

PUBLIC

THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS MET IN MANGALORE HALL, BLACKBRUSH ROAD, MANGALORE, ON FRIDAY, 9 JUNE 2017.

MIDLAND HIGHWAY SAFETY UPGRADE WORKS PACKAGE - MANGALORE TO BAGDAD STAGE 2.

Mr TED ROSS, PROJECT DIRECTOR, **Ms VANESSA KING**, PROJECT MANAGER, DEPARTMENT OF STATE GROWTH, AND **Mr ROSS MANNERING**, ASSOCIATE ENGINEER - ROAD AND TRAFFIC, PITT AND SHERRY, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mrs Rylah) - Thank you, everyone, for coming. The committee is pleased to hear your evidence today. Before you begin giving your evidence, I would like to inform you of the some of the important aspects of the committee proceedings. The committee hearing is a proceeding in parliament. This means it gives you protection of parliamentary privilege. This is an important legal protection that allows individuals giving evidence to a parliamentary committee to speak with complete freedom without the fear of being sued or questioned in any court or place out of parliament. It applies to ensure that parliament receives the very best information when conducting its inquiries. It is important to be aware that this protection is not accorded to you if statements that may be defamatory are repeated or referred to by you outside the confines of the parliamentary proceedings. This is a public hearing. Members of the public and journalists may be present and this means your evidence may be reported. Do you understand?

WITNESSES - Yes.

CHAIR - Would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr MANNERING - Thank you for having us along. The Mangalore to Bagdad stage 2 project is stage 2 of a project that extends from the Pontville roundabout right through to North Swan Street at the northern side of Bagdad. Stage 1 was completed earlier this year. Those works start at Eddington Road, just north of Bagdad Primary School, and extended through to Swan Street North. The works we are here to talk about today are the leftover bit, which is about 6.6 kilometres starting at the Pontville roundabout up to Eddington Road. The project is going to involve the same upgrade treatment that has been implemented through Bagdad - a single 3.5 metre lane in each direction, north- and southbound, with those two lanes being separated by a central turn median that will be 3 metres wide.

The idea there is to achieve what we are looking for in terms of minimising head-on crashes by separating the traffic, but also to provide a space where property owners and people accessing side roads can prop out of the way of the through traffic when turning right. This will be a big safety improvement for this length of the road where drivers currently have to prop in the through lane when they are performing those manoeuvres. That is quite a risky manoeuvre. The other thing that is happening with the project is we are widening the sealed shoulders from 1 metre to 2 metres. That has some benefits in giving some extra room for drivers that lose control to be able to regain control of their vehicle and stay on the road. We

PUBLIC

are also removing hazards and protecting hazards through the installation of roadside safety barriers where we need to do that as well.

The project generally involves widening the right-hand side of the road, on the eastern side. The reason for that is we have more land available on that side. We still need to acquire land from 20 owners, but there is a lot more available width on the right-hand side than there is on the left.

By widening on that side and taking the opportunity to use that space, we definitely minimise our impacts on some of the existing features of this length of the highway, on the western side, such as the heritage mile. There are a number of very significant heritage properties along the section between the Pontville roundabout up to Ballyhooly Road.

Other things happening as part of the project up at Quarrytown Road: because of the number of junctions on the highway, we're trying to reduce the number where we can. We are making some improvements to the junction connectivity near the service station, so we are going to close Quarrytown Road South and put a cul de sac in at that end. Most of the junctions along the highway will be getting an upgrade in terms of improving widths so that heavy vehicle access will be improved as well. That is probably about the most of it, I think.

CHAIR - I would like to open it up for questioning. Who would like to start?

Mr VALENTINE - I will lead off. Are there any issues with property owners and accesses to the road, or are they all satisfied?

Mr MANNERING - Generally across the length of the job, most owners are pretty happy about the treatment we are proposing along here because of the level of improved safety it provides for them. So giving them space to prop clear of the through traffic to turn in, they see as an advantage.

On some other sections of the highway, a lot of the owners when they go to turn right, pull off to the left and wait for the through traffic to go by and then turn right. Their behaviour has been trying to do what we are implementing, which is give them a space clear of the through traffic to be able to wait to turn. There have been minor bits and pieces with some owners about connectivity, but they are generally happy with the overall treatment.

Mr VALENTINE - With the median islands or structures in place, is there any reason why the speed limit through this area cannot be 90 kilometres an hour?

Mr MANNERING - The treatment we are proposing through here is one that you see more typically applied in an urban environment, such as Cambridge Road on the eastern shore, Sandy Bay Road or Main Road at Moonah. The section through Bagdad would be the first time in Tasmania that that treatment has been applied in an 80 kilometres an hour zone.

The speed limit needs to be 80 kilometres an hour and not any higher because there is potential for vehicles to meet in that median turn lane. Because we have property accesses on either side of the highway, in some places along the length of the project you could have two vehicles turning in opposite directions meeting in that turn lane. If the speed limit is too high, the ability of drivers to respond to an approaching vehicle is diminished, and so 80 kilometres an hour is the highest speed we are willing to accept.

PUBLIC

Mr VALENTINE - Thank you.

Mr FARRELL - Is there any risk with the central lane that it could be used for cars overtaking other cars?

Mr MANNERING - That is something we considered when developing the design. To reduce the potential for that, we have strategically positioned traffic islands in the median along its length. So at reasonably regular intervals - probably averages about every 150 to 200 metres - we've got a traffic island going in. That is to make sure people cannot use that median as an overtaking opportunity.

We've been very careful about where we've put them. Because we need the median to be used for people to decelerate into their accesses, we have tried to get those islands in just the right spot to maximise the lengths available. Because of the number of access along there, the job has been quite tricky - getting them in the right spot.

CHAIR - Will those medians be like the ones in part 1?

Mr MANNERING - Yes, that is right.

CHAIR - Paved and with some metal bits?

Mr MANNERING - Yes, there is signage on either end. There is a chevron warning sign on the approach side and on the departure sign there is another sign, which is the median turning sign. The treatment with those islands and that signage is consistent with what they do in New South Wales; the same sort of overtaking.

Mr VALENTINE - Does that say 'No Overtaking'?

Mr MANNERING - No, I forget the exact words, but the sign says 'Median Turn Lane'. It has two arrows on it.

Mr VALENTINE - I know those. I just wonder if someone in a less than reasonable state was driving through there, if they were under the influence - not that they should be driving, obviously if they're under the influence - but if they are, all of a sudden, bang, you have a problem.

Mr MANNERING - Because this is a new treatment, the department is keeping an eye on how it is performing. That is happening as part of the project because it is different to what has been done previously.

CHAIR - What has been the feedback on part 1?

Mr ROSS - We have largely received very positive feedback from the community in regard to the work. The most positive we've had is the fact that the project was completed. During construction there was quite a bit of disruption, but since it's been completed, we've had positive feedback about the work.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - In terms of the median lane with the islands. Have we had any feedback in regard to that? This specific issue that has been raised?

Mr ROSS - No specific feedback.

Mr LLEWELLYN - I noticed you've mentioned the issue of Aboriginal artefacts in the report. They have left it up in the air a little bit; there is one site.

Mr MANNERING - Yes, there is. It is actually not far from where we are sitting at the moment. It is on the other side of the road in the middle of someone's backyard. It is a little bit of a strange one. It is well clear of the footprint of the work. It was picked up through the investigation process.

Mr VALENTINE - What is the nature of that Aboriginal heritage?

Mr MANNERING - The artefact? I am not sure of the exact details. I do not have a plan here but it shows where it is. It is well clear of the footprint of the works.

Mr SHELTON - Talking about Aboriginal artefacts and talking to some of the locals down here. Aboriginals have been in this part of the world, as we have found out when the study was done, when the bridge went over, for 40 000 years. A number of sediment layers acknowledge that fact. I talked to one gentleman, who I will not name, and he indicated to me that if you walk down along the Jordan River here artefacts were plentiful. He has passed away now, but he said he had a bucketful of them in his shed. You can acknowledge that for thousands of years along the Jordan River, a tribe would set up camp and no doubt there would be artefacts around. I am aware that this is not the only proposal put to the public along here and we are here today with no public gallery -

CHAIR - No-one in the public gallery.

Mr SHELTON - No-one in the public gallery. Coming out of local government, if you have issues, you have a public gallery. From the committee's point of view, it is great to see the work that has gone into the representations, and what people have said and where the answers lie in the back of this report. My experience through this committee is that not all the issues are resolved when we have this meeting. Are there any significant issues out there? Do you see that you can overcome all the issues? Are the few issues left achievable?

Mr MANNERING - All the issues we have still to deal with are achievable. They all would be related to accommodation-type work, such as fencing, how wide people's accesses become and how far we seal back and all of those sorts of things. I think they are things we will be able to resolve as we keep going. A few landowners are concerned about how much land we need to take with the widening, but we will just have to work through that as we go.

The upgrade treatment we are proceeding with is definitely well accepted by the community. There is no doubt that they appreciate the safety benefits they are getting.

Mr SHELTON - I understand you've been through community consultation and up at the community centre with the last plan; there were a lot of people there and it was very well received by the community.

PUBLIC

Mr MANNERING - Yes, that is true.

Mr LLEWELLYN - From a compensation point of view with acquisition of adjacent land and that sort of thing - they might not be happy?

Mr MANNERING - The Land Acquisition Act obviously provides a process for landowners to be compensated for the impacts. It is something we have to work through.

Mr LLEWELLYN - No significant issues though? A little bit further up the road I know there was one that lasted for about five or 10 years.

Ms KING - Nothing like that.

Mr MANNERING - I have only heard this anecdotally, but the feedback I've been hearing is the land acquisitions on the Midland Highway upgrade at the moment have actually been proceeding well. The ones up at Bagdad went through pretty well.

Mr SHELTON - The report at 2.2 talked about the design speed and the time it takes to get to 6.6 kilometres from one end to the other. Anybody can use a set of figures - find a set of figures - that suits their argument, and I acknowledge these figures are factual in what you did. I will calculate it in a minute. You've said the average speed is 90 kilometres. From a political point of view, if I go out there say 'It is only going to lose you 30 seconds', that is not actually the reality. If somebody is driving through here and can attain 100 kilometres right through the whole strip, it is more than 30 seconds. I do not know the calculations, but often when I come through here, you can't get through at 100 kilometres an hour. There is always traffic through here, but there are occasions when you can get through - you're coming through at night or when there is no traffic.

For a commuter, particularly someone from the Bagdad end, using this piece of road, the time loss is more than 30 seconds. Probably more like a minute. I acknowledge this was the average speed obtained when the testing was done. But if a person argued the case, I would not be arguing that you're only losing 30 seconds because you are actually losing more.

Ms KING - The average driver is losing 30 seconds. Some people will be driving faster; as you said, they will come through at other times, and they will more time. In order for the average speed to be 90 kilometres per hour, other people must be coming through at 80 already. Those people will not lose time. What everybody will gain will be safety.

Mr SHELTON - From a personal point of view, I do 65 000 kilometres a year and I am on the top end of the speed limit, and I have to be most of the time otherwise I cannot get around the place. I am only pointing out those 30 seconds is not actually what somebody could come back and argue a case with.

Mr MANNERING - Yes, there is no doubt that at 100 kilometres an hour, it should take three minutes and 36 seconds to drive from one end to the other. On average, it takes people about 30 seconds longer because of the number of influences along the length of the job in terms of access. There are people turning on and off, people taking larger machinery along the road, like heavy trucks which are slower to accelerate coming out at the Pontville roundabout - they would increase people's travel time - so is where that difference comes in.

PUBLIC

Mr FARRELL - Going back to stage 1, you mentioned that people are happy with the way that has been working. It was interesting that before that work started - I don't think we had any official representations at our Public Works Committee - I had a number of telephone calls from people concerned about how it was going to work, but I have not heard back from those people saying it is not working. Have you had any negative feedback about stage 1 and the turnout lanes?

Mr ROSS - Not that I've heard, no.

Mr FARRELL - It was probably more the fear of change and not fully understanding what was intended. That is good to hear because there was a low level of aggravation there before the project went ahead.

Ms KING - That may be why no members of the public have come today, because people who live around here have experienced the Bagdad project and have an understanding of how it works. That may be why there's nobody here today.

Mr VALENTINE - Just a question on plantings. The historic or heritage plants - can you verify that really probably only two or three trees out of the 23 remaining trees in the heritage avenue will be removed or trimmed to accommodate the works?

Mr MANNERING - Yes, that is right.

Mr VALENTINE - You have not had any issues there with any neighbours?

Mr MANNERING - No, not with the historic heritage plantings. We do have some other plantings, which we saw during the inspection. There is some poplar trees on the eastern side.

Mr VALENTINE - Is that 11 Eddington Road or 1546 Midland Highway, Sayers Court?

Mr MANNERING - They are different, those ones. These other ones, the poplars, are north of School Road, so before the Eddington Road property, south of the Eddington Road property. Then also between De Camera Road and the southern end of School Road. We have some poplar trees in those locations which we are impacting on. They are trees currently in the road reservation. We are working with the landowners through the department at the moment.

Mr LLEWELLYN - The macrocarpa pines down near the roundabout, back this way from the roundabout?

Mr MANNERING - We actually don't need to remove those ones. We have managed to get the design to fit through there without needing to remove them.

Mr LLEWELLYN - Are they considered to be heritage trees?

Mr MANNERING - No, they are not.

Mr LLEWELLYN - They are almost ready to be cut down, I would have thought.

PUBLIC

Mr MANNERING - Yes. They have local community significance. We may have to trim a few branches on them doing the work, but we have managed to avoid the need to remove them.

Mr ROSS - There is a benefit in having the trees providing a visual clue to motorists, especially as we're trying to get people to stay to a speed of 80 kilometres an hour. By having those trees there, it helps to give them another visual of the perception of speed, and therefore it provides our better ability for people obey at 80.

CHAIR - To turn to the issues of drainage. As in the last project, the number 1 project, it is clear we are almost in the bottom of a valley. I am concerned about the drainage; I didn't understand the difference. You are saying there are five road culverts where one in a 100 years would have overtopping. What is the difference between those that overtop, the definition of 'overtopping', and being insufficient? I gather there is a difference.

Mr MANNERING - No, they are really about the same. If it did not have enough capacity, it would mostly likely be overtopped. Sometimes a downhill channel might result in the water running down the side of the road before it overtopped. But yes, generally what we are saying is that if it is going to overtop or it has not enough capacity, there is not enough cross-sectional area in the culvert to get the water through it.

Along this section of the highway, there are some quite large catchments that cross the highway as the water heads from the western side across to the eastern side and down into the Bagdad Rivulet. That is what we have been doing - looking at those culverts to access their capacity and see which ones have enough and which have not. To our knowledge there is no history of flooding or this section of the Midland Highway being closed due to flooding issues.

One of the culverts has insufficient capacity, but is only just deficient, and it's probably a \$200 000 exercise to pull out and replace it with a bigger one. Given we do have not a history of the highway being closed, we do not see pulling that culvert out to replace it with one that has marginally more capacity than what's there now as a good investment of public funds.

Ms KING - There are some that are just on the borderline of being fractionally too small. If you do the numbers, theoretically we should upgrade it.

Mr LLEWELLYN - That is another aspect though, historically what do you use as the data for the 100-year-flood arrangements? I know from my own experience on my property up at St Helens, we have had one-in-100-year floods three times in the last four or five years.

Mr MANNERING - The process we follow for doing those assessments is using the Australian rainfall and runoff guidelines, and they get updated over times to reflect changing intensities and those sorts of things. It is a definite issue, there is no doubt. Last year, there might have been two 50-year storms within a month of each other. It is definitely a more common occurrence these days.

CHAIR - Do you believe that you have adequately protected the road from ingress and getting the water away from the road base so that we are not going to have water banked up for days or weeks?

PUBLIC

Mr MANNERING - We believe that the drainage regime in the project is appropriate for the functionality of the road.

Mr SHELTON - Talking about culverts, I have learnt something that should have been obvious before this. Talking about headwalls, someone talked about the heritage style and headwalls on culverts and the safety aspects of them. It mentions that when they are in the road reserve area they need to be driveable. I presume when you talk about driveable, it is the galvanised grated-type ones you see along culverts all the time. It has only just come to me that is the reason they are there - so you cannot have a head-on into the end wall of a culvert. If you have an accident and you are off the road, you skip over it.

Mr MANNERING - There are a couple of different types of driveable end walls. The more obvious ones are those ones that you are talking about - with the galvanised bars facing you as you are driving down the road. If you ran off, they are there to help you to traverse up over the top of them. There is another type which we can only use on culverts less than 600 millimetres in diameter, which are a tapered shape where you cross it transversely. We will have a few of those on the job as well. The theory is that if we can use those, we do; ideally we get the endwalls outside the clear zone and far enough away from the road. If the culverts are too big and we cannot put those driveable endwalls on them, we will look at putting a safety barrier in to protect the hazard.

CHAIR - Do you believe that this project is value for money? Do you believe it is fit for purpose? Have you done all the right consultation?

Messrs ROSS, KING, MANNERING -Yes.

CHAIR - We have the consultation where we need it?

Mr ROSS - On this project, listening to the community was a big part of why we changed the project from the wire rope strategy to the current median strategy. We have taken time to do that and therefore we have come up with a solution we think is fit for purpose and value for money for the communities.

CHAIR - Excellent. Thank you very much. As I advised at the commencement of your evidence, what you have said to us here today is protected by parliamentary privilege. Once you leave the table, you need to be aware that privilege does not attach to the comments you may make to anyone, including the media, even if you are just repeating what you have said to us. Do you understand that?

Messrs ROSS, KING and MANNERING - Yes.

CHAIR - Thank you very much.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.