2025 (No. 4)

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

Bridport Road – Freight and Safety Improvements

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

Legislative Council	House of Assembly
Ms *Rattray (Chair)*	Ms *Butler (Deputy Chair)*
Mr *Harriss*	Ms *Burnet*
	Mr *Wood*

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1 INTRODUCTION

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

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY

The Committee has investigated the following proposal:-

Bridport Road – Freight and Safety Improvements

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

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 This reference recommended the Committee approve works on Bridport Road between the East Tamar Highway and Weymouth Road. These works will improve safety and efficiency through improvements to road signage, markings and surfaces; construction of turn lanes; and road widening.

2.2 Bridport Road is an important freight link from the northeast region to Bell Bay, the North-West Coast and other destinations. In a study conducted in 2022, it was found that average traffic volume on the road was 1,057 vehicles per day, of which heavy vehicle traffic made up 31.5%. Predicted growth in tourism and agriculture is likely to increase the volume of traffic in the future.

2.3 Sections of the road between Scottsdale and Bridport were upgraded around 2000. In contrast, the section in this reference has not received similar improvements and has not been significantly upgraded since the late 1960s-early 1970s. As a result, parts of the road do not meet the Department of State Growth's current design standards (T3 – Road Design Guidelines and Standards).

2.4 The Department of State Growth completed a corridor study of Bridport Road in 2024, which identified issues including insufficient road width, junction safety, road condition and road delineation. A Bridge Barrier Safety Assessment conducted in this area also recommended improvements within the purview of this reference.

2.5 Analysis of crash data along the road showed patterns of incidences which were used to identify locations of particular concern.

2.6 Ongoing consultation with stakeholders including freight operators, local landowners, local government and the broader community has also identified areas in need of improvement for the safety of road users.

2.7 The Department used information from across these studies and consultation processes to identify issues to be addressed. This was consolidated into a list of 11 potential projects, categorised as low, medium or high priority. This reference incorporates five projects rated as high priority.

2.8 This reference is proposed in the context of several other separate projects which are also aiming to improve the safety and efficiency of Bridport Road. The Department is currently in the process of developing a Heavy Vehicle Driver Rest Area near the East Tamar Highway– Bridport Road intersection; and improvements have been made to Bridport Road near Dalrymple Road.

2.9 The proposed works also build on recent upgrades completed at the Weymouth Road junction. Following the completion of these upgrades, the need for additional work was identified and has been included in this reference.

2.10 Funding for the project has been provided under the Tasmanian Roads Package. The Tasmanian Government has committed $4 million and the Australian Government has committed $16 million, for a total of $20 million.

2.11 Preparatory work has been completed, including road surface and drainage condition assessments; environmental and geotechnical investigations; land survey and concept designs.

2.12 The proposed works in this reference have been divided into five sites. Works at each will include:

- Site 1, Bridport Road/Industry Road junction: Road widening, left and right turn lanes onto Industry Road.
- Site 2, Industry Road to Pipers River Road: Road widening, camber improvements.
- Site 3, Bridport Road/Pipers River Road/Back Creek Road junction: Road widening, left and right turn lanes for Pipers River Road and right turn lanes for Back Creek Road.
- Site 4, Bridport Road/Weymouth Road junction: Left turn lane.
- Site 5, East Tamar Highway to Dalrymple Road: Road widening, road surface improvements.

2.13 Sites 1 – 4 have been designated Package 1 and detailed designs are expected to be ready by mid-2025. Site 5 is included in Package 2, which is currently at a less advanced stage of preparatory work and is projected to reach the detailed design stage in late 2025. Both are anticipated to commence construction in late 2026.

2.14 The proposed works aim to deliver the following benefits:

- Reducing crashes
- Increasing the efficiency of freight movement
- Reducing travel times
- Addressing community concerns about road safety.

3 PROJECT COSTS

3.1 Pursuant to the Message from Her Excellency the Governor-in-Council, the estimated cost of the work is $20 million.

The following table details the current P50 and p90 cost estimates for the project:

Item	P50 estimate	P90 estimate	Notes
Base Estimate	$15,000,000	$15,000,000	Works including investigations, design, community engagement, approvals, project management and construction.
Contingency	$2,500,000	$3,500,000	Contingency 17% – 26% of base estimate. This level of contingency is considered reasonable for an estimate from a concept design, due to the nature of works being safety upgrades to an existing alignment only. As the design is refined, uncertainty will be reduced and the contingency allowance will be reduced also.
Escalation	$1,400,000	$1,500,000	Escalation 7% of base estimate. Refer below for discussion.
Total	$19,000,000	$20,000,000	

3.2 The Department's submission provided further explanation of the contingency and escalation allowances provided for in the project cost estimates:

Contingency:

The contingency allowance provides for contingent events, that is events which may or may not occur. For this project, key contingent risk items include:

- *tendered rates are unexpectantly higher*
- *extensive subgrade replacement is required*
- *discovery of latent conditions*
- *property acquisition is required*
- *service relocations are required.*

Escalation:

The escalation allowance is a provision in costs for changes in economic and market conditions over time.

Estimates of escalation are not intended to be precise forecast of future prices; they are approximations intended to represent the average trends for a large group of projects in a broad region.

The escalation rate for projects which are part funded by the Australian Government is determined by the Australian Government and is included in the project cost estimates as part of funding submissions from the department to the Australian Government. The Australian Government commissions considerable economic investigation to provide state specific forecast escalation, and the department has not diverted resources into challenging these Australian Government requirements.[1]

[1] *Bridport Road – Freight Efficiency and Safety Improvements,* Public Works Committee submission, Department of State Growth, November 2024, p 12.

4 EVIDENCE

4.1 The Committee commenced its inquiry on Monday, 9 December last with an inspection of the site of the proposed works. The Committee then convened at the Training Room, Scottsdale Library, whereupon the following witnesses appeared, made the Statutory Declaration and were examined by the Committee in public:-

- 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 Smith, Senior Design Officer, Network Planning, State Roads, Department of State Growth.

The following Committee Members were present:

- Hon Tania Rattray MLC (Chair);
- Ms Helen Burnet MP;
- Hon Dean Harriss MLC; and
- Mr Simon Wood MP.

Overview

4.2 Mr Smith and Mr van der Hyde provided an overview of the proposed works:

> **Mr Smith -** *… Today we are considering funding for capital works on the main road of Bridport Road … 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.*
>
> *…*
>
> **Mr van der Hyde -** *… 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.*
>
> *…*
>
> *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.

Selection process

4.3 The witnesses explained how the Department determined this section of Bridport Road and the proposed improvements should be prioritised:

> ***Mr van der HYDE - ...*** *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.*
>
> *…*
>
> **Mr Smith -** *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 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.*
>
> *…*
>
> *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.*

Addressing the needs of heavy vehicle traffic

4.4 As noted above, improvements to the efficiency and safety with which freight can move through northeastern Tasmania are key objectives of the proposed work. The

Committee sought further information about the volume of freight traffic outlined in the Department's submission and how it compares to other roads:

> ***CHAIR*** *- … 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 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 Barnbougle 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.*
> *…*
>
> ***Ms BURNET*** *-**…** 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.*

4.5 The witnesses described the types of work that were selected as being best suited to successfully improve the safety and efficiency of freight traffic along this corridor within the available funds:

> ***Mr SMITH*** *- …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.*

Utilising historic incident patterns to determine priority sites

4.6 The Department's submission included a map of crashes along Bridport Road. The Committee sought further information about how this data was used to target the locations that most urgently require safety improvements to be made:

> ***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.*
> *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.*

Road Widening

4.7 The Committee heard further details about the proposed road widening program, including that the accepted standard width for freight corridors is 3.5m. The Committee asked for information about how this will be applied across different parts of the road covered in the reference and the particular importance of this work to heavy vehicle traffic:

> ***Ms Burnet -*** *…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 slopey 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 slopey drop-off is -*
>
> ***Ms HICKS*** *- Then there's the cut, that is the batter as well.*
>
> *…*

Ms BURNET *- … 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.*

4.8 The witnesses also noted that improving narrow road shoulders was a key interest raised during consultation, and this had informed the selection of works:

Mr SMITH *- … 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.*

Improving intersection safety

4.9 Following the site visit, the Committee was aware there are a number of roads which cross Bridport Road, creating issues both with vehicles slowing as they leave Bridport Road and with vehicles turning into the road. Further information was sought about how particular intersections were selected for work to mitigate these factors:

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…*

Mr SMITH - *… 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.*

4.10 The Department's submission provided further explanation of the risks which will be mitigated by the construction of turn lanes at these sites:

In these locations, drivers turning onto side roads need to slow down to turn safely, creating potential conflict with through traffic. Drivers following the turning vehicles may not anticipate the sudden reduction in speed, increasing the risk of rear-end and loss of control crashes. The narrow traffic lanes, shoulders and absence of dedicated turn facilities, mean

there are limited opportunities for drivers to correct or avoid collisions in these circumstances.[2]

Passing lanes

4.11 The Committee inquired about why passing lanes are not a feature of the proposed work, particularly in light of demonstrated community interest in them as referenced in the results of the consultation and feedback processes:

> ***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.*
>
> *…*
>
> ***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.*

4.12 The witnesses explained that the decision to not construct passing lanes aligns with the main objectives of the project:

> ***CHAIR*** *- … 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.*

Related Works

4.13 While the current reference is aimed at improving freight safety, it does not include a truck rest area. Such a facility is currently under development and is listed as a related work in the Department's submission. The Committee sought to understand what facilities are and will be available for truck drivers using this road:

> ***CHAIR*** *- … 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 … 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*

[2] *Bridport Road – Freight Efficiency and Safety Improvements,* Public Works Committee submission, Department of State Growth, November 2024, p 4.

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.*

4.14 The Committee had been informed that a Bridge Barrier Safety Assessment had been conducted in the area. Mr Smith provided clarification regarding which recommendations from this assessment would be incorporated into this project, rather than a separate program:

***Mr WOOD** - In terms of the bridge barrier safety, I noticed that the recommendations are being incorporated … 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.*

Environmental impacts

4.15 The Department's submission outlined the results of desktop assessments done of the flora and fauna within the vicinity of the proposed works. This found eagle nests within 5km of the project and one potential threatened native vegetation species.

4.16 The Committee sought further information about the clearing of vegetation for the proposed works and the status of studies being conducted to understand the environmental impacts in greater detail:

***CHAIR - …** 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.*

4.17 Following from this, the Committee asked further questions about how the proposed works are integrated with and respond to any issues relating to fauna in the area:

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 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.*

Impacts of construction on road users and planned mitigation

4.18 The Committee considered the impacts during construction of the proposed works and noted that this will largely fall on road users. They asked what the nature of this disruption would be:

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.*

4.19 As well as providing a route for freight movement, Bridport Road is a key access route for residents of the area, including some for whom works will be occurring on a road which provides the only access to their homes. The witnesses were asked about how this will be managed:

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.*

4.20 The Committee and witnesses noted the importance of communication with the community about roadwork. The Department further outlined how information about current roadworks can be accessed online:

***Mr van der HYDE** - ... 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.*

Benefit-Cost Ratio

4.21 The Committee noted a comment in the Department's submissions regarding the low Benefit-Cost Ratio result, with the project being listed as having a ratio of 0.33 cents benefit to the community for each dollar spent. The Committee sought to understand broadly how this figure is calculated and why the nature of the reference may not have led to a strong result, despite the associated benefits:

***CHAIR** - ... 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.*

Funding

4.22 The funding arrangements for the project were outlined for the Committee:

> **Mr Smith - ...***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.*

4. 23 The Committee heard that the Department was still awaiting approval for the Australian government funding. The Department confirmed that they were confident this approval would be received and outlined the timeline for the funding and how it will be managed within the broader project timeframes:

> ***Mr van der HYDE** - ... 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*

Project Timeline

4.24 The committee considered the proposed timeline and sought confirmation that preparations for the project are proceeding accordingly:

> ***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…?*
>
> ***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.*

4.25 The Committee had heard that the proposed works will be completed as two packages. They sought further information about how the timing and relationship between the two was intended to function:

> ***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.

…

***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.*

Does the Project Meet the Requirements of the Public Works Committee Act?

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

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

***Mr 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.*

5 DOCUMENTS TAKEN INTO EVIDENCE

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

- *Bridport Road – Freight Efficiency and Safety Improvements,* Public Works Committee Submission, November 2024, Department of State Growth.

6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

6.1 The Committee is satisfied that the need for the proposed works has been established. Once completed, the safety and efficiency of Bridport Road will be improved, with benefits for all road users.

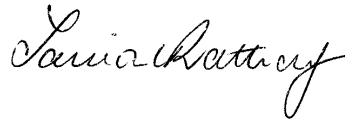
6.2 The proposed works will ensure the road is designed to modern standards and in suitable condition for the high volume of heavy vehicle traffic using this freight corridor.

6.3 This will be achieved by measures including widening the road; addressing deteriorated road surfaces; improving road markings and signage; and constructing turning lanes at key junctions.

6.4 The selection of these elements is responsive to community feedback; studies conducted into the use and safety issues of the road; and the specific needs of heavy vehicle traffic.

6.5 Prioritised improvements have been collected into practical packages of work to enable efficient use of available funding.

6.6 Accordingly, the Committee recommends the Bridport Road – Freight and Safety Improvements, at an estimated cost of $20 million, in accordance with the documentation submitted.



Parliament House
Hobart
18 February 2025

Hon Tania Rattray MLC
Chair