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THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS MET AT HENTY HOUSE, LAUNCESTON ON WEDNESDAY 14 JUNE 2023

WEST TAMAR HIGHWAY DUPLICATION - LEGANA

CHAIR - Welcome to Public Works Committee hearing regarding West Tamar Highway Duplication Freshwater Point Road to Acropolis Drive.

For the record we have on this side of the table, Jen Butler, me Rob Valentine, and John Tucker. Two apologies from Ms Rattray and Mr Wood, they are unable to be here today.

Ms JOHANNA EDWARDS, NETWORK PLANNER, INFRASTRUCTURE TASMANIA; **Ms JACQUELYN TANG**, PROJECT MANAGEMENT TEAM LEADER, STATE ROADS, DEPARTMENT OF STATE GROWTH; AND **Ms ROBYN HAWKINS**, PROJECT MANAGER - TASMAN BRIDGE PATHWAYS UPGRADE, STATE ROADS, DEPARTMENT OF STATE GROWTH WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

CHAIR - Welcome. There is a statement that I would like to read to you in relation to today's hearing. It is important for us to hear the evidence that you're presenting today, otherwise we are not able to do our job properly. I thank you for being there this morning to take us through the project on site. That was very informative.

We are pleased to hear evidence today. Before you give your evidence I want to inform you of some of the important aspects of committee proceedings, if you haven't been to a committee like this before.

It is a proceeding in parliament and it means that it receives the protection of parliamentary privilege. It is an important legal protection that allows individuals giving evidence to a parliamentary committee to speak with complete freedom without the fear of being sued or questioned in any court or place out of parliament. It applies to ensure that parliament receives the very best information when conducting its inquiries. It is important to be aware that this protection is not accorded to you if statements that may be defamatory are repeated or referred to by you outside the confines of the parliamentary proceedings.

This is a public hearing. Members of the public and journalists may be present and this means your evidence may be reported.

Do you understand? I need a clear yes from you all.

Witnesses - Yes.

CHAIR - Thank you.

There is an opportunity for an opening statement. Do you wish to make an opening statement on this particular project?

Ms EDWARDS - Good afternoon. Today we are seeking consideration for the West Tamar Highway Duplication Project between Freshwater Point Road and Acropolis Drive at

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Legana. The West Tamar Highway is the main traffic route connecting the suburbs in the locality of the West Tamar Council with the City of Launceston.

The highway is currently experiencing increased congestion due to urban growth in the municipality and a lack of alternative transport choices. In 2022, the department completed a corridor study for the West Tamar Highway between Launceston and Legana. The project objectives of the corridor improvement plan are to improve connectivity between the West Tamar residential areas at Legana and Riverside with Launceston for all transport modes; to improve safety for all road users; and to improve traffic flow and reliability of travel times along the West Tamar Highway.

During development of the corridor improvement plan, workshops were held with key stakeholders in September 2019 followed by the first stage of community consultation in May 2020. As a result of the community feedback and further analysis, 14 improvement opportunities were refined. These were taken to a second stage of community consultation held in July and August 2021 and was shared with the public and key stakeholders via an online interactive map, the transport website and Facebook page, and displayed at the West Tamar Council Riverside office.

Projects were then prioritised based on the feedback from stakeholders in the community, an engineering review of current and future road demand, an assessment of project benefits, value for money and how easily the projects could be implemented and constructed.

From the study, the corridor improvements plan was prepared, packaging the 14 improvement solutions into eight site specific projects. The highest priority project, identified as part of the corridor improvement plan, involved three improvement solutions: the duplication of the West Tamar Highway between Freshwater Point Road and Acropolis Drive; improvements to Bridgenorth Road intersection; and provision of pedestrian facilities and on- and off-road cycling facilities.

These improvement solutions received the strongest support from the community and key stakeholders. In addition, the Department of Education strongly supported this project as a priority due to the development of the new Legana School. The Department of State Growth has been working closely with the Department of Education on the project. The department is also finalising a corridor strategy for the entire West Tamar Highway from Launceston to Beauty Point, and the work done on this to date has fully supported this project.

I will now handover to my colleague to talk more on the project.

Ms TANG - The project includes duplication of travel lanes in each direction between Freshwater Point Road and Acropolis Drive, upgrading key intersections at Acropolis Drive and Freshwater Point Road to [inaudible] roundabouts; installation of a new roundabout at Bridgenorth Road; two new signalised pedestrian crossings; a central median; a new shared path along eastern side of the highway; and on-road bicycle lanes on both sides of the highway.

The expected benefits to be delivered by the project are: improvement in road safety for all road users; greater connectivity and safety for active transport users; increased road capacity and overtaking opportunity leading to greater transport reliability; improved access to and across the highway from connecting roads and active travel pathways; and greater active transport access to the proposed new Legana Primary School.

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The estimated cost of the work is \$36 million with funding allocated from the \$84 million commitment for the East and West Tamar Highway upgrade. The cost estimate is considered reasonable for the scale and scope of the works proposed. Once delivered, the project will improve road safety, traffic efficiency and connectivity for active transport along West Tamar Highway between Acropolis Drive and Freshwater Point Road.

CHAIR - Thank you. Very much appreciate it. What we normally do is work through the submission page by page, generally, and the members of the Public Works Committee will ask questions as they go through. You've certainly explained the need for the works so there's not much point in repeating that. I don't know if any member has any question on that first - on page 2.

Ms BUTLER - The \$84 million commitment for the East and West Tamar Highway upgrades, this is \$36 million. Has it been spent already, the other proportion of that funding? I couldn't remember.

Ms TANG - No. This is the first project.

Ms BUTLER - Okay, thank you. That was all.

CHAIR - The proposed works: there is an overview there. We can continue through to page 4. For the record, part-way down - pedestrian crossing option assessment - there are signalised pedestrian crossings, two lots. I noticed that they are offset. For the record, can you explain why they are offset the way they are?

Ms TANG - This would allow a little bit of space to accommodate more pedestrians in the median and also as part of the Australian Standards, this is the recommended design for that speed of the highway and safest way to cross to the road.

CHAIR - Given there is a school in the vicinity, obviously there could be quite a number of students crossing at any one time. Basically, you need the space for them to be able to fit on to that median strip without danger.

Ms TANG - Yes.

CHAIR - In that median strip, at that point, are there going to be dual fences to funnel the people who are crossing into a safe location while they wait for the light to change?

Ms TANG - I haven't seen the drawing for this yet, but the design will be complying with whatever the Australian Standards recommendations are. There is one near Launceston Christian School. They have these mesh fences to protect the students. I am assuming that will happen.

CHAIR - Given the age of the children and a primary school, you can imagine kids playing in the middle of the road. Without something there to contain them, you think oops, out in front of a car.

Ms TANG - I will take that on notice and get back to the committee once I have the answer.

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CHAIR - Yes, you could come back to us on that. Mr Secretary can note that and we will get a response back on that.

Ms BUTLER - On that, do you know if there will be arrangements with the school, because they are primary aged students, for there to be some form of like a lolly-pop lady or so forth, I know that is gendered actually, a traffic control person, taking the kids across the crossing? Will that be in place as well, for that supervision during those before and after school times?

Ms TANG - That is normally organised by the Department of Education. We have not received any request from the school to organise that. We meet monthly with the department so we have been talking about digital speed-limit signs, the ones that you have seen around in Hobart, to be installed there. We are currently in discussion about where the best location is to put those digital signs up.

Ms BUTLER - When we had our walk through this morning - and thank you very much for meeting with us on-site to run through, in a practical sense, what the project would look like - so those digital signs, there will be a speed reduction for traffic around school starting times and finishing times?

Ms TANG - That is the plan at the moment.

Ms BUTLER - I was going to ask what the actual speed limit is outside of those peak times with the schools?

Ms TANG - I do have it here. I will find the answer for you. At the moment, between Freshwater Point Road to Bridgenorth Road is 70 kilometres per hour; and from Bridgenorth Road to Acropolis Drive is currently 80 kilometres per hour. These speed limits are currently under review. We are actually reviewing the speed limit for the full corridor from Launceston to Legana. The report should be available some time next month.

CHAIR - With electronic signs, that could be altered to say 40 kilometres an hour which is a standard sort of speed around schools.

Ms TANG - That is still under discussion whether we go 40 or 50 or other speed limit but definitely there will be a speed reduction during school drop off and pick-up time.

CHAIR - It is an important point when it comes to children crossing major highways like that, that they are kept safe. That median fencing arrangement and the speed limit signs would be something that would be certainly good to have.

Ms BUTLER - It states these crossings are considered appropriate for the expected pedestrian demand. Could you run through what the expected pedestrian demand would be on that site?

Ms TANG - For the school, the pedestrian demand would be between the school and where there are people coming off the new bus stop. We weren't expecting a whole lot of people crossing the road at that location, as in constant pedestrians pressing on the lights and

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stopping through traffic. I do not have the exact number of pedestrians that we have put in the modelling, but I could find that out for you again.

Normally, say for Davey Street, you would expect there would be people constantly pressing on the pedestrian light and crossing the road all the time, but we are not expecting that sort of pedestrian volume in this particular corridor using that light.

CHAIR - Most dedicated school bus services would actually go into the site?

Ms TANG - That's right.

CHAIR - The majority of students going to school by school bus would go into the site. So it would be the incidental students who are walking and wanting to use that, or coming in by the general bus service that might use that and the parent with them, perhaps at certain times.

The reason you give here for an underpass not being considered is because of the low-lying ground. So you've looked at that side of it?

Ms TANG - We did look at that. So, for that pedestrian crossing, we considered the factors of the traffic flow, person crossing frequency, the feasibility of construction and value for money, and the signal lights were selected because they perform better in all those criteria.

Mr TUCKER - Coming back to a question that I asked this morning around the roundabouts, could you explain how you came to the design around the Legana School, with the parents having to come out that are going the other way, and having to go up and around the roundabout and then come back past the school, and the same on the other end. How did you come to that design?

Ms TANG - Where the location of the roundabout?

Mr TUCKER - Yes. Instead of putting the roundabout where the school is itself.

Ms TANG - The roundabout is placed at Bridgenorth Rd for a couple reasons. One is to improve the safety of that intersection. There was a fatality that happened last year at that intersection, and there are some reported crashes at that intersection as well. There is a lot of through traffic coming out at a 90 degree angle trying to turn right onto the West Tamar highway so there is a big safety risk. So the roundabout would resolve that safety issue at that intersection.

The other reason why we haven't put the roundabout at the school is because it would include a lot of land acquisition at that location. The roundabout takes up quite a big footprint, and there is a lot more space at the Bridgenorth Rd intersection instead of in front of the school.

The other reason is also if the roundabout is placed solely because the school location is there, it wouldn't get used much other than the two short periods of peak hours during drop off and pickup time, whereas if we put it at Bridgenorth Rd, it will constantly be used all day during the day.

The other thing is there is also a block of undeveloped land across Bridgenorth Rd at that location as well, where I think future-proofing the development there may be some other use,

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or there may be a lake or something there that could be used in the future as well. But we haven't got any plan on that front.

Mr TUCKER - What are you saying? There could be the entrance going into the school could go along and come in onto that roundabout? Is that what you're saying?

Ms TANG - I'm not quite but there is potential for something like that in the future if that's what needs to be used. Because there is undeveloped land there at the moment.

Mr TUCKER - Yes. I wonder how that gets included in the planning scheme, if that's what you're thinking going ahead with the council.

Ms TANG - We're not thinking of development of that land.

Mr TUCKER - No, but what you're saying, going into the future, as the school increases in size and the traffic movements increase, that's what your thinking is at the moment, is something that needs to be there so that land doesn't get developed on for the wrong purposes, and if it's going to be an access. You understand what I'm saying.

Ms EDWARDS - It is private land.

Mr TUCKER - I realise that.

CHAIR - I think that's the problem.

Ms EDWARDS - It's zoned agriculture I believe, or rural.

Mr TUCKER - Yes. There's a dairy farm there at the moment, from memory. What you're saying it's nearly like an easement, but it isn't an easement for access to the school at a later date to come onto that roundabout.

CHAIR - The opportunity might not be there later, is what you're saying.

Mr TUCKER - I don't really know how - I've never been in that sort of situation, future planning -

CHAIR - No, I don't think you can. Unless the department was to purchase that land for possible future use, I don't know that they could guarantee its development -

Mr TUCKER - Unless they notify the council with their planning scheme, that, yes, going forward if something happens to that land that it would be -

Ms HAWKINS - I don't think that would be a matter for State Growth to take on. In terms of the scheme that we've got at the moment, with the way that roundabouts and the access is incorporated, it is a safe option and works and deals with that safety issue at Bridgenorth Rd, but also allows for some future-proofing no matter what may happen on that land.

CHAIR - The other thing is, I think this isn't subject to a DA - a development application - is it? This project is not, no.

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Ms TANG - This project is not, no.

CHAIR - Because it's within the road reserve.

Ms TANG - Yes, so we have spoken to the council during concept design phase, and it is highly likely to be exempted from DA. That's what we got from the council. When the preliminary designers complete it, we'll go back and talk to the council again just to double-confirm that.

CHAIR - The reason for its exemption is because it's within the road reserve?

Ms TANG - It is.

CHAIR - Okay. I can see the issue that you are talking about.

Mr TUCKER - I realise that it's a complicated issue. I don't know the solution to it.

CHAIR - No, it's not clear. We have before us what we have before us, I suppose.

With materials, just to be clear, second paragraph in that materials section, these aggregates include the crushed rock used to build the underpinning structure of the road, the pavement, as well as stone used in sealing. Now, the seal is going to be a bitumen sealant. It's not a chip seal, is it?

Ms TANG - No, it's going to be asphalt.

CHAIR - Asphalt. I mean, yes. So it is a fine-crushed stone in the bitumen base.

Ms TANG - Yes. It has better sound - well, not as noisy as chip seal.

CHAIR - So it's lower noise.

Ms TANG - Yes.

CHAIR - That's an interesting point. There are different types of seals, and whether it's an asphalt seal, there are different types of asphalt seals, aren't there, for lower noise ratios?

Ms TANG - No. From my understanding, the seal that we're going to use is the lowest. The best quality there is.

CHAIR - I remember with the Huon Bypass we had houses next to a roundabout and they said that they were going to lay low-noise bitumen, but presumably they meant as asphalt as opposed to a chip seal.

Ms TANG - Yes.

CHAIR - Okay. The quarries are certified under a quality assurance process administered by Transport Victoria, which includes regular audits. That's interesting. I didn't realise that we worked off quality assurance processes administered by Transport Victoria. Can you explain to me why that is the case? I mean that is a process issue, I know, and it

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probably does not affect this particular project that much, but I would be interested to know why we work off of a Victorian standard?

Ms HAWKINS - It relates to, I guess, our adoption of the VicRoad standards, so yes, the quarry certification is done through VicRoads.

CHAIR - How long has that been in place?

Ms HAWKINS - I cannot tell you the exact date. We could provide it to you.

CHAIR - Has it been years? I am just curious.

Ms HAWKINS - Yes, certainly as long as I have been with the department, so at least five years.

CHAIR - Okay. Further, on page 5 -

Mr TUCKER - I have a question around the benefit-cost ratio: 0.69 cents in the dollar benefit to the community.

CHAIR - Yes. It is quite low.

Mr TUCKER - It is a bit low, but -

Ms TANG - So, the benefits that we looked at are travel time, crash cost saving, and active transport benefits. We mainly look at the economic assessment considering how much money you could save by reducing the crash rates and encouraging people to use alternative transport and all that. The assessment looks at the project in isolation, just for this project, whereas it is actually a much bigger program. For example, once we continue that bike lane all the way from Legana to Launceston, it would increase the BCR ratio for this.

The council also supports the future growth in the north of the West Tamar region as well, so this project is sort of used like a futureproofing for future increase in the traffic volume along the highway.

Ms EDWARDS - I believe the calculations that they used, they assumed that 10 per cent of the Legana school population would use the shared path, so that could be low. It could actually be higher than that. So that is what the calculations were based on as sort of a precautionary, I guess, a low figure - a conservative figure.

CHAIR - Okay. It is interesting, at the top of the page there, that poles and sheet metal inputs for signage are imported into Tasmania with the final signs being printed and assembled here. I am presuming we do not have any metal pole manufacturer in the state at all, is that right?

Ms TANG - Yes, that is what my understanding is. For our light poles, we do have to import them from the mainland.

CHAIR - That is interesting. With the benefits: improvement in road safety for all users, motorcyclists, and pedestrians. Something I asked this morning at our on-site meeting, just for

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the record, we are not going to end up with a Mornington-style roundabout circumstance where you have two lanes going right around the whole roundabout and confusion between people travelling in different lanes and some wanting to go in one direction and others wanting to cut off and follow through to Hobart. We do not have that circumstance here?

Ms TANG - No, there should not be any requirement for the vehicles to cross lanes within the roundabout to get to the direction that they need to go to.

CHAIR - Okay. Another aspect about the benefits: our understanding is that we have an off-road cycle path that travels in parallel on both sides of the road and we also have a cycle path on the road shoulder if you like, close to the road shoulder, but separate to the vehicular traffic. So the lycra-clad bicycle riders who are out there training can still use the main highway as a training ground and pedestrians and family bicycle riders can use the other path in significant safety.

I have raised the issue of cycle paths being needed to be considered in highway construction quite a number of times. It is good to see that finally happening. It might be because there are already paths in place in some way and it is not so expensive to put that separated cycleway in.

Ms EDWARDS - I think it probably had some bearing on the slightly lower BCR but we got really strong public feedback that that was something that the community would really like to see and extended all the way through to Launceston. We see this as the first stage of that.

CHAIR - It is a public benefit in the sense that it is providing an opportunity for good recreation and lowering obesity and all of those other good health signals.

Ms BUTLER - Getting cars off the road.

Ms EDWARDS - And that shared separated path provides an equity benefit too because people who are a bit more vulnerable can then safely use it rather than just, like you said, the lycra-clad people who feel more confident.

Ms BUTLER - Can I ask a quick question about the time frame for linking up Launceston and Legana? Is that like a 10-year kind of plan or a five-year plan? Is there an idea of how long that project will take overall?

Ms EDWARDS - We are hoping to stage it and this being the first stage. Whether they are connected in stages or we work from priority areas, we are not sure yet. But it is certainly something that we see as a priority and West Tamar Council and Launceston City Council have also said that they see it as a priority. Certainly, we would hope to see it in 10 years.

Ms BUTLER - Is there a contribution towards it by those councils or is it just state Government that would be funding it?

Ms EDWARDS - Not at this stage. It is something that we would probably be looking to see funded through a program like the road safety program or some of the programs like that, that fund cycling infrastructure, specifically. Or, as part of other duplication projects or other intersection upgrades too.

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Ms BUTLER - I think the last cycling strategy I saw was really old and outdated. I do not know if it has been updated. Is there a newer one?

Ms EDWARDS - There is a trail strategy that West Tamar Council has.

Ms BUTLER - This is a state-wide one that was quite an old document. I don't know if it has been updated. It would be good to get my hands on that.

CHAIR - Okay, over the page. Page 6, potential impacts. The department consulted on the concept design with the key stakeholders. You have given us a good understanding of the stakeholders' survey, which is attached. Good to see. We can go through that towards the end.

Property acquisition: not that high but do you want to run through that for the record?

Ms TANG - Yes, at the moment we have identified an acquisition at three properties: two held by businesses and one by an individual. We have spoken to all three of them and they are quite comfortable with what we are proposing.

There is a bit of concern around noise and safety due to the highway being moved closer to their property but we will be continuing to liaise with the landowners once we have the preliminary design to present to them to see if they have any further concern about that.

Also, we will be doing noise monitoring and assessment early next month. We will follow the Tasmanian State Road Traffic Noise Management Guidelines. For any mitigation that has been identified we will definitely engage with the landowners and work through with them.

CHAIR - Property access in this table, it is right at the bottom of page 6. For the record, I noted this morning again coming up from Mangalore that there is no median fence and they have a central lane that you can pull over into and turn right, or you can pull over into and turn left, depending on which direction, at 80 kilometres per hour. This is an 80 kilometre an hour zone maybe or 70 to 80. Quite clearly for those property owners who feel aggrieved at not being able to have cars stopping near their business or whatever.

For the record, can you run through why you have chosen to put in a median fence, and how you have managed to arrive at the design that we have, and what the property owners' concerns are? Whether you have taken them on board. Can you talk us through that?

Ms TANG - We put a median along the highway middle because we were trying to restrict the vehicles to turn left only. If we put a gap somewhere in the middle for people to turn right the vehicles will have to cross the road shoulder plus the 1.8 metres of bicycle lane plus the two 3.5 metres of travelling lane. So there is a big long distance that the vehicle will have to cross.

CHAIR - So, that is four travel lanes and two bicycle lanes, well at least one bicycle lane -

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Ms TANG - And footpath and shoulder as well. I am not quite sure of the traffic volume at Mangalore but the West Tamar Highway has an average daily traffic of 16 000 traffic volume so there is quite a fair bit of traffic utilising this highway -

CHAIR - I do not know what the Midland Highway is because that is what Mangalore is in the middle -

Ms EDWARDS - Parts of it are around 6000.

CHAIR - Six is it?

Ms EDWARDS - Yes, it obviously varies a lot but yes, those sorts of rural parts can be around 6000

Ms TANG - Yes, so to find a safe gap between the high traffic volume and to cross that width of that highway and again on to the other side of the highway we see that as a very high safety risk. So, we have two roundabouts on both sides of the highway. So from Acropolis Drive to Bridgenorth Rd is around 1.1 kilometres, which is hopefully within a reasonable distance for people to make that effort to turn around. I think we have that sort of arrangements in a lot of our other highways as well.

In part of the community consultation that went out late last year we did put this in our frequently asked question to say that now we have a median you will be restricted to a left turn only. We have not received any negative feedback around this arrangement.

CHAIR - What about the parking along the highway for some of the businesses that rely on that? There was some comment on that, wasn't there? What was the outcome of those discussions?

Ms TANG - I do not think there is any negative feedback on the removing the roadside parking between Bridgenorth Rd and Acropolis Drive. The reason we are removing the ability to park there is because the parking is right next to a very high speed highway and we do not want there to be much conflict between the bicycle lane and people trying to open their door when they stop their car -

CHAIR - I understand that entirely. I was wondering how the businesses near Fulton Street in particular -

Ms TANG - At Fulton Street -

CHAIR - What is at Fulton Street?

Ms TANG - Fulton Street is a different arrangement: it is just not banning the roadside parking. This is formalising the parking in front of their shops. At the moment they have a big space and car space where you park here there and everywhere. We have got in touch with three of the business owners at that location. We went to them and asked them how frequently are they used, what are the peak hours where there businesses are, and how often they get filled out, and where are the staff parking, and all that. We have all that information. In our preliminary design we are focusing on how we can best use that space and still provide them

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with some safer parking arrangement. But they may be at risk of disbenefit of reducing the number of parking that is available at the moment.

CHAIR - It might be more orderly.

Ms EDWARDS - It could be a benefit for them with it being formalised.

Ms TANG - We will keep talking to the businesses. The plan is once we have finished a preliminary design we will present to them our design and then we will talk to the business owners and see what else we could do.

CHAIR - On page 7 you have at fourth row down: changes to bus stops relocation and removal. Some property owners were not too happy to have one placed closer to them or whatever. Can you talk us through some of the issues there and whether they were able to be resolved?

Ms TANG - There was one landowner who is not entirely happy about having a bus stop in front of their property. But at that time we had not actually finalised the location of that bus stop. So once we have finalised the preliminary design we will go back and talk to all the landowners because a couple of the bus stop locations have changed since concept design.

CHAIR - Is that on the western side of the highway as you travel north, or is it on the eastern side of the highway travelling south?

Ms TANG - Both sides.

CHAIR - I know there are two bus stops. Which one was the property owner who had the issue? Was it on the north bound or the sound bound?

Ms TANG - It is on the south bound. We told the owners that we had not finalised the bus stop location at that time so we will go back out and talk to them. We have drafted some letters to go out to them. We will look at starting to talk to them again in a couple of weeks' time.

CHAIR - Would that take the bus stop further away from the school?

Ms TANG - No. The location that we changed since concept design is the location near Freshwater Point Road. During the detailed design the level matches better if we shift it to the other side and also it works better with pedestrian design path as well.

CHAIR - Alright, thank you for that. Any other questions on that page? Page 8, environmental and heritage.

Mr TUCKER - I have one. The eight species listed as declared weeds and you have said here you will get a management plan to ensure best practice of weed management. What will that involve considering the way that State Growth manages weeds along the highways?

Ms TANG - The contractor will basically have to come up with a plan to not spread the weed and they possibly have to do some spraying before they start the work. The contractor

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will actually provide us with the weed management plan. They have to have a wash down the area and all that before the construction starts.

Mr TUCKER - So you are not going to get rid of the weeds then?

CHAIR - No.

Ms EDWARDS - Well, we should be.

Ms HAWKINS - If they are within the construction site, they will be removed and they are required to manage them in accordance with their weed management plan in terms of burying and disposing.

CHAIR - They will have a problem breathing under bitumen. I know what you are talking about. Its 'spreading of weeds'; that is what it should read, really, shouldn't it?

Mr TUCKER - Yes.

CHAIR - It is 'reduce spreading of weeds' in the construction.

Mr TUCKER - Or it is managing to eradicate them along the edges of the roads. Once they get going on the edge of the road then we put a slasher along there, guess what happens? It spreads them further and further. It is something that we do not have a good record, do we?

Ms BUTLER - Makes for lovely blackberry bushes.

CHAIR - Yes, but you cannot pick the blackberry because you are not sure whether they are sprayed or not.

Ms EDWARDS - So you are concerned that we will not be eradicating them appropriately as a part of this?

Mr TUCKER - I was just finding out what that actually means.

Ms EDWARDS - My understanding is that we will be eradicating the weeds within the road corridor, adjoining the works we are doing.

Ms TANG - Yes, so where we will be constructing the -

Mr TUCKER - We will be eradicating them -

Ms EDWARDS - That is my understanding. My expectation.

Ms HAWKINS - Yes it is part of the specifications that are included in the tender document so they know how to manage them.

CHAIR - The member is speaking from experience being a farmer and the problems and issues that come from road construction in the vicinity of where his farm is, no doubt.

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Ms EDWARDS - It is good to note though and we will be careful to make sure that it is done properly.

CHAIR - That is not to say he has a farm in this area. I'm talking about elsewhere.

Mr TUCKER - Well, I do not have any State Roads next to me.

CHAIR - Don't you?

Mr TUCKER - But I am just talking across the state. You see it where weeds are along the roadside and they are not managed. It goes the same with councils. Councils do the same thing. We have actually put a weeds officer on in the Break O'Day Council to manage this problem - and I am not even sure if they have still got a weeds officer at the moment.

It is an ongoing problem to eradicate weeds. You have here 'a management plan to ensure best practice'. To ensure best practice, which is what you're saying, is to eradicate those weeds but in hindsight that does not happen with a lot of roads.

Ms EDWARDS - We would like to ensure that we do that if we can and also do not spread any weeds.

CHAIR - It comes out of the management of it after the contractors have gone as well. During construction, you have good weed control or eradication, as you are able to do that.

Ms EDWARDS - That is an interesting point that it would be good to ensure there is follow-up to in the next year or two following road construction works.

CHAIR - Yes, absolutely.

Ms HAWKINS - That is why we try and do pre-emptive spraying, as Jacquie said, before the project commences so that we can start on a solid footing.

Mr TUCKER - But as soon as you disturb the soil, you find all the hard seeds, which is the unfortunate thing and that is where it leads. You start off with good intentions. I am not being critical in what you are putting here but I was interested to see what that means. You start off with good intentions and you do the right thing to start with but as soon as you disturb that soil and then you build the road, then you go away and guess what, the weeds come back up and the next thing you know, you have spread them everywhere.

Ms EDWARDS - We can follow up to see if the hygiene management plan does include maintenance and for how long.

CHAIR - We have the capacity to be able to put in recommendations but we cannot make it a condition for the approval of a project. It might be something to consider if this gets through, to put in a report may be.

There is no particular issue with Aboriginal artefacts. You have had that checked out?

Ms TANG - Yes.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - By who? NRE?

Ms TANG - We have done the Dial before you Dig and there is no state or locally listed heritage.

CHAIR - Has it actually been surveyed or not, by the Aboriginal -

Ms TANG - It is only desktop that we have done. We have not done any field survey because the desktop has not turned up any identification or any warning sign but definitely we will include some clauses in the construction contract to say if there are unexpected discoveries then they will have to stop work and consult with the Aboriginal heritage council.

CHAIR - We are a bit sensitive about this because of the Brighton Bypass. It was found at a later point that there were artefacts and would have been picked up if there had been a proper survey.

Ms EDWARDS - Maybe that is something we could do earlier rather than later.

CHAIR - That would be a good idea. We could put that in as a recommendation too.

Ms BUTLER - That was very expensive blow-out.

CHAIR - It was an expensive blow-out but it was also quite embarrassing for the government of the day, I am sure.

Ms BUTLER - I think it was us. I think we were in government then. I can't blame you, Tuck.

Ms EDWARDS - Then you're so far down the track, it is hard to do an alternative at that point.

CHAIR - That is exactly right, very difficult. It is important for us to have our eyes on that.

Funding and cost, P50 and P90 estimates. You have worked out the contingencies there, 16 per cent and 29 per cent roughly in the P50 and P90, and 23 per cent escalation under the P90. It is interesting how the escalations and the contingencies change. The last one we did was in the 20 per cent mark of escalation, wasn't it?

Ms BUTLER - I think the Southern Outlet was only about 3 per cent of escalation or contingency. It was very small.

CHAIR - Perhaps to answer the question, with the escalation, what are you basing that on?

Ms TANG - The escalation allows provision in cost for a changes in economic and market conditions over time. The escalation rates for Australian Tasmanian Government funded project, which would be this one, is set by the Australian Government that is included in the project cost estimate as part of the funding submission.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - That is right, but the level of escalation, so 20 per cent or 23 per cent -

Ms EDWARDS - That is set.

Ms TANG - By the Australian Government.

CHAIR - It is not only your estimate on your project, it is a standard that is set?

Ms TANG - Yes.

CHAIR - Because we have seen some projects go quite a degree higher; generally building projects more so than road construction.

Mr TUCKER - Some of the studies that have been done on it, the infrastructure stuff, they have been double the cost and two years late in delivering across Australia. Some of the studies that they have done. Is that correct?

CHAIR - Due to the delays?

Mr TUCKER - Yes. Infrastructure, the delays and the cost increases. It's quite astronomical.

CHAIR - I know it is with buildings. I'm not quite sure how much it is with roads and bridges.

Mr TUCKER - It certainly was with the Brighton High School.

CHAIR - The high school, yes it was, that was a significant rise.

With the contingency, you've got a list of five things there: retaining wall may be required to allow split level carriageway, or tendered rates are unexpectedly higher. How do you mitigate that where you have limited number companies that can be bid for the job, because they're all so busy? Some might raise the price because they're so in demand. How do you stop them taking advantage, I suppose is the question? There must be a way to stop companies gaining the system because the demand is high and therefore they can put their prices up. Is there a price justification process that you go through?

Ms HAWKINS - Part of that, I guess, would be in the design development where we undertake estimates for what we think the project is worth in terms of cost estimation. Another way of making sure that we're getting value for money through our projects is obviously with any of the projects that are of more significant value, we do industry consultation just to make sure that we are going to get people to bid for the project and how it fits within the work that's available at the time and the timing that we've put on the project in terms of tender time and that sort of stuff, or construction time.

CHAIR - It's an interesting circumstance.

Ms EDWARDS - If we had plenty of time, we'd have a bit more leeway to work with that, but given we've got quite a tight time frame, we're bound by the time frames to some degree.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - How many companies are we talking about, that bid for these sorts of things?

Ms TANG - I haven't looked at the pre-qual for this yet, but normally it would be around at least 10 of them that would be qualified to compete for the job. It's going to be an open tender.

Mr TUCKER - Some of the projects we haven't even receive one tender though. There was one there on the west coast.

Ms HAWKINS - It was the Lyell Highway. It was my project.

Ms TANG - I think the west coast has less appeal to the contractor, but -

CHAIR - Well, costs involved, and they've got to -

Ms HAWKINS - It has successfully been awarded. Then again, that was good example of the department working with industry going back and saying, what were the issues and what can we do to make it more, I guess, attractive. You all would know, sitting on this committee, the challenges with west coast projects.

CHAIR - Yes. Absolutely

Ms HAWKINS - They're not the most -

CHAIR - There's weather, there's accommodation issues, distances travelled.

Ms HAWKINS - That's right.

CHAIR - Hopefully you got that project through in a reasonable level of commitment.

Ms HAWKINS - It's under way at the moment, so.

Ms BUTLER - I know someone who's working on it at the moment. He's very good at what he does.

CHAIR - Just a question on page 10 on escalation. The escalation rate on that, that third sentence there 'For Australian and Tasmanian Government funded projects it's determined by the Australian Government and is included in the project cost estimates as part of funding submissions', as you were saying earlier. So if the escalations actually ends up being lower than expected, is money then returned under the Fed's rules or not? Or is that something that once they've committed to fund, they just leave it at that, and if it doesn't escalate as predicted, then you get to keep the money.

Ms HAWKINS - In terms of our reporting, we step through a milestone process in terms of when the Australian Government will release money for projects. We have to have to demonstrate that what we've spent on the project, and whichever way it goes, if there's an underspend or an overspend.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - So they simply wouldn't release the money to you for the job if you haven't spent it?

Ms HAWKINS - No. That's right.

CHAIR - Okay. Timing.

Mr TUCKER - You want to ask when it's going to be completed? That's what I was going to ask.

Ms BUTLER - Just to make sure I've got this straight. The Consultation Workshop began in this around September 2019, is that correct? Or, was that on all the stages?

Ms EDWARDS - That was on the whole corridor from Launceston to Legana. That's when we started consultation to see what the community would like to see done in that location and that was the start of the consultation for this.

Ms BUTLER - Then there was another one in 2021 and now we have got it up to commence construction. Is that quite a long time frame for that two kilometre -

Ms EDWARDS - No. That was from Launceston to Legana. That was that whole section.

Ms TANG - The 2019 and 2020 consultation are for the whole from Legana to Launceston.

CHAIR - The whole project.

Ms EDWARDS - Yes.

Ms TANG - The one in 2021 is practically for this section only.

Ms BUTLER - Okay. Any idea about when that work will be completed? You've got the commence construction early 2024. Do you know how long it will take?

Ms TANG - We are hoping to send this project out to tender by the end of this year and then start construction early next year. At the moment, the project team is still working on the preliminary design. Once the preliminary design is completed, we will start the constructability review. At that time, we will work out if we were to investigate exactly how long we reckon the works will be finished. It is not going to be finished quickly. We have to consider the weather conditions during winter, we will have a slower construction time and how we stage the work to work around those times and all that.

The school is scheduled to open in February 2025. The focus is completing the section adjacent to the school as a priority. So, get those works around the school zone finished before February 2025. Then the rest of the work might still be continuing away from the school so it doesn't cause as much disturbance to the school traffic.

Ms BUTLER - It might not be completed within that 12 months of that commencement. It might take longer than that?

PUBLIC

Ms TANG - It may not. Like I said, during winter there is not much we could do. It is a swampy area where we are going to put in a fill. During winter, it will be very hard to put those fills down in those areas, so we have to take that into consideration.

Mr TUCKER - Is it also harder putting asphalt down through the winter?

Ms TANG - Yes. You have to get to a certain degree before the asphalt will dry properly.

Mr TUCKER - You probably don't want to drop pneumatic on it and make ring sound before you seal it.

Ms TANG - Yes.

Ms BUTLER - You have two summers in there. You have early 2024 and the end of 2024 and start of 2025, so, there is lots of warm weather time in there as well. It seems a long time for such a small bit of road. Is there a hold up with anything else?

Ms TANG - No. There is a little bit of challenge with this highway as well because obviously there is a lot of traffic using this highway and also there are a lot of accesses to private properties and this is assessed as well. The construction time will be quite restricted by not starting in certain directions during peak hours and again having to finish early on certain directions before the afternoon peak hour comes in. At the same time, we have to minimise the disturbance to the businesses, landowners and school as well. There is a lot of consideration in the traffic management plan to try to work around all of those challenges.

At the same time, you don't want to go hard and fast or soft and too slow. You have to find a real balance between doing the job effectively, but at the same time not blocking off excess to everyone, businesses and all that.

CHAIR - Otherwise you would have a lot of customers who are very unhappy.

Anything further on that page? Conclusions and recommendations are as they are and we are all well aware of that. Consultation and feedback: are there any public meetings at Legana to talk about the project or was it only online?

Ms TANG - It is only online, via the letters and also there was a ballot box set up at the council.

Ms EDWARDS - Also, as part of this, Launceston to Beauty Point West Tamar Corridor Strategy, we've had people on site at West Tamar Council to meet up with the public and to discuss this project if they wanted to talk about that too so we have had people available to discuss this with people.

CHAIR - It sounds like 2105 letters is probably a pretty good way to connect with people, providing they can access the letters.

You said the Bridgenorth Road roundabout option was selected as a result of community feedback received during the study - I think you covered that.

PUBLIC

Ms TANG - Yes, previously there were comments supporting the roundabout option.

CHAIR - Are there any other questions on that first set of pages? The second one - bus shelters. Is that something that you're looking at delivering?

Ms TANG - Yes, State Growth has a bus shelter guideline to identify the preferred patronage level for installation of bus shelters.

CHAIR - Sorry, preferred?

Ms TANG - Patronage.

CHAIR - I've never heard that term before.

Ms TANG - It's in terms of how many people would be waiting at that bus stop so for this project. We will be putting a shelter at the south bound near Freshwater Point Road and also the north bound outside the school. That is where we expect the most people will be waiting.

CHAIR - So kids won't be waiting in the rain if they are not using a general school bus, which is what I was more concerned about. They are unlikely to carry umbrellas.

Ms EDWARDS - Or a raincoat. Probably a jumper.

CHAIR - Yes, or a raincoat. Come home soaked to the bone.

Motor noise and bitumen - you've talked about. You say at the end of it - What's next - and then you say: The final design will be published on the department's website in late 2023. We're not going to see something vastly different than what we've got before us at the moment.

Ms TANG - No.

CHAIR - We did have that with the airport roundabout. It changed completely in the style of -

Ms BUTLER - It's not our fault.

CHAIR - There's the underpass and overpass, which lanes went over and which lanes went under; it's quite significant. There still might be issues there before the courts so we shouldn't talk too much about that.

Ms BUTLER - I have a quick question on the consultation. With Bridgenorth Road where it comes into that roundabout area - was there any consultation from any of the heavy vehicle users and the truck drivers and so forth around the design with that?

Ms TANG - We've sent letters to some associations - sorry, I can't name them now - and we haven't had any concern raised by them.

Ms BUTLER - It has quite a high-frequency of heavy vehicles which come through there and use that as a back way.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - Yes, there would be.

Ms BUTLER - It's a good shortcut.

CHAIR - The median wire rope safety barrier - just to be clear, there's not a safety barrier on either side of the road; it's just that median?

Ms TANG - Yes, it's just a median.

CHAIR - I was wondering about the bike lane and whether the on-road bike lane was going to have a fence near it but it doesn't. There'll be plenty room for cyclists to cycle there with degrees of safety.

Ms TANG - Yes.

CHAIR - Are there any other questions, members?

There are a series of questions that we ask at the end of a hearing:

First of all, do you wish to have any other comments or statements before we close the hearing?

Witnesses - No.

CHAIR - Okay. We have a series of five questions that we like to put to you which covers what is under the act, in fact, based on the provisions of the Public Works Committee Act 1914. I need a clear yes or no. I can imagine what I might get.

First question: does the proposed works meet an identified need or needs, or solve a recognised problem?

Witnesses - Yes.

CHAIR - The recognised problem. What is that recognised problem? Not enough pavement at the moment or lanes to take the traffic?

Ms TANG - There are some safety issues at the intersections, as I mentioned earlier. With the retinue roundabouts at Bridgenorth Road that will resolve, and also at the moment there isn't a lot of alternative transport options for users, so with the new bike lines and shared path that would provide additional active transport modes for people. As well as at the moment there is increased congestion along West Tamar Highway as well. With the duplication lane we'll be able to improve the capacity of the road and also improve the overtaking opportunities for the road.

Ms EDWARDS - The population's growing, so that will be an increasing problem.

CHAIR - Yes. Do we know how quickly that population's growing up there out of interest? I don't know that we covered that.

PUBLIC

Ms EDWARDS - I think it's around 3 per cent per year. But there is a lot of potential there and planned growth in Legana.

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

Witnesses - Yes.

CHAIR - Are the proposed works fit for purpose? We're not going to see bitumen sort of failing months after construction because of water problems, water being able to get away off the surface, those sorts of things? It is a pretty swampy area and you're not likely to see water coming up from underneath and destroying the pavement?

Ms TANG - We've done pavement investigation as well as your technical investigation, and it should be taken care of with the engineering designs.

Ms EDWARDS - We alluded to those issues.

CHAIR - It's fit for purpose as far as you're concerned?

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.

CHAIR - Thank you for that. Just before you go, just to reiterate what I told you at the beginning of the hearing, that what you've said to us here today is protected by parliamentary privilege. Once you leave the table, you need to be aware that privilege does not attach to comments you may make to anyone, including the media, even if you are just repeating what you said to us today. Do you understand that?

Witnesses - Yes.

CHAIR - A clear yes from everybody? Thank you. Thank you for attending. Thank you for your submission. We will deliberate. Thank you.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.