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THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS MET AT THE SWANSEA TOWN HALL, SWANSEA, ON WEDNESDAY, 2 AUGUST 2023

GREAT EASTERN DRIVE TOURISM SUPPORT

The Committee met at 1 p.m.

CHAIR (Mr Valentine) - Welcome everybody to this Public Works Committee hearing in relation to the Great Eastern Drive Tourism Support. For the record, there are members who are here with us and we will start with Hansard at the bottom of the table. Thank you very much, James, for being here to do the recording. We have Scott Hennessy, secretary of the committee and members John Tucker, Tania Rattray and myself, Rob Valentine, Simon Wood and Jen Butler.

There are no apologies today.

I acknowledge the Aboriginal people of Tasmania as the traditional and original owners and continuing custodians of this land on which we gather today and acknowledge elders past, present and emerging.

We are in receipt of one submission: the Great Eastern Drive Tourism Support Additional Packages - Component 1 - Public Works Committee Submission to the Department of State Growth, final to Public Works Committee 29 May 2023. Will a member move please a motion the submission be received, taken into evidence and published?

Mr TUCKER - Yes.

Motion agreed to.

Mr Secretary, could you please swear in the witnesses?

Mr STEFANO CONFORTI, PROJECT MANAGER, PROGRAMMING AND DELIVERY, DEPARTMENT OF STATE GROWTH; **MR ZACK HEPBURN**, TEAM LEADER, PROGRAMMING AND DELIVERY, DEPARTMENT OF STATE GROWTH; AND **Ms LIDIYA HUDSON**, TRANSPORT NETWORK PLANNER, INFRASTRUCTURE TASMANIA, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

CHAIR - Thank you. Before we commence proceedings, I would first like to thank you for appearing before the committee today. Thank you for meeting with us earlier to give us an overview of the developments before us here. Before you give your evidence, I want to inform you of some important aspects of committee proceedings which you have probably heard before, but I do need to reiterate them. A committee hearing is a proceeding in parliament. This means it receives the protection of parliamentary privilege and 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 the parliament receives the very best information when conducting its inquiries. It is important to be aware this protection is not accorded to you if statements that may be defamatory are repeated or referred to by you outside the confines of

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the parliamentary proceedings. It is a public hearing. Members of the public and journalists may be present. We have a member of the public with us today, and this means your evidence may be reported.

Do you understand that? I need a clear acknowledgement, thank you.

Witnesses - Yes.

CHAIR - Prior to us asking questions, there is an opportunity for you to make an opening statement.

Mr CONFORTI - I will be able to describe the project, if that is what you mean?

CHAIR - Please do.

Mr CONFORTI - The Great Eastern Drive Tourism Support Additional Package Component 1 - I will explain the title of the project first of all. The Great Eastern Drive Tourism Support has been a project that has gone on for many years. We had a number of funding packages since approximately 2017. We went to six separate tenders to address some of the areas between Orford and St Helens. This is an additional package and additional funding of \$125 million, which includes \$100 million from the Australian Government and a contribution of \$25 million from the Tasmanian Government.

The Great Eastern Drive is the section of the Tasman Highway included between Orford and St Helens. In this particular site we look at two packages we have been looking at tendering very soon - as early as before the end of the calendar year. They are called Apsley River and Lisdillon. I will describe them in my presentation.

We look at the objective of the project, the strategic context, the design that we will undertake in these areas where we will describe the key stakeholders we have identified for this project and some characteristics of the heritage and the environment that we know at this stage. We will describe the completed works so far and some characteristics of the cross section of the road and some corner alignment that is a priority to be implemented as soon as possible, as part of this package.

The main issues with the Tasman Highway between Orford and St Helens are that the design standards are not adequate to current road design standards. The coordinates are too tight and do not have a super elevation adequate for vehicles travelling at 100 kilometres an hour and a very poor alignment, both vertically and horizontally. There is no intersection of works that we are going to undertake; there is no shoulder extended off the sealed area above the lane width in which a vehicle could recover from a loss of control. There is the networking efficiency that will be addressed with a series of overtaking lanes and that will be in the years to come. What happens is there are no overtaking lanes in the section of work we are looking at. There are just two overtaking lanes immediately south of St Helens and just one northbound overtaking lane north of Cranbrook, immediately after Glengarry Road. What happens - especially in the summer, when the traffic conditions vary substantially from the traffic conditions in winter - is there is no opportunity to overtake slower vehicles. The vehicles that take the opportunity to overtake others do so in inappropriate areas where the road width is not available. They take risks and we would like to eliminate that component.

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The sections of work we will undertake soon will be approximately 23 kilometres of road out of the 176 kilometres between Orford and St Helens.

The project objectives are: widening the road pavement to a 3.1-metre width lane plus a 1-metre shoulder, and then the verge and drain. We have been improving the geometry of the road - that is the vertical alignment. Sometimes the vertical alignments do not allow the sight distance for a vehicle travelling at 100 kilometres an hour or it is on an alignment with very sharp bends that may lose control or not have adequate sight distance to see what is coming from the other direction.

We upgrade the junction and the axes in this section of road as I was about to describe. Before, we had approximately 38 different junctions and axes that we had upgraded in the past. Now, we are just trying to lead with the same standard on these works that we have done to have a consistent section of road. Upgrading the road will improve and will extend the life of the asset - of the road itself - and that should be about 30 years for the actual road pavement and 15 years for the seal of the road.

Everything will be designed to the Department of State Growth's standards and the policies and Australian Standards, Austroads guidelines and all the local and federal legislation.

Now, I am going to describe what section of the road we will tackle first. We have done an extended study to see which were the areas that needed to be done as a priority so we did not just look at the safety but also the economy to achieve the particular standard.

First of all, we designed the section of road that goes from immediately south of Bicheno to the north of Coles Bay Road, then there will be a bend that we will have to adjust, upgrade, that is immediately south of Coles Bay Road junction. Then there will be a bend that is very inadequate at the moment, which is immediately after the overtaking lane that we created in the north of Glen Gala Road or the north of Cranbrook. That is the area where the bend is located.

There will be one package of work which we named Apsley Package. There will then be the Lisdillon Package that goes from the south of Rocky Hill to the Pontypool intersection with the Tasman Highway. Then there will also be a bend that is north of Triabunna. That is a section of work that is about 1.5 kilometres immediately north of Triabunna that we will upgrade and realign.

That is the scope of the work that we are presenting now. I have already described the funding, where it comes from. The total that we are looking at spending in the next two to three financial years is \$125 million.

Corner realignment, upgrading the seal and pavement of the roads, addressing the pavement. Also, there is a section south of Bicheno which experienced some flooding and we will have to strengthen the pavement there. We are also looking at increasing the size of some culverts so the water can travel below the road without overtopping the road. That is very early at this stage; we are still investigating the area. We are looking at how often that floods and what to do about it.

We have identified the main stakeholders around the area and East Coast Tasmania tourism has been talking with us for a number of years and we keep talking with them,

informing them of what we are doing and basically finding their agreement on what we do. The local, national and international tourists are one of the main stakeholders, especially when you consider the safety of people travelling up and down the coast. Glamorgan-Spring Bay Council, Parks and Wildlife Service, the businesses and the property owners that would be affected by the work, both in terms of acquisition when there is acquisition and informing them of what's going on. The tourism operators, again, mainly businesses that we have around here - and that is what we have identified so far.

We'll come across heritage and environmental features along the project; there are endemic species everywhere in Tasmania. We'll come across some of them, which we will try to avoid with engineering solutions if possible and, if that is not possible, we will have to go through the approval [process], the permits to take and we will work very closely, which we are already doing, with Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania. Once we know the actual entity of the species that we have around us, we will, as I said, model the design to try to avoid them and then start talking with the local council and include a development application.

I mentioned the completed works and I said that there are some 38 areas that have been already upgraded. Mainly they were intersections with local businesses, traffic coming in and out of the vineyards, for example. We made the intersection safe but that is in isolation, in each vineyard. We included the overtaking lanes that are described in the south of St Helens and north of Cranbrook and now we are looking at linking all these isolated locations with a consistent section of the road.

I described the section of the road as being a 3.1-metre lane, so 3.1 + 3.1 + 1 metre of shoulder that is sealed in the same manner as the rest of the lane and then there will be half a metre of verge, unsealed, and then down to the drains. That is the typical section. This one may be increased around the bends, just for allowing heavy vehicles to have that radius that is necessary for them to turn around.

Possibly, the most important part of - the more risky - the area that is more prone to accidents is now the north of the overtaking lane in Glen Gala Road. There is a very sharp bend on the right, so we will have to do both a vertical and horizontal realignment of that. It's basically an S-bend that we will have to improve.

The timing for this project - we are currently finalising the investigations and then after that, we will model the design and see whether the horizontal alignment may have to avoid some heritage sites that we know of, but we don't know the details of it. Again, we'll have to model the species, the vegetation species, that we find along the way to try to avoid them. We think that we'll be able to go with a first tender before the end of this calendar year and then with the next one immediately into the next calendar year, 2024.

The contracts that we are proposing are lump sum contracts. Basically, the Department of State Growth prepares all the designs in a detailed manner, then issues that one to the potential tenderers and they will have to tender for the work in a lump sum. That means just one component. We anticipate that will probably take a couple of construction seasons. We consider construction seasons the summer periods. This one will go across this summer, the next summer coming and the next one. Obviously, the contractors will choose when to work exactly and will provide us with a program at tender stage.

These are the main features of this project and I would like to open it to questions now.

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CHAIR - No worries. Thank you very much for that extensive overview. We really appreciate that. We normally work our way through the submission you have provided for us. I will perhaps kick off the questions.

To clarify again, we are talking about the two main components here of the whole set of works that you are looking at completing over some period of time. The two main components are the Aspley Package and the Lisdillon Package. Is that correct? Is that the best way to describe these two we are dealing with today?

Mr CONFORTI - Yes.

CHAIR - No worries.

Mr CONFORTI - They will not take the whole of the budget. These are the first two we will start with.

CHAIR - Yes.

Mr CONFORTI - Obviously, we would not be able to open the whole of the Tasman Highway, so we space them away from each other and then fill the gaps.

CHAIR - And as part of that, you have assessed possibilities for projects along the route, but some are far more expensive than others. Lots of rock would take up the whole available budget just to do that particular section. Clearly, these are ones that are within the capacity of the department to deliver.

Mr CONFORTI - Yes, we wanted to strike a balance or make the most of the funding and to obtain more extended stretches of road to be upgraded to a certain level of safety standards.

CHAIR - Okay. Thank you. One thing we did talk about earlier this morning was crash statistics. Were you able to find out any further information about crash statistics or is that something we put on notice to you?

Mr CONFORTI - Yes, the crash statistics came into play with the initial assessment and selection of the areas. We did not include that information in the submission -

CHAIR - You mentioned it on page 3, about the high crash rate along the corridor and high variable travel time through the region, but you did not have any figures.

Mr CONFORTI - We can take the question on notice and provide those figures in a separate submission.

CHAIR - Okay. We will, as long as the committee's happy with that.

Ms BUTLER - Yes.

Mr HEPBURN - Given we are talking about multiple sections, the way we can do that is actually provide you the crash stats relevant to those small sections.

CHAIR - Only to these two sections.

Mr HEPBURN - Yes, and the smaller sections within. Yes.

CHAIR - Yes. That is for clarity. Okay. You have given us a pretty good understanding of the need for the works. Any extra questions on page 2 from any members?

Ms RATTRAY - In regard to the road width, it talks about the sections have narrow, unsealed shoulders or a traversable verge. What is a traversable verge?

Mr HEPBURN - It just means the vehicle can actually leave the carriageway and traverse that piece of pavement without generally losing control or going off any steep drop-off or anything.

Ms RATTRAY - That leads to my next question. It's 3.1 m plus 3.1 m road pavement, with a metre of sealed works on either side. Is there an intention to use safety rails on any of these sections proposed for upgrading? My experience from recent works is the safety rails are put so close to the edge of the road they are of no value and you certainly cannot pull off in any of the areas. Useless pavement outside of the safety rail. Is there intended use of safety rails in any of these sections?

Mr CONFORTI - We use safety barriers, not flexible barriers on this project. They will be necessary in some areas where there are bends or where there are obstacles outside the road. For example, where there is a TasNetworks pole very close to the road there will be the necessity to put a safety barrier and in this case it will be positioned on the verge, not on the sealed road.

Ms RATTRAY - Why is there a use of safety barriers, safety rails on other more recent upgrades where they have part of the metre of road verge sealed, but the rails are well inside that? If that is the intention, I have no issue, but if you are going to put them well inside the metre, what is the point of having that extra metre?

Mr HEPBURN - The design principle around where we do and don't apply the safety barrier in particular on the sides of the road is first and foremost that it depends what the speed limit is and what actual characteristics of the road we are going to achieve.

As Stefano alluded to, we are trying to achieve those 3.1 plus 1's, which is adequate room, but what we do need to give a consideration for is those roadside hazards we may not be able to address. The majority of the length might have very small drop-offs and things off the edge of that verge, where some sections might have a 10-metre drop-off. Specification on road standards would require us to actually protect that area. We would only be looking to add that barrier and use protection where it was required and where we could not accommodate improvements through the road designs.

Ms RATTRAY - So I can expect in the future not to see wasted metreage of road verge with a Armco rail 600 or 700 millimetres inside of that?

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Ms HUDSON - Some seal will be needed to ensure safety for the maintenance contractors to be able to undertake maintenance on those pieces of barrier or side of the road. It also assists them in being able to safely do their jobs.

CHAIR - And pedestrians or cyclists? Would cyclists be going on the inside or the outside of that rail?

Mr HEPBURN - Generally speaking, where we might need to use rail on the side of the road we still try to achieve that sealed suitable pavement for a cyclist to be able to ride on the edge of the road.

CHAIR - If cycle tourism is a thing.

Mr HEPBURN - Yes, and Stefano can probably elaborate further on the use of this particular section of road or sections of road for cyclists.

Ms RATTRAY - You are expecting cyclists to actually ride on the outside of the safety rails?

Mr CONFORTI - That is not the case. For this project, the cyclists will travel on the shoulder -

Ms RATTRAY - They will be on the main road pavement?

Mr CONFORTI - On the shoulder, yes.

CHAIR - Is there enough space between the 3.1-metre pavement for vehicles in general to fit a cyclist before the barrier starts?

Mr CONFORTI - The vehicles is expected to travel in the 3.1-metre lane, the cyclist will have 1 metre available.

CHAIR - And then the barrier.

Mr CONFORTI - And then the barrier.

CHAIR - Going up through some of those twisty, winding hills where you are putting new pavement down, will there be enough room for cyclist to get away from the main flow of traffic?

Mr CONFORTI - There will be a 1-metre shoulder available, yes, there should be sufficient.

Mr HEPBURN - There is not a designated cycle lane. The other opportunity is you do not seal as much as you said. That then leaves an inconsistency in the pavement and if a cyclist is trying to just move over that little bit to let a car go past, they can lose their stability on a change of the surface. Generally, in this type of treatment with or without barrier, we will try to extend that seal to give us that metre straight outside the travelling lane so there is a bit of room there for cyclists.

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CHAIR - Okay, it is an important consideration, I think, with cycle tourism on the east coast possibly increasing although we do not have figures on that.

Mr CONFORTI - No.

CHAIR - Is that something you can get?

Mr CONFORTI - We may look into it, but I am not sure whether there are figures available.

CHAIR - If we were to put that on notice?

Mr HEPBURN - If you were to pop it on notice, we would be able to come back here with a response giving you some idea of the figures.

Ms RATTRAY - My next question is about the current traffic volume averages of approximately 16 000 vehicles a day. Where is that taken from? Is that taken from the Tasman Highway when it starts outside of Launceston and right through to the other side of Orford and into Hobart? Is that where those vehicles -

Mr CONFORTI - That figure will just come from the section we are looking at, so Orford to St Helens.

Ms RATTRAY - Right. So, you do not know whether that actually includes the whole gamut of vehicles or whether you are just counting ones that come across the Lake Leake Highway? I am not sure who would come across Lake Leake Highway and come down the east coast, perhaps a delivery truck or something that is heading south? I am interested in how much of that is specific to this area of road and how much relates to the rest of the 160-odd kilometres of Tasman Highway from St Helens north.

Mr HEPBURN - Our traffic stats captured are by both permanent traffic counters that we have in place - and I cannot tell you off the top of my head where they all are - but also then temporary traffic counters that we put out in certain locations for different reasons. My understanding is that our design consultant here would have put traffic counters out somewhere in the actual two locations we are talking about or in close proximity.

Although I cannot guarantee that without checking into it to answer your question; I guess the numbers that are referred to in our submission are relative only to these couple of sections and they would change if you went further north.

Ms RATTRAY - Right, so would they get more or less?

Mr HEPBURN - I would not know without actually -

CHAIR - Okay. Any questions on page 2? Page 3 then?

Ms BUTLER - As we discussed earlier this morning, I was asking questions about the Cherry Tree Hill section of the Great Eastern Drive and why that section - which is very much an area of the Great Eastern Drive and which certainly needs some work. It is really not

appropriate at all and not safe and at 100 kilometres an hour it is a goat track. Why is that section of the road not being prioritised for the upgrades?

Mr CONFORTI - We carried out an analysis which took into consideration the project cost value in economic terms. That section of road is particularly winding and also very rocky, and we thought that to approach that section of road first would not have obtained the results in terms of safety as much as these two sections that we took into consideration now. Basically, it is very expensive to tackle that particular section of road - which we know of and will eventually be upgrading, but that will be in the future.

Ms BUTLER - So just to confirm, for the record, Cherry Tree Hill will be upgraded in due course?

Mr CONFORTI - Yes.

Ms BUTLER - Excellent. Also, just a quick question about the time lines for the work. Can you advise whether or not there is a time line for completion of the allocated funds federally for the overall project of the Great Eastern Drive?

Mr CONFORTI - Yes. We do not have an exact program because that will be included in the tender presented by the contractors. We estimate that will probably take two construction seasons and that will include next summer and the summer after that.

Ms BUTLER - Is there a completion date for the overall upgrade to the whole Great Eastern Drive? Does it have to be done within a decade?

Mr CONFORTI - The funding is spread in the next five to six years, but if you want to know the exact funding spread, I will have to come back to you and will take the question on notice.

Ms BUTLER - So it is not a situation which can happen with some projects if the pool of money is not spent within a certain amount of time that funding is lost? We do not have those kinds of arrangements in place with this, do we? I would hate it to miss out.

Mr CONFORTI - We have a certain degree of freedom to carry forward budget - and correct me if I am wrong, Lidiya or Zack - but I think with the Australian Government funding we do not lose money in any case. Obviously, we want to do as much as possible, as quickly as possible, but within reason. As I said, we cannot open the whole Tasman Highway anyway even if we want to.

Mr HEPBURN - Just to elaborate, I think things can change with funding even when it is approved. At this point in time we have the \$125 million approved and there is no time frame set on us to expend that money at this point in time.

Mr TUCKER - Following on from Jen's questions about Cherry Tree Hill, is the reason you walked away from that area that you would have to do a total reconstruction of the road?

Mr CONFORTI - Pretty much. The alignment is so windy and poor at the moment that it will take a considerable amount of work to upgrade to the current standard.

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Mr TUCKER - Is the realignment of that section of road planned for the future?

Mr CONFORTI - Yes, the whole section between Orford and St Helens is to be upgraded but that will depend on funding.

Mr TUCKER - That realignment is for the Cherry Tree Hill section - is that correct?

Mr CONFORTI - Yes, that is included in the whole scope of work. What we've done though though in Cherry Tree Hill is put in a northbound overtaking lane that will basically give the opportunity for vehicles to overtake slower vehicles. So as not to have to do it in the most critical area, we are looking at including a southbound overtaking lane in the north of Cherry Tree Hill. That will give the same opportunity to people travelling south to overtake vehicles before the windy section of the road.

Mr TUCKER - Right, you are talking about where Cusick's are at Apsley, are you? Are you talking about that section?

Mr CONFORTI - We are talking about just north of Devil's Corner.

Mr TUCKER - North of Devil's Corner?

Mr CONFORTI - Devil's Corner, yes.

Mr TUCKER - Well, that is still on Coombend, is it? Is that what you are talking about or further north?

Ms RATTRAY - Further north.

Mr HEPBURN - Utilising the straight that is there I think, which is a little further.

Mr CONFORTI - It is north of Coombend and Devil's Corner is actually north of Coombend, so yes, Devil's Corner.

Mr TUCKER - So you are talking before The Pondering Frog? You are talking about that straight?

Mr HEPBURN - I guess that is technically an interim measure that we would try to implement, to remove that driver frustration and to enable overtaking opportunities before you get into the windy section.

Mr TUCKER - But if we are going to take that piece of windy section out and you can straighten that out and go straight through, yes, from that overtaking lane is coming out of -

Mr CONFORTI - Glen Gala Road.

Mr TUCKER - An overtaking lane there, you come straight through with a more direct line that would be a lot better route - which is why you are leaving that section out -

Mr HEPBURN - Value for money based on prior corridor studies and investigations. Reiterating what Stefano said, but the value for money in that section was deemed not

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appropriate or not as high a priority as these ones. Our client, Lidiya, is working on a larger corridor study at the moment which will give us more accurate - not so much more accurate but more up-to-date - information on the remaining sections. That would be an important part of that corridor study.

Mr TUCKER - Just north of The Pondering Frog, where you have done that turn-in section there and there have not been road markings where you turn into The Pondering Frog and where you go around and you come up to the Coles Bay turn - that is part of the upgrade, is it not? Is that correct?

Mr CONFORTI - Yes. Between the new access that we constructed for The Pondering Frog and the Coles Bay Road junction, there will be an upgrade of the tight bend that we have there.

Mr TUCKER - Because there are quite a few accidents on that corner and that is why you have put that guard railing around there, which pushes them back into the coming traffic.

Mr CONFORTI - We are looking into whether to adjust the horizontal alignment, but to actually create a superelevation for the vehicles that travel to have a better shape of the road.

Mr TUCKER - With the piece of guarding you have put up there, if people hit that coming down the wrong way they will bounce back into the traffic coming the other way. I know why you did it because there were too many going over the bank there and into the paddock, but it is a section that needs significant work to fix that issue.

Mr HEPBURN - That is that superelevation camber issue Stefano is talking about; even when you are going around at the moment, it actually is pushing you the wrong way and is part of the reason.

Mr CONFORTI - We do not know the detail of the design yet, but we are definitely addressing the particular corner you are talking about as part of this package, yes.

Mr TUCKER - We do not want to end up like the Upper Scamander Road we ended up with. Have you seen that place where you come across it? Especially if you are in a truck and you load it and she throws you the other way.

CHAIR - The camber is wrong.

Mr TUCKER - Well, it is. Where they have come down the Upper Scamander Road, they have left that on the level and as soon as you go over that, you fall back the other way, but it throws your truck and then it throws you the hell away.

CHAIR - Gets you a rock up then over you go, if you are not careful.

Mr TUCKER - Most of them are aware of it but, yes, when they first did it, it took a few of them out.

Mr HEPBURN - I am not familiar with it, but that is part of the issue that will be addressed; we are just not sure how yet.

CHAIR - Okay.

Ms RATTRAY - In regards to the road audit referred to be undertaken by Lidiya and her team, given that the significant number of people travelling to the Great Eastern Drive have to get there on the other 160 kilometres of the Tasman Highway, is that also included in the road audit looking for upgrades? And possibly more about the 80 kilometres from St Helens through to where you are actually at this point in time putting in a couple of overtaking lanes.

Ms HUDSON - The transport network planning team in ITAS[Infrastructure Tasmania?] is looking at doing a corridor strategy for the Tasman Highway from Sorell all the way through to Launceston. That will incorporate this part of the Great Eastern Drive but also look at the rest of the Tasman Highway.

Ms RATTRAY - I am sure I will be well and truly retired. While I have the opportunity - because you still have to have that part of the road to get to the Great Eastern Drive unless you come across the main road, so -

Ms HUDSON - We will be looking at a whole range of issues across safety, tourism, road design, transport and all those things. More than likely, the corridor strategy will be sectioned off into the different components of the Tasman Highway with The Great Eastern Drive more than likely split into one or two sections. It will be covered and any sort of gaps that have been identified will be looked at and prioritised. Any remaining funding will be able to be allocated to the highest priority areas.

Ms RATTRAY - If you get behind a couple of caravans - and they are not small these days, they are a small home - at [?] Moorina, you are stuck until you get to St Helens. It is a long way, approximately 8 kilometres.

Mr TUCKER - Are you trying to pinch funding from the Great Eastern Drive?

Ms RATTRAY - It is part of the Great Eastern Drive because you cannot get onto it until you get off that -

CHAIR - No turf wars. Anything in relation to page 4? I have a note here that says really these works are a choice between a time priority model and a carefree relaxed pina colada model. A lot of people are wanting to get to work and there is a lot of holiday traffic - those who really have all the time in the world. It is getting that balance right.

Mr HEPBURN - That is what we are trying to achieve. As well as enhancing safety by other means of works, we are trying to improve that driver experience and where our overtaking opportunities are coming into play.

CHAIR - It is not just all about the most efficient speed, it is particularly about safety and trying to cater both for those who have to do it in a timely manner and those who are probably driving a vehicle that needs a little more consideration.

Mr CONFORTI - That is exactly right. As Zack just said, the overtaking facility will probably improve that aspect so the people who want to go slow can be overtaken by people who are going to work or to their business.

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Ms BUTLER - Trucks carrying freight and so forth, because it is the main freight route for the east coast. It is really important we have that safety, but there does need to be efficiency and if the roads are not safe and also an inadequate width, all those things should be considered.

CHAIR - There is a lot of freight on that road.

Over to page 6.

Ms RATTRAY - With regard to the upgrades, it talks about there not being any widening of existing bridges operating within their own design life expectancy. Are there any bridges closer to their end of life than not, where it would make absolute sense to replace them now, even if that is within negotiation with their local government areas or the state Government, rather than leave them and then two years down the track have to replace them? Are you aware of any in that category?

Mr CONFORTI - No. Some of the bridges have been strengthened to upgrade them to modern standards for the load they can take. That is because they had lots of lifespan left but just needed to be improved. There are no bridges to be upgraded as part of this project. We have the Apsley River Bridge that has been upgraded recently.

Ms RATTRAY - I am very fond of that bridge.

Mr TUCKER - There is a culvert south of the toilet block at Orford. It floods across the road and backs right up through the caravan park. It needs to be a square culvert - not three round culverts - to get the quantity of through-water that comes down there - like the council has done on their road above. Are there any planned works for that to be upgraded? As we are talking about bridges, culverts are nearly the same.

Mr CONFORTI - I am sorry, John, I am not able to answer that because we are looking after from the north of Orford. This specific instance may be looked at by the maintenance group. I can take the question on notice, but it is not part of this package of work.

Mr TUCKER - It depends where 'north of Orford' starts from.

Mr HEPBURN - We have completed sections around Orford. The one I am aware of is the Sheas Creek bridge replacement that occurred there a couple of years ago.

Mr TUCKER - You need to take out the rocks underneath holding the water back. That is another one of my problems seeing as you want to bring that one up.

Mr HEPBURN - I should not have mentioned that, should I? That is the extent of the work we have done to date. We are looking further north from there, but this is certainly out of scope and off topic from what our submission is on today. The department is aware of and is considering some drainage issues around that area, but they are not all relative to the road reserve. They do stray into neighbouring properties and there need to be improvements.

Mr TUCKER - The creek near Wielangta Road is another one that needs to have work done on it, but that is not in your jurisdiction - that is Parks and Wildlife.

Ms RATTRAY - I suggest they are good issues for local members.

CHAIR - Yes, they could be. If you could expand a little prior to the statement on materials. You say 'upgrades to the road in this area will be cement stabilised so as to prevent infrastructure being damaged by inundation'.

Can you describe cement stabilisation? Is it simply that it provides a hard edge rather than a soft edge?

Mr CONFORTI - Yes, that refers to the section of road that is south of Bicheno, the one that gets flooded. It is between Bicheno and the Apsley River Bridge. Stabilisation is basically reinforcing the existing pavement. The pavement is mixed with an external material to the pavement that can be lime, concrete - there are different designs - which will make it stronger. So, when the water rises to the level of the pavement, the water doesn't filter through the pavement and weaken it.

CHAIR - Less erosion. Less penetration.

Mr CONFORTI - Yes.

CHAIR - Thank you.

In the materials you talk about a service life of at least 15 years -

The road design has been completed in accordance with Austroads Guidelines with the road pavements designed for a service life of at least 40 years and the bitumen surfacing, being sprayed or asphalt seal, a service life of at least 15 years.

What is it? Is it a chip seal or an asphalt seal that you are going to use?

Mr CONFORTI - It is probably a spray seal or chip seal, as you called it, so it wouldn't be asphalt. We put asphalt maybe in intersections where the track may upset the seal or asphalt normally going to very populated areas but not on this project, that I know of; unless during design we find some intersections that will need asphalt, we will just use spray seal.

CHAIR - Most of this work would be in unpopulated areas?

Mr CONFORTI - Yes, we don't upgrade areas, say, for example, in Swansea. That is not included in the scope of the work.

CHAIR - What I'm saying is, there is no noise issue so much with the works that are proposed here today?

Mr CONFORTI - That could be another consideration. If there is a dwelling or if the project, for some reason, increases the noise then we can consider asphalt instead of spray seal, but usually for safety projects as this one is, we don't change dramatically the alignment and we don't increase the traffic on this road so the noise usually doesn't go up. Actually, the current seals are less noisy than the old seals so, if anything, very often we do an abatement of the noise, or a reduction of the noise, rather than an increase.

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Mr HEPBURN - Generally speaking, this is a safety upgrade in most cases and we're trying to improve the road geometry - the width of the road, not the actual seal.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Ms RATTRAY - With regard to locally sourced materials - and you talk about that in the next paragraph, about local quarries - do you envisage that there will have to be extensive cartage of materials or will it be able to be sourced fairly locally? I drove past a quarry supply place as we came into Swansea, so they get their resources fairly locally. That makes a difference, I understand, to the cost of the project.

Mr HEPBURN - Absolutely. Until we actually have a design, and in particular the pavement design, finalised, we don't know exactly what aggregates and materials will be used. Obviously, our quarries around the state vary on what they can and can't provide. Ideally speaking, the contractors who deliver this work will try to access the most local quarries which have those materials required available because it will lessen the cartage and the cost.

Ms RATTRAY - Given that we've already spent \$30 million on behalf of the Tasmanian community on 38 projects thus far, I'd expect that there'd be some information about the type of aggregate or resource that you are going to use for these upgrades. They're only a continuation of what's already been used. I expect that you will have some knowledge of that.

Mr HEPBURN - Yes, we do have knowledge of what we likely would use and the quarries that would have those materials available.

Ms RATTRAY - Are they local?

Mr HEPBURN - I believe we have quite a few available around the Launceston area, so a little further north.

Ms RATTRAY - That is not very local.

Mr CONFORTI - There is one in the south of Bicheno.

Mr HEPBURN - Just south of Bicheno township.

CHAIR - A bluestone quarry?

Mr CONFORTI - I don't know what kind of stone they have but we cannot be mandatory to the contractors who indicate what quarry to use. It is entirely up to the contractor to source the material as long as the material is to our standards.

CHAIR - Where would they get the bitumen from?

Mr CONFORTI - I don't know.

Mr HEPBURN - It will depend on the contractor who is successful in obtaining the works.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - The reason I am asking that is, if it has to be carted a long way, it cools down. I know you have ways of keeping it heated but it can also mean that it is not at the right temperature when they lay it and it strips off, like we have seen so often. You would take those sorts of things into account in your tender?

Mr CONFORTI - Everybody has an interest to keep the project under budget and being cost effective. We cannot be prescriptive on where to go to get the material to the contractors. It is entirely up to the contractors to source the material. Obviously, they will find the nearest or cheapest source.

CHAIR - You would be prescriptive in the temperature that the material is laid at, wouldn't you?

Mr CONFORTI - Yes, we will have technical specifications that we will define exactly what kind of material has to be used.

Ms RATTRAY - Preferably something different to what they used at Powranna when they did that road.

CHAIR - Yes, that is right.

Mr TUCKER - We saw this happen down at the Smithton to Marrawah highway where the seal lifted off. They carted the material from Sheffield because the contractor contracted it in and it was through one of his mates or something like that he could cart the material there. It would have been about \$50 a tonne or more to cart the material.

This is where the problem occurs. You are carting material from another area; yes, it might meet specifications but as soon as you put that material on the east coast or down near Smithton and Marrawah, guess what? It did not work. What are you doing to protect the east coast residents to ensure this will not happen here if you are allowing the contractors to cart material from Launceston or even further afield when they have local material here that works in the area? How do we prevent something similar from happening here?

Mr HEPBURN - Generally, the protection we have on the materials that we use and the treatments that are applied are bound by our contract specifications.

Mr TUCKER - That is what they were at Smithton to Marrawah, and that is where the problem occurred.

Mr HEPBURN - I cannot speak on that particular job or why that may or may not have failed but, generally speaking, we are talking about not state but national guidelines and specifications. As long as we are meeting those specifications - or our contractors are - the design should work and the seal should hold. There are sometimes circumstances where that does not work.

CHAIR - We have noticed it quite a few times and that is why we bring it up regularly. It is part of value for money, at the end of the day. I know that the contractors themselves are responsible to make sure that the work is durable and if it does break up, yes, they have to come back and fix it up. There is the issue of the inconvenience to the public again and that is why

we bring these things up all the time. It is important to fix it because quite often it is not appropriate. The longevity of the work is simply not there.

I look back at the work that was just prior to Launceston coming from the Perth side, at the Perth bypass. It was just weeks or a month or two before it started to strip off. We need a better resolution than that.

Mr HEPBURN - I know that we have had some issues like that and we probably will into the future. Sometimes things happen that are out of our control. I will add to the fact that although we have our specifications there to try to control that sort of thing from occurring, we do still go through a tender process where we are giving consideration to the submissions and some of those things are given consideration to what the contractor may be specifying as their quarry material and where they might be getting it. It does come into play. It is not a game changer. It is not a big-ticket item but it is certainly something we consider.

Mr TUCKER - If you have had a road fail under a certain contractor and he has bought the aggregate from another area, when he puts in the next tender, is there a big black mark against him if he is going to pull it from that same area again, or not?

Mr HEPBURN - It generally depends on the tender and how that procurement is taking place. If we have something in there for past contractor performance or giving consideration to the specifics of how that contractor may have performed in the past, we could, but if that is not in the tender -

Mr TUCKER - Why would that not be in the tender?

Ms RATTRAY - Should it be in a tender, in all tenders, given we do not have a large suite of tenderers to choose from in Tasmania? It is just a fact.

Mr HEPBURN - It is a percentage on the selection criteria or how we evaluate our tenders. Generally, we only have a few, a handful of things we are actually assessing against because otherwise it would become very hard to pick a clear winner. Construction methodology is probably where that sits and it is a large component in our assessments for a lot of our tenders.

Ms RATTRAY - I came today with Mr Wood and we came across the Lake Leake Highway. Except for one small patch, that is a really good road and that would have to be at least 30 years since that has been sealed.

Mr TUCKER - Probably constructed by the DMR.

Ms RATTRAY - I don't know. We try on this committee, Mr Chair.

CHAIR - We have been given the answer, so let's see how it goes into the future.

You mentioned under materials that poles and sheet metal inputs for signage are imported into Tasmania with the final signs being printed and assembled here. What about things like Armco barriers? Are they rolled in Tasmania? We don't import that as a flat product and then it is rolled in Tasmania, do we?

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Mr CONFORTI - The steel is all imported; whether it is then shaped in Tasmania, I do not think we have that facility. This is pretty much the answer. I know the steel is coming from somewhere else and we do manufacture some of the materials, for example the signs. We import the metal and then manufacture the signs in Tasmania. I suppose the same thing would be for the safety barriers.

CHAIR - Talking about barriers, the W barriers, are you going to have the lower horizontal barrier as well for motorcyclists? Rub rail, that's the one.

Mr CONFORTI - The design is not developed to that point yet so I don't know.

CHAIR - Will you take that on board?

Mr CONFORTI - Yes.

CHAIR - One thing that Glamorgan-Spring Bay did many years ago under Bertrand Cadart, the mayor, is that he welcomed motorcyclists a lot and just about all of the Armco railings had a lower horizontal beam - a rub rail - which stopped motorcyclists being chopped.

Mr CONFORTI - I can take the question on notice, but we are not even progressed enough to talk to the council yet. If that is a request from the council, we will look at it.

Mr HEPBURN - Generally speaking, if we are putting Armco rail on the side of a road which is a designated motorcycle route, rub rail is usually a heavy consideration.

CHAIR - That is good to hear because a lot of motorcyclists use this road.

Ms BUTLER - The motorcyclists cannot use the Midlands anymore because of the wire, because it is too dangerous for them so they use the east coast road.

CHAIR - It is dangerous. The east coast is a bit more scenic, I might say.

Ms RATTRAY - In regard to the progress to date on page 7, are we there, Chair?

CHAIR - Yes.

Ms RATTRAY - Engagement with Office of Valuer-General regarding proposed acquisition. Can you give some indication to the committee on possible acquisition requirements? The next one is engagement with the Glamorgan-Spring Bay Council regarding planning permits. There is your opportunity to talk to them about designs.

Mr CONFORTI - We are now implementing the investigations; that is, the geotechnical investigations and environmental and heritage investigations. Once we have all the data then we can start designing around these features. We are not to the point of talking to the council because we would not be able to tell them exactly what we are doing, but that will be the next phase. Probably within the next month we will talk to the local councils.

Ms RATTRAY - Wouldn't it be prudent to actually have a conversation with the council prior to the design because then you get that local input before you have something on paper?

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It is not as easy to change something after the event as it is to put it in prior, so wouldn't that be a prudent way of approaching something?

Mr HEPBURN - Yes and we do talk to local governments who are directly affected by all of our projects through the course of the development of the design and our projects. We also have expertise through our design consultants and our internal staff regarding development and planning. These types of projects, when we are doing minor widening, so lineal lengths of road upgrade by way of minor widening, in a lot of cases the majority of those sections will be exempt because under the planning scheme you can actually upgrade within 3 metres of the existing road reserve. We certainly have those discussions and even on those projects as soon as we start doing accesses or junction upgrades, that is where we are going into their area of potentially requiring a DA.

Those discussions are occurring as early as they possibly can, noting that the formal submission of any DA or otherwise exemption request cannot go out until the design is final. Otherwise, we are essentially -

Ms RATTRAY - But given that in this case, local government areas know their areas like the back of their hand, they would have feedback from visitors or locals about a particular stretch of road that, with all due respect, your designers might never have even travelled on.

Ms HUDSON - That is where our work comes into play because that's the conversation we have during the planning phase with councils, with major stakeholders, with locals, interest groups. We do all of that work beforehand so that when we hand it over to these guys they are well aware of what is happening and so are the councils -

Ms RATTRAY - Okay, there are no surprises.

Ms HUDSON - No surprises, yes.

Mr HEPBURN - Sorry for the confusion, this sort of progress in our submission here is talking about in particular planning permits and development applications as opposed to the general discussions.

Ms RATTRAY - I am thinking about that proactive approach. Lidiya is all over it.

CHAIR - No worries, anything further on page 7?

Ms RATTRAY - And if you have any other queries just ask John, Jen or me or Mr Wood, or the motorcyclist, the Chair, because we are the ones who live on the roads.

CHAIR - I declare an interest. Okay, page 8?

Ms BUTLER - Just speaking for the *Hansard* about the property acquisitions. It says here that there will be approximately 12 properties; even though they are large properties, the acquisition areas are relatively small. Can you speak us through that and whether or not that may be an inhibitor or whether that acquisition process should proceed quite nicely?

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Mr CONFORTI - We mainly use the existing alignment. We may need to adjust or widen the road and so we are predicting that we may need to take just very thin sides of the property adjoining the road corridor. Does that address your question, Jen?

Ms BUTLER - Yes, I think that is fine. Also, regarding Aboriginal heritage, environmental and heritage. Did anyone else have any questions on page 8? Sorry, Chair, I skipped onto page 9.

CHAIR - I did actually have one on page 8. With regard to traffic management during construction, I am really keen to understand the sort of interaction you have with contractors in making sure when they are not on site that the speed limits are lifted to a reasonable thing. People using the Midland Highway complain at 11 or 12 o'clock at night there is a 40 km speed limit with not a worker in sight. Yes, there might be a slightly steeper drop-off and there are witches' hats and other infrastructure.

Mr TUCKER - They put those signs up for your safety.

CHAIR - Yes. It is really for the safety of the workers, but it does not take much to hood with a different speed limit over it, locked onto those signs. Then when they come back to work, just take the hoods off.

Mr HEPBURN - Certainly. What we are doing here in terms of the areas we are looking at on Lisdillon and Apsley versus the likes of the Midland Highway are very different. The department, on that note, is considering how we manage the contractors' traffic management set-ups, through our specifications on roads like the Midland Highway and Bass Highway where there are known issues with exactly what you are mentioning.

CHAIR - It just causes accidents or delays for no good reasons.

Mr HEPBURN - Yes, it is probably a little different on this type of road as it is much narrower. In most cases it is just a single lane in each direction. In a lot of cases we do have quite undulating terrain or geometry. You are going to have roadside hazards and steep drop-offs whilst we are undertaking these works. I would expect there would be times when lowered speed limits will need to remain in place overnight and over weekends. That is actually for the safety of the travelling public. I acknowledge your concerns in regards to those other roads like the Midland Highway. This one will be a little different and we will need to have those speed limits in place for the safety of motorists while the works are being undertaken.

CHAIR - Okay.

Mr TUCKER - To confirm and put this on the record, with the acquisition, there is no compulsory acquisition. It has all been negotiated out with the landowners?

Mr CONFORTI - It is compulsory.

Mr TUCKER - It is a compulsory acquisition?

Mr CONFORTI - Yes.

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Mr TUCKER - It is all compulsory acquisition? Why don't we negotiate with landowners before we go to compulsory acquisition?

Mr CONFORTI - I am not in the position to give you much of the history. But I understand that it was done in the past - before my time - and they had the potential to cause many delays into the negotiation. But if you want to know more details, I will have to take it -

Mr HEPBURN - It is worth noting, although it is compulsory acquisition and that sounds very confronting, we are discussing with these property owners before anything is absolutely set in stone. There are always opportunities to reconsider the design and see if there are things they can change.

Mr TUCKER - You allow the landowners to point out issues to you with their properties before you come in, and you work with them. That is the main thing I am asking you about.

Mr CONFORTI - There will be plenty of negotiation before we do the actual acquisition and the landowner will be completely informed of what is going on. But the acquisition will still be compulsory.

Mr TUCKER - Yes. Right. But you are in negotiation with them before you do move to that stage to try to keep everyone on site?

Mr HEPBURN - Correct, it is part of our stakeholder engagement processes. What we do not have control over is the valuation or the compensation that may be paid to people.

CHAIR - I know that is at arm's length.

Mr HEPBURN - That is managed by a separate entity.

CHAIR - Or Valuer-General.

Mr HEPBURN - But certainly, we do have means of negotiating the sale: 'This is what we are planning to do, this is how it may affect the property, what do you think?' We have those discussions. It ties in with fencing agreements as generally where we are acquiring property, we are doing widening. We need to remove fences or reinstall fences and all of that is going on as part of the stakeholder engagement. There are always times where we cannot satisfy everyone when we are doing large lengths of upgrades as a result of our projects. But we do our best to try to accommodate people where we can through that process.

CHAIR - Where you have a road corridor, is all of the land in the road corridor generally crown land or can such a corridor go over private land and therefore acquisition is obviously needed at some point if you expand it? How does it work?

Mr HEPBURN - I may have misinterpreted your question, Chair. Generally speaking, the road reserve or the road corridor is state land, so we can do what we please in there in the way of upgrading roads.

CHAIR - The landowner does not get a heads up early on; this part of his land is part of a road corridor and therefore in the future it might be acquired at some point in time?

Ms HUDSON - Some property owners do and they know that. It is part of their title.

CHAIR - A covenant of some sort.

Ms HUDSON - Yes.

Ms BUTLER - In relation to the Aboriginal heritage section of this report, it says here that it is likely there will be Aboriginal heritage artefacts or a discovery of artefacts. Has any work been done at all yet? If the areas are known and that assessment has been done of those areas and they have been prioritised, have these assessments been undertaken at all?

Mr CONFORTI - Yes, the assessment has been undertaken and we are talking to Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania on the characteristics. We are doing further surveying to have the exact position of their artefacts or the quarry. There is also a quarry near the Lisdillon area. Once we have got the exact position, we will design through it, if possible, and work with Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania to keep them informed. There may be the necessity to have a permit, but we are not at this stage yet because we do not have the design developed enough and the assessment is still ongoing.

Ms BUTLER - I am always mindful of the Brighton Bypass and the huge expense it ended up by having to put in that overpass and the height of that overpass because of those middens. It is really important that we are respectful of that heritage and also the same with the natural values. Has there been significant flora and fauna found in those areas where the work is going to be conducted?

Mr CONFORTI - There is nothing of relevance in the section in Apsley River between Coles Bay and Bicheno. We are still looking into the southern section between Rocky Hills and Pontypool Lagoon. We expect to find more endemic species there just because the vegetation is so close to the road. We will have to take something, but we do not know exactly what yet.

Ms RATTRAY - There is no green and gold frog?

Mr CONFORTI - Not that I know of at this stage.

Ms RATTRAY - A question on other infrastructure providers when we are commencing road upgrades as proposed: what is the process with TasNetworks and any impediments that causes to a project? If you could share that with the committee, it would be helpful.

Mr HEPBURN - The department maintains relationships with all of our service providers in Tasmania, TasNetwork being one of those.

Ms RATTRAY - An important one.

Mr HEPBURN - Yes, they are very important and probably one of the providers we are working with most commonly these days, especially on large lineal projects like this one. The process the department follows in terms of managing TasNetworks infrastructure in the road reserve and, in particular, when we are conducting construction within the state road network, is agreed with TasNetworks. It is important to mention we do not have full control over how that goes. We do have to work with TasNetworks and tie into their internal processes and time

frames as well. Generally speaking, TasNetworks will not allow the department to do the design of their infrastructure in relocating and upgrading any poles or stays that may need doing. They take that on themselves because they are the owner and the expert in that area.

Generally speaking, at this point in time TasNetworks will not commence that design activity until we give them at least a confident prelim design or detailed design. That does put a bit of a hold on things in terms of getting TasNetworks' infrastructure sorted at the end of the project. Once we provide that prelim or detailed design, TasNetworks will then issue an offer to us which we can accept or not. Once accepted, they will commence the design activity. This is their design phase, as they call it.

Once their design is complete, they will provide that package to us for formal acceptance, which will have costs or estimated costs associated. That time frame on that design does vary and it depends greatly on the amount of infrastructure that needs relocating, where it is around the network and what resources TasNetworks has available at the time for their design. Once accepted, in terms of the design supply from TasNetworks and the associated estimated cost, the department then needs to arrange for the signing or acceptance of any required easement deeds as a result of that location.

That means in some cases we can just relocate the TasNetworks infrastructure - or they can - and it remains within the road reserve and within existing easement so there is no action required. More often than not now, we are going into private property. If not with the infrastructure, the easement is going into private property. Where that happens, we do need to get an easement deed signed by the property owner.

To present that easement deed - and this is something that TasNetworks is expecting the department to manage as it is the result of our road project - we need to seek an independent valuation from the Office of the Valuer-General on what the compensation may be for that easement or asset going onto the land. Once that is achieved, we can then present that to the property owner, requesting that they sign the easement deed. We have no control over whether they do or do not. We can simply ask the question. If they won't sign it, we need to reconsider our design and look at things like potentially undergrounding or changing the design significantly, which takes time and costs money.

Once we do have all easement deeds signed, where required, we can then return all of that information including the accepted offer to TasNetworks. That is the point in time TasNetworks will then progress from a design to a construction phase on their side of things.

CHAIR - And that is at your department's cost? Is there a cost involved in this?

Mr HEPBURN - Absolutely, we pay for all components of this work. Now, again, once in the construction phase we do not have any control over when TasNetworks does the work. They do the work themselves with their own contractors or subcontractors. The timing varies and it does depend again on the materials, the type of infrastructure that is going in and the workload that they and their subcontractors may have on at the time.

Ms RATTRAY - So, effectively, there could be a stretch of road that has been upgraded, even safety rails put up the side, bitumen, line marking - the whole box and dice - and you can have some power poles sitting still on the road verge with a mound of dirt around them and

TasNetworks just decides when they want to move those poles or relocate those poles at their discretion?

Mr HEPBURN - It would be rare that we actually can do all of that work. If we can, that is great in terms of us being able to keep the project moving. But it is rare that we would actually be able to do earthworks, pavement works, sealing works and the line marking while their infrastructure is there because, generally speaking, where we require their relocations it is because we are building the road over a point where that infrastructure might already be. Generally, the only time we may be able to leave the infrastructure in place and protect it by a barrier is if it sits outside where the road widening is going to go and outside any table drains or anything else that ties into the road function, but still within a clear zone. As a safety precaution you would put a barrier around it to leave it in its position. That could be temporary or that could be permanent.

Ms RATTRAY - So, who takes the liability if that actually happens? If there is no action by TasNetworks to relocate, and it's scheduled and it has been signed off and the roadworks have been completed, who takes the liability there? Is it TasNetworks for not getting on and doing the job or is it the Tasmanian people? Well, both actually, they're involved in both, but is it the Tasmanian people on behalf of State Growth who have to wear the liability?

Mr HEPBURN - Well, my understanding would be, in that particular set of circumstances, the department is the road owner, so if we choose to open the road while it is in some - if it has a pole there but it's protected by a barrier that is -

Ms RATTRAY - So, there is no time frame for when TasNetworks would be required to complete a relocation of infrastructure - their infrastructure - for a project, a road upgrade?

Mr HEPBURN - There is never a guaranteed time frame. In my experience, I have never had a guaranteed time frame. It's always an estimate, and we can't -

Ms RATTRAY - You might not be able to answer this, but should there be? You don't have to answer, you can -

Mr HEPBURN - I won't. It's a personal opinion. I will leave that.

Ms RATTRAY - All right then, I'll answer it for you: yes, there should be.

CHAIR - All right.

Ms RATTRAY - Thanks, Chair. I thought I couched that pretty well.

CHAIR - No, I think it's important stuff, there's no question about that, especially if you want delivery in a reasonable time frame. Any other questions on page 9? Page 10?

Ms RATTRAY - This is your time to shine, Chair.

CHAIR - Oh dear. I'll ask the question that I asked earlier today when we were talking about the overview of the project. The escalation cost for P50 and P90 is \$784 700 and then \$919 500; yet, in the notes it says 'Escalation 8% - 9.5% of base estimate'. If you take 8 to

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9.45 per cent of base estimate on the P50, you will get \$3.6 million, roughly. Then on the P90 you will get pretty much the same, so why is that figure so low on the P50 and P90?

Mr CONFORTI - I was informed before this meeting by the person who worked out this table that the columns are right, but the notes on the side of it are not. So, the escalation should be between 1.8 and 2 per cent rather than the 8 to 9.5 per cent of the base estimate. If you want me to, I can resubmit this particular table or -

CHAIR - I think for the completeness of the project, it probably would be worth providing an addendum because it's on the public record. I think it's important to have it right.

Mr CONFORTI - Absolutely, an addendum to the whole report or just the table?

CHAIR - Just the funding and cost section, just that page if you would like, a resubmitted page 10.

Ms RATTRAY - Supplementary: does the note on the bottom of the page about the escalation rate for Australian and Tasmanian government funded projects being determined by the Australian Government make the 1.8 to 2 per cent correct according to that, or does that need to be amended as well?

Mr CONFORTI - I think that doesn't need to be amended but I will double-check and reissue page 10.

CHAIR - I think you will find that the P90 is 2.26 per cent rather than 2 per cent, but anyway, that is okay.

Ms RATTRAY - It's closer to 8 per cent than 9.5 per cent.

CHAIR - It's closer to 8 per cent than 9.5 per cent. Apart from that, the contingency is about 12 per cent and on the P90 it's about 35 per cent.

Ms RATTRAY - Is that one right?

CHAIR - That is quite significant. Yes, I guess my question was: what went forward for escalation in the funding submission to the Commonwealth?

Ms RATTRAY - They might not have been as forensic as this committee, Chair.

CHAIR - I do not know, but I would be interested to know what went forward to the Commonwealth on the escalation for these two projects.

Ms RATTRAY - That might come as a supplementary on that funding and costs page.

CHAIR - You might get them to also check that. There is \$784 700 and the \$919 500. Just get them to check that is actually what went forward to the Commonwealth for when they were looking at getting funding for it.

Mr CONFORTI - We are actually still to submit the PPR, which is the project proposal -

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Ms RATTRAY - To the feds?

Mr CONFORTI - To the feds.

CHAIR - Right, you have not done that yet.

Ms RATTRAY - Well, you will be able to get it right before it goes off.

CHAIR - That is okay, you just resubmit page 10 as it should look, thank you. Any other questions on page 10? Page 11?

Ms BUTLER - I have some questions on the timing. I want to confirm the time line documented here in the submission is accurate. To advertise for tenders starts in September 2023, that is next month. The close of tenders will only take a two-month process and then to assess tenders and award the contracts between November to December 2023, noting not much really happens in government pretty much from 10 December onwards. Service relocations, November 2023; then to commence construction in January 2024.

Is that for the first project?

Mr CONFORTI - Yes.

Ms BUTLER - Is that likely, do you think?

Mr CONFORTI - No, there has already been a delay since we have submitted this report. The September 2023 first line in the timing section should be October 2023 and all the rest will move a month from then. This is our best guess and our plan at the moment, but you know there are things during the life of a project that could further delay the issue of the tender -

Ms BUTLER - Is there an idea on when that first project - sorry to cut you off then as well, I apologise. That is the timeframe, but it is a month out for the first project. When do you think the first project will be complete?

Mr CONFORTI - We suspect the first project will start at the beginning of 2024 and finish in mid-2025.

Ms BUTLER - That is just the first project?

Mr CONFORTI - Yes.

Ms BUTLER - Then the second tranche of this?

Mr CONFORTI - Yes, the second project will hopefully be tendered within three or four months from the first one.

Ms RATTRAY - Which goes first: Apsley or Lisdillon?

Mr CONFORTI - Apsley.

Ms BUTLER - What is the overall projection for both projects to be complete by?

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Mr CONFORTI - By the end of 2025.

Ms BUTLER - That is both?

CHAIR - The assessment of tenders and awarding of the contract in November to December is now going to be December to January. The assessments will be done during January by the department.

Mr CONFORTI - No, hopefully the assessment will be done before Christmas, then I am not sure whether the contract will be -

CHAIR - But if you haven't got the tenders to assess, the tenders will not close till November.

Mr CONFORTI - Yes, usually we can do the assessment two weeks after the closing date.

Mr HEPBURN - Business would continue in our office over that period; it is just that we cease awarding tenders for a period over Christmas. If we can achieve those prior dates, we would still be looking to award rather than in November - December, it would be more like December - January, it would most likely be late January.

CHAIR - That is what I am saying, you would be doing the assessment in the office and that does not rely on other services.

Ms RATTRAY - And if all goes well with Tas Networks, the service relocations will be done by April 2025, upon the completion of the project.

Mr HEPBURN - That depends what services are required.

CHAIR - And other relevant approvals? Is there any DA associated with this, or do you think that is -

Mr CONFORTI - There will be, there will probably be because of acquisition and possibly environmental or heritage values -

CHAIR - Is it the case that -

Mr CONFORTI - We are predicting there will be a development application at this stage for both sections.

CHAIR - Is it the case, where there are acquisitions, it automatically goes to a DA, or not?

Mr CONFORTI - I think they do in most cases.

Mr HEPBURN - Sorry, I missed the question.

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CHAIR - If there are acquisitions, does that automatically pull a DA trigger? Does it have to go to a DA? Because, obviously, if it's within the road reserve, generally DAs are not required.

Mr HEPBURN - Generally speaking, yes, but it does depend on the timing of any acquisitions. Sometimes, acquisitions may occur even in the planning or scoping stage of projects and, generally speaking, we will be managing that.

CHAIR - If there is an acquisition, does it automatically go to a DA?

Mr HEPBURN - If there is an acquisition to be made as a result of a project which is yet to go through the planning, then yes.

CHAIR - Okay, thank you. There aren't any questions on the maps and we are done and dusted. It does leave me to reiterate as we advised at the commencement of your evidence, before I get to that point I'll ask the questions. Mr Secretary was looking worried there for a minute. We do ask for answers to five questions, which are important questions for us to ask under the Public Works Committee Act and I need a definite response to these: Firstly, does the proposed works meet an identified need or needs or solve a recognised problem?

Mr CONFORTI - Yes.

CHAIR - Okay, problem being a road that is not fit for general public use.

Ms RATTRAY - Does not meet standards.

CHAIR - Does not meet standards, is that correct?

Mr CONFORTI - Yes, it does not meet any safety standards.

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

Mr CONFORTI - Yes, it does.

CHAIR - Third question, are the proposed works fit for purpose?

Mr CONFORTI - Yes, they will be.

CHAIR - Do the proposed works provide value for money?

Mr CONFORTI - Yes.

CHAIR - The last question is: are the proposed works a good use of public funds?

Mr CONFORTI - Definitely, yes.

CHAIR - I know it sounds strange we should ask such questions, but they are part of the act and we need to make sure we get answers to them. We can draw our own conclusions from what you have told us during the hearing, but they are important questions to ask. Thank you

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for coming today and providing the information to us. It is important information for us to make a proper assessment.

As I advised you at the commencement of your evidence, what you have said here today is protected by parliamentary privilege, but once you leave the table you need to be aware the 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. Do you understand that?

Witnesses - Yes.

CHAIR - Thank you.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.

The Committee adjourned at 2.39 p.m.