UNEDITED TRANSCRIPT

THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS MET IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, HOBART ON MONDAY 14 FEBRUARY 2002.

LYELL HIGHWAY-MOLESWORTH ROAD JUNCTION

Mr GRAEME NICHOLS, PROJECT MANAGER, DEPARTMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE, ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCES; AND **Mr PHILIP MILLIN**, ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANT, MILLIN EMS PTY LTD, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Wing) - Mr Nichols and Mr Millin, thank you very much for the explanations on site. Mr Nichols, would you care to lead the evidence?

Mr NICHOLS - Mr Chairman, I will deal with the introduction, economic and social justification, design and estimates and Mr Millin will deal with the planning and environmental factors on the project.

Molesworth Road forms a T-junction on the Lyell Highway approximately four kilometres south-east of New Norfolk. It has a number of deficiencies, sight distance and narrowness of the existing bridge that have led to some accidents in recent history. It has been mooted for upgrading this calendar year and it is expected that the work will actually be finished around about November/December. The junction is located in a rural environment close to the Derwent River and it is bisected by Sorell Creek, which flows from the Collinsvale area to the Derwent River just below the junction. Molesworth Road, as you would have seen today, is aligned parallel to Sorell Creek south of the junction and services Molesworth township five kilometres south of the Lyell Highway. This area is used as a pick-up and drop-off point for school children going to Hobart or to New Norfolk. The highway has been widened in the past but this work has been very ineffectual in improving the safety of the junction.

The average daily traffic at this location is 5 500 vehicles per day and a bit lower than most areas 8.5 per cent commercial vehicles. Molesworth Road has approximately 500 vehicles a day and the area is located in an 80 kilometre per hour speed zone.

The department undertook a planning and safety assessment of the existing junction in September 2001, which identified a number a deficiencies and recommended a substantial upgrade, including a new bridge over Sorell Creek.

The need for the project - the existing left-side passing lane that is opposite the junction before you get to the bridge travelling towards Hobart is deficient and poorly located in relation to the Sorell Creek bridge. You noted that most cars weren't using that left-side passing lane very efficiently and were turning into Molesworth Road before they reached the junction, cutting off the junction.

The existing carriageway width over Sorell Creek bridge is 6.7 metres and is deficient by today's standard - we require 9 metres width, excluding turning lanes. The bridge, I might add, can't be widened because it is a very old-fashioned ... and curb slab bridge in which the large curbs are the beams, so it is very difficult to widen a bridge like that - and costly as well, plus the fact that the bridge is of a deficient load-carrying capacity for today's loads.

The other things to note: the Sorell Creek bridge level is below the 1:100-year flood level for the Derwent River and does not have adequate flood protection to meet accepted highway standards. It is also deficient for flooding in Sorell Creek. The safety barrier at Sorell Creek bridge is deficient in length and does not conform with Australian standards. There are also undesirable pedestrian movements east of Sorell Creek bridge where pedestrians cross the Hobart-bound lane to reach the bus stop on the northern side of the highway.

CHAIR - They have to cross both, don't they?

Mr NICHOLS - Yes, they do; they cross both lanes, but they are crossing very close to the junction where there is deficient sight distance and movements coming out of Molesworth Road.

It was determined that there should be left and right turn slots for the new junction, based on traffic movements. We looked at a number of alternatives: widening existing Sorell Creek bridge, rather than a full replacement of the structure. As I said, that was a rather difficult exercise. Also, as we are raising the road, widening the bridge becomes more difficult. We are putting extra load on the bridge because we're putting 1.5 metres of extra fill on the existing bridge and it's already deficient for load-carrying capacity. It also means widening the bridge and providing some way of carrying that load with the beam and attaching it to a new structure. The other thing is that by leaving the bridge where it is we're not improving the hydraulics in Sorell Creek itself so we don't get a 100-year flow through Sorell Creek.

The second alternative we looked at was replacing the existing Sorell Creek bridge with a wider structure at a higher level - which is the proposal you have before you. The third one was the realignment of Molesworth Road to relocate the junction away from Sorell Creek. We actually looked at bringing the road from much further up Molesworth Road and to the west of the speedway but that meant a major realignment to Molesworth Road. The crossing on Sorell Creek would have been further up Molesworth Road. It's also fairly difficult because of the fact that we have to cross the water mains, too. The other thing that we didn't like about that was, having built a new structure on Molesworth Road to cross Sorell Creek, we still were left with the deficient culvert on the highway. So there were a number of good reasons not to totally realign Molesworth Road, least of all the additional cost. We determined that option two, the replacement of the Sorell Creek bridge with a wider structure and higher level at the existing location, was indeed the way to proceed.

The design itself incorporates 3.5 metre wide through-lanes on the highway with shoulders of one metre width in accordance with our requirements, plus 3.5 metre wide left and right-turn lanes at the Molesworth Road junction, so the bridge will actually be

four lanes wide to allow for those turn slots, which enables us to divert traffic onto half the new bridge. So the new bridge will be built two lanes at a time and we'll be able to divert traffic onto half the bridge while we are demolishing the old bridge.

The turn lanes have been designed for an 80 kilometre per hour speed limit environment. We are providing footpaths to the new bus stops. We are extending the footpath on the southern side of the highway until we reach the end of the guard rail so there is no disruption to the guard rail by the footpath, which is the case at the moment on the northern side - that is not really a good thing to do - but also by extending the footpath to the end of the guard rail it moves the footpath, the point of crossing the highway, further away from the junction and improves sight distance for the children back towards the junction.

Mr GREEN - Will the crossing still be on the four lanes or just on the two-lane section of the road?

Mr NICHOLS - It will be more than two lanes but it won't be four, so there will still be a little bit of taper at that location. I can't pick a distance out of my head but just looking at where that is there is still a little bit of taper.

Mr GREEN - That's a complicating factor for crossing the road.

Mr NICHOLS - It is certainly narrower than what it would be at the existing location, which will be four lanes wide at the bridge, but it will be tapering in at the point we intend to take them across.

Sight distances for the pedestrian crossing will be good being in excess of 250 metres, which is fairly good as the stopping sight distance for a vehicle travelling at 100 kilometres per hour is 170 metres. We're continuing to provide the parking area that is presently used by parents picking up children and that will be provided in its present location off Molesworth Road.

Safety barriers will be improved and extended to meet the Australian standard and the whole area will be improved so it provides improved flood protection. The bridge itself, there is a detail of the bridge and we are doing a full design on this bridge because there are a number of issues associated with this. We're not doing it by the design and construct method that we have. What you see here in this concept is the actual bridge that we intend to build so, whilst there may be an alternative, we basically believe this is how it will be. There is a buoyancy problem with the superstructure of the bridge and we need to seal off the beams and tie them down to the abutments and piles so there's no buoyancy - well, there is a buoyancy problem, but the beams can't possibly float away in a big flood. That's a little bit of a special situation that made us decide to do a full design on the bridge so we got exactly what we wanted so that concept is part of the full design set of drawings. The footpath is incorporated into that bridge design and does incorporate a pedestrian fence on the outside and protection for the pedestrians on the inside of the road. As I said, it will provide a 100-year flood protection in Sorell Creek and the Derwent River and will be built.

Social impacts: widening on the highway will require acquisition from three property owners. There is a section of the Browning, Crawford and Williams property that needs

to be acquired and they will require a new access. The Padman property will be fully acquired, which he is agreeable to, and no access will be provided to that property which the Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment are happy with and that will just become another section of the foreshore in that area. The Webster property east of Sorell Creek will require a substantial amount of acquisition on areas of land that are presently used for grazing and they are agreeable to that situation, too. We have mentioned here that there is an issue relating to headlights on the Webster house and we intend to provide some plantings along that fence line to alleviate that problem.

The beneficial impacts include: improved traffic flows; safer travel through the intersection zone; reinstatement of parking for commuters; improved safety at the junction for traffic joining or leaving the Lyell Highway, improved pedestrian safety, especially schoolchildren in the vicinity of bus stops; and a new bus shelter will be provided as per the Channel Highway. The other thing that's worth mentioning, as I said previously, is that the line of poplars will be retained along the Lappin property - the previous design by SKM didn't provide for that.

The cost estimate for the work is $1.8 million and that includes a contingency of 15 per cent, which is appropriate for this cost estimate at this stage. As we get closer to completing our detailed design we will be able to fine tune that to probably 10 per cent but that is probably a fairly good cost estimate. Construction timing: we are hoping to start construction in April with completion by November this year.

Mr MILLIN - Mr Chairman, I will address the planning requirements for the project and look at some of the environmental and heritage issues that have been addressed in the planning and approval process.

To place the project into context, to cover some of the work already covered by Mr Nichols, the department did a regional strategic transport assessment, which was completed last year, and that was for the section from Granton to New Norfolk. Improvements to the Molesworth Road junction was one of the key recommendations and key requirements that came out of that regional assessment and the community desire from that study was really to improve the safety, widen the bridge, provide turning lanes and passing bays, retain the existing park and ride facility, which we saw when we were out there on site, and improve the pedestrian access and bus stops. Mr Nichols has covered the design aspects of those requirements, which all have been met in the design to date.

The project itself is located within the Derwent Valley and is governed by the New Norfolk Section 46 Planning Scheme of 1994. Some of the works will be outside of the boundaries of the road reservation in land zoned on the north side on the river side of the highway, a general rural flood zone, and on the south side rural residential type B. The planning scheme is not specific about developments relating to road construction, however it makes specific reference to maintenance of public utilities so that there's a little bit of interpretation of the planning scheme which resulted in the council requiring a development application to be lodged and the council having the discretion as to whether to approve that development application or not.

Mr GREEN - Has that been approved?

Mr MILLIN - Not yet, no. It has been lodged. I will cover that now that the question has been raised. The development application was lodged before Christmas. The council accepted the application and advertised it publicly last Saturday, 5 January, and it will be advertised for two weeks until 19 January. After that public advertising period, council has 28 days in which to make its decision on the application and to take into consideration any public representations made during that period. After having made the decision, there's a further 14-day appeal period to consider any representations made during that initial 14-day public advertising period, so the expected council decision time will be mid-February.

The other requirements of council was in their planning scheme, because of properties located within a flood-prone area, council needs to be satisfied that there won't be any additional back flooding caused by the development and also that the development will withstand flooding and downstream effects from washed-away structures and what have you. As Mr Nichols has pointed out, the design is aimed at the 100-year design level for that area and it's highly unlikely that any of those two effects would be of concern to council.

The other matters was that the development will take place along a prescribed stream, as specified in their Schedule 10 of the planning scheme, so council again needs to consider any applications that may involve works along a prescribed stream. So thus those three factors led to the requirement that we lodge an official application and seek discretionary approval.

Other State policies which are relevant to this particular project are the State coastal policy as we are within the coastal zone and the State policy on water quality management. One other matter of consideration is that downstream from the mouth of Sorell Creek onto Derwent River is the commencement of what is called the 'River Derwent Conservation Area', which was declared as a bird sanctuary and an important area of conservation. While not affecting that land directly, there is potential for downstream effects.

The environmental assessment phase: a number of specialist studies were carried out including an Aboriginal survey, a cultural heritage assessment and a botanical survey which included an assessment of fauna habitat. Those specialist assessments, including other site assessments, were incorporated into an environmental effects report which was lodged with council with the development application that addressed the site environmental and heritage requirements as well as those State policies just mentioned.

I will cover the outcomes of the environmental surveys and some potential environmental impacts, the key points being as noted in the report before you, is no Aboriginal sites or landscape values were identified in the location of the works. The nearest Aboriginal sites were on the other side of the river more than a kilometre away, however there's always potential for uncovering Aboriginal relics when doing earthworks so there are specifications in the contract clauses to alert the contractor to that requirement to stop work and allow specific assessments to be carried out if any relics are discovered.

The line of poplars which Mr Nichols referred to, it was indicated to us by the Tasmanian Heritage Commission that they had important heritage value representing the

hop industry that started in that part of the Derwent Valley. As well, there's a hop pickers hut in the field immediately to the south-east of the proposed bridge. The other value for those poplars is the aesthetic value and the local community, we were advised by council, had strong feelings about those poplars. The positioning of the new bridge to the north of the existing structure allows for that particular line of poplars not to be disturbed by construction works, as with the hop pickers hut, will be outside of any zone of influence on the works.

There's also what is called the Sorell Road Convict Station was purported to have been in that vicinity although its exact location has never really been established. Again, if during construction works and excavation works any remnants of heritage value are uncovered, then there are requirements under the Heritage Act to address, map out and record those remnants.

As far as the botanical survey is concerned, there were a number of rare grassland species which are listed under the Threatened Species Act. None of those will be within the actual limit of works under the contract, however at the New Norfolk end of the job on the south side there's some grassland species there that require protective measures to prevent inadvertent damage during construction.

The Sorell Creek itself: there were a number of threatened species that appeared on the database in the vicinity. They were discussed in the report. None of them are within the actual contract area, however the Australian grayling, which you will recall is a fish species that seems to be related to all the bridge projects we have been assessing over the last six months -

CHAIR - From one end of the State to the other.

Mr MILLIN - Yes. It has been sighted in the actual Derwent itself and it is assumed that it may possibly use Sorell Creek itself to reach its breeding grounds. The proposed works will not have a significant impact on that species and particular measures will be implemented not only for the protection of that species but maintaining water quality in the area generally. There will be run-off controls and certain measures in place to prevent water pollution.

There are issues relating to weeds and the presence of cracked willow. Again, weed treatments will be carried out as part of the construction contract and precautionary measures will be implemented during removal of the willows to prevent re-establishment following completion of construction.

I mentioned the River Derwent conservation area earlier and, again, the measures to minimise impacts on water quality during construction will likewise avoid possible downstream effects on that conservation area.

There are a number of other matters laid out in the report which are really of a routine nature. Any construction works within a creek is going to cause a bit of a stir and there's an increased risk from oil spills and burst hydraulic hoses and what have you. The department's normal specifications of specified measures are to be implemented during construction to minimise the risk of those sort of events happening and thus reducing the potential for adverse impacts on water quality.

Air quality: one of the main issues there is the proximity of the residences on the south-western side of the junction and the possible disturbance from dust and air emissions from the construction plant. Again, there are standard specifications and also re-emphasising in the contract of specific specifications for dust to be controlled and plant to be properly maintained to avoid excessive air emissions.

The only other matter which is mentioned there is the use of chemicals and the potential for chemical sprays for weed control. Again, it's not a large issue there. There's limited weed controls required near those properties so it's not anticipated there will be a problem.

The other general construction impacts are adequately covered by the department's standard specifications and, where required, there are some project-specific requirements which will be included in the contract. Thank you, Mr Chairman. That is all I have to present on the environmental matters.

CHAIR - Thank you very much, Mr Millin.

Mr GREEN - The lights issue of the Websters: is that as a result of the 1.5 metre lift in the road profile or is that an existing problem?

Mr MILLIN - That was a potential issue which has arisen on other projects where, as soon as you change the alignment of a road, people who live in the residences nearby become used to the prevailing traffic and as soon as you change the alignment or move the road - and in this case the road will be moved more onto the alignment of that house and also the level will be raised - so the traffic conditions will change and the residents will probably notice a difference. The actual headlights shining on the house was assessed on site to be a potential impact but not necessary an actual impact. However, the precautionary measures or the preventive measures there were to arrange with the property owner to provide a vegetation screen.

Mr GREEN - So the project will significantly improve the line of sight looking back towards New Norfolk?

Mr NICHOLS - Yes.

Mr GREEN - By cutting that corner?

Mr NICHOLS - The corner's being eased and there will be a bit of vegetation cutback, too, to improve it.

Mr GREEN - Where you pull onto the highway as such, will that be extended out from the existing banks on the left-hand side?

Mr NICHOLS - Yes. The holding line from Molesworth Road junction will be almost to the other side of the existing highway.

Mr GREEN - Right. Will that give the opportunity to people turning left towards New Norfolk to enter the highway at a reasonable speed?

Mr NICHOLS - No, there will still be a give-way situation so they will have to look. But for those people turning towards New Norfolk the visibility looking back towards Hobart will be substantially increased because the effect of the existing bridge interrupts the line of sight so it will be dramatically improved.

Mr HARRISS - Just cutting in there, if I might, Mr Chairman. You mentioned that they will still have to give way, will it be a give way or a stop sign at that junction?

Mr NICHOLS - Give way.

Mr GREEN - So they must stop?

Mr NICHOLS - No.

CHAIR - It is not a stop sign.

Mr NICHOLS - There will certainly be an adequate give-way sign. I haven't seen the final line marking being made but that is what I would believe; I would be surprised if that's been proposed.

Mr GREEN - On the one you have given us, the general curve suggests there's quite a large wedge in terms of the road as it swings out, which would mean that it would be actually rolling towards New Norfolk as opposed to stopped at a line.

Mr NICHOLS - They don't have to stop as such, they just have to give way, but there should be very good sight distance back towards Hobart to enable that to happen. At the moment, they really need to stop to have a good look because the bridge beam does obscure the sight distance. You can't really be sure that you can see until you have actually stopped at the junction.

Mr GREEN - And the residents generally are happy with the bus shelter-type facility in that arrangement for the schoolchildren there because it occurs to me that if there were buses heading toward Hobart, given that there are going to be significant improvements to the highway with pull-off lanes, et cetera, it would be almost just as easy for them to pick up the kids at the car park area as opposed to making the kids cross.

Mr NICHOLS - Getting them to do that is a major hassle though because the bus drivers don't like to pull off the road. If we don't provide the facilities that they like to use then they tend to just drop them on the highway anywhere - and we could see that down the Channel Highway. At times, especially during the roadworks, they were dropping the children in the most inappropriate places. When we had the bus stops completed they started using the bus stops, but they will park across junctions and just anywhere that is convenient for them, but to actually pull up into a side road they won't do that.

Mr MILLIN - The other issue with that - if I may interruption, Mr Chairman - is the turning and getting back onto the highway and providing an adequate turning area for the buses once they pull off into the highway. They certainly need a much bigger turning area.

Mr HARRISS - I was interested in Mr Nichols' comments, Mr Chairman, about the existing bridge and it's impractical to widen it, et cetera, and my initial reaction when I studied this report was that we have a bridge there and it may not comply with a 100-year flood regime, but I guess the cynicism in me said, 'Here we go, here's a new structure and up goes the construction cost, up go the consultants' fees and so on'. But having seen the site conditions and your explanation that it was impractical because of load restrictions to in fact put fill on top of the existing bridge that was my first reaction, why not? If we have to lift the height of this roadway that was an option but it's just simply not a practical option, is it?

Mr NICHOLS - No, it would be very difficult. I guess you would end up leaving the beam on the northern side of the bridge in place and then putting fill over the top and then you have compaction problems in the fill over the top. You have a strip of the pavement that is much more solid than the others and it means also then that you would have to build the new bridge down at that level so that would have to have fill on the top of it, too. The new structure is not a culvert. We have gone to some trouble to make sure that we're not building the bridge in the wet. If you have a look at the concept design, the piling is all up on the top of the embankment. There are no works in the stream bed at all. The only works in the stream bed is removing the existing bridge - and that is appendix C - so we are piling up on the embankment clear of the waterway and the new structure is well and truly clear of the stream and the existing bridge. So having a bridge that's buried is not really good from the maintenance point of view either.

Mr HARRISS - No. It leads me to a question, Mr Chairman, about the 100-year flooding issue and the real imperative for building this bridge above that level and what the extra costs are of doing so rather than building the new bridge at a similar level to the existing because there are associated roadworks with Molesworth Road as well as the approaches to this bridge? Obviously the construction costs would be less if the bridge height wasn't raised and the 100-year flood issue - the river floods anyway - so that Molesworth Road in some parts would flood and water would be over the road, so Molesworth Road is impassable but the bridge across Sorell Creek will always be passable, whereas at the moment I would assume that at times it's not?

Mr NICHOLS - It is probably reasonable. When I raised this issue with our assets people - parts of the Lyell Highway further down towards Hobart are not passable in the 100-year flood but their attitude was, 'We've got to take advantage of the situation at the moment and just slowly improve the road until it is passable on the 1:100-year flood'.

Mr HARRISS - That is a reasonable approach. Do you have a breakdown of the extra costs -

Mr NICHOLS - No, not off hand, but there would be a substantial cost, not in the bridge itself but in the road fill. It's several hundred thousand dollars to raise the whole length of the road.

Mr HARRISS - On page 7 of your submission where the costings are set out, it indicates there that there's some timber piling to control settlement of the eastern bridge abutment, my question is: won't there be a settlement problem at the western end?

Mr NICHOLS - No, there's some soft material at the eastern end where the old creek bed was; the old creek bed apparently cuts back around to the eastern side of the existing bridge.

Mr HARRISS - The only other question I have is one that the Chairman will probably raise, as he did on site, and that is the matter of sealing the footpath for pedestrians from the bridge down to the bus shelter on the Hobart side?

Mr NICHOLS - We certainly could have a look at that. I think it needs a directive from our Assets Branch as to what they want to do. The only risk I see there is that if we seal the footpath then it becomes neglected and no-one takes responsibility for resealing it so over a period of time it cracks and breaks up, whereas with the gravel it tends to wear down but it doesn't tend to break up.

CHAIR - But it would tend to get muddy, would it not, in wet conditions?

Mr NICHOLS - Yes.

CHAIR - Is that not undesirable, particularly when young children will be using it on a regular basis?

Mr NICHOLS - It's not too bad; it gets a little bit soft on the top when it's wet, but it's not too bad. You will pick it up but it does compact down reasonably hard.

CHAIR - Having seen the surface of the gravel walkway this morning, I feel that sealing would be much better for the children as well as for adults using that. What would be the likely extra cost of sealing that?

Mr NICHOLS - We wouldn't use red gravel; we'd probably use something a little bit better. It would only be a matter of thousands of dollars.

CHAIR - Can you give some approximate estimate?

Mr NICHOLS - Not off the top of my head, but it's not a substantial sum.

CHAIR - Could you give a range?

Mr NICHOLS - Something like $2 000 to $5 000 - something in that range.

Mr HARRISS - The distance is only about 80 metres.

CHAIR - And the width?

Mr NICHOLS - It would be a metre wide.

Mr MILLIN - It is 120 metres from chainage 320 to 440 - the end of the footpath tapers down. The park and ride facility will be a gravel surface and what you would end up with would be a compacted gravel surface there and then a sealed footpath -

CHAIR - From the parking area in Molesworth Road.

Mr MILLIN - Yes. You would probably need to seal the park and ride facility as well, wouldn't you?

Mr NICHOLS - Yes, that's right.

CHAIR - What approximate area would that be and what would be the approximate extra cost of sealing that?

Mr NICHOLS - I reckon that might be $10 000.

Mr MILLIN - 8 000 square metres probably in the footpath.

CHAIR - No, the car park.

Mr MILLIN - Sorry, the car park would be about 250 and about 500 in the park and ride facility, so that's 700 square metres.

Mr NICHOLS - Say, $10 000 or so.

CHAIR - Both - about $10 000 for the car park and the footpath?

Mr NICHOLS - Yes.

CHAIR - On the question of costs, in the submission the cost estimate of construction, including a 15 per cent contingency, is shown as $1.8 million, which of course is under our limit of $2 million for jurisdictions for this committee to investigate projects. But I understand from the discussion we had on site that the cost estimates are higher than that -

Mr NICHOLS - Yes, that's right.

CHAIR - and we need to have full details of cost estimates. Could you give details of the extra over and above the estimated $1.8 million?

Mr NICHOLS - I believe Mr Donnelly is away at the moment so can I email those to -

CHAIR - Yes, to Ms Thurstans who is the acting secretary. Could you give us some estimates of those amounts because at this stage we don't have any jurisdiction because the estimated amount, according to the submission, is $1.8 million.

Mr NICHOLS - No, it's definitely over $2 million; we're looking at about $2.2 million estimated cost.

CHAIR - And you will let us have details of that?

Mr NICHOLS - Yes.

CHAIR - Thank you. The estimated time for construction is approximately seven months which seems a very long time because it involves disruption of traffic and restricted

speed limits. I would have the impression that in Japan it would probably be done in about three weeks. Why is it necessary to take seven months? Could it be that the time be shortened significantly and what would that involve?

Mr NICHOLS - I guess the problem for us is the bridge and the casting of bridge beams. If we shorten the time then it is likely the contractor will import the beams from the mainland rather than cast them here.

CHAIR - Can they not be cast before the work commences and be available to be put in place after the commencement?

Mr NICHOLS - It might be a bit tricky because for the super T-beams there's only one bed in the whole of Tasmania and that's located in Ulverstone so we'd have to actually purchase them from a mainland supplier if that were the case because his bed is fully utilised at the moment. He's got a number of projects on the north-west coast that are using his supply and he can only cast one of them per week on one bed.

CHAIR - Desirably, it's better to have anything that can be done in Tasmania done here but I'm very conscious of the disruption to traffic and travelling the Midland Highway as regularly as I do, I'm really conscious of the long time it takes to do roadworks. I appreciate that that's the St Peters Pass area and now Powranna are federally funded; they are not the responsibility of your department -

Mr NICHOLS - We do look after those.

CHAIR - I see, but they haven't come to our committee because they're federally funded, I think. But it seems to have taken an eternity to do the work at St Peters Pass, between there and Oatlands, and now at Powranna it doesn't seem to be proceeding with any degree of haste. There are people wandering around all over the place and it's disrupting traffic and slowing traffic up.

Mr NICHOLS - Powranna is a very complex project actually. It involves a railway realignment and they're about to begin building a structure for the railway. But I do take your point about St Peters Pass. The problem there was that the project was awarded very late in the year. When I say 'late in the year' I mean April/May and they weren't able to do substantial works; similarly with the Tunbridge junction. I don't know the reason why they did do that.

CHAIR - Yes, that's the other one that seemed to take a long time.

Mr NICHOLS - In this case you'll recognise that we are intending to award late in the year - April/May. There is some logic to it in this case because we'll be able to do some basic earthworks before winter sets in and then they'll be able to spend their time over winter building the bridge and demolishing the other one. Fortunately in Tasmania we're not restricted by weather conditions for bridge building that we are with road construction. It's really only in the highlands that it's difficult to build bridges in the winter but in the fairly mild climate that we have in Hobart and other parts of the State we can build bridges all year around. I'm trying to put your mind at ease about this, but we will be doing the necessary bridge works during the winter and early spring to enable us to finish off the job during the warmer months of October/November. We certainly can't do a lot

of the finishing-off work until the weather warms up in October/November. There's just not enough drying.

CHAIR - For what period of time will the width of the road be limited to one lane?

Mr NICHOLS - It will never be limited to one lane, it will always be two lanes.

CHAIR - I see. I thought you were building half the bridge at a time and I assumed that it would be just one lane.

Mr NICHOLS - No, the bridge is four lanes wide by the fact that there's turning facilities on each side, so there's four 3.5 metre lanes on the bridge. The bridge will be built half at a time and so as soon as the northern half of the bridge is built we'll be able to put the traffic onto that.

CHAIR - So throughout the construction there will be two lanes of traffic able to move, one each way all the time?

Mr NICHOLS - That's right. The junction won't be perfect but, by the same token, there will be a lower speed environment while we are building the junction and traffic will be able to be easily channelled into Molesworth if they wish to turn up that road.

CHAIR - You have been able to peruse the submission made by Mr Holderness-Roddam?

Mr NICHOLS - No.

CHAIR - You are aware of the import of it and you saw at the site his sketch of the plan.

Mr NICHOLS - Yes.

CHAIR - Certainly one difference from his proposal and the department's submission is the lack of an acceleration lane that he suggests should be available to traffic turning left at the Molesworth Road junction towards New Norfolk. Would you care to comment on that?

Mr NICHOLS - I don't think there's a great deal of need for an acceleration lane in the sense that I think it would add an extra complication because there's a bus bay being placed just here which is next to the Lappin property, so this is just one thing that it affects - you would have buses pulling in past the junction and then having to negotiate across an acceleration lane. The volumes of traffic turning out of Molesworth to New Norfolk don't really warrant the acceleration lane and it also affects the Lappin access, getting in and out of that.

CHAIR - There will be speed limits for traffic using this road during the period of construction?

Mr NICHOLS - It normally would be about 40 kilometres.

CHAIR - It seems to be a fairly common practice when road construction works are undertaken to have a progression of speed limit signs: the first one 80 and then down

to 60 and then sometimes down to 40 and that the traffic moving away from the work is usually restricted to similar speed limits on the departure side of the project, for what appears to me no good reason at all because the work is completed and they're just travelling a normal roadway but it seems that almost inevitably that that departing traffic has to wait until the beginning of the first speed limit sign for approaching traffic before the speed limit is derestricted. Can something be done about this?

Mr NICHOLS - I guess it depends on what the standard - I take your point. I am just wondering whether the reason for that, I am not entirely sure, but maybe the effect that that has on traffic that is approaching that if traffic is going in the other direction at 100 they will slow down may be the reason. There are Australian standards for setting out the signage at a construction site.

CHAIR - It's very important to ensure maximum observance of traffic rules for the rules to appear to everybody to be reasonable so, if a vehicle has to travel for about half a kilometre or more at, say, 60 kilometres an hour going away from road construction work, there's a natural tendency and temptation for them to exceed that limit because they can see no valid reason for it. The roadworks are already completed and then somebody puts a speed camera there and they pay a penalty. It causes lack of proper observance of other signs which are reasonable sometimes and people disrespect the reasonableness of any sign.

Mr NICHOLS - I know this is an issue that our contract administration staff are dealing with all the time because of the fact that the contractor sets out the signage and, particularly when maintenance crews are working along the highway, they tend to set it out over their full day's work and hence make it exceedingly long. Our contract administration staff are often getting them to move signs to make it a bit more practical. But I do take your point. I don't think it's probably going to be the case here because it's a very confined site so we've a good defined limit of construction, so I think they shouldn't have any difficulty setting appropriate signage.

CHAIR - Even more irritating is the fact that when the contractors don't put any derestriction signs after the work is completed - and I've had that experience where if I'd followed the signs strictly coming from Launceston to Hobart on a number of occasions I would have been travelling at 60 kilometres an hour until I reached the next 110 sign some kilometres down the road. When I see that I usually phone the minister's office on the mobile phone and then they do something about it. But I shouldn't have to do that. If it is possible to pass those comments on to the relevant section and it seems from what you are saying that they are giving attention to that. That is all the questions I have. Any other questions?

Thank you very much Mr Nichols and Mr Millin for your evidence and assistance that you have given us. I will see if Mr Holderness-Roddam wishes to give any evidence.

Mr MILLIN - Would you like us to be present?

CHAIR - Yes.

Mr ROBERT HOLDERNESS-RODDAM WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR - We would be interested to hear what you would like to tell us.

Mr HOLDERNESS-RODDAM - Thank you, Mr Chairman. I guess my interest in this particular intersection started in the early to mid-1980s when I was a member of the New Norfolk Council and I started to receive approaches from people, particularly residents of the Molesworth area and Sorell Creek, saying that they thought this intersection was dangerous. I think what really precipitated it was a fairly serious accident which, if I remember correctly, some horses in a horse float were either seriously injured or killed in the accident. There was also a tragic case where a local policeman's wife was killed in an accident, not at the intersection but close to it in Sorell Creek. I started to look at that intersection and I actually took a video camera along on two or three occasions and observed and videotaped vehicle behaviour and it was very obvious that the bridge at that stage even was far too narrow for the traffic using it. Traffic approaching from Hobart and wishing to turn into the Molesworth Road was frequently, I suppose, harassed by tailgaters and people overtaking on the bridge and we've already heard today evidence that the sight line into Sorell Creek is not brilliant. It just struck me that there were going to be more accidents if something wasn't done.

I was very disappointed in the mid-1990s, I suppose it was, when some work was done on the site but not anything like what I felt was sufficient. As you see in the diagram I tabled, I felt that the only way to overcome this was with turning lanes both for traffic coming from the east into Molesworth Road and from New Norfolk west into Molesworth Road and a lane so that people could pass, and I am delighted to see that this is the same conclusion that public works, or whatever they call themselves these days, have come To.

CHAIR - It's difficult to keep up with the changing terminology.

Mr HOLDERNESS-RODDAM - It is, Mr Chairman, considerably. But anyway, whoever they are, whatever they call themselves, I fully support their ideas and what they are planning to do.

CHAIR - It is the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources.

Mr HOLDERNESS-RODDAM - Well, I am happy with their plans. I am a little bit disappointed about the acceleration lane out of Molesworth Road. It is certainly something which I think maybe we have to consider that Molesworth is going to grow in population. I think it is a lifestyle area and therefore more people may decide to live there and maybe there will be more traffic using it coming out of Molesworth Road over the next few years - others would have a better handle on that than I.

I am delighted with the proposals. But there are a couple of things coming out of today's hearing which I would like to touch on as well. One is the footpath which I personally, having reared five children and now have four grandchildren, I know just how muddy children's feet and shoes can get when they are going to and from school so I would urge

the best quality footpath possible to save parents and maybe schools and the school bus from muddy feet.

The duration of the works: I am not really an engineer but if action could be taken to reduce the delay to people during the peak hours because - and I say this really from the safety point of view - I know myself that if I get held up by roadworks there is a temptation to maybe go a bit faster to make up time. The rest of the road into Granton, while some work has been done it, there's still plenty of blind corners and things and the temptation is there to overtake when maybe it's not safe and go a bit faster.

Your comments, Mr Chairman, on speed restrictions on the departure side of the roadworks, I endorse 100 per cent. I have travelled the Midland Highway over the years and I get frustrated if I'm reduced to, say, 40 or 60 kilometres when I am passed the roadworks area and I get particularly frustrated when other drivers, who may not be going as fast as me on the open road, just zoom past and then sit on my nose for the rest of the journey up the highway. I guess I am fairly impatient.

CHAIR - Until you get to the passing lanes and then they speed up so you can't overtake them and then they slow down after they get past the passing lanes.

Mr HOLDERNESS-RODDAM - Precisely, I couldn't agree more. Human nature behind the wheel of a car, there is no accounting for it, and we could certainly bear that one in mind.

Thank you, Mr Chairman, I don't think I need to say anything more.

CHAIR - Thank you very much, Mr Holderness-Roddam for coming and for your interest in this and your evidence. There is one point that you have reminded that I forgot to mention, that I raised on site and that is the large sign at the junction of Molesworth Road and the Lyell Highway on the New Norfolk side which says '3 kilometres to Lachlan Valley village', is it?

Mr HOLDERNESS-RODDAM - Yes, it's the new Willow Court.

CHAIR - It obstructs the vision of motorists looking towards the direction of New Norfolk and we felt that it probably hadn't been approved by any authority. It would be surprising if it were because it does block the visibility and I think you're going to take that up, Mr Nichols, aren't you?

Mr NICHOLS - Yes, thank you for reminding me.

CHAIR - Thank you all very much indeed.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.