

THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SELECT COMMITTEE ON ISLAND TRANSPORT SERVICES MET IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, HOBART, ON FRIDAY, 2 OCTOBER 2009.

Mr PAUL WEST AND Mr STEVE WASS, KINGOROUGH COUNCIL, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mrs Rattray-Wagner) - Gentlemen, welcome.

Mr WASS - Our submission covers four terms of reference concerning the adequacy of existing transport service arrangements. We have found that there have been complaints from the community, particularly those who reside on Bruny Island and have holiday shacks - even some of the tourists - that during peak times it is very difficult to get to and from Bruny and it is creating issues. Some tourists with only a day available to visit Bruny, if they don't get an early vessel across then that could be a day wasted and they may well drop the Bruny expedition and go to other parts. Council believes that anywhere up to 20 per cent of tourists are affected in that way from time to time. On that basis the community of Bruny Island that is geared up for tourism is alarmed. They are doing the right thing by marketing their island and produce, but that is where they're losing customers who would have previously been customers.

There have been a number of discussions about what should happen from council's perspective and from the community's perspective in relation to whether there should be a larger ship, an additional ship et cetera. It is council's belief that if there were a larger ship that would create a number of issues because docking facilities on both sides of the channel would need to be improved. At slow times of the year would that ship be best utilised because it would have vacancies? It is council's belief that that is not the way to go. Perhaps the way to go would be to have another vessel to cover peak periods.

CHAIR - Has there been any discussion with the operator of the ferry service and the department that looks after the contract in relation to expanding that service, whether it be by additional sailings - something the committee explored briefly yesterday with a couple of island residents - or having an extra ferry?

Mr WASS - I am not aware of that, Madam Chair.

Mr WEST - There have been some discussions with Graeme Phillips through the Bruny Island Advisory Group, which is a committee the council has established. It has community representatives and a councillor chairs the meeting. They are monthly meetings. In recent times there have been discussions with Graeme Phillips about some issues around the adequacy of the sailings and those things. There were some views expressed that there needed to be more attention given to the peak periods in particular. As far as DIER is concerned, we have tried to have some discussions but we find that most of the information that may give us some more detail is commercial-in-confidence. DIER is fairly reluctant to discuss the contractual arrangements and how that all works with council. We have not really gained much information from DIER as far as this concerned.

CHAIR - Paul, as the general manager of the council were the council or you as GM involved in the discussions when the contract was renewed recently?

Mr WEST - No, not to my knowledge. There were certainly no discussions that I was involved in and I don't believe there was any discussion with council at all. I don't recall any correspondence or any of those details that would have come through.

Ms FORREST - With regard to the peak periods, we had evidence yesterday that it is not just peak periods in months of the year; it is peak periods at times of the day as well, particularly on Friday afternoons with a lot of people coming back after work and shackies going over. Would a larger ship be a viable option? It would make sense in some regard but peak periods at times of the year is one issue and peak times of the day is another. How do you see that could be addressed?

Mr WASS - Perhaps that is a difficult one. If you have larger vessel then you would have a number of sailings but it would not be fully utilised. The fear then could be that the sailings may be reduced, which would further compound the issues we face now. I suppose if you then have another vessel that is available to cover particularly the tourist season and the weekend section, you then have another vessel that is going to sit around and do nothing for four or five days, or it would be utilised somewhere else and then be ferried back to Ferry Road to be a ferry again? It is not an easy solution.

Ms FORREST - Do you see any ways by which the deficiencies of the current service could be remedied so that you could get more crossings or a greater efficiency that would mean more vehicles for the same vessel you have now?

Mr WEST - The crossing times are fairly fixed. You would have seen when you went yesterday that they're posted. The 9.30 a.m. sailing is the most popular. We have a lot of people going backwards and forwards and the 9.30 a.m. ferry is usually fairly well subscribed. There are usually a lot of people on that one.

The crossings are reasonably fixed, or the times are, but they do run extra sailings in those peak periods. In the lag time they try to make as much use of the ferry as they can. The locals indicate to us that there are real difficulties, particularly in that peak summer period when you have all the tourists wanting to go backwards and forwards, plus all the shack-holders and so on.

Ms FORREST - Increasing efficiencies like boarding or loading the vessel, the ticketing arrangements and all that sort of thing, could that be enhanced in any way to increase your efficiency if you were going to fit another couple of sailings in on those busy days?

Mr WEST - There have been some discussions and we have recently done a Ferry Road-Little Oyster Cove precinct plan because there are issues in relation to the road itself. There was certainly some discussion in relation to having a priority ticketing process where you actually book your sailing. Apparently that was trialled some years ago and the locals didn't like the idea. They want to be able to access the ship when they want to go and they don't necessarily always know when they want to come to the mainland. So that was one avenue that has been looked at as far as improving the efficiency. You know when you have a full ship so you tell people not to turn up.

Ms FORREST - Or you know you might need to put on extra sailing or try and fit another one in?

Mr WEST - Yes, but when it has been trialled in the past, it hasn't been well-received. However, when the main ship was off for dry dock recently, you had to pre-book and I didn't hear any complaints from anybody in relation to booking in that period.

Ms FORREST - They mustn't have rung you, then. We heard a lot of grumbles and obviously you didn't hear them.

Mr HALL - Another option was that some operators talked about a service coming from Hobart down to Dennes Point, taking on board a lot of those tourists who would normally go to drive down to Kettering and do it that way. Would that alleviate some of the pressure currently experienced with cars coming over and also tourists on the regular Kettering run?

Mr WEST - That is more the foot traffic coming out of Hobart to Dennes Point or into Adventure Bay or wherever, but once they get there then there has to be some sort of -

Mr HALL - They were talking about setting up an infrastructure - mini buses and day trips et cetera.

Mr WEST - Certainly that is one of the things that people on BIAG have been pushing. We are in the process of upgrading the facility at Dennes Point to encourage more tourism. An ideal situation is for people to travel from Hobart by boat down to Dennes Point or from there on. We do have a number of tourist operators now that are transporting passengers from Hobart to Roberts Point and then bussing them through to Adventure Bay and putting them onto another boat for Peppermint Bay. So there are opportunities there, no doubt.

Mr HALL - Would it take enough heat off the other service to resolve some of the issues that we have at the moment, without having that extra vessel on board in peak season?

Mr WASS - It would make a small impact, initially. It would then be determined by how the operators were able to transport those people and change that idea of what they were going to do on the island. A lot of people that travel on the island, of course, are from interstate. If you are going to lose the luxury of independence, for example your rental car, then is what is on offer, in their eyes, better value or should they continue to drive themselves around the island to see what they want, when they want? Then you condense it down into time they have available.

Mr HARRISS - I wonder whether it would be in the interests of all of those people - the tourism operators, the council, the ferry operator, Tourism Tasmania, DIER - to somehow survey over a six-month period, maybe at the peak times, everybody who is on a ferry, and you could do that onboard while the ferry is crossing. Do not bug people while they are lined up and waiting for ferry or whatever. I am unaware, and I suppose I asked the question, as to whether there have been any surveys conducted by anybody, whether it is the conglomerate of the council, DIER, Tourism Tasmania, the tourism operators, a really concerted effort to somehow get a grab on what options Bruny Island travellers would consider to address those points you have made, Steve.

People who are here as interstate visitors might have hired a car so why leave it sitting at the Grand Chancellor while they jump on a boat - but you could promote that, the charm of doing a boat ride down there and then be ferried around the island hassle-free and then a charming boat ride back. It is all marketing, I suppose, but you do not know what you are marketing until you find out what the people want. Are you aware of whether any survey along those lines has ever been done?

Mr WASS - I am not aware that there has been a survey done. A few surveys that we get to see at council is where some of the tourist operators have advised us of their own individual surveys type of thing and then seek support from council to do whichever they have in their own, I suppose, best interest. But no, I am not aware of any such - I do not see an issue with that. It is possibly a good starting point.

Mr HARRISS - Superficially it seems like a way to go because we are hearing people's value judgments and that is all they can be at this stage without doing some proper survey.

Mr WASS - One of the big areas out of that would be a financial master plan, if you like, for those people coming to the island and if that meant that the cost to go to the island was going to increase because of the repayment of the infrastructure required to do some of those things, if that outweighed what they could do now, that may also be detrimental.

Mr HARRISS - And again it is all a marketing issue. Sometimes it will never come down to cost, provided the experience is such a wow factor that people go there regardless, and I get the impression that it is getting to that stage now. People want to be on Bruny Island because of the attractiveness of simply being there.

Mr HALL - It is in your electorate, isn't it?

Laughter.

Mr HARRISS - We might put that to Tourism Tasmania; probably everybody needs to be in, DIER, the council - a bit of a contribution from everybody.

Mr WASS - It could open up a niche market for something on the island.

Ms FORREST - Like a hire car. Even King Island has hire cars. You have to have a hire car if you land in a plane obviously. There are no hire cars on the island at the moment?

Mr WASS - No. I have a vested interest in hire cars because I currently work with a hire car firm and we do not allow our vehicles to go to Bruny Island.

Ms FORREST - Because of the unsealed roads?

Mr WASS - No, it is the cost that would be opened up if a vehicle broke down and they could not make the last crossing back. They could be looking to the company then to cover accommodation costs. If a vehicle were to break down, the tow truck operator over there says. 'This is the price - take it or leave it' and if you leave it, you are going to be tomorrow at the earliest or even two days before someone else will come, so they

write their own ticket. I suppose regarding the unofficial destination of our hires I personally would rate Bruny Island as the number 2 destination in southern Tasmania.

Ms FORREST - They ignore the rules then. Would it be better then in a situation like that to have hire cars on the island that stay on the island so that if you come over on a foot ferry you can hire a car and it would not be a huge cost because they are only going to be there for the day probably - it is the same as going to King Island for the day - and then you obviously leave it at the ferry terminal when you leave.

Mr WASS - I am sure, as I said to Paul, that they are niche markets that could open up. For someone interstate who has a hire car and parks at Kettering and gets a hire car on Bruny, is that seen as good value? Again, it depends on the cost and the excitement of what they want to do on the island and how long they propose to be there.

Ms FORREST - Without that sort of research that Paul is suggesting it is hard to know what would work and what wouldn't work.

Mr HARRISS - Madam Chair, I will go to the part in the council's submission - and we are still under term of reference 1 - where you mentioned this report that you understand is being prepared by GHD for DIER but it's not publicly available. Are you aware of the purpose of that study, report or whatever - are you aware of whether it might have gone to some of the things which we are discussing now? Because it is not publicly available, you probably don't have a clue.

Mr WEST - We don't actually have an idea of what is in the report but it was around the same time as the contract was being discussed and issues around the number of vehicles and all those sorts of details, but we have not been privy to that and, in preparing this study, the reason we became aware of it is that it was a combined arrangement between DIER, DED and council who paid for the study. There was mention of this report that was prepared by GHD and there was information that DIER were prepared to provide to our consultants in relation to some of the background but it was only a very small part of it and so that is why we mention it in there. Apparently there is a study and it may be of interest to the committee, based on your terms of reference.

CHAIR - It is interesting because apparently there is a Tourism Tasmania study as well that hasn't been made available. That is from the understanding of Bill Hughes.

Mr WEST - Tourism Tasmania undertook some sort of survey process on the island probably within the last 12 months or so. It was soon after I started at Kingborough that we were asked to provide some details on names and addresses and those types of things to try to get a survey out. So there was some type of study of residents from Bruny Island in relation to it, and I think that was around tourism activities and the benefits of tourism but I have never seen any report to date in relation to what the outcome of that survey is. I do know some residents received it and participated in the process.

CHAIR - But it hasn't been made public.

Mr WEST - Not that I can remember, no. I don't believe so.

Mr HARRISS - I suppose that goes to the issues that Greg was raising with you about a foot ferry. We understand from evidence given to the committee yesterday that there is at least one commercial operator who thinks it is a viable prospect, provided the berthing facilities at Dennes Point could be improved a little for safety. It might cost \$5 000 to improve that safety measure but that is the assessment.

Then there are other matters that have been suggested over the years of a single-deck ferry to supplement what we have already got and so that might carry 30 to 50 cars, then you will overcome your difficulties, both during your peak day times that Ruth talked about and your peak annual times.

Mr WEST - There hasn't been an approach to council by any commercial operator in relation to Dennes Point at this stage. In relation to Adventure Bay, we currently have two commercial operators running tours from there and a lot of the tourists who access the ferry are driving to Adventure Bay to catch the tours there, and we have a third operator that has now approached council to give them permission to use the jetty at Adventure Bay.

So, potentially, there is a third operator on the way for this next summer.

Ms FORREST - Where from?

Mr WEST - They will be operating from Adventure Bay.

Ms FORREST - To Hobart then?

Mr WEST - No, they will be doing similar tours to what Bruny Island's Rob Pennicott and Simon Currant currently do. So it is another competitor. But Rob Pennicott is now operating four ferries a day during the peak tourism period and up until last year it was a maximum of three ferries a day. So Simon Currant's come in, he's increased his amount and now we have another one wanting to come there.

Mr WASS - I think that adds to your suggestion, Paul, of the 'wow' factor. That has been very well received and people talk about that when they go back to wherever they're from or other parts of Tasmania, and their friends and family want to do the same when they are here.

Mr HALL - Are the Simon Currant tours coming out of Kettering to Adventure Bay and then around or are they all going straight over to Adventure Bay?

Mr WEST - Last year they were going from Hobart to Peppermint Bay, across Peppermint Bay to Roberts Point, then they bus them from there to Adventure Bay, then they do their tour and then come back and bus back. So the impact on the ferry from his operation was minimal, but as a result Pennicott increased the number of services that he is providing because he has competition, so he has increased his number of boats to four and they all basically travel by motor vehicle. So there is a larger number of people now and, from what Rob is saying, he is actually filling most of his boats.

Mr HALL - They come from Kettering and then go across and then to Adventure Bay?

Mr WEST - Yes. I think this year Mr Currant is cutting out the Peppermint Bay leg, so it is going to go straight from Hobart to Roberts Point and from there through.

Mr HARRISS - It makes you wonder why he wouldn't go straight into Adventure Bay.

Mr WEST - I actually asked that question and it has something to do with the experience. It is another experience for the tourists. They have a boat ride, they have a bus ride, they see the countryside, they have another boat ride and then another bus ride, rather than just straight down on the boat. That is apparently the reason.

CHAIR - All those people going onto the island lead me into the next area of infrastructure. It has been floated by one of the associations on the island that an environmental levy be put on visitors to the island to help with the infrastructure costs that will be needed. Do you have a comment or an opinion on that, Steve?

Mr WEST - We supported it.

Mr WASS - We discussed that at council some time ago, and obviously supported it. I know both sides of the argument and, at the end of the day, I didn't know whether it was for environment or for infrastructure -

CHAIR - It is probably a more pleasant way of saying there is a tax on going to the island.

Mr WEST - A transport levy.

Mr WASS - We did support the Bruny Island Committee in their reference to the State Government.

Mr WEST - Yes. It came through BIAG. It was a decision of BIAG; it went through to council, council supported it and it is being looked at by Tourism Tasmania and a number of other departments. A group was going to review this in conjunction with council and we have a couple of council staff members who are involved in that, but there has been no definitive outcome yet. At the one meeting I attended I had the feeling that perhaps there wasn't a high level of support within the bureaucracy to support the position of a levy.

Mr HARRISS - Clearly it's contended through that process that if that money flowed back to the council, then council would know in advance that there is a guaranteed revenue stream of whatever proportion. Council could then embark upon infrastructure improvements, or in association with DIER.

As we were travelling back last night we were discussing whether you apply something like that and identify it as a levy or you simply increase your fares by \$5; you don't have to tell anybody why. DIER then parks that \$5 per fare and provides it to the council and council knows that it has that guaranteed revenue stream based on 102 000 vehicles crossing per year or whatever those numbers are. Council can then start doing some work, knowing that the dough is going to be coming in at the other end. That could be a way to go. Don't necessarily identify it. Maybe \$25 is too cheap for the service or experience people are getting. It could be done.

Mr WEST - That certainly has been the point of view that we have put across, not necessarily identifying it as a levy. I'm not sure exactly what the arrangement is with the operator. The operator keeps all the income from the fares so there must be some contractual arrangements involved.

Mr HARRISS - Yes, there would be. So if the Government thinks it is worthwhile increasing the fares to \$30, the operator gets them anyway. That would be the contractual arrangement unless the contract is set.

Mr WEST - Or there is an ability to change the arrangements or something. There are certainly some infrastructure issues on Bruny Island in relation to public toilets and all of those sorts of things. There is a fair bit of pressure on council to improve a lot of that. At Roberts Point in the summer period cars can be one or two kilometres back up Lennon Road and it is a long walk from there down to fairly average public conveniences and people can be lined up there for a couple of hours. If they get there and miss a ferry, it can be quite a bad experience.

Mr HARRISS - Who is responsible for the toilets? The council?

Mr WASS - DIER, I believe.

Mr HARRISS - That being the case, a bit of pressure ought to be put on DIER, given the substandard quality of those facilities at Roberts Point.

Mr WEST - We certainly try to put the pressure on DIER regularly for a lot of things.

Mr HALL - Surprise, surprise.

Ms FORREST - This issue about the facilities and the cars backed-up on the Bruny Island side, particularly in the summer time, there was some discussion that some land had been made available by a landowner on the left, heading toward the further left-hand side, and there had been some hold-ups and problems with that. What is the issue with that? It seems it makes eminent sense to have a bit more room on that side of the road for cars to pull off and get into an arrangement where they can have closer access to the facilities there. We did hear evidence of some people, the elderly in particular, pulling out of the line, driving down to the toilets and then going back. Having lost their spot in the line they have to go right back to the end again.

Mr WASS - Under a recent planning scheme by John Grunseth, he was prepared to give land for that very purpose. To my knowledge there is nothing holding that up.

Mr WEST - It was part of a subdivision proposal and one of the conditions was that this land would be transferred to DIER when the survey plan and everything was finalised.

Mr HALL - What is the quantum of that land, roughly?

Mr WEST - I am not sure.

Mr HALL - Because evidence was given that you can get about two-thirds of a ferry load in the current arrangement, so therefore obviously you need another third. If there is more available then the better off, one would presume.

Mr WEST - I am not sure of the exact area. The surveyed plan has not been finalised yet. I did have some discussions with DIER recently and if there was a request from DIER that they wanted that to progress sooner rather than later, we could actually do that.

Ms FORREST - So who is undertaking the survey work? Is that DIER?

Mr WEST - No. As part of the subdivision arrangements, in the plan of survey for the issue of titles there will be a parcel of land that will be transferred to DIER as part of that, but usually titles are issued when all the works are completed and there is still some work to be done on the subdivision. So that process has not been finalised yet, but if there was a request from DIER to deal with that area earlier than the rest of the subdivision, then we would do what we could to try and facilitate that.

Ms FORREST - So for you to act more quickly on that issue, DIER would need to put a request in for that section of the title be dealt with separately to the rest of the requirements.

Mr WEST - Of the subdivision?

Ms FORREST - Yes.

Mr WEST - But obviously then they would have to be prepared to do the necessary works to prepare the parking area.

CHAIR - To utilise the ground.

Mr HALL - Just as a matter of interest, how big is the division? How many lots and what size are they?

Mr WEST - It would be before I went to Kingborough to work so I am -

Mr WASS - It is all the right-hand side from Roberts Point.

Mr HALL - On the southern side?

Mr WASS - Yes. The acreage I am sorry I just do not recall.

Mr HALL - We looked at it yesterday.

Mr WASS - It is fairly substantial and certainly the developer was more than happy to provide that land because he saw a need for it and based on probably the evidence that you got yesterday, it is very dangerous. You come up over the hill and if you are not careful, there is a car right in front of you and you can be out that side to miss it and then probably hit someone who is just coming off the ferry.

CHAIR - It would enhance the whole experience, wouldn't it, of actually getting on and getting off the ferry.

Mr WASS - Certainly. You could just imagine a couple of young children and as soon as you pull up the question they ask you as a parent is, 'Where is it?' and then you have to walk them all the way down. As someone said a moment ago, by the time you drive down and come back, you are probably 25 spots further behind. A playground or anything to take the kids' mind off it would be appreciated.

CHAIR - There is even reference to the first signs of road rage, Steve, on the island.

Mr WASS - We have seen people pass on the wrong side of the road because they want that extra 20 metres in front of the other car. It happens all the time.

Ms FORREST - We saw an example of that when we were driving there yesterday.

Mr WASS - You witnessed it?

Ms FORREST - As we got off the ferry people were overtaking in unusual places and gaining very little.

Mr WASS - Yes.

Mr HALL - You were driving too slowly.

Ms FORREST - Was that it? I could have driven more quickly to make it most uncomfortable for my back-seat passengers.

CHAIR - Steve, are there any other points you would like to identify to the committee that you feel would be useful?

Mr WASS - I suppose on the mainland you have probably had a lot of discussions on Ferry Road. That has been a major contentious issue for a number of years. I know at least one person, a resident of Ferry Road - and I am going back in time and, forgive me, I could not tell you whether it was two, three or four years - actually took a video, put it onto DVD and sent it to most councillors and sent it on to DIER showing the problems. It may well have been Easter, from memory. The cars that were waiting in line for the ferry were banked up along the highway and people who were going the other way had to then drive into private driveways, et cetera, to allow others who were going towards the ferry to pass. That happens as a norm, I suppose. There is certainly a lot of things that council wants to do and - again I am going back on memory, whether it was eight or 10 years - council decided to release its vision and what it wanted to do, particularly after a report that was provided to council which identified villages remaining their own private settlement and distinguished that. One of the recommendations was to put a boardwalk in there and we initiated what we had wanted to do for many, many years and that is because the road was not ours we were hoping that DIER would come on and do the road, and that we would put footpaths in.

There are a number of issues with septic or the other waste water and on that basis we thought it was appropriate that that should be finalised and we put in place provision for

water and sewerage but unfortunately we were the only party that wanted to take that up. We had one or two leaseholders along the foreshore not opposed to council but certainly asking questions because the information they were getting from the Crown was that they were going to be liable for public liability and until that could be finalised, there was an issue for them and certainly council's boardwalk plans just did not get off the ground. We still have that plan and that vision and we would like to see that because we believe that Kettering could be a spot to be.

There are two other areas of significance. One is the environmental damage done by the septic tanks, et cetera, and the other one of course is the tourism industry generally and that is that some tourists have indicated and I will not say that it is Third World but it is a bit average to come down a highway, turn into a little place to get onto a ferry and go where they want to go and be really blessed, if you like, with what they see on Bruny but they have to go through this awful little road to get there and certainly that probably does not stand well in the tourism industry either, and there is probably not sufficient area for where the cars are lined up waiting for the ferry. There are a number of issues there that really need to be resolved sooner rather than later.

Mr HARRISS - I suppose that all goes to the change of location from the Bruny Island side from Barnes Bay to Roberts Point years ago but Ferry Road, Kettering, has always been the departure point on this side. Has council ever addressed the desirability of identifying a better location to depart from on this side of the channel?

Mr WASS - To my knowledge, as an elected member, we have had no discussions or requests put to us and it has never ever been debated.

Mr HARRISS - It seems that the restrictions at Ferry Road cannot be practically or economically addressed because of water on one side and houses on the other. There is not too much you can do on the study that is going on at the moment and the local angst about the sewage treatment plant smack where the ferry comes in, and the visibility of that has been an issue. I do not know how far that has got to resolution. The boardwalk would not have solved the vehicular access through Ferry Road so that has always been a restricting factor and probably always will be. There is not too much down at the bottom end near the ferry terminal where you can enhance the car parking.

Mr WEST - One of the recommendations that is included in the study that we have just completed is that an extra marshalling area is provided at what the locals call the lighthouse site which is currently under lease - it is under a crown land lease - and that has certainly been well accepted by the locals and certainly, from the comments that we have received back in from the local community, this plan is reasonably well accepted. There is obviously, as always with these sorts of things, a number of issues that they are raising, 'Have you thought of this?' or 'We do not like this bit' or whatever, but that particular aspect, increasing the marshalling area by resuming the lighthouse lease, has been very well received by the locals and it is certainly something that I believe DIER is actively looking at.

Mr HARRISS - How many cars would that accommodate, Paul?

Mr WEST - Effectively you would end up with more than one ferry load of vehicles.

Mr HARRISS - In that extra area?

Mr WEST - In the marshalling area you would end up with sufficient space to allow at least one end heading towards the next lot of vehicles so you do not have the same amount of vehicles in spreading back up.

Mr HARRISS - Because there is about one ferry load in the current marshalling area.

Mr WEST - Yes.

Mr HARRISS - But the lighthouse site would not add lots.

Mr WEST - I could probably tell you if I could quickly flick through the report as to how much extra space that would provide us with.

Mr HARRISS - The only other alternative, and Steve has identified the difficulty because of the leaseholders along the foreshore, is to reclaim land.

Mr WEST - Yes.

Mr HARRISS - It is an expensive option whichever way you go, whether you identify a brand new site, if you reclaim land and relocate the current leaseholders to somewhere else in the marina.

Mr WEST - Up to two ferry loads of vehicles in the total marshalling area so the expanded piece would allow for up to two ferry loads of vehicles.

Mr HARRISS - Not bad.

CHAIR - It would probably take a reasonable amount of pressure off some of that and back up the highway but there is still the Roberts Point issue. It seems as though there is a solution there if it can be moved forward in a timely manner.

Mr HARRISS - Then again, on the matter of Ferry Road, Steve, you just indicated that people aren't too impressed when they drive along this really substandard road and then they get onto Bruny Island, have a great experience and all of that. Ferry Road is narrow but two heavy vehicles can pass - and you go at 40 km.

Mr WASS - Unless you have cars parked on the side, then you have the issue again.

Mr HARRISS - Yes, there's the problem. As a general conveyance through there, it is a beautiful experience through the little village part of Kettering on Ferry Road.

Mr WASS - It is not if we get the boardwalk, it is when. We can certainly turn that into a very nice experience for those people waiting to go across. Of course the beauty in retaining it at Kettering is that the infrastructure is there - the stores et cetera that can provide a coffee and things.

CHAIR - That can be very important to people if they are waiting in a line for quite some time.

Mr WASS - If you don't have creature comforts like that -

Ms FORREST - Toilets and coffee.

Mr WASS - That is right.

Mr WEST - It is certainly a busy little shop there just before the ferry leaves.

CHAIR - Yes. We did notice that the little shop on Roberts Point was open yesterday but we have had some evidence that that wasn't always the case.

Mr WEST - The last time I was there it wasn't open.

CHAIR - Yes, it is consistency with any of those things.

Mr HARRISS - It is of interest to the committee as to how far advanced is the study in the Kettering village about sewage disposal and treatment because that all fits into part of what is going on here for ferry customers. Where is that at the moment?

Mr WEST - The study was completed at the end of August. We have released it for public comment, and submissions on that closed on 30 September. All the submissions have been referred to the consultants who prepared the report for their comment. It will then go back to the wider stakeholder group, which includes council, DIER, DED, Tasmanian Planning Commission and Southern Water. I had a meeting earlier this week with Danny Sutton from Southern Water and Norm McIlfatrick, talking about what is in this report and how we might address some of those issues around sewerage infrastructure, particularly relating to the ferry terminal, the hotel site and the proposed developments that might occur in those areas. Also, if the septic tanks remain that is obviously an issue that council will need to address because council is the right regulatory authority to deal with that issue.

CHAIR - In all the submissions relating to Bruny Island, everyone has praised the efforts of the current ferry service under difficult times and circumstances. You raise the point that there is a concern about having no back-up plan if anything happens and the ferry breaks down for an unscheduled time. Would you like to make a comment on that?

Mr WASS - I am just trying to think what the old ferry's name was.

Mr HARRISS - The old *Mangana*, a single deck ferry.

Mr WASS - That was parked at Kettering just in case and then it was taken away and it went to the Tamar, I think.

CHAIR - It would be well and truly parked in the Tamar, Steve.

Laughter.

Mr WASS - No, I think the operator must have unfortunately gone out backwards, or something occurred and they got rid of the vessel. I do not know where it went or

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whether it went to the mainland. That was just the background. When that second ferry was taken away, with plenty of advice to both council and Bruny residents - they obviously were concerned - the Bruny residents believed that should not occur because if the present ferry broke down then what was going to happen. The Government of the day provided a guarantee that the old vessel would be back within 24 hours or something similar but I believe - and my memory might be a bit clouded - that vessel might have even left the State. To my knowledge there is really no back-up ferry apart from what we had before. If that occurred, say, over the summer period, Easter, or sometime like that, then it would be diabolical.

CHAIR - We noticed that the *MV Flinders* was parked yesterday, so that is obviously just sitting around at the moment. That is the one that does the two weeks out for the *Mirambeena*.

Mr WASS - That was basically the history, as I recall it. Thankfully and fortunately the ferry has not been taken off for breaking down and having that issue develop. If it does it would be horrendous for the people on the island and people wanting to get to Bruny Island.

Mr HALL - I can appreciate the problem. I suppose from a commercial point of view it is pretty difficult to have an asset parked there just in case. It is something you wouldn't want to entertain unless it was a public subsidy, and therefore the Government perhaps should do it.

Ms FORREST - I know on King Island there is obligation money set aside as a budget line item to ensure that, should the current service not be able to operate for whatever reason - not because of bad weather but because it has broken down - then there is a contractual requirement to provide the service within a designated time frame. Are you aware whether there is anything in the agreement like that?

Mr WASS - Only what I said before.

Ms FORREST - That was a previous arrangement with a previous vessel, wasn't it?

Mr WASS - That was when that second vessel left, and that was the undertaking given, but I am not aware of where we are with that.

Ms FORREST - So you don't really know what the agreement is?

Mr WASS - No.

Ms FORREST - Another matter I want to raise is the airstrip on the island. That is another way of getting there. There have been a few comments about the suitability because, even though it looked quite dry in some photos we saw, they said it was quite boggy and it must get a bit swampy in that area. Do you want to give some comments about Kingborough Council's view of the airstrip and who should manage and maintain that?

Mr WASS - We have it, we own it. We inherited that from the Bruny Island Council at amalgamation. I have not walked it so I have no comments on what you have said. One of the big problems is wildlife. It is more suited to helicopter than plane in the sense that

wildlife is the big issue. It is seen by a number of tourist operators as the next phase that they would like to look at because of the problems with the ferry. From the council's perspective there are going to be more and more demands on council to, firstly, improve it and, secondly, to maintain it in probably a far better manner than is done now. There have been a number of points put to us, as a council, that it needs to be updated a little because of rescue services -

Ms FORREST - Air ambulance and that sort of thing?

Mr WASS - Yes. Thankfully we have not had that issue and generally when someone has been taken off the island, they tend to use the vessel wherever possible.

Ms FORREST - They tend to use helicopter rather than fixed wing?

Mr WASS - Yes, and to my knowledge that is because of the animals. The worst thing is trying to land a plane and a half-dozen kangaroos hop across your path.

Mr WEST - It would require a reasonable level of upgrading if it were to be used for any regular passenger transport.

Ms FORREST - What sort of upgrading are you talking about, Paul?

Mr WEST - At the moment there are no lines; it is basically a grass strip. It is suitable for light planes but if it were to be used to bring passengers in then there would need to be work done on the airstrip. There was a review being undertaken by members of BIAG. A report was to be provided to council with recommendations from that group, which we haven't yet received.

Ms FORREST - I have another question on the airstrip. Is there any intention to try to sell it?

Mr WEST - There certainly has not been any discussion in relation to that that I am aware of.

Mr WASS - I think the locals at one stage believed council was going to do something along those lines and certainly council has not made any recommendations either way. I think that is when BIAG started to look at what Paul mentioned before as to the future use of that airport and certainly requested council not to even think about disposing of it because of urgent rescue needs and those types of things. It is really in abeyance waiting for that report to come back to us.

Ms FORREST - How much has been spent on maintenance of the airstrip in recent years?

Mr WEST - Minimal maintenance. It is basically care and maintenance, although we now have one regular user of the airstrip and he has a small hangar beside the airstrip on private property and he uses it regularly on weekends. We have an arrangement with him where he is basically doing some inspections and those sorts of things and letting us know if there are any issues. But it is really just care and maintenance and very minimal expenditure.

Ms FORREST - So there is not a pressing need to sell it because of the maintenance cost at this stage?

Mr WEST - No.

CHAIR - Steve and Paul, I would really like to thank you on behalf of the committee for presenting. If there is anything that you feel later on after you leave this that you would like the committee to know, we would be appreciative of that. Dr Huntly will provide you with his contact details. Thank you for your time this morning.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.

Mr WAYNE CUTHBERTSON WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mrs Rattray-Wagner) - Wayne, we welcome you to Parliament. If there is anything that you feel that you would like to share with the committee in camera, let us know when you are ready to do that. I know that you have indicated there are some issues that you would like to put on the record in camera. Feel free to speak to your submission, thank you.

Mr CUTHBERTSON - Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for inviting me along. I guess you have read my submission. It was originally written for the Flinders Island Aboriginal community where I was working as a consultant at the time but they, I believe, submitted their own so I thought, knowing the islands quite well and dealing with other people over there, that I would put it as a submission from my own consultancy.

I spoke widely amongst people on Flinders Island in particular and some on Cape Barren and certainly to the people that are involved in the shipping service currently running out of Bridport. I will be quite transparent - most of the ideas on this are from them and I thought that was the best was to go. There is no point in just listening to what I have to say. Everything I have put there comes from people from the mayor down to most of the councillors on Flinders, to a lot of the farmers and fisher people and general people on the island who own things like supermarkets and depend very heavily on the shipping service and then from the other end, the delivery out of Bridport. I spoke to most of the employees past, which is quite a few, and currently, and I hope to address that with you in private later.

My main thrust on this would be that the ships currently, *Matthew Flinders* and the *Southern Condor*, are not up to standard. I think we all know that, with the continuing hassle with that Mr Gabriel is getting from MAST and AMSA. They are certainly not conducive to carrying passengers. The *Condor* recently got a sub-ticket to go back to sea and one of the conditions was that it was not allowed to carry any passengers. So this affects the island as far as tourism is concerned because then they do not take their cars because they can't go.

So basically my submission is on tourism - on an upgrading of the shipping service. I am not particularly convinced that there need to be two ships. If the bigger of the two was done up, I think it could offer a good five-day service, however that is rejigged. But currently one of them goes every month to King Island and then goes on to Welshpool. The general thing is that most people over there are very, very unhappy about the lack of service, the lack of communication, the lack of transparency - truth - in how it is managed. In particular, the invoices they receive weekly or monthly from Southern Shipping and not even writing what the GST is or what different consignments they are entitled to. It is just put in as one lump - pay \$655, or whatever it might be. I have attended several shipping meetings on the island where Southern Shipping had been asked to rectify that. The promise has always been, 'Yes, it would' but it has never happened. So that leads to a great deal of frustration. Of course it has led to another operator out of Launceston, Les Dick, putting through one of his services, which to a reasonable extent is better at the moment than the other one, but they should not be put

through this when there are two ships available, and of course now we have three with Les Dick's.

A lot of the farmers complain about livestock, which I have mentioned here - they slip and slide. There are also passengers on board and when the boat is loaded they have to walk through the animals that are already on the boat, so there are safety issues that are quite alarming.

There is no real tourism thing to the boats where it could be a wonderful experience for people to get on at Bridport and get off at Lady Barron or wherever and really enjoy themselves. There are no washing facilities, no shower facilities and no provision for lunch or a cup of tea, and sometimes you are at sea for 12 to 14 hours if it is a little rough. So there is all that tourism thing which the island now is starting to concentrate on, but which they are certainly not getting from their shipping service.

With the cost of taking a car over, I even suggested to Mr Gabriel that, considering there are two ships available and there are probably three trips a week that could be done just to take cars and passengers over, \$900-something return for a car at the moment is excessive but he is certainly not interested in looking at that.

There are no concise times of departure or arrival. This can all be calculated because they read the tides. They know what the tide is going to be, unless of course there is a desperately low tide, which happens from time to time, but for the majority of the time they can assess and tell their commercial transporters what time to have the goods there. They don't go out of their way to do that.

A lot of the complaints are from people who have taken the punt and bought a reasonably expensive block of land on Flinders and then need everything to be brought over. There are photos galore of plaster being smashed to pieces and windows and window frames. I have been at Lady Barron dock when a young married lady with two little kids, and a husband in Melbourne, was down at the boat to meet all the new windows and everything but they were all smashed. They said, 'Stiff, we don't cover anything like that'.

There is a lot wrong but I would like to concentrate on the positives of it. I think you will find most of the councillors over there would be prepared to have an investment and be involved in the shipping company. The events of the last month would probably push them over the top as far as that is concerned. There are other councils around Australia that do have arrangements like that. Lord Howe Island is one where they actually administer the subsidy that the Government puts out. That keeps everybody on their toes that they had better perform. Our present subsidy by the Government is just given ad hoc and is not responsible for anything. It just goes into wherever it goes to and nobody gets the benefit.

With the fuel subsidy, I am not au fait with the arithmetic side of the coin but you will find out that most people on the island are probably being taken for anything up to 20 per cent of what they should be paying at the moment. I think you will probably find that when you get to Flinders Island. They will be ready to give you all those statistics.

CHAIR - When you talk about the council as ready to be involved, it is my understanding that council have for a long time wanted some input into the contract that delivers the **LEGISLATIVE SELECT COMMITTEE ON ISLAND TRANSPORT SERVICES**, 18 **HOBART 2/10/09 (CUTHBERTSON)**

services to the island but they have been unsuccessful in gaining any input. Is that your understanding as well?

Mr CUTHBERTSON - That would be my understanding of it, without directly being told by the whole council, but certainly several councillors have indicated that to me.

CHAIR - There has been no opportunity for them to provide any input?

Mr CUTHBERTSON - No. It seems to be a closed door where the current Government - and whether it happened with previous governments, I do not know - say they are happy with it and there will be a review shortly, but that is it. Councillors Grimshaw and Williams came to Hobart and saw Mr Sturges and had quite lengthy conversations but as usual they walked away with nothing.

CHAIR - In relation to Les Dick's service, is that a bit ad hoc or does he have a regular service to the island now?

Mr CUTHBERTSON - I really cannot answer that but in my last five visits to Flinders over the last seven months, every time I have been there his boat has come into Lady Barron. I think he is able to carry fewer types of cargo than Southern Shipping can carry. I think he mainly is big timber loads, big steel loads and certainly livestock, but not the perishables.

CHAIR - The north-east, of which I know you are a resident and head of the Chamber of Commerce, would not want to see the sailings removed from Bridport but do you consider that a more efficient service would come from Bell Bay in relation to the tidal issues with the *Matthew Flinders* out of Bridport from time to time?

Mr CUTHBERTSON - As President of the Chamber of Commerce and on the Dorset EDGE Board as well, our major play would be to keep the shipping service there. A lot of the problems at the moment are tidal but part of the contract that Gabriel is also responsible for is dredging the river, which he has not done in 12 months. Over a period of 12 months there is a lot of build up of sand, silt or whatever and consequently I have sat down there and watched the boat stuck on sand from 8 o'clock in the morning until 4.30 in the afternoon. The time before last it was like a football match; probably more than 60 cars and 200 people were watching it. It was an event for Bridport but that happens on a regular basis. Part of his getting that subsidy is that he must dredge the river. He does not. He started to in the last two weeks but I guess he has concentrated more on building a wall to try to stop the sand, which of course is illegal, as he has not contacted the Department of Environment and MAST, I believe.

Mr HALL - Sorry, this is Mr Dick, is it?

CHAIR - No, this is Mr Gabriel.

Mr CUTHBERTSON - Of Southern Shipping. Part of his subsidy agreement is to dredge the river and I can tell you - and I know that the Fair Work Ombudsman has copies of heaps of footage probably going three or four hours - of all sorts of strange things that go on down there but certainly there is absolute proof and signed statutory declarations that for nine months the machine that digs out the river has not been operational and in fact

has just sat out on the point. The police have asked him on three or four occasions to move it because it is unsightly but it has stayed there. It is now operational but it is not digging out the river, so that is his major problem. And I have got this from people who know that they can get the tidal information months ahead apparently and if the river was operable they could sail in and out, unless they overload the boats, which they continue to do.

CHAIR - And that is to cut back on the number of services that they would provide to the islands hence cutting their costs.

Mr CUTHBERTSON - He currently has a log agreement with FEA and it is around about I think at this stage 23 loads behind so he has pressure from FEA and all the other stuff on top of that, which I will talk about when we go to the other side of things.

Mr HALL - That contract is pines off Flinders Island, is it?

Mr CUTHBERTSON - Yes, from the north of the island.

CHAIR - That was from the fallout from the allocation of timber resource to FEA over Auspine, as we well remember. Wayne, you obviously believe there is a future in tourism on the island, what about the air services as well to the island? I have visited the island and at times I am a little frustrated that I cannot get off when I want to get off. Have you heard that particular issue arise as well?

Mr CUTHBERTSON - It has happened to me on three or four occasions and it is very frustrating when you are told on the Friday afternoon that you cannot get off and there will be no service until Monday because of the weather or there is a mechanical problem. It becomes very, very frustrating. When you are there and the boat does not arrive and there is no fresh milk and no fresh vegetables, to experience it yourself you say to yourself, 'Now I know what it is all about' and you do get frustrated. I represented the Flinders Island people last year on the new marketing zone for Tourism Tasmania as part of the east coast, north-east coast and Flinders. I attended quite a few meetings over there. FIT, I think it is called - Flinders Island Tourism - led by Mick Grimshaw. It is a fantastic effort. They virtually match the whole east coast of Tasmania dollar for dollar. They are a tremendously vibrant group of people who certainly go out on a limb and try to get things to happen. I would say that it is a great tourist opportunity over there at the moment.

CHAIR - What if there was a bit more flexibility, in your view, with the times and the services that are available? We know that there has been a lot of money spent on the airstrip at Whitemark and yet my experience is that it is still slightly under-utilised at different times.

Mr CUTHBERTSON - The whole island is, and it is not dissimilar to the north-east of Tasmania. Recently, as part of the North East Rivers Festival, which is the old Derby River Derby, we had to cancel the Bengarra Dance Company coming to us, unfortunately. One of the major reasons was that there was no accommodation; everything was gone in the north-east. There was nothing at Scottsdale, nothing at Bridport, nothing anywhere. So I guess the demographic that would follow the Bengarra Dance Company just all of a sudden said they were not coming so we had to cancel. I

think accommodation on Flinders is pretty well similar. They have some marvellous stuff, they really have, but I think they have about 274 accommodation nights, from memory. I think it is like the egg and whatever it is.

CHAIR - The egg and the chicken.

Mr CUTHBERTSON - Yes, that is it. There has to be a lot of money spent there. There has to be a lot of money spent on signage and all that type of thing but this particular tourism body I think are addressing all that. I think they have a progressive council at the moment. I think the head of tourism over there, Mick Grimshaw, is a councillor, the Mayor, Carol Cox, is very supportive, but I can go back to the days of Northern Tasmania Development with Andrew Eastick when he was negotiating I think with the airline that goes into King Island - is that Rex?

Ms FORREST - Regional Express - it goes from Victoria.

Mr CUTHBERTSON - Yes - he was negotiating with them at quite a high level to try to get some services, even if it was only Monday, Wednesday and Friday into Flinders, but once he left and went to the Northern Territory nothing has been picked up in that area.

CHAIR - In your capacity as assisting the Flinders Island Tourism Association and Aboriginal Association, I know from time to time, has the airline issue been raised with you in recent times because Andrew Eastick has been gone for quite some time now, hasn't he?

Mr CUTHBERTSON - Yes.

CHAIR - Has that been raised again?

Mr CUTHBERTSON - Only as the new aeroplane they bought - Dornier I think is the brand - can only carry so much freight. You could not bring over your golf clubs if the plane was booked out. I think you are restricted to one reasonable suitcase and that is it. Regarding the rest of the other smaller planes of the airline, people just think it is a bit of a joke as far as the new Dornier is concerned. I think it was out of service for months and months because it did not have an anti-freeze system in the engines, so I think it is just there like the ship is still there. It is still underbelly.

CHAIR - Do you think, Wayne, that unfortunately the islanders tend to just put up with the services rather than really stand up and say that it is not good enough?

Mr CUTHBERTSON - I think this current council have more bite than the previous maybe two or three councils have had.

Mr HALL - Wayne, regarding some of those niche products that come off the island - seafood and that sort of thing - are they transported to the mainland and then on to Hong Kong and so on by private charter? Do they use their own air services or what happens there?

Mr CUTHBERTSON - I think we could address the abattoirs with their wallaby and their milk-fed lamb and all that type of thing and their sausage meat, which they make. They

depend solely on Southern Shipping and the chillers and the freezers. Quite often they break down and quite often Mr Gabriel does not get them repaired. That happened in the mutton-bird season so the Aboriginal owners of the sheds had to pull together and they got their own freezers in and put them on board the boat and then he turned around and charged them for freight of the actual freezers as well as the foodstuffs. Gail Grace who runs the abattoirs is always in the newspaper or on the radio, as you have probably heard, screaming about the fact - and the butcher shop Casalinga would tell you too that they cannot commit to a lot of their customers. The wallaby and the sausages and all that will come in in great supply and they buy directly from the abattoirs on Flinders. In fact she closed for three weeks only about six weeks ago. It was put on the market and she was considering closing it down. So all those opportunities are missed.

Mr HALL - That is a shame because that is pretty basic stuff. So it is all coming south. There is no shipping which takes out any of that product going to Melbourne the other way?

Mr CUTHBERTSON - Not that I am aware of. Southern Shipping certainly take livestock to Welshpool when the season is on and that is it.

Mr HALL - When they have a contract going with a mainland processor.

Mr CUTHBERTSON - Yes, when something is urgent. We had a dinner recently and had some wallaby and we had to get it flown in. It came through Gordon and his plane service out of Lady Barron into Bridport. That happens occasionally when she can't work it out.

Mr HALL - So going back to that other question about the seafood, that goes north by private charter, does it? How do they move their stuff? It is very time-sensitive stuff, as you are aware.

Mr CUTHBERTSON - When you go to Flinders, tragically, you will find there are only two fishing boats left on the whole island.

Mr HALL - Is that right?

Mr CUTHBERTSON - Yes. One of the reasons is the downturn in the fishing industry and the younger people aren't taking the opportunity. I encourage the Aboriginal community to invest in a couple of boats because they have a lot of money over there, as you are aware, and a lot of youngsters especially come back to the islands for the mutton bird season. I spoke to quite a few of them this year and on one of the days I had two of the head ladies from the department and I had Tom Black and William Wright - the four of them there for two days - which was a tremendous opportunity for the island. We actually spoke to some of the younger guys on the beaches and we had lunch with them. It was absolutely fantastic and probably 90 per cent of the young guys and young girls said, 'We'd love to get into fishing, we would love to get back to doing what our ancestors did'. But that is a problem that probably lies with Flinders Island Aboriginal community. They don't see that because there is not that attraction there as far as commercial activity as the moment. They are just not picking it up. I think it would be fantastic.

Ms CLAIR ELLIS, TOURISM TASMANIA, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mrs Rattray-Wagner) - Yesterday the committee was privileged to travel to Bruny Island. We experienced travelling on the ferry, lining up at the exit at Roberts Point as well, so that was good for the committee to understand that.

Ms ELLIS - What we did with the submission was try to demonstrate that there is a range of information that Tourism Tasmania collects that might be pertinent. We tend to be a very research-driven organisation and we have the luck of being an island, so you can actually count people who come on and off the State and what they have done. We have some very good statistics to do with interstate and international visitation to Tasmania. Getting intrastate figures for Tasmanians who travel around their own State and are therefore visitors from different locations is much more difficult for us because we don't have an easy methodology, though we do have some statistics on that.

So what we try to do is summarise some of the core things. At each of the three locations our involvement as Tourism Tasmania has been different because they are different issues. Bruny, being part of the Kingborough Council, is an area we know has growing tourism visitation. Because of that and perceptions around that, some issues have been raised with us which came from the BIAG, up to Kingborough Council and from Kingborough Council across to us as the State Government. So we are part-way through with Kingborough Council in particular - we have also referred with Parks and Wildlife and DIER as the two other main agencies involved - to understand where there may be tourism infrastructure issues on Bruny Island, or at least as perceived by the local community, and then look at the range of options that there may be to help resolve those issues.

One of the things that is not in the scope of our work is the ferry itself and the Kettering side; it is only to do with the Bruny Island side. Three issues have come up from the BIAG to council and in our discussions with council. There have been many issues raised by the community. The vast majority of them have some process underway to resolve them and are not particularly to do with tourism and visitation. Three have been refined as ones that we are currently looking at.

One is the Bruny Island side at Roberts Point and how the carpark queue comes to the ferry. There has been a little shop outlet and things in that area. One is at the Neck, which is the main point of interest for tourists because of the penguins and things. There is quite limited geographical ability to change things because of the road and the car parking and the Neck itself. We are working with Parks and Wildlife as well on that. The other is Adventure Bay, which is more to do with the jetty and jetty infrastructure. That is probably slightly different from the scope you are potentially looking at, but they are the things that we are looking at due to the issues that have been raised to us through community and council.

Most of our work has sat in that area and we recognise and understand that there are other parts of government doing work with the Kettering side, and the ferry responsibility sits with another part of government.

Flinders and King islands fall into quite different categories in terms of what we are doing and have been doing with them, both being councils in their own right. We are part of the councils and State Government partnership agreement and so we have had ongoing relationships with both councils in terms of how to work. Both have quite different interests and involvement in tourism, which is not unusual. All the councils have different sectors of the economy that they see as the key drivers.

Flinders is the one that we have been most active with. I am sure you're probably very familiar with the issues at Flinders, but Flinders has a diminishing population. It has dropped down to about 850, which it puts it at a critical point in terms of the skills, population base and ability to do anything and everything, whether it is health services or a whole variety of things. Back in 2008, with Economic Development, we started to seriously look at sustainable development issues for the island. Part of the reason is that, over time, fishing has become less important for the island. They don't have very many fishing boats ported there any more.

CHAIR - We heard there were two - in evidence this morning.

Ms ELLIS - That is right, yes, and obviously they were - I cannot say right now - but they have been in long-term drought and so the actual farming side has become much more difficult on the island as well.

Tourism in the past probably has not been seen as the main economic driver, going quite a way back, but increasingly is being seen by the islands as something that they do have to engage with and are interested in engaging with to take them forward. In fact we have that because we have done with the council host population surveys to see what the host population's view of tourism and future tourism growth is and it has come back from Flinders very positively. So we got involved with working with the council and had a key agreement about the courses to look at to take the island further forward.

From tourism's point of view, there are a couple of those things that were critical. One of them was that nobody knew how many people came on and off the island. There were no visitation records at all. Part of it is the complexity that they have a number of airports and charters going in and out, and it isn't that simple to do.

We have also been looking at a zone marketing and bringing them into a new tourism approach for zone marketing. We looked at and identified the need for an economic community development position for the council and that position has now been filled. The rest of the scope of it was looking at a vision for the Lady Barron port area to improve efficiencies and visual amenity. That work is ongoing with council and Economic Development getting the local government partnership agreement going again and looking at a skill development attraction program across the island. Only some of those ended up being Tourism Tasmania's responsibilities; some were Economic Development or council took the lead in it.

We have been continually working on some major marketing approaches with them and that is ongoing work. We have had food tourism workshops with specialists going across to try to build their agricultural and tourism base - a bit like Kangaroo Island does.

Probably the main piece of work that I can contribute today is that we did do a serious

piece of work on understanding the visitation to the island and that research has now just, as of almost last week, I think, been drafted and done. I am happy to share it and give a copy. It is probably slightly in-confidence because I think the minister has not launched it yet and it hasn't been approved up the channel so it would be taken as a draft but I cannot anticipate that it will change a great deal. So I am happy to share it with you in those circumstances, to say that I am sure that in a week or so it will be official.

Mrs FORREST - Maybe tomorrow when the Premier is over there.

Ms ELLIS - It gave us a huge insight into how many people are there on holiday, how many are visiting friends and relatives, what is the purpose of going to Flinders and how many people are actually going on and off Flinders - business, employment, special interest, et cetera - and how long are they staying and are they principally coming from Victoria - what is the source - or are they from Tasmania. So that has all been cut out into that and gives you much better view.

One of the reasons that we did this is that Tourism Tasmania works heavily on driving or improving access, if you like, to the State and around the State, and we recognise that to make the business cases to allow our new route development or to increase the capacity in different places, you need to have a business case - you have to have the data to back it up - and Flinders, whether they were putting in for a grant or whether they were trying to make a case to an airline, had no data to base anything on. So this is the primary piece of work that the council and the tourism association are now going to take to help them start to build business cases around access because they have a base for it.

The other thing that we have been working with them and encouraging them to do is to look at the infrastructure, so you have to know the number of bed nights and know the capacity et cetera so that you can make your cases, so it is a very fundamental piece of work hopefully that will allow us to move forward. It goes across a whole year because we have to do the seasons, so it takes time and effort to put it together.

That probably summarises that piece for Flinders. The other thing we have been doing is that we have an aviation expert that we use at Tourism Tasmania. He's not an employee of ours because we need an aviation expert who stays embedded in that industry. We have had him look at and just have some broad discussions to understand both the Flinders and the King situation better to see whether there is the capacity; where and how we could easily improve things. We sat down with him after he'd done some interviews and worked with the council and the industry association over there and gave feedback and they've agreed to a number of processes to try to improve things.

CHAIR - For both islands?

Ms ELLIS - Both islands. We did them both separately. With Flinders, for instance, they are looking and wishing to talk about things like using the business case. Now that they have the data, they can develop it to say, 'What about long weekends backwards and forwards to Melbourne?'; how would they construct that to allow the community to have a weekend away in Melbourne and how would you do the back filling and drive the visitation with a small festival on Flinders. It's not a solution to everything but it would allow them to pick up and do things.

So we talked through quite a range of very practical options that didn't require significant amounts of either the infrastructure or really long-term dreams that were unlikely to come to fruition.

CHAIR - Claire, in your opinion, does King Island already gravitate towards Victoria?

Ms ELLIS - Both King and Flinders do to some extent. If we're talking about leisure visitation, King Island does more so and in fact the majority of visitors to and from King Island are business, not visitation, not leisure; so they're all visitors but they're not leisure. Because King has had some significant other businesses on it, when we have talked about tourism it's probably not seen as quite such a significant priority as Flinders Island who don't have as many alternatives. So you can understand with King Island, for instance, and aviation access issues the discussion is very much about things such as whether the mine will reopen and what would be the impact of the mine on the local population and on aviation, which is a very significant piece of work in consideration. Tourism is therefore sometimes a good supplement but not at the same priority as a consideration from Flinders and Flinders Council and the tourism association because obviously on King Island all those business visitors are using the accommodation and the sort of formal parts of tourism just as a leisure visitor would. So the perspectives of the two are quite different.

Ms FORREST - One of the issues for tourism on King Island is the cost of air fares to get there, particularly from Tasmania. It's cheaper to go to Victoria and also you've got a bigger plane with a toilet on the plane, you've got that sort of thing that does make a difference to people, but also there is no sea access at all unless you've got your own boat to go over to King Island. Do you think those are areas that should be addressed or do you think it would not make a big difference?

Ms ELLIS - To some extent, it is hard to say. On King Island it is a bit of a chicken and an egg in that both King and Flinders have significant infrastructural problems in terms of the quality and the amount of accommodation. So while you can increase capacity, if there is nowhere to stay or nowhere to stay that you would like to stay, you will not increase visitation just because you've increased capacity. And of course a new investor says, 'I want to see the capacity before I turn around and build a 50-bed hotel or even a 20-bed hotel'. So it is a difficult situation.

Generally sea access is not used or preferred by tourists. Often they prefer to fly there easily and stay that way. For instance, if you look at Tasmania, the majority of visitors to Tasmania come by air. TT-Line is a very small percentage in that total visitation to Tasmania. Sometimes it's partly based on cost and sometimes it's based on time and different visitors will have a different basis for it but it's quite common, for instance, even with the TT-Line that someone might put their car on and fill it up with the gear for the kids but the kids and Mum fly over and they don't all come on TT-Line. But every visitor is different in that regard.

Ms FORREST - Do you think that tourism would be enhanced on King Island, though, if you had the capacity to travel with your vehicle and have your own vehicle over there? You can hire cars over there.

Ms ELLIS - I am not convinced. If you asked me what would be the priority of things to work on most which would make the biggest, quickest change for an amount of money, I would not say that is high on the list.

Ms FORREST - Do you think the cost of air transport is a prohibiting factor, and to what degree?

Ms ELLIS - Cost always comes into everyone's consideration set. However, having said that, if the location is sufficiently attractive people will go there, and King Island does not have a lot of accommodation so you are not having to fill a Gold Coast, for instance. What you find is that people interested in their passion and niche - which might be fishing or diving, for instance, with King Island - will travel there and the cost is not a key determining factor. They are people who are relatively well travelled and can go where they like. There is a big source market out of Victoria in particular, but also New South Wales, where it is close access, and if you were looking at both Flinders and King and asking how would you most quickly improve tourism to both locations, it would be by driving the mainland market directly to those locations.

CHAIR - Has your consultant done any work on air travel to Bruny Island?

Ms ELLIS - No.

CHAIR - Do you intend to use that?

Ms ELLIS - No. Part of the reason is small planes can go to a number of things. He is more of a large-scale aviation person and the issues to do with airports, even what planes are currently available, is the realm of his work. Bruny may be a charter business. It could be a small business out of Cambridge with a different set of issues and decision-making, but we haven't looked at it.

CHAIR - I know when you leave from further down, from the Launceston Airport, to go to Whitemark, if you came off a plane that came into Launceston Airport I do not think you would necessarily be able to wheel your bag and get yourself onto the Airlines of Tasmania. Has there been some thought about how to make that more streamlined?

Ms ELLIS - We have had quite a bit of discussion on it, as much with council and the community, and I probably don't know all the details to be able to fill in all of it but there are two issues. If you look at it superficially, everyone says, 'Oh, yes, it would be so much better if the Flinders Airport was not that kilometre down the road', because we have probably all been in the situation where you have had to get from one to the other. However, by bringing it back up into the Launceston Airport the Flinders community when they go back and forth to their island would have to pay for car parking or have a different car parking situation because it is part of the major Launceston Airport. That is a problem for them, as they have told us. In addition, you go through screening and baggage and X-ray and a whole range of different things that are now part of normal airport security, and different arrangements. And the Flinders community has again said, 'Oh, no, we don't want that bit'.

CHAIR - 'We want to turn up five minutes before the plane is leaving'.

Ms ELLIS - And flexibility of the different situation that sits at a more local level airport has been preferred. That has come to us through council, and how broadly that perspective sits across the community I can't say but we are just taking what the council as the community representatives, if you like, have told us. So there are pluses and minuses and some quite significant changes that would also occur if you did that, I gather, under current airport security and airport arrangements, and different costings for people.

Mr HARRISS - I was wanting to go back to the Bruny scenario and what role Tourism Tasmania intends to play, has played or could play in regard to a more advanced survey and assessment of visitor intentions or visitor desires, if you like, because the committee had put to it yesterday the notion of a foot ferry from somewhere in Hobart to their proposition, Dennes Point. Then you cater for, potentially, interstate and overseas visitors who are staying in Hobart because that's where they want to stay; they want a one-day experience but they might not have a hire car or whatever. So they jump on a ferry here, disembark somewhere on Bruny Island and then get ferried around on a bus. There is potential for that to alleviate the congestion on the vehicular ferry. So the question really is, Claire, I think, do you think Tourism Tasmania has a role to play in somehow surveying the current visitors to Bruny Island as to whether, if such a facility were available to them, they might take advantage of it and somehow try to build this case to support or squash a proposition such as that?

Ms ELLIS - There is a range of different ideas that come to us from investors, developers and sometimes other parts of government; all sorts of ideas about things that could or might work for tourists, and what we encourage, if they get more serious and start to develop their business case, is that they do some market testing. We have a strong research section and we are happy to give advice on how to structure up good market research. It can be quite difficult to ask people about what they might like because you have to look at price points, you've got to do some quite serious research methodology, usually, for it to have any validity otherwise you're asking people either a socially biased question or something where they say, 'Oh, that'd be lovely', but does it mean they are likely to do it? It's hard to say. So quite often from our experience, the research - and this can vary enormously because it depends on how you structure it up - often it can sit at around \$30 000 to \$40 000, at least to do. What we do is generally encourage our business investors and developers who are thinking of setting up a new business to very seriously undertake the rigour to know whether their business is likely to be successful and to work out price points properly to help their business case because invariably they then have to go to the bank about, for instance, buying a boat or whatever they're looking to do.

Mr HARRISS - So you could be a partner in terms of providing advice as to -

Ms ELLIS - We provide advice, yes.

Mr HARRISS - sourcing some better information rather than just good guesses.

Ms ELLIS - Yes, and we do have a very sound base of data but our data is things like our Tasmanian Visitor Survey which does only look at interstate and international, so, for instance, it may be that people are looking at those figures and the changes and they're wanting to get more information about intrastate or potentially about shack owners going

backwards and forwards to Bruny or whatever. Then we would give advice on how to think through some research and how to approach some of those questions.

Mr HARRISS - Certainly the various groups who take an interest in tourism on Bruny Island would contend that the attractiveness of the island is becoming more widely known and yet, looking at your figures, the overnight stay really hasn't changed - sorry, it's about in line with what's happening in Tasmania generally. That's the total overnight, but then there's the total nights on the island which has taken a real leap at 48 per cent over a five-year period whereas the Tasmanian experience for that is only a 14 per cent jump over the five-year period. It seems to indicate that it's becoming an increasingly desirable destination.

Ms ELLIS - Basically what happens with small bases - and Bruny overnight is certainly a small base if you're talking statistically - is that there certainly have been new accommodations being established and obviously they are then marketing themselves to make sure that they get occupancy. Yes, it does create a significant jump in a statistic like that when you're looking at it.

I have to say we have been lucky; a number of places around the State have had very good, strong growth in tourism and the State as a whole has continued to grow, which is very unlike the trend of many parts of regional Australia. So we have continued to do well.

Mr HARRISS - As your figures show, a 32 per cent increase over that five-year period for Tasmania is pretty substantial. Has Tourism Tasmania identified whether King, Flinders or Bruny do have the capacity or the potential to expand rapidly? What is your overall assessment?

Ms ELLIS - We obviously do look at these things right across the whole State. The difficulty is that you need, if you like, the investor to decide that they want to build a new experience or product and to have the associated infrastructure to go with it, which can be accommodation, supermarkets, petrol stations et cetera. Undoubtedly we believe that there is significant potential for growth and some areas at the moment get a lot of attention, the Tarkine, for instance, as an area that may be able to be a significant attracter, and in some cases you would say the associated servicing, and so the investment and development, may sit in service towns along the coast. So if you are looking at Bruny or we are looking at the Tasman or different places here in Tasmania, there is a difference between driving day visitation and the issues with the local economy and the infrastructure that is needed and driving overnight. They are quite different in the resources that have to go into driving that growth because overnight obviously needs accommodation and a variety of other services that usually come with people staying there for longer than overnight - they need a restaurant to eat in or they need to be able to access food et cetera - versus day visitation which can have a very different impact and a very different set of needs to growing overnight stays.

CHAIR - Claire, one of our submissions referred to a report or a study done by Professor Margaret Deery.

Ms ELLIS - Yes, on the host impacts.

CHAIR - This particular organisation was keen to look at that particular report. You have provided some information. Is it a public document?

Ms ELLIS - It is on the web site. It is on the Tourism Research Australia web site, I believe, because they actually paid for it. It was some work done that we did with our Australian body. We trialled about two or three years ago a process for understanding the social impact of visitation in different locations. We started with Coles Bay and we have recently done five locations and Bruny, King and Flinders were all included. I can double-check that and send you by e-mail the web site connection, if you like.

CHAIR - That would be excellent. It would be good to have that. Claire, we will more than likely take an opportunity, after we have assessed what we have to this point, to have another conversation at a later time. We thank you for today. Is there anything else that you would like to share?

Ms ELLIS - No. The questions that you have put about the potential for growth are always really complicated in terms of making sure that you have that investment potential. I think many parts of Tasmania have enormous potential if they were developed appropriately, both for the contemporary visitor so they are attractive to come to, and appropriately in a sustainable sense for the community et cetera. Being able to do that and having the investment dollars to do that is a different issue, and sometimes obviously it is the priority of the investor in terms of determining where they want to put their money, and so you get that constant set of dichotomies, I guess.

CHAIR - Thank you very much, Claire. We appreciate your time.

Ms ELLIS - That's all right. No problem.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.