

**THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS MET AT
THE MEANDER VALLEY CENTRE FOR HEALTH AND WELL BEING,
LANDSDOWNE PLACE, DELORAINÉ ON WEDNESDAY 9 OCTOBER 2002.**

CRADLE MOUNTAIN TOURIST ROAD

ROBERT TYSON, PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE; **MILAN PRODANOVIC**, CHIEF TRAFFIC ENGINEER, DEPARTMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE, ENERGY AND RESOURCES WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED. **PETER TODD** AND **LEIGH BARRETT** WERE RECALLED AND RE-EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Harriss) - At the adjournment of the committee last time around, Mr Wing was the chairman and he was authorised by the committee, as then constituted, to undertake some further investigations on behalf of the committee at that stage. So we have invited him to join us today and provide a report to this committee. We would like to commence the proceedings by inviting Mr Wing to join us at the table and provide the report, following his further deliberations on behalf of the committee.

Mr WING - Mr Chairman and members of the committee, as requested and authorised by the committee when it last met at Cradle Mountain, I contacted Professor Colin O'Flaherty who is an engineer with academic and also practical experience. He has written books on road building and bridge construction, which is his speciality. He spent about two hours with me, looked at the detailed plans and gave quite a lot of consideration to the matter. He pointed out that he could not accept a consultancy because he wasn't in practice and didn't have any insurance coverage - he has retired from his academic positions. He was happy to give his time to provide the opinions, which I have been authorised to inform the committee of. He has authorised me to say this as his opinion. I have written a report, which you have, Mr Chairman, and it reads:

'Professor Colin O'Flaherty, spent some two hours studying the plans and allied documents for this project. He has authorised me to say that the proposal probably would work. He would expect it to work in terms of slowing down traffic, reducing speeds. However, as it is a new development for Australia, he felt it would probably be desirable for the committee to receive independent expert advice to reassure itself regarding the safety implications of this new design. He pointed out that the committee has received assurances from the government safety audit review but it would have reassurance from an independent review of the safety implications.

Professor O'Flaherty said that, in view of the Government's public responsibility to provide safe road designs, it could not be accused of introducing an unreasonable measure if it has taken the precaution of having its safety audit independently checked.'

That is what he has authorised me to say.

Mr Chairman, I might take the opportunity to express some views of my own as a private citizen of Tasmania. I visit Cradle Mountain quite often, and have done for some years. I also take visitors there and in the last two years we have had picnic lunches on the banks of Dove Lake with overseas visitors I have been entertaining. That is always very enjoyable. I wouldn't feel that I would be able to do this - certainly not in the same way and probably only rarely - if private motor vehicles are restricted from travelling from Cradle Mountain Lodge and the interpretation centre to Dove Lake. I think this is relevant: although the committee is asked to deal only with the road project, it seems apparent from the totality of the evidence that it is intended that this be part of an overall plan for the area. It seems that the overall plan for the area at this stage, or when the committee last met, also involved a walkway from the interpretation centre down near to Dove Lake with some services - sewerage and water - being placed under the wooden walkway and also it seems that it at least is being considered very heavily closing the road that you are dealing with in the project to private vehicles for at least most of the time, when people would be required to travel by bus from the interpretation centre to Dove Lake. All those matters are also under active consideration

Personally, as a member of the committee I was finding it difficult to deal with the road project in isolation knowing that it was likely to be part of an overall plan involving the other factors and maybe some others. It seemed to me, and I know it seemed to other people who have given evidence, that the only satisfactory way to deal with the road project was to have an overall plan prepared so everybody knows what is intended to be done in this area so that every aspect of the various projects can be considered in relation to each other. I feel it is very difficult to do justice to the situation by dealing with one in isolation. As it seems that there is at least a feeling in some quarters that the road should be closed most of the time at least, for private vehicles, I feel that is a problem. As a citizen of Tasmania I would find it a problem. I would be reluctant to take visitors to Tasmania there, knowing that they would have to get out of my car and, if we were intending to have a picnic, take the picnic things on a bus and then get off the bus at Dove Lake and have the picnic, then have to wait for the next bus to come and then get on the bus back to the Interpretation Centre or wherever the base is then repack the car and go from the area. I would find that a rigmarole that I would not want to be doing. I would not feel that was convenient or comfortable, even in fine weather. But in wet weather it would be most unpleasant to get out of a comfortable car, get into a bus, repack everything, get out of the bus at Dove Lake, and after the bus had gone, if it started to rain heavily, find there is no protection. You cannot just get back in your car as you can now and it would certainly deter me from taking people there or even visiting alone.

Through Tourism Tasmania, Cradle Mountain is one of the tourist icons being heavily promoted to encourage visitors to Tasmania. I think it would be a retrograde step, quite counter-productive, if a measure were taken which discouraged people from visiting Cradle Mountain. If it is a drawcard to bring people to Tasmania and then we set up a measure which discourages people from going there or places inconvenience on them once they are there, even if they don't realise that before, it does seem to be counter-productive to the efforts of another department and not in the best interests of using a tourist asset to the best advantage. But the difficulty, Mr Chairman, is that your committee is not dealing with the question of road closure. Although it is relevant to your considerations, it is peripheral to it. Because of the evidence you have received -

and at least some witnesses have given evidence that this is favoured for certain reasons - it is a relevant matter for you to take into account as a committee, even though that part of the project is not before you. But I think members of the committee will be aware that it is difficult for you to deal with this particular project when there is no overall plan and I think it is a matter of the cart before the horse.

So I thank you for the opportunity to express those views purely as a citizen of Tasmania and one who has made a practice of visiting Cradle Mountain on a regular basis. I have concerns about the walking track. People go to Cradle Mountain and want to walk. I doubt if they would want to walk along the less interesting section between the Interpretation Centre and close to Dove Lake; they would want to get up in the mountains and into the wilderness and bushwalking experience. I have a concern about the services being placed under the proposed wooden walking track because of the climatic conditions and the risk of freezing of the liquids and the water passing through there. Although we have heard some evidence that measures would be taken to counter that, those measures would be less likely to be necessary, I think, if the services were underground, even running close to roadway. Thank you very much for the opportunity to express those views.

CHAIR - Thank you, for that, Mr Wing. Just quickly, the matter of the walkway in fact will be a consideration for this committee in about a month's time. So that is a separate issue even though the committee, as you'll recall, discussed the matter at some length when we last met because we were advised about it being part of the overall redevelopment of the precinct. So that will be something which we will be considering at another time. That is an issue which again, as a citizen, you are quite at liberty to make a submission on if you wish. But, yes, it is your recollection, like ours, that we did discuss it at length last time but it is a matter for a separate submission to the committee. Can we thank you for the advice you provided because the committee authorised you, as I said at the outset, to seek that information. We have that plus your own private views. Does any committee member have a question for the President at this stage, following that evidence having been provided?

Mr BEST - What you are saying in essence is that you see the road project as part of some changes of people's access, and you are saying that you have concerns as to how that affects tourism in the State, the lifestyle of ordinary Tasmanians, and a safety issue in a sense with the lake. If you were to unpack, how long would you be there before the bus came, if it started to snow or something?

Mr WING - I was not concerned about that aspect, but I am pleased you have raised the question of the safety aspect, because I did not actually directly refer to my views on the road. Certainly the design is an interesting one that would slow traffic down. As one who has been interested in road safety - and I chaired the select committee of the Legislative Council on Road Safety in Tasmania some years ago - I have an apprehension with that, the repeated widening and narrowing of the road, two lanes to one, two to one, two to one - and I forget how many times that occurs now; it might be 19, or it might be more, as many as 29 - there may be some occasions when motorists who are approaching each other from the opposite direction, each anxious to get onto the narrow one-lane section before the other, will be speeding up to try to get there first, with the risk of some collision. But I am certainly not an expert on that. It is a bit like single-lane bridges, I suppose. I understand that there have not been many accidents like that in

relation to single-lane bridges, so I may be over-apprehensive about it, but it is a concern that I have.

But my overall concern is that there seemed to be a number of plans in the pipeline for this total area and, in my view, each aspect of it should be coordinated, and the overall plan should be developed and finalised before any part of the project goes ahead, so that when the committee, for example, is dealing with the road project it knows what is proposed about the walking track and whether private vehicles are going to be prevented from using the road. Thus as the committee considers each individual part of the project, it does so in the full knowledge of what is proposed overall, rather than dealing with the matters piecemeal. It seems that it is being dealt with departmentally in dribs and drabs.

You mentioned, Mr Chairman, that your committee will be dealing with the track. Twelve months ago when we as a committee were dealing with the road project there were no final plans for the track. I think it would be helpful for the committee to know what is proposed and whether private vehicles are going to be stopped from going there, because that has an impact on the design.

Mr BEST - Just one point of interest - I am not sure if you would have discussed this with Professor O'Flaherty. If you did discuss this - because we understand the design we are looking at is in the context of small vehicles using the road - did he express a view as to whether or not it was a suitable or a sensible design for buses only? Would you design something different if you were going to bus-only as opposed to other vehicles?

Mr WING - He may have expressed some view on that at the time. It is probably close to 12 months ago that I had the discussion with him -

CHAIR - Probably a little less.

Mr WING - or probably a little less than that. I do not have a date here, but I was not primarily asking him about that; it was just about the road design. Because it was some months since we had discussed it, I telephoned him yesterday and asked what form of words he would like me to give to the committee. These are his words that he has authorised me to give, but I do not have any clear recollection of whether he expressed any views some months ago about that particular aspect.

Mr BEST - No, I am just interested in whether we are looking at something that relates to what we believe it relates to, but which in fact has a different intention. But I guess we will get to that a bit further down the track.

Mr WING - I am not sure whether the design that the committee is looking at is designed with a view to not accommodating private vehicles but only buses, or whether it is designed otherwise. But in my view, with respect, the point you raise is very valid and relevant.

CHAIR - Any further questions.

Mr HALL - I just make the point that the issue that Mr Wing raised in regard to looking at the whole issue in totality is well supported by the letter from the Kentish Council and also by Bob Graham.

CHAIR - So who from the delegation is now going to lead the next session?

Mr TODD - I am prepared to do that, Mr Chairman, if you wish. At the conclusion of the last hearing the committee requested a range of information. The department then undertook to prepare a report which was provided to the committee, and the principal components of that report relate to the design philosophy, the approvals and standards that have been applied there, the consultation, with a further consultation that the committee requested with staff at the Parks and Wildlife Service, and then a section on traffic efficiency, safety and operation. I notice that one of the particular questions raised by Mr Wing today in terms of numbers of single-lane areas and so on is covered in the report as requested by the committee at the last meeting.

If I might start in reverse in one sense, I need to go back just to refresh the discussion we had at the first hearing. Really this project is principally about protecting the environment from the run-off and contamination that is occurring because of the unsealed road and the risk of the importation of phytophthora and other diseases that could affect that area. In fact what we are proposing in terms of the design is really formalising what is already happening. We are bringing together a number of the single-lane and the double-lane sections to make those longer and more continuous, and if you refer to the report in fact in appendix A, the second page, you will see that the single-lane sections constitute 40 per cent of the length of the road, so the rest is double or two lanes. That was one of the issues.

What we then did was utilise a modelling technique - and I might ask Leigh Barrett to talk about this in a moment - to work out when the road would become saturated. This is a fairly technical input and we utilised the traffic volumes that were supplied to us by Parks and Wildlife. If you turn to page 9 of the supplementary report, in 4.7 it talks about the maximum degree of saturation being attained of 12.5 per cent which is anticipated in 25 years, which is within the very good range, so our modelling indicates that even in a 25-year period if the road continued to be used as it is now with the growth that is anticipated it still would not have reached saturation. Mr Barrett might be able to answer some of the more technical questions about the modelling, but that is the conclusion. So the design is not contingent at all on excluding light vehicles. It is robust with respect to that issue. That may be an issue that others might have, but it is certainly not one that as a road-owner we have considered to be a problem in terms of reducing the volumes of traffic and the saturation that might be created on the road. The modelling indicates that the current design will, for a 25-year period at least, be capable of coping with the traffic volume.

CHAIR - Mr Barrett, is there anything you wanted to add to that, given that Mr Todd has provided an introduction. Did you want to elucidate anything in the report? We have all had a copy of that supplementary report and are familiar with the contents of it.

Mr BARRETT - All I might add, Mr Chairman, is just a brief summary of the method of analysis. We chose five locations along the road which we considered would be the most likely sections to cause any traffic problems - where the one-lane sections are at their longest, where you have short two-lane sections adjacent to them and you might find queuing could possibly extend longer than the actual length of the two-lane section back into a one-lane section, which would then cause a bottleneck in the road. We chose

five sections along the road which we considered were the worst or the most likely to cause any problem if a problem did occur. We took the traffic data which was provided to us by the Parks and Wildlife Service and analysed that data to find the maximum traffic flow for any given hour from that data, and that worked out to be 122 vehicles in an hour - that is two-way traffic - with approximately a 52:48 per cent split, so the flows were approximately equal in each direction. We took those volumes and then increased them to look at what the traffic volumes would be like in five years, 10 years, 15, 20 and 25 years, allowing a 3 per cent growth rate every year, as 3 per cent is a State-assumed average increase in traffic, which is probably an overestimation, so we are looking at the worst case scenario. We are still being ultraconservative, trying to look at what could be the worst traffic case possible. Looking at 25 years from current traffic data would give a 12.5 per cent degree of saturation, so it would not cause any traffic congestion at all.

In appendix C at the back of the report you will notice that we have the results of the analysis split into five sections on the road where we've analysed - 'a', 'b', 'c', 'd' and 'e' - and for each of those you have the five, 10, 15, 20 and 25 years with the results giving queue length and degree of saturation. That queue length is a theoretical length; you don't get 0.7 of a vehicle 5 metres long, but that figure represents the queue length in which 95 per cent of the time vehicles would be less than that length. So it's just indicating there that for a significant amount of time there wouldn't be any queue at all. You need to have a one-vehicle queue or no vehicle. It shows that for this limited amount of time there would be no queuing at all. That's how we come to have a fraction of a vehicle. Throughout that analysis the longest queue length is 1.7 vehicles: 95 per cent of time the queue length will be less than that and only 5 per cent of the time would that queue length be exceeded. That is when you have the maximum amount of big traffic using the road which, again, is a very small fraction of the total time throughout the year and which would possibly occur probably only once over a one hour period over the whole year. This is really looking at the worst case scenario.

I might add something that wasn't provided to the committee. Mr Nevard and I discussed another scenario which wasn't in this analysis and I have e-mailed Mr Nevard some thoughts on this analysis and if the committee would like me to read it out it would give you a better feel as a road user what you would expect; it's a little bit more than just cold numbers on a page. It would give you more of a feel what it would be like if you were driving on the road - what you would see.

The e-mail reads - 'Tim. Had a look through the traffic counts. I have seen that the peak one-way volume was 93 vehicles' - that's 93 vehicles per hour - 'to give a feel for what this would be like for someone travelling in the opposite direction' - so you're travelling against that 93 vehicles - 'I've done some calculations. These are based on taking about 15 minutes to travel from one end to the other - just over seven kilometres. The first vehicle you would meet would've left the other end 15 minutes prior to your starting, and the last vehicle you meet would have left from the other end 15 minutes after you've started. So this means you've met all the vehicles starting in a half-hour period; that is, half of the peak hour traffic - approximately 46 and a half vehicles - you'd meet as you travelled along the just over seven kilometres.

Assuming that they are evenly spaced out and with the two-lane sections accounting for 60 per cent of the total length, you'd expect to meet 60 per cent of the oncoming traffic in two-lane sections and 40 per cent in one-lane sections. These are averages; it's not a

rigorous analysis, it's just to give a feel for what amount of traffic would be likely to travel the road. So you would expect to meet possibly 18.6, say 19, vehicles in one-lane sections, half of which you would have to give way and half of which would have to give way to you. So you can expect to give way to nine vehicles. In some cases you'll be able to see the oncoming vehicle in the one-lane section from far enough back from the start of the one-lane section so that you would be able to modify your travelling speed so that you do not have to stop to give way but merely slow down and pull into the one lane section as the other vehicle passes by. As a result of this you could expect to stop, say, seven of those nine times to give way to oncoming vehicles. That's approximately once every nine one-lane sections, given that there are 66 one-lane sections in total.

Doing the same calculations on the normal peak hour one-way traffic for January of 60 vehicles gives a result of having to stop five times, or once every 13 one-lane sections. Outside the peak hour, traffic volumes were down considerably and 20 vehicles per hour one way was not uncommon. Doing the same calculations on this gives a result of expecting to stop only once or twice on the whole length of road. That's just to give a feel for someone who is going against the flow of traffic and meeting a large number of oncoming vehicles - relatively large for the road.

Mr HALL - So in peak hour that was seven times? In peak traffic times seven times to give way, I think. Or approximately?

Mr BARRETT - On average. That's an average of approximately seven times. You might have to stop a couple of times more; you might have to stop a couple of times less. But seven would be the number of times you'd expect to stop. Let's say approximately once a kilometre, given it's seven kilometres.

Mr BEST - Can I just ask how would that factor in with tourist buses with those lengths?

Mr TODD - The only buses that are allowed on that road are the Maxwells buses which are a smaller, 28-seater bus, so -

Mr BEST - You've got no interstate tourist coaches?

Mr TODD - No, they're not permitted past the re. These are smaller - 18-seater or something of that order.

Mr TYSON - I think some are even smaller.

Mr BEST - How many of those a day?

Mr TYSON - Probably on a peak day we have nine big coaches, so each of those result in two of the Maxwell mini-coaches, and you'd also have at least probably another half dozen other operators of buses. So 25 to 30 mini-buses would be a peak day.

Mr BEST - When you say 30, that's both ways you're saying?

Mr TYSON - No, that's individual buses, so it's 60 up and back.

Mr BEST - So 60 bus movements?

Mr TYSON - That's the peak.

Mr BEST - In summer?

Mr TYSON - Yes.

CHAIR - Anything else regarding the submission?

Mr TODD - The other issue was that of safety. I believe that in section 4(11) and 4(12) we recorded the comments of Mr Prodanovic, the civil traffic engineer from the department; the committee was after that information as well. So that has been included in there.

CHAIR - And the committee did resolve at an earlier time to in fact require Mr Prodanovic to either provide evidence or answer questions, so is there any evidence which Mr Prodanovic wants to share with the committee?

Mr PRODANOVIC - I think it's just in terms of how I see this project from a traffic viewpoint. Obviously there's an issue of the environment and ending up with a service. But in terms of the level of the traffic side, there are probably two aspects. One is the capacity of the road. We've heard some evidence in terms of how it is seen to perform and complementing with the analysis that had been undertaken. I see no problem with that side. The other side is obviously the safety side and in that regard I at an early stage indicated what I thought was necessary in terms of a motorists exiting and entering the one-way sections along the road.

In that regard, I see the measures that are necessary aren't being provided for. In my mind there is still a little bit of detail to be resolved to fully satisfy me about entry and exit arrangements. As an extreme, you have the bays on one side; a motorist going down in the one direction that hasn't got any bays on it might be able to assume now the right-of-way and that sort of thing, but Mr Wing has indicated that there might be some tendency to jump in if the design goes into the one-way - if it were done differently, if I could put it that way - and there is in fact sort of an entry more into what seems to be the territory of the opposing traffic, then there may be more caution undertaken by those motorists. I think those sorts of elements are provided for if there is appropriate signage.

Obviously in view of the environment, I am satisfied there are safety issues that need to be addressed. Certainly it is a somewhat unique design that I am aware of, in terms of deliberate design. I think I came across one or two very minor roads somewhere in the State some years ago that may have had a similar arrangement, but just ad hoc; I can't even remember where they were. Overall, personally I am confident in this working; it is a matter of balancing a sealed-surface road that will tend to generate higher speeds with a design appropriate for that area that will create more of a stop-start situation as much as possible.

CHAIR - Okay, thank you. Any questions?

Mr HALL - Obviously a coroner's report was done, and this committee hasn't seen that yet. Are you at liberty to explain what the findings were in regard to the road safety aspects?

Mr TODD - Mr Chairman, I feel a little reticent to do that; it is certainly not my field of expertise. The findings were handed down on 17 May and I have a copy of the decision of the coroner, but I don't feel personally competent to comment on all of those matters. I wonder whether it would be better if the committee took a copy of that, if the committee so wishes to consider it. I would rather table that than actually make a comment on it.

CHAIR - Okay.

Mr HALL - Notwithstanding your comment about that and that you had a copy of the coroner's findings, with regard to the safety let's focus our attention on the point of the accident. Can you recall what the coroner said about that particular part?

Mr TODD - My recollection - and it needs to be seen only as a recollection - is that the safety barriers that have now been put in place following the accident are satisfactory and meet the comments made by the coroner. I am not sure whether he referred to it explicitly, but that was certainly the implication I drew from reading the findings. From that, I understand that the issues in terms of drops off the road has now been addressed on the whole length of the road and, following the accident and the safety audit that we had done, we implemented the recommendations of that audit.

Mr HALL - Obviously that is going to take a while to digest. Can I just put another point to the Department? And looking holistically at the whole management plan, as Mr Wing talked about the road perhaps in isolation of some of the other things that eventually may occur. Did the Department ever consider - and I am just putting this forward as devil's advocate here - as an interim measure - and I am referring to the road's surface and I think we talked about environmental damage in terms of phytophthora, that dust may be causing to flora-

Here I just digress a little: in the Meander Valley we had a lot of dust problems on our country roads. What our works people then moved to what is known as Brambles' scouts, which is a gravel which Brambles use. We roll that heavily and, in terms of an engineering solution to gravel roads, it has been absolutely outstanding. The dust problem is reduced very considerably; it is a much better environmental colour, if you like, and if it is rolled and compacted when it is quite damp it is a very good surface. In fact, the only drawback is that sometimes it gets some potholes in it.

We have clearly stated that we want to retain the character of a narrow, winding road and what we have got before us is a pretty extensive engineering solution to this whole process. I wonder whether, perhaps as an interim measure, that road would be better surfaced with another material and with appropriate safety barriers put on where necessary. I understand some of that has already been done.

Mr TODD - Yes, those barriers have been put in place, Mr Chairman.

Mr HALL - I am not totally opposed to sealing I am just putting it forward as an idea if the Department does reseal the road on a regular basis. Probably every three years we do a reasonably major resurfacing with gravel material. It depends on the supply and so on of what is available and from what quarries we can actually get that material.

Mr TODD - Yes.

Mr HALL - Like I am saying, there are different qualities of gravel surface and this is something that is far superior to normal gravel.

Mr TODD - That is right. I do not recall the exact material that is used. The advantage of sealing the road, in terms of the maintenance issue, is that we will not have the potholes. We will not have to come back for 15 years and basically touch it because it will only have light vehicles on it, with some buses which are not overly heavy. So the maintenance effort will certainly be reduced with this capital injection. The method we are intending to use is bitumen foam stabilisation, which uses hot bitumen with water sprayed into it which then foams, and that is just blended with the existing materials that are already there. There will be some additional material to get some better shape in the road. So it is really utilising the material that is already there and then put a seal on it. So it will not mean bringing in lots of new material and it will mean that there will be fewer interruptions during the peak tourism season, which is really the only time that we can really get in there and work anyway.

I know it is a problem for Parks that often when we want to work on the road it is in the middle of summer when most people are trying to go in there and it is an inconvenience. So it does get around that problem.

Mr HALL - I have is one other question, Mr Chairman - and I think we have touched on this before. Is it the future intent for this road - and I think we talked about how many years to saturation? I cannot quite recall. Was it 25 years?

Mr TODD - We talked about it not reaching saturation, even in 25 years.

Mr HALL - But is it the long-term aim to not have private vehicles on that road and to simply have bus conveyance? Is that the aim?

Mr TODD - As a road manager, that is not an issue that I have been involved in and it has something that we have not considered. Perhaps I could ask Mr Tyson to address that issue.

Mr TYSON - One of the issues that we are faced with in the management of Cradle Mountain is the increasing traffic volumes and a desire not to increase the area taken up by car parks at places like Dove Lake, which is one of the main natural vistas that people are going to see. In the work that we have been doing and, more recently, in consultation with Tourism Tasmania, the Kentish Council and the Cradle Coast Authority, we have identified the need for a staged introduction of the transport system. When and if that would ever become the full-time and only available option we do not know. What we are intending to do is to trial a system this coming summer to collect some information on visitor attitudes to a shuttle bus service, but also to tie that in with the peak period. The traffic flow figures that we have suggest that there is about a 41-day period from Boxing Day through to about 9 February where we get the most heavy use. These, with some other odd days over Easter, the March long-weekend and Anzac Day, when the deciduous beech has the colour, are really the peak days. So we are looking at trialing a bus service for part of that period this year. We will also be tying that in with the end of road construction works so that we can gauge what public attitude is.

Mr HALL - When you say trial the bus service, Bob, you would actually close the access to private vehicles for a while?

Mr TYSON - Yes. The thinking at the moment is, looking at the modelling, the fine peak days. They coincide with fine weather so we cannot exactly predict when they are going to be but from past records but they are from about 10 a.m. onwards. We are still working through how we would implement this, but the feeling at present is that we would continue to have private vehicles going into the park up until 10 a.m. - and this might vary once we do the modelling. People would then be requested to go by bus. We would run that service from the airstrip, near the existing restaurant, because that is the place that has sufficient parking. The buses would then run - the numbers of buses would depend on the demand - until about 3 p.m. when the car parks within the park tend to have emptied out. So those that have gone in before 10 a.m. would gradually come out during the day. Then you would allow the private vehicles to start going in again. You would still operate your bus service because there would be people who had gone in by bus who would need to be brought out. So that is the basic skeleton of how we would operate a trial. Tied in with that, we would be putting a temporary shelter at Dove Lake so that people who are travelling by bus would have somewhere to shelter. That is also the place where we would probably administer the visitor survey - either there or as people get off the buses to gaze at the view.

Mr HALL - I think it is very important that you do that visitor survey, not just for tourists but for locals alike, such as bushwalkers like myself who still like to drive through to Dove Lake and then put the pack on and go, but come back to a private vehicle. I think from a tourism point of view you've really got to consider the fact that if tourists come up there they've got to pay a park entry fee. If you have a family and you have to pay a few more dollars per head to get in and out on a bus that may well impact upon tourists coming up there too.

Mr TYSON - Very much so. And that is something that we're aware of. The bus would be at no extra cost over the park entry fee as part of the trial to gauge what the public acceptance of it is.

Mr HALL - But you will be telling them how much a bus fare may cost though?

Mr TYSON - Yes, that's right.

Mr HALL - They're travelling free at that stage.

Mr TYSON - Exactly.

This would repeat the survey we did in 1998, I think it was, when we asked people about that at the Double A carpark. We surveyed a range of interstate, overseas and Tasmanian visitors so we would be comparing what we get this year to that original survey that was done then.

To come back to the question, we would perceive that if the numbers continue the way they are then it may well be that in 10 years time there will be a period of the year when the only way in would be by a bus service. Given the numbers, I doubt that it would be

viable to have a system that operated year round but we would need to have something just in those peak periods.

Again, in terms of trying to develop an overall plan, it's difficult to look that far into the future. Certainly in the early work that we have done, we have looked at the whole range of different types of transport. So the idea of a skyway train, a loop road - there have been a whole range of things which I guess have been almost brainstormed through rather than coming up with any finite figures. The most logical solution for the immediate future we see as being a bus service which will make use of the road either in its present form or in its upgraded form.

Mrs NAPIER - Can I just follow-up that particular issue? My understanding was the original survey that was done really didn't highlight what the cost would be of a bus service. Is it anticipated that in this survey that is about to be done you will use a figure and what would that figure be?

Mr TYSON - If it's in order, Mr Chairman, I could read the question that was asked of people. The question was:

'The real cost of providing such a service would be around \$10 per person and people would still have to pay their park entry fee. What would you consider to be a reasonable priced fare to take a shuttle bus from the visitor centre to Dove Lake and back, assuming that the fare is per person for a return trip?'

Mrs NAPIER - Did you also ask, 'Would you use it?'

Mr TYSON - Yes. We had an earlier question:

'Overcrowding is often a problem at Cradle Mountain and many people report problems with the roads and carparks. For environmental reasons the management strategy for the area rules out widening the road to cater for the large number of visitors. To deal with this problem which option would you prefer?

- (1) A full-time shuttle bus leaving from the visitor centre to replace all private vehicles.
- (2) Some cars to continue to be allowed in up the limit of spaces in the carpark with a shuttle bus to cope with excess demand on busy days.
- (3) No change. For other, please explain.'

So those two questions went together.

Mrs NAPIER - Did the charge go before that question or after it?

Mr TYSON - It came after it.

Mrs NAPIER - Isn't it possible that you might well have people that say that might well be the solution, will you pay for it?

Mr TYSON - The first question was about the preferred option. The second question was that the real cost in providing a service is \$10. What would you be prepared to pay?

So that was the questionnaire we did in 1999 and the result was that 56 per cent of respondents would pay somewhere between \$1 and \$5 per person. And then there's a lot more detail in the whole breakdown of that particular survey.

Mrs NAPIER - What's the current gestimate of what the cost is likely to be this year if you'd had to charge it?

Mr TYSON - Since doing that we have done some more work with a consultant by the name of Bernard Lynch and my recollection of the figure that he came up with for a full-time bus service was about \$6 per head.

Mrs NAPIER - One way, two ways?

Mr TYSON - Two-way. You buy a ticket and that does you for the day.

Mrs NAPIER - Gets you up and back?

Mr TYSON - Yes. I haven't got his report with me, but I would need to go back and check that but my recollection is that it was around \$6 per person is the figure he came up with if it was done particularly as a compulsory bus service. If everybody coming into the park went by bus that was the figure he calculated.

CHAIR - Mrs Napier, given that formal information, do you want that to be provided?

Mrs NAPIER - Yes, I think that'd be good.

CHAIR - That was Mr Tyson's recollection - do you want that figure -

Mrs NAPIER - I want to ask a question of Mr Barrett first -

CHAIR - Certainly but I was just wondering whether you want to formalise that?

Mrs NAPIER - just following from the point that Mr Hall was raising. On page 6 of the supplementary information you provided us with dated April 2002, you've listed there the changes to the number of one-way and two-way sections and the length of the sections and you've indicated the number of one-way sections are essentially doubled and the number of two-way sections are effectively halved and you indicated that the length of the one-way sections is to be 40 per cent so what was it previously?

Mr BARRETT - It has been very difficult to actually estimate what the existing length of the one-lane sections are because driving the road there are two-lane sections, there are one-lane sections, but there are also sections which are one-and-a-half lanes so it is difficult to say where you would actually measure. This is just a gut feel; I would expect that at the moment there would be less than 40 per cent that would be one lane, maybe of

the order of 25 to 30 per cent; the two-lane sections, I expect, would be around about what is in the design - approximately 60 per cent - and at the moment the difference between that 25 to 30 per cent and the 40 per cent would be the one-and-a-half lane sections. So effectively we have converted those one-and-a-half lane sections to one lane sections.

Mrs NAPIER - The main two-lane sections that are wide that you are reducing to one-lane sections on the premise of basically getting people to slow down, the most contentious are the Ronnie Creek to Dove Lake section, and the section that basically comes from the visitor centre - I think down to the creek or the boardwalk or something like that.

Mr BARRETT - Ronnie Creek.

Mrs NAPIER - Ronnie Creek to Dove Lake, that is the section where you take off from near the walk down the spur road.

Mr BARRETT - That's right.

Mrs NAPIER - Okay, so that is one section. The other section - a good wide two-lane road for the area that you are proposing that we reduce to a one-lane road - is the section just there at the beginning of the entrance to the park after you have been to the visitor centre. Is it just not possible to continue to provide that width but just put up some sensible signs to slow people down?

Mr BARRETT - My feeling is that they would ignore the signs and also the signs would be visually intrusive on the natural environment as well. The road has been tailored to get away from actually using large numbers of signs to try to -

Mr PRODANOVIC - Can I make a comment. It is certainly possible to maintain the two lane bearing in mind that we are getting a sealed surface here. I think it might be proven once you pass the visitor centre there to actually introduce the nature of the road from the beginning rather than have some kilometre, or two or three or whatever it is, of reasonable sort of road because it is reasonably straight, even though there is a grade on it. So you could introduce the nature of those one-lane and two-lane sections from the outset rather than give people the impression that this is a two-lane road and then later on introduce something different. I think it would be best from the motorists' point of view to recognise the nature of the road once you have entered this whole section of the road - of what it is actually like.

Mrs NAPIER - Although isn't it true to say that if we used that rationale on the Westbury section of the National Highway you wouldn't have the same combination of single and double lanes?

Mr PRODANOVIC - That was a funding issue, I suppose.

Laughter.

Mrs NAPIER - I think I rest my case. Through you, Mr Chairman, my concern is that particularly Tasmanians will really struggle to come to terms with the fact that we are talking about taking a two-lane road into a one-lane road and we are going deliberately to

make people go in a stop-start trip when one of the reasons you live here is that you value the fact that you do not have to get caught in traffic jams. You might equally argue that the reason why visitors enjoy this place is that they know they are not going to have to stop-and-start and get in traffic jams. I think that is probably a philosophical difference even though I acknowledge that it might have very strong road safety implications.

CHAIR - Can I come back to the comments that Mr Tyson made in response to Mr Hall's questions and the trial period for a bus as an exclusive means of access. The position involves the design of the road: to what extent has that issue been taken into consideration with the design of the road? If we are going to move ultimately to nothing but bus transport, what impact does that have on the road design and what impact has been taken into consideration in designing the road to provide access within the park?

Mr BARRETT - In our design we didn't specifically take into account using buses solely on the road and no cars. The road has been designed to take cars and I don't see that the actual use of buses is really linked to the road. I think it is probably more linked to the car parks being overcapacity and so I think the buses are used. My view is that the use of buses is being considered because of the car parks and not the road. However, the road would adequately take the buses if it was converted to just bus use. The road would quite satisfactorily handle the buses.

CHAIR - Mr Prodanovic, as I recall, if I heard your submission correctly, you made a comment to the effect of 'if certain matters were taken into consideration then the safety aspects would be satisfied'. What are you specifically referring to in terms of matters which need to be taken into consideration to satisfy you in a safety component?

Mr PRODANOVIC - I think what I am getting at there is the finer detail of the two-lane to one-lane transitions. To have the geometry of the two-lane to one-lane transition, to have -

CHAIR - So you have some reservations about what is before us in terms of the current design?

Mr PRODANOVIC - No. As far as I am aware, overall now we have a concept where these one-lane and two-lane sections will be. I guess it is a very small-scale plan from my needs and I would be looking at how the geometry of that two-lane to one-lane section is taken account of.

CHAIR - So you have some reservations about what's before us in terms of what is currently the design?

Mr PRODANOVIC - No. As far as I am aware, overall now we have a concept of where these one-lane and two-lane sections will be. Obviously it is a very small-scale plan for my needs and I will be looking at something a bit more detailed. I will be looking at that finer detail much more closely in terms of how it will be finished off, as well as other features in terms of a guidance system and so forth.

CHAIR - So you haven't looked at that detail yet?

Mr PRODANOVIC - I haven't been involved in that, no.

CHAIR - Having heard that, I guess I could have some concern that, as a safety auditor, if you wish, in terms of a State road, you haven't looked at that safety detail, yet there is a proposal before the committee to construct a road in accordance with the designs we have had presented to us. Yet our safety auditor, if I can call you that, can't satisfy me today that all the safety aspects have been taken into consideration with regard this innovative road design.

Mr PRODANOVIC - I'm not saying that the design considerations haven't been taken into account, because I am aware of what it is that I will be looking for. There are a set of plans that exist and which are before us all which detail what it is that is proposed there. When we talk about a finished product, I do see that some more detail is needed on how precisely the finished product is provided. I guess it is a matter of at what point that is necessary. At the moment we are looking at a plan and whether we agree or not to a proposal that is detailed on that. The next stage would be in fact what level of guideposts there would be, what signage there would be and how the actual geometries would be finished off at very precise points along the road. That is not to say that those sorts of things cannot be achieved. I am not expressing doubt that they are not being achieved. I guess it is a matter of expressing exactly on a more detailed plan what it is that will be required when it is constructed.

CHAIR - From your assessment of the concept, is it your opinion that there will be a need for intervention by you in terms of that finer detail?

Mr PRODANOVIC - I will, I guess, in terms of signing off on this, have one more look at the detailed plan. It may not be detailed precisely on this plan; it may be a separate detail that says, 'This is what it will be providing at each of these points', so it would be a general detailed design for those locations - and that is quite okay, obviously, that being explicit in terms of what it would finally end up looking like. There are words in the report that say that these sorts of general provisions are being provided. The report talked about line marking, guide signs and all that. That is not specified exactly on these sorts of plans. That is what I am talking about, that we will detail that precisely as to where it will end up.

CHAIR - Are you aware of any similar design having been used elsewhere in the world?

Mr PRODANOVIC - No.

CHAIR - Mr Barrett?

Mr BARRETT - No, I am not aware of any design like that.

CHAIR - So this is quite a new project for your company?

Mr BARRETT - Yes, it is unique.

CHAIR - But the supplementary document indicates that in every respect, in each change et cetera, it complies with national safety road requirements, as I recall.

Mr BARRETT - Yes, as those documents apply. Those documents wouldn't apply in this sort of road because it is such a unique road with unique treatment.

Mr PRODANOVIC - The primary considerations we are looking at are obviously forward sight distance - in terms of the road itself and also in terms of oncoming traffic, particularly at those points where you have to stop to allow that opposing vehicle to come through. I guess there are Australian standards, if you like, that you do rely on. Those standards are applied in all sorts of road design but they are also applicable in this sort of design directly related, I guess, to the behaviour that is being required of motorists.

Mr BEST - Just to follow up - it is sort of the same question but I am really after the answer: if a proposal had been put to you for a bus-only road from the lodge into Dove Lake, would that have been significantly different? How would you design if it was a bus-only route and not for public vehicles? Would it be the same treatment?

Mr TODD - Mr Chairman, my feeling is that you would probably be able to have a lesser standard in the sense that you could have radio contact between buses if they were all that was on the road. You wouldn't need so many passing areas so you could probably reduce the standard to some degree, although the project as it has been proposed is really utilising what is already there. So whether you went to the effort of reducing what was already there or you just utilised what was there, that is a point you could probably consider. In the end there probably wouldn't be a great deal of difference because you would say, 'We've got this area of pavement; we know there are only buses on it, but it's here and rather than get rid of it let us just utilise it'. You certainly wouldn't need a higher standard of road, by any stretch of the imagination.

Mr BEST - Okay. So in fact if it was a bus-only route that we were looking at that would be less expensive?

Mr TODD - I would suggest it would be quite marginal in terms of reduction in cost. I don't think it would be substantially less; I think it would only be marginal.

Mr BARRETT - If I might add, the buses - only would be in peak period and in the rest of the year light vehicles could possibly be using it. I think you still have to design to allow for light vehicle usage anyway. So that would be very much like the design is at the moment. But you always have to allow for the fact that there will be periods when there are light vehicles on the road - you still have to accommodate them.

Mr BEST - It would be a different process though, wouldn't it, in a sense? What we are hearing is a possible outcome. I am interested to know whether the process would be substantially different in a sense because you are not looking at light vehicles? How might that differ?

Mr TODD - Mr Chairman, if I may, there would also have been the ongoing use by Parks staff who would need to continue to use the road. I am not sure what access to the chalets at Waldheim would need to continue while there was a bus in operation. So there would be some light vehicles still using that road, even if it was a bus-only service, if you like. So I doubt that it would be very feasible or very responsible to reduce the service substantially from what is already there.

CHAIR - Any further questions of this particular group of witnesses?

Mr HALL - Just one, Mr Chairman. There was reference made in a couple of the submissions regarding a loop road and I think you did mention that that was considered and discounted. We talked about the new walking track from the Interpretation Centre through to Waldheim and obviously a new corridor is going to have to be created there. Is that a possible route for another road in terms of a loop road? I am talking about a single-lane loop road - was that ever considered?

Mr TYSON - It was considered some years ago. More recently another potential route was suggested which was quite a lot longer and it went out of the park on the forestry area to the east of the Cradle Mountain area and came back onto the Cradle Mountain Link Road some kilometres from Leary's Corner, from the present turn off. So it would have been quite a major loop and it would have taken you away from the village centre. The distance was longer than the present road. I think it was 14 or 15 kilometres and the expense of that would have been considerable just based on the cost estimates that were given at the time. The route that we have now proposed for the walking track - in my view would be very difficult and disruptive to build a road there. The walking track that is proposed is a boardwalk all on timber piers, so we are not disrupting any of the drainage pattern of that part of the area. It does involve a couple of crossing of the Dove River as well. Pedestrian bridges are reasonably easy; road bridges, I would suggest, would be another order of magnitude.

Mr HALL - Just remind me, what's the estimated cost of that walking track?

Mr TYSON - It is 5.5 kilometres long and the estimated cost, I think our most recently one is about \$800 000.

Mr HALL - That doesn't include the infrastructure that goes with it?

Mr TYSON - No, that is a separate cost.

Mr HALL - That is about \$800 000 just for the track, okay.

Mrs NAPIER - Can I ask a question further of Mr Tyson? Has the final response to the Pencil Pine Cradle Valley Visitor Services Own Plan being released and published? What did that finally conclude in relation to car parking, so that we can relate it to the car parking points that have been included within this presentation by Mr Nevard and Mr Barrett.

Mr TYSON - When we released the draft Pencil Pine Cradle Valley Visitor Services Own Plan in January, the public comment which came back was fairly divided in relation to the bus service and the terminus for the bus service and shelter at Dove Lake. Because there was another process going on in relation to the Cradle Valley Tourism Development Plan, we put the Visitor Services Own Plan on hold and we haven't progressed that from its draft form. The public comment period for the Tourism Development Plan closed last weekend and we will look with Tourism Tasmania and the consultants who have prepared that plan at the comments that have come back in and from that we then intend to form a final view to put the minister in relation to the

proposals that were in the zone plan. So we haven't finalised and we have yet to see the public comment that has come back in on the Tourism Development Plan.

Mrs NAPIER - So relative to that, given that it would appear that possibly the future solution is going to be high season bus in the middle of the day allowing for the fact that there is still going to be growth - and if they're smart they will try to get there early and try to beat you to it! But one of the points that is made in relation to car parking in this report that you provided - page 7, under 3.5 - is the current need to accommodate up to an additional 10 to 12 vehicles at the roadside at Ronnie Creek and an additional 80 to 85 vehicles at Dove Lake. I think the suggestion is that we expand Ronnie Creek to cater for an additional 15 vehicles and Dove Lake to provide for an overflow of up to 100 car parking spaces. Is that recommendation which, as I understand it, is part of this construction project that we are dealing with, consistent with what is being proposed as some of the alternatives in the Pencil Pine Visitor Plan.

Mr TYSON - What we have taken on board is the 500 metres of the end of the Dove Lake Road, to retain that in its present width for use as a temporary overflow car parking while the planning for the future of that whole area is determined. So in relation to the advice given here, that is what we will be doing.

Ronnie Creek - my understanding is that we wouldn't create a new area there but we'd look at the option of using the roadside. I might need to have a look with Mr Todd on just how that was proposed to be done. It wasn't intended to expand the Ronnie Creek car park beyond its present state.

Mrs NAPIER - I would appreciate a comment on that. I accept what you're saying - that you have been asked to design a road, not car parks - but it seems to me that if we are looking at the structure and safety design of a road that that has an end collection point, or a couple of collection points, then it seems appropriate that we look at this issue of needing to press both Ronnie Creek and Dove Lake, given that we are using a 3 per cent per annum projection of growth for each of the next 25 years. I think we will get that and probably more, given the increasing number of people who will be bringing cars to the State.

Mr TYSON - I guess our view is that the upgrading of the road will suit either need. So whether we expand or how we might expand car parking or provide alternative transport will not impact on the upgrading of the road itself. While the planning for the road has been finalised, we haven't yet finalised exactly how we are going to treat traffic movement at Ronnie Creek and Dove Lake beyond what is presently there.

Mrs NAPIER - Given the design of the road you have made - and you know my concern about getting rid of two lanes and cutting back to one lane - is it likely that you will be able to accommodate the increased capacity of car parking on the roads and maintain your current design?

Mr TODD - Mr Chairman, I think the difficulty would be if we tried to accommodate the parking along the road. People would be walking almost from the visitor centre; they would be walking two or three kilometres back. I think already the experience is that people are walking 500 metres or more along the road now because the car parks are already full. All that we undertook to do as part of our project was to try to stabilise at

least some areas along there to give them some parking that is a bit more sound than the existing gravel. So it was really just to accommodate the immediate problem at a very marginal cost because it is only a small area when you compare it to the total project. That was just additional works we incorporated into the project at least to facilitate what is happening now in terms of overflow onto the road.

Mrs NAPIER - What is it going to look like? Basically you'll have a bitumen strip with a single lane and parking. If there is a significant section of road, even though only one half of it is sealed, it will end up two-lane traffic, won't it?

Mr TODD - No, I think the design is such that - and Mr Barrett might be able to help me - it will still appear to be the shoulder and it will be on a separate level from the -

Mr BARRETT - In the area approaching the Dove Lake car park there would be a two-lane section of road with parking outside of the two lanes.

Mrs NAPIER - Does that increase the amount of gravel space that there is currently?

Mr BARRETT - Not substantially at all; that is basically what is there at the moment.

Mrs NAPIER - Are you just going to stabilise that?

Mr TODD - All it does is stabilise that along the edge so it is a much sounder surface for cars to be parked along, as they are doing now.

Mrs NAPIER - So the cost projection for this particular project - how much is it?

Mr TODD - Good question.

Mrs NAPIER - Did that ever include the cost of doing car parks?

Mr TODD - No. The car parks are a separate issue which are looked after by Parks and Wildlife. This is purely for the road. It is just that we have incorporated these two areas to assist Parks with their problem of car parking back along that road. We have just built that into the project because it was a marginal cost. But it does not address the issue of the car parks, which is longer term project that Parks are working through.

Mr TYSON - Mr Chairman, perhaps I could just add to that. Mr Wing, in his introductory comments, referred to the need for overall planning and an overall site plan. I quite agree, but with the actual consultation and all the players that we need to collect information from to get a final answer, it is an enormous job and it is not something that can be done instantly. Inevitably we end up breaking a master plan, if you like, up into those bits where we do have some answers and we are able to proceed while we are still collecting information, collecting opinion, looking at a direction to go with some components of it. Then I guess we are almost to the point where we have to start again and start looking at the changed circumstances. So your planning is an ongoing activity where you are constantly assessing new information as it comes along, re-examining what you have done and then potentially modifying it. We have to make decisions as we go along and I guess that is where for things like the road it was our feeling that that will cater for the various scenarios that are under examination for the future. Whichever of

those scenarios is adopted, the road, as it is presented here, in our view, meets those requirements of whichever future scenario we adopt of transport, parking and shelter, which are the elements within the valley.

Mrs NAPIER - A question in relation to the shelter that you are proposing at Dove Lake, how many car parking spaces does that take?

Mr TYSON - The proposal is not to put it in the existing car park but to put it slightly back. One of the scenarios is to largely rehabilitate the existing parking area and to provide those facilities slightly back from the lake -

Mrs NAPIER - Is that the Eagle's Nest -

Mr TYSON - It is not the Eagle Hill one; it is the compromise half-way between one that we are looking at at the moment, but it would go on an area of disturbed land so we would not be creating new disturbance. I guess it would take up some of - I was just trying to think of the size of the building - it will be a minimal number of sites, but they would about 100 metres back from the centre of the existing car park.

Mrs NAPIER - So that is not going to reduce car parking spaces?

Mr TYSON - It would not interfere with car parking in the present Dove Lake car park, no, in the short term.

Mr HALL - Just a final question to Mr Barrett, and putting aside any safety issues. Given that this is such an innovative and new design, can you assure the committee that in your view that design will not totally frustrate motorists?

Mr BARRETT - Yes, I believe it will not frustrate the drivers. My view is based on having driven the road, meeting oncoming traffic and having to stop a number of times. I went through that exercise - which I am quite happy to table - just to get a feel for what motorists would expect to meet and see whether it would lead to an undue amount of stopping and lead to frustration. I believe in a worst case scenario you are looking at an average of seven stops, which is probably once every kilometre, for maybe 10 or 15 seconds. I do not believe that would cause any motorists undue frustration.

Mr TODD - Through you, Mr Chairman - in the original submission to the committee the estimate of cost of the project was \$2.5 million.

Mrs NAPIER - Given that this is an experimental design - and I note that there was a reference to a wet tropics World Heritage Area project where a similar thing had been tried, though I think perhaps not in such a structured way as you are doing - we raised the question as to what happens if we trial this but find it an absolute disaster. I do not believe Tasmanians will wear having to pay for a bus to go and enjoy their own World Heritage Area - these are just political realities and we are just as much politicians as we are keeping an eye on the public dollar. Will the design enable the reversion to a reasonable number of two-lane sections if it is deemed possible, or is it likely to be just as expensive to do it all over again?

Mr TODD - If you then decided to extend the two-lane sections it could be done. There is no reason that could not be done. It would just be a case of additional works, and obviously there is more environmental disturbance, but there is no reason that you could not then eventually convert it to a two-lane road. I cannot see why that would not be possible. Of course the risk with doing that is then you will potentially encourage people to drive faster and you get away from the concept of what we are trying to create here, which is really a unique experience in a wilderness area. If we just build another two-lane two-way road people will come screaming through there and pull up at Dove Lake, and they will have missed some of the experience. I think really what this design is trying to do is get that balance right about this unique experience of entering into this World Heritage Area, an area unique in the world. I think this is what we are attempting with this design. But that does not in the end preclude changing the design in the longer-term if it was found to be necessary.

Mr BEST - My question is to Mr Prodanovic. What would your opinion be in relation to a further independent review of safety applications, given that I understand the Government's safety audit has undertaken a review?

Mr PRODANOVIC - That is a decision for the committee if it feels it needs that. I am not sure that the process and the outcomes at the end would be any different. I guess if you are looking at traffic-type questions you are going to look for this sort of presentation and, I guess, the figures and do some calculations similar to those I am familiar with. At the end of the day it is judgmental thing, I guess, and maybe one expert might have some slightly different viewpoint perhaps to what is here, and I imagine this would be the greatest variation between someone independent coming in and what has been presented here.

Mr BEST - So you do not think that from a safety point of view it is significant? Do you think there is any benefit in the sense of clarifying it?

Mr PRODANOVIC - I personally do not see any different outcome from it, or really, I guess, just coming along and saying that there is a real safety concern or a total safety problem with this concept, that is in a sense broken down into elements along the road, and those elements are looked at in detail in terms of the vehicle complex. To my mind there is only one way of looking at it in terms of talking about traffic flow and queuing theory. The model that has been used takes that to a software form to give us some answers. It is possible to go back to first principles and look at that and get those sorts of answers before it arrives at scenarios. The tables presented with the appendices really reflect from a capacity point of view what will eventuate, and I guess from the safety point of view it is really trying to control vehicle speeds. As Mr Todd said, you could go the other way and provide a two-lane sealed road, putting a 40km limit, for example, on the finished product. Driver behaviour is always such that a percentage of motorists do exceed that, and there is a likelihood of that a higher than expected proportion of the population may be exceeding that limit. So there is a case for building in the necessary safeguards to try to control that speed environment around the sort of topography we have here.

Mr HALL - I think an engineering comment was made that if buses only are permitted then a lesser design could be used. Is it fair to say in that context then that a final management plan to address this view could have a bearing on the design of the project?

Mr TYSON - I guess the approach that we have taken is that for a bus service to be acceptable to the public it should only operate, initially anyway, when you have peak traffic periods, so we do need a design which is going to cater for private vehicles as well as buses. I guess our assessment, as I have heard here, is that a completely 100 per cent compulsory bus service would not be acceptable, and we would not get that approved in the short term.

Mrs NAPIER - They thought that in 1989 too.

Mr TODD - Mr Chairman, if I could just make a comment to the committee, and I know it is totally the committee's discretion in terms of approving or otherwise the project, but would encourage that we do have a limited window for construction. We would like to proceed with construction in the new year. Of course that is in the peak period of tourism, and it is the intention of the department to actually do the construction work at night, therefore allowing visitors to still access the park during the day. Of course that will mean the road will need to be closed at night, but we believe this is one way it can be done. But that obviously needs to be in the peak summer period. Recognising that it is entirely up to the committee, we would appreciate having a decision as soon as possible.

Mrs NAPIER - What is the length of time for construction? How late can you start and how long before it is finished - before May, presumably?

Mr TODD - Well, we really have to be finished before then if we are going to be operating during the night, because obviously night temperatures start to drop substantially once you even get towards the end of March, I would think. So we want to be working really in the heat of summer, if there is a heat of summer at Cradle Mountain, because we are going to be working at night-time. I think it is only going to be a six to eight-week period that the work will be happening on the road, so it is a fairly short time frame.

Mrs NAPIER - Right in the middle of the tourist season.

Mr TODD - I realise that. That is why we want to do that at night, so people will have unfettered access basically during the day. They will be able to come in and out as they enjoy now, but we will need to do that work at night. That is why we really do need to do it at the warmest time of the year, which is January-February.

CHAIR - Gentlemen, you are welcome to stay for the rest of the hearing, but if you would like to clear the space at the table for further witnesses, and if you need to move then you are welcome.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.

ROD STENDRUP, GENERAL MANAGER, CRADLE MOUNTAIN LODGE AND CHAIRMAN, CRADLE MOUNTAIN TOURISM ASSOCIATION WAS RECALLED AND RE-EXAMINED.

CHAIR - Welcome back after a fairly protracted delay.

Mr STENDRUP - I am here in two positions: one, I am the resort general manager of Cradle Mountain Lodge; the other is that I am the inaugural chairman of the newly formed Cradle Mountain Tourism Association, which is basically a group of commercial operators within the area.

As a basis we are not concerned about, in fact we are quite in favour of, sealing the road for environmental purposes and I haven't heard what has been said previously here today, so that is of no concern to us and we think that is a good idea. We are concerned, however, about the wider ramifications about the design of the road. I understand that the engineers are quite sure regarding delays, traffic jams, et cetera, but we feel that certainly at major times, peaks times and busy times - and there is a big significance in the change from busy times to quiet times, from summer to winter - that it will in fact be a catalyst to the introduction of a shuttle-bus service or a bus service of some format. That we are quite negative to for a lot of commercial ramifications and the impact it will have principally, I guess from a selfish point of view, on our commercial businesses in the area.

There has been a significant amount of money expended. The Government itself has actively encouraged Doherty recently to develop a big centre up there and we are constantly told that the way we can enhance our visitor nights and the stays up there - because the overnight stays are declining as a proportion of the visitors to the area - is by providing greater facilities, greater activities, et cetera. We see the fact of our guests and visitors to the areas having to get out of their cars or leave their cars at home and wait for a bus, or hop on a bus and hopefully there is a seat - if there is a group of them there may not be enough seating they are relatively small buses - that this has the potential to impact quite significantly on the viability of the businesses up there and the potential future growth of the area.

Our major concern with the road itself is not bitumening the road or improving the surface of the road by sealing it - we think that that is quite wonderful - it is the number of single passing bays. I am not sure what the final number is, but I know that it was mentioned just a while ago there were seven or eight stops. I would be surprised if it was as few as that during January through to the March-April period; I would think it would be significantly more than that. I guess that is where we are coming from.

I was pleased also to hear, because we did have serious concerns about the road works being undertaken in the busy tourist period, that they would be undertaken at night time. Of course that alleviates those concerns so that is a wonderful initiative and we are very thankful that that has been considered. Generally speaking, that is all I have to say. I am open to questions, but we are very concerned. Cradle Mountain as a visitor area has been growing in day-traffic numbers but it has been declining as an overnight stay principally because we are told we are not providing sufficient activities. We do not want to turn it into a Disneyland, into something that it is not, but we are very mindful

that we need to provide a quality service for those who are investing in the area and coming to stay.

The other issue is perhaps there is the opportunity for a two-tiered approach where those who are overnighing may have some sort of special access other than day trippers. I think again we seem to be heading towards designing a process that is for the least committed to the area. Those who are committed to, say, a four or five-day stay, who walk significantly in the park, who really want to use the area up there, they have the potential to be impacted adversely if we cater for someone who is driving from Devonport to Strahan, for example, and wants to take a five-minute happy picture of Cradle Mountain. That is basically our position.

CHAIR - Thank you very much. Members, does anybody have a question of Mr Stendrup?

Mr HALL - Yes, Mr Chairman. Obviously today, Mr Stendrup, we have to look at the issue of whether we approve of the design or not and that is quite simple. We haven't the power to modify anything else. In your opinion, having said that you acknowledge that the sealing of the road would be of great value to the tourist operators and yourself, do you think from your knowledge of the area it would be better just to have a two-lane road?

Mr STENDRUP - A two-lane road from a strictly commercial viewpoint, and forgetting about the environmental side of things, would be ideal because it would mean that people could get up and back. I understand the complications; it is not that simple because you have car parking - where do you park the car and all those sorts of things - so the greater the facility you offer the more people are going to drive into the park and the greater the problem is with the car-parking space at Dove Lake. I acknowledge that on busy periods - January, long weekends and those sorts of things - it is just a nightmare up there trying to get a park. So it is very difficult at times and a two-lane highway would not improve that situation unless there was considerable money spent on car park facilities at the other end and that would have an impact.

I know again it doesn't work; my simplistic idea would be to stick bitumen on the existing road which has the opportunity to pass in numerous places along the way, but that is not so.

Mr HALL - So that to you is the best solution.

Mr STENDRUP - Yes. I believe that it would handle things other than those periods of long weekends. The only way you are going to overcome that is to increase the car park space as it develops. I guess I have to accept that, at some stage in the future, it is going to outgrow that facility as you just can't keep providing bigger and bigger car-parking spaces. So somewhere at some stage there is going to have to be some limitation put on it, I believe; it is a matter of just when and at what stage it gets to.

Mr HALL - So your best solution, just to get a firm handle on that, was to seal the existing road and without putting all the back-up points on it.

Mr STENDRUP - Yes. I think the other problem is that we see figures based on large numbers of people who are using the road and the area at present, and projected growth.

I don't know whether any samples have been taken or whether there's anything that we can judge on what happens when you do put in a bus service and you start charging people - or with the inconvenience. The large numbers of people that are talked about now, the projections may just disappear completely if people have to get out of their cars and hop into a coach. So the numbers might even be halved. I don't know whether there's a sample or any modelling that has ever been done on that anywhere that can be taken as a useful exercise.

Mrs NAPIER - I was going to ask: in terms of your own clientele, presumably there is a reasonable number of international visitors who come through. Are they likely to be in all of those bus tours or are they more likely to choose to use a local bus operator, or do you tend to find that predominantly they bring their own car or a hire car, more probably?

Mr STENDRUP - About 23 or 24 per cent of our visitors are international. The greater majority of those are, as we call them, free and independent travellers. So they are travelling independently and a lot of them in hire cars. There are a few who come in coach groups from Germany, predominantly. The ones that do come in a coach group we generally take in mini-coaches, smaller coaches, up into Dove Lake ourselves. Through winter we run two full-time activities people and in summer we will have three plus a casual this year. We have three vehicles ourselves and every day we run tours up into the park, but obviously if we've got three vehicles we can cater for about 35 to 40 people at a time, morning and afternoon. We have a lot more guests than that, so there are still an enormous number of our guests who use their own vehicles to either go into or out of the park, or they participate in walks around the visitor centre itself and up behind the lodge.

Doherty's also have a full-time activities person and a vehicle that they use for tours, and they have, I think, 50 rooms. Wilderness Village have 26 cabins and also Cosy Cabins, I think, and the camp ground has facilities for about 400 people camping in summer. So there is a significant number of people who are going to be there, and once you start running a bus service and that is the only means of operation for them, it will be very difficult to get people going when they want to because you will again have peaks - after breakfast, lunch time, after lunch and back late in the afternoon. So it will take a heck of a lot of managing to make it work properly.

Mrs NAPIER - Have you any feel for the issue of whether there is likely to be less flexibility involved in having to establish a bus - whether it's another independent agency or your own - or whether it would predominantly be the cost factor that would inhibit the use of the service?

Mr STENDRUP - I think our guess is it wouldn't necessarily be the cost factor. Once people are there overnight, it would be more the flexibility of it, depending on what they're trying to do. Some people tend to go up there and have a 10-minute walk out to Glacier Rock or down to the boat shed, or something; other people do the circuit walk; and other people go away for a day. But it tends to be that the peak periods are the first thing after breakfast in the morning and back in time for lunch, and then again after lunch and coming back late in the afternoon.

I think the biggest difficulty with a coach service would be how you would ever get on one. You might be waiting at the bus stop, if there is one somewhere, and the coach starts up the road and by the time it gets to you it's full. It goes past and maybe there's another one or you don't know, or there's no set timetable, so it all becomes very confusing. So, as I said, I am speculating, but an enormous amount of work needs to be done before we would be convinced that it wouldn't be detrimental to the commercial realities in the marketplace.

CHAIR - Mr Stendrup, thank you very much for coming back and, in many respects, reinforcing your views, but sharing that with the committee. Again, you're welcome to stay for the rest of the hearing if you wish.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW

GRAHAM GEE, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR - Mr Gee, welcome. Would you like to proceed now and make your submission.

Mr GEE - I want to read my submission if I can, but before I start, with due respect to Bob and everybody else, let us be down to earth about this. You will see from the submission that I was part of the gang that built the original Dove Lake Road. I consider the road from the visitor centre now to Ronnie's Corner more dangerous than it has ever been. It's an absolute disgrace; it's got vertical curves in it, which are unforgiving nowadays. The surface of the road is absolutely unacceptable for modern-day traffic.

Somebody asked the question earlier in the day about the volume of visitors. I used to take up there a chap named Alan Richmond from Devonport, who was part of the Parks and Wildlife board at that time in the 1950s, and we only got there because I had a four-wheel drive vehicle. In those days, according to the figures I have been privileged to hear, 1 000 people were going up there; now it is 200 000. Parks and Wildlife's estimation is 500 000 in 2025.

I would suggest, Mr Chairman, to be blunt, this argument is the same as it has always been. It will be an environmental argument as against the progress of tourism in Tasmania and the commonsense approach to cater for the amount of money we have spent on ships and that sort of thing. Cradle Mountain is a world-wide tourist attraction.

There are lots of other questions there I would like to answer but I had better read the submission.

I have been a resident of the Devonport and Kentish municipalities and worked in those areas with the HEC and on the west coast of Tasmania as a motor mechanic and road building contractor for the past 52 years. I was a contractor employed by the Public Works Department as a member of the team that built the road, Ronnie's Corner to Dove Lake. I also maintained the road, bridges et cetera with the Public Works from Forth to Cradle Mountain until that section was handed over to the councils.

Points relevant to improving access to Dove Lake. Before any roadwork is undertaken a decision on the mode of transport of visitors to Dove Lake should be finalised. Placement of services - that is, power, sewerage, water, communications - should be finalised, whether they are going to be in the road reserve or otherwise. Information and projections contained in the publications that Mrs Napier mentioned a moment ago: the Pencil Pine/Cradle Valley Visitor Service Zone Plan 2002 by Parks and Wildlife, together with the Cradle Valley Tourism Development Plan, September 2000, by the Cradle Valley steering committee, of which the gentlemen referred to a minute ago.

During the period December 1998-April 1999, Parks and Wildlife measured 67 500 vehicles travelling to Dove Lake: 600 of those vehicles were bus operations from the visitor centre, accounting for some 1 200 visitors, leaving approximately 101 000 visitors travelling in private vehicles. Sixty-three thousand people walked around Dove Lake and to Wombat Tarn; 8 000 people travelled on overnight or overland walks;

52 000 completed day walk registrations. The percentages of walkers were: 14 per cent overseas, 40 per cent interstate, 15 per cent Tasmania, 26 per cent involved in commercial walking operations, and 5 per cent unknown. That means that approximately 10 000 Tasmanians walked in the Dove Lake area during the period 1998-99. There would have been at least 42 000 people, on those figures, who stayed at the Dove Lake car park. It should be noted that the figures cover the period 1998-99; no doubt current figures would be much higher. Parks and Wildlife personnel envisage a 100 per cent increase by 2025, which is, as has been mentioned, 3 per cent a year. This would produce, theoretically, 134 000 private vehicles travelling to Dove Lake, containing approximately 226 000 people. If all those visitors were transferred to shuttle buses of 28-seat capacity, there would be a need to have 8 100 bus movements during the December-April period to accommodate them. This breaks down to 188 people per hour - that is private vehicles only.

If the total of visitors expected in 2025 by Parks and Wildlife is 500 000 and the present percentage of 61 per cent wanted to see Dove Lake, there would need to be accommodation for 2 000 people per day - 254 people per hour - and that would equal 9 buses per hour, provided visitors arrived in regimented numbers. This of course would not happen as most visitors would leave their previous destination between 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. from Launceston or the north-west coast, or somewhere like that, and arrive at 11 a.m. or midday, making a situation where you could have a thousand people trying to access buses to Dove Lake. That situation would require 36 28-seater buses to move them.

As 5 p.m. is the proposed closing time, there could be 2 000 visitors to transport between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m., which equals 400 visitors per hour. This would require 14 or 15 buses to carry those visitors on conducted, slow, medium-fee tours. That would require each return trip to Dove Lake to be completed in 20 minutes - that is, 10 minutes either way.

Most visitors would want to stop at Dove Lake and some take one of the short walks around the lake - this being one of the main attractions of the area, as seen in the very well-documented advertising brochures distributed throughout the world showing Dove Lake with the boatshed. How could this be accomplished? There would be no time.

For those stranded at Dove Lake after 5 p.m., one suggestion by Parks and Wildlife is to have communications available at the lake to call a taxi to collect them. Where would the taxi be based? At the airstrip or perhaps at Wilmot. This would appear to have been very expensive and not practical or viable.

Quite a number of experienced walkers would set out to enjoy walks around Dove Lake in the evening - sunset et cetera. They can do this at present, very comfortably and independently, by leaving their cars at Dove Lake parking area. I would suggest that to refuse access by private vehicles would be discriminatory and would lead to a pronounced drop-off of visitors.

If that situation suited those who oppose the dual-carriageway road at municipal standard, I would suggest those most affected would be Tasmanians and interstate visitors, together with those entrepreneurs who have invested many millions of dollars to encourage tourism to Tasmania.

As at present only 12 per cent of visitors stay overnight at Cradle Mountain, there is a very great incentive for the proprietors of the various businesses to offer interesting attractions and to list the number for the benefit of all concerned.

The specifications set down by Parks and Wildlife for the 28-seater buses would, in my opinion, cost \$225 000 for each bus. I should expand on that. The suggested bus is a four-wheel drive vehicle; it has aerodynamic windows in the roof, airconditioning, heaters, all the mod cons and it is expected to possibly have a ticket machine for collecting tickets. Those buses do not come cheap, and I think my estimation would be on the cheap side.

The Parks and Wildlife estimate needing 11 buses. As can be seen by my calculation, that would not be enough. Indeed, if buses had to cater for all visitors to Dove Lake the system would break down. If a contractor supplied 12 buses, having one spare - which would be necessary - together with necessary staff, they would be looking at an initial bus cost of approximately \$2.7 million. When you add the wages and running costs to cover 11 drivers for five months, reducing to three in the low period, plus ancillary staff, and considering the problems of permanency of employment et cetera, you would have to find a very brave contractor to accept this with the Parks and Wildlife condition that the service be cost-neutral to them, affordable to the visitors and still profitable. I would point out that I believe one trial was done with Mr Maxwell. He had a bus leaving every 15 minutes in the peak period and the cost was \$10 per passenger.

There would inevitably be friction with some passengers boarding the buses where inclement weather or a fall in muddy conditions resulted in walkers exceeding the boundaries of bus cleanliness rules. If it was my bus for \$225 000, I would not want someone who fell over in the mud climbing all over it.

As I began with the suggested condition that the first and very critical decision is to finalise the mode of transport within the park boundaries and I would suggest the following points. The most practical and fair system for all concerned, including the State and TT-Lines et cetera, would be to build a road to municipal standard - that is, dual-carriageway, requiring an 8-metre to 9-metre road reserve from park boundary to Dove Lake.

The section from the visitor centre to Ronnie's Corner would need major rebuilding; the section from Ronnie's Corner to Dove Lake would need minimal rebuilding. The cost of the road would be cheaper - note, I say cheaper - than that proposed by the present one. This is because the conditions laid down in the specifications for a variable-width road are unpractical. There are just two reasons amongst hundreds I can think of, but two reasons that are immediately obvious. The road cannot be 3 m wide because each bus will be 2.2 metres wide or thereabouts. We have already said there is a safety rail there - and I must go and have a look at it and see what sort of a job we have made of that - but in my experience it is necessary to put a safety rail on the fill that would be used there 1 metre in from the edge, and then you have to have clearance for your bus on either side. And then you can use the table drain, provided you use the macadam surface and seal it. But you could not possibly have a single-carriageway road under 4.5 metres and be safe. Three metres is out the door.

Because the requirement is that the road be built during the busy period – and that was well spoken about a while ago - December to April, both the Parks and Wildlife and common sense dictate that it would be impossible to work on the road under proposed conditions of closure. I have not seen the document of specifications, unfortunately. I wish I had; I have not been able to get one. I have been told it says that the closures are not to exceed two hours. If the services - sewage, power, water, communications - were laid in the road reserve as is usual, the road would have to be closed for extended periods, especially where rock required explosives. This was in a single-lane road. Even installation of the culverts and pits would need extensive closures. Alternatively, a road built to the municipal standard of a 9 metre road reserve would allow much less closure because of the ability to allow half-road access at most times. I would estimate that the municipal standard road could cost between \$250 000 and \$500 000 less than the proposed specifications, provided the contractor was given fair and reasonable standard conditions. And that was partly answered to me when it was suggested when the contractor could work at night. It was suggested to me previously that that was not acceptable. But keep in mind that if the contractor works at night he is going to have very noisy generators and he is going to have a lot of them because it is very hard to see pegs 20 ft away in the night time.

When Ronnie's Corner to Dove Lake section was built the Government, the Public Works Department and those working on the road copped a hiding; we were constantly criticised and abused. Nothing alters on the environmental front. I do not recall many, indeed any, of those criticising at that time participating in search and rescue operations regularly needed in the area, and we did not have helicopters then. When you are reduced to crawling along the tracks, with very high winds blowing sleet horizontally into your face and eyes, and being able to hear a hiker in serious trouble but unable to pinpoint their exact location – requiring that you go home and come back at daylight – you tend to be very thankful to those in power for deciding to save you the extra hike from Waldene to Dove Lake. I believe the road has been a very great help to rescue operations and has allowed a great many people to admire the entrance to a wonderful area via Dove Lake. It has made the lot of many park rangers a great deal easier when having to carry materials personally into cabins and walkways and so on. And I believe that some of them still have to be done that way.

I firmly believe that the dual carriageway road, with a vastly extended parking area provided at Dove Lake, is the best option. This of course will not be accepted by some interested groups. The decision of those in power must revolve around the following proposition: will it encourage tourism in the area, particularly after allowing investment and infrastructure to its present level, or do we retreat and cater for a very reduced privileged group?

I am also, Mr Chairman, very interested in the infrastructure part of it. It is not today's problem but we will have problems in Kentish municipality. We already have problems with sewerage and whatnot in the area - a very serious problem. It is not easy; it is going to be terribly expensive.

Mr BEST - Mr Gee, you have been here through most of the proceedings and you would have heard some of the comments that we have received from DIER, particularly in relation to car parking and the feeling that there is a limitation on what car parking can

be provided. You are suggesting the two lanes. How do you see that? I am interested to know how you see that fitting with these car park restrictions.

Mr GEE - Mr Best, we went through this exact argument in 1964 when we built the road to Dove Lake. The car park that is there now is the one we built; it has not been extend to my knowledge. We do this every time. If we want to maximise the benefit for the State at Cradle Mountain we have to balance environment with practicality. It is no use putting in the facilities we see at Doherty's - I had a look at them the other day; admirable building, wonderful facilities. And I notice the chap a minute ago from P&O. He's got a bus. He had two buses; I think he had three buses. Doherty's got a bus. Are we going to stop them from going into the night? We get all out of kilter -

Mr HALL - Mrs Napier?

Mr GEE - Mrs Napier was very close to the point when she said Tasmanians will not sit tight. Have no doubt that this document from the visitor centre zoned plan and the one the P & O man was talking about, definitely support only shuttle buses, with the centre to be moved to the airfield not the visitor centre. Everything would start at the airfield. It's good reasoning because it's out of the way and it's a good area. Everything would start at the airfield and go to Dove Lake and come back and would be very regimented. But you can't regiment people to be there on time, not when you're talking about figures like these.

When somebody said there's got to be cut-off point; well, I'd agree with that but why didn't we do that years ago? We've got a situation now where we've got over 300 beds up there - he was wrong about Doherty's, Doherty's got 65 beds. We've got over 300 beds up there now and surely the millions they've put in - and Doherty's helps us all over the State - surely we've got to look their way a little bit.

Mr HALL - Mr Gee thanks for what you've done there. It's very comprehensive and you've obviously put a lot of thought into it.

I think you noted there that in your estimation the price difference between what's proposed and what you're proposing was between \$0.25 million and \$0.50 million. Is that your estimate from your past experience or did you get some other engineering advice on that?

Mr GEE - It's interesting and this is why I made the stipulation when I took the oath. I didn't hear the figure of the gentleman when Mrs Napier asked him what the cost was -

Mrs NAPIER - 2.5.

Mr GEE - In Kentish we've been fiddling, as you've seen in the paper, with a road into Lorinna. It's worse than Cradle Mountain so help me. But Sinclair Knight Mertz, a reputable electrical engineering firm, did that work and the gravel situation is similar, the terrain is similar. I've worked on both the roads. In fact I'd rather work on Cradle Mountain Road than Lorinna Road.

Mrs NAPIER - I'd rather drive it that's for sure.

Mr GEE - The projections there were \$0.5 million cheaper for the exactly the same length of road. Now, I didn't go down to the last cent - you'll have to pay me if you want me to do that - but that's a good indication because Sinclair Knight Mertz and Pitt and Sherry have already done it, too. It's quite reasonable. The only difference is and I did a pricing on the Cradle Mountain Road just for my own benefit, and I allowed for very much increased culvert use to stop the hydraulic action of water running the gravel around and that sort of thing and for the crossing of the Parks and Wildlife, who naturally like to see the animals and that sort of thing. I allowed a lot more culverts.

I am very confident that if the contractor is given a fair go - and, as I said before, the night helps him - the main cost of the alternative plan, the suggested plan, will be the fiddling. 'Stop! you can't do it; go away!' It doesn't work with roadworks. You've got a truck that's 2.3 metres wide and you've got an excavator that's 2.5 metres wide and you're trying to work on 3 metres. Cut it out! It's impossible! You've just got to close everything, stop everything - and the night business would overcome it. But it's not practical. It'll be a deathtrap.

One of the things I noted here; that bus that went over and we had the tragedies, it wasn't the only one. There've been other buses over and there hasn't been any serious injury. They've had to be wound back with a winch and they've continued that. Even a safety rail won't stop a bus, depending on the height of it because of the centre of gravity. A safety rail is that high and if we have the sort of buses we're talking about with 7 foot clearance, domed roof and whatnot stability becomes a problem, especially when you've got ice and snow. One of the issues has been, according to the road design, that they don't want to disturb the local fauna. In your opinion, doing a two-lane road as you suggest, is that going to make much more disturbance or impact than what is proposed in this plan?

Mr GEE - In the section, visitor's centre to Ronnie's Corner, yes. But that is lethal, that piece of road. There's one piece there I didn't think I would ever have let people like Laurie Bailey, who was the former director of Public Works, get away with. But there is one vertical curve there that is on a corner. Somewhere in the specification you will see where it says there will be line of sight for passing. Where do you get line of sight when you have a vertical curve on a corner? Absolutely impossible. That all happens from here to the road. Major re-build is the only way to stop it. It is a very, very dangerous piece of ground and if you are going to put that quantity of traffic on it, it becomes impossible.

Mrs NAPIER - There are basically three main arguments that have been put forward for using this one lane system. One is associated with minimising the impact on the surrounding environment, which you have already raised. The second one is to reduce animal kill and I would be interested in what ideas you have that might be used to deal with that. The third issue is to try to slow people down, given that when you get a decent bit of road that is bitumen with enough space you tend to speed up. Have you a view about what other systems could be used taking into account the fact that you need snow clearance?

Mr GEE - I am afraid I am old fashioned, Mrs Napier; I think that the premise is that the punishment fits the crime. I think we are doing it in Tasmania, and I would be shot by Parks and Wildlife for saying this, but we can hang a lot of cameras in a lot of trees and

we don't have to see anybody, do we? We just issue the fine. You go the Melbourne - a chap wrote a letter to the *Advocate* the other day; he got off the boat, crossed the bridge and it cost him \$40 and he is screaming his head off. They wouldn't do it for long. There is another very important point there that I would like to make, too. I don't want to side-step you but if you have been through Sheffield lately on the road to Cradle, when you leave the main street of Sheffield we now have the Department of Infrastructure has put yellow domes on the road, painted the road. It's very obvious that you're coming to a T-section. The reason for it was that we had so many foreign people who don't speak English. We had corner, giveway, stop written on the road, and they were going straight through the T-junction, straight through, flat out, 60 kilometres per hour - and people coming down the main street. So very important. With some foreign people, it wouldn't matter what you put up on a sign, apart from the picture signs. You can tell a corner with a wriggly road. If you are going to put cattle crossing, you put a photo of a beast, not just write 'cattle crossing' - that doesn't mean much to those who don't read English.

So in answer to the question, we put it all over Tasmania, 'Beware, you will be fined if you speed. We have cameras. I don't see that there is any distinction between that and the park. Either that or you have a complementary system where park rangers are engaged, and they wouldn't want to be, in pulling people up and saying, 'If you do it again you are in trouble'. They wouldn't take much notice of you. But I don't see the speed as a problem. I am more concerned about the danger, much more concerned about the danger and the animals. In the proposition I was telling you about where the road could be cheaper, I allowed for a certain number of minor cattle crossings. You know how we put cattle crossings under main highways now? We build them with -

Mr HALL - Underpasses, you're saying?

Mr GEE - Underpasses, we build them as prefabricated boxes. In the appropriate places where you have a little gully we can prefabricate those; no need to be as big as a cattle crossing. We can prefabricate those and drop them in very quickly and the road is not closed for long. The animal has a decent access. You cannot put a fair-sized wallaby through a 300 millimetre pipe.

Mrs NAPIER - The other point you raised in your submission deals with the issue of infrastructure, and that had been raised at the last inquiry on this issue. The decision has been to put the sewerage and other associated services under the walking track that is being proposed as separate to this, basically in a gully to the side of the road rather than in the road itself.

Mr GEE - I can't accept that. I spoke to one of the chaps that's doing some pricing for it, and he was mentioning that the Hydro cable would be suspended. I have great reservations about that. Not wishing to bring Basslink into it, but we do have vandals and exposed cables are deadly. Standard engineering practice in councils and road works where it's necessary services are in the road. They're not dangerous, they're out of the way; they're only dangerous for the people who've got to dig them up again, and they are very much more secure in themselves. I don't know what you find in the cities nowadays, but in the country if you go from Sheffield to Cradle Mountain you'll find that one in two or three signs - and I stand to be corrected on that - are shot to pieces by a gun. Some people aren't satisfied unless they're slashing tyres; that's going on all over Wilmot at present. It

doesn't take much of a maniac to get up near a sewerage pipe and make a mess, or a hydro cable.

Mrs NAPIER - Thank you for your presentation.

CHAIR - Mr Gee, thank you very much for your verbal presentation and the time put into tabling that as a written submission for us to take into consideration. Thank you.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.

EDDIE FIRTH, PARK RANGER, PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE WAS RECALLED AND RE-EXAMINED.

CHAIR - Welcome, Mr Firth. Would you like to make your presentation, please?

Mr FIRTH - I have come along today in my capacity as a ranger at Cradle Mountain, as stated previously to this committee. I spoke at the last parliamentary committee meeting at Cradle Mountain. On the back of that, from the general manager of Parks and Wildlife, I have been held responsible in the eyes of the department as being the person responsible for this road not going ahead.

Mrs NAPIER - That makes us feel a bit better; we thought we were the ones holding it up.

Mr FIRTH - Well, when you get personal vilification from the general manager for coming and speaking to a committee such as this, it leaves me very upset. This has also come from my district manager as well, which I must admit he has had to do from the general manager. Hank Schinkel, sitting over here, can witness that because he was at that meeting. Really, I am pretty disappointed that that can come from the general manager.

CHAIR- Just before you go on then with the rest of your submission. I was a member of the committee previously constituted which took evidence. Can I just say, as a matter for the record, that if that in fact has been levelled at you I would struggle to find a reason for somebody to come up with that assertion because nobody knows the deliberations of the committee.

Mr FIRTH - I am just saying what somebody has obviously said.

CHAIR - No, I am setting your mind at ease. If you like, that that ought not take place.

Mr FIRTH - I realise that, but I am just telling you what actually happens within our department. I have come here today because I have serious concerns about the safety of what is being proposed and I also have serious concerns about the way it has all happened.

I understand that this document from DIER has been handed in as evidence - the supplementary information.

Mrs NAPIER - Yes, there is supplementary information, which in effect - through you, Mr Chairman - models the time frames over which cars might necessarily be waiting in the one-lane sections and how often the peak load is.

Mr FIRTH - Was it put to you that that had been supported by the staff at Cradle Mountain and supported through consultation?

Mrs NAPIER - There certainly had been consultation with Parks and Wildlife staff on the issue, but predominantly in relation to car parking.

Mr FIRTH - I will just put you in the picture as to what happened on the day we had the meeting. After the last parliamentary meeting at Cradle Mountain, Mr Barrett and Mr Nevard came to a meeting with all the Parks staff at Cradle Mountain. One of our female staff asked Mr Nevard as to why they were coming and talking to us now and was it a direct reflection of this committee. Mr Nevard said 'no'; he had come to speak to us because he was a good fellow and he wanted to come and get our opinions. That is all well and good because he was challenged as to why he was there talking to us and was it because of this and he denied that. So we had that meeting and that document was sent around for us to sign-off on so it could be presented here. We were not told at that meeting that that was going to be sent around for us to sign-off on, so whether anybody did sign-off or not and send it with their support I do not know. All I am saying is they haven't been very upfront and honest with us in the way we have been dealt with. It really does leave a bit of doubt in our minds as to what the actual agenda is and what is going on.

I just want to go back to when I spoke to you at the last parliamentary inquiry - that was the first opportunity that we had had as a staff on the ground to actually put our views of what was being proposed on the road. If you look at the State Service Act 2000 and you go to 7.1, the State Service Principles, section (h) says:

'The State Service establishes workplace practices that encourage communication, consultation, cooperation and input from employees on matters that affect their work and workplace.'

From that I think you could reasonably argue for consultation on things that affect us in our workplace because what actually happens on this road really does affect us seriously in our day-to-day work, so I just make that as a point.

I would like to move on to the planning side of things. Obviously I haven't heard everything that has happened here today, but this document has come forward since the last time the committee met -

CHAIR - Just for *Hansard*, you said 'this document'; can you refer to it by its title?

Mr FIRTH - It is the Cradle Valley Tourism Development Plan. This is the first time, to my knowledge - and I am only looking at it from a low person down on the ground - that we have actually had a document that plans the whole area. As Bob said, the planning is a very complex issue, but we have a draft Pencil Pine Cradle Valley Visitor Services Zone Plan so we have little bits and pieces everywhere and the road is one component of it, but we have no overall plan. To rush off and do a bus service or a road or infrastructure of late we really need to have a plan or some document that actually shows us where we are going. I have serious concerns about how a bit here and a bit there can happen and when we are spending good public money we should have some common goal at the end of where we are headed for.

Mrs NAPIER - Before we leave that, the Cradle Valley Tourism Development Plan - who was that developed by and when was it published?

Mr FIRTH - This is the summary for the public and it was released in September 2002. Have you seen this?

Mrs NAPIER - I haven't a copy of that, Mr Chairman. I don't know if you have read it but I wouldn't mind getting hold of a copy.

Mr FIRTH - I will give you this one.

Mrs NAPIER - Thank you very much.

Mr FIRTH - I would like to make some comments on this submission that came from DIER. The first one I would like to make is - and it goes back a little bit to planning - there is some work in here from Dr Menna Jones quoted about the potential of road kill and the species of animals. She draws a lot of her information from the road outside the national park which is from Cradle Mountain Lodge to Clearys Corner. I would like to suggest that while her work is very good it does seem to be a little bit inappropriate for this. That is probably is the closest road you can compare, but to compare the usage pattern of a road that is going from Cradle Mountain Lodge out, which is being used at all hours of the night because of staff knocking off and going home to Wilmot, people who have gone down to the lodge for a meal and are going back to the camp ground or whatever, to that of a road in the park is not appropriate because that pattern is not the same. As you have been made aware of, since this data on a road count has gone in on the road just past the visitor centre going into the park, you can actually look at these figures and they tell you how many vehicles go in and out in a quarter of an hourly period. So if we go through and look at the day, say, 9 January when 550 cars went into the park and then we look at the critical danger area, which we are supposedly being told that the road is being designed for, of the 550 cars that went in, 20 went in during that period of high road kill, which takes me back to the overall -

Mrs NAPIER - You mean after six o'clock?

Mr FIRTH - No, I am using eight o'clock at that time of the year because it was talking about the dusk period and I think there is a two-hour dusk period. But that takes me back to the overall planning again: of those 20 cars that went in there or let us say of any of the traffic that goes in there during the night time, there is a proposal to get rid of the staff housing out of the park and at that time of the year we have quite a few staff living up in the park so, if in the overall context of planning, those houses were going to be removed then that would eliminate x amount of people travelling along the road. Again, certain numbers of those figures would probably be the spotlight tour which is operating as well. The way I am looking at it is, there should be a lot more planning done. All the facts and figures should actually be looked at because if we are designing a road on the wildlife side of things and only 20 vehicles are going to travel on it out of 550 and the other 330 people have to duck and dive every day, day in day out because of the 20 vehicles at night or whatever it is, then I think that all needs to be brought into the equation. That is just one aspect of it. I think that covers what I wanted to say on that. It's just that I think the usage patterns are different outside the park versus inside the park.

The other thing I want to raise again is a planning issue. We have been talking and hearing about the traffic that is being proposed for the visitor services. Another issue there would be if the road is built now, there is going to be a lot of impact on the side of that road while the actual track is built, with vehicles dropping off materials, cables, and

the workers. So again that sort of comes back to the overall plan. The way I see this is that the road should be done at the end, the last thing, because the infrastructure, say, at Dove Lake or the car parks - all that sort of stuff - needs to be put in place first. If you do the road first then obviously potentially you've got more people coming in and then there's more impact along the way.

I would also like to just point out something - and I heard Mrs Napier mention it earlier - about the road at Westbury. I've brought along the stuff that was in the *Advocate* from a while back about Ulverstone and the design of the traffic calming measures that were introduced there and the amount of bad publicity that got in the press. It seems to me that is coming from the same school of thought as what is actually happening in other places. I don't know if you've seen that, but there's an article on the inside of the page.

CHAIR - Members might like to refer to it.

Mr FIRTH - Yes. Also, following from that, I understand that the Central Coast Council are now taking it up with DIER as a follow-up to that, I have read in the media since. We have already mentioned what has happened with the Westbury bypass, but there was also another incident at Ulverstone. Just to show you how road engineers don't always get it right, when the new highway was put through at Gawler Road the transport operators who carted potatoes to the Edgell's factory back in those days, put in a petition to actually get on-off ramps put on the highway. That was in the petition when the road was being designed. But 10 years later the engineers went back and put in the on-off ramp. So it just shows that while we have a good standard of road, sometimes they don't get it right every time.

I would like to go back to the document again - and here I'm quoting Berwick & Associates 1996 landscape and visual study which is part of DIER's submission to the parliamentary committee. In this report in the terms of reference it says, 'A range of issues will be considered, but this report is required to provide information and an assessment of the landscape and visual qualities/values of the corridor', which is what they have done.

The point that I would like to make is this study points out the seven viewfields you get along the road as an overall experience as you travel along the road, but in three or four of these viewfields, we are now planning on putting a walking track through the middle of it. In my mind, that would quite severely impact on the work of what Berwick & Associates have done with this document. As far as this being included as part of the road planning, to my mind Berwick should be given the opportunity to go back and reassess the information that they've put in a document like this because if you go down to Ronnie Creek and you see the new track that's been built there recently and fit that in on this, then these viewfields are quite severely impacted upon, which then brings the quality or the integrity of having a report like this as part of this document into question. In all fairness to the authors, they didn't know they were going to put in a walking track for all these viewfields and had they known they probably wouldn't have written the same report as they've written. So again, it comes back to planning or not having an overall plan of what you're doing. Yes, I admit I'm lost.

Mrs NAPIER - Just in support of that, is it your understanding that the report written by Berwick on landscaping and viewfields was done without the knowledge of the proposal for a walking track?

Mr FIRTH - I would say so because this was done in 1996 and as far as I know, that wasn't proposed then. If they are going to be quoted in an article like this they should be given the opportunity of, say, redoing the area report, or something like that. Another area of concern - and Mr Gee has mentioned it -

Mrs NAPIER - What page is that other reference to the Berwick study that you gave?

Mr FIRTH - It is listed all through the document; you've got to read the document, but -

Mrs NAPIER - Yes, that's fine.

Mr FIRTH - this page here which is -

Mrs NAPIER - That's right, I do recall it.

Mr FIRTH - Yes. It talks about the viewfields. I would like to go to 6.2 on page 28. It's part of their report, they've put in a paragraph here on uncertainties. I think it is a fairly pertinent point to bring up because this was in 1996, we have to remember. They talk about the trees just around what we call the Button Grass Corner where the trees actually go into the road, and the way the road has been designed, if you overload on that, there's no way, to my way of looking at it, that you can actually see through the trees to see what is coming. We travel the road pretty often and it is a potential safety hazard. They've brought it up as an issue and they make the statement in here that sometimes you actually have to put the safety of people above the environment, so I would just like to point that out.

We've heard that the environmental considerations of this road are a major point. I'd just like to point out that a lot of the places where the gravel washes off the road currently nothing has ever been done to stop that from happening. It could be something simple like what we use on our walking tracks - where a piece of track has heavy erosion off it, in the drain that goes off the track at that point there is a little sump and every year on maintenance someone goes and scratches out what is in the sump. It can be thrown back on the track if it's suitable or disposed of. Over the years a lot of things could have been done on the road. A sump could easily have been dug with a backhoe which could have been part of the maintenance work to clear it each year or every six months or whatever was needed.

In the transcript from the last hearing on page 19 we heard about the design of the road that's being proposed. I have major concerns with what is being proposed and the person from Department of Infrastructure, Roads and Energy did mention it is going to be a headache for snow ploughing because we've heard that they're not going to mark where the road goes with guideposts but they're going to configure the ground with logs and rocks placed so that effectively you have a naturalistic edge and you would not be able to define the edge of the road. How are they going to snow plough that when it's all covered over with snow? One of the problems we have now is that whenever you've got snow covering everything, whether it's just the little markers in the carpark, you can't see

where anything is. So how are they going to snow plough the road when they don't know where the logs and the rocks are on the edge of the road?

Which then brings me to another issue that I have. When we do get cars meeting or if we have one car going too fast and the other has to take evasive action then the only place for that car to go is into these logs and rocks that are placed on the edge of the road. So, I think that leaves a fair bit to be desired from our point of view. I'd like to restate that it's not you people, it's not the road engineers or whoever who will have to attend to the accidents that happen. It's us. I think that should be some consideration as to what happens on this road.

At the moment the way the road is we're very lucky that anything that does happen is usually very minor and I put it down to that being the nature of the road. Because it is a gravel road, people are intimidated by it, especially our overseas visitors who have never driven on or even seen a gravel road. They're probably our safest drivers because they drive up the middle of the road and they see another car coming and they just freeze and stop. So at the moment that is in our favour and I feel that with a sealed road with a 66 give-way points in it, they will try to race through and beat the next car through and you will have accidents.

I'll just make one little comment. Have any of you ever been to Lake St Clair? It is a two-lane sealed road. Nearly everybody here has been- and you don't want to say anything about that do you?

I'd just like to point out too that -

Mr HALL - How far inside the park boundary is Lake St Clair?

Mr FIRTH - It's five kilometres inside the park boundary, yes. I'm just saying that there is one lot of rules for one end of the park and a different set of rules for the other end of the park which to me just does not make sense.

Just while we're talking about Lake St Clair, they put a sewerage plant in there a couple of years ago and they dug an outfall trench of some five kilometres past Derwent Bridge. A lot of that outfall trench went through parkland. So, again, we've got two different standards for two different ends of the park.

I was also going to bring up that now that campervans and caravans have some concession for travelling on the ships that will add further to our problems with the road design as well. Potentially we could get more caravans and campervans up there.

Mr BEST - Just let me say that I heard what Mr Firth said in his opening comment. Just as a committee member, I personally find a bit distasteful that he's been reprimanded for giving information and that's not really acceptable as far as I'm concerned. It has been given in good faith and honesty, which we will assume it has been, so I just hope that is not the course of action. That is all I just wanted to say in relation to that.

The other thing I was going to ask you, Mr Firth, is that obviously you're suggesting maybe there are some other things that need to be investigated a bit further. You have not put a conclusion to the committee as such, you have really posed more or less

questions to us that you are suggesting that we need to have answers to. Would that be a fair assumption or a fair statement of how you -

Mr FIRTH - I am not saying that I have the answers or I expect you to have the answers. I am just pointing out that in the big picture there are many different aspects of it along the way that should all be brought in. There is a big picture there and whether it is the issue of the houses in the valley or the road usage patterns, it seems to me that there are a lot of things that are not being brought into the picture. We have moved in the right direction by having a plan like that although that is very simplistic plan at this stage but it is saying that there will be shuttle buses, there will be this, there will be that. But, again we heard from Bob earlier about the proposed shuttle bus service and if you read this document, it says in there that there's only going to be eight car parks at Dove Lake, for goodness sake. Yet, if you look at the figures of how many cars go in before 9 a.m., before the bus starts, on a busy day something like 49 cars went in. How many of those 49 cars are going to park in those eight car parks at Dove Lake I don't know. But what I am just saying, like the whole overall planning -

CHAIR - You held a document up and referred to it when you said this suggests eight car parks?

Mr FIRTH - This is the draft Pencil Pine plan. But this hasn't been finalised yet. So what I mean is, the whole planning issue is still very much open ended.

Mrs NAPIER - Mr Firth, I find your comments very useful. Obviously this committee is struggling with the concept of trying reduce a two-lane road back to a one-lane road and looking for the reasons to justify doing it. There may be good and valid reasons but the first point I would ask is, Mr Chairman, I am very concerned that we did ask if Parks people would provide us with input at the last meeting that we had at Cradle Mountain and I would view very seriously any attempt made to, in effect, threaten or punish you as a consequence of having provided that kind of information. Because good planning requires grass roots input it seems to me. I am not sure if this committee might wish to consider that at some other stage. But can you indicate a little bit more to the committee as to what arose as consequence of your having provided us with information?

CHAIR - Can I just interpose there for a moment and to put this right into context? I think it is important that I do. As members of parliament, we understand that any witness appearing before a parliamentary committee receives parliamentary privilege protection and the effect of that of course is that any intimidation of a witness or a threat of punitive action taken against a witness is a potential breach of privilege. As members of parliament, we know that that has very serious consequences. As other members have already indicated today, you have appeared in good faith, taken an oath and provided evidence. So it may constitute a serious breach of privilege. That being the case - and this is the reason I interpose now - you may wish to take the issue further. That is your prerogative and if you wish to take the issue further then you are certainly welcome to write to me, as the Chairman of the committee because, as I said, it may constitute a very serious breach of privilege. That is why people who appear before parliamentary committees in good faith and having taken an oath are protected by privilege. That evidence which you have shared is potentially very serious.

Mr FIRTH - I don't wish to take it further. But I just, like I said, wanted to point out to this committee while some people are listening that this is what happens in our department. While I had an e-mail that was sent from the General Manager to my District Manager read to me, it was protected in such a way that it could not be either forwarded or printed. But he read it to me and things like whistle blowing can't be seen to be reprimanded and these types of words were used in that e-mail. So I am just making you aware and today it is difficult for me to come here today knowing that I will be seen in the same light again.

CHAIR - I did interpose - sorry, Mrs Napier - but it was important to put that on the record because Mrs Napier is right. To fulfil our responsibility to the Parliament and the people of Tasmania we do need every bit of appropriate evidence to be tendered and provided to this committee or we are not doing our job.

Mr FIRTH - I feel it is my duty as a person that has an interest in it to do it as well and that is why I am here.

CHAIR - Absolutely.

Mrs NAPIER - It reminds me of the time when the Brooks High School was moved in location. But that is not in your department. Could I just ask a question in relation to your observations of driver behaviour that is occurring on that current road? If it were a road similar to that which is at Lake St Clair do you think that would increase the speed limit on the road and might equally impact on road casualty statistics, both animal and human?

Mr FIRTH - Obviously if the road was built as a two-lane road there would be some impacts on animals, and we cannot kid ourselves that would not happen. The questions that I would like answered are as I indicated before: what is the need for people to use the road in that critical time, and how many people need to use the road? If that was addressed we might have reduced our potential for animal kill to half. But, going back to what you were saying about the road, the road could easily be made into a two-lane sealed road following its current alignment if there was some strategic widening in a few places and a few trees removed. Basically the road in a lot of places now is a two-lane road, and we have heard from the engineers that some of that is from gravel-creep over the years, where the road has actually crept out a little bit -

Mr HALL - So those parts are degraded anyway now, are they not?

Mr FIRTH - Yes, they are impacted areas, but also basically the alignment of the road is within the broad context a two-lane road. I think if it had a 40km speed limit on it, which is what has been proposed, and there was access for two vehicles to pass on the whole length of the road, then that obviously would be much safer for the people travelling the road than it would be if you were forced to give way potentially 66 times.

This also brings me to another point that I did want to raise. In the plan of this, one area that we did bring up where we have a lot of concern - and I think Mr Nevard referred to it in the extra information that was actually presented to you - is the Ronnie Creek car park. I think the figures are 350 metres of single-lane road, and they have come up and said that this road is safe. I am not an expert, by any means, but you have a single-lane

road coming to Ronnie Creek car park, you have a short 20 metres of double-lane road, and then you have another 350 metres of single-lane road. So you have a very busy car park here, and the point that we raised was that we are getting cars parking on this side of the road now. How that is going to work we just cannot work out because you have people coming and going from the car park, you have a pedestrian crossing there to the track, and you have this big piece of single-lane road and only enough room there potentially for two cars, if you work on 6 metres for a car. You have obviously heard that their modelling picked that as a potential problem in their model works in that area, but how it is actually going to work on the ground, I -

Mrs NAPIER - So could I just clarify? You are saying that you and Parks provided some advice to Mr Nevard, that you would expect to be included in the supplementary information, that raised concerns about the design as it related to -

Mr FIRTH - Yes, actually it does say that. I think it is in -

Mrs NAPIER - Does it, right. For the reference to the size of the car park -

Mr FIRTH - No, it does say in there where we brought it up as a concern. I think it is in 3.2. I do not actually have a copy of that with me today. I left it behind. I will have to look at and tell you exactly, but we did bring up the concerns.

Mrs NAPIER - I must admit I read that 3.2 as being a problem with overflow car-parking -

Mr FIRTH - Yes, I am not 100 per cent sure.

Mrs NAPIER - and not necessarily a question of access and egress.

Mr FIRTH - Right. Well, we brought that up and his modelling did model on that particular point as the worst point. That said that was potentially one of the problem areas, but how that is going to work in actual real life on the ground, not simply the fact that you have so much parking -

Mrs NAPIER - So your judgment is not so much that it is the issue of the size of the car park, but more a matter of traffic flow and the ability to be able to get in and out of the car park in that short period of the two-lane section that faces it?

Mr FIRTH - Yes, it did address our issues there in 3.2, which was the tree sight lines and the car parks. That was overflow of the car parks. Just a little bit more background information on this: at that meeting another one of our staff members brought up about what is actually going to happen with the car park at Dove Lake and how the road was going to affect the car park, so after this meeting was held -

Mr HALL - This is the meeting with Mr Nevard?

Mr FIRTH - Yes, and Mr Barrett. It was after that that Hank and Mr Coles went up to Dove Lake to have a look at the parking, because Mr Nevard and Mr Barrett said we were given that line on the map there and that is what we worked up to, and we had to address the car park issue. This just shows you how planning is being done on the run, because they went up there and said, 'Oh well, we'll just extra seal the last half a kilometre of road

and that will be where the cars park'. That is how that came about. So it shows there is not much planning; it has just been done on the run.

CHAIR - Just to conclude then, I guess, to be thorough in my responsibility as chair of this committee at the moment, given your opening comments and the other information which I have provided to you in terms of parliamentary privilege of witnesses, you mentioned the fact of an e-mail, and as I recall you saying it had some sort of protection in it. Whilst it may not be a matter which you wish to pursue any further in a formal manner, this committee nonetheless has the option of pursuing the matter if it chooses. It is quite possible that this committee might further deliberate over what you have put on the public record because other members have already spoken and I share their view that it is a very serious matter that any member of the public, let alone a member of a government authority, is subjected to intimidation or threats, whether they be overt or covert, is a very serious matter. It could well be that this committee may yet consider the matter further of its own volition. In that light, if there is anything else that you feel would be appropriate for this committee to be aware of, then you are certainly welcome to share that but if there is nothing else then -

Mr FIRTH - I am happy with that. I came here today to talk about that safety angle.

CHAIR - As indeed you attended originally -

Mr FIRTH - Yes.

CHAIR - with an open book about where you were coming from. You had a genuine concern which you wanted to share.

Mr FIRTH - Yes.

CHAIR - Okay. Thank you very much, Mr Firth, once again.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.