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THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS MET IN THE TRAINING ROOM, SCOTTSDALE LIBRARY, SCOTTSDALE ON MONDAY 9 DECEMBER 2024.

BRIDPORT ROAD FREIGHT and SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS

The committee met at 2.00 p.m.

CHAIR (Ms Rattray) - I declare our meeting open. Before I welcome everyone, I thank you for the opportunity to have the site visit this morning. That was very useful for the committee.

Before we commence formally, I'll introduce members of the committee. We have Simon Wood; I am Tania Rattray; Helen Burnet; and Dean Harris. We have an apology from Jen Butler; please accept that.

We have the message from Her Excellency, the Governor in Council in relation to the East Tamar Highway and Bridport Road intersection, to be read referring this project to the committee inquiry. Thank you.

SECRETARY - Pursuant to section 16(2) of the *Public Works Committee Act 1914*, the Governor refers the aforementioned proposed public work to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works to consider and report thereon.

Pursuant to 16(3) of the act, the estimated cost of such work being completed is \$20 million: Bridport Road Freight and Safety Improvements.

CHAIR - Thank you very much, Secretary.

We are in receipt of one submission, which is the Bridport Road Freight Efficiency and Safety Improvements Public Works Committee submission from the Department of State Growth, November 2024. Can I ask a member to move this submission be received, taken into evidence and published?

Ms BURNET - I'll move that.

CHAIR - Thank you, Ms Burnet.

The witnesses appearing before the committee today are representing the proponent, the Department of State Growth. Thank you very much. We appreciated the opportunity to have a site visit this morning. It's a great location, starting with the coffee spot on the corner. Please state your name, position and organisation, then make the statutory declaration that sits in front of you.

JACQUES VAN DER HYDE, PROJECT MANAGER, PROGRAMMING AND DELIVERY, STATE ROADS, DEPARTMENT OF STATE GROWTH; **CARY HICKS**, PROJECT MANAGEMENT TEAM LEADER, PROGRAMMING AND DELIVERY, STATE ROADS, DEPARTMENT OF STATE GROWTH; AND **RICKY JOHN SMITH**, SENIOR DESIGN OFFICER, NETWORK PLANNING, STATE ROADS, DEPARTMENT

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OF STATE GROWTH, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

CHAIR - I am interested in the opening statement which we have already discussed. Whoever would like to commence that, please do so once we start. I have a statement to read. This statement is something we need to present to you before the start of each committee.

Thank you for appearing before the committee. The committee is pleased to hear your evidence today. Before you begin, I would like to inform you of some of the important aspects of committee proceedings. The committee is a proceeding of parliament, which means it receives the protection of parliamentary privilege. It is an important legal protection that allows individuals giving evidence to a 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 best information when conducting its inquiries. It is important to be aware the protection is not accorded to you if you make statements that may be defamatory and are repeated or referred to by you outside the confines of the parliamentary proceedings.

This is a public hearing. Members of the public and journalists may be present, some may come and go. This means your evidence may be reported. Do you all understand?

Witnesses - Yes.

CHAIR - Thank you. Please, your opening statement.

Mr SMITH - Good afternoon. Today we are considering funding for capital works on the main road of Bridport Road. The Bridport Road Freight and Safety Improvements project is a funding commitment totalling \$20 million, with \$16 million from the Australian Government and a co-contribution of \$4 million from the Tasmanian Government.

As we have seen this morning, it runs from the Tasman Highway at Scottsdale to the East Tamar Highway near Bell Bay. We skirt around the south of Bridport and pass through Pipers River for a total of about 70 kilometres.

Early on, State Growth completed background investigations to identify and collate issues along Bridport Road. We felt that funding was not sufficient to upgrade the entire road and would need to be focused to specific locations where the greatest benefits could be gained. During the investigations, we noted that the section between Bridport and Scottsdale had been substantially improved since the year 2000, whereas the section from Bridport to the East Tamar Highway has been largely untouched since upgrading in the late 1960s to early 1970s. Much of that section between Bridport to Bell Bay is narrower than current standards, especially considering the requirement for heavy freight vehicles, for example, about 10 kilometres is too narrow for an edge line to be painted.

The investigations we performed included assessments of road geometry, for curve radius, road width, and gradients; the differences of vehicle speeds, i. e. between trucks and cars on hills; the need for turning lanes at junctions and for passing opportunities. We determine at locations of crash clusters, the general road conditions, and included the results of other projects in the area. For example, we have done some bridge barrier assessments and we had feedback from another project in the area from the Dorset Roads Package. As a result, pending stakeholder engagement, the focus of our improvements was thought to be concentrated on that

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Bridport to Bell Bay section, with some ideas on how projects could be packaged together to maximise the amount of work that could be done with the invaluable funding.

Given the objectives of the overall project were for freight and safety improvement, candidate projects were anticipated to comprise a mix of widening and strengthening of the existing road where needed and sealing the shoulders; junction improvements to include turning lanes where required; minor horizontal curve improvements or curve delineation; passing lanes; safety barrier upgrading, particularly at the bridges; and delineation, which often is line marking, signage, guideposts, and cat's eyes, as you would know them.

These types of improvements assist freight efficiency and safety by, in part, allowing heavy freight traffic to maintain a steady speed and not having to slow down for vehicles turning off the road; allowing heavy freight traffic to maximise their travel speed by providing a smoother ride, whereby trailers are not swaying off the road or over or close to the road centre line; reducing wear and tear on tyres by providing a wider sealed surface, i.e. they are not running onto gravel and doing damage to their tyres, which reduces the ongoing maintenance cost for those heavy vehicles. Also, being able to keep their speed consistent means that they are not accelerating and breaking as much and contributing to fuel burn. Then, providing an additional width to allow space to avoid hazards or minimise the effect of them, for example, oil spray from trucks in wet conditions without other vehicles having to leave the road.

The department's engaged a consultant to perform the scoping phase of the project, primarily focused on the section between Bridport and Bell Bay. That phase has reviewed our investigations, engaged with key stakeholders to establish expectations and define assessment criteria for the potential projects. We have also included broad community engagement to identify problems and issues from the perspective of people who use the road regularly. The community engagement in particular provided valuable insight, identified unknown issues and influenced the determination of the list of potential projects.

After that list of potential projects was defined, we had a high-level cost estimate created for each of those projects and fed that into a multi-criteria analysis, using assessment criteria identified earlier to determine the highest priority project sites.

Finally, the department determined the projects presented in the PWC today by combining high-priority projects in adjacent localities to both meet the fundamental project objectives - improvements for freight efficiency and overall safety - and maximise value for money by eliminating repeated contract costs.

I will now hand over to Jacques to talk more specifics on that project.

Mr van der HYDE - Good afternoon. The proposed works of the Bridport Road Freight Efficiency and Safety Improvements project comprises freight efficiency considerations, which includes: improvements to the road to better accommodate heavy vehicle traffic, improving efficiency and safety for freight transport; road delineation improvements, that means improvements to signage and road markings; intersection upgrades; the addition of new turn lanes at intersections, road widenings, which means widening the road to provide a 3.5 metres through lanes; and one-metre shot sealed shoulders. Then road condition improvements, which means improvements to the road surface and road camber.

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The project is currently at detailed design and development stage, which is planned to be completed by the end of 2025. The approval process for some matters may extend into 2026. Construction for the first package is planned to start later in 2026, subject to environmental and other regulatory approvals, and to be completed by mid-2027. The estimated cost of the upgrades is around \$18.9 million based on the P50 cost estimate and \$19.9 million, rounded up to \$20 million, based on the P90 estimate. That's the funding limit that we've been provided for the project as well.

Once delivered, the Bridport Road Freight Efficiency and Safety Improvements project will primarily enhance road safety and increase freight productivity by improving a more efficient road corridor in Tasmania's north-east. Overall, we submit that, number one, this is an important project that aligns with the department's objectives of improving safety and efficiency on the state road network. The proposed improvements will make the road safer for everyone and more reliable for freight operations, which is important for supporting economic growth as demand increases. It will also reduce travel time for all road users. Secondly, we recognise the significance of stakeholder contributions in the success of the project and will continue to engage with stakeholders to ensure key objectives of the project are delivered. We are seeking other legislative approvals as required and the costs are appropriate in relation to the available funding. In conclusion, we contend that this project is a good use of taxpayers' money.

CHAIR - Thank you very much. As we normally do, we'll start at the beginning of your submission and we'll ask some questions as we go through.

The need for works, and obviously you've outlined an extensive list of requirements. So, page 3, members, and I'm happy to open it up for questions. If not, I'll make a start.

You mentioned that it's approximately 70 kilometres of road. I'm assuming that 70 kilometres includes the road between Scottsdale to Bridport turn-off -

Mr van der HYDE - It does.

CHAIR - and then right across. Of the remaining section, the one that we're looking at today, you've identified a number of areas that don't meet standard. How many other areas don't meet the required standard, but are not part of this submission today? Is that something that you can share with the committee?

Mr van der HYDE - Certainly. During our scoping phase of the project, we did identify a list of priority projects, but we had to go through an extensive consultation phase as well as engineering advice that we've received, we had to come up with a shorter list of priority projects that we were able to fund with the limited funding that we had available.

CHAIR - Is that corridor study available for the committee for potentially future reference, or is that something that stays in-house with the department at this point in time?

Mr van der HYDE - We can make that available to my knowledge.

Ms HICKS - Has that corridor study been published?

Mr van der HYDE - No, we've only published the -

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Ms HICKS - Stakeholder consultation report?

CHAIR - We are happy if you take that on notice and get back to the committee. It'll be just interesting to know what still remains on that significantly important stretch of that freight corridor for future.

Mr SMITH - For example, I think it's pretty obvious from our site visit today that that section from Bridport to, I think it's about Micka Rivulet Bridge, that doesn't have the room or the width for an edge line to be painted, is one of those areas that we had to consider and didn't form part of the priority aspect of the package that we've been able to put together, although it is still a fairly high priority section for us to look at.

Mr van der HYDE - Can I just add, on page 7, we do have a section there, Options Evaluation, and we're talking there, in short, about the improvement opportunities that have been identified as part of the scoping phase. But if I can take that question on notice as to whether we can share that list of projects -

CHAIR - That would be really good. There are 39 improvement opportunities packaged into 11 projects and we're dealing with two today, so that still leaves nine significant areas outstanding, but that's certainly something for the future.

The volume of traffic as we were at various sites today, is that - in 2022 there was an average traffic volume of 1057 vehicles per day with heavy vehicles accounting for 31.5 per cent. Is that where you believe the traffic volume still sits in 2024, or is there some assessment that might well be more than that? Or is that not something that we would be able to have an understanding of today?

Mr van der HYDE - I wouldn't be sure from my end. Are you?

Mr SMITH - I wouldn't want to be able to put my hand on my heart and say what the percentage growth rate is at the moment. I'd anticipate that it's likely that that there would be a growth, but not a substantial one, if that's key or consistent with roads across the state. Bear in mind that traffic data is daily traffic, so there are things like seasonality and times of year where that will fluctuate as well naturally, and for key events, for example, with Barnbougles and the polo tournament, for example, that bring a lot of attraction.

CHAIR - Do we know in what month of 2022 or was it over a three-month period that that traffic volume was assessed?

Mr SMITH - That would be annualised over the whole year.

CHAIR - Okay. In that case then, seasonal produce in and out of the area, particularly out, would already be taken into account back in 2022.

Mr SMITH - Yes.

CHAIR - It would have been, okay. Because there's a significant amount of potatoes that leave this area when the harvest starts because there's no processing left in the north-east.

Mr SMITH - I understand that.

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CHAIR - Okay, more of a comment than a question there.

Mr SMITH - That's okay.

CHAIR - Thank you. Do you have a question, Ms Burnet?

Ms BURNET - Thank you. Still on those traffic figures, is 31.5 per cent a high ratio of heavy traffic for a road like this?

Mr SMITH - For a general road, it's a very high percentage and that's one third, so you're talking 300-odd trucks per day. I was trying to do the calculation in my head, sorry, but I don't want to get that accurate.

Ms BURNET - You did pretty well. Thank you very much for taking us on the site visit today. It was really useful to get that view of what the road is used for.

The other question that I have on this page is, you talked about the 3.5 metre-width lane, is that possible throughout the length of the proposal?

Mr van der HYDE - There may be potential issues achieving that in certain narrow sections, especially where the batters are, extremely slopy batters as well; or where land acquisition may prove to be quite large to an extent, then we'd probably go through a process of departure from standards if there has to be a sacrifice to the width of that section, but our main aim is to achieve that standard.

Ms BURNET - What's a batter?

Mr van der HYDE - It's the side slope of the road. So, you have your sealed surface where the cars are driving, and we're going to achieve another one metre of sealed surface past that white edge line bit of gravel shoulder, and then the slopy drop-off is -

Ms HICKS - Then there's the cut, that is the batter as well.

Mr van der HYDE - That's true.

Ms HICKS - Embankments and cuts.

Ms BURNET - Yes. I know that we covered a lot of this this morning, but I'm just asking so it's on the record. I don't have a very good memory, but it is not as bad as it might seem.

You described this morning about that drop-off, not so much of the slope of the road, but the drop-off at the gravel section, is that an ongoing maintenance thing for roads anyway? Can you just describe what you're doing there at the moment?

Ms HICKS - Yes, that's correct. That's something our maintenance contractors will look at on all roads on our network. Once it gets to a certain drop off, we call it edge drop off or edge repair required. Once we get to a certain depth that becomes unsafe for vehicles if they get off the edge to get back on and they can have a rollover accident. The narrower the road, particularly when we've got a lot of heavy vehicles constantly damaging that shoulder, the more

important it is. It's a higher maintenance cost for us to maintain that edge to make it safe for all vehicles.

CHAIR - Thank you. I have a supplementary in regard to that. I had need to contact State Roads last week for water over the road on The Sideling. I asked, 'Wouldn't the maintenance crew be going through, particularly after heavy weather events and checking on the road?'. The person on the end of the phone told me that no, it's up to the community to contact the department and then they would follow up with the maintenance crew. How does that work when it comes to those edges Ms Burnet just talked about? Who actually assesses: is it the people on the road or the road maintenance for that area?

Ms HICKS - I can't speak for how the maintenance contractor would operate after a wet weather event, so I can't respond to that query unfortunately. But things like edge repair, they do travel a network typically once a week depending on the type of road and how much traffic's on it. They will do an assessment for any maintenance defects they find. Then they'll program that depending on the priority across the whole network or the safety risk of that particular item. That's a regular occurrence they are constantly monitoring the network, but after a flood event, I don't know how quickly they can get out. I can't speak for the maintenance team there.

CHAIR - That's interesting. I will follow up at a later time with the minister who's very keen to address all issues, I believe.

When there's an intersect between a local government road and a state road as we saw with Industry Road today, there were already some line markings that obviously weren't put on by the State Growth representatives, but council representatives. How does that work? Do you make some contact with local government saying, we have this issue around access onto a state road from a local government road and work with the council? Is that a cooperative arrangement or approach?

Ms HICKS - Yes, absolutely. Typically, the department, whichever department is initiating a change. In our case, the state government is upgrading their road and it connects into other, it could be private land holders or council infrastructure, we would make safe and design those intersections appropriately and be in consultation with council about how we integrate with their network. In the situation with Industry Road where we might be looking to install more signage, but on the council network, we would come up with that proposal, that would be funded under our project, but in consultation with the council and agreement as to what we're looking to do. We would engage with them at the time.

CHAIR - Mr Wood had a very good point and on site today. It would be worth putting that on the record.

Mr WOOD - Yes, just to get it on the record again. This is a great opportunity to improve the conditions for drivers travelling north on Industry Road. Obviously, the works there at the intersection are going to be fantastic, but for vehicles heading north on Industry Road to Bridport Road, there needs to be a little bit more warning of that intersection. You do approach and happen upon that intersection rather quickly. Whether there could be some consideration to some signage 500 meters back from the intersection saying, 'intersection - reduce speed', that sort of thing. It would be worth that consideration.

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Mr van der HYDE - I definitely agree with you. We could all see that today and we'll definitely start. Well, we're already in consultation with the council, but we'll focus a bit more on getting that sorted so there's adequate warning leaving Industry Road into Bridport Road.

CHAIR - It was a good point raised this morning. We talked about the poor road delineation and visibility for drivers using Bridport Road being impacted by faded or missing line markings. There are quite a bit of those. The paint doesn't seem to be as good quality as it was in the good old days, but that's probably me showing my age. Will that all be part of the upgrade, even if it's not part of the works being undertaken? Will there be upgraded line marking or is that part of the line marking contract?

Ms HICKS - We do have an annual program for line marking across the state. Not every section of road will get re-marked every year. Any sections that are outside of our program, if they're deficient then they'll be typically picked up in the line marking program.

CHAIR - Are they assessed annually?

Ms HICKS - Yes, I believe so.

CHAIR - We also discussed vegetation. There were some great questions asked by Ms Burnet on the vegetation. Would you be willing to put on the public record what has been done in regard to that area and assessments for species that may be disrupted through potential works?

Mr van der HYDE - For this project's purposes, we'll assess that site specifically to ensure we don't over-clear any vegetation. We'll also need to ensure our sight distances are achieved and the safety requirements of that. I can't really speak for the entire road and what studies have been done for vegetation clearing. That is part of the maintenance contracts that do the routine checks on that. At the moment, we're still in the investigations phase with the consultancy's environmental experts looking at the areas and finding out what kind of endangered flora we might be dealing with. It is a bit early for us to commit to what extensive vegetation clearing we might be looking at.

Ms BURNET - There was a desktop study for environmental and heritage. There is one potential threatened native vegetation species listed under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act*. It looks like there are records of Tasmanian devil habitats. Further up the road there are issues. You haven't done those studies in detail yet?

Mr van der HYDE - It was more of an overview, natural values assessment that was undertaken as part of looking at the entire Bridport Road between Bridport and the East Tamar Highway back during the scoping phase. I'm not aware of the complete information just yet. We are still awaiting those final reports with the detailed species identified. We'll act according to whatever approvals are triggered.

Ms BURNET - In the event there is a problem with fauna, say Tassie devils or whatever, and there is a higher road death in the vicinity, what does the department do to manage this, particularly when you have a chance to upgrade the road?

Ms HICKS - We're typically guided by our environmental professionals giving us that advice. Typically, we don't find dens for Tassie devils within the road reserve. Mostly we're

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not looking to acquire land and if we are, we only take very small strips. If we're doing a more substantial realignment and taking a larger portion of land, then we're on private property or in bushland that could have significant impacts. We would do trapping and assessments to find out what we have in that area and manage it accordingly. Typically, we don't have a lot of options for how we would change the actual road configuration to avoid that. We can't fence them out, effectively.

Ms BURNET - No. Do you ever consider crossings or whatever? You probably don't need to in this instance, but I'm curious to know if that's a go-to approach for roadbuilding.

Ms HICKS - It is in some instances. I haven't heard of that for Tassie devils in that particular example, but we're not experts in that field. We need guidance from others to be able to respond to these in more detail.

Ms BURNET - In relation to the junction safety, we saw a number of areas today where there were roads coming in and there were roads crossing which would be upgraded. Is it the number of accidents at those points that help you make decisions as to how you manage those junctions?

Mr van der HYDE - During the scoping phase, we undertook the multi criteria assessment. There was quite a lot of criteria which helped us to decide what to basically manage on improving those junctions. Crashes would have been one of them and also feedback from the community. Ricky, have you got anything to add on that?

Mr SMITH - Yes. There's feedback from the community, because what we don't get is the report of near misses and other issues that people might have. That was really valuable for us to get that information back. We are also aware of changes, particularly in Industry Road, how that junction is being used, and we've had feedback from council in years gone by. Also, we did do some turning count movements at each of those junctions to understand how many vehicles are turning and at what times. That gave us an indication of what best treatment to apply to those junctions for any turning facilities.

Ms BURNET - There wasn't too much cross travel crossing Bridport Road at the junctions we saw today?

Mr SMITH - No. At Industry Road and Weymouth Road and Pipers River, not so much Pipers River Road, but those junctions are T-junctions, so you can't travel across. Back Road and Pipers River Rd, we're not aware of cross road movement because those junctions are staggered, so it means you can't drive directly through them, that really forces people to slow down and do those turns separately.

Ms BURNET - You have a map or a diagram showing fatal, serious, minor, first aid and property damage only collisions. There's been one fatality or more along this section? Could you describe the clustering of those collisions and events?

Mr SMITH - The map shows quite a cluster on the western side of Pipers River. That's covered by our project site. When we did our initial investigations, we actually found a crash cluster at that location. We found that the super elevation or camber on that curve was deficient in one direction with a steep embankment on that northern side. That's one of the things we're trying to address in this and becomes a safety concern.

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Due to the scale of the map. There are a couple of other locations where there appear to be some lower grade, more so property damage crashes as opposed to serious or fatal.

CHAIR - Do you call going through fences or something property damage?

Mr SMITH - Property damages, yes. Just something like where people can drive away from that incident and they might have to get some repairs afterwards, even like hitting an animal, for example. Whereas, first aid means people require medical treatment. There's a delineation there.

Also, west of Lefroy to the East Tamar Highway, there's a number of crashes in that area too. That's within one of our priority investigative sites that we're looking to address.

CHAIR - That's got the fatality in that one?

Mr SMITH - There was a recent fatality which was east of Dalrymple Road. That isn't in our package of work at this point in time. I don't know what the cause of that fatality is. I haven't heard anything from a coroner to actually substantiate what that would be, so I'd hesitate to surmise what that might be.

Ms BURNET - I think there was another fatality listed on here. It is quite hard to read this diagram. Was there another fatality along this section of road as recorded? Is it near what you described as the Currie Straight?

Mr SMITH - No, I think the fatality that's shown on that is the recent one and it's between Dalrymple Road and Big Hill Road that leads into Lefroy, which is outside of our work package at the moment. That was earlier this year, if I remember correctly. I can't honestly tell you what the date is.

CHAIR - The other fatality is way up the other end then? The one that was actually being recorded? It's way up the other end.

Mr SMITH - There does appear to be one, up closer to Bridport, but I wasn't aware of that one. I'm finding it a little bit difficult to read the colours.

CHAIR - Hence we did as well. That might be some feedback for the department. It could possibly warrant its own page.

Mr SMITH - Sure.

CHAIR - We're here to provide feedback. Related works, which is in page 5. The questions do sort of overlap at various times, but it's good to go right through the report so we don't miss anything. The state-wide heavy vehicle rest areas strategy. There's no designated rest area. We did see a truck resting as we drove back to head towards Scottsdale, but that's not a formalised rest area is, is that correct? There's no rest area on that road?

Mr SMITH - I'll take that question. That is a new project in the process of being developed and where we pulled over and met this morning.

CHAIR - Which time, because we pulled over and met a number of times.

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Mr SMITH - When we met this morning.

CHAIR - Oh, the first meeting?

Mr SMITH - Yes, the first meeting point near Bridport and East Tamar Highway junction. There is, as per my understanding, a plan for a truck rest area for that area which allows access to that site from both directions. The works from that site are planned to my knowledge to start at the East Tamar Highway and work back to the rail underpass. That's about a couple of hundred metres back from that junction and it's reutilising a lot of that area that's there at the moment, which was a former weighbridge. That's why we called it a related project, because it's still within the report.

CHAIR - Will that have toilet facilities as well in the future? Is that part of that strategy?

Mr SMITH - Yes. That site will have a toilet facility. That's currently planned.

CHAIR - That would be helpful. Hope you have more luck than you are having on Illawarra Road though.

Regarding the North East Freight roads, which is number two on your related works, you talk about improved road conditions in two locations and these are the two sites that have been identified. Does that include re-sheeting as well or new pavement?

Mr SMITH - [inaudible] that work has actually been completed. This morning we drove over a section just on the western side of Currie Straight where there was a section with deadlock with edge lines where that pavement was overlaid and strengthened. There was a crash hotspot at that point in the years gone by and there's a sign there at the moment which actually has the truck tipping. There's one curve there that's designated for 65 kilometres an hour. That was one of the strengthening projects that's been done.

The other strengthening project that was done is immediately on the eastern side of Dalrymple Road for that 1.6 kilometres. That goes from Dalrymple Road towards Bridport just past Big Hill Junction, I either turn off into Lefroy -

CHAIR - You might have noticed that Saltwood Road as we came along the Saltwood Road straight and towards the end of that straight there's a really poor section of road pavement there. Is that likely to be in the next stage, or is that something that needs to be followed up separately? There's obviously some failure as a road pavement there.

Mr SMITH - There are probably road pavement failures for some discrete lengths through this thing and through the whole length, we've tried to target the areas where they were the worst conditions and also where we actually got a lot of feedback from the community. When we did our broad stakeholder engagement, we were asked to concentrate on areas without edge lines where they were quite narrow. And, they actually identified some spots, particularly towards that western end, which is why we are trying to target that area.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr WOOD - In terms of the bridge barrier safety, I noticed that the recommendations are being incorporated into the - how many bridges are there, roughly? Or there is a number,

let's just say there is a number. Will all bridges be getting that upgrade to their barriers or has there just been one or two that have been assessed as requiring that attention?

Mr SMITH - All the bridges along that segment were addressed in terms of the assessment to find out what issues there might have been with it and recommendations made. Any of the bridges that fall within our package of works we will address as part of our package of works. My understanding is that there is another program that will look at those barrier upgrades, but in order to maximise efficiency between programs we would address the ones that are in our scope of work. If we have to widen the pavement, for example, that means we have to pull the guard fence out; then we put that guard fence back in accordance with the requirements for that bridge barrier assessment.

CHAIR - Supplementary then. The large culverts just at the Industry Road turn-off there, and a couple of members braved themselves across the road and went and looked at them, will they end up having railings either side? There are significant culverts and drop-offs there.

Mr SMITH - We do. That is part of our safety improvements, to address those kind of drop-offs, where we are actually changing the situation to make sure that we do a risk assessment to make sure that those treatments are appropriate. If there are steep drops, we are making sure that those areas are protected.

CHAIR - Do you extend those culverts out further -

Mr SMITH - Yes, we will.

CHAIR - into the road verge? They will be extended?

Mr SMITH - Yes, we would need to extend them because currently they are not long enough for the new road. And, because they do have a significant drop-off, we have other methods to assess that. We could make them really long to make sure that they are outside, like a clear zone or to be a hazard in their own right; or we can actually put a barrier in, which is cheaper, given that location in particular, the creek winds around a bit, so can't extend them in such a way that we have to divert a creek, as an example.

Mr WOOD - In terms of the proposed works, was there any need highlighted by community members or work done in consideration of passing lanes in this particular project? I notice there's not a lot of them.

CHAIR - Yes, but they weren't taken up.

Mr van der HYDE - Yes, there was quite a bit of consultation and feedback that came back asking for that. Part of our assessment was, with the cost estimates it would have been such a big proportion of the available funds, of the limited funding we have had, we'd have just gone for that and wouldn't have addressed any of these other safety concerns.

Mr WOOD - Right.

CHAIR - Even though it was a significant number and, I mean, we have not got to community yet -

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Mr WOOD - Sorry, perhaps I jumped the gun a bit.

CHAIR - No, no. You're not, because it almost - this needed to be further into the report. It is talking about overtaking lanes. The thing is with that road, the maximum speed is 100 km/h and when you are following a heavy vehicle, laden, particularly with timber resource, you get all of the little bits coming off your car. You would like to go around it, but you might be meeting the boys and girls in blue the other way and you would be speeding to get past them. You know, it is actually a really important aspect of that road yet it wasn't seen as a high priority. It was deemed as a lower priority. Is that purely because of the cost?

Mr van der HYDE - Yes. The limit of funding has just completely thrown out all our other options to take care of these critical junction upgrades. It would have been a large proportion.

Mr WOOD - Just adding to that. I guess the main purpose of these works is for improved safety for all users, but also the ability for heavy vehicles to travel safely at that 100 km/h speed limit with the widening and so on. I guess to some extent that perhaps alleviates the desire for overtaking lanes, if the trucks can continue safely at that speed.

Ms HICKS - One of the other key criteria for us is the freight efficiency. Passing lanes don't necessarily improve road efficiency for us. We get that from upgrading the intersections and widening.

CHAIR - It's just from the travelling public, the other -

Ms HICKS - As you say, lifting the travelling speed of the heavy vehicles, so it can go through more efficiently.

Ms BURNET - How do you measure the - I mean, you mentioned freight efficiency as a priority, but how do you measure that against safety? What is the optimal speed for a B-double or a freight vehicle?

CHAIR - Or a tri?

Ms BURNET - What's the optimal speed for safety?

CHAIR - They're speed limited, aren't they?

Mr van der HYDE - I wouldn't - Can I take that-

Ms HICKS - Probably none of us are sure how to answer that one. The posted speed limit should be the safe speed for any vehicle on the road. I don't know how else we could respond to that one.

Mr SMITH - Ms Rattray is correct in that trucks are speed limited to 100 km/h. At least they're supposed to. I don't know how many people -

CHAIR - I'm not saying they're not. I'm just saying I think they are.

PUBLIC

Mr SMITH - You're correct. That was a rule for vehicle standards some years ago that the speed limiting for heavy vehicles was 100 km/h. I don't think that's changed.

Ms BURNET - Remind me, along that whole stretch it's virtually all 100 km/h? There's a small section where we stopped at our third stop, which was 80 km/h.

Mr WOOD - At the shop, Pipers River shop.

Ms BURNET - Yes, the shop.

Mr SMITH - It's 80 km/h through Pipers River.

Ms BUTLER - Yes. Everybody is travelling at speed along there. For clarity, we're looking at 3.5m-wide lanes. What's the width of a vehicle like one of those larger vehicles?

Mr SMITH - Should be in the vicinity of 2.5m; 3.5m is generally accepted as the requirement for a heavy vehicle load freight corridor.

Ms HICKS - Can I come back to your original question about the safe operating speed? The reason why I couldn't think to give you a good answer for that is because it's different for every vehicle and road situation. The posted speed limit is a maximum speed limit. We often think of it as a minimum speed limit, but it is a maximum speed limit and all vehicles should drive to the conditions that are appropriate for them.

Ms BURNET - Thank you. It begs the question. We often talk about schools and the safe speed around them, it might be 40, but 30 km/h is a safer speed all round for pedestrians. I understand there are conflicting reasons for roadworks and safety, and making freight efficiencies as well.

CHAIR - If there are no further questions on that we'll move over to options of evaluation on page 7. We have already touched on that a bit, around the 39 improvement opportunities that were packaged into 11 projects. We have nine to go if these meet the favour of the committee. Are there any other questions around that?

I know the member for Huon will be very interested in the materials section of this. We've had some recent information that the Victorian standards have changed somewhat or are changing. Can you give us some indication of the current status there, given we build our roads to Transport Victoria specifications, but are amended to reflect Tasmanian industry products and conditions? Can we have an update on where that is?

Ms HICKS - Nobody in this team is across that project, so we can't give you an update. We're happy to give you a response if you'd like us to take that away.

CHAIR - I think it would be useful. Member for Huon?

Mr HARRISS - Yes.

CHAIR - We would like that. It may not have any reflection on this particular submission.

PUBLIC

Ms HICKS - This project will adopt the standards available to us at the time, but we're just not part of that team that's doing any assessment of those specifications.

CHAIR - It does make a difference to the resource that's used and where it's sourced because we have, sadly, known in Tasmania where product comes from a long, long way away and something much closer is overlooked, for whatever reason. So, it would be good to have an understanding of where we are with that. Has there been any discussion with any of the potential contractors around sourcing of resource? I noticed there was some on the side of the road at the Curries Dam stop that we had this morning that's being used for the shoulders.

Mr van der HYDE - No consultation with any contractors just yet, being so early in the design and development phase of the project.

CHAIR - We'll get to that. Anything else about the materials being used?

Mr HARRISS - No.

Mr SMITH - Might I address the previous question on the object options evaluation?

CHAIR - Yes.

Mr SMITH - The last paragraph under that, says that we've a submission for five high-priority projects, which is out of that 11, so what we've done is we've bundled those five projects into these two that we're trying to deliver at the moment to create packages of work.

CHAIR - Right, so, there's really only six remaining then, if you've bundled five?

Mr SMITH - I'd say that's correct, and they're actually different sites. This morning and with the documentation we've provided today, we've talked about Site 1; Site 2, which I think was Industry Road; Site 3 being the super-elevation improvements, et cetera.

CHAIR - So I was being disingenuous when I said two? I apologise.

Mr SMITH - No, you weren't being disingenuous. I thought I would take the opportunity to correct the public record.

CHAIR - They are clearly articulated as well, so thank you for reminding me about that.

Mr van der HYDE - I think I might have confused you with the two being the two packages - projects bundled together.

CHAIR - Moving over now to page 8, which is the Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) of 0.33. This means every dollar spent on these works there is a 0.33 - 33 cents - benefit to the community, and then it goes on to talk about:

While this is not a strong result, it's essential to consider the broader impact of these initiatives.

Would these projects not normally see favour because of the of the low BCR, but the safety aspects outweigh those? Is that what we're looking at here, or am I on the wrong road?

Ms HICKS - I can only talk in hypotheticals for this. Typically to get a better score for a BCR, if there was, say, a fatality history on a site that we were correcting, we would score a lot better. When we can't necessarily have that crash history to support the BCR, we know we're still getting a massive safety improvement and the potential to reduce the risk of those really serious incidents. That's why it's important to look at the broader context. We get similar things for pedestrian crossings, if there are no accidents at pedestrian crossings they can - and you're not improving it for vehicles, they don't score well in these sorts of analyses, but they're still critically important.

Mr SMITH - It doesn't mean that there's not benefit in actually investing to make sure those things don't happen. Another example of those sort of BCR things, too, is that we're cutting five kilometres out of a trip over a 10 kilometre length. That sort of reduction in distance will start giving you a benefit because of travel time saving and distance travelled. Given that this is an existing road we're upgrading, it's very hard to achieve those high-benefit costs in that situation.

Ms BURNET - It's perverse, isn't it, when you think, you don't want to go to the situation where you have fatalities, then you have that higher BCR. Is this a standard formula that you rely upon? Is it standard from one project to the next that you compare BCR, like you use the same sort of measurements?

Ms HICKS - I believe the criteria's similar, but those assessments are performed by economists, so we can't really comment on the specific detail of those with this group, but if you get more specific questions.

CHAIR - We need to contact Saul Eslake, is that what you're saying?

Ms HICKS - We do need to provide benefit costs to the Australian Government for these projects too, for the assessment as well and approval.

CHAIR - Progress to date, when you go to the timelines on page 13, we possibly need to talk about those together, because we're talking about the tender, or detailed design mid 2025. If this progresses, it'll possibly be another six months before the design is settled or decided on, is that correct?

Mr van der HYDE - Correct, yes.

CHAIR - Do you see the project will meet those timelines given the progress to date and the applications still needed to occur, given there's still quite a lot?

Mr van der HYDE - The design itself for the road upgrades is fairly simple in nature. It's not a complex type of project compared to a bridge building project for instance, safety upgrades. The design itself goes fairly quick. The main item that might push our time frames out a bit more are the approvals we need to seek as part of the project. We're still awaiting the Australian government's funding.

CHAIR - I was going to say, that's a big one, isn't it? Because that's the funding.

PUBLIC

Mr van der HYDE - Correct, yes, but we are quite confident. We've submitted that Australian government approval request, believe it was in October and we may be expecting an approval by May next year.

CHAIR - But there'll be a federal election in the middle of that, which means there will be a caretaker government and there'll be no decisions made. Do you still see that May time frame?

Mr van der HYDE - If that potentially does drag out, our tender time frame that we're looking at these for mid 2026, potentially for the first package. It's only the actual design drawings we're hoping to get done by mid 2025. The tender release is that the date we'll need all those approvals in place for which is mid 2026, which gives us a bit more time for that. Then just in brackets we did say subject to approvals, if these approvals go quicker for any reason we could look at tendering late -

CHAIR - And those approvals include this committee's work?

Mr van der HYDE - Correct.

CHAIR - Sometimes we get a little tad overlooked, that's all. Not by you, of course.

Moving to potential impacts and opportunities. I'll open that up to committee so I don't ask all the questions.

Mr HARRISS - No, you're going well, Chair.

Ms BURNET - I don't think I have any questions. You're not likely to have to buy adjacent land in this project. Noise is not really a huge issue and not going to change too much, is it? Just the traffic management, safety is covered.

CHAIR - Do you see any disruption to the travelling public while the works are being undertake, or do you see those as fairly minimal on that stretch of road, particularly the first area?

Mr van der HYDE - We would definitely aim to keep it at a minimum, but that will be up to the construction contracted to implement the traffic management plan with their experts to keep that disruption to a minimum.

Ms BURNET - Does it still mean you'd have one lane open all the time?

Mr SMITH - Yes, we'll be constructing under traffic.

CHAIR - Can you just make a note somewhere when you issue the tender, if we get that far, that they have the number of how much longer you have to wait so I don't get too excited all the time? Because you when you pull up you have no idea how long you're going to be waiting. Whereas, if you can see that you're on 4, 3, 2, 1 its really useful.

Ms BURNET - Like minutes?

PUBLIC

CHAIR - Yes, it tells you how much longer you are waiting. They are real improvements for the motoring and traffic.

Mr SMITH - We are talking about a countdown clock or something like that?

CHAIR - Yes. Is that what it's called? I don't know that they actually have the time frame on them now and you see them quite a bit more on the road than we ever used to. Part of the contract.

Mr WOOD - Regarding the work on the intersections, most of the intersections if they are required to be shut or out of use for a period of time to make that work, perhaps with Weymouth - and I might be wrong, but that is the only way in and out of Weymouth/Tam O'Shanter area - there will have to be some consideration around the works there to allow residents to be able to have access to that intersection.

Mr SMITH - We typically would not allow any foreclosures for a project of this nature. The contract will have to make provision to let people through the site.

CHAIR - There are a number of other alternatives to Industry Road for a start. You can let people know Industry Road is going to be working on, so there are two other options they can use before they get to Industry Road. Works get done a lot quicker if people know not to use that section. That communication with the community is really important. Again, that's up to the contractor, but working with the department is really useful.

Mr van der HYDE - That's right, yes. We do have a system in place too where the contractors provide us early notice through what we call the roadworks roundup, where we publish where the works are happening around the state. You can actually put that roadworks round up into Google. It provides you a Google map with blips all around the state of where the works are. It provides you also with a bit of information on whether it's an occasional lane closures with speed reductions for instance and with site contacts if someone were to need additional information from a contractor.

CHAIR - Over the page to page 11. Following on from the bottom of page 10, Environmental and Heritage.

Ms BURNET - I believe I've asked my questions in relation to that.

CHAIR - Funding and cost, obviously in the presentation at the beginning of today's hearings, you talked about the cost P50 and P90. We've already talked about the fact the federal government has a significant role to play in the funding of this. The escalation is that 7 per cent of base estimate and then you give me some information down there, which I felt was really helpful. Thank you for putting that in. We don't always see that extra detail on escalation, but it is useful. We have an expert on escalation on the committee.

Ms BURNET - Any problems there?

Mr HARRISS - No, I'm all good, Chair.

CHAIR - Thank you. What about the contingency?

PUBLIC

Mr HARRISS - No, I am interested in the commencement of construction which is due in late 2026. Are there any factors into the pricing or does that purely get priced on 2024 figures and we just hope that nothing changes? It always surprises me. If I knew I was building something two years down the track, I'd probably factor in a bit.

Mr van der HYDE - Our estimates, my understanding is for current industry rates. Then we do apply that escalation when we apply for the Australian Government funding as well. My understanding is that 7 per cent of escalation is quite conservative from the Australian Government, but suggested percentage to cover for probable inflation over two years.

CHAIR - Regarding the contingency in talks about the extensive subgrade replacement is required, we have seen a failure on the Midland Highway of part of that significant upgrade there. A large stretch of about 20 or so metres had to be completely dugout and replaced. How do you tell how extensive the subgrade replacement is until you actually start?

Ms HICKS - I might jump in there. Because we are a concept stage, we do have a higher amount of contingency for the things we do not know yet. By the end of the detailed design stage, we would expect to understand a lot more about the site and the contingency will come down. But we might have actually used up some of that contingency with the design in managing things like a weak subgrade. I am assuming we haven't yet undertaken the geotechnical investigations, but that would be part of our detailed design process.

We will go out and find out what subgrades we have, what the extent of it is and how we manage it. At the moment, we have just got contingency in for that in case it is a worst-case scenario.

CHAIR - Service relocations. Any thoughts that there may be a requirement? I know you are not moving power poles. We already talked about that.

Mr van der HYDE - No, that is right. We are not expecting any or at least a very minimum few at maybe a junction upgrade. Where, if a cable needs to be relocated to make way for the new works, we will go into that process with that utility provider such as TasNetworks, engage them through the roads and duties acts. Then it is like a notice to move infrastructure and there is processes in place. But yes, we aren't expecting -

CHAIR - There'll be no lighting at any of those intersections?

Mr van der HYDE - One of our junctions has a light.

Mr SMITH - Industry Road will have a light.

CHAIR - Will it? Because that doesn't have a light now.

Mr SMITH - No it doesn't, but because we are putting a splitter island in there, that means we actually have to put a light at that junction, so it is visible of a night time.

CHAIR - Very good. You will need to work with TasNetworks. You need to give them about two-and-a-half years notice, just as a heads up. That is how long they took to move the power poles on The Sideling. You can put that in the report. I continually sent them photos.

PUBLIC

They were jutting out on the road verge. Anyway, that's good to identify those really early because they obviously have a big back log of works.

Ms BURNET - I noticed when we stopped at stop 3 -

Unknown - At the shop?

Ms BURNET - You are coming off gravel onto the road and it is probably private property. Are there any collisions happening there when people are coming onto the road? What that considered at all when you were doing the upgrades or looking at this project?

Mr SMITH - I am not aware of any crashes. There is always a chance there is near miss and is what we relied on with some of that community consultation. Even in discussion - we personally have not been involved in discussion with the shop owner to find out specific issues; our consultant has been running with that.

Often, we will try to seal enough of an access like that so you are taking off on a sealed surface rather than on a gravel surface. It eliminates that risk of -

CHAIR - You do boot it a bit to get onto the road, don't you? I mean, you and I both did.

Ms BURNET - Or tried to.

Mr SMITH - I can't recall with the design as it sits at the moment, how far back we are sealing, but it is better to be taking off on a sealed surface in that circumstance than on an unsealed surface. Particularly, where the gravel gets a bit loose.

Mr van der HYDE - It is also part of our investigations at the moment to find where those underground fuel bowsers would be at the fuel station. That will help us determine how far we can widen into that space.

Ms BURNET - Any sort of informal pullover areas you would consider when you are doing these upgrades? If there is that need, what happens then?

Mr van der HYDE - If there is definitely the need for it, we will design to cater for that. I am not aware we have had to include for this project any provision for those informal pullover areas.

Mr SMITH - Certainly, not in the second package. I don't recall because it's in an early stage of design for the package closer to the East Tamar Highway. We'd have to take that on board as we found the need.

Mr van der HYDE - The thing is, if you start providing for those informal pullover areas, you're going to have to look at making such areas compliant and take ownership of things that might then be created by the community.

Ms BURNET - I see.

Mr van der HYDE - It would make things potentially difficult.

PUBLIC

Ms BURNET - I suppose it caused its own safety issues.

Mr HARRISS - On the timing, are we up to time?

CHAIR - We're up to everything.

Mr HARRISS - The two packages, they both note they commence construction in late 2026. Will they run side by side or in conjunction with each other? Is that how it's planned at the moment?

Mr van der HYDE - The works may potentially happen concurrently as things work out. Our current plan is to tender package 1 first. That includes the junction upgrades and super-elevation improvements. That will help us to understand the amount of funding we will have left to tender package 2, which is the widening and rehabilitation project. At the moment we have cost estimates, but that's at concept stage early on. Once industry has provided prices and tenders for us on package 1, it will give us a lot more assurance of the amount of length we can work with on the rehabilitation project and to maximise that as far as possible.

CHAIR - Could there potentially be some economies of scale in savings to tender them together?

Mr van der HYDE - It could. We do have to ensure we have adequate funding available for the works we put out to tender. It does provide us good confidence to know that once we've got pricing available for package 1, which is quite a distance away from package 2, then we have the confidence we do have available funding for package 2.

Mr SMITH - There is a risk factor in trying to tender both at the same time with approvals that might come up with package 2, which we're confident we don't need for package 1 junction improvements. The risk there would be if we delayed tendering everything to the one package that we'd further impact our bottom line with the funding by escalation and those sort of impacts by having to hold everything over at the same time.

Ms HICKS - I can probably add to that. That's not locked in. We have procurement methodology at this early stage. Should we get closer to tender time and we have confidence in the rates and continuance in our estimates and we do have confidence in approval times and there's an opportunity to package that up as a single package, we would still consider that.

CHAIR - It appears there will be some if you're using the same contractor. They have to put a lot of gear in place to do particular work. It might be easier to have all your gear in one place and not be moving it, finding somewhere else to find a home overnight for the big machinery and the like.

Ms HICKS - Yes, that would always be our preference.

Mr SMITH - We realise there's an economy of scale with things like site establishment with all the offices and that sort of rigamarole, which is why we've tried to package all these different projects up together, to deliver that economy of scale rather than small projects all along the road.

CHAIR - Would you at the very least give the tenderers a heads up? We've got two packages, we're only tendering this one but this one will come up. They always have to give you the best price, surely.

Mr van der HYDE - We do have a mechanism in place for providing future tender opportunities to the market. We've got the public tender schedule, which you can put into Google and it will take you to that department's website. That provides a list of all the projects that are planned to be tendered, usually in the next six months or so. It's a bit of a forecast that helps the market to understand what work is coming out. We can certainly look at something to help the industry understand that these two packages will be related and explain that in the first contract as well.

CHAIR - Well, if you're buying some resource, say from the Nabowla Quarries, and you know you want X amount of resource and you know that you're going to want some more resource later, you're going to be able to possibly barter a better deal, if you have that opportunity to buy another lot a little bit further down the track.

Mr van der HYDE - One last thing to add is what we'll consider as well. Package 1 is a little bit further advanced at the moment with progress, compared to package 2, which still has all those investigations and things. We'll try to find that happy balance of - if both are going to be around, ready at the same time to tender, then that's going to be a no-brainer to do that together as well, or if package 1 is still going to be leading in terms of progress for the duration of the time, we wouldn't want to keep a tender locked away which can go out to market and not create those jobs.

CHAIR - I understand that. I was looking at the other way, actually. Not holding this one over, but bringing this one in to be closer to economies of scale and efficiency and hopefully saving some dollars.

Any other questions in regard to the public consultation? I noticed that there was a little bit about improvement for cyclist safety and I thought of you straightaway, Ms Burnet.

Ms BURNET - Did you? Well, thank you. Could you talk us through that then, please?

Mr van der HYDE - Which page number are we on?

CHAIR - Well, it's not actually numbered. It's in your community consultation and feedback.

Mr van der HYDE - Yes, so I can add that as part of the shoulder widening works, that will provide a lot more space for cyclists to use the road in a safer way.

Mr WOOD - I think they'll be very grateful.

Ms BURNET - Yes, I think so. Not for the faint-hearted along that road. That was from the public feedback, wasn't it?

CHAIR - Yes. Any further questions, members, in regard to that? Did you have a conversation with heavy vehicle - Tasmanian Transport Association?

PUBLIC

Mr van der HYDE - Yes, we did make sure to involve them since the very start of the project, during the scoping phase as well. Their input's been valuable for us to help decide on the projects and improvements required. Tasmanian Transport Association, yes.

CHAIR - Anything further, members?

Thank you very much. We've left you with a just a small amount of homework and some of it not necessarily relating to this submission, but for general information for the committee, which is always useful when we're looking at projects. Thank you very much for attending today and giving evidence. I just have a small statement after the evidence that you've provided.

I'll just ask the standard questions first, before I do the departing one. Thank you. These are some really important questions. I know that you somewhat answered them in your initial information to us, but that's part of what we do in this committee.

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

Mr van der HYDE - Yes.

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

Mr van der HYDE - Yes.

CHAIR - Are the proposed works fit for purpose?

Mr van der HYDE - Yes.

CHAIR - Do the proposed works provide value for money and are the proposed works a good use of public funds?

Mr van der HYDE - Yes.

CHAIR - Thank you very much. Again, we very much appreciate not only your time for the hearings, but the site visit as well, as we looked at those various stops along the way.

As I advised you at the commencement of your evidence, what you said to us here today is protected by parliamentary privilege and once you leave the table, you need to be aware that the privilege does not attach to the comments that you make to anyone, including the media, even if you're just repeating what you have said to us. Do you understand? Thank you very much. It's much appreciated.

I did forget to acknowledge our support here today, James, from Hansard and Scott, who is our esteemed secretary. This committee wouldn't function without these people. So, thank you very much. We shall continue with our deliberations. Again, thank you very much for your time today.

Witnesses - Thank you.

CHAIR - Safe travelling back to the Big Smoke.

PUBLIC

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.

The hearing concluded at 3.22 p.m.