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THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS MET IN THE COMMITTEE ROOM, HENTY HOUSE, CHARLES STREET, LAUNCESTON, ON TUESDAY, 3 AUGUST 2021

NORTHERN ROADS PACKAGE

Ms ROBYN HAWKINS, PROJECT MANAGER, **Mr SVEN MEYER**, PROJECT MANAGEMENT TEAM LEADER, AND **Ms JANE HICKS**, TRANSPORT NETWORK PLANNING, DEPARTMENT OF STATE GROWTH, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

DEPUTY CHAIR (Ms Rattray) - Welcome. I have a statement to read before we call for evidence and this is something we do at the beginning of each committee.

Thank you for appearing before the committee. The committee is pleased to hear your evidence today and before you begin giving your evidence, I would like to inform you of some of the important aspects of committee proceedings. Some of you will already be well familiar with these but I need to go over them again.

A committee hearing is a proceeding in parliament. This means it receives the 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 the 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 we do have some public. This means that your evidence may be reported. Do you understand?

Misses HAWKINS and HICKS and Mr MEYER - Yes.

DEPUTY CHAIR - I invite whoever is going to make the opening statement to proceed. Thank you very much.

Ms HAWKINS - Thank you. Good afternoon, my name is Robyn Hawkins. I am a Project Manager with State Roads, responsible for the delivery of the Northern Roads package. With me today are Sven Meyer, Project Manager and Team Leader and Jane Hicks, Manager, Transport Network Planning.

Today we are seeking approval for the Northern Roads Package which consists of three roads: Birralea Road between the Bass Highway and Frankford Main Road, approximately 18.49 kilometres in length; Frankford Main Road between Birralea Road and the West Tamar Highway, approximately 13.53 kilometres in length; the Batman Highway between the West Tamar Highway and East Tamar Highway, approximately 10.87 kilometres in length, noting that the 5.5-kilometre section between the Batman Bridge and the East Tamar Highway commenced in early 2021. The total corridor length is 42.89 kilometres.

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The Northern Roads package is a road upgrade aimed at increasing freight productivity and road safety for all road users. The Tasmanian Integrated Freight Strategy released in 2016 identified the Batman, Frankford, Birralee Road corridor as a key regional freight route. It is a strategic connection between the north-east and north-west of Tasmania.

In April 2019, the Australian Government committed \$24 million to upgrade Birralee Road from the Roads of Strategic Importance or ROSI initiative. In order to maximise the benefit and consistent with the 2016 Tasmanian Integrated Freight Strategy, the scope of the original Birralee Main Road commitment was increased to include the Batman Highway and the connecting section of Frankford Road. The roads included in this package all have a significant percentage of heavy vehicles in their daily traffic volumes. The Batman Highway has approximately 2500 vehicles per day with 21 per cent heavy vehicles. Frankford and Birralee Roads have traffic volumes of approximately 1800 and 842 vehicles per day respectively and both have in excess of 20 per cent heavy vehicles daily.

The recorded crash history for the Northern Roads corridor has been obtained for the last 10 years as part of project development and investigations and is as follows: 27 crashes on the Batman Highway, 37 crashes on Frankford Main Road, 34 crashes on Birralee Road, including one fatality. The proposed improvements for this project include road widening, pavement strengthening and localise curb improvements for the Batman Highway, Frankford Main Road and Birralee Road to enable the corridor to cater for increased heavy vehicles movements, supporting business and industry and to improve safety for all road users.

A heavy vehicle rest area is also being incorporated at Sidmouth hall. The Northern Roads Package will effectively open a shorter freight route in the north of Tasmania, especially providing freight vehicles a more efficient route. Non-freight vehicles will also benefit from the improved route. Major benefits include: freight operational cost savings; shorter trips and the enabling of higher productivity vehicles; time savings for all vehicles and occupant types; crash reductions and safety improvements; environmental benefits; reduced greenhouse emissions due to fuel savings and lower maintenance costs.

In terms of cost, the total project excluding the Batman Highway east of the bridge is forecast to cost \$50 million dollars at a P50 value for the corridor. Costs for the proposed improvements - based on estimates - are consistent with similar projects recently completed on a per kilometre basis. Once delivered, road users will see a consistent cross-section on each of the roads with sealed shoulders, pavement strengthening where required and curve widening to improve freight productivity and road safety for all.

The proposed improved widths for each of the roads are as follows: for the Batman Highway is a 3.5 metre lane width with 1 metre sealed shoulder and 0.5 metre unsealed verge. A total seal width of 9 metres. Currently, the average seal width on the Batman Highway is 6.3 metres.

Frankford Main Road will have a 3-metre sealed lane width with a 1 metre sealed shoulder and 0.5 metre unsealed verge. Total seal width is 8 metres. Currently Frankford Road has an average sealed width of around 6.75 metres.

Birralee Road will have a 3-metre sealed lane width with 1 metre sealed shoulder and 0.5 metre unsealed verge. Total seal width of 8 metres. Currently the average Birralee Road seal width is 6.1 metres.

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Overall we submit this project is an important freight productivity and safety upgrade. The upgrades will provide a consistent traffic lane and shoulder width to improve safety and efficiency and curve widening. It will also provide a heavy vehicle rest area for drivers on the corridor. We have worked with stakeholders and will continue to do so to reduce convenience impacts of the project, both during and after construction.

We are seeking legislative approvals as required. The per kilometre costs are appropriate and in conclusion this project is a good use of tax payer's money.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Thank you very much. Anything you would like to add? No. Okay. The usual proceedings for this committee are we go to our information and we will start at 1.2, project summary. So, I will open it up to members for questions and anything relating to the overview. Thank you, members.

Ms BUTLER - Just a quick overview question. Is the concept design and scoping for Frankford, Main Road and Birralea Road complete?

Ms HAWKINS - No, it is not at this stage. The concept design is currently being developed.

Ms BUTLER - And a subsequent question. You understand as members of the Public Works Committee, we are asked to evaluate whether it is a good use of taxpayer funds, but we do not have the concept design or scoping for those two sections. This leaves us in a difficult situation when trying to make an assessment on whether or not it is a good use of taxpayer funds.

We also had this problem in a recent project we oversaw on Illawarra Road where there was not an actual concept design. Is this going to be a new way information is presented to the Public Works Committee?

Ms HAWKINS - I can speak for this project. In terms of what we are actually delivering for Birralea and Frankford Road, whilst yes, we do not have a concept design at this stage, we have given you the typical cross sections of what is intended to be provided and it demonstrates a significant improvement of both freight productivity and safety. Whilst it is not at concept design stage it certainly does demonstrate what is to be provided.

Mr MEYER - For the last two or three years, State Roads has been actively progressing an accelerated infrastructure program. COVID-19 made that even more accelerated. A lot of these large projects are programmed and packages of works. That is why we do not necessarily have the whole program designed. We try to work through the concepts and the program delivery. At each tender season we try to release tender packages in May-June for delivering works that summer and would work up the physical components of the program to get a package of work out. We have changed how things might be delivered five or ten years ago.

DEPUTY CHAIR - It would be useful to have on the record what has already been done, and typically, what we are going to see duplicated in the proposed works. Most of us drove from Sidmouth back into Launceston and went over the new section, a road that has already been redeveloped and completed, but not necessarily completed. It would be useful to have on the record what has been done and the effectiveness of that. Thank you.

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Ms HAWKINS - The Batman Highway east to the Batman Bridge to the East Tamar Highway is a package of work awarded in January 2021. A section of the highway near the bridge has been completed and basically provided the cross section that is going to be provided west of the bridge, being the three and a half middle lanes with the one-metre sealed shoulder and half metre verged. The remaining section will be delivered in the coming summer, so the project will be completed in the coming summer.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Is the reason why the project has not yet been completed due to the weather experienced through the winter in Tasmania? Will this provide a better-quality project at the other end by waiting?

Ms HAWKINS - Certainly, there are limitations with constructing roads when temperatures are not sufficient and yes, that is the reason why the project has gone into shut down pending the temperatures warming up and the weather conditions improving.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Is that something identified by the Department that needs to happen so we get a better-quality of work at the other end? Because I have been somewhat critical myself in the past. I know that other members have seen, I guess, new pieces of road, then all of a sudden we see repairs needing to be undertaken. They have not even had an official opening at times. Is that something that the department is learning?

Ms HAWKINS - The department has in place standards and specifications that talk to minimum temperatures that roads need to be at to enable things like sealing, so I guess that is part of where timing for projects and when they can be delivered comes from.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Part of this project, there is a heavy vehicle rest area, there are actually two in this section, aren't there? It is not just one. There is one on the same side as the Sidmouth Memorial Hall, then one on the opposite side further down, closer to the Batman Bridge. Is that correct?

Ms HAWKINS - No, the only heavy vehicle rest area that has been provided as part of this project is at Sidmouth hall. It is providing a parking area in both directions.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Yes, it is on both sides, it is actually two.

Ms HAWKINS - It is considered to be one, east and west.

DEPUTY CHAIR - I will ask about the consultation process with the heavy vehicle and transport industry when we get to the consultation process. I just wanted to get that clear. When that was identified as a need, has it been identified as a sleepover area, if you like, or is it more just a pit stop, like a rest area, a coffee and across the road to the hall for conveniences? I want to understand how that rest area, one either side of the road, was arrived at?

Ms HAWKINS - I believe the purpose of the rest area is to provide drivers with an opportunity to use facilities, for meal breaks and that kind of thing. It is more short term rather than long term.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Again, for the public record - we have had a number of these conversations out on our site visits, but we need to put it into the record as well. There are

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already what we would probably refer to as informal areas where heavy vehicles, particularly heavy vehicles, stop around the Sidmouth shop. There is one that is quite functional at this point in time, but that is not where the formal proposed rest area is going to be. Can we have the rationale behind that, thank you?

Ms HAWKINS - Certainly. The design of the heavy vehicle rest area took into consideration the number of vehicles that we would need to accommodate, as in being parked on both directions, east bound and west bound. It took into consideration sight distances for property accesses, including the store and the community hall.

Given the size of the vehicle, the parking areas were positioned to ensure that there was sufficient sight distance for people exiting those driveways, so that they could safely do so, considering the road environment at that location and the speed environment as well. To facilitate drivers' access, there is provision for drivers to walk on the passenger side of their vehicle to access both the store and the facilities.

DEPUTY CHAIR - That does have a limited speed on that stretch of road. Is the new proposed rest area covered in the 80-kilometre speed zone?

Ms HAWKINS - Yes, it is.

DEPUTY CHAIR - So that starts right back at the corner, on the Batman Bridge side.

Ms HAWKINS - The rest area is within the 80-kilometre speed zone.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr TUCKER - I will make a statement. I think this is a really good project that needs doing. It is a pity that it has not been done, in my opinion. It is roads that need to be updated. I am just really stoked that it is being done. It needs to be done. I have looked through the designs and everything like that. I cannot find any faults with it. A pat on the back from me.

DEPUTY CHAIR - You are a heavy vehicle driver as well.

Mr TUCKER - Yes.

Mr ELLIS - I echo the comments from Mr Tucker. In a broader overview question, would you be able to give us a sense of who the road users of this corridor might be and why they might choose to go through this road rather than, for example, on the Tamar Highway?

Ms HAWKINS - Basically, as part of the Tasmanian Integrated Freight Strategy, it was identified as a more efficient link between western Tasmania to eastern Tasmania, to Bell Bay. There was an opportunity in terms of improving the roads to open up an alternate route other than going through Launceston.

Mr ELLIS - Maybe someone like, for example, a pine plantation or a log truck driver might take that from the north-west through to Timberlink at Bell Bay?

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Ms HAWKINS - Yes. I cannot speak to exact users but certainly from our site visits and the information we have on the percentage of heavy vehicles, logging trucks and movements are a significant component of that heavy vehicle traffic.

Mr ELLIS - Broadly speaking, what sort of time-saving would you expect to see going through this corridor versus say, coming from the Bass Highway into Launceston and then up the East Tamar Highway?

Ms HAWKINS - I do not have that information today but we could certainly provide something.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Is that something the committee can access that would be able to be provided?

Ms HAWKINS - Yes.

Ms BUTLER - In December 2020, the northern regional prison website or update under the project upgrades of that particular project had that Birralee Road would be widened to accommodate entry to the prison site. Is that accurate?

Ms HAWKINS - I cannot speak to the prison project. Obviously, the Department of State Growth is working with the Department of Justice where we can but there are planning approvals that need to be obtained for the prison site.

Ms BUTLER - That work is separate to this \$55 million joint state funded project? They are separate?

Ms HAWKINS - Yes.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Is it \$50 million or \$55 million?

Ms HAWKINS - Excluding the bit of the Batman Highway that is east of the bridge, it is \$50 million.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Any more questions in 1.2, project summary? I am sure you will pick them up in the other areas as we go over.

Project location which is 1.3. We have a couple of colourful maps which have no bearing on *Hansard*, but members, are there any questions about that project location?

Ms BUTLER - Maybe, to clarify for the record from our site visit this morning that the Birralee Road section, the length of that site and that the whole area will be widened? If you could run us through that for the record.

Ms HAWKINS - Going back to my opening statement, the Birralee Road section between the Bass Highway and the Frankford Main Road is approximately 18.49 kilometres.

Ms BUTLER - Thank you.

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DEPUTY CHAIR - One of the questions I asked when we stopped at the exit of the Visitor Information Centre related to some of the poor quality of existing road pavement and how the department sees that as being part of an upgraded integrated approach. I would be pleased to have the response you gave me at Exeter on the record.

Ms HAWKINS - Sure. Part of the design development has included pavement investigations. We are looking at existing pavement strength and we are undertaking things like deflector graph and test pitting to examine the quality of the existing pavement. As the concept design is worked through we will look at widening in any areas that may need pavement strengthening as well.

DEPUTY CHAIR - That, in itself, could cause the project to go over its budget? Would that be fair to say?

Ms HAWKINS - Potentially, but there are opportunities to look at ways that we can address any pavement issues. That will be formed as part of the concept design and as it is worked through.

DEPUTY CHAIR - In saying that, does that mean that there could be some shoulder widening taking place? Then you would have to come back at another time and do the strengthening or would it always be done in conjunction with the works being undertaken in that particular area at any given time?

Ms HAWKINS - I guess it will be part as we work through the concept design and be able to fulfil the aims of the project within the budget. From a department point of view, we would also look at opportunities to save costs if any of the roads are included on maintenance schedules.

Ms HICKS - We try and integrate where we can any existing known maintenance issues and build them into the project at the same time, so we are not coming back and reworking. Sometimes, if it does not fit within the scope the maintenance budget will cover some of those pavement items and helps us to stay within the budget. We integrate it where we can.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Thank you. I also talked about the very deep side of the road verges. I do not know if they are still called table drains or not, is that still a relevant term?

Ms HICKS - They are still table drains.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Thank goodness for that. While we have had significant weather events in Tasmania of late and everything's wet, about 4 kilometres coming towards the Exeter township there are very steep road verges with a lot of water laying in those table drains. How are those wide heavy vehicles that meet where a vehicle has actually had to pull off the road but they cannot get right off the road accommodated? Mr Tucker can explain a lot better than I can, when large vehicles meet and there is also something parked on the side of the road which has very deep edges. Can we have some understanding of how that situation is going to be addressed through these road works?

Ms HAWKINS - With the increased seal width, if you take into consideration for example, on Birralea Road where a current seal width is a bit over 6 metres will be increased to 8 metres plus an extra metre of unsealed verge, half a metre on each side. You are talking

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about an emergency kind of situation, not an everyday parking kind of arrangement and with that alone you have a significant increase in terms of area for vehicles to be able to manoeuvre around maybe a vehicle broken down or that kind of thing. In terms of batters and the table drains, obviously, the department in the design development tries to work within the available road corridor space. Things like acquisition do come into this and the steepness of those batters. But they are certainly designed within Austroads requirements and department standards.

Mr TUCKER - Robyn, a quick one for the record. Is it correct there is no wire rope through the middle of this road?

Ms HAWKINS - No, there is not. No.

Mr TUCKER - Thank you.

Ms HAWKINS - No, there is not.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Can we also talk about the barriers on the side of the road -

Ms HAWKINS - Yes.

DEPUTY CHAIR - - and what is intended in the placement of those barriers?

Ms HAWKINS - Yes, as the concept design is worked through hazard locations will be identified and a risk management kind of approach will be put in place to determine where safety barriers are likely to be required. They can be things like protecting from drop-offs or hazards on obstacles on the side of the road, such as power poles, trees or that kind of thing.

DEPUTY CHAIR - I also noted there was a lot of pink ribbon on various power poles and the like as I drove through thinking, that is part of the new road upgrade. Can you explain to myself on the public record and members of the public that it is not necessarily removing every power pole with a pink ribbon on it at this point in time?

Ms HAWKINS - As I mentioned, in terms of Birralee Road and Frankford Main Road, we have undertaken a full survey for the road to establish the road corridor in terms of property boundaries. It is likely that the pink ribbon that you spotted as you drove through is part of the surveyor's control that they are setting up. At this stage we are not in a position to be pegging road alignment or anything like that.

DEPUTY CHAIR - When will you be in a position to be pegging road alignment?

Ms HAWKINS - We will not necessarily go through and peg road alignment but in terms of establishing the design, I would expect that that would be certainly to concept level later this year.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Any other questions in 1.3? If not, we will go to 1.4, which is Related Projects and Strategic Context. This is about the Northern Roads Package and the Tasmanian Government's commitment to the \$12 million in transport efficiency and road safety improvements along the West Tamar Highway between Riverside and Greens Beach. Any questions about that? I think we will just make note that that is part of this submission.

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Now, we get into the nuts and bolts, it is Project Scope so 2.1 is about the problems and opportunity statement.

Mr ELLIS - If I might just add on that previous one, the section along the West Tamar Highway links up the entire corridor essentially, right from the Batman Bridge through to the Bass Highway?

Ms HAWKINS - That is correct.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Problems and opportunity statement. Has the department identified the problems that will occur with this project should it receive approval?

Ms HAWKINS - Later in the submission we talk to risks and opportunities. I believe that is covered off in that section.

DEPUTY CHAIR - It talks about the volume of traffic. You have already given us those sets of figures, the 2500 vehicles on the Batman Highway per day, then the 1800 and 842 vehicles respectively on Frankford and Birralelee. Thank you.

Ms BUTLER - I have a question on the Birralelee Road section again. Birralelee Road was addressed as safety deficient by DIER in 2010, although it is now the preferred route for freight vehicles, including high productivity vehicles. At the moment, does it meet the national standard for HPVs?

Ms HAWKINS - I believe the national standard is not relevant to this road because it is not part of the national network.

Ms BUTLER - It does meet the State Growth's own guidelines for road geometry for HPVs?

Ms HAWKINS - It does.

Ms BUTLER - Is there much of a difference between the national standard and the state standard? I believe Norm McIlfattrick worked on those standards quite some years ago. Did he see much of a difference between them?

Ms HICKS - The national highway standard is usually an AusRAP 3, which is a mixture. You put into a box all the different parameters and it gives you an AusRAP star standard according to sight distance, width, use of the road and so forth. The roads are designed and have specifications according to their category. We have our road categories that talk about what the road is used for and the amount of vehicles per day on that road.

Ms BUTLER - Will the upgrade of this road make it safer for those vehicles? Could you explain some of the improvements that will be leading to it being a safer road?

Ms HAWKINS - It is known that by providing sealed shoulders it is a demonstrable safety improvement in that it gives vehicles an opportunity to recover if they happen to drift out of the lane. It reduces run-off road crashes. There is a demonstrated safety benefit in the shoulders.

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From a maintenance point of view also, the increased lane width and the shoulders mean that you see less things like edge break-up from having heavy vehicles running along the edge of the seal.

Ms BUTLER - I am a bit stuck on the fact that DIER stated in 2010 that Birralee Road they say was safety deficient. It is now not seen as safety deficient. I am concerned about whether or not these improvements would still make it appropriate for those heavy vehicles to be using it.

Mr MEYER - A lot of these larger projects do have a long duration in planning. I was not actually aware of that statement but it makes logical sense then if in 2010 this was identified that it sometimes can take 10 years to progress through the planning and to secure funding commitments from the Tasmanian and Australian governments and for everything to come together to bring the projects to fruition.

Even though it was identified as a heavy vehicle freight route it does not necessarily mean that it was suitable for all heavy vehicles and I guess that statement you mentioned identified some of the deficiencies which this project will rectify.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Following on from Ms Butler's question then, it is guaranteed that the speed limit on the Birralee Road for all traffic, once these improvements are made, will be at the 100 kilometres per hour? Is that correct? Has there been a conversation around reducing the speed limit on that road?

Ms HAWKINS - Not as part of this project. We are happy to take that on notice.

DEPUTY CHAIR - I am not asking for that. I am asking has there been any work done or any conversation. I would probably be shot and put out of the country if I suggest we have reductions.

Ms HAWKINS - Not as part of this project but we would be happy to take that on notice to confirm if there have been any other discussions with any different areas of the department.

Mr MEYER - Generally, with highways we don't encourage reduction of speeds for freight routes but during the community consultation phase if that arises as a particular concern then that is something that can be forwarded on to the Transport Commissioner for further review.

DEPUTY CHAIR - I certainly understand that there has been a community conversation, amongst the community who drive the road to and from their destinations. I am interested to know.

Mr MEYER - I wasn't aware if anything came up in the community consultations. Are you aware, Robyn?

Ms HAWKINS - Obviously there was discussions about some of the corners on Birralee Road and the heavy vehicles using them. That was some of the commentary coming back from the community.

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DEPUTY CHAIR - There's no funding to straighten any of those corners. We are only using the existing road pavement and adding the shoulders.

Ms HAWKINS - We would be looking at localised kerb widening as well. We would be going through and basically prioritising kerbs that need attention.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Because we are not in the design stage, we have no idea where those are likely to be?

Ms HAWKINS - No, not exactly at this stage, but it will certainly be part of the concept design.

Mr ELLIS - If a road is regarded as safety deficient, would you then have a safety upgrade to make it safety sufficient? That is sort of a point of what we are doing.

Ms HICKS - Safety is the underlying intent of this road and heavy vehicles are secondary.

Ms HAWKINS - But definitely too, the freight context for this project or this package of work is about making it efficient for the larger vehicles but also improving safety. That safety upgrade has got to be in the context of available funding as well.

Mr ELLIS - My reading of the two alternative routes going down the East Tamar or alternatively through this highway has it about 14 kilometres shorter going through Birralee Road and across the Batman Bridge. One of the interesting things, currently goes through the East Tamar Highway, goes straight through Launceston, we pick up a number of traffic lights going through there and increased, say, peak hour congestion, as opposed to the other road which would have zero traffic lights -

Ms HAWKINS - Yes.

Mr ELLIS - - and probably unlikely to have any congestion?

Ms HAWKINS - Yes, so I guess that travel time would be dependent on time of the day as well in terms of peak hour, that kind of thing.

Mr ELLIS - So, this would give operators more consistency and certainty about road conditions and traffic conditions?

Ms HICKS - In the original scoping one of the benefits that was identified was that it would decrease the number of heavy vehicles travelling through Launceston, which of course would have impacts upon congestion, but also amenity.

Mr TUCKER - And safety as well.

Ms HICKS - And safety, exactly. Less interaction.

Mr TUCKER - A lot of positives for this project.

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DEPUTY CHAIR - Thank you. If there are no further questions on 2.1 we'll move to 2.2, which is Options Evaluation. This road has been designated as the freight route but I'm interested to have some understanding. I've been made aware that the only impediment to the Frankford Highway for using that all the way as a heavy freight route is the Rubicon River upgrade. Can somebody just help me to understand if that is the only impediment?

Ms HAWKINS - We'd probably like to take that on notice but I don't believe it is just the bridge over the Rubicon that is the only issue with that route. Perhaps if we can take that on notice and provide the committee with more information.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Obviously it's aside of this reference but it comes back to the reason why the Birrale Road needs to be upgraded as a freight route in preference to continuing on along the Frankford Highway to get their goods to market. I thank you, I'd appreciate that.

Any other questions on 2.2? Moving on to the really important one, which is Project Costs, 3.1, the overall project cost summary table. We do have a table and this is always the interesting one, about P50 and P90. So, I think it would be good to have that on the public record again, that difference in costings.

Ms HAWKINS - Yes, so basically the project funding that we have is to P50 level and we have an opportunity to request P90 funding from the Australian Government, if needed. So, we are essentially working to the P50 at the moment.

DEPUTY CHAIR - So, that request to go to the P90 and those additional funds from the Commonwealth. Would that be in the design stage or is it when you get into the work and then you realise that, gosh, you know, we had an assessment on that piece of pavement but that's not going to cut the mustard here and we need to upgrade? When do you decide, when do you make that decision?

Mr MEYER - Yes, the project is designed to the P50 and the further you go through a design phase the less contingency you have and the more accurate you are in your costings and then once you receive the tenders you have the final costs. The aim is to have all tenders delivered within the P50 budget. So, the P90 budget is the ultimate government commitment of -

DEPUTY CHAIR - I call that the Rolls Royce.

Mr MEYER - Yes. It's the ultimate commitment of funds that you might use for a project. So, generally you wouldn't access anything between P50 and P90 unless it was during construction and there was some major issue, it could be a latent condition, like it could be rock or some other aspect that no-one was aware of during the design phase that arises only during construction. And so once -

DEPUTY CHAIR - I think we would have noticed a bit of rock around.

Mr MEYER - Yes, so once you've exhausted the P50 -

Ms BUTLER - The dolomite.

Mr MEYER - You then have to seek the use of additional funds to the P90.

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DEPUTY CHAIR - So, drilling down into those figures, it's \$44.3 million. It says, total out turn cost estimate and then it goes on to the P90 is \$48.4. So, am I to take it that these figures are just a tad out of date?

Ms HAWKINS - As I said, we're still working through the concept design. Obviously, we've got to work to the P50 in terms of the design.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Which is around \$50 million?

Ms HAWKINS - Fifty million is -

DEPUTY CHAIR - The budget.

Ms HAWKINS - ...is the P90.

Mr MEYER - So, the P50 budget is the estimate and then within the estimate there are risks identified and one risk, as an example may be a latent condition for rock. So, then they go through a risk profile assessment to work out how much would that rock potentially cost and you get an upper and a lower limit. We do that for all the risks and then the end outcome for the upper and lower limit, in this case of \$48.4. So, it is not, I guess you could go to 50, but it is based on a risk assessment process. So, it generally comes close to the ultimate budget, but not necessarily on the same dollar figure.

DEPUTY CHAIR - So, if you have to put in a request for additional funding to the Commonwealth, how long does that normally take? Does it hold up the project, if you like? Would that hold up a project or would the state just go ahead and have the request sitting there with the Commonwealth and just hope that, or just wait for the additional funding to be provided?

Mr MEYER - Yes, the Commonwealth does a commitment of funds. To access that you generally have to write some sort of...

DEPUTY CHAIR - ... very good submission I expect.

Mr MEYER - a good submission to justify why you need to access those funds. There is no set time frame for how long it takes to access the additional funds.

Ms HICKS - But it is something that we look at as soon as possible and it runs concurrently while the project is going if we identify. It is not something that would stop the project.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Would not it stall a project?

Ms HICKS - Not unless it is absolutely unforeseen.

DEPUTY CHAIR - That was really what I was looking at, the answer. It is not going to hold it up, that it will not commence.

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Ms HICKS - No, and we meet regularly with the Australian Government and give them updates on the projects and what milestones they are hitting. So, they are aware of where is it at and what is happening, so they are along for the journey as well.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Well, they are looking for the opening of that section of road, absolutely.

Ms HICKS - So, if there are issues identified, they are aware of those as we move along.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Members, any more questions about the project cost, 3.1? I think we have almost covered 3.2 as well.

Mr ELLIS - Sorry Chair, a question on the funding. My understanding is this is through Roads of Strategic Importance. So, is it right to say that a program funded by the Commonwealth, even though this is on roads that are not national roads, still get an 80-20 federal split? Would you be able to give as a sense of why that is important, what that is enabling in this particular instance?

Ms HAWKINS - Why it is an 80-20 split for this project?

Mr ELLIS - Yes.

Mr MEYER - The majority of road funding in Tasmania is based on an 80-20 split. Bridges are 50-50, and there are some outliers but the vast of projects is 20 per cent Tasmanian and 80 per cent Australian. The ROSI commitment was an overall package, so these projects came within that overall package which was committed in the last federal election.

Ms HICKS - ROSI talks about strategic linking. It is not necessarily about national highways but it is about roads that strategically link communities, industry. That is the story that ROSI tells.

Mr MEYER - Particularly on the freight side of things.

Ms HICKS - Yes. This was a prime candidate for the Australian Government in terms of ROSI.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Okay, there are no further questions in that. We will move to 4, which is Project Benefits, 4.1.

Ms BUTLER - Thank you, I have a quick question about the major benefits and the lower maintenance costs. Can you run through or give us some examples of how this infrastructure will reduce maintenance costs?

Ms HAWKINS - I previously mentioned, the increased sealed width will mean that you will not have these larger vehicles running on the edge of the seal, which is a saving in terms of edge break. That is a significant saving considering how wide the seal is at the moment, so if you think about the larger vehicles that are operating on these roads, they would be running quite close to the edge of the seal at the moment. As the committee mentioned, they drove east of the Batman Bridge, you would have seen if you happen to follow a truck or a truck coming the other way, what a difference the increased seal width and the sealed shoulder makes.

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DEPUTY CHAIR - It means I can give them more room on the road and suits me fine.

Ms HICKS - As we discussed, we are also strengthening some of the pavement as we go along, which actually gives the pavement a longer life and another added benefit.

Mr MEYER - I am not sure if it relates specifically to this project, but quite often with the freight efficiency route upgrades, lower maintenance costs also relates to the trucks themselves. With a wider cross section they can generally be more efficient in their speed environments. Rather than slam down for corners and those sorts of things, they might be able to sit closer to a consistent speed, which is probably around 90 for those ones.

DEPUTY CHAIR - That is reducing the fuel consumption.

Ms HAWKINS - And also wear and tear on the pavement itself.

Mr MEYER - Freight is looking at a consistent speed environment from A to B as the main driver.

Ms HICKS - There is also benefit of when it is wider, of different truck configurations are being used by, say, logging and so forth, that often runs better on the pavement than some of the other configurations.

DEPUTY CHAIR - We have already covered the operational cost savings and the crash reductions. What were the figures again for crashes on the Birralea Road? Was it 37?

Ms HAWKINS - 34 in the last 10 years.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Were they in any particular area? Do you have a breakdown of where they actually were?

Ms HAWKINS - I do not have a breakdown of where they are but we could provide.

DEPUTY CHAIR - The locals could probably tell me when I am out and about. Thank you.

Ms HAWKINS - When we look at the design and so forth, we look to see if there is any specific issue or things we need to be addressing.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Areas that sadly have a higher number than others.

Mr ELLIS - Something like a heat map would be handy for our reference.

Ms BUTLER -- As a statement for the record, I know through consultation with a lot of people whose properties access Birralea Road there is a general concern about larger trucks, i.e. log trucks that come through pretty quickly. The visibility makes it hard to see other log trucks coming and locals often wind down their windows and put their heads out because they can hear them before they can see them coming. Those kinds of issues need to certainly be looked at. If they are travelling at 100 kilometres an hour, it is a big load to brake quickly when

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people are accessing that road. Yes, I think there have been quite a few near misses, but it hard to quantify what those near misses are.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Thanks for that. Moving on to finance and procurement. I note there is a note here saying a private/public partnership is not considered a viable option for this project as there is no appetite or benefit to that model in the Tasmanian market. Can we have some expanded explanation around that?

Mr MEYER - That is essentially toll roads.

Mr ELLIS - Keep them out of the north west.

Ms HICKS - It is where a private company takes ownership, then charges the user a toll for that road.

Ms HAWKINS - There is no appetite for that in Tassie. We do not have the number of vehicles.

DEPUTY CHAIR - I thought it was about having a private/public partnership to build the road. But they would then have ownership and put a toll on it.

Ms HICKS - Yes, that is toll road.

DEPUTY CHAIR - We are not having those in McIntyre either, thank you very much.

Ms HICKS - It is a question that has been asked in the past.

DEPUTY CHAIR - That is the first time I have read that I can recall. The secretary might give me the nod there.

Mr ELLIS - It was in the last one.

DEPUTY CHAIR - It was, okay. I think I was so cold I probably missed rereading that. Another important aspect, if there are no further questions in that area, 5.2, which is on the project timeline. We do have a timetable, activity and timeline. Any questions?

Ms BUTLER - I asked this question when we were doing the site visit today. Could you run through what the plans are on sequenced works which would make it more user-friendly for vehicles on that road?

Ms HAWKINS - In terms of letting tenders and constructions packages, the department would be looking to consider overall delays for works happening concurrently to try and reduce inconvenience to the travelling public, noting with road works, unfortunately there is some inconvenience which cannot be avoided.

Ms BUTLER - There will be public notifications about road changes, won't there?

Ms HAWKINS - Definitely. The department is proactive in terms of keeping the project pages on our website up-to-date and obviously, advertising in the Roadworks Roundup when

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there are going to be road work, the duration and what the impact is likely to be on the community.

DEPUTY CHAIR - We have a note here that says the key assumptions, and it goes on to 'development applications by the relevant councils. It is not expected that there are any major representations to be made or onerous conditions imposed' (tbc time 2.31.10).

Ms HAWKINS - In terms of the Batman Highway works, -

DEPUTY CHAIR - It was a different council though.

Ms HAWKINS - east of the bridge was George Town, west of the bridge is West Tamar and neither required a development application. We have another section that will be in West Tamar and then it will go over to Meander Valley.

Once we have the concept design complete, we will understand if there are any impacts on flora/fauna, that kind of thing.

DEPUTY CHAIR - But you are not expecting?

Ms HAWKINS - We are not expecting. Not typically for a shoulder sealing.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Seeing I am sitting in the Honourable Rob Valentine's chair today, you are not expecting any regarding environmental or heritage aspects?

Ms HAWKINS - Not expecting, but at the moment we are currently finalising flora/fauna studies and Aboriginal and European heritage.

DEPUTY CHAIR - The member was on the Heritage Select Inquiry, so he has a significant interest.

Mr TUCKER - One question to follow is fauna surveys. When it is done on a road, do we have to do another fauna survey or once it is approved is it the end of it, even if work has to be done again later?

Ms HAWKINS - It would depend on, if you are saying come back and do more work, what the duration of the time between when the flora/fauna survey was done and when you may come back to do work.

Ms HICKS - But also if you are stepping outside of the footprint of where you have previously disturbed for building the road, then that would be considered new works and you would be re-evaluating to make sure you cover duty of care.

Mr TUCKER - So you do keep the fauna ones so you can reuse them again?

Ms HICKS - If it is within what we are doing, otherwise we have to fulfil our duty of care and re-evaluate.

Ms BUTLER - Has there recently been an environmental reclassification of vegetation alongside Birralee Road?

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Ms HAWKINS - I am not aware of anything but we can take that on notice.

Ms BUTLER - Thank you, I would appreciate that.

Ms HAWKINS - That would be picked up in our survey by our specialists if there is, so they will let us know within that report.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Would that be through the department of environment and would you engage with the department to check that detail? Is that how it is assessed?

Mr MEYER - There is the Natural Values Atlas, where when any flora/fauna survey done by anyone is lodged in this database. Essentially, we use this as the early assessment tool and if that highlights potential flora/fauna then you do an on-ground survey to confirm whether those flora/fauna are actually on site.

DEPUTY CHAIR - That is a question you will take on notice?

Ms HAWKINS - Sure.

Ms BUTLER - It is my understanding if there has been a reclassification, it would have been around February 2021 and it was to do with eucalypts along the Birrale Road. Allegedly, a reclassification process has happened, so that would be really handy, thank you.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Okay, we have the heads-up. Number 6, which is risk and sustainability, the major risks and proposed mitigation strategies. I note this is something that is done at a stage basis. Do you want to give us a brief overview of how that works?

Ms HAWKINS - Yes. Risk identification and mitigation, in terms of evaluating the level of risk, is done throughout the project. As we work through from early stages through the project to concept and detailed design, the project team will come back together and identify any new risks or potentially reduce the risk level because it has been mitigated or work has been done so it means that it's no longer a risk to the project.

DEPUTY CHAIR - We just need a little bit more volume. Anything you want to add to that, Robyn?

Ms HAWKINS - No.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Okay. Any more questions there? I note that local government is identified in this as well, so there's certainly that obligation to work with local government in regard to any of these projects because it's a benefit to their areas.

Mr ELLIS - Chair, just out of interest and in a technical sense, what is deflectograph testing?

Ms HAWKINS - It's just a means of assessing the pavement condition. It's just basically a weighted truck that runs along the road at a set speed and it measures how much the road moves as the truck moves along. It's a means of determining what condition the pavement is actually in.

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Mr ELLIS - Yes.

Ms HICKS - It's often called roughness and rutting. It measures how much rutting is within the pavement, how much roughness is within the pavement and that's the drive that you get on -

Mr TUCKER - There you are, I've learnt something new. I was always told that was called pumping.

DEPUTY CHAIR - There we go.

Ms HICKS - Corrugation.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Okay, 6.2 which is about major disbenefits, including likely impacts to the community and the environment. We will talk about stakeholders and that process when we get to 7.2 but is there anything that you need to add there that would be useful for the information of the committee?

Ms HAWKINS - No, I don't think so.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Any questions, members?

Ms BUTLER - No, I'm good.

DEPUTY CHAIR - If not, 6.3, Sustainability Strategies, including fewer heavy vehicles travelling through Launceston CBD. We've already talked about that. Mr Ellis talked about the fact that this joins up with the other previous works on the West Tamar.

Stakeholder engagement is one of the most important aspects of any project that we do on behalf of our communities and so, 7.1 is the Public and Stakeholder Participation Consultation. I note from the booklet that was provided that about 47 members of the community attended a session at Sidmouth community hall on their section of the road. Can you talk about that feedback because we don't have any real information about what was said there? You indicated earlier that it was well supported. Also, the Birrale community, about their consultation process. Thank you.

Ms HAWKINS - Yes, the public drop-in session at Sidmouth was for the entire project. So, we did have -

DEPUTY CHAIR - You didn't separate them?

Ms HAWKINS - No. We did have people visit the consultation session from -

DEPUTY CHAIR - Both areas.

Ms HAWKINS - Yes, Birrale Road and Frankford Road and the Batman Highway. To support that session we also had two static displays, one at West Tamar Council's offices in Riverside and one at Meander Valley in Westbury, which were up for basically a month. So,

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it gave an opportunity to people who couldn't actually come in person to the drop-in sessions to provide comment.

Overwhelmingly the feedback that we received from the consultation session and from the consultation more generally is that the community sees this as a worthwhile project.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Do you want to talk about the drainage issues and the Sidmouth shop?

Ms HAWKINS - Regarding the project on the Batman Highway west of the bridge, and indeed works that we will be doing on Frankford and Berrilee roads, we do consider impacts of the project on drainage and any drainage issues that are happening in the project area. We take them on in terms of the project scope and available budget and the issues that are around to determine if they are included or not.

DEPUTY CHAIR - If there is a drainage issue and it is going to compromise the project, then it does not matter how much it costs it is going to have to be addressed, isn't it? Otherwise, the project will not be worthwhile in that particular area.

Ms HAWKINS - Yes, that is right.

DEPUTY CHAIR - So, you will not make an assessment on whether you can afford it. It would just have to be afforded, wouldn't it?

Ms HAWKINS - We would make an assessment of the drainage issue and how we might deal with it.

DEPUTY CHAIR - So again, you have the Rolls Royce model of dealing with it, or you have - I will not use...

Ms BUTLER - Go Kia.

DEPUTY CHAIR - You sure? I said Hyundai last week and the Holden fanatics were very down on me. - Then Kia.

Ms HAWKINS - I guess to add to that are the opportunities that may be available in planned maintenance works and how they may be incorporated into the project.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Just focusing on the crest just north of the Sidmouth shop that creates a blind spot. Was that from locals? That obviously was not from heavy vehicle users?

Ms HAWKINS - I would have to take that on notice just to let you know exactly where that came from.

DEPUTY CHAIR - I would appreciate that. I am interested to drill down into that a bit more. Overall, landowners along the Batman Highway did not want an increase in heavy vehicles on the road. Where do they think they might go? Have you made any suggestions?

Ms HAWKINS - No.

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DEPUTY CHAIR - Overall, community members thought the provisions for formalised heavy vehicles rest areas would be an improvement.

Ms BUTLER - Just on that, with the feedback summary, it relates there to the landowners along the Batman Highway as Ms Rattray just referred to. Was there any community feedback about not wanting an increase in heavy vehicles from the Frankford section as well?

Ms HAWKINS - I will have to take that on notice and just confirm if we did exactly receive any from landowners. Certainly, in relation to the project, all landowners along the length of the corridor have been contacted individually and we will continue to do so, particularly where they are impacted by activities, such as acquisition.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Moving onto 7.2 and the stakeholder consultation. There is a significant list there of about 12 including TasWater, Telstra, TasNetworks and the like. So, the engagement with TasNetworks about removing or replacing poles, is that done at the time when you do the design, or have you already had a conversation with them, given that they are part of your stakeholder consultation group?

Ms HAWKINS - It needs to be done concurrently with the design. Basically, once the design identifies that there is a need to remove or relocate a service asset, we will contact the service owner and start to discuss how we might do that. Where possible, the design may be adjusted to avoid an impact on services but sometimes that is not possible.

DEPUTY CHAIR - I know that you said that you put these plans on display at the two council offices, is there an opportunity for people to go online and look at it?

Ms HAWKINS - Yes, it certainly was online as well. There is opportunity. There is a project page which is available so people can certainly make comment.

DEPUTY CHAIR - We all have to be aware of the COVID-19 restrictions these days. Some people do not like to move too far out of their home environment. Any other questions in regard to that stakeholder?

Ms BUTLER - I do have a quick question. Is there a set timeframe dealing with any other stakeholders from your department, that each department has to meet deadlines? Is there a month or is there a two-week kind of deadline? Can things sit in people's in-trays and hold up the process or is there a systems approach?

Ms HAWKINS - Yes, it probably varies depending on the activity.

Ms BUTLER - Just channelling Mr Ferguson's red-tape reduction.

Mr MEYERS - It depends on the authority. Development applications have a set timeframe. TasWater has legislation, they have set timeframes for responses. Not every acquisition has set timeframes.

Ms HAWKINS - Sometimes we are a bit reliant on ministerial approval for acquisitions. TasNetworks do their own thing.

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Mr MEYER - TasNetworks generally do their own thing. They are very responsive. We work quite consensually with TasNetworks.

Ms BUTLER - There are no penalties that apply to not meeting deadlines from stakeholders or anything in place?

Mr MEYERS - There are no deadlines.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Thank you. We have already talked about landowners and property acquisition. Obviously, that will be a one to one conversation with landowners. I did notice there were quite a few landowners who are very close to the road. I am sure, if you went into their bedroom, you would probably be able to work out how much rumbling was on the road. They were very close. They will need quite a conversation, I expect.

Ms HAWKINS - As I mentioned, in terms of the whole road corridor, we have been in contact with every landowner and will continue to do so as the project develops.

Mr ELLIS - What sort of property are we talking? Is it likely to be homes or rural properties on their land? What is the typical person we are dealing with in this situation?

Ms HAWKINS - The nature of Birralea and Frankford Road, even the Batman Highway, it is not an urban kind of environment. They are typically rural with commercial properties also. There is an orchard on the Batman Highway we have been dealing with as the project has developed. It can vary, and farming.

Mr MEYERS - Generally, with these rural types of shoulder-widening projects you are talking about taking maybe five metres off each side.

DEPUTY CHAIR - That would put you in a couple of bedrooms in a couple of places.

Mr MEYER - We generally avoid houses in these sorts of environments. I am not aware of any house implications.

Ms HAWKINS - I am not aware either at the moment. We have opportunity to go to the other side.

Mr TUCKER - The bedrooms are safe then.

DEPUTY CHAIR - I thought it that was a good thing for us to actually drive the road and while most of us have driven the road, we were at a reasonably lower speed than normal so we did get a good look around. I did anyway. Moving onto eight, if members have any questions out of all those 8.1 right through to 8.5? We have actually covered a number of them. Please speak up now if you have any questions.

Mr TUCKER - Just one.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Then straight to 8.5.

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Mr TUCKER - Yes, has the Meander Valley Interim Planning Scheme 2013 been updated, or is that still on that scheme where we were working? I thought they had done their Local Provision Schemes, but I was not sure where they are at with that.

Ms HAWKINS - It is my understanding it is still in place, but we can confirm that.

Mr TUCKER - It is only a minor thing. I am just interested, that is all.

DEPUTY CHAIR - I think there are only a couple of councils that have actually signed off on their schemes.

Mr TUCKER - There is a fair number now that have done their LPSs.

Mr ELLIS - I think it is 19 April 2021.

Ms BUTLER - To reaffirm for the record once more, the environment flora/fauna landscaping and visual amenity is not complete for the Frankford main road and Birralee Road?

Ms HAWKINS - That is correct.

DEPUTY CHAIR - I have already asked about heritage, but there is Egmont, a listed property over the bridge where we stopped today. Up and over the bridge and around the corner. This property is to be impacted and a Certificate of Exemption shall be sought from Heritage Tasmania.

Mr TUCKER - It is not going to be impacted, is it?

DEPUTY CHAIR - It says, this property is to be impacted and a Certificate of Exemption shall be sought from Heritage Tasmania.

Ms HAWKINS - It is unlikely the works will impact

DEPUTY CHAIR - Oh, 'it is unlikely', right, 'however unlikely'. I saw 'is to be impacted'. I was making sure I had the heritage covered because the Member for Hobart would not be happy if there was no mention of heritage.

Ms HICKS - If it was to be impacted, it would be identified as a major risk and we would be discussing under this section.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Might be going around that one as it is very significant. Members, are there any further questions?

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.

Ms ELIZABETH SKIRVING, CEO RURAL BUSINESS TASMANIA, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Welcome. On behalf of the committee I sincerely thank you for taking the time to put in a submission. You were not at last week's, but you did have wonderful representation with your dear mum.

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Thank you for coming today, because this is really important, as somebody who knows and understands rural roads and the effect they have on the community. I invite you to make an opening statement and yes, we all do have your submission.

Ms SKIRVING - Thank you. The submission came about with the fact we have a number of clients. Rural Business Tasmania looks after the financial and business management of clients, around 200 in rural and regional Tasmania. So, forest, fishers, farmers and small businesses that are affected. We also involve - and are engaged with - rural stakeholders, about 15 of those rural stakeholders and have a bi-monthly discussion group. As part of that and as ongoing feedback from our clients and stakeholders, we see the benefits of the increased work on the roads and acknowledge the input and the money that is being spent on that.

Our concerns that we've heard through a number of different parties have been about some of the practicalities of the roads, particularly for large slow-moving vehicles; for harvesters which are over 4 metres in width. Some of the informal lay-bys and areas that are being used that may be compromised through deep drains and the table drains as you spoke of earlier.

They're the main concerns that we're looking at. It's about the practical use, about those slow-moving vehicles and how they may impact, particularly in this instance in the Birralee Road where they are talking about increased freight. How a tractor or a harvester that might be slow moving, 4 metres in width, not on a float, but a float would be a similar sort of situation in width. It might be moving a little bit quicker, particularly through peak periods of seeding and harvesting through the September period, potato harvesting for the Birralee-Batman Highway corridor where potatoes might be harvested in the Scottsdale area, your background.

DEPUTY CHAIR - My patch.

Ms SKIRVING - And moved through to Ulverstone or Smithton processing factories. That's a key corridor. You've got multiple trucks coming through and if there are slow-moving vehicles, such as tractors, in that Birralee area that are moving from one paddock to another, going 30-40 kilometres an hour, and you have two trucks that would regularly move and just - it is a regular use of heavy vehicles and those slow-moving vehicles. So, how that would impact to make sure that where traditionally there have been informal areas that are unsealed that they would be still available for use, rather than that deep drainage that will help with the drainage. And that's really good that we don't have the water over the road from a safety point of view, but there are still sufficient areas for passing.

Ms BUTLER - Thank you.

DEPUTY CHAIR - I apologise that I didn't read out the statement around your evidence.

Ms SKIRVING - No, that's all right.

DEPUTY CHAIR - But you did hear that?

Ms SKIRVING - Yes.

DEPUTY CHAIR - And you do understand that before -

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Ms SKIRVING - Yes. So, I take that on - yes, from a previous, yes.

DEPUTY CHAIR - we ask you any questions. Thank you. I apologise for that. But you were in the room when I read that.

Ms SKIRVING - Yes.

DEPUTY CHAIR - So, thank you. You've obviously had a look at all the submissions and in my view all the points that you made about that heavy vehicle movement are very valid

Ms SKIRVING - Yes.

DEPUTY CHAIR - It is a significant growing area and also a transport area for the state. Do you have any concerns about what has been proposed and whether that road pavement width on the Birralee Road particularly, which is a metre less than it is on the other part of the reference today, that that won't be wide enough to manage those vehicle movements?

Ms SKIRVING - I am certainly encouraged by what I've heard today with regard to the consideration of that. I think it's still going to be tight in some areas if you have a large harvester that's in that four metres, if two; or you have a truck that is actually passing there, particularly if you've got small vehicles following that perhaps aren't used to the rural roads. We are seeing an increased prevalence of drivers who perhaps aren't used to those rural conditions. So, if they're meeting a harvester and then there's a truck behind them, that metre less would actually put a little bit more pressure on that.

Certainly, the ability to have some unsealed area to continue to that pull-off would be very useful and to ensure that the road surface is at a level to provide access easily for those larger vehicles in gateways and those sorts of areas.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Thank you. I want to let you know that I handed your submission to the members of the department last week. I indicated that there were some very good photos in your submission about exactly what you have spoken about. Thank you for going to the trouble of taking those and I have handed them on. The department has a copy so they can see exactly what you are talking about.

Ms SKIRVING - Thank you very much. We want that practical use, as members such as Mr Tucker would know, and continue to support that agricultural community and the work they are doing.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Before I go to Ms Butler, Mr Tucker gave us quite a good lesson last week on the width of tractors and those large pieces of machinery so we are well across it now, even if we did not understand it before.

Ms BUTLER - I wanted to have a quick chat to you about the design with Birralee Road. We know that there is not a set design at this stage. It is about widening. With the research you have done - and thank you again for the submission. I read that prior to our last hearing and found it really useful, so thank you. Do you think an overtaking lane or some kind of capacity on Birralee Road would provide some form of relief if you were, say for instance, trying to get through a harvester or a heavy vehicle?

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Ms SKIRVING - It may be useful. Probably also to consider - and something you see a lot on European roads - are those informal passing bays where someone can actually pull over. It may be a little bit wider more frequently rather than an overtaking lane that would be only one section.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Slow-moving vehicle turnouts.

Ms BUTLER - There are some on the Tasman Highway and they seem to work quite effectively.

Ms SKIRVING - Yes.

DEPUTY CHAIR - That is a really good suggestion and it would be worth asking the department, when we come back, if there might be an opportunity. They only need to be appropriately signed and people are not so anxious and in a hurry.

Mr TUCKER - I was going to suggest to you, Chair, that instead of having a slow vehicle turnout lane we could have a high-speed passing lane.

DEPUTY CHAIR - That takes longer and we need more room for that.

Mr TUCKER - I read your statement and Illawarra Road resonated with me, with the wire rope barriers. That is why I was so pleased with this proposal that has been put forward that they do not have that wire rope barrier and it gives you 8 metres there on Birralee Road plus another metre of gravel so you have got more than enough room for a truck and 2.4 metres to go past.

With that other one, we were down to 6.5 metres from memory, it makes it very tight and I would not want to be driving one of those machines, going past someone, even at a slow speed. With 100 ml each side, there is not much room for error when you are sitting up high.

Ms SKIRVING - There isn't, no, definitely.

Mr TUCKER - You would be in agreeance with me, without that wire rope down the middle it makes it a lot easier.

Ms SKIRVING - It does make a lot of difference and I know a number of people that would be thrilled to hear that there is not the wire rope. I understand the wire rope needs on major roads but the fact that there isn't, is really good.

The other thing I would say is that it appears that from some of those that have been raised in the past and raised in our submission, the department has really considered some of the compromised areas of Illawarra and now the Cressy-Longford area. They are really showing that they considered that in the Birralee and Frankford for this particular part of the project.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Anything else, Elizabeth, you might like to share with the committee? You have been so patient and waited. It was good information you would have heard.

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Ms SKIRVING - No, it has been very valuable to hear and to be able to feed that back to those who have been impacted or have raised concerns in the past, to see the benefit of putting in a submission and for them to actually see that process. I really appreciate the time you have all taken.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Anything you would like to add to your mum's submission?

Ms SKIRVING - No, I am sure my mother fed a lot of information through last week. She is very passionate about it.

DEPUTY CHAIR - It was good to have. We do not always have any members of the community come and present outside of the department those proposing particular projects. It is really helpful to the committee and I am sure it was very much appreciated by everyone. Thank you. Obviously, what you have said here to us today is protected by parliamentary privilege. But again, once you leave the table you need to be aware that privilege does not attach to your comments you make to anyone, including the media. I know you are well across the media. Even if you are just repeating what you said to us, you understand that?

Ms SKIRVING - Definitely, thank you so much.

DEPUTY CHAIR - We, again, thank you for your time. The committee will hear again from the department and put that very good suggestion to them. I think they are probably already ringing or emailing somebody higher powered today, right now. The committee will do their due diligence at the end of this. Thank you, Elizabeth.

Mr SKIRVING - Thank you, Tanya and everyone for giving me the opportunity.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Please feel free to stay if you need to or would like to. That is up to you.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW

The committee suspended from 3.07 p.m. to 3.09 p.m.

Ms **ROBYN HAWKINS**, PROJECT MANAGER, **Mr SVEN MEYER**, PROJECT MANAGEMENT TEAM LEADER, AND **Ms JANE HICKS**, MANAGER TRANSPORT NETWORK PLANNING, DEPARTMENT OF STATE GROWTH, WERE RECALLED AND EXAMINED

DEPUTY CHAIR - Welcome back. You obviously heard the suggestion by Elizabeth. I absolutely endorse that. I would have to be one of the most frustrated road users in this state, particularly when I travel between Scottsdale and St Helens, because there are no slow-moving turnouts designated anywhere on that road. Is there an opportunity - without saying yes or no right now - to look at something like that when we know heavy machinery is going to be used on that road?

Ms HAWKINS - I appreciate the submission and the information provided by Ms Skirving. One thing I would like to make the committee aware of and they obviously are, is the Northern Roads Package is a significant length of road. We have in our discussions today

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identified some issues that need to happen such as road widening and also pavement strengthening. Any additions to the scope would have to be considered in terms of the available budget, given we are currently working through concept design to look at areas of pavement strengthening.

The overall widening we are going to undertake on the Batman Highway, Frankford main road and Birralea Road is going to significantly improve safety and usability for larger vehicles. As was mentioned, there is an 8-metre seal width on Birralea Road plus an extra half metre on either side of the road, so 9 metres overall in terms of width, which will make it much more usable for those larger vehicles. Any additional work would have to be considered in terms of the available budget.

DEPUTY CHAIR - As elected members, we go cap in hand to departments every day to look for support for various projects and I feel sure if we could build a case for one, or two if that was in the minds of whoever was designing at the time

Ms HAWKINS - Also be aware as part of this corridor, the committee mentioned the West Tamar Highway is part of the corridor, and I accept it is not near the Birralea, but there is actually going to be an overtaking lane that will form part of this corridor which will be completed in the coming summer on the West Tamar Highway. I think probably it can be considered, but has to be taken into the context of the available budget and the primary objectives of the project.

DEPUTY CHAIR - I know I am not speaking for the committee, but I am asking for that consideration. And it only has to be factored in, if it is somewhere on that Birralea road stretch where you could have a slow-moving vehicle turnout on either side of the road, that would elevate the safety aspect to the next level.

Ms HAWKINS - Yes, but that is an individual view and obviously must take into consideration where it might be located and impact on property owners and environment.

DEPUTY CHAIR - But we do that every day.

Ms HAWKINS - Certainly.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Any other questions?

Ms BUTLER - To confirm if that could be looked at and investigated? I agree it could assist with safety when frustrated drivers making silly rash decisions, pull out, and also provide a lot more comfort to drivers of large vehicles that there is a place they know along there and they do not have to do 15 kms at a really slow pace holding up a lot of traffic.

If there is to be a prison built there would be increasing traffic and I imagine an increase of heavy vehicles also. I would appreciate that being considered.

Ms HAWKINS - Certainly.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Any other questions members for the department?

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These are a number of questions we would like to ask and I know you pre-empted them and answered them at the beginning, but we will ask them again now you have given us all that very good evidence. I do not mind who answers, can be three if you like.

Does the proposed works meet and identify need or needs or solve a recognised problem?

Ms HAWKINS - Yes, it does.

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

Ms HAWKINS - Yes.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Are the proposed works fit for purpose?

Ms HAWKINS - Yes.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Do the proposed works provide value for money? We don't know yet, do we?

Ms HAWKINS - We believe so.

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

Ms HAWKINS - I believe so.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Thank you very much. Now, to the statement after evidence. As I advised at the commencement of your evidence what you've said to us here today is protected by parliamentary privilege but once you leave the table you need to be aware that the privilege does not attach to your comments that you make to anyone, including the media, even if you are just repeating what you just said to us. Do you all understand?

Ms HAWKINS - Yes.

Mr MEYER - Yes.

Ms HICKS - Yes.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Thank you so much.

Ms HAWKINS - Thank you.

DEPUTY CHAIR - On behalf of the committee, thank you very much not only for this hearing process but also the opportunity to look at the site firsthand and particularly those conversations that we had at the stops along the way. That's very helpful, I believe, for the committee and I'm sure that they endorse my thanks to you for organising that. We understand that it's not always easy to have site visits on very busy stretches of roads, so thank you very much. The committee will further their consideration of this reference. So, thank you.

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And thank you very much to Rosemary and to Scott for your assistance today. Much appreciated.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.