



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

Huon Link Road

*Presented to Her Excellency the Governor pursuant to the provisions of the
Public Works Committee Act 1914.*

Legislative Council

*Ms Rattray (Deputy Chair)
Mr Valentine (Chair)*

House of Assembly

*Ms Butler
Mr Tucker
Mr Wood*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	3
2	BACKGROUND.....	3
3	PROJECT COSTS	5
4	EVIDENCE	6
5	DOCUMENTS TAKEN INTO EVIDENCE	29
6	CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION	30

1 INTRODUCTION

To Her Excellency the Honourable Barbara Baker AC, Governor in and over the State of Tasmania and its Dependencies in the Commonwealth of Australia.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY

The Committee has investigated the following proposal:-

Huon Link Road

and now has the honour to present the Report to Your Excellency in accordance with the Public Works Committee Act 1914 (the Act).

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This reference recommended the Committee approve works to construct a link road between the Huon Highway and Flood Road, around the eastern side of the Huonville township, to divert traffic traveling to and from Cygnet away from the Main Street, Huonville.
- 2.2 Traffic modelling undertaken by the Department of State Growth to 2029 indicates traffic volumes are forecast to grow on Main Street. Modelling of the existing intersection of the Channel Highway and the Huon Highway also indicates that this junction performs very poorly in all the 2029 “Do Nothing” scenarios, with average delays growing from less than 20 seconds to 150 seconds in 2029. The additional delays at this site are caused by a lack of gaps for right turning traffic from the Channel Highway onto Huon Highway. This intersection is particularly problematic for heavy vehicles on the Channel Highway which turn right on to the Huon Highway to head north.
- 2.3 The proposed works will allow vehicles, and most importantly, heavy vehicles, travelling north from Cygnet to bypass Main Street, thereby avoiding this intersection. It will also allow Cygnet-bound traffic travelling from the north, including heavy vehicles, to bypass Huonville, if desired.
- 2.4 By removing this traffic, modelling shows a less substantial increase in traffic volumes on Main Street than would occur under the ‘Do Nothing’ scenario.
- 2.5 As a result, the proposed works are expected to generate the following benefits:
 - Improvement to current safety conditions for road users and pedestrians.
 - Improving access to the Channel Highway.
 - Improvement to traffic efficiency.
 - Reduction in average delay at Channel Highway/Huon Highway intersection compared to 2029 model scenario.
 - Consequential improvements to the amenity of Main Street.

- Potential consequential improvements to reduction of crashes along the Huon Highway due to the traffic to and from Cygnet being directed onto the Huon Link Road.
- Capacity to upgrade the existing Flood Road as part of the works.

3 PROJECT COSTS

- 3.1 Pursuant to the Message from Her Excellency the Governor-in-Council, the estimated cost of the work is \$24.3 million.

The following table details the current cost estimates for the project:

	P50 (\$m AUD)	P90 (\$m AUD)
Base Cost Estimate	\$16,924,594	\$16,924,594
Contingency	\$2,424,162	\$4,272,005
Total Project Cost Estimate	\$19,348,756	\$21,196,599
Escalation	\$715,904	\$784,274
Total Outturn Cost Estimate	\$20,064,660	\$21,980,873
** NOTE: The above cost estimate is only an estimate and the Department reserves the right to maintain access to the full allocated budget of \$29.2M. The above estimate is subject to change dependant on multiple factors including market volatility at time of tender; finalisation of designs. The Department is confident that the overall project cost will be significantly less than the allocated budget however it is prudent to retain the budget until designs are completed and the tenders closed.		

4 EVIDENCE

- 4.1 The Committee commenced its inquiry on Monday, 17 October last with an inspection of the site of the proposed works. The Committee then returned to Committee Room 1, Parliament House, whereupon the following witnesses appeared, made the Statutory Declaration and were examined by the Committee in public:-

Proponent

- Craig Tarbotton, Project Manager, Department of State Growth
- Gary Hicks, Project Management Team Leader, Department of State Growth
- David Peck, Project Client, Department of State Growth

Members of the Public and Interested Parties

- Gerry White, Public Officer, Circular Economy Huon
- Dr Liz Smith, Circular Economy Huon

The following Committee Members were present:

- Hon. Mr Rob Valentine MLC (Chair);
- Hon. Ms Tania Rattray MLC (Deputy Chair);
- Ms. Jen Butler MP;
- Mr. John Tucker MP; and
- Mr Simon Wood MP.

Overview

- 4.2 Mr Peck provided an overview of the proposed works:

Mr PECK - ... A quick overview of why we are putting up this road for consideration. The Huon Valley Council approached the State Government seeking support to construct a new road around the eastern side of the Huonville township.

The State Government is supportive of the project and has committed \$15.8 million in funding towards the project. The project will also receive \$13.2 million of co-funding from the Australian Government.

The project objective we are trying to achieve is to divert Hobart to Cygnet traffic from the existing Channel Highway/Huon Highway intersection on the Esplanade and Main Street, Huonville by developing a link road that will directly connect the Channel Highway south of Huonville at Flood Road to the Huon Highway north of Huonville.

Some of the key benefits we are trying to achieve as outcomes from this project are providing a safer and improved alignment for the Channel Highway while also removing through traffic from the Huonville town centre. This will improve the ambience of the town centre and reduce congestion during peak periods, improve pedestrian and cyclist safety and reduce noise and vibration through the township.

The new greenfield alignment will also provide enhanced access and promote development in and around Huonville.

Project Benefits

- 4.3 The Department noted the potential benefits of the project include improved safety, reduction in congestion in Huonville, reduced delays at the Channel/Huon Highway intersection, improved amenity in the town centre, reduction in the number of heavy vehicles in Huonville centre, and minor travel time improvements.
- 4.4 The Committee asked the Department's witnesses to expand on the expected benefits:

Mr TARBOTTON - ... The traffic survey, the traffic modelling, at the moment identifies that the Huon Link Road will remove approximately 3000 vehicles per day from the main street of Huonville. Those 3000 additional vehicles will move to the Huon Link Road... times of the day when the travel time - efficiencies or gains will be the greatest - normally your a.m. and p.m. peaks, because it's the slowest along there. During the middle parts of the day, or outside those a.m. and p.m. peaks, the travel time efficiencies will be reduced because it is free-flowing.

...

CHAIR - ... from my own experience, it seems Huonville suffers from congestion at this point where the hotel is, just over the bridge or just before the bridge, depending on which way you are going, and an ingress onto the Huon Highway, which is quite a dangerous point. Is this to reduce the amount of traffic that actually flows through the main street without necessarily increasing the capacity of vehicles that ultimately use the Huon Highway? Is it primarily to steer cars away from the main street of Huonville as opposed to providing a better road that provides greater capacity?

Mr TARBOTTON - Yes, both. At the moment, as we know, the main street through Huonville is congested and that of itself creates traffic hazards and safety issues. It is not just the traffic travelling down through the main street which creates that. There is also that junction between the two highways.

CHAIR - It is not a good junction, I have to agree with that.

Mr TARBOTTON - Heavy vehicles cannot use that so that compounds that issue. Our new highway has multiple goals. It takes away the highway traffic - that is, the traffic which is bound from either Hobart to Cygnet, through traffic which has no need to go through a town centre and should not be in the middle of a town, so it takes those vehicles away, improves safety.

At the same time, we are proposing a multi million-dollar road, so we have to ensure that the capacity of that has capacity for the future as population grows and so does vehicle volume increase. So, our new highway has the capacity for future population growth, greater volumes.

CHAIR - In what sense? It's still only a two-lane structure, it's not four, is it?

Mr TARBOTTON - Correct. However, the free-flowing nature of a highway will allow more vehicles to travel along its length, hence the 80 km/h and the minimisation of junctions. The more free-flowing that highway can be allowed to operate under, the more traffic flow or volume that can pass through it.

...

Mr TUCKER - With the problems with the existing link, we are putting this bypass around the back of Huonville. We would be reducing a number of crashes coming out of that corner where the bridge is, where the Esplanade meets the Huon Highway, but also making it safer for

people when they are visiting those shops and hopping out of those vehicles, especially when heavy vehicles are going past. It is not an overly wide road.... This will address those safety issues?

Mr TARBOTTON - Correct. That is one of the primary goals for this project - to remove unnecessary vehicles from the town centre, thereby indirectly promoting it as a destination.

CHAIR -... On the fourth dot point, 'Reduction in average delay at Channel Highway/Huon Highway intersection compared to the 2029 model scenario', is that simply because one is a roundabout and the other is a T intersection?

Mr TARBOTTON - ... Yes. By diverting the traffic from that substandard junction, vehicles will still use that junction. Vehicles will still travel from Cygnet along the Esplanade and turn left if they want to go south. They will still have that junction, but there will be far fewer vehicles and there should, potentially, be far fewer heavy vehicles at that junction.

...

Mr TARBOTTON - ... The traffic survey, the traffic modelling, at the moment identifies that the Huon Link Road will remove approximately 3000 vehicles per day from the main street of Huonville. Those 3000 additional vehicles will move to the Huon Link Road. Back to your times of the day when the travel time - efficiencies or gains will be the greatest - normally your a.m. and p.m. peaks, because it's the slowest along there. During the middle parts of the day, or outside those a.m. and p.m. peaks, the travel time efficiencies will be reduced because it is free-flowing.

...

Mr TUCKER - My understanding of this project was that it was a fair bit to do with safety, more than the seconds saved and putting this road through where it was. There is also the flood mitigation which happens there on that Esplanade road. Do you want to go into that a little bit more?

Mr TARBOTTON - You are correct. There are a number of goals. Safety, travel time certainty, travel time efficiency, which relates predominately to our transport sector and, of course, flood immunity. We wanted to maintain the flood immunity. We have achieved that. The flood road is slightly higher in centimetres, not half a metre. We improved safety because we removed vehicles from the main street and at the moment the main street is congested. There are two aspects of the safety. One is the congestion itself along the main street. The difficulty for people that either park vehicles or cross the street and the second is the junction between the two highways at the bridge. That of itself creates a safety issue or risk, so we are minimising that. We are achieving a safety outcome and that is achieved by taking traffic away from those areas and putting them on to a bypass.

4.5 The Committee also sought to understand what improvement in travel times may be expected:

Ms BUTLER - I know it wasn't part of the scope of this project, but has there been any work done on whether the new bypass will improve travel times for people who don't have to access the main road?

Mr TARBOTTON - ... Yes, yes. Our primary consultant engaged a traffic specialist to undertake that survey and that modelling and it has been determined that there will be travel time efficiencies gained, as a result of the highway. The gains are primarily due, for a few reasons, to the increased speed along the new highway. The greenfield section of the highway will be 80kms per hour, so it's time gained in that. Because you are not travelling to the main centre of Huonville you pick up time, or gain time, due to the lack of congestion, or avoiding that congestion. And, of course, trying to turn onto the Huon Highway, at the bridge, you gain time by not having that manoeuvre. There are travel time efficiencies to be obtained, or gained. They are normally measured in seconds. They are not large timing increases, but as far as travel time for vehicles, we typically measure them in seconds and we are obtaining those travel time efficiencies.

Ms BUTLER - Are there different times of the day where greater efficiencies would be felt? I gather that when you're not having that big block down - when you come off the bridge, near the hotel, when you turn tight off the Esplanade, I imagine that would all bank back in normal traffic conditions. Can you run through what it looks like the moment, for the record, at, say, peak hour times?

Mr TARBOTTON - ... The traffic survey, the traffic modelling, at the moment identifies that the Huon Link Road will remove approximately 3000 vehicles per day from the main street of Huonville. Those 3000 additional vehicles will move to the Huon Link Road. Back to your times of the day when the travel time - efficiencies or gains will be the greatest - normally your a.m. and p.m. peaks, because it's the slowest along there. During the middle parts of the day, or outside those a.m. and p.m. peaks, the travel time efficiencies will be reduced because it is free-flowing...

...

Mr TARBOTTON - ...I agree the travel time gains are minimal. They are only measured in seconds and they will never be anything but measured in seconds, but that is how we measure travel time performance. It is not just the speed limit which contributes to travel time gains, it is the fact that the 80 kilometre per hour section should be free flowing provided we keep junctions to a minimum. By not having to travel through the centre of town you avoid that congestion. It is a comparative or relative gain over what it currently takes you to drive through Huonville and then towards Cygnet. I agree the travel time performance gains are not measures in tens of seconds or minutes, but that is a travel time gain and it is not dictated purely by or governed purely by the speed limit. We would prefer to create a higher speed limit but we could not. The road length was too short, but we have also taken into account the congestion along the main street.

Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR)

- 4.6 The Committee understood the project had a positive benefit-cost ratio and asked the Department's witnesses to detail the figure and how it had been determined:

Mr TUCKER - You have a positive benefit cost ratio. Give us an outline with that.

Mr TARBOTTON - Explain how we arrived at that benefit cost?

CHAIR - Yes.

Mr TARBOTTON - That is based on a lot of factors. Incorporated in that assessment is travel time, the type of vehicles that are using the highway, commercial vehicles generating the revenue from their time and the quicker they can pass through a section of highway, there is value to that to them as part of the cost benefit. The reduction in crashes, there is a dollar value per crash, the reduction we factor in. Regrettably, the more severe a crash you can avoid, the greater the savings generated and the greater the benefit.

Mr TUCKER - Do you have the cost ratio?

Mr TARBOTTON - Yes. That is not in this report. If I could provide that back to you. I do not want to guess that. I have a figure in my head and do not want to say it without confirming that.

- 4.7 The Department of State Growth subsequently provided additional information confirming the positive benefit cost ratio:

The Benefit Cost Ratio of standard benefits for the project at the 4% Discount rate is 2.08 and 1.52 for the 7% discount rate at the P90 project total outturn cost estimate at Preliminary Design Estimate phase of the project when the BCR was undertaken¹

¹ DoSG Response to questions taken on notice at 17 October hearing, page 4.

Matters Raised by the Circular Economy Huon

4.8 The Circular Economy Huon made a written submission, and Mr Gerry White and Dr Liz Smith also appeared on behalf of that organisation to give evidence in person to the Committee at the public hearing. Matters raised by the Circular Economy Huon included:

- Insufficient data on heavy vehicle movements, including their origin and destination, to verify how many heavy vehicles will use the Huon Link Road and how much this would reduce congestion in Huonville;
- The induced demand created by building new roads or increasing the capacity of existing roads;
- No consideration of other options to relieve congestion in Huonville, such as measures to encourage modal shift, rather than a focus on road building;

4.9 The following excerpts from the Circular Economy Huon's submission highlights its view on these matters:

... There is a lot of information about vehicle flows available through the Geocounts Tasmania website. This records that on an average day, of the total vehicles heading north and south through Huonville, 3,738, or around 42%, were on the Channel Highway and around 8,800 were on the Huon Highway. Unfortunately, the data doesn't tell us the destination of vehicles on the Channel Highway. Some would have just been going to Huonville, some heading south to Franklin etc., and the remainder heading north to Kingston and Hobart. Without knowing the destination of vehicles on the Channel Highway it is impossible to know how many vehicles would use the new Link Road, or by how much congestion could be reduced in Huonville. This is a serious flaw in the whole project.

Another consideration is that not all vehicles are equal! The majority of heavy vehicles, trucks and semitrailers, going through Huonville are on the Huon Highway and associated with forestry, agriculture and aquaculture. These heavy vehicles usually move slowly through the centre of town, can easily take up the equivalent of 4 or more domestic cars and have high levels of emissions. Data is required to properly understand the impact that these vehicles have on congestion and road safety in Huonville. Furthermore, these vehicles will not be removed by building the Link Road.²

...

One of the main implications of building a new road or widening or lengthening an existing road is that it results in more vehicles using that roadway. This is referred to as 'induced demand'. Therefore, due to the construction of the Huon Link Road it will attract more through traffic, not less traffic on the Channel Highway.

The implications of induced demand are that in future years it is likely that there will need to be further 'modifications' to the Channel Highway; more road widening, lanes added, improvements to intersections, and so on. By spending funds on one section of roadway now it is certain that more will need to be spent in the future. Also, there are inevitably maintenance costs associated with all new road infrastructure.

Another implication of building the Huon Link Road, with the impact of induced demand is that it will increase traffic heading north and this will cause congestion further up the Huon Highway. This may be in Kingston, requiring more parking or improved intersections etc. It will also exacerbate the congestion going into Hobart

² Submission from Circular Economy Huon, page 1

at the bottom of the Southern Outlet on Macquarie and Davey Streets. The Huonville Link Road will lead to 'transferred congestion' in other locations.

Prior to spending \$millions on a new road it would seem reasonable to undertake a masterplan for the township of Huonville. Consideration should be given to future parking requirements, what measures may be needed to improve pedestrian and vehicle movements on Main Street and how suitable other roadways are for a car-dependent community.³

...

As no other solutions to congestion had even been considered prior to going full steam ahead with the Huon Link roadway it is hard to see how it can be financially justified. In our view this project represents irresponsible and wasteful use of Australian and Tasmanian taxpayers money.⁴

...

Tasmania has restricted vision in its approach to transport planning brought about by institutional shortcomings in the Department of State Growth (DSG). DSG is far too heavily focused on opting for road building which is probably a reflection of skill sets within the organisation, and unexamined assumptions about public transport. One is reminded of the way the Hydro saw dam building as the solution to Tasmania's development in the middle of the last century.

...Instead of spending on road building, a revised approach to traffic planning is needed to canvas broader solutions by looking at jurisdictions overseas that are adopting strategies to bring about behavioral change in how people approach transport and mobility. This is particularly relevant in considering commuter traffic to and from Hobart.

Another indication of roads as an institutional problem is the consultation process for the Huon Link Road. The public consultation on the congestion was tailored so that the community could opt for one of two roads! It didn't provide the opportunity for wider discussion and the individual comments from the public have not been published.⁵

...

CEH is not saying that no new roads should be built in Tasmania. But what does need to happen prior to any new road building is to take a broader view and see how transport options can boost vehicle occupancy to reduce the number of single occupancy journeys by car. In terms of considering better options for people travelling to Huonville from Cygnet and surrounds, it will mean looking at other ways that people can travel apart from driving or using one of the three buses a day that is the 'service' now offers. It is likely to include more public busses (sic), smaller commuting minibuses, on-demand public transport options, and car-pooling systems. For people living in, or closer to, Huonville there needs to be better provision of active transport infrastructure for cycling, walking and the use of scooters. This approach will greatly reduce the large amount of money spent on roads, encourage better land use, have less environmental impact and provide greatly improved mobility for the whole population.⁶

³ Ibid, page 2

⁴ Ibid, pages 3-4

⁵ Ibid, page 4

⁶ Ibid, page 5

- 4.10 Mr White provided the Committee with some data he had sourced on truck movements, highlighting the majority is north/south bound, not travelling to and from Cygnet:

Mr WHITE - ...I have done some figures on trucks. With regard to truck numbers, and their geocount positions both on the Channel Highway and the Huon Highway.

They give an indication of the number of vehicles that travel north and south. They also give a percentage of those vehicles that are heavy vehicles, so you can calculate the number of heavy vehicles.

CHAIR - This is the Department of State Growth data?

Mr WHITE - Yes. Publicly available on the website. The important figures are, I think, the counter just before Flood Road, shows that there were -

CHAIR - Is this just before Flood Road on the Esplanade or on the Cygnet side?

Mr WHITE - On the Cygnet side.

That is south, but is both looking at north and south movement of vehicles.

A total of 3738 vehicles. This probably relates to 2019 and these are figures per day, of which 9.8 percent are trucks. My calculation is that is 366 trucks. Then if you look at the geocount figure just south of the bridge, on the Huon Highway, the total vehicle count of 6332, and there are 10.7 per cent classed as heavy vehicles, or trucks. That is 677 truck movements per day.

That means that 35 per cent are from the Cygnet direction, going from and to Cygnet. 65 per cent are south going north and south from Franklin, Dover and so on.

- 4.11 Heavy vehicle traffic data subsequently provided by the Department of State Growth broadly confirmed the heavy vehicle volumes provided by Mr White:

State Growth HV traffic data:

- Huon Hwy north of Huonville. HV% = 9.4% (2017), 997 trucks per day
- Channel Hwy east of Huonville. HV% = 10.6% (2021), 431 trucks per day
- Huon Hwy south of Huonville. HV% = 10.7%, (2019), 678 trucks per day

The traffic modelling undertaken for the Link Road project included origin-destination surveys for peak periods. This included cars and HV movements. The OD survey indicated the following truck movements during the AM and PM peak periods:

- Channel Hwy to Huon Hwy north AM 2 trucks, PM 2 trucks
- Huon Hwy north to Channel Hwy AM 1 truck, PM 2 trucks
- Huon Hwy north to Huon Hwy south AM 9 trucks, PM 3 trucks
- Huon Hwy south to Huon Hwy north AM 15 trucks, PM 8 trucks
- Channel Hwy to Huon Hwy south AM 7 trucks, PM 8 trucks
- Huon Hwy south to Channel Hwy AM 4 trucks, PM 2 trucks

It can be seen that the dominant through route was Huon Highway south to north as well as north to south.

Channel Highway through truck movements appear to have a dominant origin/destination as Huon Hwy to the south of Huonville.

Based on the above, the link road will remove some truck movements from Huonville town centre, but not all. Overall, the trucks that remain on Main Road will have improved travel times due to less traffic using Main Road.⁷

- 4.12 The Committee was keen to understand what traffic modelling had been undertaken by the Department of State Growth to determine the impact the works would have on traffic volumes in Huonville:

Ms RATTRAY - It has been suggested that the modelling has not been done for the destination of vehicles for this project. We know how many vehicles - there are plenty of 'geo-counts' I think they are referred to - relating to the average number of vehicles on the roads. Could you walk me through why that data was not collected? I am interested to have that understanding, or if it is even necessary?

Mr TARBOTTON - Our road projects all evaluate traffic flows. We do that so that we can understand what category of road we need to design for, and the scale of the road itself. Our traffic surveys identify where vehicles are heading to - the broad destination - where they stop, and where they turn. Whilst we cannot categorically tell you that the vehicles travelling north will go to Hobart, we know that they are travelling north of Huonville and we can identify the volume of that traffic that travels north of Huonville. We can identify the volume of traffic that turns south at the Huon Bridge and heads further south. We cannot tell you where they go beyond the bridge, but we know that they turn left and travel south.

That information tells us the split of the traffic. We know the traffic coming from Cygnet along the Channel Highway. We know how much travels north and how much goes south. We can also determine how much stays in Huonville based on the volume of traffic that leaves Cygnet. We know how much is travelling south, how much is travelling north with the balance staying in Huonville. So, that of itself is a form of destination survey. It is not a specific destination survey. It is more the traffic volume so we understand traffic movements.

CHAIR - So, a lot of the traffic could be going, at the moment, via the Huonville main road or call it the CBD if you like, it is pretty busy. They might have a temporary stop there to get coffee or fuel or whatever, and then travel to Hobart.

Mr TARBOTTON - Yes.

CHAIR - You are not able to refine it any lower than that, to be able to say exactly how many vehicles are likely to use this particular road, and bypass Huonville altogether?

Mr TARBOTTON - I will take that on notice. We have forecast the number of vehicles that will use this Huon Link Road, the proposed road. We have forecast the percentage of vehicle drops, what the traffic volume will reduce along the main road.

CHAIR - Then how can you forecast that - and this is a genuine question - without really having the origin destination survey to know whether large trucks are currently going up the Esplanade and doing a right into Huon Road? Yes, they are large trucks and they do not have many places to stop, but they may be stopping on a side street, for instance going towards Ranelagh, going back getting their early morning coffee or their lunch or whatever they might want to buy, and then continuing on. How do you know the nature of the traffic that is actually utilising the strip in Huon Road?

Mr TARBOTTON - We will put traffic counters at key points along all of the major highways associated with this project. Traffic counters were positioned further north of where we intersect with the Huon Highway - that is north of Orchard Avenue. That will tell us the volume and type of traffic.

CHAIR - And the weight?

Mr TARBOTTON - Correct. It is typically split between heavy vehicles, regardless of their weight - which is heavy - and standard vehicles, so we know the split and we know the volume

⁷ Huon Link Rd - DoSG response to questions on taken on notice 17 October hearing, page 6

- the number of vehicles - that travel beyond Orchard. We also know the same characteristics of vehicles travelling south. But, you are correct - if I can give you an example. If 20 000 vehicles are travelling along the channel from Cygnet, 5000 turn south to go south and only 10 000 travel north of Orchard Avenue. That leaves a balance of 5000. They may stay in Huonville, or they may go to other destinations, which we don't put traffic counters on, because they're not associated with this. That is the request I'm hearing, that you'd like us to

Mr VALENTINE - Okay; but you can deduce what is likely to be staying in Huonville as opposed to those likely to use this road.

Mr TARBOTTON - That's a traffic count, they're actual statistics, they're values. We forecast.

- 4.13 The Department of State Growth subsequently provided additional information on the impact the Huon Link Road would have on traffic in Main Street:

The Link Road is modelled based on AM/PM peak periods and extrapolated out for full day volumes. The results on this modelling indicated post completion the vehicles per day is 4062 in 2025 and increasing to 6407 vehicles per day in the year 2045.

Traffic volumes on Main Street are forecast to increase between 2019 and 2029 both to the north and the south of the town centre irrespective of the presence of the Link Road. This is because the link road does not primarily service traffic using the key north-south Huon Highway route through the town centre. This traffic is likely to continue to use the town centre route rather than use the link road.

Despite this, the increase in traffic on Main Street is less substantial between 2019 and 2029 when the Link Road is included in the modelling.

The variation of traffic volumes on Main Street for the two hour AM/PM peak periods between the base models and the Link Road models are shown in the Chart 1 below.

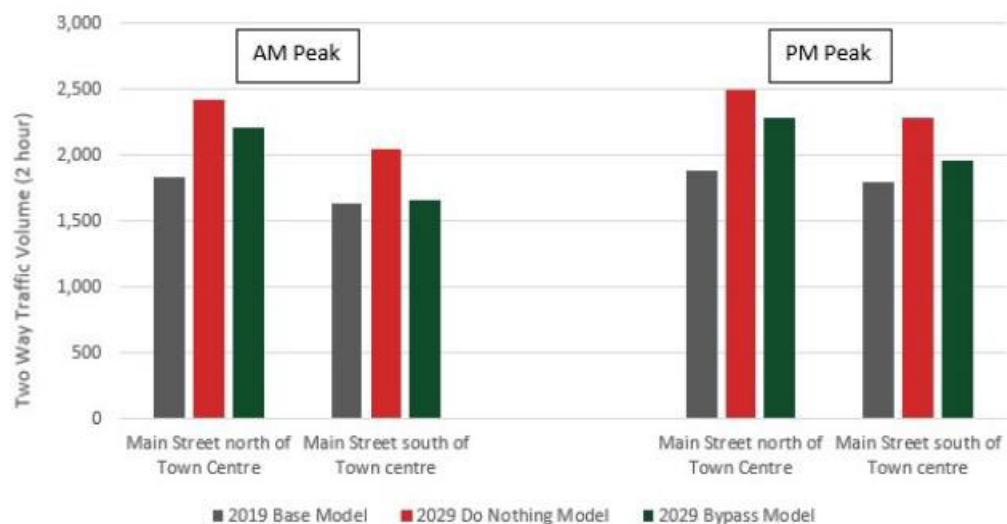


Chart 1: Main Street Traffic Volume comparisons⁸

- 4.14 The Circular Economy Huon contended that a transport management study should have been undertaken prior to committing to Huon Link Road. Mr White also specifically referenced the Department of State Growth's Huon Highway Corridor

⁸ Huon Link Rd - DoSG response to questions on taken on notice 17 October hearing, pages 1-2

Study and questioned why the Huon Link was being progressed ahead of this study being released:

Dr SMITH - ... We are looking at a proposed construction of the Huon Link Road, which is a bypass for traffic from Cygnet - which, as Gerry said, is about one-third of the traffic. It is predicted that this bypass will reduce traffic and therefore congestion in Main Street, Huonville.

I would like to talk about the issue of transport that was described in the Huonville Ranelagh Master Plan, because the aims of the master plan were primarily to contribute to increased activity and revitalisation of the townships of Huonville and Ranelagh, enhancing key assets, and to strengthen Huonville's role as a significant regional centre. Then there were another four aims, which are not exactly relevant to what we are talking about today. I will give you this transcript which has those bits on it.

The master plan outlines the key directions, recommendations and actions. It also includes an outline of the next steps in the process. Section 5 on page 36 provides a holistic transport management approach. A key outcome of the stakeholder and community engagement was:

“the effect of the volume of traffic through Main Street and the lack of permeability and connectivity of the road and trail network.”

I am not exactly clear what that means, but it probably means that you do not have enough connections onto Main Street. The recommendation, then, was:

“a holistic transport management approach is required, with the first step being the preparation of a comprehensive transport management study that considers all aspects of the movement of people and vehicle, including, the realignment of the esplanade -”

Which has been under discussion for many years -

“a link road or bypass, the number of entry and exit points on Main Street –”

The recommendation in the action section of the plan, which is SS1 on page 46, is to:

“prepare a comprehensive and holistic transport management study that considers the critical elements of transport network within and around Huonville and Ranelagh. This is to consider and include the diversion of the Channel Highway (the Esplanade), the creation of a bypass from the northern end of town through to Flood Road, and a link road. ”

...As far as I know, the transport management study has not been completed. I have never seen it.

...If it has not, then the question is, when will it be completed, and will a review of the recommended actions in the master plan be made? Why was the decision to create a Huonville bypass made before the transport management study was released?

...In the community consultation by State Growth in January/February this year, the introductory statement was, and I am sure you have this:

“We are committed to building a link road between the Huon Highway and Flood Road. The link road will divert Cygnet-bound highway traffic from Main Street, Huonville. It will reduce congestion and improve safety through the Huonville town centre.”

Now, the options were only the two potential routes: a northern route and a southern route, but nothing else. It was not a very broad consultation with the public.

CHAIR - What other options do you see?

Dr SMITH - I think the management study should have been done, so we had the information on which to make decisions.

CHAIR - Do you see an immediate option that might provide a better -

Dr SMITH - I think there may well be better traffic management issues in Huonville, and we will go onto that. I think there has been some discussion about the potential for a roundabout at the Channel Highway junction with the Huon Highway. Also, I looked at the pinpoint responses of the community to that consultation, and I found them to be very ambiguous. At this point, I have not seen any in-depth cost-benefit analysis - although I gather the department has given you some information on that today.

I would have expected that the transport management study that was recommended in the master plan for a holistic traffic management approach for congestion in Huonville would have been done before committing to a bypass. The primary aim, as I said before, for the Huonville Ranelagh Master Plan was to strengthen Huonville's road as a significant regional centre. I am not sure that the link road or bypass is consistent with that aim.

I live in Cygnet and travel to Huonville quite often; I basically just go to Huonville because it has all the services I need. I think that applies to a lot of people coming from Cygnet. Gerry has given me some figures on that. It looks like a lot of the congestion, or at least the feeling - because there are a lot of trucks on the road - is the domination of heavy trucks on Main Street. These are mostly coming over the bridge. There are log trucks and a lot of aquaculture vehicles, as well as the transport vehicles that run up and down to the more industrial areas of the Huon Valley. It seems to me that we have to actually look at it in a much broader context than just a bypass.

One question is about the statement that the bypass would in fact divert Cygnet-bound highway traffic from Main Street, and reduce congestion and improve safety. There does not seem to be any data - although Gerry has come up with some - on the destination. I think the department said they could give us much more detailed information about the destination of vehicles, rather than just saying so many vehicles on the road.

Another basic question is whether the major traffic issues in Main Street are due to commuters travelling directly between the Cygnet area and Kingston and Huonville. I do not know what proportion they are, but in future commuter traffic from Cygnet may well be reduced because the Cygnet area has a relatively high proportion of professional workers who can, do and probably will continue to increasingly work from home. I wonder whether any detailed analysis had been done on the trends in working from home, either full or part time and how this might affect the volume of traffic actually using a Huonville bypass.

... The other thing that strikes me and I did a brief survey last week, is the large proportion of traffic on the Huon Highway that is local work-related, like commercial vehicles. A lot of tradies who run around the valley and they go from Cygnet to Ranelagh; they go down to Franklin. There are a lot of these people and also, care providers. They are travelling within the Huon Valley and going through Huonville; they are not going out towards Kingston. We do not know where they go but they do transit through the main road in Huonville. Then the question of how traffic flow in the main street could be improved through maybe traffic-calming measures, more roundabouts, pedestrian crossings, traffic lights. I would think these would have been addressed in a transport management study.

The biggest question is who would benefit from spending \$29 million on this bypass. There are certainly a lot of ways that that kind of money could be spent in the Huon Valley to the great benefit of the valley. I would like to come back at the end to the Huonville Ranelagh Master Plan because the master plan includes strengthening Huonville's roads as a significant regional centre. The recommendation was this transport management study and then bringing it back so the whole master plan could be considered in the context of that.

... It seems to me that without this transport management study, it is a bit premature to be allocating so much money to a link that will grow to a bypass when we do not have the numbers that back it up.

Mr WHITE - ... The Huon Highway Corridor Study has been mentioned already and it seems amazing that we are launching into this without seeing the study. We were involved and

participated with a web-based discussion - it was probably 11 to 12 months ago. Circular Economy Huon was involved and a number of other agencies and there was discontent with the state of the corridor study that was presented as a provisional draft document - great to see it but come back and let us have a look at the improvements. We have never seen the final draft. We understand as well from other sources that it is now with the department, but we think that it is important that is considered at the same time as other issues before big money is spent on a highway.

4.15 The Committee asked the Department's witnesses on the status of the Huon Highway Corridor Study:

CHAIR - ...the 2021 Department of State Growth Huon Highway Corridor Study, pending publication. Is there a reason why this project has been put forward now prior to that being published? Or do you know the contents of it and, therefore, can take any issues into account?

Mr TARBOTTON - That is a separate entire project to this project. At the time of submitting this document to the committee, that corridor study, the stakeholder consultation had not been finalised, consequently had not been publicised. But it is a separate project to this.

CHAIR - And it doesn't impact on this in any way? It's not likely to impact on this, is that what you're telling me?

Mr TARBOTTON - I don't know.

Mr PECK - I've reviewed it and there are no recommendations for this segment of road in that report.

CHAIR - Okay. I just thought it was a bit odd that -

Mr TARBOTTON - ...It's a separate project but if I can just add to David's comment. That is a corridor strategy, a corridor study about how multiple roads could be potentially improved to improve the region. The project before you is one specific road; that is, the goal is to take traffic away from one section of existing road.

The budget you just mentioned, this project has a supported budget of \$29 million, which David mentioned earlier. That's the budget for this project. That's not to do with the corridor study. We are forecasting costs less than that \$29 million.

4.16 The Department of State growth subsequently provided further information on its status:

The Department is in the process of finalising the Huon Highway Corridor Study, which will be made publicly available in the coming months. While the Corridor Study is not yet publicly available, the Department can confirm that the Huon Link Road project and the benefits it provides are noted as part of the Study.⁹

Huon Valley Council's Involvement in the Project

4.17 The Committee understood the Huon Valley Council had initially proposed a new link road a number of years ago. Further it noted the Council's continued support for the project. The Committee sought further information from the Department's witnesses on the Huon Valley Council's involvement in, and support for, the Huon Link Road:

CHAIR - ... You mentioned the Huon Council and I am interested to know how much interaction there was with the council in relation to this, especially in relation to the strategic planning the council does. It may well be something that has happened over a number of years, but if you could fully describe your interactions with the council in relation to this particular project,

⁹ Huon Link Rd - DoSG response to questions on taken on notice 17 October hearing, page 5

especially because this land was within the jurisdiction of the Huon Council and obviously interacts with the community they represent.

Mr TARBOTTON - I can certainly talk on behalf of the project. The project that has been presented today represents the last two years of the life of this road. Prior to the project there were earlier discussions with council which I am not privy to.

Since the project started - approximately two years ago when we inherited it from the council, we have kept council via one of their staff, Lachlan Kranz, as closely informed as we can through our consultant. Our design consultant, Burbury Consulting, engage ERA Planning and Environment as stakeholder specialists and they consult with all stakeholders. The council is a key stakeholder and our very first meeting of the project involved the council as key stakeholder. Throughout that previous two years we have kept council fully informed about the project.

A lot of what the project is to develop, and key facets of what the project is delivering are council's requirements or desires, which includes a shared path. The council decides that, connectivity to the Skinners Creek pathway was a desire. Indeed, the alignment was a council preference too, the northern alignment that we've chosen. So, all along the project implementation delivery path lifecycle, we have kept council as fully informed as we could.

CHAIR - Thank you, and they see it as keying in with their desires. Are they very supportive?

Mr TARBOTTON - Yes, I think in support of that the position that the new highway has taken - so we are here to talk about what we are internally calling the northern route, generically it's the Huon Link Road but it's the northern route of two options that were assessed. That route sits within a zone of land that council identified as a road corridor on their planning scheme. So, we have positioned a road on a piece of land that they had already hoped would be developed for a road, for a future bypass. So yes, council is fully informed, fully aware and supportive of the project.

Route Options

4.18 The Committee noted community consultation was undertaken to determine the preferred route for the Huon Link Road. The Committee asked the witnesses about this process and the ultimate selection of the northern route as the preferred option:

CHAIR - You have options evaluation under 2.2 between the southern route and the northern route. Could you describe why you chose the northern route so the people listening in can understand that.

Mr TARBOTTON - The project took to the public two options, we called them the southern route and the northern route. We wanted the public to express their preference as opposed to the State Government simply dictating or prescribing a solution. The project was initiated on a southern route only, but we wanted the public to express their opinion. We identified, in consultation with council, an alternative route, which we called the northern route. Public consultation occurred in the early part of this year and it closed around February or March.

The overwhelming response was support for the longer route. That also happens to be council's preferred route. From a transport engineering perspective there are benefits to be obtained by adopting the northern route. It exits that traffic further north away from the town centre.

South of Orchard Road, which is where the northern route joins into the Huon Highway, there is a portion of Huon Highway which has a higher crash rate than other sections along the Huon Highway. By adopting the northern route, which exits further north, we also avoid that. We send more traffic away from that section of the Huon Highway than if we were to adopt the southern route, which joined into the Huon Highway further south. Between where the

southern route would have joined Huon and the northern, that section of Huon Highway is prone to traffic accidents, so there were benefits to adopting the northern route.

Capacity to Cope with Flood Events

- 4.19 The Committee recognised Huonville was prone to flooding and Flood Road itself was built to provide an alternative route to avoid flooding caused by the Huon River. The Committee asked the Department's witnesses on the capacity of the Huon Link Road to cope with flood events:

CHAIR - The current flooding that's occurring in the north of the State, is that one of the principal reasons for this in terms of council's desire to have this road built to avoid the flooding at the Esplanade? I would think that would be the case but can you confirm that is what it is about?

Mr TARBOTTON - It's not the principal driver for the project. It is a consideration and an aspect that we have considered. Flood Road, as the name implies, was developed to avoid floods in the event the Huon River floods. Our project is not to avoid that and we do not necessarily change the alignment of Flood Road. It was not a primary driver for the project but we have considered how our road or the highway will perform under floods.

We have undertaken extensive flood modelling, in fact our design consultant undertook their own flood modelling. They engaged a separate independent person, organisation, to review their flood modelling and the outcome is that this project does not worsen or exacerbate the current situation. A lot of the land in question is mapped as flood prone, not necessarily at the southern end of Flood Road, perhaps further north, the northern tip of Flood Road. We took that into account when designing our project. All our hydrological studies, our storm weather modelling shows that we do not exacerbate that situation.

Storming and flooding will still likely occur under those extreme events, and we are talking greater than one in one hundred events. We design our road products for one in one hundred depending on the capacity and the category of the road, but as a highway we design it for one in one hundred-year events and our modelling indicates that we have not worsened our situation.

MS BUTLER - ... Going back to the potential flooding that may occur on the new highway, there are two bridges, I believe, that are part of that. Can you run us through whether those bridges are built to a hundred-year standard, and some of the work that has gone into ensuring those bridges will be fit for a purpose?

Mr TARBOTTON - So yes, they are designed for what we call a one in one hundred-year event or 1 per cent probability of occurrence. There are two bridge structures, one is new and one is the existing one on Flood Road which we will be upgrading, widening.

... So yes, they are designed for one in one hundred-year events, and again what drives that modelling and that design is the category of the road, the State highway, that drives that modelling. So, one in one hundred years is what it will be immune...

Ms BUTLER - Some of the technical work that the department has undertaken or a consultant has undertaken should ensure those bridges are fit for purpose?

Mr TARBOTTON - All of our designs are designed in accordance with a number of guidelines. Our roadworks are designed in accordance with Austroads, which is a national guideline. Bridge structures are designed in accordance with a national standard. The Australian Standard of 50-100 that will govern the design of the bridge as far as the immunity of that structure to flooding, that's our flood modelling. Again, it has to withstand a one in one hundred-year flood event and this one will withstand that.

CHAIR - ... It is not an insignificant catchment coming down into that, is it?

Mr TARBOTTON - No, it is quite large. Correct.

Ms RATTRAY - Was a larger bridge construction considered or was it decided that because it met the one in one hundred-year flood event, that these would be suitable?

Mr TARBOTTON - Correct. The designs have to be appropriate and fit for purpose. We quite often use box culverts or large concrete culverts for bridge structures. They are cost effective.

Stormwater Management

4.20 The Committee was aware that construction of new roads can result in increased run off, which can impact surrounding land and local stormwater systems. The Committee sought to understand how this situation would be managed:

CHAIR - ...obviously, putting in a significant area of new hard surface you get significantly more run off.

Mr TARBOTTON - Yes.

CHAIR - You are saying that all of that has been calculated and the run off can be easily catered for?

Mr TARBOTTON - I would not say easily. There is some significant stormwater management within this project and a lot of design has gone into it to ensure that our road does not adversely affect the surrounding land.

CHAIR - I was going to ask, does it add to the problem?

Mr TARBOTTON - Yes, it does; however, we control that. All our discharge from our hard surface is picked up by a number of stormwater structures and relayed to the Huon River, which is the ultimate discharge point. Our modelling indicates we will not adversely affect the adjacent land.

Mr TUCKER - Have hydrology reports been done on this road?

Mr TARBOTTON - Yes. We have had two reports undertaken. The existing land is in a low-lying area; well, it depends upon which portion of the land. There are portions of this land which are already identified as flood prone or wet. We do not exacerbate that. We control our discharge and we redirect it to the Huon River.

Catering for Future Developments on Land Adjacent to the Huon Link Road

4.21 Noting the potential for development in the vicinity of the Huon Link Road, the Committee asked the Department's witnesses to explain how future developments may be impacted, especially how access may eventually be provided:

Ms RATTRAY - ... It's been suggested that because there hasn't been an actual Master Plan, or a current one, undertaken and approved by the Council, then this is a bit of the 'cart before the horse'. So, just some comments around that, if I might?

Mr TARBOTTON - I would disagree that it is the 'cart before the horse'. This project, this alignment, if you like, has been discussed before the council for many years, well before my time. We are developing a State highway. We have certain goals that we wish to achieve. Those goals are traffic safety, travel time efficiencies, which we will achieve.

The council does have plans for the greater Huonville region. Just at the moment, they don't have a specific plan that relates to the land between the new highway and the town centre.

We are going to work with council when they start to develop that plan to make sure that our State highway can, or will not, prevent the further or future development of Huonville and that the two can work in concert.

Ms RATTRAY - I also asked the question on site about access on and off the new highway. It was suggested that there will not be multiple access points anywhere, because this is

obviously going to be an area that in the future, I expect, looking at the growth of where we were standing today, that eventually those housing subdivisions will push out further, in and around the highway.

Can you talk me through how that is going to occur and what sort of conversations will be needed with council, in the future, as they are designing their subdivisions, or developers, with council, about the on-and-off opportunities of the proposed bypass highway?

Mr TARBOTTON – Those discussions typically start with a comment such as:

We would like to talk to you about how you are going to plan for the future development of the township.

That will then initiate further discussions.

We have raised this matter with council, and we will then progress those discussions. Those discussions have not occurred in detail yet. They will occur, and I can't tell you what time, but they will occur.

Typically, what would happen is that council would identify how they foresee this land being used. At the moment, the land between the highway and Huonville is not all zoned general residential.

If the council does want that land to be developed into residential subdivisions, it has to be rezoned, and that is a discussion within council. Of course, there have to be the developers there who wish to develop the land, so again, that is a discussion between council and private developers, not State Growth, or the State Government.

Once the council has identified that they desire this land to be used for residential purposes, and there are property developers willing to apply for rezoning, or the council rezone it themselves, then they can come to State Growth and ask us, how can we - council - connect into your highway? We want that conversation to occur. We're not here to prevent the development of Huonville but we are here to ensure that our State highway does perform as a State highway. There is a lot of money, as you know, going into this project and we cannot afford that highway to function at a lower level than a State highway.

The format of that discussion will be council identifying that they do want to develop the land. They might prepare their own master plan showing how they see the land being developed, in the lot configuration that they see best, and then approach us and talk to State Growth as a road authority as to where we can position junction points.

Ms RATTRAY - What I am taking from what you are saying is that this could be a long time down the track, so it is State Growth's focus on putting something in place for what is there now and not necessarily looking at the future needs of the Huonville broader community at this point in time? Is that fair?

Mr TARBOTTON - Yes and no. It would be imprudent of us to position a junction point now not knowing how that land will be developed. We could put a junction there now and if it does not suit or work in concept with the land developers, it could work against the land developers to their detriment. We do not want that and they do not want that. So, the most pragmatic approach is to build a State highway, allow future connection to that in a controlled manner and the way that we control it is through a discussion with council.

Ms RATTRAY - How difficult is it to put access points, and I am assuming it is probably only going to be one or perhaps two, how difficult is it to put those access points into a State highway after the event, after it has been established? Is that something that is not necessarily an issue?

Mr TARBOTTON - No, it's not. It's not a concern from an engineering perspective, it is standard business for us. From a cost perspective it is not that onerous to do it retrospectively.

Ms RATTRAY - Well, the State does not pay. It would be the developer, wouldn't it?

Mr TARBOTTON - It can be, yes, correct, quite often that is the case. As far as the positioning of it, there are no constraints as to where it could be positioned. Along the full length of the highway there is a possibility for a junction to be placed anywhere along that land. There are some locations better than others.

Cost Estimate

- 4.22 The Committee noted the current cost estimate was significantly lower than the project budget, and the Department confirmed its commitment to delivering the project within the budget:

Ms RATTRAY - So, you have \$29.2 million in the kitty but it will only cost \$21 million to do the works?

Mr TARBOTTON - Yes, that cost estimate is preliminary cost estimate. When I say preliminary, it's a point-in-time cost estimate.

...Our goal is to obviously deliver this project within the budget, within the \$29 million. That is an estimate to show you that we are targeting to bring it in under the \$29 million. We reserve access to the \$29 million because our cost estimates are not finalised yet. We're still finalising the project but we intend to bring it in under the \$29 million.

Acquisition of Orchard Land

- 4.23 The Committee sought further information from the Department's witnesses on the land being acquired from the orchard which will be bisected by the Huon Link Road:

CHAIR -Something that often comes up when you are dealing with alienation of agricultural land is the class of land that it is alienating under the Protection of Agricultural Land Act. Can you deal with that component with respect to the orchard that's being bisected?

Mr TARBOTTON - ... To the orchard owner, it is currently a commercial operating orchard and we have been in close communication with that land owner since the implementation of the project two years ago. The orchard owner is in support of the project and they believe this will provide a positive outcome to the community, and we support that as well.

We cannot deliver this project without impacting land. If it wasn't the orchard land, it would have been prime residential land, and there is a balancing act about what land we affect. Is it agricultural land or is it residential land? The council supported the longer route, knowing that we would pass through an orchard. The orchard owner supported a northern route, knowing that we would pass through their land.

In discussions and communications with the orchard owner, they have made comment that they purchased this land in the 1980s knowing that Huonville would expand onto their boundaries at some point. It was only a matter of time, and that happens to be now. They are fully aware of that, and they have started to diversify their business to allow their business to continue operating, knowing that the land opposite Orchard Avenue will eventually be constrained by residential development.

CHAIR - So, the amount of compulsory acquisition for the two options - can you give us an understanding of what that might look like?

Mr TARBOTTON - ... The southern route has less impact on agricultural land. We do not pass through the orchard, so that's less there. The square meterage of acquisition is less on the southern route as a total quantum of acquisition. The cost of the acquisition - and I am not referring to compensation here, that is a matter for the Valuer-General to determine, not myself - but our estimates indicate that the cost of compensation between the two routes would be equivalent, based on the value of the land. Whilst the area of acquisition is less for

the southern route, the value of that land is greater, being already zoned residential and planned residential.

Aboriginal Heritage

- 4.24 The Committee sought an assurance from the Department's witnesses that all required assessments had been undertaken with respect to potential Aboriginal cultural heritage, and that an appropriate unanticipated discovery plan would be in place:

Ms RATTRAY – A question regarding any matters relating to the Indigenous community. What assessment has been done? As we know, the Bridgewater Bridge has halted.

Mr TARBOTTON - ... We have, via our consultants, engaged with Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania (AHT) to ensure that the Aboriginal community are aware of this project. They have been given an opportunity to communicate with us and have a dialogue with us regarding their concerns. No concerns have been raised. The survey undertaken by AHT identified no artefacts, so the risk is low. The community has not expressed any dissatisfaction with our project, and they have been given the opportunity to raise their concerns.

...

CHAIR - ... with respect to the unanticipated discovery of Aboriginal relics... You are telling us that you have had the surveys done. Are you saying to the best of your knowledge there is no Aboriginal relics?

Mr TARBOTTON - Correct.

CHAIR - And you have a plan in place to deal with them if they are discovered?

Mr TARBOTTON - Correct.

... What happens is, if the road contractor, or when the road contractor identifies what they might consider to be an artefact, the process is that they must cordon off that area and cease all works within that cordoned area.

They don't stop work across the entire site. They will move onto other areas where they can work, but they will cordon off the area where they believe there could be an artefact. They will notify us. We will then notify Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania, who will send out an officer to inspect that area. If it is an artefact they will instruct us what can be done.

Often, we are given the authority to, or they are, to relocate that artefact, and once the artefact is relocated, we can recommence work within that area.

CHAIR - Depends on what is found?

Mr TARBOTTON - Correct. Yes.

Impact on Nearby Properties

- 4.25 Having undertaken a site visit, the Committee was aware there would be an impact on nearby properties, both during and post construction. These impacts included noise, light spill and impacts on residential amenity.
- 4.26 The Committee asked the Department's witnesses to outline how noise impacts may be quantified and the measures that may be used to mitigate any adverse noise impacts for residents:

CHAIR - One of your expected positive outcomes is a reduced noise impact and increased amenity in Huonville due to the heavy vehicles travelling to Cygnet using the Huon Link Road at the entrance to Huonville. We talked on our site visits, the issue of noise and noise impacts

to a number of areas. One was in the more built up area of Flood Road and the other one was on the lead-up to the roundabout, travelling north near the orchard.

For the record, can you describe how you approached the issue of noise and what you do for residents who are close to developments like this to reduce impact and why you do not, if that is the case?

Mr TARBOTTON - All of State Growth road projects are governed by - not governed if you like - required to assess their impacts against the State Roads Traffic Noise Management Guidelines. That will identify what process is required to be undertaken by a project. For this project, it was identified that noise modelling had to occur. We had to identify whether the project would have a negative effect on adjacent residents, or what the outcome would be, and that's quite common across all of our major work projects.

For this project we placed noise receivers in select properties along the highway, as best we could, and that recorded the sound. We then developed a noise model that reflected accurately that noise receiving. Where we identify if a project is going to exceed the threshold in the State Roads Noise Management Guidelines we have to mitigate against that. There is any number of different types of mitigation that could be implemented.

The type of mitigation that a project adopts will depend upon the number of impacted properties. The lower number of properties will typically adopt a mitigation targeted at the individual property. When it gets to a greater number of properties, we will look at trying to mitigate at the source of the noise, that's the road itself. There are a number of different options available to us. At times we will place noise walls adjacent to our roads; sometimes you can put earth mounds. For this project, there is approximately a 700-metre section of road where the noise generated from that section of highway will exceed our noise thresholds and we did have to mitigate. The mechanism that we have chosen is to use a surface seal that generates less noise than all other seal types.

CHAIR - This is in the lead-up to the northern roundabout?

Mr TARBOTTON - Correct. This section of highway happens to be adjacent to the Debra Place residences. They are the residents of the properties, including vacant lots, that we have identified, that the project has the potential to exceed our thresholds. When we adopt, the term is an open graded asphalt, that is a form of seal that generates a lower level of noise than other types. When we adopt open graded asphalt the noise level drops down below our thresholds, and in theory we should not exceed those thresholds at those residences.

CHAIR - With that being - correct me if I'm wrong - being slightly uphill to that roundabout, wouldn't the noise be more from motors than from road noise, tyres?

Mr TARBOTTON - The source of the noise itself, there are a few sources from the vehicles. There are tyres, there are exhausts, there is braking, there is engine noise from accelerating, so yes that does come into play. However, the primary source of noise is from tyres.

CHAIR - Even on an incline?

Mr TARBOTTON - Yes, but I agree with you. On an incline as the engine increases in revs, there will be an increase in noise, but predominantly most traffic noise comes from the interaction between the vehicle tyres and the surface, which is why we chose the open graded asphalt, because that will reduce the greatest volume.

CHAIR - Now on the roundabout itself, you talked about, is it some form of glass, that can be used in residences?

Mr TARBOTTON - At the Orchard Avenue roundabout, the roundabout surface has to have a particular type of seal. It is not open graded, so we cannot use the noise-reducing seal at the roundabout itself. There are a number of residences very close to that roundabout and we are working through the mitigations there, and because there are only a few residences in that proximity, if any mitigation is to be included it will be to the residence itself.

CHAIR - Have you had conversations with those who are likely to be impacted?

Mr TARBOTTON - I understand that to be the case, yes.

CHAIR - The consultation has occurred?

Mr TARBOTTON - Yes.

...

Mr TUCKER - Under the noise, 8.2, you have there - 'a short section of the new highway alignment in the vicinity of Debra Place will likely require mitigation'. In my terminology either it does or it doesn't. It is not 'will likely require mitigation'. So, which is it?

Mr TARBOTTON - ... It does require mitigation and mitigation has occurred. It was identified that our road project would exceed noise thresholds in the vicinity of Debra Place. Once we identified that we had to mitigate and the mitigation was the open graded asphalt.

...

Ms RATTRAY - On site earlier today, I asked a question about the two houses that will be closest to the roundabout on Flood Road corner. My assumption is that they deserve some noise reduction asphalt as well because they will have quite a bit of road noise there, and two of them will be quite close. Would that be considered in the tender document - the area heading on to the roundabout? I know you can't have them on the roundabout, but heading to and off the roundabout, some noise reduction asphalt there as well. My request on behalf of those nice people.

Mr TARBOTTON - The answer is that we have considered it and our noise modelling is our consideration. We undertake that to determine if our project impacts negatively and if it does negatively impact, we address it. We cannot simply provide a betterment to localised residents because we want to.

Ms RATTRAY - But you also indicated that after a project is completed, you go back and check with the residents, if they are concerned?

Mr PECK - We don't talk to the residents. We do another noise study to see what the post construction situation is.

Mr TARBOTTON - We don't always do post construction. We can, and we have.

Ms RATTRAY - And you will?

Mr TARBOTTON - It is not necessarily 'will' because unless we hear some feedback...

Ms RATTRAY - Feedback from the residents?

Mr TARBOTTON - Correct. Normally it requires a resident to say to us, 'dear State Growth, we believe your road has created a worse situation'.

Ms RATTRAY - Significant increase in road noise?

Mr TARBOTTON - At that point we will then undertake more modelling, both modelling and recording, to determine if we were correct and if we weren't correct, then we will address

Ms RATTRAY - That means a resal, possibly?

Mr TARBOTTON - Any number of things.

Mr PECK - There are lots of treatments available.

Ms RATTRAY - Plus you would have to do an assessment. That is time. Wouldn't it be easier to put it on when you are putting it further up the road anyway? You have to buy some anyway, or the contractor is going to buy that product, and it is probably 50 metres.

Mr TARBOTTON - Correct, it is easier; however, it is not how we can justify the use of those public funds.

4.27 The Committee asked the Department's witnesses to detail the Huon Link Road's lighting requirements and how light spill into residences will be mitigated:

Ms BUTLER - Regarding the visual impacts - what kind of lighting do you anticipate the project will have, and will there be lighting on the roundabouts?

Mr TARBOTTON - Yes. Typically, we provide lighting where, at what we call, decision points or where decisions must be made, and they will be wherever there is a change in direction.

The roundabouts will be lit. That is a decision where they must, where they are turning. Between the roundabouts we won't provide lighting. A shared path will be lit by itself, of itself, and that will spill some light onto the road, but it is not to the level that it provides any benefit to the motorist.

So, no lighting between the roundabouts. It is not required. We design our street lighting to the Australian Standards, and that dictates to us where and what type of light to put in. So,

Along Flood Road there are a number of side roads which join onto Flood Road. They all have what we call flag lighting, which is a single light pole identifying the junction and lighting that up.

CHAIR - At the T-junction, you have a house, if not two, at that point.

Mr TARBOTTON - Yes.

CHAIR - They are not likely to be impacted by significant lighting, or can they be blinkered so not to cause an issue for them?

Mr TARBOTTON - Yes. Typically, that is what we would specify in our contract - essentially, to prevent light spill going backward behind the light into the residences. So yes, we do control that.

- 4.28 The Committee also recognised there could be adverse impacts on residential amenity resulting from the Huon Link Road. The Committee asked the Department's witnesses how this would be addressed:

Ms BUTLER - When we were in our committee this morning, in relation to those residences, some of them looked like new builds on the Orchard Avenue end, the northern end of the development. Some of those residents would have built those properties not thinking that there was going to be a highway very close to their back fence, especially with vehicles potentially able to look into their houses. Are there any measures, or any obligations to those people if there is the risk of a devaluation of the property price?

Mr TARBOTTON - The project will identify measures to minimise any impact on the aesthetics or the amenity of those properties. I cannot talk to devaluation, that is not my field. There are limited approaches that we can adopt to improve or to assist those landowners, and we are discussing that now. The most obvious is some form of vegetation barrier along their rear boundary which would assist and improve amenity. It will not assist with noise, unfortunately, but it does assist with vehicle headlights penetrating private space. It does address some amenity issues.

Beyond that approach for amenity, the only other options we have - and they do not address all concerns - are noise walls which of themselves can be unsightly, cannot be that attractive to look upon. They do not necessarily address amenity, they address noise. They can create their own amenity issue, but the project is considering some form of landscaping vegetation along that short section of road.

Ms RATTRAY - Something that likes wet feet, I expect, given what we saw today? It is very wet there.

Mr TARBOTTON - Yes. It is not a straightforward matter. We will look into that. We will address it. We will need to talk with the landowners about what solution is acceptable to them, what solution is acceptable to the State road authority, but we are trying to identify a solution.

Impact on Threatened Vegetation

4.29 The Committee asked the Department's witnesses to detail the project's impact on threatened vegetation and their approach to mitigating or offsetting these impacts:

CHAIR - Looking at stakeholder and community concerns with the environment; threatened vegetation - can you give us an understanding of what sort of threatened vegetation there is and how that may have been addressed in the design of this road?

Mr TARBOTTON - There are two broad categories of threatened vegetation. They are both eucalypts - *Eucalyptus ovata* and *Eucalyptus obliqua* - on two separate areas of land. At the southern end of Flood Road, we have *Eucalyptus ovata* which is both foraging and nesting habitat for the swift parrot. We have undertaken detailed environmental assessments of the quality of that woodland - both woodlands. It has been identified that the *ovata* trees are not of a size or an age to provide nesting habitat. It is possible that it provides foraging habitat. To minimise our impact on that, we have realigned our Flood Road as far away from that woodland as possible. We are constrained on one side of Flood Road by residences and the woodland on the other side of the road. For two reasons, we cannot go further towards the properties because we do not want to impact on that -

CHAIR - And create another problem.

Mr TARBOTTON - They are also on the higher side, and the further we travel into that hill, the greater the impact of the road itself. There is a minimal impact to the *Eucalyptus ovata* forest, on the left-hand side of the southern end of Flood Road. We minimise that, but there is still an impact. We have undertaken assessment, we have discussed our impact with the Federal Government. They have a separate body there to manage the EPBC requirements. We have informed them, we have met with them, we have explained our impact. To date, they are supportive of our self-assessment, which is minimal impact. We do not require an EPBC permit based, on our self-assessment and our self-assessment is currently with the Federal Government for a second review. The second group of vegetation that we do impact is further north.

CHAIR - *obliqua*?

Mr TARBOTTON - Yes, the *obliqua* at the rear of Debra Place land, the subdivision there. The ex-golf course land. We impact that further - a greater area of land that we impact and therefore a greater number of trees. What the project will do is, under our planning submission and under the local council's biodiversity requirements, is that we will provide offsets to any trees taken.

...As far as the offsets, there are two types of offsets available to us. One is a financial payment to council. The other is that you can plant trees at a ratio. Depending on the quality of tree you are taking, it can be five new trees for every one tree that you take.

Ms RATTRAY - Where would you do that?

Mr TARBOTTON - Interestingly, the land where those apple trees are, on the ex-orchard land, that is available for offset land. That is one portion of the land where we could plant offset trees, and we are contemplating it. I know it might sound ironic that we are removing apple trees to replace it with natives, but that is the land that we could use.

CHAIR - ... It won't block out sunlight from residences?

Mr TARBOTTON - That is always a possibility and that will be a consideration, correct. One of the discussions that we need to work through with Debra Place is the amenities. If we are going to put up a 10-metre tree, what impact does that have? It's never a straightforward matter of simply saying, we will do 'X' and satisfy everybody.

... Those trees that are affected are protected, so we do have to replace them. We are going to replace them. At the moment, we are working through whether it is purely a replacement with new trees for the ones that we are taking or a combination of planting new trees plus a

financial payment. There is land available on the site; where we cut through the obliqua forest, there will be a portion of land there where we can densify that with new trees. We can use that land, that will be road reserve land in addition to the ex-orchard land.

Does the Project Meet Identified Needs and Provide Value for Money?

4.30 In assessing any proposed public work, the Committee seeks an assurance that each project meets the criteria detailed in Clause 15(2) of the Public Works Committee Act 1914. Broadly, and in simple terms, these relate to the purpose of the works, the need for and advisability of undertaking the works, and whether the works are a good use of public funds and provide value for money to the community. The Committee questioned the witnesses who provided the following confirmation:

CHAIR - ... Does the proposed works meet an identified need or needs or solve a recognised problem?

Mr TARBOTTON - Yes. I believe it does.

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

Mr TARBOTTON - I am struggling with the term 'best'. The project that we are delivering or presenting to you is providing an appropriate solution. It is cost effective compared to the options that we considered. It will provide a benefit, a true, tangible benefit to the Huonville region. Is there an alternative? I can't answer that. There are always alternatives, but of the two options, this is the best option.

CHAIR - Are the proposed works fit for purpose?

Mr TARBOTTON - Yes.

CHAIR - And the purpose being, in your mind?

Mr TARBOTTON - The purpose being, it is multifaceted. One is to improve safety, the second is to improve transport efficiency and certainty of travel times. Probably those two, there are indirect benefits which is how the township of Huonville will benefit from this. We cannot guarantee that there will be future development but if we compare similar bypasses to similar scale towns they have prospered or benefitted from such a bypass. There is no reason why Huonville would not also prosper.

CHAIR - Do the proposed works provide value for money?

Mr TARBOTTON - Yes, they do.

CHAIR - Are the proposed works a good use of public funds?

Mr TARBOTTON - Yes, they are. There has been a need identified, which is improved safety, reduced congestion, improved travel times. We need to improve our State highway. This project does that. It's cost effective, when we compare it against the second option. It's an equivalent cost to the second option - to the alternative option - so, yes, it is value for money.

5 DOCUMENTS TAKEN INTO EVIDENCE

5.1 The following documents were taken into evidence and considered by the Committee:

- *Huon Link Road Project*, Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, Department of State Growth, 4 October 2022; and
- *Huon Link Road*, Submission to the Public Works Committee, Circular Economy Huon.
- The following papers tabled at the public hearing on 17 October 2022 by Circular Economy Huon:
 - Document entitled “How Much do Tasmanians and Huon Residents spend on Transport?”
 - Document entitled “Moving from Roads for Cars to an Integrated Transport Systems”
 - Document entitled “Expanding Highways and Building More Roads Actually Makes Traffic Worse”
 - Document entitled “Carpool. Connect. Share. Optimise parking. The Complete Carpooling Platform for your Organisation”
 - Document entitled “On-Demand Shared Transport”
 - Huon Link Road Presentation to Public Hearing by Joint Standing Committee on Public Works Monday October 17th
- Circular Economy Huon, additional information provided via email 21 October 2022
 - Road safety in Huonville;
 - Traffic Huonville hourly;
- Huon Link Rd - Department of State Growth response to questions taken on notice 17 October hearing.

6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 The Committee is satisfied that the need for the proposed works has been established. Once completed, the proposed works will provide a link road between the Huon Highway and Flood Road, around the eastern side of Huonville, which diverts traffic travelling to and from Cygnet away from the Main Street, Huonville.
- 6.2 The proposed works will allow traffic going to and from Cygnet to avoid travelling through the Huonville town centre. Importantly, it is expected to remove a significant number of heavy vehicles from the Huonville town centre. It is also expected to reduce the number of vehicles using the challenging and somewhat dangerous Channel Highway/Huon Highway intersection. In doing so, the Huon Link Road is expected to result in better safety outcomes for the local community, travel time and travel efficiency improvements, by observation, strengthening of the flood by-pass option, especially with an expected increase of traffic in the longer term, and reduced congestion and improved amenity within the town centre.
- 6.3 Accordingly, the Committee recommends Huon Link Road, at an estimated cost of \$24.3 million, in accordance with the documentation submitted.

**Parliament House
Hobart
28 November 2022**

**Hon Rob Valentine MLC
Chair**

