

**THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SELECT COMMITTEE ON ROAD SAFETY MET
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, HOBART, ON FRIDAY 28
AUGUST 2009.**

Mr PETER HUBBLE AND Mr SHANE GREGORY WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Wing) - Thank you very much for coming. We are looking forward to discussing with you how you approach the role of determining the speed limit restrictions and zones and some particular instances. Perhaps if you could give us an overview of your role and functions and how you discharge those generally.

Mr GREGORY - I am currently the acting Director of Traffic Infrastructure and Peter is the Manager of Traffic Safety. When we look at speed management then perhaps we start at a high level. Speed management includes the limits and signs that we put in place. It includes education and enforcement - a whole range of things that you would be looking into through your committee. We understand that we are here to talk about the speed limit aspect.

CHAIR - Yes, that is right.

Mr GREGORY - DIER is the authority responsible for setting all speed limits in Tasmania - State roads, federally maintained roads or federally funded roads and local government roads. All speed limits are set by our agency.

We work to the guiding principles of AS1742.4, which is the Australian Standard for speed controls and the Austroads guidelines, which are a series of documents put together by Austroads - a body convening all State road authorities. We also use the *Guide to Road Safety, Part 3 - Speed Limits and Speed Management*, so they set the guiding principles for determining and applying speed limits.

When we look at limits we have a range of things we need to consider. At the very basic level we look at trying to get a complementary blend of efficiency in the transport network and safety and where there is a decision to be made we always err on the side of safety so we will actually compromise efficiency to an extent to achieve the safety outcome. It is all about getting the correct blend of safety and efficiency.

In trying to do that we consider the speed environment. There is a whole range of factors that contribute to speed environment. They include development along the road, the function of the road, the number of pedestrians and the type of development. There is a very extensive list of parameters you consider in determining what the speed environment might be.

The speed environment effectively is a speed that a motorist will naturally tend to drive at based on those factors around them. So speed environment is probably one of the most important things in setting the speed limit because inconsistency between the environment and the speed limit does not lead to an effective outcome.

CHAIR - I knew that was the case 15 or 20 years ago, but I thought with some examples recently that there seemed to be a departure from that. Having just heard your evidence, I am pleased to know that that is still a factor.

Mr GREGORY - Yes. It is still a very consistent issue that has to be applied. If you go out and arbitrarily apply a speed limit that is not consistent with the speed environment you can end up with an unachievable enforcement task so we need to ensure that the speed environment and the speed limit are consistent.

CHAIR - And seen to be reasonable by the public.

Mr GREGORY - Yes. We also consider road function so when we are looking at a local road that runs through a small town we would have a different outlook perhaps than we would for a dual-lane highway, which is a major freight carrier. There are different parameters that we would look at. We also obviously consider crash history so we look for clusters of accidents, particularly those that are potentially the result of speed.

Once we have worked through a process - and it is not a single person making arbitrary decisions - we gather a lot of information, we gather a group of people who have varying responsibilities within the agency and we look at the information we have and then we collectively make a decision about what is an appropriate speed limit to apply and we would do that through a process of consultation with the local government authority and the RACT as an interested party. That is a general overview of the process.

CHAIR - Thank you. How long have you been in your present role dealing with these matters?

Mr GREGORY - I have been in the agency for only six months. I am actually acting Director of Traffic Infrastructure, but I am substantially the Manager of Planning and Design. I have been involved in the planning, design, construction and maintenance of public infrastructure for 24 years.

CHAIR - If you both feel free to answer any questions that we ask, I am just wondering how you apply what you have just said to the reduction in the speed limit at Cleveland, first to 90 kilometres an hour and more recently to 80, on the Midland Highway.

Mr GREGORY - To talk about specific sites, we do not necessarily have all that information to hand now but for the committee we are more than happy to go back to our file and provide you with a response to that.

CHAIR - All right.

Mr GREGORY - If we are talking about specific sites it can become quite difficult.

CHAIR - That is one of the purposes of asking you to come and give evidence today, of course, not just generalities. Were you in your current position when in recent months that speed limit was decreased from 90 to 80?

Mr GREGORY - No.

CHAIR - I see.

Mr HUBBLE - I was involved, yes.

CHAIR - You were involved in that?

Mr HUBBLE - Yes, directly involved. I was working with the department when both those reductions occurred. In the first instance when it went from 110 to 90 I was not actually involved in that decision, but in recent times I was involved in the reduction from 90 to 80.

CHAIR - Can you tell us how that has come about and what caused the review?

Mr HUBBLE - The situation in both instances I understand was that the request came from the community, the people who live on the road or adjacent to the road. They have made a number of claims in recent times regarding the 90 kph limit.

CHAIR - To your department or to somebody else?

Mr HUBBLE - To our department. They would have originally come to our department and I think we in the first instance probably said no, we believed that the 90 would be appropriate for meeting the objectives of maintaining mobility et cetera. Then we received an additional request through different areas and that would have come through the parliamentary system.

CHAIR - Through the parliamentary system?

Mr HUBBLE - Yes, it would have been through opposition members.

CHAIR - Opposition members?

Mr HUBBLE - Yes, I believe so.

CHAIR - Any government members?

Mr HUBBLE - We respond on behalf of our minister, Mr Graeme Sturges. I cannot exactly tell you, but I am assuming it would have come through Graeme's office and then we would have sat down and assessed that. Part of that was the fact that the community were upset because they believed that their safety was compromised by the 90-kph speed limit in relation to getting into and out of their driveways.

They had requested that the speed limit be reduced to 60. We went and met with the community on site on two occasions to discuss their concerns and we tried to provide other infrastructure measures to address their access concerns. However, that did not alleviate their concerns and, as a consequence of that, we wrote off to the council and the RACT to get some support and assistance in reducing that speed limit.

CHAIR - The Midlands Council?

Mr HUBBLE - I would imagine so, yes.

CHAIR - How many residences are there in that speed limit area?

Mr HUBBLE - I cannot tell you exactly how many there are. We receive probably a minimum of 100 - somewhere between 100 and 200 - requests for changes in speed limits per year and to address each speed limit takes a number of hours or a number of days so I could not tell you exactly how many residents live on that road but I would say it is somewhere between 10 and 12.

CHAIR - Residences?

Mr HUBBLE - Yes.

CHAIR - That would be a maximum I think. When each of those reductions was made, was there any consultation with any association representing the truck drivers?

Mr HUBBLE - As I said, I was not involved in the first instance where the limit was reduced from 110 to 90, but I was involved in the reduction from 90 to 80. No, the consultation occurred with the council and RACT only and not with the truck industry.

CHAIR - What emphasis was placed on the criterion of the normal speed at which traffic would be expected to flow through a certain area affected by a speed limit?

Mr HUBBLE - One of the principles that we tried to follow when we were dealing with Cleveland was they had currently a 90 speed limit. They made a request to have a 60 speed limit and their justification was that they considered their community was equivalent to other areas on the national highway where a 60 speed limit occurred. An example would have been Perth/Campbell Town. We had that discussion, but we believed that was not the case. There was definitely a difference in the level of roadside development between Cleveland and Perth/Campbell Town. They also said that 90 was an unusual speed limit for our highways. Normally with roadside development or communities or towns we have the 60 or the 80. So as a compromise we agreed that to improve their safety we would make it more standardised across the national highway and have an 80-kph speed limit.

CHAIR - Have you heard any concerns from truck drivers travelling north that with the reduction in speed they have to go down several gears, use more fuel, whereas before they could just get a run up over the slight incline to the north without using gears?

Mr GREGORY - I think that comes back to one of the first considerations - the balance between transport efficiency and safety and we tend to err on the side of safety. It is an interesting case study I guess. In a transport efficiency sense we would prefer that to be at the normal speed limit but there is an unusual collection of properties around the highway.

When you are comparing Cleveland to say Campbell Town, the residents of Cleveland had asked for 60 but, applying the principles of speed environment, that environment is significantly different to that of Campbell Town in terms of the range, extent, density, type of development and movement of pedestrians. We obviously felt that 60 was not an appropriate speed environment, particularly combined with the geometry of the road and

the transport task, so there was a compromise to say well we felt we would in fact like to have it higher from the transport efficiency point of view, but from safety we would agree to 80 as some level of compromise.

Mr DEAN - Just on the Cleveland thing, have there ever been any accidents or incidents on that piece of road in the last, say, 10 years that you are aware of?

Mr HUBBLE - With a traffic project we normally look back five years. I believe there have been no accidents in that area associated with directly-accessed properties. Among the people we spoke to were an elderly couple who live in Cleveland is and have been there from day one. Now that they are elderly they have more difficulty in accessing their property. On occasions their age has made it more difficult for them to live in that environment and that was another reason we sought a compromise.

Mr DEAN - Is that a criterion that you would use anywhere else on that highway - if you have an elderly couple entering that highway, would you use that as a reason for reducing the speed limit?

Mr HUBBLE - What we are trying to do here is reduce the risk of anybody being injured, either on the highway or accessing the highway.

CHAIR - Well on that basis you probably would have stayed by the blanket limit of 60?

Mr DEAN - That is right because you have elderly people entering the highway all over the place. I just wondered where that criterion comes in.

Mr GREGORY - Can I just add to that? I think the fact that there was an elderly couple is part of the consideration, but it is not the driving factor. Cleveland is a bit unusual. It is a very straight section of road, in a road geometry sense it is quite a high-speed environment, but we have a cluster of houses there. When we are looking at the national highway we actually prefer to apply a limited access approach so that we would prevent new accesses onto the highway. Unfortunately, in places such as Cleveland, which would have been traditionally a coach stop, we are dealing with a legacy of the road originally being a horse track and it has consistently been upgraded.

Mr DEAN - Would that stretch of road meet all the criteria for a speed reduction if this elderly couple were not there and were not involved? Would it meet the criteria for a reduction in speed limit - all the other criteria you have referred to?

Mr GREGORY - It would meet some criteria for a speed reduction and then it is a matter of what level of speed reduction. The other thing we try to do is have some consistency in the speed zones that are applied so we tend to apply some standardised zones - 100, 80, 60 and 50 in urban areas.

Mr DEAN - I think the concern that has been raised is that this followed immediately on top of a lot of maintenance occurring on that stretch of road. The road was updated, the road was made much safer, the travel surface was made much safer and the speed limit reduction followed immediately on top of that. So I take it that road surface and road structure is taken into account as a part of the criteria as well? The road is much safer now that it was previously.

Mr GREGORY - The condition of the road surface, the width of the road - it all contributes to speed environment. One of the conundrums of road safety is that as we upgrade roads and make them wider and provide wider lanes and wider shoulders, the speed environment increases. That is one of the complexities in managing the road network. It is a very emotive subject and people always have the view that there is a fatality about to happen. It becomes very emotive.

Mr DEAN - One of the criteria I think you put to us what that it was the likelihood of the traffic to comply with a speed limit in an area like that and I would have thought in that area the likelihood of traffic complying with that speed limit would have been somewhat reduced.

Mr GREGORY - Situations such as Cleveland are difficult because, yes, I think the likelihood of compliance is a bit lower and the enforcement activity to achieve the outcome is likely to be high.

CHAIR - To ensure maximum observance of speed limits, like other traffic laws, would you agree that they need to be perceived by road users as being reasonable?

Mr GREGORY - Yes, we would agree with that. That is the concept of the speed environment.

CHAIR - Would you agree that most users of that road through Cleveland would perceive the 80-kph limit to be unreasonable?

Mr GREGORY - That is a question I could not answer.

Mr HARRISS - Are there any similar environments to Cleveland? You have mentioned the speed environment there is somewhat unusual. Are there any similar that either of you can think of on a major highway around the State which have been treated in a similar manner because of similar environments.

Mr HUBBLE - Mangalore and Bagdad. Bagdad is one that has been reduced to 80.

Mr HARRISS - That has been 80 for a long time.

Mr HUBBLE - Yes, correct.

Mr HARRISS - There is a school zone there. It is all the same, isn't it, all through Bagdad through the school zone?

Mr HUBBLE - Yes, it is 80, correct.

Ms FORREST - Doesn't it go to 100 before the school?

Mr HARRISS - It might do.

Ms FORREST - Just before the school turnoff it goes to 100.

Mr HARRISS - Anyway, the general environment.

Mr HUBBLE - And then it goes to 100, yes.

CHAIR - That is just before the school, residential properties -

Ms FORREST - A service station.

CHAIR - a shop and service station. It is much busier, with a greater population than Cleveland.

Mr HUBBLE - I understand what you are saying. As Shane has indicated, it is always a difficult balance to achieve the right outcome between safety and efficiency.

CHAIR - Can you understand people not understanding why the speed limit at Cleveland is 80 with about seven or 10 houses there, whereas it is 100 on the southern end of Bagdad where you have traffic generating, school populations, a service station, shop, as well as residences?

Ms FORREST - At least as many houses.

Mr HARRISS - In addition to that, Mr Chairman, before either of the gentlemen answer, Peter mentioned Mangalore then flicked back to Bagdad.

Mr HUBBLE - At Mangalore we reduced the limit from 110 to 100.

Mr HARRISS - I am thinking specifically of Mangalore in relation to what the Chairman has just asked you about because there is now a closed service station on the left-hand side heading south; there are lots of residences of that stretch of highway through Mangalore yet that has always been 100, even when the service station was there.

Mr HUBBLE - Yes.

Ms FORREST - Also another consideration is that that road - and I drive it all the time, as do most of the members here - would be in not as good a condition as the current road at Cleveland, which has recently been resealed and it is a much better road surface. It is very straight. The Mangalore section is relatively straight through that section.

Mr HARRISS - Also there is the turnoff to Broadmarsh, the turnoff to Elders, whatever - there are a number of major intersections as well as residential accesses and yet it has always been 100 -

Ms FORREST - The road shoulders certainly are not as good, I do not think.

Mr HARRISS - Yes, that is right.

Mr GREGORY - I think in response we would not suggest that we have absolute consistency. We do not sit down and review speed limits on every section of road on a regular basis. They are reviewed as an issue comes to light or as we are asked to consider them. The task of sitting down and reviewing the speed limit on every section

of road in Tasmania would just be unachievable so we tend to respond in looking at statistics, clusters, requests and so on, so over a period of time there can be inconsistencies and we would hope that again over time we would eliminate those inconsistencies.

Mr DEAN - The Mangalore one is a good example and I accept the comments that you make. However I know the Mangalore straight fairly well and there have been accidents on that stretch of road. In fact I think we had one very recently, a very bad accident.

In addition to the Cleveland thing you have accidents actually occurring on that stretch of road but still that does not meet the criteria. I am not advocating it should be any less than 100 but I think we are comparing it with Cleveland, and on that basis Cleveland should not have been reduced.

Mr GREGORY - In response to the issue of accidents, we do not just look at numbers of accidents, we look at what is causing them and the type of accident. If we have a cluster of accidents that are caused by road geometry or weather or drink-driving, changing the speed limit has no effect. We appreciate that people do find the speed limit decisions confusing. We recently started looking at the speed environment in Richmond and we took the opportunity to go to the community and explain the whole concept to them and they got a much better understanding of why we might set of speed limit at a certain level. So I think it is confusing for people. There are a lot of factors to take into account and a lot of subtleties. People might look at a bit of road and say well this is exactly the same as that, but there might be very subtle differences in the conditions that might cause us to set it differently.

Mr DEAN - I think you can see where this committee is coming from, can't you, with the apparent inconsistency between Cleveland and Mangalore.

Mr HUBBLE - We have had a number of requests in Mangalore to reduce the speed limit but, as Shane said, we look at the crash history and see if the crashes are attributed to people entering and leaving the highway -

Mr DEAN - There have been none at Cleveland, you know, none at all.

Mr HUBBLE - Not to my knowledge.

Mr DEAN - But we do know of some at Mangalore.

Mr HUBBLE - I believe the last one you spoke about at Mangalore resulted from overtaking.

Ms FORREST - There was one with the flat tray ute not so long ago that was pulling out of a driveway though.

Mr DEAN - No, it was not overtaking.

Ms FORREST - Just going back to the Cleveland section, you said that a number of infrastructure options were considered and rejected. Can you go through what those were?

Mr HUBBLE - When I say rejected what happened was the residents were concerned about their ability to pull out of the driveway with safety. They had a gravel driveway. We went in there and sealed the driveway for a couple of residents so it made it easier for them to take off and gave them more traction. With the elderly couple I mentioned, we went and spoke with them. They had some difficulties regarding their access in that they often need emergency service access to their property. So we improved their access and we have also provided some other infrastructure - handrails and so on to help them to get in and out of their property.

CHAIR - Handrails, did you say?

Mr HUBBLE - A handrail, yes.

CHAIR - What? For a motor vehicle?

Mr HUBBLE - No, on their property.

CHAIR - Driving out?

Mr HUBBLE - To get into and out of their house to their driveways.

Ms FORREST - Why would your department be interested in that? Why wouldn't that fall to Health?

Mr HUBBLE - We were there at that particular time and we were trying to improve their level of accessibility to the highway.

Ms FORREST - How much did that cost?

Mr HUBBLE - I have no idea, sorry.

Ms FORREST - How often would you do that sort of thing? How often do you provide handrails for residents to assist them out of their gates into their vehicles?

Mr HUBBLE - We look at each situation on a case-by-case basis.

Ms FORREST - Has that been done before?

Mr HUBBLE - Not to my knowledge. It is all to do with the upgrade of the highway and the residents -

Ms FORREST - Make it easier for them to get into their cars to access the highway.

Mr HUBBLE - The residents believe that, as a consequence of the highway being upgraded, the grade of their access to the highway had increased and, as a consequence of that, we were there to address that concern.

Ms FORREST - Their house would not be right on the highway - there must be a distance they have to get into their car and then drive up that grade to actually enter onto the highway?

Mr HUBBLE - I cannot tell you exactly the distance but it is reasonably close to the highway.

Ms FORREST - But they would still be moving? They do not get in their car and take off and enter the highway immediately? Their car is not parked within two metres of the highway?

Mr HUBBLE - I cannot tell you the distance, but it is fairly close and they have a grade on their driveway, yes.

Ms FORREST - I accept that there is a grade up now onto the road so in fixing up those issues, putting in the handrails, assisting them into their vehicles, getting them into the car, up a grade so that it now has greater traction. Why is it now a problem for accessing the highway that it was not acceptable to leave the speed limit at what it was? What was the issue? Why then was that not acceptable? Why did it warrant a reduction in the speed limit?

Mr HUBBLE - As a consequence of the road upgrade I believe that the road was lifted marginally and the residents believed that that was a safety concern.

Ms FORREST - So you addressed that?

Mr HUBBLE - Yes, we did. We went in and addressed that with the sealed driveways.

Ms FORREST - So then why do we need to reduce the speed limit once that has been addressed? I can accept that is an issue, but why -

Mr HUBBLE - As I said, we met the couple a number of times on site and they raised their concerns. We tried to address that using other infrastructure.

Ms FORREST - Which you have talked about?

Mr HUBBLE - Yes.

Ms FORREST - Was there other infrastructure?

Mr HUBBLE - No.

Ms FORREST - That was the sum total?

Mr HUBBLE - The sum total, yes. I understand we went back again and met with them but they were still not satisfied that their level of risk was appropriate.

Ms FORREST - We have areas through Mangalore and Bagdad, which are, again, on the old coach routes and subsequently have houses quite close to the road. Have you been asked to provide that sort of support for other people, whether they are young, old or otherwise?

Mr HUBBLE - I do not believe that their houses are as close to the highway as this particular house in Cleveland.

Mr GREGORY - I think the issue of the work that was done on that property does not relate directly to the speed limit. When we go out and do any civil project there are always ancillary works that need to be done to facilitate the change in the road level or on occasions to simply get people to sign off on fencing agreements so the project can actually go ahead. There are a whole range of issues where a person can stop a project and sometimes it is prudent to say, 'Yes, we will give you a thousand dollars worth of asphalt driveway so we can get the job done.'

Ms FORREST - Yes I accept that. I know that happens all the time on the Bass Highway between Wynyard and Smithton we have had a lot of that. I accept that. I guess the question is if that was the only point of access, could their point of access have been changed to another area to make the area more accessible for them? Was that not a possibility?

Mr HUBBLE - That was considered but they have a very small block. It is a smaller residential block rather than a rural block and therefore we had difficulty in providing a different access.

CHAIR - Would it be correct to assume that the decision to decrease the limit from 90 to 80 on this occasion was based mainly or solely on the circumstances of this elderly couple?

Mr HUBBLE - That was a factor but the overwhelming factor was the concern of the whole community of Cleveland. Each of the residents were -

CHAIR - What was the concern of the others? There were only about another six houses there I think.

Mr DEAN - Six or seven. That is about all.

Mr GREGORY - The process of determining speed limits is not a black and white process. There are a number of guiding principles and there are a number of judgments to be made, so we can get slightly different answers and having a different group of people look at that we can get a slightly different answer in considering what is appropriate and what is not appropriate.

I acknowledge that there will be what the community perceive to be inconsistencies and we are talking about a comparison between Cleveland and Mangalore and asking why they are different. Well, at Cleveland the buildings are much closer to the road than they are at Mangalore. At Cleveland there is very limited opportunity to undertake widening. We have got two historic properties on the western side of the road where vibratory rolling was not permitted because of the potential damage to the historic buildings. A whole range of other factors are considered, but there is not any great opportunity at Cleveland to provide turning slots.

We had at the time - and I am sure it is still there - a business operating virtually right on the highway, extremely close, so there was no opportunity to put a turning slot in for that business, whereas if we had a similar situation at Mangalore we have plenty of room and we could put in a turning slot.

CHAIR - Some of the houses are quite close to the highway at Mangalore, aren't they?

Mr HARRISS - Some are right on the shoulder.

Mr GREGORY - Some are, but I would say, looking at the environment, that the constraint of the buildings generally in Cleveland is closer than in Mangalore and at Mangalore there are opportunities, if we needed them, to provide turning slots.

Ms FORREST - If that elderly couple decide to move or they die or for whatever reason they are no longer there, would that speed limit be reviewed?

Mr GREGORY - I think you are putting a lot of emphasis on the elderly couple.

CHAIR - Well, I think you are.

Mr DEAN - You are.

Mr GREGORY - We are saying it was a consideration. There were a number of other considerations.

CHAIR - It seems to be the main one.

Ms FORREST - As this was a consideration that was taken, I am now asking you, if that situation no longer existed for whatever reason, however that came about, whether you would reconsider?

Mr GREGORY - You could reconsider. We do not routinely go back and reconsider but we could do that.

Mr DEAN - I think what you said was there were also issues raised from the Opposition, was that right?

Mr HUBBLE - What I meant to convey was that the community would have gone to the Opposition and they would have written to us for support.

Mr DEAN - Did many members within the Government raise it as well?

Mr HUBBLE - As I just said, I do not really know exactly who it was and where but I am assuming that would have come through that as well.

CHAIR - Why do you assume that?

Mr HUBBLE - Just recollection, that is all.

CHAIR - But you do not have any recollection of a government member making similar representations?

Mr HUBBLE - As I said we have a number of issues that we have to deal with on a weekly, monthly and yearly basis and I cannot give you details exactly where all the requests come from.

CHAIR - You mentioned specifically the Opposition.

Mr HUBBLE - Maybe I was wrong in doing that. I apologise for that.

CHAIR - Do you think you were?

Mr HUBBLE - As I said, I cannot define exactly where the request came through.

CHAIR - Can you check and let us know?

Mr HUBBLE - I am happy to check and provide that evidence.

CHAIR - If you could check and let us know what representations were made and by whom, if you could let us have that in writing.

Mr GREGORY - We would be happy to consult the file and give you a chronology.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr DEAN - Your area is road safety, speed limits, signs and so and this committee's concern is obviously road safety. You said not to identify particular areas, but I just need to identify Pipers River, which is a good example. I suspect you were involved in that when there were a number of complaints made about the speed limit past the Pipers River shop which is a dangerous piece of road - curvy, bendy and used by a lot of people. A request was made for a reduction from 100 to 80. That did not meet the criteria. Were you involved in that, either of you?

Mr GREGORY - No. Again, we are happy to go and pull out the file and give you a chronology and our thoughts behind why that is.

Mr DEAN - This committee has been given evidence that we probably ought to be considering reducing the speed from 110 to 100 kph throughout the State. Are you looking at that in your area, the maximum speed limits on our roads in Tasmania, or is that not a matter you are concerned with at this present time?

Mr GREGORY - It is a matter that we are concerned with and we have the KiSS trial - Kingborough Safer Speeds- in the Kingborough municipality where we are reducing sealed road speed limits to 90.

Mr HUBBLE - And other roads to 80.

Mr GREGORY - That operated for an initial trial of one year and that has been extended. That indicates that in Kingborough there has been a reduction in the number and severity of crashes. The trial has now been implemented in the Tasman municipality.

Mr HUBBLE - Correct.

Mr GREGORY - So it is really about gathering some information and when you are looking statistically at whether these things are working or not you need to get a period of time

because we can get an anomaly in one year that might have just occurred regardless of the speed limit.

Mr DEAN - If the further study then identifies that it does assist with a reduction in accidents and safety et cetera, would you look at bringing that in for the rest of the State in all of those similar areas? Is that what the project is all about?

Mr GREGORY - The project is about seeing what impact it has and whether it works. If you travel around Australia there are very varying views on what is an appropriate speed limit and how it should be operated. We have one Territory that believes it should not have a speed limit full stop, so we will be looking at that and then looking at how that might work.

We know that there appears to be a positive result in Kingborough and we will run that for another period of time and see if that result is maintained. We need to understand whether the positive result in year one was purely because there was a high level of enforcement that got people focused. Do we keep that level of improvement or does it deteriorate in year two? We will see what happens in Tasman and, yes, we will then look at whether that is appropriate to apply in other parts of the State.

Mr DEAN - My other question was about the 110-kph limit that currently applies - and the Midland Highway is probably a good example. Are you looking at that? We have been given evidence to this committee from some witnesses who have said that we ought to be looking at that, we ought to consider that perhaps it is too high. Are you looking at the maximum speed limit around the State? We know the limit is 100 but on specified roads you can do 110. Are you considering that?

Mr GREGORY - Not specifically.

Mr DEAN - I am not advocating that should happen - not at all.

CHAIR - In the information you are providing us with, we would like you to provide information about any representations made on the Cleveland speed limit, not only documentary but also verbal, personal representations.

Mr GREGORY - Yes.

Mr HARRISS - Before you go off that, Mr Chairman, following on from where Ivan was with regard to the Midland Highway and the speed limit - are you aware that ARB have determined after laser testing of the highway that it is not suitable for passenger vehicles at 110 kilometres per hour and that very few roads in Tasmania are suitable for 110-kph usage?

Mr GREGORY - Their laser-testing unit that measures right cant, roughness, rutting -

Mr HARRISS - Yes, in both directions - longitudinally and latitudinally.

Mr GREGORY - I am not aware that there have been any representations to suggest that we should lower the speed limit.

CHAIR - Are you aware that they conducted testing with their laser vehicles?

Mr GREGORY - No, they conduct the testing on behalf of the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources.

CHAIR - Have you sought any information about the results?

Mr GREGORY - The results are given to us. The testing is done every year, it is provided to us and we use that data to consider the changes in the condition of the network and use it to help develop programs forward.

CHAIR - You are not aware of their attitude to the suitability of that road?

Mr GREGORY - No.

CHAIR - Have you sought information from them about their views on that?

Mr GREGORY - We have not because we were not aware they had an opinion.

Mr DEAN - Do they just provide for you the bald data without any commentary -

Mr GREGORY - Yes.

Mr DEAN - as to their assessment of the quality of the road surface?

Mr GREGORY - They do not process and assess the data. They collect the data and they provide it to our accident information group.

CHAIR - Do you assess it?

Mr GREGORY - Yes.

CHAIR - Have you not made any assessments similar to the one that Mr Harriss has told you they have made?

Mr GREGORY - No. If we look at the southern part of Tasmania the data was used as part of key performance indicators within the long-term maintenance contract and, for example, the roughness of the lower category roads improved significantly over the 10-year period of the contract.

CHAIR - It must have been in bad condition before the contract then, unless they have improved to an acceptable standard, which I don't consider they are, for the majority of the Midland Highway.

Mr GREGORY - It is very difficult for us to respond because we do not know what ARB has said and it has not made representation to the department.

CHAIR - I am surprised you have not asked them their views on that. I mean they are the body with the expertise and they are providing you with information. They are a body

that is partly funded by our State Government, so I am surprised you have not sought that information.

Mr GREGORY - The roughness data generally shows that the roughness is within acceptable limits but there is no clear definition of what is an acceptable level of roughness and what is not. It is a measure to determine what the roughness is so there is no standard that says the roughness of a category 1 road should fall below this.

CHAIR - Have you never considered that ARB is a source of expert information which could give you an assessment of the condition of the Midland Highway, for example, compared with other highways around the nation and then make an assessment of the appropriateness of the maximum speed and whether it should be reduced to 100?

Mr GREGORY - I guess ARB has an opinion. The State road authorities that form Austroads would have an opinion.

CHAIR - We are making a financial contribution to ARB and you have not even sought their opinion on that? It is somewhat surprising.

Mr GREGORY - Not that I am aware of but we receive number of papers from ARB. ARB is very forthcoming in providing papers on a whole range of issues that they have sent to us for a review and comment and for information. We are represented on Austroads so we actually send people to Austroads meetings. I have put been into a position to answer a question but I do not know what ARB has said.

CHAIR - That is what surprises me - that you do not know. You do not even have a view.

Mr GREGORY - There may be people in the agency who have had the discussion with ARB but I have not.

CHAIR - But you are making assessments of appropriate speed limits and you should know if any such information has been provided to the department, surely?

Mr GREGORY - If it has been provided I am happy to go and make inquires, but I am being asked to answer questions about something on which I do not have the information.

CHAIR - I think it would be advisable if you informed yourself about that in view of the importance of the role that you have and the expertise that exists in ARB, a body partly funded by our State Government.

Mr GREGORY - The agency does utilise ARB. It utilises its expertise.

CHAIR - But there is not much point in utilising expertise if you are making these decisions and you do not even know about them. Do you see the point I make?

Mr GREGORY - I am not aware of who in ARB has made the comment or where it has come from. Have they raised the issue formally? In discussing this with you, have they indicated what the relative roughness of roads in other States is compared to the traffic volumes carried? The reality is that the Midland Highway between Kempton and Perth carries relatively little traffic when you compare it to the national highway in other

States. It is a very low traffic volume. It is only in the order of 5 000 vehicles a day so there are a whole range of factors. It is easy for someone who collects data to say, 'Oh well, this is too high or too low,' but we have to balance everything we do with the amount of funding we have and providing the best outcome across the whole State.

CHAIR - Unless there are any other questions on that I want to move to another situation. Have there been any complaints that either of you are aware of in the last 10 years or so from residents in the northern section of Campbell Town where some years ago the speed limit was reduced from 80 to 60 over a distance of probably one-and-a-half kilometres? Are you aware of any residents having complained about difficulty in getting access to or egress from their properties?

Mr GREGORY - We are aware of a range of opinions on the speed limit at the northern end of Campbell Town so potentially the 60 could be brought in closer to the town. That would satisfy a range of people who use the road travelling through. Whether that would satisfy the people who are getting access onto the highway at the northern end of Campbell Town, well, that is probably a conflicting view.

CHAIR - I have travelled that road regularly for 27 years. I have only seen about two cars entering that section of the road and about three pedestrians in that area in the whole of 27 years so I am asking you whether any property owners have complained, as they have in Cleveland in the case of the elderly couple, about any difficulty in getting in and out of their properties?

Mr GREGORY - Not that I am personally aware of. I would say the comments and representations we get, would be from other parts of the community - and I am talking of the broader community, beyond Campbell Town - that the 60 should be brought in closer.

CHAIR - Sixty should be brought into closer?

Mr GREGORY - The 60 zone should be shortened. I think it is fair to say that we are reviewing that, and it may be that the 60 zone continues too far.

Ms FORREST - Would you accept that in that particular setting the houses are set back well off the road. There is a wide shoulder, visibility is good in that section leading in. I mean, you have to come around that first corner - I accept that - but there is no entry point immediately on that corner, but there is an intersection just a bit further around.

Mr GREGORY - We accept that perhaps - if I dare say it - we got that wrong in extending it so far.

CHAIR - I am pretty pleased to hear that because it does not meet the guidelines you mentioned earlier where you said relevant factors, such as Ms Forrest put, of very wide nature strips, some of the widest in Tasmania and hardly any traffic of any consequence entering and leaving. At the time that reduction was made - and I am not sure how many years ago, it may be 10 or so - a question was asked in the Legislative Council about why it was made. The answer given by the Government was that a resident had requested it - one resident - and that decision was made. Will that be reviewed?

Mr GREGORY - We have had discussions internally about whether the current situation is appropriate and I think it is fair to say we are in the process of reviewing that internally.

CHAIR - Good.

Mr GREGORY - When we talk about speed limits it is very emotive and we like to get the support of the RACT and the council. It is not necessarily a black and white edge that we are dealing with. If we took the standards and processes and applied them in a very black and white way, I think you would feel that we were being far more consistent.

We think we are being fairly consistent anyway but we are dealing with people who put forward very emotive arguments and so sometimes the lines are a bit blurred, sometimes we move the lines out a little bit because if we just went in and were very black and white, if we said, 'That is what it is, that is what you are having, that is what the rules say,' we would then, for the sake of 50 or 60 metres of the location of a sign, go through a process of continually responding to letters. In some cases we make the choice that leaving the sign 50 metres or 100 metres up is an easier course of action and it is erring on the side of caution. Yes, we might be impacting on efficiency, we might be impacting on people who are driving through, but we are erring on the side of caution when it comes to safety.

CHAIR - I do not know whether you are aware or not but at the time that the speed limit was reduced in the northern end of Campbell Town to 60 the then council had not been consulted at all. The then mayor told me that they were not impressed that there had been no consultation with the council at all, but it seems to be a glaring case of where the speed limit is too low and it does not conform with the criteria that you mentioned - the natural flow of traffic at the usual speed of traffic in a particular area - because 80 was about the natural flow.

In relation to the 60 speed limit from Pontville to Brighton, I am aware that you would no doubt want to avoid constant or regular changes of speed signs and no doubt that was a factor, but it defies the criterion of the natural flow of traffic. It seems to me there are very few access points to that road between the church at the southern end of Pontville and the beginning of the built-up area just before you enter the Brighton shopping centre. Could you tell us why that is 60 and not at least 70 and perhaps 80?

Mr GREGORY - We have had a range of speed limits I guess starting at the Mangalore straight and coming through. There was a period where there was a range of varying speed limits and then there has been a 50 introduced in the shopping precinct of Brighton which is -

CHAIR - I have no problem with that.

Mr GREGORY - very busy. I think potentially we had 100 -

Mr HUBBLE - 70.

Mr GREGORY - 70, 60.

Mr HUBBLE - A whole range of what they call 'chop and change'.

Mr GREGORY - That is then when we start to make some judgment calls about whether it is more appropriate to keep changing the speed limit or whether it is in fact better to get some consistency and perhaps have a speed limit where in isolation we might have it higher but in the consideration of adjoining speed limits we actually keep some level of consistency.

It does become a bit difficult when you have situations such as Brighton/Pontville where you can get some very intense development and you can have some ribbon development. At Pontville the geometry itself has an influence on what we choose, so sometimes it is not that simple and we have to make a judgment about whether it is better to extend the speed limit for a longer period just to get some level of consistency because that is a major problem with motorists if we bring them down, put them up, bring them down and put them up in what is a relatively short space from the beginning of Brighton to the end of Pontville.

Mr DEAN - Two to three years will fix it anyway, won't it, with the new road?

Mr GREGORY - We would see a completely different approach to the old Midland Highway when the bypass goes in.

CHAIR - There are very few problems with a four-lane highway. It does seem strange that at 2.00 a.m. people have to go through areas like that at 60 and particularly when there are speed camera checks at 11 p.m. and people are booked for doing 15 kilometres over the 60 limit, which I know is happening. Have you given any consideration to the use of electronic signs so that speed limits in some area can be varied according to the time of day? For example, it may be appropriate to have 80 all the way through Campbell Town from midnight until 6 a.m. I am just plucking figures out of the air. But, as to the principle, have you considered doing that?

Mr GREGORY - Yes, that is a principle that we are considering at the moment and where that might be appropriate. You would be aware we have introduced the electronic speed zone signs around the schools and that, in effect, is addressing that issue. In the past we had a blanket period of time where you had to slow down, but now we have signs that are matched to the specific and the school can request a specific time zone, so it can be varied if they have a sports carnival and they are going across the road to the oval. We have done that and as you drive around now you will see that they are not a consistent time period, they are a time period that is relative to the school that they are attached to.

We have introduced, on Constitution Hill, not some regulatory signs but some warning signs, advisory signs, that are electronic and they will change with the road conditions. So, if we get wet, icy roads, the advisory speed on the electronic board will come down. If we get fog, the electronic advisory speed sign will come down and then we detect the speed of motorist going through and we flash up and tell them they are going too fast and they should slow down.

So we have introduced those relatively simple ones. There are many issues around variable speed limits. Does our legislation allow us to do that? Is it a safe thing to say to people that if they are in Campbell Town late at night they can now do 80 instead of 60? That perhaps creates the expectation that, yes you can go through at 80 and do not have

to be careful because there is no-one here and when someone pulls out of a side street you might create a larger problem.

So many different factors need to be considered and we need to consider whether we should do a trial somewhere and see how it works.

CHAIR - It is good that that is under consideration.

Mr DEAN - It is a very common thing now in Victoria for these variable signs to be used and they are complied with in the main. That is the evidence we had from the Victorian people and the organisations there.

Are you also considering that - and I suspect this might not be your area, so you will tell me if it is not - in Victoria in some parts, on some of the main highways, you have these warning speed limit signs up which record the vehicle coming at them and they will say very clearly what speed you are driving at.

CHAIR - It can say, 'Too fast'.

Mr DEAN - Yes. .

CHAIR - They are used on the Southern Outlet and in Launceston as well.

Mr DEAN - They are. Are you looking at one or two of those, for instance, on the Midland Highway, strategically placed?

Mr GREGORY - We have put it in the two signs at Constitution Hill. One that you will notice as you drive through is generally not lit up at all. That is the sign that flashes up to advise you that you are going too fast, compared to the advised speed. At Constitution Hill, the advised speed will change, depending on the road condition. So we have sensors and infra-red cameras out there and if the road conditions deteriorate through snow, ice or fog, the advised speed will reduce.

Mr DEAN - I think that is what you have in mind, isn't it, for Dilston?

Mr GREGORY - I am not aware of that particular piece.

Mr HUBBLE - I am aware of that one and we are looking at an electronic system for Dilston. At this stage, what are we doing? We are using the situation at Constitution Hill to get the learning to develop our knowledge of the systems and compliance and then we could apply a regulatory speed limit at Dilston, but obviously that is down the track.

Mr GREGORY - What we are talking about in the broad collective - and I note your references to Victoria - is what is referred to as intelligent transport systems. Various States do different things and various countries do different things. We have a group of people in our traffic signals area who are working in close contact with the people in Victoria. We recently had the VicRoads guys come over and talk to us about the sort of things they have been doing, what they have found to be successful and not successful, and there are varying degrees of success in the different ITS solutions. It is something

that we see as a very positive thing going forward. It is a matter of making sure we do not saturate the roads to the point that ITS signs just become another tin sign. We are seeing them as a very positive thing at schools and we have had a very good response. The new technology makes them highly visible, they are more suited to the school times, so that has been very successful. One of the things we are quite conscious of is that if we turn every sign into an electronic sign we might lose some impact. We need to look at where we might get the best impact and roll out that technology.

Ms FORREST - A point touching on school zones, I think it is in America where, if the school bus has stopped and it has its indicators on, everyone has to stop. You cannot drive past 40 kph. In Tasmania people do not even realise that you are supposed to drive past at 40 - it is just the speed limit on the road. On our rural roads where school buses stop on the Bass Highway at Flowerdale people do not necessarily slow down to 40 to pass the bus. They will keep going at 100 or whatever they are doing.

How do you address that? Is that a public awareness that needs to be promoted because I do not think it is well promoted? Would there be any consideration given to people having to stop when a school bus has stopped and its lights are on?

Mr GREGORY - You have now diverged completely from our area of expertise.

Ms FORREST - Oh yes, I know I have.

Mr GREGORY - Perhaps you should talk to the Office of Road Safety or the policy area.

Ms FORREST - That is the case with school buses though. People are supposed to drive at 40 kph around a school bus when the lights are flashing.

Mr HUBBLE - That is correct.

Ms FORREST - Would you accept that it is not well known?

Mr HUBBLE - I believe there has been some advertising of that in the last couple of years. I believe the Road Safety Task Force did some advertising.

Ms FORREST - I do not watch commercial TV so I do not see it.

CHAIR - Any further questions. That being so I would like you just again to go in camera and deal with one other matter. I do not need to close the door, there is nobody there. Is the committee agreeable to going in to camera to deal with one matter?

Mr DEAN - I had another matter. It may not be your area again so we might fix it very quickly.

The temporary speed limit signs that are used at work sites and so on, is that a responsibility in your area at all or not?

Mr GREGORY - I am happy to try to answer the question.

Mr DEAN - The committee has been given quite a lot of evidence in relation to the temporary speed limit signs that are put in on work sites and so on and being left there when they should not be, et cetera. I can give a very good example with the date and the time. I was at Mornington just after Christmas when a 60 kph speed limit sign was in place for line marking. It was in place for about 6 kilometres right back the eastern side of Mornington through to the top of the hill before you go down onto the Tasman Bridge. Traffic was backed up bumper to bumper right through there. Then they got to a stage where they knew there were no works being done and they sped up and did not comply with the 60 kph at all. There were no works there at all for the whole time that I noted it or recorded it all. I have got it recorded and I will bring it forward one of these days.

CHAIR - And there were many other examples.

Mr DEAN - Yes, there were many other examples of that. The public were really frustrated. They were honking their horns and God know what else. Do you have any control over that? Is there any responsibility on these people who leave these signs out when there is nothing happening? There was nothing happening. The lines had been painted the previous day.

Mr GREGORY - Temporary signage is covered by AS1742.3 and it is the code of practice for traffic control of work signs in Tasmania. The code of practice is, I believe, referred to in the Roads and Traffic Act. The code is effectively part of the legislation. There are very clear guidelines and guiding principles on the application of temporary signs for road works. One of the guiding principles is that you only use the signs where they are necessary and you remove them when they are no longer required for the very reason that if people conducting operations abuse the signs and leave them out unnecessarily they lose their impact.

Mr DEAN - That is exactly it. On this occasion they were complied with for the first 200-300 metres then the public just started ignoring them and sped up to 100 kph. So they just totally ignored the signs.

CHAIR - That causes them to have less respect for signs generally and therefore it affects the degree of observance of the traffic signs.

Mr GREGORY - There is a range of people out on the network: we have our maintenance network managers who are out in the network, we have superintendents representatives for construction works so if people see them generally they deal with that fairly quickly and get on to the contractor.

Mr DEAN - In fact, I tried to get your emergency number that morning to give you a ring to tell somebody to get out there and move the things off because it was just impractical.

Mr GREGORY - It is a case, to a certain extent, on self-regulation. We rely on contractors to do the right thing. We require all our contractors' personnel to be trained in traffic management to have a certificate of competency. And where we do see anomalies, or where we are made aware of them, we try to correct those fairly quickly because it does impact on the effectiveness.

Mr DEAN - No penalty applies for them leaving them out when they should not be there?

Mr GREGORY - No, there is no penalty.

CHAIR - Can that be considered? It is your department's area. Can you make recommendations about that? There was another instance I know of when our committee was taking evidence in Devonport in the early stages of the inquiry and there was a 60 sign at the top of the hill at Sassafra. That was there when our committee was at Devonport. I happened to go down the north-west coast a few days later at the weekend. The sign was there for about seven of eight days. I phoned and it was removed. It was just sitting there for seven of eight days.

Mr DEAN - They conceded that they had 'just forgotten it' or something didn't they, I remember some comment on it.

Ms FORREST - The problem is that there is often intermittent works on those areas so when they leave one there like that people then think or just one that has been left out again. I can concur with those stories and I could tell you heaps more, particularly on that section.

Mr WING - If the contractor is not subject to any sanction or penalty, then they will be tardy.

Mr GREGORY - There is a sanction for our contracts because we have a measuring process, or report on the contractor that goes into a performance database which influences their ability to win future contracts. One of the things that we measure in those contracts is application of traffic management. So if we feel that someone has been tardy or is using traffic management inappropriately they can be scored down which then impacts on their track record, which is a mandatory element of tender assessment. So there is that mechanism. There is not to my knowledge a monetary penalty available to us.

Ms FORREST - A smack on the back of the wrist with a limp lettuce leaf.

Mr GREGORY - You may look at it that way, yes.

CHAIR - Any other questions in open session? The committee now agrees to go in camera.