parrots can instead feed on trees in the Meehan Range “200m away”.

After further investigation, according to the List, that distance is actually further. Suitable habitat in the Meehan Range is 358m from the site and includes a patch of *e. globulus* (blue gum) dry forest and woodland at the base of the Meehan Range. It is 520m to grassy *e. viminalis* (white gum) forest and woodland, further into the Meehan Range.

My understanding is that blue gum is the most important tree species for swift parrot, but that *e. viminalis* is also very important habitat for them.

Here is a description of both Eucalyptus communities near Lauderdale Primary School taken from Listmap:



The information provided about the trees and their removal raises the following concerns:

- The distance to alternative nesting and foraging trees was consistently reported by the proponent as less than the actual distance. Was this what was provided to DCCEEW as well as this Committee?
- The proponent argued that because the trees slated for removal are located in an area next to a highway, it is less desirable for birds to use these. This completely disregards the fact that the trees are adjacent to the important Ralphs Bay Conservation Area. The statement seems to purposely reduce the value that these trees have to wildlife. However, when visiting the site it was clear various species of birds were in the trees and that the natural values next to Ralphs Bay are evident.
- The Committee was notified that the report had been signed off by DCCEEW and yet there was no direct evidence tabled of that notification from DCCEEW presented to that effect.
- The Committee was not provided with the reports, desk top report against the EPBCA, any vegetation studies, nor correspondence to or from DCCEEW. After further investigation, I located the information. However, I believe that this should have been taken into consideration as part of the evidence presented to the Committee

There is no indication of the cost of tree removal in the proposed tender. If the estimation of cost to remove mature trees in Tasmania lands between \$5,000-12,000, that is a significant cost to the project.

In contrast, any change in positioning of the pathway adjacent to the school to the other side is not considered. The path adjacent to school grounds does currently have a gate that leads into the school near the south-east corner of the school grounds. This was not mentioned as part of the proponent's submission. Rather that it was communicated to the Committee that it would be too difficult to move the path to the other side of the road.

The proponent has not clearly set out why the proposed works in closer alignment to the Lauderdale Primary School was not a viable option. Realignment of the existing walking path to the other side of South Arm Road may have had better outcomes of reducing costs for mature tree removal, better amenity because of potential shade from trees and the benefits of traffic calming. That would link to a safe crossing point at the proposed traffic lights.

Regarding 4.43-Aboriginal Heritage is important to consider in any project. Desk top assessment was undertaken of middens in the vicinity but this information was not provided. Further, it is not clear in the evidence that the palawa community was consulted.

The sensitivity about any findings to the palawa community should be regarded and understanding of what might be done to protect sites if found was not clear in the evidence provided to the Committee.

Regarding 4.44-4.47 Flood Mitigation and Bioretention

When the Department appeared before the Public Works Committee, there were outstanding reports about the water runoff treatment in the Conservation Area (Parks). The Committee heard there would be greater hard surface from the roadworks and consequently greater run-off water amounts to treat.

Also I do not believe the Reserve Activity Assessment was submitted.

It is not clear that these questions have been answered, as to the impacts for Parks to manage

Summary

In summary, the concerns raised could have been mitigated. Removal of trees near a school has consequences not only for habitat removal but for visual and cultural amenity.

Ongoing removal of trees in multiple infrastructure projects should be considered against stricter criteria. There is only so much of vegetation that can be offset or trees being close enough to be substituted for foraging and habitat.

Finally, I request that the proponent consider the following:

1. Alternative treatments to minimise tree/habitat loss for Tasmanian fauna such as the swift
2. If tree removal and subsequent loss of habitat does occur, plant more habitat for the swift parrot and blue winged parrot.
3. If Aboriginal heritage is potentially effected and compromised, seek input from the aboriginal community – the evidence provided was unclear as to whether that had been undertaken.
4. Publicly report the level and treatment of contaminated run-off into the Ralphs Bay Conservation Area from the larger road surface which appears to be something that Parks will need to manage.



Helen Burnet MP

Member Public Works Committee

March 13, 2026