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PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

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PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

# West Tamar Highway Safety Improvements

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*Brought up by Mrs Rylah and ordered by the House of Assembly to be printed.*

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## MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Legislative Council

*Mr Valentine (Chair)*  
*Mrs Rattray*

House of Assembly

*Ms Butler*  
*Mrs Petrusma*  
*Mrs Rylah*

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The Committee has the honour to report to the House of Assembly in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Works Committee Act 1914* on the -

### **West Tamar Highway Safety Improvements**

## 2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This reference recommended the Committee approve works to improve safety for drivers on the West Tamar Highway, between Riverside and North of Exeter.
- 2.2 The West Tamar Highway has a significant crash history, and both the West Tamar Council and the RACT have identified improvements as a high priority. The existing highway has deficiencies in stopping sight distance, approach sight distance and safe intersection sight distance, along with horizontal alignment deficiencies for a 100km/h speed environment in some locations. The road corridor is narrow, with limited to no sealed shoulders or gravel verges in many sections. Existing bi-directional overtaking opportunities are in areas of poor horizontal alignment and sight distance.
- 2.3 The Tasmanian Government has identified a six-point plan to address areas of high priority on the West Tamar Highway, four of which comprise the West Tamar Highway Safety Improvements project, which was the package of projects referred to the Public Works Committee (the Committee) for inquiry.
- 2.4 The four projects comprising the West Tamar Highway Safety Improvements project are:
- **Project 1: Reconstruct and widen the West Tamar Highway between the Gravelly Beach intersection and Rosevears Drive.** The scope of these works includes:
    - Pavement widening to provide 3.0m lane widths, a 1.0m sealed eastern shoulder, a 1.5m sealed western shoulder to allow for cyclists moving slowly up steep grades;
    - Kerb and channel on the eastern side of the highway with a concrete spoon drain on the western side;
    - Provide a 1.5m concrete footpath on the eastern side to replace the existing 1.0m gravel footpath;
    - Nominal 2m sight distance benching on the eastern side and landscaping works;
    - Provision of channelised right turn lane (CHR) treatments at the Rosevears Drive, Killara Avenue and Gravelly Beach Road junctions; and
    - Provision of an auxiliary left turn lane (AUL) at Killara Avenue and extension of the existing AUL at Rosevears Drive.
  - **Project 2: Reconstruct and widen the West Tamar Highway between the intersection with Atkinsons Road and Waldhorn Drive.** The scope of these works includes:

- Pavement widening to provide 1.0m sealed shoulders on either side of the highway;
  - Extension of existing drainage culverts, where required; and
  - Consideration of options to replace the subgrade and construct a full-depth pavement where pavement failures have been identified at Muddy Creek Hill, with further geotechnical investigation required to determine an appropriate solution to the landslip issues in this area.
- **Project 3: Provide overtaking opportunities between Exeter and the Batman Highway.** The scope of these works includes:
    - Widening of the eastern side of the road to the south of Motor Road to provide a northbound overtaking opportunity, with the provision of an additional 3.5m lane, 1.0m sealed shoulder and 0.5m gravel verge;
    - Widening of the eastern side of the road to the south of the Batman Highway to provide a southbound overtaking opportunity, with the provision of an additional 3.5m lane, 1.0m sealed shoulder and 0.5m gravel verge;
    - Full depth pavement construction and spray sealing;
    - Property acquisition and associated accommodation works where required;
    - Reinstatement of roadside furniture; and
    - Extension of existing drainage culverts where required.
  - **Project 5: safety improvements at the Motor Road/West Tamar Highway Junction.** The scope of these works includes improvements to site distance and visibility at the intersection through:
    - Excavation works for sight benching of roadside batters;
    - Relocation of power poles; and
    - Vegetation clearance, including acquisition of land to facilitate ongoing vegetation maintenance.
- 2.5 The other two projects, which are not included in the West Tamar Highway Safety Improvements project and not subject to consideration by the Committee, are:
- Project 4: resealing and widening the West Tamar Highway north of the Batman Highway intersection to Lightwood Hills road, which has already been completed; and
  - Project 6: resealing and widening the West Tamar Highway between Brisbane Street and Legana Park Drive roundabout to provide cycling improvements, which will be undertaken separately.

### 3 PROJECT COSTS

3.1 Pursuant to the Message from Her Excellency the Governor-in-Council, the estimated cost of the work is \$10.5 million.

The following tables detail the current p50 and p90 cost estimates for the project:

Project	P50	P90
Project 1	\$6,550,000	\$7,150,000
Project 2	\$1,650,000	\$1,850,000
Project 3	\$4,400,000	\$4,900,000
Project 5	\$250,000	\$300,000
Total	\$12,850,000.00	

The current funding allocation is \$12 million however, the Government has agreed that if required additional funding can be accessed from the *Launceston and Tamar Valley Traffic Vision* as necessary to allow for completion of the four projects listed above.

## 4 EVIDENCE

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

- Robyn Hawkins, Project Manager, Project Services, Department of State Growth;
- Jonathon Elliot, Project Manager, Jacobs Engineering;
- Raoul Harper, Infrastructure Manager, West Tamar Council;
- Joy Allen, Deputy Mayor, West Tamar Council; and
- Elizabeth Springer.

### Overview

4.2 Ms Hawkins provided a brief overview of the proposed works:

*Ms HAWKINS - ... The Department's submission is the West Tamar Highway traffic solution package of projects. The objectives of these projects are basically to deliver transport efficiency and also road safety improvements along the West Tamar Highway between Riverside and north of Exeter.*

*As part of our submission we are looking at four projects: reconstruction and widening of the West Tamar Highway between the Gravelly Beach intersection and Rosevears Drive; reconstruction and widening of the West Tamar Highway between Atkinsons and Waldhorn Drive; to provide overtaking opportunities between Exeter and Batman Highway; and looking at a left turn acceleration at the Motor Road-West Tamar Highway junction.*

*These projects have been identified through various stakeholder representations such as from the West Tamar Council, the Royal Automobile Club of Tasmania and members of the community. It is looking at the need to address both safety and efficiency along the West Tamar Highway.*

### **Project 1: Reconstruct and widen the West Tamar Highway between the Gravelly Beach intersection and Rosevears Drive**

4.3 The Committee questioned the Department of State Growth witnesses on how the road widening required for Project 1 would be managed, given how close residences were to the road:

*Mr SHELTON - We did look at that section from Gravelly Beach Road to Rosevears Drive in the tour and the difficulties of finding the right width for safety there, particularly for the impediment on those households or blocks that are on the western side of the highway. Is that all manageable from an engineering point of view?*

*Mr ELLIOT - Yes, it will certainly take a lot of design effort to make sure we can widen the highway and improve the sightlines while also trying to balance the impacts on the properties and ensuring that the driveways meet the standards that we are aiming for. I guess you create a new footpath on the eastern side there. Yes, I believe they are manageable.*

*Mr SHELTON - ... It was mentioned there that at the moment the road width is only about 14 metres but to gain the safety requirements the Department is looking for, you need to go to 21 metres. Is that it?*

**Ms HAWKINS** - Yes. At the moment it is 14.5 metres in terms of the road reserve. To fit the shoulder widening and the footpath, we are looking at around 21.5 metres as the preferred option, which is supported by the West Tamar Council.

- 4.4 The Committee sought further information about the road cross-section proposed for Project 1, in particular the sealed shoulder specifications. :Mr Elliot noted the difference between the width of the sealed shoulders on the eastern and western sides of the highway reflected the speed at which cyclists would be expected to be travelling:

**CHAIR** - ..... Project 1, on page 9, talks about pavement widening to provide 3 metre lane widths, a 1 metre sealed eastern shoulder and a 1.5 metre sealed western shoulder to allow for cyclists moving slowly up steep grades. On some other projects it's been 2 metre shoulders, so can you explain to us why it is one-metre and 1.5-metres?

**Mr ELLIOT** - In terms of the standard of the highway at that location for the speeds, you would have a 1 metre shoulder, 3-metre lanes and 1 metre shoulders. Ideally we want to provide more room on the western side for the cyclists - an additional half metre - to allow them more room as they travel slowly uphill.

As they come downhill, our feedback from the West Tamar Council Road Safety Committee is that it is not as much of a concern because it is more according to the speed limit because it is downhill. It is trying to provide that additional width for cyclists on the western side while trying not to encroach as much as we can into the properties that are very close to the highway. I guess that is the philosophy behind what we are doing there.

**CHAIR** - I am mindful of the road rule that says you have to give 1.5 metres distance to a cyclist. If there is only 1 metre, it is bringing traffic reasonably close to the cyclist. Your explanation is good.

- 4.5 Noting the potential impact on residences close to the road, the Committee sought to understand how and what consultation had been conducted. Ms Hawkins indicated that the consultation process had a direct impact on the development of the proposed works:

**Ms HAWKINS** - The department has been working with both the council and directly affected stakeholders looking at the options and safety improvements, particularly on this Rosevears to Gravelly Beach section of the highway. The options analysis development of the project was done by Jacobs on behalf of the department. Two options were put forward.

Option two was trying to look at a reduced footprint of the overall impact of the road and the actual requirement to take additional land. It meant there needed to be some reductions in terms of the shoulder width and that kind of thing. The feedback from discussions with council indicated it was not acceptable to council. It also meant things like some of the junction upgrades were not able to be included because of again the reduced overall width.

Discussions with council and the broader community consultation has happened. We have been out both doorknocking with directly affected residents and also a public consultation period that had Social Pinpoint letterbox drop to 183 people along the highway and given them an opportunity to comment. The option one proposal is generally well supported, acknowledging there will have to be some management through the detailed design process of the impact on residents through that section.

**Project 2: Reconstruct and widen the West Tamar Highway between the intersection with Atkinsons Road and Waldhorn Drive**

4.6 The Committee noted that the Department referred to the overtaking lane south of McEwans Road as being of insufficient length. The Committee sought clarification this was being addressed in the Project 2 works. The witnesses noted that this wasn't being addressed, and that based on consultation, the provision and extension of sealed shoulders was the priority for this section of the Highway:

**CHAIR** - ... With respect to Project 2, you talk about -

*The road pavement is visibly deformed and uncomfortable to drive on over Muddy Creek Hill between Atkinsons Road and McEwans Road and the northbound overtaking lane to the south of McEwans Road is of insufficient length and is immediately followed by auxiliary left-turn lane.*

What are you doing to rectify that?

**Mr ELLIOT** - I don't believe we are changing the length of the overtaking lane in the projects proposed. It is more about providing a 1 metre shoulder length where possible and giving a more consistent road environment. I don't think that has changed at all.

**Ms HAWKINS** - No. From discussions with the council's Road Safety Committee, in trying to discuss this commitment by government and looking at what actually their areas of concern were in that location, that was certainly the lack of consistent shoulders through there, and also the condition of the pavement.

**CHAIR** - In some cases non-existent shoulders, as you say. So, you are providing shoulders, which is the important component.

**Ms HAWKINS** - Yes, that is right.

4.7 The Committee noted that the site of Project 2 was a recognised land slip area. The Committee sought further information on how the known landslip issues would be managed in designing the Project 2 works:

**CHAIR** - It talks about longitudinal cracking and rutting being present and landslip issues. We touched on this when we were doing the site visit. Is that intrinsic landslip issues or is it just bad road-building from previous years?

**Ms HAWKINS** - No, my understanding is it is actually the ground conditions themselves rather than the road.

**Ms BUTLER** - For the record, will the new drainage culverts on the project provide best-practice techniques for that landslip with the drainage?

**Mr ELLIOT** - Project 2 is more focused around the shoulder widths. Any drainage provided would try to meet the standards required there and take into consideration any of those that are on a more active hillside. It is something that will have to be looked at in more detail once the design is progressed further.

**CHAIR** - From a technical perspective, how do you propose that the landslip issue might be addressed? Is it through vertical pylons or something like that?

**Mr ELLIOT** - What we have said in our previous options assessment is that there needs to probably a bit more of a detailed look at that issue to understand it better. From my understanding it has not been looked at in the detail needed. There is a bit more work to be done there in terms of understanding that.

**Ms HAWKINS** - If a retention strategy is required or maybe even looking at things like having the drainage done on the uphill side of the road and managing that.



**Project 3: Provide overtaking opportunities between Exeter and the Batman Highway**

4.8 The Committee noted the northbound and southbound overtaking lanes proposed in Project 3, and sought further information on the proposed length of these overtaking lanes:

**CHAIR** - To a point that has been brought up in another submission, with regard to the length of road needed for overtaking lanes, it's been brought to our attention that B-doubles use that road; therefore, it is important that there is a sufficient length of road to overtake them safely. Do you have any comment on that and what is being provided?

**Mr ELLIOT** - The designs would look to Austroads Standards to achieve the minimum road requirements and ideally the preferred or desirable requirements for overtaking lanes. I haven't got the numbers off the top of my head of the difference between the two, but it would all depend on trying to provide the overtaking opportunity for the longest length we can within those standards but also then balancing that with the impacts that are going to be to landowners on either side.

**CHAIR** - Quite clearly, the project that is to the north has a long sight distance and might not present as much of a problem as maybe the parts of the projects to the south where we have more corners and things like that.

**Mr ELLIOT** - Potentially, yes.

**CHAIR** - You are saying it is to Australian standards?

**Mr ELLIOT** - The designs would be, yes, that is right. It would be a requirement of the design and construction tender that goes out to meet those standards and design or replace something accordingly.

4.9 The Committee also sought further clarification on the location and length of the proposed overtaking lanes:

**CHAIR** - ... ..Could you inform us again, as best you can, exactly where those passing lanes are likely to be?

**Ms HAWKINS** - At the moment we are proposing a southbound overtaking lane or passing lane between Batman Bridge and Hjorts Road. Then the northbound opportunity is -

**Mr ELLIOT** - North of Supply River but south of Motor Road.

**CHAIR** - So there is one going north and one going south. The rough lengths of those?

**Mr ELLIOT** - The idea would be again to meet at least the minimum Australian standards for lengths so the minimum length we would be looking to achieve would be 550 metres in overtaking lane length, plus-

**CHAIR** - And the bleed in to those?

**Mr ELLIOT** - You are looking at 100 metres to merge in. It is a merge so the extra will keep going out slightly and 100 metres going in, so they are diverging merge tapers. The overall distance we are looking at, the minimum total length is 815 metres.

**Mrs RYLAH** - Isn't that for one and isn't the other one longer? About a kilometre from what I saw on that map?

**Mr ELLIOT** - Yes. There is potentially one with more. The north-bound overtaking lane south of Motor Road has more area to use, or it might be easier to construct and meet the desirable length. Again, those details will be further looked at in the next phase of the project.

4.10 The Committee recognised that some property acquisition would be necessary to construct a road cross section of sufficient width to provide the proposed

overtaking lanes. The Committee sought further detail of the impacts on, and consultation that had been undertaken with, affected landowners. Ms Hawkins noted that the proposed works were being designed to minimise impacts on landowners and that affected landowners were supportive of the proposed Project 3 works:

**Ms BUTLER** - I am not exactly sure which project it is. It could be Project 3 where there will be some acquisition of some property. In the documents we have been provided, the section on property acquisition we went through today showed some of those houses were quite close to the road already. There may be extension further into their properties, which would have them very close to traffic.

**Ms HAWKINS** - Are you talking about where the overtaking lane section is?

**Ms BUTLER** - Yes, could there be property owners who may be resistant to that acquisition? If that was the case would the Department potentially move to a compulsory from of acquisition?

**Ms HAWKINS** - The Department and Jacobs have contacted the directly affected residents in both of the sections of the proposed overtaking lane. At this stage they were all very supportive of the project. In terms of the positioning of the overtaking lanes, where possible we have tried to locate them where there would be least possible impact on properties. The general feedback we have received is that any widening should happen on the eastern side of the highway. That is to try to not get too close to houses where possible.

Regarding the acquisition process, my understanding is that the Department goes through a compulsory property acquisition process but we are mindful of the impact of residents and try to work with residents where we can.

#### **Project 5: safety improvements at the Motor Road/West Tamar Highway Junction**

4.11 The Committee noted that the Department's submission stated that Project 5 was to construct a left-turn acceleration lane at the Motor Road/West Tamar Highway junction for vehicles turning south out of Motor Road. The Committee however, further noted that the current plans did not appear to include the left-turn acceleration lane. The Committee sought confirmation on the scope of the planned Project 5 works, and sought further information on the reasons for any changes:

**CHAIR** - Project 5 talks about a number of private residential accesses will be impacted by the construction of the acceleration lane. Can you tell us for the record whether that is going ahead, or not? I believe it's not, but if you can confirm and why not maybe?

**Mr ELLIOT** - With Project 5, to construct an acceleration lane somewhere close to the standards, it would be 100 metres of additional road to allow turning vehicles to move from a slow-moving position up to the somewhere close to the 100 kph speed zone. On the eastern side of the road there is a number of property accesses directly affected by this. To construct a new lane there it would be about 3.5 metres additional road. How that would then work with property accesses on an acceleration lane would be quite challenging and difficult.

In that project, we are proposing to improve the sight lines and improve the sight distance at the intersection for vehicles on motor road by looking north: primarily through the removal of the vegetation on the north eastern corner. We are also looking at sight benching works on the hill to the north to really open up the intersection to provide good visual cues as to what is the traffic situation approaching the intersection and make the right choice as to drive particularly for slow moving vehicles.

**Ms HAWKINS** - *The option development was greatly informed again by discussions with the road safety committee and also looking at traffic vehicle movements at that intersection in terms of actual demand there. The treatment is commensurate with what is actually happening on site and the need for work through there.*

**Issues raised in Submissions to the Committee**

- 4.12 The Committee placed an advertisement in the Public Notices section of the Examiner on Saturday, 18 May 2019, calling for submissions. The Committee received two submissions; one from the West Tamar Council and the other from Elizabeth Springer.
- 4.13 In the submission on behalf of the West Tamar Council, Mayor Cr. Christina Holmdahl, noted the Council's strong support for upgrading the West Tamar Highway, including the works presented to the Committee. However, the submission also highlighted other projects on the West Tamar Highway that the Council considered should be a higher priority than 3 of the proposed works that were the subject of the Committee's inquiry.
- 4.14 Specifically, Cr. Holmdahl noted that within the allocated funding, those projects that should be progressed as the highest priority were:
- Project 1, the works from Rosevears Drive to Gravelly Beach as put forward by the Department of State Growth to the Committee, and
  - Two roundabouts in Exeter; one at the Glen Ahr Road/Main Road junction and another at the Frankford Road/Main Road, which were projects not put forward by the Department of State Growth, but developed separately by the Council and its engineering staff.
- 4.15 The submission therefore noted that these 2 projects should be considered a higher priority to be progressed from the funding commitment made by the State Government, than Projects 2, 3 and 5, as presented by the Department.
- 4.16 Mr Raoul Harper, representing the West Tamar Council, expanded on the submission and the Council's priorities at the public hearing. Mr Harper stated that the Council strongly supported Project 1 and the roundabouts in Exeter, as put forward by the Council, and these projects should be prioritised for completion from the current funding allocation. Mr Harper also noted that the Council did not support the use of the committed funding to projects on the West Tamar Highway that sit outside of the West Tamar municipality, specifically Project 6:

**Mr HARPER** - *.....Council certainly is of the opinion that the projects they have been working on with State Growth now for many years are all worthy projects to be funded, and we have worked very collegiately with State Growth over that period.*

*What has become apparent over the last two years in particular with the projects put forward by council in our submission to the committee is that very much the traffic movements through the Exeter region are becoming quite significant now, especially heavy vehicle movements through the Exeter area. We believe that the allocation that has been made was \$12 million, not \$10.4 million, for the West Tamar area. I would be happy to be corrected on that. It should be put forward to projects that will have a significant impact on the safety of the users of the West Tamar Highway.*

**CHAIR** - *To clarify the question you just had, what were you suggesting there?*

**Mr HARPER** - My understanding, and from listening to the Department of State Growth staff just then, was that \$1.6 million would be spent on improvements to the highway between Launceston and the West Tamar. My understanding is that is predominantly for upgrades to the shoulder of the highway to support cyclists. Let me make it clear that the West Tamar Highway Safety Committee is not supportive of that allocation outside of the West Tamar municipality at this time.

**CHAIR** - They are not supportive of the \$1.6 million?

**Mr HARPER** - Not being spent on that project.

**CHAIR** - Sorry, we just have to be a little careful because there are components that are not being dealt with under this. Projects 4 and 6 are not being progressed.

**Mr HARPER** - They are the projects that have been put forward by Jacobs and State Growth to you. We have not been privy necessarily to the details of those projects at the level you have.

**CHAIR** - I will let the Department answer that.

**Mr HARPER** - Just continuing on from that, council is very supportive of the work that has been done at the Gravelly Beach Road and northern end of Rosevears Drive. That is very much seen as our number one priority.

**CHAIR** - That is project - ?

**Mr HARPER** - ..... I think we can be confident that it is project 1, having heard the discussion. The options put forward within that, as discussed by the Department of State Growth staff and the consultant of the 8.5-metre seal width and the 1.5-metre shoulder on the western side, the 1-metre shoulder on the eastern side and the 1.5-metre concrete footpath are certainly council's preferred option. In fact, this is a classic project that has been in the too-hard basket for far too long. We believe this is the one opportunity where it should be done once and it should be done well.

..... That is very good news from our perspective. I guess the key difference that council is putting forward is that we have done - and you would have seen this in the submission that was sent through - preliminary design work and preliminary costings probably well beyond the basic concept stage. These have been designed fairly well and, we believe, fairly well costed to show the roundabout improvements that we would like to see in Exeter. These have the support of not only the West Tamar Highway Safety Committee, but have been discussed at a workshop with council and council has been very supportive of the direction taken.

**CHAIR** - But I don't think they are included in these projects.

**Mr HARPER** - They are not, no.

**CHAIR** - As long as you are clear on that.

**Mr HARPER** - Yes. In closing, in my opening submission, council is of a different position to the Department of State Growth in how these funds should be allocated. They are very supportive of the allocation put forward. Our position is that the money should be spent in the West Tamar area given the lobbying that went on to secure the funds for projects specifically on the West Tamar Highway by the West Tamar Council.

**Mrs RYLAH** - In summary, my understanding from reading your submissions and looking at the images, the difference between that and what we have in front of us is their lack of roundabouts.

**Mr HARPER** - Yes, that is right.

**Mrs RYLAH** - In simple terms, the proposal in front of us doesn't include roundabouts. You would like what we've got in front of us plus roundabouts?

**Mr HARPER** - No. We would like all of it, naturally, but we think the prioritisation given the increase in traffic that is going through the Exeter area since these projects started being discussed many years ago puts the other projects that are on the state Government's agenda less of a priority.

- 4.17 Mr Harper also indicated that it was the Council's position that the Department of State Growth should reconsider the projects being put forward. In response to this Mr Harper was informed that the Committee's role does not extend to amending projects presented to it; the Committee can only approve or not approve a project based on the plans and specifications that are submitted to it by the proponent (in this case the Department of State Growth). The Chair however, did indicate that the Council's position was now on the public record:

**Mr HARPER** - We believe that some revision should be put forward by State Growth in their prioritisation of projects moving forward.

**CHAIR** - We can only deal with what we have before us. If there is a difference of opinion in terms of what ought to be funded between yourselves and the Government, that is for the Government to address. We can only address what is before us here today. I think you can appreciate that.

**Mr HARPER** - Chair, I can only put forward what I've been directed by the Mayor and the General Manager to put on the table.

**CHAIR** - I appreciate that.

**Ms BUTLER** - Has there been an effort between the council and State Growth in relation to the difference of opinion about the funding and what projects should be funded? Have there been attempts to communicate and negotiate that already?

**Mr HARPER** - Yes, there has. Council wrote to Shane Gregory at State Growth some months ago and expressed our position on this. Mr Gregory's advice was to put that forward at this committee hearing, as I understand it.

**CHAIR** - I guess the difficulty is, yes, it can be put forward and it goes on the record and the Government will have the opportunity to hear that. It is not in the documents we have before us today. There is the difficulty in understanding what may or may not be funded. We cannot direct the Government to spend its money in certain ways. We can only deal with what's here.

- 4.18 The Committee questioned Ms Hawkins about how the projects that comprised the West Tamar Highway Safety Improvements package had been prioritised. Ms Hawkins noted that the Department of State Growth was implementing all commitments made by the State Government in its six-point plan, with four of these projects packaged as the West Tamar Highway Safety Improvements for efficiency reasons. Ms Hawkins further noted that community consultation had indicated there was broad community support for the projects:

**Ms BUTLER** - ... .. My other question is about the decisions on the projects that were chosen by State Growth. I think there were six and then four? It was narrowed down to four. There seems to be a lot of information in the document about fatalities and crashes and injuries to drivers. Was that a driver for the decisions that were made and which projects to undertake as well as costings?

**Ms HAWKINS** - No. It's certainly a driver in terms of individual projects, but in relation to the package, the Department is looking to deliver the whole six projects. The reason we've tried to combine the four projects is that they're within the West Tamar Council area. One of the projects or the commitments from the Government has already been completed, the reseal

and widening of the West Tamar Highway north of Batman Highway to Lightwood Hills Road. The other project is resealing and widening the highway between Brisbane Street and the Legana Park Drive roundabout for cycling improvements. Because there is a crossover between Launceston and West Tamar Council, that project will be delivered separately.

There has been no decision on behalf of the Department on which projects to deliver. We are looking to deliver the Government's commitments, but for efficiency reasons these four are being packaged.

**CHAIR** - .....What you're not dealing with in this that the council may have wanted to progress as opposed to what you are dealing with .....

**Ms HAWKINS** - The Department is progressing the Government's commitment to the projects they have identified and allocated funding to. We have taken these projects as we've progressed in terms of our option analysis to council. My understanding is that the council is very supportive of project 1, option 1. At our most recent discussion at a whole-of-council meeting, there was some suggestion about council's priorities being other projects in Exeter, but the Department has reaffirmed with council that we are taking forward the Government's commitments to projects.

In developing these projects, we met with the West Tamar Safety Committee to develop and get their feedback on what they saw the needs were. They haven't been developed in isolation and they certainly haven't been developed without the Department talking to both the council and taking it to the broader community.

**CHAIR** - There was one other question regarding the council. It was about concentrating the money on other smaller components of the project rather than putting in the roundabouts, which may have been \$2.24 million in total. Can you talk about why the options were chosen? Do you know?

**Ms HAWKINS** - Yes, at this point, the Department is looking to progress the commitments made by the Government. To my knowledge, we haven't been given direction that that should change at this stage.

**CHAIR** - You can't make any policy decisions? We realise that.

**Ms HAWKINS** - No. I would also like to add that in the submission I have received from West Tamar Council, it is great to see both submissions to the committee, there was support for Atkinsons Road to Waldhorn Drive project and the overtaking lanes on Batman Highway junction to Exeter.

As was mentioned, these are the projects that provide safety improvements. Another point worth noting is, other than the Gravelly Beach to Rosevears Drive project, which is a 60 kph environment, the other projects are in 100 kph speed areas. In terms of the safety risks, particularly given that one of the projects is looking at allowing safe overtaking opportunities, it can't be disregarded.

**CHAIR** - Quite clearly, the Government has focused on these as what it wants to deliver.

**Ms HAWKINS** - Yes.

**Mrs RYLAH** - Would you agree with the comment that I said before, and that council agreed with, that council is supportive of all of these projects - it just wants the roundabouts as well? Is that your understanding?

**Ms HAWKINS** - I cannot speak for council. I can only talk on behalf of the Department. I believe they are supportive of the projects that we have put forward.

**Mrs RYLAH** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - It is what is being put forward to develop, in terms of priority. It is a priority thing as far as I can see. From what we heard from the council and what the Government has proposed to put forward, there is a divergence in priority. It is not that they don't agree with the technical aspects of the projects.

**Ms HAWKINS** - No, and I would also like to add, in terms of the community consultation that we have done with the broader community, there was support for the projects that we have put forward.

4.19 Elizabeth Springer, a West Tamar municipality resident, also made a submission to the Committee. Ms Springer's submission highlighted that the most important matter that needed to be addressed in any works on the West Tamar Highway, in her opinion, was the lack of overtaking opportunities. Ms Springer noted the heavy vehicle and tourist traffic on the highway and suggested that any overtaking lanes that are provided should be sufficient to allow approximately 6 vehicles to pass slower vehicles.

4.20 Ms Springer expanded on her views at the hearing:

**Ms SPRINGER** - I travel the highway every day and passing lanes are what is needed for the safety of everybody. I'm not sure where the passing lanes are going to be. I couldn't understand that. I don't know how long they are going to be, if they're going to be long enough for people to pass safely. I am concerned that that is what we need.

... .. Passing lanes is what we need - bottom line.

... .. There are not only the log trucks, there are the milk trucks. Also - and this is in my submission - there are the people coming off the ship, all the caravans and all that.

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

4.21 In assessing any proposed public work, the Committee seeks assurance that each project is a good use of public funds and meets identified needs. The Chair sought and received an assurance from the witnesses that the proposed works were addressing an identified need in a cost effective manner and were a good use of public funds:

**CHAIR** - ... .. So, to the questions we always wrap up with. Do the proposed works meet an identified need or needs or solve a recognised problem?

**Ms HAWKINS** - I believe so.

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

**Ms HAWKINS** - I believe so, but as we have mentioned with what we are presenting to the committee today it will be progressed through a design and construct tender. There is further work to be done.

**CHAIR** - Are the proposed works fit for purpose? Do the proposed works provide value for money?

**Ms HAWKINS** - I believe so.

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

**Ms HAWKINS** - Yes.

## **5 DOCUMENTS TAKEN INTO EVIDENCE**

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

- West Tamar Highway Traffic Solution - Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, State Roads, Department of State Growth, May 2019;
- West Tamar Council Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Public Works RE: West Tamar Highway Priority Projects, Funding and Delivery, dated 5 June 2019; and
- West Tamar Highway upgrade, submission from Elizabeth Springer, 14 June 2019.



## **6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

- 6.1 The Committee is satisfied that the need for the proposed works has been established. Once completed, the proposed works will provide a safer road environment for all road users on the West Tamar Highway, cater for future development in the region and improve travel efficiency.
- 6.2 Accordingly, the Committee recommends the West Tamar Highway Safety Improvements, at an estimated cost of \$12.85 million, in accordance with the documentation submitted.

**Parliament House  
Hobart  
6 August 2019**

**Hon. Rob Valentine MLC  
Chair**