



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

Bass Highway Upgrade – Wynyard to Marrawah

*Presented to Her Excellency the Governor pursuant to the provisions of the
Public Works Committee Act 1914.*

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Legislative Council

*Ms Rattray (Deputy Chair)
Mr Valentine (Chair)*

House of Assembly

*Ms Butler
Mr Ellis
Mr Tucker*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	3
2	BACKGROUND.....	3
3	PROJECT COSTS	5
4	EVIDENCE	6
5	DOCUMENTS TAKEN INTO EVIDENCE.....	20
6	CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION	21

1 INTRODUCTION

To Her Excellency the Honourable Barbara Baker AC, Governor in and over the State of Tasmania and its Dependencies in the Commonwealth of Australia.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY

The Committee has investigated the following proposal:-

Bass Highway Upgrade – Wynyard to Marrawah

and now has the honour to present the Report to Your Excellency in accordance with the Public Works Committee Act 1914 (the Act).

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This reference recommended the Committee approve the Bass Highway Upgrade–Wynyard to Marrawah, which is a package of 80 projects focused on safety and travel time efficiency improvements.
- 2.2 The Bass Highway between Wynyard and Marrawah is the key link for freight, tourism and people movement between the far north west of Tasmania and the key ports of Burnie and Devonport and further to Launceston and Hobart.
- 2.3 The existing highway is a single carriageway rural road of varying standard. While some sections meet performance and design standards, others would be assessed as being substandard in relation to cross section and geometric alignment. Numerous intersections do not meet contemporary standards relating to the provision of safe turning facilities.
- 2.4 The Department of State Growth undertook an extensive development process to determine upgrade priorities. Projects were identified based on an engineering assessment undertaken of the corridor, and feedback received from the Bass Highway – Wynyard to Marrawah Working Group and the Tasmanian community. The projects were then prioritised based on the level of safety and travel-time efficiencies to be gained.
- 2.5 The proposed works will include the following elements:
 - Four new overtaking lanes (approximately 7 km);
 - Alignment improvements to 13 sections of road, with potential for realigning an additional two sections (approximately 11 km);
 - Junction upgrades to 63 junctions to improve safety. Proposed treatments include new left and right turning treatments, such as auxiliary lanes and intersection channelization. Intersections will also be upgraded through incorporation of traffic islands, signs, line marking and medians;
 - Shoulder widening of up to 55 km of the highway with 20 kms identified as a high priority. The cross section to be adopted between Wynyard to Mella Road

is 3.5 m lanes and 1.0 m shoulder, and from Mella Road and Marrawah is 3.0 m lanes and 1.0 m shoulder;

- Upgrades to roadside drainage;
- Pavement strengthening;
- Removal of roadside hazards; and
- Upgrades to general access bus stop infrastructure.

2.6 The objectives of this upgrade program is to:

- Improve safety for all road users, recognising the growing transport demands on the corridor;
- Improve travel time reliability and efficiency by providing an acceptable level of service for the diverse group of road users (commuters, freight, tourists, and cyclists);
- Improve corridor resilience by minimising delays caused by unplanned incidents; and
- Support growth and social access by improving economic support for the region by providing a good quality transport corridor with reliable travel times.

2.7 The expected benefits of meeting these objectives include:

- Improved travel time efficiency;
- Reduced accidents and injuries; and
- Capacity to meet future demand and facilitate growth in north west Tasmania.

3 PROJECT COSTS

3.1 Pursuant to the Message from Her Excellency the Governor-in-Council, the estimated cost of the work is \$94 million.

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

	P50 (\$m AUD)	P90 (\$m AUD)
Base Cost Estimate	62.95	62.95
Contingency	7.80	23.38
Total Project Cost Estimate	70.75	86.33
Escalation	6.19	7.62
Total Outturn Cost Estimate	76.94	93.95

4 EVIDENCE

4.1 The Committee commenced its inquiry at the Circular Head Council Chambers on Monday, 16 August last with a video presentation of the proposed works. The Committee then commenced the formal hearing, whereupon the following witnesses appeared, made the Statutory Declaration and were examined by the Committee in public:

- Mary O'Hare, Project Manager, Department of State Growth
- Lidiya Hudson, Network Planner, Department of State Growth

The following Committee Members were present:

- Hon Rob Valentine MLC (Chair);
- Hon Tania Rattray MLC (Deputy-Chair);
- Ms Jen Butler MP;
- Mr Felix Ellis MP; and
- Mr John Tucker MP.

Overview

4.2 Ms O'Hare provided an overview of the proposed works:

Ms O'HARE - ... Today we are seeking approval for the projects identified in the Bass Highway Wynyard to Marrawah corridor study. The Bass Highway Wynyard to Marrawah project was born from the 2018 state election with the Government committing to deliver upgrades west of Wynyard with a commitment for \$40 million.

A total \$6 million has been spent to date on Brittons Swamp Road rehabilitation and upgrade, the Boat Harbour Primary School turning facilities and Rocky Cape Hall relocation. This funding was then further supported by the Australian Government under the Roads of Strategic Importance initiative with a co-funding commitment of \$60 million. The Tasmanian Government commitment was included in the 2019-20 State Budget so the total budget for this project is \$94 million.

Given the scale of the project, a strategic approach to public community and stakeholder engagement and consultation was developed and adopted for this project. State Growth will continue to engage with key stakeholders throughout stages of the project and affected landowners are engaged as the design of specific projects are progressed.

The corridor study identified 80 sites for improvement and including four overtaking lanes, 13 alignment improvements and 63 junction upgrades. There were also around 55 kilometres of shoulder widening identified throughout the corridor. Construction has not commenced on any of these projects. The projects are rated in order of priority of high, medium and low, with the high and medium projects expected to be delivered over the next five years under this funding arrangement.

The objectives of the road upgrade are to improve safety for all road users, recognising the growing transport demands on the corridor; to improve travel time reliability and efficiency by providing an acceptable level of service for the diverse group of road users - commuters, freight, tourists and cyclists; to improve corridor resilience by minimising delays caused by unplanned incidents; and to support growth and social access by improving economic support for the region by providing a good quality transport corridor with reliable travel times.

A significant benefit to this project is increased safety. A total of 458 crashes were recorded on the Bass Highway between Wynyard and Marrawah from January 2009 to March 2019. Of these, a total of 220 resulted in casualties, which were made up of 13 crashes resulting in fatality, 26 resulting in serious injury, 134 resulting in minor injury and 47 requiring first aid. While there are some specific locations with crash histories, there are safety concerns for the full length of the corridor. This project will address the majority of those safety concerns.

Overall, this program of works is viewed as relatively low risk. Although there will be disturbance and delays to local road users during construction, many landowners and both councils have voiced their appreciation of the benefits that will be derived from these upgrades.

Overall, we submit that these projects are part of an important safety upgrade to a key highway in Tasmania. The upgrades will improve safety and travel times. We have worked and will continue working with stakeholders to reduce the inconvenience of any impact of the projects, both during and after construction, and we are seeking other legislative approvals as required. In conclusion, these projects are a good use of taxpayer money.

Project Funding

4.3 The Committee noted that, according to the Department of State Growth's submission, the total funding for the Bass Highway upgrades between Wynyard and Marrawah was \$100 Million, comprised of \$40 million committed by the Tasmanian Government and \$60 million committed by the Australian Government. However, the Committee also noted the Department was seeking the Committee's approval for \$94 million of works under this program. The Committee asked for clarification on the difference in the total funding commitment and value of the work the Committee was to consider:

CHAIR - Thank you very much for that. Just to be clear, the \$94 million we are dealing with today is for the 80 projects and not those that are already under construction.

Ms O'HARE - There are three projects that have been completed for the \$6 million that was spent out of the state \$40 million funding, and the rest of the money is for the rest of the projects.

Ms BUTLER - The first paragraph under Project summary 1.2 states that the election commitment included a \$40 million funding commitment for upgrades to the 110 kilometre section of the Bass Highway, between Wynyard and Marrawah. Then it states -

The Australian Government subsequently announced a \$60 million funding commitment, resulting in a total of \$100 million commitment for the Bass Highway.

Jumping to page 11, there is a different amount of funding under 3.1, in the first paragraph where it says \$94 million. That seems to be a contradiction. One has \$40 million and \$60 million, and \$100 million on 1.2, and then under 3.1 it states that it is \$94 million.

Could you please explain this again, for the record, because they contradict each other?

Ms O'HARE - Yes. The Tasmanian Government made an election commitment in 2018 for \$40 million towards the Bass Highway Wynyard to Marrawah project. The first \$6 million has been spent to date on the Brittons Swamp upgrade, road rehabilitation and pavement strengthening. The Boat Harbour Primary School turning facilities project has been completed, and the Rocky Cape Hall relocation has been completed.

So, \$6 million has been spent out of the \$40 million committed by the state government, which leaves \$34 million. The federal government has also contributed \$60 million to the project, which leaves us with a total budget of \$94 million.

Prioritisation of Remaining Projects

4.4 The Committee noted that a large number of projects identified during the planning phase would not be undertaken under this package of works. The Committee sought to understand how these projects might be prioritised for future work:

Ms RATTRAY - I would like to ask about the consultation stakeholder process. From the earlier briefing you indicated there were 146 projects and then they were shortlisted to the 80 that are the priority list.

Ms O'HARE - That is correct.

Ms RATTRAY - We were also informed that the remainder of those, which would be 66, will remain as a priority and are seeking further funding. Can I have some indication of how that works? Do they have to go back to a consultation process or do they just stay on the priority list for the state Government?

Ms HUDSON - For any projects that can't be delivered within the funding envelope we are asking for at the moment, they will sit on the 10-year plan for the Bass Highway upgrades and will attempt to be delivered when further funding is made. Given that we have undertaken the initial stakeholder engagement, we identified them as being important to the community to deliver and further stakeholder engagement would be undertaken as those projects are funded and we start to go through the design and construction process again.

Ms RATTRAY - But they don't automatically go on a works program without going back and being re-consulted, if you like?

Ms HUDSON - If and when we get funding, we would then go out and specifically engage with potentially impacted stakeholders. Until then, it would sit on a list of potential projects that could be delivered in the future when funding is available.

4.5 Noting, there were 66 additional projects identified on the Bass Highway that were not funded under this program of works, the Committee was also interested more broadly in how potential works across the state were prioritised:

Ms RATTRAY - I'm interested in how other areas of the state might compete against the remaining projects that have been identified.

Ms HUDSON - Infrastructure Tasmania has a commitment by the current government to develop 10-year corridor strategies or action plans for each of the main highways. They will all be undergoing a similar process to identify potential projects for work, and a plan will be put together.

The normal process of undertaking community consultation to gather those priority project lists would be undertaken. Then, as we move through and funding is available, specific consultation will be undertaken with those who may potentially be impacted.

Ms RATTRAY - I wouldn't like any other areas to completely miss out because these have already been consulted on.

Ms HUDSON - The commitment has been made to do highway plans for each of the highways.

Ms RATTRAY - Does the department look at equity right across the state, or who's next in line for receiving funding for their particular project?

Ms HUDSON - At the moment, we're committed to looking at all the highways, and I daresay that priorities would be going into areas that have high crash rates and high fatality rates,

where there is a big impact on safety - depending on what the co-funding commitment is. If it's a road safety priority funding initiative, then road safety would be prioritised. If it's a 'roads of strategic importance' initiative, then we would look at things like economic development and freight access.

In that freight space, we also look at freight safety for drivers. There are regulatory requirements to ensure heavy vehicle operators have safe and frequent stopping locations. That is a safety benefit for all road users, not just the heavy freight industry.

Current Progress

4.6 The Committee understood some contracts had already been put out to tender, to enable concept and design work to commence. The Committee questioned the witnesses on what contracts had been let and whether they expected to meet the timeframe for completion of the entire package of works:

Ms RATTRAY - I have a question around the progress to date. It would be useful to put on the public record the fact that there have been tenders already let for projects under this particular reference. Can we have some explanation around that progress to date?

Ms O'HARE - Six projects have been let as a design and construct delivery method in order to start the projects getting through their design phase. Obviously the design phase takes time with all the statutory approvals et cetera and that has been let. Do you want me to list those projects?

Ms RATTRAY - Yes, I think that would be useful.

Ms O'HARE - Okay. Gates Road junction improvement; Myalla Road realignment and junction improvement; Dallas Road overtaking lane, East Pollards Road; Dunn Street junction improvement, which is near the Crayfish Creek Caravan Park; Munatrick Road overtaking lane; and Mella Road junction improvement. They're the six projects that are out for design and construction.

Ms RATTRAY - Okay, and there's been a tender let for those?

Ms O'HARE - Yes, there has.

Ms RATTRAY - To Shaw Contracting?

Ms O'HARE - That's correct. They are in concept and design phase.

Ms BUTLER - I want to ask a quick question around the progress to date. Just for the record, could you run through whether you believe you will meet the deadline here - commence design mid to late 2021 under the second and third tranche of high priority sites? Are you on track?

Ms O'HARE - There is a big body of work in these projects and currently I have just completed the brief for the tranche 2 and 3 projects for design. That body of work is very large. What we will do as part of the concept and detailed design is concentrate on the high priority projects and move our way through. We will be able to stage those projects to meet our timeframes. It is going to be difficult but I am confident, in all honesty.

Crash Reduction and Safety Measures

4.7 The Committee noted one of the aims of the program of works was to reduce accidents. The Committee sought further information on what crash reduction measures would be implemented:

Mr ELLIS - Chair, one of the challenges identified in terms of crashes were run off on straights. Can you give us a sense about how this project and some of the measures will help improve that situation and broadly talking, what sort of sections might be able to help?

Ms O'HARE - Some of the accidents on the stretch are driver fatigue and falling asleep. We are not proposing to put any centre wire rope barriers on the section of the highway, but, with the widening and improvement of alignments on some of those alarming curves, that would certainly help.

Ms HUDSON - The overtaking lanes also will improve safety.

Ms O'HARE - The overtaking lanes will stop risk-taking in areas where they should not be.

Mr ELLIS - Would widening shoulders on straights, particularly?

Ms O'HARE - It gives you more sense of space. Yes, I do not know if anyone else has experienced as I have, where it is that narrow you will cross the centreline on occasions, particularly if speeding and going around a bend on a double white line. While you should not be doing that, the wider it is, the tendency to stay within your lane is much higher.

Ms RATTRAY - A supplementary to the running off road and certainly driver fatigue, no amount of investment in road infrastructure will ever address driver fatigue. What about better signage for some of those areas? Obviously, this would be a significant upgrade. When you talked about some of those driver conditions I asked in the briefing about signage. Is elevating signage something the department might also consider, such as telling people there is a sharp bend?

Ms O'HARE - Yes, each and every project will receive more improved signage as part of the detail designed, plus we are replacing any old with new signage.

In some places, we might reuse old signage if it's still applicable to the standard, but a lot of the signage is looking pretty old and dated. It will all be new signage within the project sites.

Ms HUDSON - The junction upgrades were where we saw most of the rear-ending type of accidents, where people are stopped on the highway to make a right turn, usually, or slowing down to do a left turn into an access. So, looking at those junction improvements to reduce those rear-end crashes.

Ms O'HARE - I think there are some issues as well in that vehicles that have stopped don't necessarily look like they've stopped, so as a car is approaching from behind, by the time they get there they realise the car has stopped, but it's a bit of a visual issue as well.

Mr ELLIS - Some of the worst sections, in terms of needing junction upgrades, would be around those kind of shack communities at Edgecumbe Beach and Hellyer where there's not a lot of visibility. People might be turning right into them, that sort of stuff.

Ms HUDSON - That's where a lot of them are.

Ms O'HARE - That's exactly right.

Overtaking Lanes

4.8 One of the measures to improve safety and travel efficiency was the provision of additional overtaking lanes. The Committee sought further detail on the number and location of the proposed new overtaking lanes:

Ms BUTLER - I was wondering if you could talk us through the overtaking lanes. It says here that there are four new overtaking lanes. Is that for the whole 110 kilometres, four overtaking lanes?

Ms RATTRAY - There's already quite a few on it, aren't there?

Ms O'HARE - There's seven kilometres worth of new overtaking lanes. Are you asking exactly where they are?

Ms BUTLER - Whether it's correct that there are four new overtaking lanes and, for the record, if you could outline where they're going to be as well, on the map.

Ms O'HARE - you have at Edgcumbe Beach, an overtaking lane. Then on the same page, near Pollards Road and Dallas Road that is in the current set of design and construct contracts.

Ms RATTRAY - Are they both ways?

Ms O'HARE - No. Because I don't have details of the design, I'm not quite sure which way it will be going. Monateric Road is an overtaking lane. between Black River camp site and Peggs Road, I think there's another overtaking lane.

CHAIR - Or is that shoulder work?

Ms O'HARE - It is both.

Ms BUTLER - Just noting that in the community consultation feedback, overtaking lanes were mentioned a number of times, as adding to safety... .. Could you talk us through the practicalities of providing lots of overtaking lanes and the expense of overtaking lanes?

Ms O'HARE - They are not a cheap item, particularly in both directions. At this stage I am not quite sure whether they are east or west. Where we do have an existing alignment, to upgrade an existing two-lane highway is relatively simple, although it is still a big job; particularly considering the existing pavements are not going to be reused in any of these cases. We are putting in two new three-metre lanes and a metre shoulder and whatever barriers are required.

An overtaking lane, which is considerably expanding the width of the road, does increase the cost. It also can increase the amount of land acquisition involved on private property. In fact, probably, without a doubt you would have to take the frontage off someone's property. If that is farmland, that may not be a huge deal, but ideally, we do not encroach on houses in which we would have to take the house. Plus, all the service authorities would have to be relocated to the new alignment as well. That needs to happen with most widenings anyway, but it would be definitely an increased cost in overtaking lanes.

Ms HUDSON - I think the overtaking opportunities were identified where it was safest to do so and also the most economical.

Ms O'HARE - The topography also has a lot to do with where we can put an overtaking lane in, because we need to get the appropriate sight lines. Between Wynyard to Smithton particularly, is so circuitous, you potentially could not get up to speed to pass a vehicle without doing a major cut into the earth or major raising of the existing ground, such as building bridges.

Mr ELLIS - Because as well, there are overtaking lanes at a number of spots between Wynyard and Smithton - Flowerdale; Boat Harbour, Rocky Cape...

Ms O'HARE - Yes, existing.

Ms BUTLER - I don't expect you to have the answer here, but how many overtaking lanes are already along that 110 kilometre stretch? You might be able to provide that as additional information, or you actually might know the answer.

Ms O'HARE - We will take that on notice.

Ms RATTRAY - I think the local member has got a fair idea.

Mr ELLIS - I think four, off the top of my head. But there may be five.

Ms BUTLER - These would be in addition to that?

Ms O'HARE - Yes.

CHAIR - So, the construction of them isn't driven by crash statistics, in certain areas, where people get frustrated and try to overtake?

Ms O'HARE - Well, that is one factor.

Safety Measures for Cyclists and Motor Cyclists

4.9 The Committee understood that the project aimed to improve safety of travel for all road users. Noting this broad objective, the Committee asked if specific measures were being employed to improve safety for cyclists:

CHAIR - ... Are cyclists getting any special attention? Is it really improving it from a safety perspective for them? There is not going to be any hard barrier between the cyclists and the road traffic, is there?

Ms O'HARE - No. Shoulder widening.

CHAIR - It is just shoulder widening, no markings saying 'cycleway'?

Ms O'HARE - No. However, we are looking at that in detail at Tollymore, because there is a very keen cycling group in that area that rides through there to Table Cape, I believe.

CHAIR - It is becoming an increasing pastime for a lot of people to cycle, especially with electric bikes and for perhaps the lycra set. There are more and more people able to use bicycles and I was just interested to know what you were envisioning there for cyclists?

Ms O'HARE - That is the one-metre shoulder but there won't be any physical barrier between a vehicle travelling on the highway and that shoulder.

CHAIR - Was there any consideration given to line marking there in relation to that?

Ms O'HARE - There will be an edge line, but not specific bicycle symbols.

CHAIR - Do we know what level of cycle tourism we get on the coast here?

Ms O'HARE - The example I gave is the only one I know of, which is the Tollymore St group. There is a very keen cycling group in that location but I am not aware of any others.

Ms HUDSON - Most cyclist groups tend to use the non-highway sections of connecting roads, so it is more of looking at where there are connections, as Mary mentioned, around Table Cape.

Ms O'HARE - We capture that in the concept detailed design phase. On my other projects we actually contact cycling bodies to tell us where they are and what needs to be catered for.

CHAIR - So you do that consultation?

Ms O'HARE - Yes, absolutely.

4.10 The Committee also questioned the witnesses on any specific measures that would be implemented to provide improved safety of travel for motorcyclists:

CHAIR - ... Do you have any idea of motorcycle crashes on this stretch over a certain period of time?.....The reason I ask is are you intending on putting any armco railing at all on this whole section of road on the project?

Ms O'HARE - On the outside? Yes, depending on where the embankment and the steepness of the embankment on either side of the road as to what is required for Australian standard wise.

CHAIR - ... So would you consider rub rails to go down below to protect people?

Ms O'HARE - Yes, the rub-rails is an interesting subject, because the major roads standards stay silent on whether they must be installed or not. When we talk about it for our own state road standards it is not a definite installation. It certainly can be done and where we consider the risk is high on a particular bend et cetera, especially for motorcycles, yes, we would install rub rail.

CHAIR - Some people do see the rub-rail stopping a collision with a post and helps to deflect the rider back into the road, but it might also make them go further out and into the path of another vehicle. There are places where they should or should not go. I am not the expert.

Ms O'HARE - It is a very definite rule as to where they should go with the double beam or guardrail and the wire rope barriers, but it is not such a fine art with the rub rail, but I have included on some projects where we believe there is a high risk.

CHAIR - Thank you very much, I am sure all riders would appreciate that.

Aboriginal Heritage

4.11 The Committee was keen to understand what consultation was being undertaken with the Aboriginal community. The Committee also sought to understand how the Department would ensure that any Aboriginal Heritage in the area of the proposed works was identified and what measures would be taken to mitigate any adverse impacts:

Ms BUTLER - Going back to Aboriginal heritage concerns, it's stated under 6.1 - mitigation measures have been identified in the risk register relating to environment, historical and Aboriginal heritage concerns. Could you run through where you're at with that, noting there is subsequent information on page 20, which highlights quite a few blue triangles which are Aboriginal heritage. Could you run through where the project is at with consultation with the Aboriginal community?

Ms O'HARE - A detailed Aboriginal heritage survey will be undertaken on each site that is any close proximity. From the report I've read, briefly, I don't think we're within one kilometre of any Aboriginal heritage sensitive area. However, with each project we'll engage an archaeologist to undertake a further Aboriginal heritage, and European heritage, and a flora and fauna survey of that specific site. If there are any Aboriginal heritage issues, then we obviously then we'll go to Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania and if we need to the Aboriginal Heritage Council; we'll do a mitigation strategy and go from there.

CHAIR -You covered a little bit of the Aboriginal Relics Act. We're not going to get halfway through and find that things have been discovered like the Brighton Bypass situation? That's not likely to be an issue?

Ms HUDSON - We are going through the process and, as Mary said before, for each individual location where upgrades will be needed there will be further work just to make sure there is nothing there. We do a preliminary overall review of the whole corridor.

CHAIR - You're telling me the process covers it off? Okay.

Ms RATTRAY - Do those consultants or experts that are used make contact with the local indigenous community?

Ms O'HARE - Yes, all local Aboriginal communities must be consulted with as part of doing any archaeological survey on site.

CHAIR - Okay, and you also go to the State Government's Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania?

Ms O'HARE - Yes, they have to approve the report. They read the report and suggest mitigation strategies if required.

Consultation with the Farming Community

4.12 Noting the agricultural nature of the area, the Committee was interested to understand if the farming community had been consulted in scoping and designing the works program:

CHAIR - ... you've got a list of the people involved in an initial meeting and investment logic mapping workshop that was held with representatives of State Growth, both councils, Cradle Coast Authority, RACT, and the Tasmanian Transport Association; but I do not see the TFGA.

... it is a fact that there is a lot of road, there are a lot of farms, access issues, those sorts of things. Are you leaving that up to the councils to bring forward?

Ms HUDSON - Yes. The investment logic mapping process is about getting key stakeholders that have a representation for the communities that use that corridor. Councils are the main ones - they represent all of their community - and the Tasmanian Transport Association, that represents the heavy vehicle industry, who also represent a swathe of different industries across the state. RACT for safety and for tourism, and some touch points on freight. It is getting those groups in the room, and they have the opportunity to represent their communities and their constituents. Then we go through that public consultation period, where everybody and anybody can also come to the table with feedback.

CHAIR - The question is if it's likely the farmers would be aware of these sorts of things going on, and through what avenue? Councils might put out some sort of advertisement in a newsletter to say this is going to happen.

Ms HUDSON - Part of the infrastructure investment logic mapping process is to engage with those key stakeholders and to have them engage with their constituents. So, it is a responsibility for the whole group to go out as far and as wide as we can to get in touch with those people that use the corridor.

Ms O'HARE - In addition to that, where we are currently undertaking prelim or concept design, we speak to every single landowner in that project.

CHAIR - Okay, that is the important thing. If that is what you do, that is good.

Ms O'HARE - And I know, on a couple of occasions, they have said, we need to get the combine harvester through, and the gate isn't big enough. We don't do any private property works, but if we can make the turn better, or wider; we simply ask them what is coming in and out of here to get onto the highway.

CHAIR - And you do that with most entrances along the way?

Ms O'HARE - Yes. We need to make sure that the highway will marry into their existing entrance and if it doesn't then we need to make sure it will.

Highway Access for Large Farm Machinery

4.13 Again, recognising the agricultural nature of the area, the Committee was keen to ensure that the design of the works would enable safe access for and movement of large farm equipment when necessary:

CHAIR - The delineation facilities - the little posts with the delineators on them - are they just a standard flexible plastic that you are envisaging? The member to my left brought up an issue with harvesters and things like that moving around. It wasn't in relation to delineators, but knowing that this is a significant farming community, it may well be. I don't know whether harvesting happens a lot up here; it's probably more dairy farming. Have you had consultation with the farming community to know whether some of the structures you're putting in place might impact on them?

Ms O'HARE - Are you referring to moving their equipment on the highway?

CHAIR - Yes.

Ms O'HARE - There's not a lot of that. There are quite a few poppy farms coming up around the place, which is interesting. With the delineators, are you talking about the guideposts with the cat's eyes?

CHAIR - Yes, the guideposts.

Ms O'HARE - Yes, they're those plastic things. They're flexible so if they're hit, they will go over. A harvester might take it out.

Mr TUCKER - It's more where you have a wire rope on the side protecting the vehicle from going over an embankment and you have a wire rope running up through the middle. You have a single lane and then you have a two-metre shoulder and you have a metre in the middle which gives you six and half metres. If you have a 2.4 metre truck or B-double on these freight routes that breaks down, it won't get hard on that wire rope; it's going to be a little bit away from the wire rope. 2.4 metres, you could nearly say by the time you finish this, you're talking that three-metre mark and then you have a four metre over 3.6 metre piece of agricultural equipment at 12 feet, it doesn't leave much area.

Ms O'HARE - In theory that fits.

Mr TUCKER - When you're driving those machines, it's totally different. I mean, 100 millimetres isn't much when you're sitting up high and you're looking down over a big wheel. Guess what, the wire rope goes and that's when I see it. But I don't see a problem here with this.

Ms O'HARE - No, we won't be having a centre wire so that access shouldn't be an issue. One would hope that the harvester isn't on the road for very long, and going slowly as well.

Land Acquisition

4.14 The Committee noted there may be a need to acquire land for some of the projects. The Committee sought further information from the witnesses on the progress of land acquisition negotiations with affected landowners, and whether any homes would potentially need to be acquired:

Ms BUTLER - Under 5.2, Project timeline, it says, 'Land acquisition is undertaken through the compulsory acquisition process.' For the record, could you run through where you're at with any compulsory acquisitions at the moment as a department, and if those negotiations are going well?

Ms O'HARE - For projects that are in 'design and construct' at the moment, because we don't have a final design, we are unable to do the final detail survey plans. Paperwork is being prepared, and survey plans have been developed, but they are yet to be approved by the minister for DPIPW or Parks for proceeding to acquisition.

However, we've certainly spoken to all the landowners who are affected by acquisition, and we haven't had any great opposition to any discussions about land acquisition. None of them are full takes. No houses are affected, and all land acquisition is on larger properties or farmlands, requiring maybe a metre or a half-metre strip along the front of their property.

Mr ELLIS - ... Are we expecting many homes to need acquisition on this process?

Ms O'HARE - A full take of a home? No.

Mr ELLIS - So it is unlikely to see a Boat Harbour type of situation?

Ms O'HARE - No, look I have to put my hand on my heart there. Without seeing the detail of every single project, I can't envisage it; but I guess, through the concept and detail design phase, if things can be changed, or tweaked, or altered once we've got the feeling from the stakeholders and the community, on the project as a whole - we can tweak designs to make changes so the effects on private property are not as bad ...

... if we can tweak the design without compromising on safety, we can do that. When we get into talking to stakeholders one-on-one it is a very good indicator, usually in that first meeting, to see how the land acquisition process is going to go. But I don't envisage that.

4.15 Given that land acquisition can often be contentious, the Committee recognised that landowners needed to be treated fairly. The Committee sought to understand the nature of the compensation paid to landowners when land is acquired, and how and by whom this is determined:

CHAIR - *In terms of land acquisition, something this committee does, I suppose, is to make sure that those who are having their land acquired are provided a fair and reasonable go.*

Ms O'HARE - *Well, they're paid market price, plus their legals are paid for.*

CHAIR - *They've paid market price?*

Ms O'HARE - *Yes, that's right.*

CHAIR - *Market price, not Government valuation?*

Ms O'HARE - *No, it's market price and we pay for a valuer to undertake an independent valuation.*

CHAIR - *So it's independently valued and they get reimbursed*

Ms O'HARE - *Yes -*

CHAIR - *Is there any change to that if it's a compulsory acquisition? I suppose you end up with that. Is there any room for movement when people say it's valued at this but because of my developments and what's going to happen in the future I think this land is worth more? Do they have an opportunity to negotiate?*

Ms O'HARE - *I believe they do. That's a question for the officer, the Valuer General, and the solicitors in that area, but I believe that type of thing is taken into account, yes.*

Ms BUTLER - *As a supplementary to that; I've been through this with community members whose property was a compulsory acquisition. The people whose properties would be acquired, would that valuation be made on the value of the property prior to it being designated as an area where the road is going to be widened, or what the value was prior to that? Prior or after; because I know that can make a lot of difference - if it's valued once it's actually been notified as this is going to be for a road... .. Because that often is the contentious subject -*

Ms HUDSON - *In some instances, properties can increase in value after a certain development has been approved, as opposed to decrease. It is the Office of the Valuer General that undertakes that whole process of property acquisition and we don't participate in that process.*

CHAIR - *You're not setting the value, as you said before?*

Ms HUDSON - *No, it's outside of our responsibilities.*

Coordination of Upgrades with Other Works

4.16 The Committee sought an assurance that planned maintenance works would be coordinated with the proposed upgrades under the Bass Highway upgrade, to ensure there was no duplication and that all works programs were undertaken efficiently

Ms RATTRAY - *On page 8 it talks about the feedback that was given which I thought was very useful, and then there is State Growth's response to upgrades of the road surface along Smithton to Marrawah, this length of road of 47 kilometres, and mentions various issues that have been raised. It says:*

Some sections of the highway are already scheduled for improvement works in 2019-20 under the road network maintenance services contract for the north west region.

Are works being carried out under this particular area and then they might come back and be redone? Are we wasting our money? Is it duplication?

Ms HUDSON - On that particular stretch there is a maintenance contract and they schedule their works based on the needs and whatnot. When we identified there was a section through there that required some widening, we coordinated with the maintenance contractor to carry out both works at the same time so we could do the widening and then they would come in and finish the sealing of that section so that we did not dig up new works and we got economies of scale by bringing in materials and workforce at the same time. We worked alongside them to try to get some benefits rather than wasting money on duplicating potentially or ripping up works.

Ms RATTRAY - So is that the same on page 9 where it says west of Smithton there is a narrow bridge in this section that needs to be widened? State Growth's response is that width alignment and camber of the highway is being reviewed as part of the corridor strategy, so does that mean that the bridge is going to be widened and that will be under the corridor strategy or is that not addressed?

Ms HUDSON - We looked at the works that were required and maintenance doesn't cover building new bridges, so where particular works were needed we ensured that that maintenance work did not occur and it was looked at as part of the concept and detailed design work to replace the bridge.

Ms RATTRAY - So there will be a bridge replacement?

Ms O'HARE - Yes, the Montague River bridge is being replaced and widened.

Ms RATTRAY - Again, I am just checking that we are not carrying out works and then ripping them up because, as governments and elected representatives, the community just came us for that as an absolute waste of money, and I agree.

4.17 The Committee was also interested to understand whether the Department works with local authorities, such as councils, to identify opportunities to collaborate and coordinate works for mutual benefit:

CHAIR - When you deal with these corridor plans and different highways, do you work with local government to make sure there's some synchronicity, if you like, or collaboration?

Ms HUDSON - We have developed a corridor strategy template, whereby we'll undertake a similar process for each corridor. That includes the development of a working group, which would have representation by the local councils that are relevant within those corridors. As key stakeholders the RACT will be invited, the Tasmanian Transport Association would likely be invited, and the public transport division of State Growth would be included as well.

If there are any other particular key stakeholders, they will be considered at that point, but each corridor may represent slightly different constituents.

CHAIR - I'm aware that some councils go into quite significant strategic depth when it comes to developing roads that might intercept with state highways. I'd like to understand how that might be handled.

Ms O'HARE - During the planning phase, which Lidiya starts with, the local councils are involved. Then, in delivery and design, it's very important for us to engage with council, particularly to understand if there are any statutory requirements - for example, a development application might be required for the upgrade on a highway - plus their local knowledge in drainage and particular stakeholders, et cetera. At the design phase, they're also involved in the project.

Ms RATTRAY - Would that include the type of resource that is available locally?

Ms O'HARE - Yes.

Ms RATTRAY - Councils would know what they use locally when they look after roads they have responsibility for.

Ms O'HARE - Yes. The only difference is that the type of papers for a local road might differ slightly to a highway - but we could definitely utilise their knowledge on local supply of goods and materials.

Ensuring Quality with Design and Construct Contracts

4.18 The Committee recognised that there may be potential conflicts in a design and construct contract if there was not sufficient independence between the designer and the construction contractor. The Committee sought an understanding on how the Department managed this type of risk:

CHAIR - Moving on to 5.1, the design and construct model. This was brought up recently at one of the hearings. If you have the same contractor doing the design as well as the construct, there is an opportunity to end up with a less than quality outcome, because they might compromise the design to fit the dollar available. How do you mitigate that when you are dealing with somebody who is designing it and then going on to construct it?

Ms O'HARE - For design and construct, the contract is with the constructor. They engage the designer, so they should be two separate entities.

CHAIR - But do you make it that they have to be two separate entities?

Ms O'HARE - Yes. The designer has to be an accredited design office. They have to be recognised by whatever the qualifications are for a design office, and a constructor is a constructor.

CHAIR - So you don't have both?

Ms O'HARE - No, they don't have both. Plus, the contract documents - or what we call our principal project requirements - are very clear on what has to be delivered as part of the quality design and then quality construction. That is where people like me, as a project manager, are greatly assisted by a superintendent, who is another independent person who acts on behalf of me as the principal, and independent of the contractor as well, to make sure that all are abiding by the contract.

Ms RATTRAY - So there is never a design company that is absolutely affiliated with the contractor?

Ms O'HARE - Not that I know of. There are contractors who probably prefer certain designers, but in this particular D&C [design and construct] they are not aligned in that fashion. The designers are very much independent of the constructor. Equally, the constructor would have a contract of some sort with that designer, but I am not aware of what is in that contract for them to be able to deliver. So, it is really up to that contractor. If the contractor does not manage that design well, that is when we will have a problem. But then it is up to us. I also verify the designs independently, so there are all these checking mechanisms involved.

Does the Project Meet Identified Needs and Provide Value for Money?

4.19 In assessing any proposed public work, the Committee seeks assurance that each project is a good use of public funds and meets identified needs. The Committee questioned the witnesses who confirmed that the project met these criteria and was a good use of public funds:

CHAIR - Do the proposed works meet an identified need or needs, or solve a recognised problem?

Ms O'HARE - Yes.

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

Ms O'HARE - Yes.

CHAIR - *Are the proposed works fit for purpose?*

Ms O'HARE - Yes.

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

Ms O'HARE - Yes.

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

Ms O'HARE - Yes.

Ms O'HARE - *In conclusion, these projects are a good use of taxpayer money.*

5 DOCUMENTS TAKEN INTO EVIDENCE

5.1 The following document was taken into evidence and considered by the Committee:

- *Bass Highway – Wynyard to Marrawah*, Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, 5 July 2021.

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 contribute to the provision of a safe, reliable and consistent highway for all road users.
- 6.2 The proposed works incorporate a suite of 80 projects, which includes the provision of additional overtaking opportunities, alignment improvements, shoulder widening, and junction upgrades as key measures to improve the safety and efficiency of travel on the Bass Highway between Wynyard and Marrawah.
- 6.3 Implementing this package of projects is expected to improve road safety, provide economic benefits and contribute to increased productivity by providing a safer and more efficient road corridor in the north-west region of Tasmania.
- 6.4 Accordingly, the Committee recommends Bass Highway Upgrade – Wynyard to Marrawah, at an estimated cost of \$94 million, in accordance with the documentation submitted.

**Parliament House
Hobart
20 September 2021**

**Hon Rob Valentine MLC
Chair**