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THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS MET AT KEMPTON COMMUNITY HALL, KEMPTON ON TUESDAY 29 AUGUST 2017.

MIDLAND HIGHWAY SAFETY UPGRADE - SPRING HILL

Dr DAMIEN DRY, DEPARTMENT OF STATE GROWTH AND **Mr MUHAMMED KHAN**, CONSULTANT WERE CALLED, MADE THE STAUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED

CHAIR (Mrs Rylah) - Thank you for appearing before the committee. The committee is pleased to hear your evidence today.

Before you begin giving your evidence, I wish to inform you of some of the important aspects of the committee's proceedings. A committee hearing is a proceeding in parliament. This means it receives the protection of parliamentary privilege. This is an important legal protection that allows individuals giving evidence to a parliamentary committee to speak with complete freedom, without the fear of being sued or questioned in any court or place out of parliament. It applies to ensure that parliament receives the very best information when conducting its inquiries. It is important to be aware that this protection is not accorded to you if statements that may be defamatory are repeated or referred to by you outside the confines of the parliamentary proceeding.

This is a public hearing; members of the public and journalists may be present, and this means your evidence may be reported. Do you understand?

Mr DRY and **Mr KHAN** - Yes.

CHAIR - Thank you very much. Damien, would you like to make the opening statement?

Mr DRY - I thank the committee for meeting with us today to hear about the Midland Highway project. I am here with Muhammed Khan, who is the Project Manager from the designers, Jacobs Pty Ltd.

This is the Midland Highway - Spring Hill project, part of our 10-year action strategy on the Midland Highway, which involves upgrading the safety along the 157 kilometre length of highway between Mangalore and Breadalbane. As part of this we are looking to increase the safety by bringing it up to a three-star rating, which is an AusRAP star rating system, an internationally accredited system. Currently the road is at two stars and through a number of safety upgrades we will be bringing it up to three stars.

Through the safety upgrades, which will be a combination of making sure we have 3.5 metre lane widths, 2 metre sealed shoulder, 2.1 central median, removing roadside hazards and also audible edge lines, will increase the safety to the three star.

Some finer details on this project - this is a 3.3 kilometre section of highway between the south of Spring Hill and the north of Spring Hill project. So we are looking to fill the gap, and will be tying in to the existing safety improvements we completed there a couple of years ago.

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We are not looking to do any property acquisition as part of this. There will be two turning facilities, one at Bisdee Tier and another one a private G-Turn, so the landowner can access both sides of the road.

That is enough for an opening statement; I pass it over for any questions.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr VALENTINE - Given that this section is on a more south-westerly facing hill, are there expected to be any particular problems or issues with laying the pavement? Because it is subject to colder weather do you have to have a different approach, or is it the same as any other section?

Mr DRY - It should be very similar to a lot of other sections. We will be constructing this in the summer months so you will not have any issues of the winter - frost and things like that. Long days and warm weather all help with constructing roads.

Mr VALENTINE - The drainage and shedding of water off the road - are there any problems with that? You have the culverts worked out through the guttering?

Mr DRY - Yes, I think we have mentioned that in the report. Generally the capacity of the culverts will allow for that one-in-100-year flood to carry those. We will just be looking to widen the culverts to accommodate the widening of the road.

Mr VALENTINE - As far as the frontages are concerned, no particular issues from the farmers and the like?

Mr DRY - No. The design consultants and I have been liaising with the property owners to make sure they are happy. Given we are not acquiring, there aren't too many accesses along here and they have generally been very happy with what we are planning to do.

Mr SHELTON - Thank you very much for the tour. On the look-around, there is a separation with the pull-over bays at the top of the hill - one going north, one coming south. According to the drawing they will be separated from the main highway.

Mr DRY - Yes.

Mr SHELTON - It was mentioned that there will be a 7 metre width in there for trucks -

Mr DRY - Correct.

Mr SHELTON - Could you explain them.

Mr DRY - There will be a W-beam barrier, and then there will be a 3.5 metre lane to travel through, and then another 3.5 metre lane for the trucks to stop in - long enough to berth the three B-doubles to stop in.

Mr SHELTON - Looking at the second drawing, page 2 - Bisdee Tier turnoff and Tedworth Drive on the left - there are no barriers. It is crossover there? The barriers exist or don't exist in that portion?

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Mr DRY - Where specifically is this?

Mr SHELTON - On page 2. Now, going north to get to Bisdee Tier you pull off to the left, wait, and then come across the highway. The drawing shows a dotted line where the rope is in the middle. It doesn't exist and it can't exist that going north you can turn right into Bisdee Tier? You can do that under this design?

The next question: if your vehicle is travelling south at 110 kilometres an hour, will you be allowed to turn right into Tedworth Drive, considering there is no barrier there?

Mr DRY - The first question, yes. A vehicle heading north, coming along the Midland Highway will turn left into Tedworth Drive and then be able to cross over into Bisdee Tiers. There will be a gap in the barrier there.

As for a vehicle heading south and then turning -

Mr SHELTON - If they are in the southbound lane, the single lane coming down the hill, and there is a gap in the rope, then I suggest someone is going to try to turn right.

Mr KHAN - There is a G-turn on the left-hand side. You would do exactly what you would do if you are coming up from the south as you would do if you were coming from the north.

Mr SHELTON - Right, okay.

Mr KHAN - If you veer left and then you come across, you'd be able to cut across and go straight over to Tedworth Drive, so there's all that space here.

Mr SHELTON - So it doesn't actually show a G-turn in there -

Mr KHAN - No, it doesn't as yet, but there's a little note that says, 'New G-turn facility' - there's a little note there.

Mr SHELTON - It doesn't have the centre barrier; it's just got the route, and so it needs to be well marked. Otherwise we'll have vehicles pulled up in the middle of the single lane coming south wanting to turn right.

Mr KHAN - Yes, certainly. That's a fair comment. The latest line-marking plans have chevrons marked down there to delineate that -

CHAIR - And it will be a no-right turn sign for people turning south?

Mr KHAN - Yes, it will be. They'll be encouraged to take that veer left and then go across -

CHAIR - To turn right, go left?

Mr KHAN - Yes. Come off the right -

Mr SHELTON - Go left to turn right. Okay, thanks for that clarification.

Mr VALENTINE - A good pick up.

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CHAIR - I'd like to raise a few more questions on the truck bays. I assume these truck bays are going to be sealed? Is that correct?

Mr KHAN - Yes, they will be sealed.

CHAIR - And they will be line marked?

Mr KHAN - Yes, they will be.

CHAIR - Terrific. Will they be signed so that not only the everyday user of the highway but tourists and other people will know that there's a pull-off bay coming up?

Mr KHAN - They are signed. They're signed for trucks, but if other people want to use it, they can. It's just that the signage actually specifically shows a truck-parking bay.

CHAIR - For example, when you travel on the Hume Highway and many of the other highways, there are some that say 'Trucks only' - you know, 'Do not enter if you're a car or a caravan'. We're not going to go to that level, because there is very little space for tourism.

Mr KHAN - You are right. That is something we will consider. We were just looking to reinstate the existing truck facilities that we have there, which can also be utilised by tourists looking to pull over. So that's something we take on board, yes.

CHAIR - Very good. Thank you. I have another question on a different subject. I noted that there's been 15 crashes in this 3.3 kilometres - is that a high level of crash incidence per kilometre or per distance?

Mr KHAN - That's a very good question. I can't think of the statistics on other sections of road that were for 2006 to 2014, so that was a number of years. I could take that on notice and get back to you, if you'd like the specifics on that.

CHAIR - Right. Clearly there's been one very public interest incident on that road, but I was just wondering how urgent - it's all urgent, I get that - but it was really just a matter of interest, so thank you if you could come back to me on that.

Mr KHAN - Yes.

Mr SHELTON - I might just clarify that. Fifteen crashes seems high, and the high profile one that you mentioned wasn't actually -

Mr VALENTINE - It was further down. It was actually on the old -

Mr KHAN - It was on the south -

Mr SHELTON - The section that's already been done?

Mr KHAN - Yes.

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Mr SHELTON - But it's mentioned - I'd assume it's talking about the same incident - in the report that in December 2014 there was a fatality resulting from a head-on collision on the highway at the northern limits of the project.

Mr KHAN - No, that's up the other way.

Mr SHELTON - Fair enough.

Mr KHAN - There was the fatality, and that was near where the access is going to be - the private access -

Mr DRY - The private G-turn.

Mr KHAN - The private G-turn, so it was a little bit further up from there - that's where that fatality was.

Mr VALENTINE - When did that happen? Can you remember?

Mr KHAN - I can't remember, not off the top of my head.

Mr SHELTON - It says 2014.

Mr KHAN - Yes.

Mr VALENTINE - That's all right.

Mr KHAN - So, yes, December 2014.

Mr VALENTINE - Wasn't just recently, no. Just with respect to the flora and fauna, in reading the report, it seems to say there will be some threatened species taken out, but they're not very good examples of the species and it's not considered to be of high impact. Is that right?

Mr DRY - That is correct. As part of the roadworks, obviously we're looking to widen the road a little bit, so that will mean we'll have to take a sliver of road further beyond the expanse of the earthworks. That means that we'll be impacting slightly on these things, but given the quantum beyond that, it's very insignificant. The quality as well is quite low.

Mr VALENTINE - Is that the opinion of the people doing the study or is it just casual observance?

Mr DRY - This has been referred to our professional teams, so we've got an environmental unit that looks after this so that was their opinion.

Mr VALENTINE - Okay, thanks.

CHAIR - I think there's only one stock underpass in this section. I noted that the stock underpass is going to be widened because of the road, and I presume that truck stop is going to impact on that, but it says there's no precast units in that. How are you going to do that without precast units?

Mr KHAN - There will be precast units to make that.

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CHAIR - There will be?

Mr DRY - Looking at this cost estimate, this may just be a case that we've allocated those to potentially the miscellaneous section - so while it's in there, we might just have incorrectly placed that in the wrong section.

CHAIR - But it will be concrete under there?

Mr DRY - It will be, yes.

Mr VALENTINE - Or is it the case that there's no concrete in it at the moment?

Mr DRY - That is a concrete culvert there, in the underpass. It may be that instead of a precast unit, it might be a slightly different size so we have to cast it in situ, but in this instance it's probably a precast unit.

CHAIR - Right. I was pleased to see, further to our discussions in the briefing, that the skull and crossbones were weeds. I have one other question. How many projects in total are there for the 10-year Midlands Highway project?

Mr DRY - That is a very good question. We're in the process of still establishing how many projects there will be. It depends, I suppose, on how big each project is. We could have one project that does the rest of the highway - that probably wouldn't be feasible, so we typically have broken them down into 3- to about 10-kilometre sections. That is manageable for the contractors. As to how many more, I couldn't tell you at this point.

CHAIR - Okay, so what I'm hearing there is making it suitable for Tasmanian contractors to be able to undertake because previously there were very large contracts that Tasmanian contractors couldn't undertake in their own right, and so the smaller size allows them to be able to bid without having to have, whatever - a head contract, a mainland -

Mr DRY - That's part of it, certainly.

CHAIR - Thank you. Do you believe that this project is value for money for the taxpayers of the state?

Mr DRY - Yes, I believe it is value for money.

CHAIR - Is it the best solution that we have to get to AusRAP 3?

Mr DRY - Yes, this is the best solution. Yes, it is.

CHAIR - Okay. Thank you very much. Thank you again for our visit and talking us through the project. It is appreciated. It really makes it a lot easier.

Mr DRY - Yes. It will be all right once it's finished.

CHAIR - Before you leave the table, I need to read my little bit. As I advised you at the commencement of your evidence, what you have said to us here today is protected by parliamentary privilege. Once you leave the table, you need to be aware that privilege does not attach to comments

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you may make to anyone, including the media, even if you are just repeating what you have said to us. Do you understand that?

Mr DRY and **Mr KHAN** - Yes.

CHAIR - Thank you very much.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.