

## INQUIRY INTO ROAD SAFETY IN TASMANIA

On Tuesday 29 June 2021, the Legislative Council resolved that a Select Committee be appointed, with power to send for persons and papers, with leave to sit during any adjournment of the Council, and with leave to adjourn from place to place, to inquire into and report upon ways in which to improve road safety in Tasmania. The Committee invites written submissions from interested individuals or organisations.

**Electronic submissions are encouraged** and all submissions can be provided to:

Mr Tim Mills  
Inquiry Secretary  
Parliament House, Hobart, 7000  
rst@parliament.tas.gov.au  
Phone: (03) 6212 2250

The Committee's Terms of Reference and other relevant information are also available on the Parliament of Tasmania website ([www.parliament.tas.gov.au](http://www.parliament.tas.gov.au)) or by contacting the Inquiry Secretary. Submissions become the property of the Committee and are generally made publicly available via the Inquiry webpage prior to the Committee releasing its Final Report. However, authors of submissions should not publish their submission elsewhere until after the Committee has reported. Submissions should be received by no later than close of business on **Friday, 28 August 2021**.

### Members of the Committee Inquiry:

Hon Rosemary Armitage MLC - Chair  
Hon Jo Palmer MLC  
Hon Tania Rattray MLC  
Hon Dr Bastian Seidel MLC - Deputy Chair



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SELECT COMMITTEE  
ROAD SAFETY IN TASMANIA

Dear Honourable Members of Committee,

I have concerns for road safety issues and suggested resolutions as follows:

- 1) In driving to Hobart on the Midlands highway some 12~18 months ago, and following upgrades, being in particular intersections works, I see the point at issue in said design and had a near collision outcome, in particular at the Melton Mowbray / Midlands highway section highlighted here as perhaps the worst example, but all are potential "Black Spots". I was near the Melton Mowbray intersection where I saw a sedan gingerly entering across from the Bothwell Road to cross and head south. I was heading south emerging from a horizontal curve and also on a vertical curve proceeding down towards the intersection in cruise control at 110 kph. Sensing a potential danger of the vehicle entering across into my future path, and somewhat, then oblivious, of the intersection changes, I slowed to 90 in caution. As I rounded the bend moving toward the intersection her car had gingerly crossed the north bound lane and then dutifully followed the only valid path as everything else was white lined out. Seemingly not understanding her distancing, she drove forward into the single southbound highway lane, as designated by the design of the painted lane markings. We were both now in the 110kph Southbound Highway. Now, I am in the wrong if I rear end her and we are both placed in much danger of a major accident.

Luckily, it was full daylight and a dry road, even without the sun's blinding situation that occurs with low winter sun situations, when the sun at times is in entering traffic driver's eyes directly impairing vision of southbound traffic, this example, that would flow through to many other intersections of the same design. So multiple challenges face even experienced

drivers that compound crash situations occur (not accidents) - just situations - that need to be taken into account in road design that ramp up the safety outcomes as prudent. I do not envy the Road Designers task and their need to be able to utilize high skills and experience to effect prudent design outcomes, but failure is failure here.

Even though there is a massive area to utilise without duly following the course set out by design and some perhaps 15kph ~25 Kph directly into the 110 lane, and she seemed a bit cautious, which lost her more time and distance between us, but indeed made way into the lane as I came up behind braking heavily to just avoid rear ending her! She proceeded accelerating reasonably, to drive south from the point of being in the 110 zone highway with me following for some 50 meters or so until I utilized the overtaking lane to pass her safely. One could blame the other driver, but I had realized immediately that it was primarily a trap by mistaken engineering and needed to be addressed urgently.

I noted the area upon return and Google Earthed same.  
Points of note are:

- **I would say that any intersection where traffic is to merge must only occur if it is reasonable to see both vehicles attain to similar speed in reasonable times frames and manner. Should be a rule in design!**
- The northbound roadway is quite wide across to the centre area safe zone from Bothwell side entry point adjacent the Melton Mowbray Pub to allow an exclusive entering lane and then use the overtaking lane that commences a very few meters down the roadway and indeed as I have just found out today via Google Street View that from the Bothwell side has not been updated as yet (see attached) and indeed shows the old design that is required here most urgently for starters.

Currently in this case for south bound drivers from Bothwell Road entering across to the south bound side there is a slight camber/vertical curve to the highway that precludes seeing the road surface and lane markings on the south bound side. I believe where many drivers are unfamiliar with the layout and changes are drawn unwittingly to the centre area as, but upon arrival feel mustered to proceed into the merge lane. This route is very popular for tourists and locals alike traveling from Bothwell and or the Lakes area back south.

The mass of white-outs make one realize there is not legal area to move on, apart from the designated road lane curving directly into the south bound 110 kl highway.

The view is limited by both the vertical and horizontal southbound roadway for such fast moving traffic southbound and or even when in my case I had slowed to 90 early enough I saw the car coming across the intersection towards my lane, I was put into a dangerous situation due to inappropriate design.

On a second trip, a week later, I again was confronted with a similar situation and duly slowed, this time a large semi-trailer truck, who waited off, thankfully.

Noting the situation, and again researching the other intersections into the Midland Highway where this standard design applies in all but one case!! - I rang the Transport Department some 18 months



ago. I spoke to a man seemingly in charge of road design and explained the dilemma and the somewhat easy fix particularly at this intersection, being:

Make the entry lane from Melton Mowbray side move into a lane exclusive from the south bound lane and black out the white no go area of which there is plenty, and see such entering traffic continue in this new exclusive designated lane (*as I now discover as it was before – see picture*) to arrive in the current overtaking lane that could then see such traffic make up to speed limit speed closer to the main southbound traffic flow as they look to merge into the other south bound traffic - thus making the situation safe and reasonable as the premium design here and as it was before.

In fact, in suggesting that all was needed to quickly be done was “witches hats” and black paint to make immediate fix, as I felt it so important to address most urgently. The response was that he took it on board for consideration and would merge same consideration into the current upgrade works.

I reiterated that I felt that the matter needed urgent action as exposure to accidents and injury and death are at stake here and delaying would be irresponsible. He was polite, seemingly took all comments onboard without objection, but in outcome no action here, and that was a year and a half ago now! I feel that my comments may in hindsight aggressed on their professional design toes and as I am non-qualified. Obviously, they run the show!!

Further, I now see that they had just created this design, so perhaps reversing it back would be politically difficult to proceed with and perhaps career affecting etc. as a change here would have to see an overall design change everywhere else for consistency and avoid driver confusion across the board.

I feel I have a responsibility to prevent injury, suffering and deaths by pushing this issue and would feel part guilty if I did not act responsibly in effecting change, thus I must soldier on here and trust in the Road Safety Committee to sort this out.

## **2) New safety Initiative to address Visiting Drivers and Overseas Tourists.**

We have all experienced, I am sure, where visiting drivers from interstate, and as I have found as a visitor to mainland states, where unfamiliarity occasionally leads to such drivers hesitating to change lanes, anxious of being caught trying to get to the right turn off and realizing it's right there and must get across etc. plus many other situations. This leads to locals being aggressive and causes stress all round plus road accidents and injury and death!

Overseas Visitors, many of which are not used to driving on our non- super-highways and seemingly have little road savvy and seem well under-experienced as drivers and then there are the experienced right hand drive country drivers unfamiliar with left-hand vehicles on our roads.

I propose a twin variety of car signage same size as the “L” & “P” plates whereby all visiting overseas drivers not holding a Tasmanian licence display front and back red **“T”** Tourist plates and green **“V”** Visitor. Both seeing the word “Tourist” or “Visitor” written under the “V” or “T” lettering accordingly.

**T** Plates should be mandatory for all drivers not holding an Australian state or Territory valid driver's licence.

**V** Plates Should be encouraged for all drivers that are unfamiliar with the roads in the areas they are driving in, and highly encouraged for interstate visitors

Plates are encouraged and available at all Service Tasmania outlets, Rental car outlets and pickup and indeed be required to have in the glove boxes of same, plus at ports, Ferry Terminals and on-board passenger ships and airports, as free along with messaging and media promotion backing.

Rental car outlets would have a legal responsibility to set up the plates for their clients prior to pickup of same, in the public interest.

I believe, particularly when and as we return to a Tourist State as before or similar, that this system will save not just stress, but lives and injury on our roads and promote more tolerance from the driving public leading to politeness and understanding of seemingly silly road manoeuvres, driver hesitation, slowness etc, over road rage and aggression outcomes that are seen every day.

### 3) Highway Dividing Wire Structures versus Extra Lanes!

Whilst these as installed recently create greater safety (apart from where cyclists have grave concerns), in separating traffic from head on drivers straying across, they also cost more to build in and use much tarmac roadway!!

However, if we did not have the centre road wire barriers, then the extra roadway space available would almost create an extra lane anyway!! In most instances this could instead become dual lanes in both directions at maybe similar or lower cost.

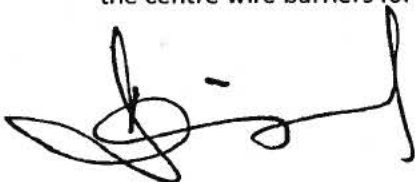
Alternatively, where there is only one lane in each direction with wire barriers we could have an extra overtaking lane for one side instead.

I feel that the choice of barriers in the dividing lanes may not be the safest overall outcome here against extra lanes instead.

Obviously dual lanes both ways with divider barriers would be better again.

Then dual lanes both ways but with same separated by some 20 meters or so again superior again.

So cost is the compromise as we all appreciate but in balance using the created spacing each side of the centre wire barriers for extra lanes would seem more sensible to me.



John Thirgood

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[Redacted]  
[Redacted]



National Highway 1  
Melton Mowbray, Tasmania  
[View on Google Maps](#)



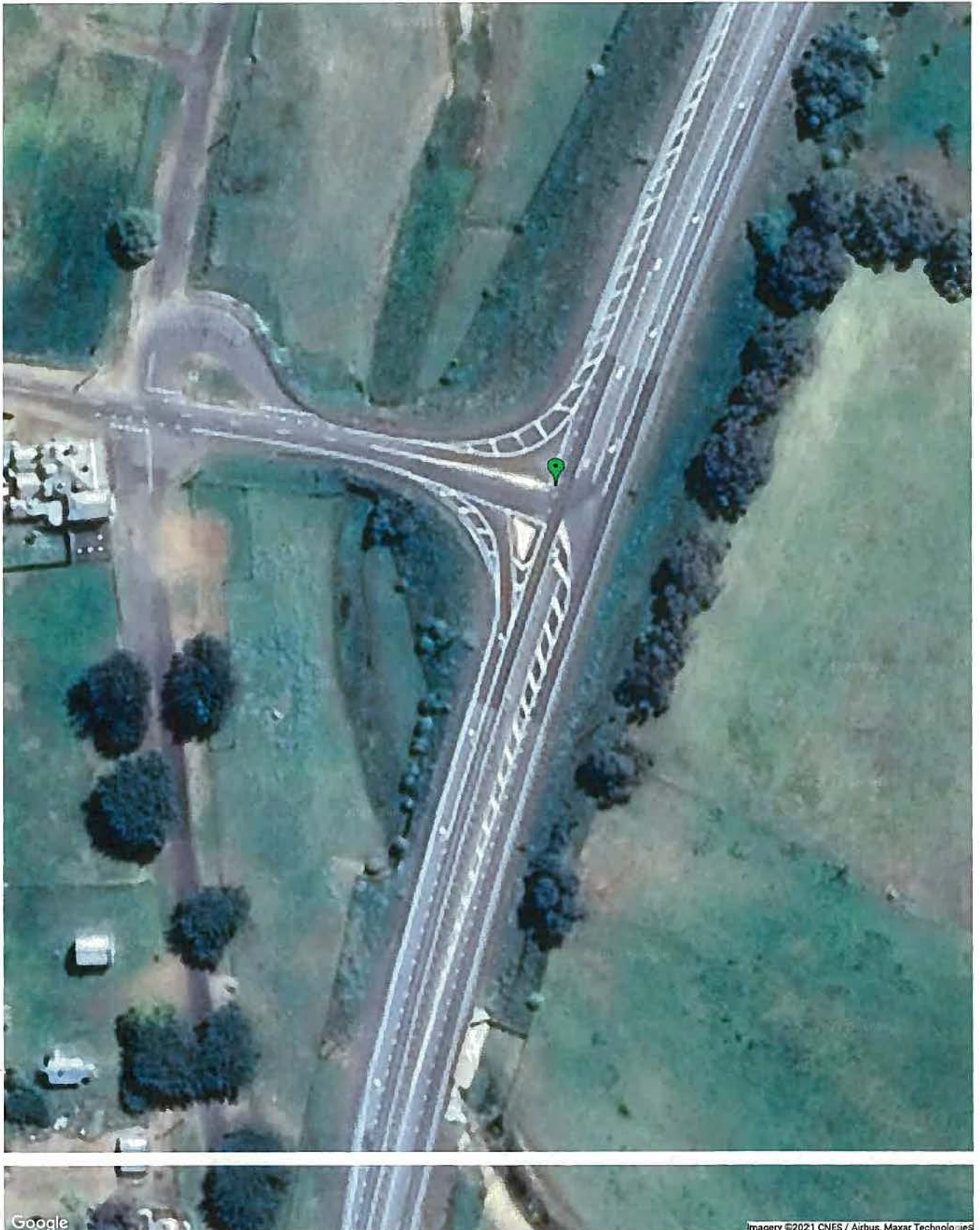
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National Highway 1  
Melton Mowbray, Tasmania  
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KEEP LEFT  
UNLESS  
SIGN INDICATES  
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