

## PUBLIC

**THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS MET AT VIEW 42 FUNCTION ROOM, STRAHAN VILLAGE, ON WEDNESDAY, 9 JULY 2014**

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### **MACQUARIE HEADS DEVELOPMENT ROAD**

**Mr MARK ILES**, PROJECT MANAGER, PLANNING AND DESIGN, TRANSPORT, REGULATORY AND CUSTOMER SERVICE, AND **Mr ALAN LEE**, ENGINEERING PROJECT MANAGER, DEPARTMENT OF STATE GROWTH, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

**Mr BROOKS** (Chair) - Any public project with spending of over \$5 million has to be recommended to proceed by this Public Works Committee. You are covered by parliamentary privilege, but you will not be protected under privilege once you are outside this hearing.

**Mr ILES** - I became involved in this project just before Christmas last year when the previous state governed, through negotiations with the salmon industry and the West Coast Council, allocated a budget of just over \$5.2 million to upgrade the roads between Lyell Highway and Smith Cove Road. That actually came out of conditions on a development application permit issued by the West Coast Council for the shore-based facilities at Smith Cove, where effectively the previous Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources, now State Growth, agreed to take on the conditions applying to the road upgrades.

We then undertook an assessment of the type of vehicles which would be using the road where effectively Henty Main Road through Harvey Street, Ocean Beach Road and Macquarie Heads Road becomes a B-double route for the industry. Fish feed comes mainly from Hobart but also some comes from the north-west coast, mainly on semitrailers, using the Lyell Highway. That is where the upgrade of Lyell Highway/Harvey Street, or Reid Street as it's called, comes into it as well.

We began our concept designs and planning process. We had to do normal survey works, which include heritage and environmental surveys, to see if we need to go through a permit process, either federal or state, to apply for those permits. Our assessments required that we did not need to go through that process. We will be checking with West Coast Council if we need a development application. We received written confirmation from West Coast Council that we are complying with the conditions on the permit, so we did not need to go through any further process. We have undertaken significant consultation with industry and the local population in Strahan, including a public information day. We have had various meetings with community groups.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - Are you satisfied that the project as you designed it will make it possible for traffic to flow smoothly, including the new traffic that is going to come - the semitrailers and the B-doubles - and also the traffic that is normally generated within Strahan, and tourism traffic?

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**Mr ILES** - The road work design is based on a national standard. For a B-double it is an 8-metre traffic width. That is what we are designing for - to meet those minimum standard requirements.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - Have you also taken into account the number of traffic movements? That is hugely different at this time of the year than it is in summer time.

**Mr ILES** - Yes.

**Mr FARRELL** - As to the road design and the projected growth in the industry, is it designed over the limit it currently will be used for or is there projected to be a growth in the industry and it will have to be revisited at some stage to be improved? What is its life span?

**Mr ILES** - The road itself is designed to cater for a particular type of vehicle. We are taking the evidence that was provided to council in the traffic impact assessment based on the growth of the industry - when it reaches that peak. I am not sure when it reaches that peak, whether two years, five years or 10 years. We are basically in accordance to what was submitted to council.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - There will be no B-doubles on the first section, Reid Street, where the first roundabout is?

**Mr ILES** - No, there won't. B-doubles have to have a licence issued by our department, and that section will not be an issue.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - So only be B-doubles coming from the north down Henty Street?

**Mr ILES** - Yes, Henty Main Road and Murchison.

**Mrs RYLAH** - My interest is in regard to noise mitigation and the concerns that have been raised around that. It is a very quiet and has lots of water, therefore sound travels a long way. What considerations have been made in regard to the mitigation of noise on that road?

**Mr ILES** - Regarding noise, we work on what we call a 63dBA - and I know that sounds very scientific - over an 18-hour period because we have an environmental document. When we upgrade major roads, particularly very busy highways, we put in noise mitigation processes and go through a process where we do all the measurements and when it gets above that policy, which is worldwide, we then take mitigation processes.

The initial modelling shows that because the number of heavy vehicles here is spread out over 24 hours, we do not need to initiate that policy. However, we do not dispute the amenity of residents will change. That should have been taken into account with the development permit issued by the West Coast Council. We inherited the conditions on the permit which was issued to the industry. There is no denying there will be some impact on existing residential amenity in Harvey Street and Andrew Street.

**Mrs RYLAH** - What about the tourist accommodation in particular?

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**Mr ILES** - I do not dispute that. You have to remember that we are talking about, from my understanding, up to an extra 40 vehicles a day, and that would be spread out over 24 hours. We have also been working with the industry and have sat down with them to enter into a code of practice. That code of practice is currently being developed and my understanding is that industry has already talked to its drivers and they will enter into an agreement on what the speed of the trucks will be - I understand it would be roughly 40 kph but I have not seen that yet - and also not using engine brakes in residential areas.

**Mrs RYLAH** - Who will enforce the code of practice and how will that work?

**Mr ILES** - The code of practice is developed between the industry, us and the council. It is not a legal document in itself but a memorandum of understanding. You find in most communities, where we have entered into those agreements, that they work effectively because, in the end, the industry, the drivers and everyone else have to live with the community. We had one in Scottsdale for a number of years on the Tasman Highway where B-doubles were not to use the Tasman Highway between school hours and things like that. That worked very effectively and we have done it in other small communities around the state.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - You said over 24 hours, Mark. Are we talking about them driving through at night as well?

**Mr ILES** - You probably need to ask the industry itself, but my understanding is that once Smiths Cove is up and running it will be a 24-hour operation. I have taken this from the traffic impact assessment. It is my understanding that the fish will be harvested on demand and transported where it needs to go to the north-west coast for processing and probably out the following day. From my understanding of the industry, it is often harvested on demand, and that could be the middle of the night. Do not take that as a certainty, however; you need to ask the industry that.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - No. I am thinking the impact would be worse on local residents if trucks are going through in the middle of the night.

**CHAIR** - I wanted to discuss community engagement a little further. In your submission, as part of the community process some issues were raised, stakeholder concerns, in appendix c. Can you take us through that community consultation in a bit more detail and what feedback you have received and how you have addressed it?

**Mr ILES** - Community consultation has been done a number of ways in that we have had informal meetings with groups and gone through an information day process. A number of issues have been raised, particularly safety issues, including a request for a bypass and additional footpaths and also noise. The noise issues we have tried to address through entering into that agreement, and safety issues as well to a certain degree by reducing speed limits. The development application for the permit required us to put in the footpath on Harvey Street from the Andrew Street roundabout through to the bridge. Additional issues raised during the stakeholder consultation included a request for a footpath in Andrew Street up to the last residential street, Henty Main Road, and also in Reid Street, part of the Lyell Highway. We acknowledge those concerns and have been

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working with council on those issues. We encouraged council to put in an application under our vulnerable road users program for funding.

Effectively under legislation with the roads and jetties act, our department does not have [inaudible] footpath; it maintains all the black stuff but, at the same time, in many projects we do build them and then hand them over to council. The biggest constraint in this project is that we have a \$5.2 million budget and our P50 estimate is bordering on that. In an ideal world we would like to construct those footpaths in Andrew Street and Reid Street and there may still be provision to do so if when the contract goes to tender it there is the potential for us to work with council to build them. My understanding from discussions with council is that they are going to evaluate the process of building a temporary footpath in Reid Street, and when I say temporary, I am not sure to what standards but obviously not to the concrete standard which most of the footpaths are constructed from.

Some residents have raised the issue of vibrations in the bottom end of Andrew Street in the houses. Andrew Street was basically a cul-de-sac when they built Henty Main Road back in the 1980s from Zeehan and that area was raised slightly and was basically built over a swamp to a certain degree, so trying to mitigate that is not easy. There are some issues there in relation to the pavement. The bottom end of Andrew Street basically looks like golf balls have been indented in the pavement. Structurally it is okay but that may be causing some of the issues as far as vibration is concerned; we are not sure at this point. Again, subject to budget, there may be ways that we can reseal part of that road there. We do not know at this point whether that is causing the vibration but that is just an observation at this point.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - The bottom end of Andrew Street is not part of this project, though.

**Mr ILES** - No.

**CHAIR** - What you are saying to the committee is that it is not in the budget or the plans but you may be able to sneak a bit in if the price is right.

**Mr ILES** - That would still have to be approved by my department as a high-level management plan and obviously by my minister, Mr Hidding, for that to occur, but as I said, quite often we do not know in the competitive tendering process. We have to do an estimate based on a number of things potentially happening but quite often if we get a competitive tender it is substantially under and the only reason we have to have this money in the first place is that a number of projects which came under what was called the community roads program came under the estimated budget. There was a reallocation of money with the Rokeby Main Road upgrade and the Richmond link road. They came in substantially under budget.

**CHAIR** - Do you have an estimate on what it would cost to do that?

**Mr ILES** - We only have an estimate from council at this point. The guesstimate is roughly \$500 000 for Reid Street and Andrew Street. There are difficulties in Andrew Street because of stormwater. It is below the road so whatever we do there we would have to do in relation to providing drainage.

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**Mrs TAYLOR** - Are we talking there about footpaths along Andrew Street because at the bottom part of Andrew Street you were talking about the pavement but that is not part of this project. But as to the area between Henry Street and Harvey Street, the B-doubles will go along there.

**Mr ILES** - Yes.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - Are there any footpaths there?

**Mr ILES** - No. There are wide grass verges which in summer are quite fine for pedestrians, however we acknowledge that in winter that area would be subject to inundation, given the rainfall on the west coast.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - I do not understand why you have said footpaths along Harvey Street from Andrew Street to the bridge are necessary, but they are not necessary -

**Mr ILES** - I was not saying they are necessary. That was a condition on the development application where there were no conditions for Reid Street and Andrew Street. All the works we are undertaking are compliant with those conditions.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - So there was nothing for those two blocks of Andrew Street?

**Mr ILES** - No.

**CHAIR** - I want to briefly talk about the intersection of Harvey Street where we started this morning. Currently you have semitrailers travelling on that road and this improvement will bring it up to the required standard to support those truck movements.

**Mr ILES** - That is correct. There would be a number of roads around the state that, because of when they were constructed, are probably not compliant, based on the numbers and things like that. There is a risk assessment undertaken. In this case, the number of heavy vehicles using the Lyell Highway will increase with the growth of the industry and that is why council would have imposed that condition on the permit. That would have been done in discussion with our department.

**Mrs RYLAH** - I would like to back to the area that is wet and sandy and probably swampy. My concern is that with this number of truck movements around that Mill Bay area which is close to the water's edge et cetera, it is my experience in Circular Head that the roads have deteriorated with the tankers and log trucks. Are these trucks are going to run all year?

**Mr ILES** - Yes.

**Mrs RYLAH** - Will that be strong enough, what is proposed here? It might meet a national standard but will it be strong enough to not just deteriorate and squeeze out the sides and go all humpy and hollow et cetera?

**Mr ILES** - Alan is the engineer so he can answer that one.

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**Mr LEE** - This was an issue I raised with the project team when I was first made aware of the project. Because of the high water table issues I was concerned that the design be appropriate to cope with those conditions and therefore requested that the design consultants provide additional information to verify the ground conditions on that part of the route and to modify, if required, the design to cope with that scenario. I haven't seen the outcome of that geotech report and any change that may have arisen from that, but certainly there was a concern from a constructability perspective that we needed something that would be able to cope with trucks under a 12-month code scenario. In the past there have been trucks coming from Macquarie Heads from the pine plantations, but that tends to be seasonal cartage. If you are carting 12 months of the year, which this industry will be doing, we need to make sure the road is fit for purpose. That was an issue I identified and asked for additional information to be provided.

**Mrs RYLAH** - When are you expecting this report?

**Mr ILES** - It will be done in the next week.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - What happens if they say what you're planning is not sufficient?

**Mr LEE** - There will need to be an understanding of the cost implications arising from any redesign. There are various options as to how you would deal with that scenario. If it imposes a significant cost impost on the patent design in the notional P50 estimates, I would have to look at various scenarios to try to keep it within budget.

**Mr FARRELL** - There had been a preference from some of the local people to bypass that area. I know there hadn't been a formal plan done for a bypass but would the cost of a bypass be in the range of tens of millions or hundreds of millions? If this report comes back and says the budget is not sufficient to do the work required along the areas that have the high water table, where would that bring that in relation to the cost of a bypass road?

**Mr ILES** - A bypass itself would take a fair bit of planning work once we get an alignment and doing all we are required to in going through the proper planning process, environmental impact statements and everything else, significant technical work. With the cost estimates now it is very difficult to put a price on it, but it would be significantly higher. The Richmond link road also went through paddocks and was easily constructed from a constructability perspective. I would say off the top of my head - it would be a guesstimate - it could be potentially double the cost of that road if it was sealed.

**Mrs RYLAH** - Chair, I would like to formally request that geotech report, please.

**CHAIR** - We will give that formally in writing on conclusion of this hearing.

This committee is bound by legislation on what we need to consider. When looking at the project we consider whether it is suitable for the stated purpose, the necessity or advisability of carrying it out, and also whether it provides present prospective value for taxpayers' funds. That is what we are keen to understand, and for the public to know why we are asking all these questions about it. We are bound to stick to those three guidelines, but also it means we have to ensure that it is an appropriate expense of taxpayers' money, and it will fit the need now and in the future. On that, we might go

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into a bit more of the community consultation and then we might start focusing on the cost and the potential need and demand.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - What are you planning to do in terms of line markings? What are the chances of the vehicles on the road being able to stay within the line markings?

**Mr ILES** - The road is designed for vehicles to keep within their lanes. We will be going for that extra width in the half-metre shoulder and edge lines. They will be painted edge lines and centre lines, and normal signage for intersections. Those design drawings came in the other day, so we are more than happy to provide them. Those have to go through an internal committee to be signed off as appropriate. Through curves, the pavement will be wider than the normal 3.5 metre lanes to cater for the tracking paths of the heavy vehicles.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - While we were on site it was one of the things we noticed. As trucks come by, there is no way at the moment they can keep within their own side of the road.

**Mr ILES** - No, that is right.

**CHAIR** - Regarding Mr and Mrs Newett, you had a discussion with them and they have made a submission to the committee. Their concerns are that it will be to the detriment of the Mill Bay precinct. They state that DIER invited representations. However, they supplied no response to the following requests raised. These include written confirmation about the vegetation removal from the foreshore and road verge. No thorough environmental impact study has been carried out. No heritage study was undertaken and proposed roadworks include the excavation of the hill adjacent to the foreshore. The concrete wall will have an impact on noise in that area - and a couple of other things. Have you taken into consideration the concerns they have raised?

**Mr ILES** - Yes. We have undertaken extensive environmental studies. We undertook environmental studies back in January, both flora and fauna, to see if there were any threatened species. We have to do that to see if we then have to go through a permit process, whether state or federal. That has been done within a heritage assessment under what is listed under state and local planning schemes. We do not impact on any heritage listed items of property. We do not have to go through a process there. When it was raised by the Newetts, and at the community information day, we went out there and did another survey approximately one month ago, just to double-check to see if there was any potential for burrows or anything else there. We realise there is potentially a foraging habitat in areas around Mill Bay, at both the streams and on the foreshore area, so we are actually taking special consideration. Where the turn facility is, there is actually a stream there. We will take special consideration there - sedimentation process and everything through proper screenings. They reckon through the construction process they were not impacting on it.

As I said before to, most of our works are on the northern side. We are deliberately doing that to minimise impacts on the southern side regarding removal of vegetation on the Mill Bay side itself. In parts of it, as you approach Mill Bay, there will be some vegetation clearance, or at least cutting, to improve sight lines. We have to do that to meet minimum standards, only 50 kilometres, but again we are trying to minimise any impacts on the southern site vegetation.

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**CHAIR** - So you have taken their concerns into account and addressed them?

**Mr ILES** - We have. We built the wall only because we are trying to minimise excavations. We would have to actually impact on that hill and the scaring, in our opinion, would be of far more visual impact than a wall.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - They are also talking about the impact of wind conditions in that same area because of the concrete wall - visual, noise and wind.

**Mr ILES** - It is hard to answer that question given we are trying to minimise impacts on vegetation on that southern side.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - I think they are talking about the wind tunnel around that wall.

**Mr ILES** - I do not have an answer to that one.

**Mrs RYLAH** - You describe a rock mass block retaining wall or approved equivalent. Can you describe what that is because their concern in this letter is about a concrete wall?

**Mr ILES** - We had some discussions with the Newetts. They raised the issue of potentially putting in a gabion wall - the cages we put rocks in. When we first looked at this that was one of the things we thought would be appropriate, but our design engineers will not sign off on a gabion wall. From a construction point of view they are not confident that a gabion wall would hold that bank up, so what we have actually gone for are these concrete blocks. From a constructability perspective, you can excavate a small section of the road, place a block in and then move without having to impact hugely on that bank and having far less destruction to traffic during a peak tourist season.

**Mrs RYLAH** - What do the blocks look like?

**Mr ILES** - I am happy to send you coloured photos. Basically they are a cubic metre and they lock into each other. They come in various colours. Rather than grey concrete we will try and get a colour which blends in more.

**CHAIR** - So you will take that into consideration?

**Mr ILES** - Yes.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - It is not going to be a straight wall; it is actually going to be stepped?

**Mr ILES** - Stepped in slightly and locked into each other.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - They are solid.

**Mr ILES** - They are very heavy.

**CHAIR** - Obviously the engineers will work out the stability and stacking?

**Mr LEE** - Yes.



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**CHAIR** - There is not a gap between the wall and the curbing or the pathway or the road. It is more or less straight concrete, or is there a gap between the wall base and the road?

**Mr ILES** - There is a slight gap but through there will be a kerb and gutter.

**CHAIR** - So there is no plan to put any vegetation in that gap?

**Mr ILES** - No.

**Mr LEE** - If you put vegetation in front of that gap you are reducing the sight distance because of the corner.

**CHAIR** - The closest to the water in that specific area - I presume you are talking about where we saw the jetty - that is where the wall will go?

**Mr ILES** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - There is no plan to add any bike access along that route?

**Mr ILES** - No.

**CHAIR** - Once you do this you won't be able to put one in, I presume?

**Mr ILES** - No, not unless you impact on the foreshore.

**CHAIR** - Would it be extremely prohibitive cost-wise to move that back further to allow for any pedestrian or cycle access along that road?

**Mr ILES** - It certainly adds to the cost of the overall project if we were pushing further onto the north side to minimise impacts on the foreshore area. Otherwise you would be basically removing the vegetation and putting in walls around that area.

**CHAIR** - And you'd have to dig more out to make more space.

**Mr LEE** - Exactly. By going in another metre you might have to double the height of the wall because it is the additional height of the embankments that needs to be stabilised.

**CHAIR** - Have there been any representations from the community seeking pedestrian and/or vehicle access that you are aware of?

**Mr ILES** - It has certainly come up in discussions but not in any written representations to us.

**CHAIR** - Is it used much by pedestrians or bikes?

**Mr ILES** - We don't know.

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**CHAIR** - I understand it's not your role to know how many people walk along that road each night, but it was more of an interest point looking at the future use of that road. We need to make sure we take everything into account.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - I understood there was going to be a line and then half a metre of tar surface and then gravel, or is that not all the way out?

**Mr ILES** - Basically, most of the road will be an 8-metre trafficable width, which is standard for B-doubles, whether it is sealed or unsealed. We will going for a 7-metre seal with a half-metre sealed shoulder and a half-metre gravel shoulder.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - Cycling tourism is quite important as well and I am sure in summer there are people who cycle out there, so they're going to have to run the risk with the trucks, are they?

**CHAIR** - They are probably already running a greater risk now. It widens the road and the verge, doesn't it?

**Mr ILES** - It does.

**CHAIR** - We would all love cycleways everywhere but it's not within the scope of this committee. There's no law against riding a bicycle along there now and once this is built there will be no restriction.

**Mr ILES** - No.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - Is that correct, because now it is going to be a state road, so will people still be allowed to ride bikes on that road if they want to?

**Mr ILES** - Correct.

**Mrs RYLAH** - You have increased the width of the road to 7 metres, as opposed to our drawings here which show three plus three. Is that correct?

**Mr ILES** - It is an 8-metre trafficable width, which is two 3-metre lanes, half-metre sealed shoulders and half-metre gravel shoulders.

**Mrs RYLAH** - I am looking at sheet 1012 where we have the retaining wall. Have we moved that retaining wall back a metre further than we are showing here or some other distance further back to allow for the variable width of parking on the harbour side plus the road, or am I misunderstanding that?

**Mr ILES** - In some of those corners the pavement will be wider. It will be in accordance to the tracking paths of the vehicles. With a B-double the trailer behind them quite often swerves - on a straight that is the minimum but on corners it will be wider.

**Mrs RYLAH** - So, Mr Iles, you're telling me this drawing represents the straight bit of road and what we see on the corner may be quite different?

**Mr LEE** - It is about half-a-metre wide.

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**Mrs RYLAH** - So the block wall is back further than shown here? I don't see how you are going to get your extra half-metre otherwise because you're not going out into the water.

**Mr ILES** - That's right. All the widening is on that northern side.

**Mrs RYLAH** - Is it high enough?

**Mr ILES** - The block wall? Yes.

**CHAIR** - Do you believe it meets the present and prospective demand as part of this project?

**Mr ILES** - We do.

**CHAIR** - Mr Lee?

**Mr LEE** - I haven't been involved in the design process.

**CHAIR** - We will move on to pages 16-18 now.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - As a new member of this committee, I don't understand the difference between the rate and the amount columns. Why is there a difference between the rate and amount columns?

**CHAIR** - If you look at the base, just under item 10, you have the P50 and the P90, but that is for the different total at-term cost.

**Mr ILES** - Our estimates are based on a document produced by Evans and Peck for national road projects. The Commonwealth Government was getting upset that when the states put in a proposal for a road or bridge project, when it came to construction it always came up. The idea with the P50 and P90 is that with the P50 you are 50 per cent confident you can deliver the project for that price with a fair bit of contingency, but there is a lot more contingency for the P90, which says you are 90 per cent confident you can deliver it for that price. With most road construction projects there are a lot of unknowns until you get out there. Even if you do every bit of work you think you can do, you always come across something - the unknown unknowns, as they say. The more you get into the detail of the design, by rights the P50 or P90 will come down.

There is a lot of contingency in there. We find that when it comes to the tender price it often depends on how buoyant the industry is. We have had very competitive costs over the last 18 months whereas four years ago when we had a lot of large construction projects, including the East Tamar Highway, the Bass Highway west of Wynyard, the Kingston Bypass and the Brighton Bypass, the quotes were coming in far higher. At the moment industry is at a lot lower ebb. We would be hoping this would still come under the current level.

**CHAIR** - Landscaping; what is included in that?

**Mr ILES** - At the moment, before we get into the final design, we put in a contingency to cater for that.

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**Mrs RYLAH** - Is miscellaneous another contingency?

**Mr ILES** - Yes. There are a lot of unknowns until you get out there. That is the reason you have these. Our costs, once upon a time, were based on estimated cost of construction but that is literally not what happens.

**CHAIR** - You are not sure about the landscaping until the final design is done. Are you talking about where you are widening the road into people's property and you have to move their garden beds or their letter box et cetera?

**Mr ILES** - Exactly. We usually negotiate with them. A lot of that is quite often to do services. As part of this we do potholing and everything to find where services are. We acknowledge there is going to be a cost in relocation of certain services. That can be a huge cost, particularly if it comes to Telstra and everything else. We are reasonably confident that we have identified all services. That is why you have these contingencies - when you come to construction and a service is located where it should not be.

**Mr FARRELL** - The difference between the electrical and the telecommunications is about double - to move the telecommunications than to move the power. Why is that? Is that dealing with Telstra?

**Mr ILES** - Yes. Anything to with optic fibre in the ground is very expensive to relocate.

**CHAIR** - Is there fibre down here?

**Mr ILES** - Yes. The optic fibre is on the side of the bank where the retaining wall needs to go. We need to move it.

**CHAIR** - Rather inconvenient. You have \$1.284 million for pavement. I take it that is different to footpaths?

**Mr ILES** - That is your base course material.

**CHAIR** - That is different from bitumen?

**Mr ILES** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Isn't that the road surface?

**Mr LEE** - Bitumen is the seal.

**Mr ILES** - All our pavement has to come from Queenstown. One of the problems we have here is the cost of where you bring your material from. On the west coast we are restricted on the type of material which is needed to build a road. There is only one place we can get it and that is Queenstown. All the materials have to come in from Queenstown. That often influences the cost of the project - where it has to come from and the distance that is travelled.

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**CHAIR** - You would be aware of the Treasurer's Instruction to include a local benefits test on government tenders.

**Mr ILES** - We are.

**CHAIR** - Will you be applying for an exemption from that requirement?

**Mr ILES** - No.

**CHAIR** - Do you have any ideas about local businesses that could deliver that work?

**Mr ILES** - We will go through a normal tender process. A huge percentage of state road contracts are local firms. It is only huge projects, like the Brighton Bypass, where you get interest from interstate, and even those firms did it in partnership with local firms. We would expect - this is just over \$5 million - we would get no interest at all from outside. Usually the successful contractor may use local contractors from a cost point of view because of the cost of bringing equipment and everything. Whoever might get it will be looking potentially for subcontractors, usually from a cost perspective of bringing their own machinery and so on.

**Mr LEE** - The cost of accommodation, for instance. If you have someone who is local it is more cost effective for a contractor to use local personnel as much as they can.

**CHAIR** - Obviously there are some concerns with some of the bigger firms - bi-contracts on a very cheap rate - and then squeeze the local businesses to a ridiculously low price. Then it is either take a bit of something or all of nothing. Everyone loses except for the major contractor, which is part of the reason that Treasurer's Instruction has been put in place. Once the tender is awarded who will be managing that contract for performance and for compliance?

**Mr LEE** - I will be project manager, overseeing overall delivery of the project. I will have beneath me a contractual administration team who will directly administer the contract.

**CHAIR** - We normally get a project timeline.

**Mr ILES** - We are aiming for final design being completed in the next few weeks. Draft tender documents will come into the department next Friday week for us to review, with the idea of those documents being finalised by early August and the potential for the tender to be advertised during August and finalised during September. The construction would then be from late September or early October, depending on when the contractor can get on the ground, and completed by next March. That is our timeline.

**CHAIR** - There would be restrictions, I presume, on weather, so summer would be the optimum chance?

**Mr ILES** - Yes. This project has moved fast from the period we inherited the project in February when the road handover was completed. Being the west coast you have a very limited construction season because of the weather, more from upper areas of the state. If we miss that timeline you may add a year to the project.

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**CHAIR** - How are you going to manage vehicle access during the construction phase? I would presume there will be truck access during the construction. Also, tourism visitors might like to go to the beach.

**Mr ILES** - The contractor will have a traffic management plan during the construction phase, which will need to be approved by our department. That usually involves traffic management from safety perspectives. As well, during the construction phase we will initiate our own community information early in the piece by putting out flashing signs on the back of trailers. We have only talked about it at this point but where the Lyell Highway entrance is coming off the Murchison Highway you can have a number of trucks bringing in material in the early part so you will need to warn people, whether they're tourists or local residents using the Lyell Highway into Strahan, that they may potentially be stuck behind a slower vehicle. We will need to work in with school buses carrying children going to Queenstown High School. It involves careful management and that is usually worked out between the contractor and the department during the construction phase.

**Mrs RYLAH** - I think in this document it said you are hoping to have the tender out in July.

**Mr ILES** - No, the tender documents completed by July.

**CHAIR** - Tender documents can go out prior to the recommendation of the committee provided it is stated they are subject to approval by the committee. If we had a preference, you would have to wait but we also understand time is of the essence to get it done before this season. The road at the moment is fairly close to the water's edge, especially near the Newitt's jetty. You mentioned on site that you were raising the level of the road. Given the concern around environmental impacts and rising sea levels, what have you put in place to mitigate that?

**Mr ILES** - With rising sea levels, we probably haven't taken that issue into account, but we realise part of the pavement is subject to inundation at Mill Bay.

**CHAIR** - So you're raising the level of the road?

**Mr ILES** - Yes, by 150 mm.

**Mrs RYLAH** - Is that sufficient in the king tide?

**Mr ILES** - We don't know because we have not been around during king tides, so I can't tell you that.

**Mrs RYLAH** - Can't the locals tell us?

**CHAIR** - We can't take interjection from the community but they can be sworn in and we can ask them about their experience with that. You understand that to be a sufficient increase in height, with the information you have?

**Mr ILES** - Yes, taken from our design engineers and the information we have.

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**CHAIR** - In your opinion, do you believe it is a suitable use of taxpayers' money to proceed with this project?

**Mr ILES** - I do.

**CHAIR** - Do you believe it will meet the requirement of what it is desired to do, Mr Lee?

**Mr LEE** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, gentlemen, for appearing before us.

**THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.**

## **PUBLIC**

**Ms DIANNE COON**, SECRETARY, AND **Mr MARK McDERMOTT**, CONVENOR, STRAHAN STREETS WORKING GROUP, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** - Thank you for appearing.

**Ms COON** - Thank you very much for coming to have a look at our project, we appreciate that and the opportunity to address you and make a submission. I will make a few points and my colleague, Mark, will interject as we need to.

This process started back in February when we called a public meeting as a result of frustration in the community that we had been starting to hear about road works and projects with the fish farms, and then we heard the magic number of 49 trucks per day and very little else. Some people had been receiving communications from DIER specifically to come into their properties to investigate. We asked about things like bypasses and got no decent response, so as a result of that we called a public meeting. It was attended by, among others, Mrs Rylah's husband. Mr Brooks was in communication and was not able to attend. Your colleague, Ruth Forrest, attended and also the then MP Paul O'Halloran - and now minister Rockliff, among many others. As a result of that meeting the Strahan Streets Working Group was established, of which we are secretary and convenor.

The meeting that night tasked us with a number of things, many of which are now part of what DIER and co are doing. A key priority was the footpaths. For the public meeting, the key priority was the footpath coming down the Lyell Highway, which is Reid Street, where we have great concerns that there are families living there, people wishing to walk down that street, and there are currently serious numbers of trucks coming through there. The second priority was Andrew Street and the third priority was the Harvey Street footpath. We would like all of them but they were a key concern.

A local trucking contractor was at the meeting and he was very helpful in talking about how noise could be abated somewhat by speed limits and curfews. We were instructed to pursue that. We were also instructed to pursue something that we, as a group, have decided after subsequent consultation that we will not continue. The community is so concerned about traffic on the Lyell Highway that we were initially instructed to explore diverting traffic from Queenstown via Zeehan so it did not come down the Lyell Highway at all. We would love that to happen but we understand the practicalities of that not being the case, but for the committee's interest, that is the level of concern.

The community had much discussion at that meeting about trucks and school buses and access. It might be worth at this point saying that the community has a different view to DIER and what a B-double is, because my understanding from my discussions with Mr Iles is that a B-double is technically a vehicle 26 metres and longer, but the community believe it must only be 19-plus metres long. They are actually a truck and trailer, but as far as the community are concerned they are B-doubles and they go down the Lyell Highway. As far as we are concerned, it is an administrative difference. They are still huge trucks that cause people difficulty.



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They were the things we were tasked with doing. We quickly were able to get into very good and positive communications and consultation with DIER, and we would like to congratulate our colleagues in DIER. We have read the 39-page report on the website and find it to be a thorough and accurate document. They even have all our names spelt correctly - well done them.

Before the public meeting we were approached by Adam Main from the Tasmanian Salmonid Growers Association saying, 'If you've got a problem, we've got a problem, let's work together.' We would like to put on record that we have had very good communications with the TSGA. We assured them before the public meeting and reinforced at the public meeting and in every subsequent discussion with our community that everybody we have spoken to is in full support of the aquaculture industry in general and of the development at Smith Cove. Nobody wants to see this stopped; we are very much in support of that process. However, along the same lines, the amenity of the community is currently affected and given the proposed increased truck traffic, will continue to be more affected by that traffic, so we need to work together. We have had good relationships with TSGA, although they have been fairly quiet at the moment. They are working on other things, I think, but we have their phone numbers on short dial and we know how to talk to them. It is fair to say we developed a strategy about the bypass road that we are going to talk to you about in close consultation with the TSGA. I can't speak for them; I know they put in a submission but I am not aware of what they said. I would be surprised if it didn't say, 'That's not a bad idea as well'.

**CHAIR** - So you aware, we can't change this plan as submitted. The committee can only recommend or not recommend. If we don't recommend, the opportunities for the Government are that they either put legislation through to allow it, or they can then submit a further representation, or they may use the funding elsewhere. That is a determination for the Government. This committee did not recommend one project in the previous term - the Devonport police station - because it did not meet the requirement. We can't make this submission change. We can only recommend or not recommend, seek further information or make some suggestions, but we have to make a determination in the end. We are more than happy to hear your concerns about the future use and needs as long as I explain that we are limited in what we can do.

**Ms COON** - Mrs Rylah would have been briefed that the public meeting we had initially said, 'Stop spending any public money on the road we are now looking at. Let's look at a bypass'. We have moved on from that to agree with TSGA that this road is important, if not essential. The view of the Strahan Streets Working Group is that this road is necessary and needs to be built well, and presumably quickly. Even were a bypass road to be built later on, there will always be traffic going out there. There is a volume of tourist traffic, particularly in the summer months, and there will always need to be some traffic going out there, so it is about time that road was improved. We believe that is appropriate, whatever happens. I believe last-hour discussions with TSGA were that down the track a bypass road ought to be considered. We understand the issue of funding. We don't expect buckets of money to be found but we believe, if this is the appropriate thing for the community, we should be putting this on the agenda.

The important part of the agenda is that the Strahan community is currently being affected by the trucks coming into town. You would have been informed that two of the fish farms are moving away from the waterfront in the next few months - we hope. That

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would reduce the pain to a smaller part of the community, to the streets around the esplanade. Thankfully the trucks won't go past the school or around the post office or past the clinic.

I produced a document in the past where we counted the houses and businesses that would continue to be passed unless and until a bypass is built. There are 42-odd houses down Reid Street and Andrew Street and seven accommodation businesses, including 62 units, a supermarket, post office and church. Down Andrew Street there are 14 houses, three of which were built before 1900 and 11 of which were built before the road was made. These were houses that did not understand they were having a road go past them when they were built, let alone B-doubles. Our point is that even when everything moves out to Smith Cove in the west of Strahan, Andrew Street and Harvey Street and that roundabout will cop all that traffic forever until a bypass road is built.

We understand there is important short-term mediation. As a result of our public meeting on the Wednesday, by Thursday lunchtime a local had approached the gravel truck contractors - Gradco - and said, 'How about you reduce your speed limit?'.

**CHAIR** - This is a public hearing and *Hansard* will be available.

**Mrs COON** - I am sure they will be happy for that. It is just they felt that if one of their truck drivers misbehaved badly, they did not want to have to explain it publicly, whereas we believe they did exactly the right thing and ought to be congratulated for it which is they said, 'How about you reduce the speed limit to 40 kph?'.

**CHAIR** - I think it was 60 to 50 kph.

**Mrs COON** - No; the truck company voluntarily reduced it to that. Also, a 6 o'clock start; we had hoped we could get them to 7.00 a.m., but there are some operational things, and no air brakes. That was immediately noted by the community and commented on. So the simple behaviour of one trucking company trying to do the right thing in the community, certainly improved amenity. They are the gravel truck operators who I think have stopped now. They have finished that part of their work. They were well able and willing to work with our local operators and people; that is often the best way to do it. We agree with DIER and Mr Iles that a code of practice is a good thing, but a truck driver who knows he is going to get into trouble - if by the time he arrives at Smith Cove the phone call has already gone in from Harvey Street, Strahan, saying 'this truck is going through town at 70 kph' - is actually going to have more effect than a code of practice, in our view. We understand importance of relationships and the importance with working with our locals with that.

The one comment we have about the DIER report is the costings. You have spoken to Mr Iles about those costings. Again, they are engineers and they know much more than we do. That report said it will be cheaper and noted likely environmental effects; there is no report to confirm any of that. We have been asking, since the moment we had the public meeting, what would be the cost of a bypass road. We originally heard that there were reports but there are no such reports of any relevance. I understand why people thought they were there - they had a funny title - but it is our understanding that there have been no costings and no planning to be done for that.

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**CHAIR** - I think that is consistent with the evidence given by Mr Iles.

**Mrs COON** - Indeed it was. Our point is that the report says it might cost more. It undoubtedly will cost more than what is happening now, but we would hope this government would be able, in the next little while, to at least find the funds to do a bit of a plan, so then we know what the costing would be and then we can start maybe looking at how we do that. Currently we are guessing. There are locals around here who can take you for a walk and show you likely processes, but we believe that would be a really good way to also give the community an understanding that they are being listened to. We know buckets of money cannot be found and tenders let in the next little while, but if we actually understand where it might go and what it might cost, then we can look at those processes.

We agree with all of the reports on the website. We agree with you on the importance of the Reid Street and Andrew Street footpaths. A key issue for the people who reside in Andrew Street is that pavement which Mr Iles has reported to you. We would remind you, as he said, that was not a road until 1983, so it has already got a geological issue and nobody knew it was a road. It is no accident that we have called our working group the Strahan Streets Working Group, because, while through legal reasons DIER and others call those roads the Lyell Highway and the Henty Main Road, they are Andrew Street and Reid Street according to the titles and the people who live on them. People live in streets; trucks go down roads. Our point was to make clear that there are people already resident in these streets, already paying their rates and who moved here well before the trucks started happening.

I think it has been vaguely mentioned but logging is happening again and they are B-doubles.

**Mr McDERMOTT** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Where about?

**Mrs COON** - The logging is happening at Swan Basin plantation, so they are going past Smith Cove, and down onto this road here. My understanding from one of our previous meetings with DIER is that is not a road for B-doubles but has had an exemption. We discussed as a community whether we would contact the logging contractor and ask them not to use B-doubles, but the tonnage of timber has to come out and if you were to put more on less axles we were not quite sure how that worked, so we decided to leave it. The fact remains the timber needs to come out and the trucks are going to go on the road.

**CHAIR** - It normally means more trucks.

**Ms COON** - Yes, that's our point. In general terms, it would be lovely for them not to go through the town of Strahan but while they do we might as well get the wood out in as few trucks as possible. We have had some approaches informally from the contractor of that logging company saying, 'If anybody's doing the wrong thing, let us know', so there is willingness for those companies to cooperate in that process.

It does not stop big heavy trucks, the point Ms Taylor made. I can't comment on how the logging trucks are going to do it, but at some times of the year I have counted trucks go

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past my house at quarter past five in the morning and the other fish farm company which harvests at night generating trucks the night before at midnight. There will be times when they are really unseasonal hours. We wanted to work with them and as a result of the consultative committee TSGA set up there is sort of a working group on trucks, but it hasn't met because nobody has done anything.

We will be working with them on that. We don't want them to stop their business operations but we want them to understand what is happening. We believe it may be truckie who don't understand what is going on. In one case I knew which company it was and I eyeballed the guy and said, 'At a quarter to six this morning a truck came past'. He came to see me privately and said, 'There is no reason for them to be out there then', so we may be able to sort a lot of that by people understanding what the local amenity is. We are even talking about the idea that maybe we need a truck pull-off area halfway between Zeehan and Strahan so truckies can pull off and sleep there rather than deciding to keep driving into Strahan at 5.30 a.m. and then sleep. We believe it may be a simple issue such as that that we may need to be resolving.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - So they are coming down Andrew Street rather than Reid Street?

**Ms COON** - There are three companies and it is a bit hard to add the information but, as far as we can work out, they are locals, many of whom work at fish farms, and we believe 80 per cent of the fish farm traffic comes and goes up Andrew Street. There are definitely the baby fish from one or two of the farms that come down the Lyell Highway. This road will always be needed. We understand there are hatcheries down that way and for biosecurity reasons, if nothing else, those trucks will have to keep coming up the Lyell Highway and along through Strahan. We understand a bypass would not stop everything but it would reduce a lot of that traffic. I will get Mark to comment on the sea level rise and Harvey Street.

**Mr McDERMOTT** - In the past - and I would have photos to substantiate it - on a high tide we have had water up over Harvey Street probably to 300mm deep. We have had houses flooded in Meredith Street just north of Harvey Street with a high tide. Harvey Street floods to the east of the Abattoir Creek bridge and also around the area of the sawmill on Harvey Street or Ocean Beach Road.

The other thing I would like to say, and it is outside the scope of this road, is that when the council did the application for the fish farm development they did not consider Andrew Street north of the roundabout. That is where we have the problem of footpaths and vibration. Some houses are already showing cracks in masonry walls and plaster and doors that no longer open correctly. It is having a real effect.

The traffic impact assessment was done for one week at the end of August, early September last year, which is probably the quietest time of year, so the information they gleaned from that certainly is not reflective of what is going to happen in summer.

**Ms COON** - That would be our one comment when you asked Mr Iles if this would deal with the proposed traffic. I fully acknowledge their engineering knowledge, but in terms of truck traffic, both the fish farm traffic and the tourist traffic ramps up in the summer. In August there are hardly any locals in town either and there is no tourist traffic. Our

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concern about the data is that if that traffic impact assessment is used we might be in trouble. There is a serious amount of traffic going out there.

As to bike paths and things, I walked out along that road today, partly because I like that area but partly to have a look, and cyclists in any number will never be cycling along there because it is plain unpleasant and dangerous. An improvement to that road will help. Having said that, it is a dirt road past the airport and no too many people choose to cycle. I fully understand the cycle tourism issue and we are involved in that kind of thing. I worked for a cycling organisation in another life, so I know a bit about cycle access, and improving that road would help. Our idea would be that in the medium term, when a bypass road is built, that will be a lovely road to cycle on with less traffic, tourists going out to the beach, cyclists and the heavy traffic diverted off it. Currently, however, improving that road will not do anything to the access because it is already horrible in that area.

One other point worth making, and I don't think there is a way round it, but the summer months when the road would be built is our peak tourist time; from Boxing Day through to Easter we get serious numbers. We have talked to Mr Iles before about traffic counts but I do not think it was there, I think it was the entrances down the Lyell Highway and Henty Main Road. We get significant numbers. There is a tourist attraction of the shearwaters in Strahan and every year except last year there was summer ranger there. I was the summer ranger 15 years ago and we were getting 100 people a day, times three, in a car. The industry sends people out there every day and it is a seriously used road in the summer months.

We have already talked to the engineers. DIER came to do the public consultation, which was excellent and very well advertised, and we talked to the engineers about making sure the road turn from Smith Cove to the beach was well done, because tourists in hire cars are a very dangerous commodity when they cannot decide what to do. We believe the road will be designed in such a way that when people inevitably stop in the middle of the road they will not be cleaned up by a B-double coming the other way. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. To paraphrase from your representation, you have no massive objection to the proposal but there are some things you would like considered.

**Ms COON** - I think we can state more positively that we are in support of the proposal. We are in support of the road being improved and there are some qualifications, perhaps information, we can give that might help something but, by and large, it seems like a sensible engineering proposal. There might be some local issues we need to alert people to but we are very much in support of it.

**CHAIR** - Mark, do you wish to add anything?

**Mr McDERMOTT** - I would concur with that. We hope fish farming will be a long-term proposition, whether it is going to be 50 or 100 years. When we start discussing a residential bypass, if we are looking at that period of time, I would envisage that would make a residential bypass more financially viable and acceptable to the community. If we are looking at fish farms that are only going to be here for five or 10 years, we will

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put up with what we have, but we hope that will not be case and it is a long-term industry for the coast.

**Ms COON** - There would also be good numbers on carbon footprint. If the semitrailers cut five or 10 kilometres off their journey and with all the slowing down and speeding up to go through a residential area, there is a fair bit of fuel consumption and carbon footprint you could save in the long term. We believe this is a long-term industry.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - In relation to the traffic impact study, has DIER done traffic counts and, if so, when?

**CHAIR** - We will need to invite Mr Iles back to the table.

**Mr FARRELL** - In relation to local knowledge on the flooding of that area of the road, how often has that happened and what sort of damage it did to the road surface?

**Mr McDERMOTT** - It used to happen in the past probably every 10 or 11 years, however I believe the last significant flood was 15 or 20 years ago. Why that has changed I don't know but in my lifetime I have seen it on a number of occasions.

**Ms COON** - Stormwater flooded Joseph's house in Meredith Street eight or 10 years ago.

**Mr McDERMOTT** - I remember the last large flood we had the whole council depot was under water and we were shifting chemicals for the water treatment plant up onto a higher level to get them out of the water. When the water receded the fire brigade pumped water from one side of Harvey Street back to the other side to get it out of the house located close to the creek. It was a significant amount of water.

**Ms COON** - It is also worth noting the extraordinary tidal conditions in Macquarie Harbour. There isn't a lunar tide here. There isn't a predictable six-hourly tide; it is a barometric tide. The reason the flooding often happens is not the water coming down the creek but that the tide stays high for days. It is a bit unpredictable and could last for days, unlike most areas where the tide comes up and goes down again. It is quite an unusual circumstance. There are lots of pictures of people rowing boats through this whole area of west Strahan in the 1890s. There has been some flood mitigation but it is still quite possible.

**CHAIR** - Would the rise in the road of 150 mm help that?

**Mr McDERMOTT** - It would help but on a really high tide it wouldn't alleviate the problem. It is probably 15 years since we had water up over that road at that location, but it will happen.

**CHAIR** - Thank you for your contribution. As I said, you are protected by privilege for anything you have said here today but once this committee ceases to be heard you won't be protected by privilege from anything you comment on afterwards.

**Ms COON** - Thank you.

**THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.**

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**Mr MARK ILES AND Mr ALAN LEE WERE RECALLED AND RE-EXAMINED.**

**Mrs TAYLOR** - In relation to the traffic impact study we talked about I was presuming that traffic counts had been done but in the evidence we have heard from the community, they are saying the traffic impact study was probably done in September.

**Mr ILES** - The traffic impact assessment was done by Pitt and Sherry on behalf of the industry and it is correct that that was the time period in which it was done. We do traffic counts ourselves in all our state network periodically for planning purposes. We have not done them on this stretch of road as yet but given it is a state road now, we will. I can only take what Pitt and Sherry has in their TIA as being correct in what they have done, but it was certainly done out of tourist season so what the real counts are I could not verify.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - I asked you about the number of cars and trucks in the tourist season and whether that would be a problem and you indicated you thought not but it is hard to say unless you know. I do not know about the West Coast Council but most councils would do traffic counts on their local roads at some time or another. Are you aware whether the West Coast Council has done traffic counts on those roads?

**Mr ILES** - I very much doubt they would. It is very small council and it does not have the resources. Usually the larger urban councils in this state do as part of their own network planning but I would find it unusual if West Coast Council had the resources to do it, given its size.

**Mrs RYLAH** - In regard to raising the height of the road from 150mm to 300mm, what is the likely cost of that?

**Mr ILES** - I honestly could not tell you, but it would also have significant effects on our design in Mill Bay. What we are trying to do is blend in without removing any of that vegetation. We would either have to take a lot of that embankment out further or the vegetation would have to be cleared and walls put round to get your levels. I could not put a cost factor on it without knowing.

**Mrs RYLAH** - How difficult is it to have something that measures the noise for residents over a long period of time? I know you have said that your desk noise measurement thing says it is below 63 decibels, but how difficult is it to put in some monitoring so that we have something to measure against what residents might be hearing?

**Mr ILES** - Usually when we are doing a planning project we go out and install noise monitors out and measure, particularly if it is a substantial project on a busy road. That measurement is usually based on traffic volumes, so the 63 DBA usually to a very busy stretch of road over an 18-hour period in which we are going to get quiet periods and busy periods. That is why I only did a desktop model. I have just done one for the Midland Highway between Perth and Breadalbane. We put them out for at least a week, sometimes two weeks, to get the measurements, and that forms the base of your model. We then use that to work out what mitigation measures we would put in. It is usually on very busy stretches of road with about 10 000 vehicles per day, not hundreds of vehicles per day.

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**Mrs RYLAH** - If I could paraphrase what I think you are saying to me, the level of traffic on this road will not reach a level that you would consider needs noise mitigation.

**Mr ILES** - That is correct, based on our current policy because of vehicle numbers.

**CHAIR** - To clarify, you are not aware of any costings or analysis for a bypass road made by DIER?

**Mr ILES** - No.

**THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.**