

## PUBLIC

**THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS MET AT PERTH COMMUNITY CENTRE, 173 FAIRTLOUGH STREET, PERTH ON THURSDAY, 3 AUGUST 2017**

---

### **MIDLAND HIGHWAY SAFETY UPGRADE - PERTH LINK ROADS**

**Mr TED ROSS**, PROJECT DIRECTOR, **Mr CRAIG TARBOTTON**, PROJECT MANAGER, DEPARTMENT OF STATE GROWTH, AND **Mr GREG McGUIRE**, PROJECT MANAGER, GHD DESIGN, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** (Mrs Rylah) - Thank you for appearing before us today. The committee is pleased to hear your evidence today. Before you give your evidence, I would like to inform you of some of the important aspects of the committee proceedings. 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 statements that may be defamatory are repeated or referred to by you outside the confines of the parliamentary proceeding. This is a public hearing. Members of the public and journalists may be present and this means your evidence may be reported. Do you understand? Thank you very much. Would you like to make an opening statement?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - The Perth link roads project we are here to discuss is the follow-on stage, if you like, of our stage 1 project - the Perth to Breadalbane. The Perth link roads is a critical project for the department. It is a part of a greater or broader Midland Highway program upgrade. It connects two legs of a national highway - that is the Illawarra Road and the Midland Highway. The focus of the project is to ensure and maintain transport efficiency and road safety for vehicles travelling upon that. The focus is for the heavy vehicles coming from the ports in the north-west to connect to the ports in the south. That is for transport efficiency and, of course, for motorist safety. From a road design perspective, the project essentially consists of a dual carriageway separated by a median with a flexible wire-rope safety barrier down the centre.

It is a typical cross-section all of the Midland Highway projects, or majority of them, will adopt for the median and the 2-metre wide sealed shoulders. Other elements of the Midland Highway per se may have a 2 + 1 configuration, whereas this project is a dual carriageway. The project consists of three interchanges, if you like. We have a roundabout system at the south connecting to Perth. We then have the western change, which is our major interchange, allowing connection to the Illawarra Road heading towards the west. The highway then heads north and we have a third interchange system consisting of roundabouts, allowing access back into Perth and continuing north to Launceston. Is that sufficient?

**CHAIR** - It is entirely your call.

## PUBLIC

**Mr ROSS** - The report contains other information and we take it as read, but we are willing to take questions on any of the content.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much. Members, it is over to you. Do we have questions?

**Mr FARRELL** - Madam Chair, I know it is hard for the people down the back to hear a little bit - the acoustics are not brilliant - but I will shout as much as I can.

I think with the other witnesses facing forward it is probably a little difficult. I have a general question relating to documentation about the cross-section of the road, which says 'typical cross-section', not 'actual' cross section but 'typical'. In regard to the median strip that we are putting in right across the state, is the 3 metre from white line to white line the Australian Government standard? Does it have to be 3 metres with the fence in the middle? Does it have to be 1.5 metre either side of the steel rope?

**Mr McGUIRE** - The intent of the median is to allow for the wire rope that protects vehicles travelling in opposite directions from colliding should an errant vehicle occur. The usual deflection allowable on that wire rope is about 1.6 metres. Where we have a greenfield site, when we are building a new facility, we would certainly attempt to get the 3 metre median. In some of the other facilities around the state where we are working within constraints on existing roads, we have adopted a 2.1 metre median as being adequate.

**Mr FARRELL** - Does that still allow to come up to the standard with the 2.1?

**Mr McGUIRE** - Yes. The safety guidelines we are working to are an AusRAP system, which effectively assesses the facilities around the section of road that you are working on and the safety mechanisms they adopt. Having the wire rope in the central median is a key part of meeting the AusRAP 4-star requirements we are looking for in this project.

**Mr FARRELL** - So all the new roads that have been modified lately should be 3 metres?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - The Midland Highway is a program we aim to achieve AusRAP 3. That is in the situation, as Greg mentioned, where we are constrained by existing alignments. So they have a narrower median and a slightly lower AusRAP safety rating. Because the Perth link roads project is effectively greenfield - going across non-existing highway - we are aiming for an AusRAP 4, which is a higher safety rating, and consequently we have that wider median too.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I know we may have talked about this during the tour but we obviously need to get it on the record. Tasmania is continuing to grow as a cycling tourist location. Clearly people would be cycling from Launceston - I am talking about pushbikes, here not motorcycles - in particular from Launceston down. They might stop in at Perth and then they may want to go on to Longford. Can you just indicate for the record how those people are being catered for in terms of safety? I know that it is not desirable to have cycleways on main highways - I appreciate that might be the impetus - but Launceston, Perth and Longford are attractive towns. Can you just tell us how that is being catered for?

**Mr ROSS** - This project builds on the previous project, the Perth to Breadalbane project, where, in consultation with the Northern Midlands Council, we have developed a cycling route that follows the old highway alignment from the Breadalbane roundabout beside Devon Hills all the way into Perth. From within Perth, the council's vision is then to improve cycling within the

## PUBLIC

township. That will mean that areas like the existing highway alignment - Youl Road and Drummond Street - will all turn into more cycling-type friendly roads. The department has also developed another cycling facility - a cycling/pedestrian facility - that links at the Illawarra interchange that will take cyclists all the way up along the Illawarra Road to the Pateena Road junction -

**Mr VALENTINE** - That is off the main highway?

**Mr ROSS** - Yes that is off-highway. So that allows cyclists to be able to link all the way through Perth and all the way up to Pateena Road, which is the limits of the contract. That is where we would encourage cyclists to go in lower speed environments. There is a less differential in speed. In saying that, the highway alignment also provides 3.5-metre lanes and 2-metre shoulders so there is still the ability for cyclists if they choose to actually cycle in those shoulder areas on the main highway.

**Mr VALENTINE** - So the lane on the left-hand side of the road on the highway - that will have barrier fencing, won't it? The shoulder outside the barrier fencing is still wide enough to take -

**Mr ROSS** - No, sorry, there is a 3.5-metre lane, a 2-metre shoulder and then the fence.

**Mr VALENTINE** - And then the fence? Okay. Thank you for that. My other question relates to whether you have any information on the analysis of crashes that have occurred in and around this area - the types of crashes that they were. Has anyone done any homework on that? It is mentioned in 2.3 - Road safety improvements, which is about forecast decrease of crash frequency on the Midland Highway, Youl main road and Drummond Street with 10 fewer crashes per year. Can you give us any indication of the types of crashes that have occurred over the main time? Has it been mainly larger trucks and smaller vehicles? What type of crashes were they? Do you have any detail on that?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - We could take that question on notice. We have the information and data - we have a history of the nature of the crashes - but regrettably I do not have that information here at hand. I can say that the majority - I will provide this information to you after this meeting - but in recollection the majority of the nature of crashes are interactions between local vehicles. They are not fatalities. On Drummond Street and Youl Road, there is a lot of interaction between vehicles coming off Illawarra and residential traffic. So the interaction between those two types of movements has been the predominant cause for accidents.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Okay. So the main issue with this is that it will be a great improvement compared to what currently exists in terms of crash statistics?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Correct. By having a full system interchange at the Illawarra - the western - the objective is to obviously maintain high-speed traffic movements for both heavy and light vehicles, but the road safety is twofold. Obviously the new highway itself has to be up to a certain safety standard. However, it also reduces the number of vehicles entering into a low-speed residential precinct and consequently there will be a reduction in those interactions as accidents.

**Mr VALENTINE** - My next question is about noise. I live reasonably close to the Brooker Highway, about one-and-a-half/two streets away. I know that sounds a bit odd, but there is a junction there. I notice they have mounds to project noise away from the residential areas. That works very well. Can you explain for the record how you are dealing with that noise aspect?

## PUBLIC

A distant highway travelling at 110 as opposed to local traffic travelling at 50 and large trucks having to pull up and start and whatever at different intersections creates different types of noise. Could you explain how that might impact on the town? I imagine possibly in a positive way, but could you explain that?

**Mr McGUIRE** - As part of the analysis process for the project we have undertaken noise impact modelling. That entails originally getting some baseline data of existing noise levels and noise generated by the traffic on the existing system and then comparing that to the noise that will be generated by the proposed arrangement. Backing that from a technical perspective is a guideline that has been adopted by the department regarding noise thresholds and potential impact on residential amenity et cetera. Throughout our study it was determined that the main road, as you would expect, would get a significant improvement in amenity - that is, Drummond Street, Youl Street and residences along there will improve significantly.

The highway will obviously generate some more noise on the outskirts of the town. The threshold levels were exceeded by two properties as far as intervention levels under the guideline. We are currently undertaking discussions around the mitigation methods et cetera, for those affected residents.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Does that include plantings, berms and things, or not? When I say berms, I mean the mounds.

**Mr McGUIRE** - Part of the scope of the works being discussed with council and in process at the moment is the planning of a 20-metre wide screening facility adjacent to the highway - between the highway and the residential community. From a visual amenity and from a light-spill perspective that will be quite effective. From a noise reduction perspective, there is a slight reduction with vegetation but not a huge amount.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Obviously GHD - Greg mentioned that we undertook this, a baseline or a reference-level noise modelling, and then we predicted our impact upon that. The outcome of the noise modelling shows that 90 per cent of the receivers - they are the houses we modelled - will have a reduction in noise level. So, yes, there will be a change to noise levels in certain portions of the township, but a large percentage of the township will have a reduction in noise levels associated with this alignment.

**CHAIR** - Because of the distance away?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Mainly because at the moment there is a lot of heavy vehicles and light vehicles coming through Illawarra, Youl and Drummond. They will now use our new alignment, our new highways. Similarly, a lot of the residential - the light vehicles - for example, when a person coming from Longford heading north in a residential sector, it is likely they will take the northern leg of our new highway. This transfer of vehicles from the local traffic onto our highway will reduce traffic noise.

**Mr VALENTINE** - There will be less stopping and starting, and therefore less revving and engine-breaking?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Yes, and the sheer quantum of vehicles travelling through those local streets.

## PUBLIC

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Could you explain the exact distance or the average distance, the highway parallel to Drummond Street is from Drummond Street? I know we saw it out in the paddock, but how far is it approximately?

**Mr McGUIRE** - I don't have it at hand, but I'd say it would be 200 to 300 metres.

**CHAIR** - That is a significant distance. You are talking about a 20-metre tree line near the town. Do you believe that will provide any additional fire risk to the town when it is grown?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - No. We have an environmental unit and it is working in consultation with the Northern Midlands council which has its own landscaping consultant. One of our key criteria is the flammability of the tree species selected. The species will be selected so that it has a lower flammability.

**Mr FARRELL** - Being that is a substantial - over \$80 million - project and over quite a long period of time, were other options looked at, such as putting the bypass on the eastern side of Perth, or whether the main reason was to bypass the town or to link up the highway to the west. What were the priorities around that and what other options were considered?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Throughout the design process we undertook a number of design iterations or considerations, if you like. The objective of the project is to connect the two ports - one of the key objectives is obviously to connect ports - positioned up in the north-west with our southern ports. That drove us to look at connecting back into Illawarra. At the same time we recognised that there is a significant transport route between south and Launceston, so, again, we had to maintain that as well. The focus of the design is actually a north-south orientation - that is, Hobart to Launceston - however, the western interchange, that system interchange, allows full connectivity into Illawarra at a high speed so there is no loss of functionality or quality, if you like, if you come from the south going to Illawarra.

That has been driving impetus for this alignment. I know - but again it is anecdotal - that on the eastern side of the river very early on - a few decades ago - that was considered. I just cannot answer to what level that was considered.

**Mr FARRELL** - That was looked at, but quite a while ago?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Correct.

**Mr FARRELL** - So the planning for this section has been on the table for -

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Well, at our second public display, we actually put up an earlier public display that dated from 1986. I understand this project was actually touted earlier than that - I just do not have the information about those earlier designs. The 1986 public display showed the same alignment that we have adopted, which is to the west of the town. If I could say that we do not see this as a bypass of Perth. We see it as relocating traffic. The access into Perth from the south or from the north is identical to what it is at the moment. We allow full traffic residential to go in. Our goal is to move the heavy vehicles away from Perth. At the moment heavy vehicles are travelling through the centre of Perth onto Drummond. Our highway still allows light vehicles, tourists and residents, to enter at south and north. So it is not a bypass per se.

## PUBLIC

**Mr VALENTINE** - Looking at the maps and the issue of local access at the Illawarra Road interchange - 68 per cent of respondents not wanting local access at Illawarra Road interchange and 32 per cent in favour. It is the fact that they are not getting local access at Illawarra, is that correct?

**Mr ROSS** - The department has worked very closely with the community in regards to the development of this proposal. We have undertaken a number of public displays to engage the concerns and interests of the community. At the Illawarra interchange, I guess people's concerns and the concerns raised by the community are around the connectivity between Perth and Longford. There is a very important social connection between Perth and Longford. A lot of people live in Perth and work in Longford and people who live in Perth access a lot of services in Longford.

The project has managed by making sure that the connectivity through the southern and the northern interchanges is maintained. There is still access. The concern, especially from some of the residents in west Perth, is that by having to actually travel back to the south and north ends of Perth is there is some additional travel time. The department recognises that additional travel time, but I guess it is offset by some of the other aspects that we have said around improved amenity for the residents in that area and the improvements in safety around some of the junctions.

In general also it is a direction of the flow off the highway onto the main road, which is important for business and also for direction. It also came back to the Illawarra junction. The concerns around trying to put in local access were that it would take away from the functionality of having a high-speed system interchange and would create confusion for drivers and make it less safe. It is very important and I think the project has done a good job in addressing the concerns of those residents to make sure that we still have a very good connection between Perth and Longford. It is very important that is maintained. We have also demonstrated that through the development of the cycleway and footpath, which we see in the future could be extended all the way. Again, it is the importance of the connection between the Perth community and the Longford community.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you very much for that. There was one other aspect about the South Esk River Bridge - considerations of the size of that and whatever. The score there is that that has another 15 to 30 years' life?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - I mean that is a slightly subjective evaluation. The bridge was constructed probably in the early 70s. We're saying there's 30 years of life left in that bridge at the moment, at which point we will start to consider the -

**Mr VALENTINE** - As to what you do with it?

**Mr TABOTTON** - Correct.

**CHAIR** - Importantly, I understand - and I'd like to get this on the record - that the bridge was built for a slower speed. It was not built for a 110 kilometre speed? Is that correct? For large trucks?

**Mr TABOTTON** - Correct. It's not that it wasn't built for that; it is posted at 60 because there are slight concerns for the bridge, if you like. It is better to be at 60 for motorists' safety.

**CHAIR** - Right, okay.

## PUBLIC

**Mr VALENTINE** - That is being maintained in this project?

**Mr TABOTTON** - Correct.

**CHAIR** - I understand from the Breadalbane project that it was discussed that there were some projections in terms of traffic flow, as we do for the highway projects, that indicated - please don't let me put words into your mouth - but I think they indicated the traffic flow across that bridge space aligns similarly with when it will need replacing so increase to four lanes? Am I remembering that correctly or not?

**Mr ROSS** - I guess the philosophy around the project is the department has made a commitment that, especially off the end of a dual carriageway - so the Perth to Breadalbane is a dual carriageway - and we have extended that dual carriageway as far as the township of Perth. As you get south of Perth, there is a significant drop off of the traffic volumes and it does not warrant a dual carriageway anymore. As you go south of the South Esk River, you then get into the 2 + 1-type arrangement.

We have made sure that there is dual carriageway through this project to manage the traffic volumes generated within Perth and north, and then as you head south, the traffic volumes, as I said, drop off and it does not currently warrant a dual carriageway. In a way that also fits in with the future review of the bridge - in 30 years' time, you will see how many lanes you would install and what sort of junction configuration you may have in the future at the southern end.

**CHAIR** - In regard to that, near the South Esk River, the placement of the roundabout, the size of the roundabout and the need to slow traffic. Could we have some discussion on that please?

**Mr McGUIRE** - Yes, it certainly has been discussed. The slowing of traffic, as we have said, from a dual carriageway highway down through that highway and onto the existing bridge is an important safety consideration. The slowing will be generally controlled through a speed limit implementation and obviously significant signage and management of information to the driving public through that system. The roundabout itself has been employed as an appropriate traffic management device for a couple of reasons as we touched on - providing that coactivity into Perth at the southern end of the project as well as slowing vehicles down before they hit that South Esk River bridge and the alignment just beyond the bridge, which is also below a 100 kilometre per hour standard. The slowing of the vehicles will be managed through signage and regulation through to the roundabout and the actual road geometry will manage the speed of vehicles through that small section.

**CHAIR** - The size of the roundabout is about the same size as the existing Longford roundabout. Is that right?

**Mr McGUIRE** - Thereabouts - it is potentially a little larger. The vehicles that we have allowed to run through the roundabout are the designated high-productivity vehicles. For vehicles remaining on the highway, we are allowing up to B-triple level and then for vehicles accessing Perth or our test area, B-double access. Quite high-productivity vehicles will be able to traverse that roundabout without any trouble.

**CHAIR** - Is the B-triple that is referred to as the 'tri-tri'? Are they the same or are they different things? I am getting a shaking of the head from the background. Thank you.

## PUBLIC

**Mr McGUIRE** - They are not vehicles commonly on the Tasmanian network at the moment, but on these facilities, particularly new facilities, we are potentially looking to the future and ensuring that what we are building now doesn't necessarily become a constraint to future productivity of the freight systems.

**Mr VALENTINE** - In your submission, 1.4.2 on page 5 is headed 'Alignment with Planning Policies and Themes.' You've obviously had a lot of interaction with the council on this. I'm aware that there are planning documents called land use strategies, which are statutory documents under the State Planning System. Yet I don't see the northern land use strategies as opposed to the Perth Structure Plan or the Northern Integrated Transport Plan - there are a few there - but I can't see the land use strategy mentioned in there in terms of whether or not this project fits that. Can you recall any discussion with council with regard to land use strategies that are the statutory document?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Both the Department of State Growth and our consultant, GHD, have employed planners who are familiar with the planning schemes. There has been a thorough process of review of those codes. I can't quote you what we have, but I am very confident that the Department of State Growth and our consultant have considered those codes in coming up with this alignment.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I know a heck of lot of work goes into those, and I wonder sometimes whether they get bypassed, not like a road, but obviously -

**Mr TARBOTTON** - The project currently has as submission to council to receive a development application permit.

**Mr VALENTINE** - And that will deal with it, will it?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - We have to address those concerns and those codes within that application, so I am very confident we have considered that and taken it into account.

**CHAIR** - In regard to the development application, when is that going before council and when are you expecting an outcome on that?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - That planning application is with council. It was submitted to council on 21 June, I believe. That public comment period has closed. The council has asked for an extension of time for its decision and that has been postponed to 21 August.

**CHAIR** - The 21st?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Correct.

**Mr FARRELL** - Generally on that, does the local council have any particular concerns about the road? Is it just the reason behind the extension?

**Mr ROSS** - The reason for the extension is basically twofold: One, there is obviously a public exhibition period and then there is also a period to allow council to actually review those submissions made by representations, and also to develop a report and then to table it at the next council meeting. The department is working together with council to help facilitate that assessment and make sure there is enough time to properly assess it.



## **PUBLIC**

**Mr VALENTINE** - While we were out at the site tour, we touched on buses and the normal bus stops and the like. Can you give us an overview of how you have consulted with regard to the various bus stops that need to be retained and how they might be being modified or otherwise, making sure that students are able to safely negotiate those sorts of situations? Not only students, but obviously people who use bus services.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - The department has a unit called Passenger Transport Services. They are our section within State Growth, which regulates and monitors the performance and use of these public facilities. We - that is, we as the project consultant - have been in consultation with that unit. They have subsequently or consequently been in contact with the bus operators. Because Drummond Street will be terminated, we know there will be a reallocation of the bus services. So at the moment our Passenger Transport Services is in consultation, if you like, or in discussion with the various bus operators to identify where those new bus bays will be.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Obviously student safety and those sorts of things would be very high on the agenda at that point?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - As part of the passenger transport services, we have internal policies. It is an interesting area. The internal policy is that if a project creates a new bus bay - and by new, I mean if there is an existing bay and it is relocated x number of metres, that is considered a new bay - that new bus bay must be to DDA compliance, so a high level of design criteria must be satisfied. If an existing bus bay is simply being slightly reformalised, if you like, and it is not changing location, we will improve the accessibility to that, but not necessarily raise to the highest DDA compliance.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Okay, thank you.

**CHAIR** - What is the future planning for Seccombe Street? How will connect into the roundabout?

**Mr ROSS** - There is a roundabout at the northern end of Perth that will connect the main road of Perth to the northern interchange. It also connects through to Devon Hills Road. At that point we have aligned that roundabout so that at a future time if Northern Midlands Council also wanted to extend Seccombe Street, Seccombe Street could also link into that. One of the things we identified as part of our consultation is that the local residents at that point did not indicate they wanted that connectivity. It is a local council matter, but it is positioned in such a way that it could enable that future connectivity if the local council wanted that to happen.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, Ted. That makes sense to me. Thank you very much.

**THE WITNESSES WITHDREW**

## PUBLIC

**Mr JOHN STAGG, Mr DES TAYLOR**, VICE PRESIDENT, TASMANIAN TRUCK OWNERS ASSOCIATION, AND **Mr ALF WATERS**, SECRETARY, TASMANIAN TRUCK OWNERS ASSOCIATION, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** - Thank you for appearing before the committee. The committee is pleased to hear your evidence today. Before you give your evidence, I would inform you of some of the important aspects of the committee proceedings. 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 of place out of parliament. It applies to ensure the parliament received the very best information when conducting its inquiries. It is important to be aware this protection is not accorded to you if statements that may be defamatory are repeated or referred to by you outside the confines of the parliamentary proceedings.

This is a public hearing. Members of the public and journalists may be present and this means your evidence may be reported. Do you understand?

### **THE WITNESSES ASSENTED.**

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much. Would you like to make an opening statement? Who would like to go first?

**Mr TAYLOR** - Thank you. I represent the Tasmanian Truck Owners and Operators Association. Obviously. As the name implies, we cover truck owners and operators who cover a wide field of transports in the state.

We have a couple of probably not necessarily questions but concerns with the projects. What we are seeing is from projects past and currently being worked on, particularly with the two one-lane configuration, is that there seems to be - and I can be corrected - a limited amount of space for over-dimensional loads. We can also put into that bracket oversize farm machinery, whether tractors, combines, harvesters et cetera. In the interests of safety and the design of the road structure, there now seems to be a lack of areas where slow vehicles can be accommodated - as in slow in movement or in slow where they can pull off the road and let traffic flow and thus improve safety through limiting frustrations.

With the oversized dimensional load aspect, we have three roundabouts in this particular project so it becomes of some concern with limited information as far as dimensionals go, nor do we know what the size of the oversize load might be in the future.

We have come across a situation - or it is an observation - where we have an engineering works in Western Junction. It is doing fine work exporting oversize, over-dimensional loads interstate. I am not speaking for the company itself, but all I am saying from the aspect is we used to have a large engineering amount of works going on at Bell Bay, but that became restricted from road access because the railway line limited access for vehicles that travelled on there. So we cut out engineering aspect in future employment in that area. When we move onto whether engineering firms in Tasmania can tender and compete for national contracts, obviously the road system is largely responsible whether the contract can be fulfilled or not.

## PUBLIC

All in the same vein as this is that we are talking about tourism. We are pretty big on tourism in Tasmania. People who are bringing caravans and motorhomes, or even hiring motorhomes in the state, need to have somewhere to move off and sightsee. If you are going down the highway, for instance, it is designed for through travel. Our highway is a clearway - near enough to clearway status - because there is nowhere to pull over.

From what our members have been telling us, this is a concern. For instance, the single lane sections act as a speed management tool where the highway traffic does not move at 100 kilometres, it moves at 80 or perhaps 90 kilometres until they get out of the single lane, and as soon as it is a dual lane, they open up to 110 kilometres. While this is a good safety management tool, it becomes a form of frustration to those who know the road and are able to drive to the conditions. They are the main points that I see. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, Mr Taylor. Members, do you want to ask questions of Mr Taylor? Who would like to go next? Mr Stagg?

**Mr STAGG** - I am a lifelong resident of Perth. My first job when I left school was working on the upgrade of the Midlands Highway between the Evandale turn-off and Symmons Plains. I was a member of the 1999 bypass consultation group run by Johnstone McGee and Gandy. It was an exhaustive process that ran over four days. At the end of that they had various drawings, various such-and-such from all forms of people, and the final outcome was that they basically said, 'Yep, we will work for a 20-year start date'. So I was very pleased when this project got away a lot earlier. One thing they did can very early in the piece, and their later drawings never showed anything on it, was the link road off Illawarra Road. It was deemed back then not to be viable, so I really had some concerns when it showed up originally in the plans.

Some people - not as many as people would make out - but wanted this link road. I think if it did go ahead, it would be a complete disaster. One reason for that is that Perth people nowadays are more aligned to Kings Meadows than Longford with shopping, everything. Perth people go to Kings Meadows.

Another reason is that the Northern Midlands Council has passed its Perth structure plan which allows for 605 new dwellings in the west Perth area. If that were the case over a period of years, that would double the population of Perth. Why would you have a reasonably busy link road entering right in your highest population area of Perth? Common sense tells you they come in on each end of the main street and then traffic diverts off the main street to the various locations they want to go to in Perth.

Even on today's standard, 28 buses a day enter and exit Perth. If that were the case, well, with a higher population, there will be more buses - they would all exit and enter through that Illawarra Road link, apart from the ones that go via Evandale, which would use the southern roundabout. That is my only concern. I am very pleased with the rest of the project. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Very good; thank you very much.

**Mr WATERS** - The truck owners would very much like to thank this committee for letting us come along and give our opinion. We are over 35 years old and we have been having meetings every month. We have different drivers who go right across the state and bring in all sorts of complaints on road-building. Having them come along today and voice their opinion on this is pretty good. We have seen some of the other projects you have done - for instance, as Des Taylor

## PUBLIC

said - there is nowhere for the over-dimensional to get off. Over the years we have never been able to have the say on different things like that. One thing we have not seen in this project is truck stops. There are no truck stops in here whatsoever for trucks to get right off the road. This often comes up in our meetings. When premier Paul Lennon was about, it was right on the cards to have decent truck stops well off the road. Not on the side of the road because some blokes, after five and a half hours, have to have a decent rest and, you know, whatever. That was one of our main concerns.

The South Esk River Bridge was another complaint. B-doubles - locking in your 60- and 65-ton range going around, say, this roundabout here - you are coming off the dual highway into this roundabout across that bridge. That really concerned us. Listening to what the committee fellas just said a while back, this plan has been on the go since 1986. Well, if it was developed in 1986, why haven't we got a bridge catered for by now to take the dual lane all the way to Hobart? And now this is what we have.

Perhaps we have the wrong designers here, I do not know. I mean you look at Sydney, the harbour bridge was developed in early 1900 - it's got a six-lane bridge. Now 100 years later, what have we done wrong? We just think with all the productivity coming out of Bell Bay, it is fairly hectic on that East Tamar Highway and we would like to see - even though you have it partly right with this new highway in Hobart, there is going to be catches. We believe many years ago the roundabouts were mucked up there at the western junction and they had to be narrowed because of our new imports of our B-doubles. With the technology of our vehicles, we do not really want to slow down for roundabouts, especially when some B-doubles are coming off the boat at Devonport and have to drop stuff in Hobart and be back on that boat at night time. That is what we are looking at, and we are looking at the fast road between Devonport and Hobart.

As I said, we have noticed over the years - for instance, the chaos in Launceston at the moment with all this heavy traffic coming out of Hobart, Devonport and those places - that it is all coming through Launceston for the same thing that is coming here: This bridge has narrowed a dual highway down to two lanes. We think the planning has gone wrong somewhere.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Members, do we have any questions of these witnesses?

**Mr FARRELL** - With the issues you face with slow agricultural traffic, I have also had feedback that it can be a bit of a problem because there is no space to pull over. Have your members looked at what would be the ideal gap between pull-over spaces? Do you need pull-over spaces every 10 or 20 or 50 kilometres? What would be ideal for people to check their loads or for machinery to move over? Or does that vary between different parts of the road network?

**Mr TAYLOR** - It varies. As you say, the condition of the network - where the fatigue stops are, where caravans can pull off - we could probably put the caravans in the same bracket as agricultural tractors and combines. When they would like to pull off, they know to pull off - that is about the size of it. Whereas years gone by, I guess we have been spoiled in essence to what we are looking at today. We have been spoiled with the ability to pull off the road. In years gone by, councils use to put a couple of loads of gravel on the side of the road - there was a pad to be able to pull off there. Of course nowadays in the interests of safety, we have done away with all these things. Now we have clear lanes in essence.

How often? A truck driver has a logbook he has to fill in - he has to stop after a maximum of five hours. Does not say what he has done in those five hours or how far he has travelled or where

## PUBLIC

his five hours is limited. The authorities say the driver needs to work his time around so where he can stop for three hours, not five hours, and do his break and then continue on his way. Well and fine, but we do not know where his three hours or his four hours is going to drop in so it is a bit hard to say where the truck stops should be. The other side of it is they need to be, let's say, 50 kilometres between areas where you can pull over.

Tractors and farm machinery go from between one property to the next, so that can be far less. The common thing through all that is that we are restrained from pulling over on the side of the roads. That is in the interest of safety - I suppose maybe that is part of growing up.

**Mr WATERS** - When you get a blown turbo, it is instant - you have to stop. If you have B-double on, you have to take up half that road. Up against the wire road - drivers have to get in there or the mechanic has to get in there and repair it, so then all the triangles have to come out. On the East Tamar Highway, it is really critical. It is fairly long and if ever there was an accident, geez, now there's nothing.

**Mr FARRELL** - Does your organisation have any input into the department as far as planning and suggesting -

**Mr WATERS** - None. This is the first hearing we have been to in a long time.

**CHAIR** - What is the width of the B-double?

**Mr TAYLOR** - Standard truck width is 2 foot 8-and-a-half, which is 2500.

**Mr WATERS** - If you get two blokes down on either side, then you are out on the white line when you are doing mechanical work.

**Mr TAYLOR** - It is an interesting thing when you have a truck, for instance, in trouble on the side of the road. If you have road repair going on and you have all the flags, sticks, lollipops and everything else, but the truck driver usually gets stuck down there on his own so it is an interesting sort of situation.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I am interested in the fences - the median fence or barrier and the barrier on the edge of the road. You talk about large loads and manufacturing and all the rest of it - do they ever present a problem, the height of those? Are they ever an issue for you?

**Mr TAYLOR** - It can be. Consequently the transport sector now - it depends on the shape of the load - has devised hydraulic platforms that can raise themselves above these barriers. Again, that all depends on the stability of the vehicle et cetera. Every over-dimensional load has different characteristics in its own right.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Are you aware of any major issues in relation to these sorts of things in the past where it has really been a show stopper?

**Mr TAYLOR** - It has been a showstopper in the respect that we cannot contract or tender because of the road access ability.

**Mr VALENTINE** - If you are transporting large framed articles, if you cannot get it to Devonport, you cannot get it to the mainland.

## PUBLIC

**Mr TAYLOR** - There are a couple of rail bridges in the way. Down the East Tamar, of course, but yes.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Are there any options out of Bell Bay itself in terms of transport?

**Mr TAYLOR** - The shipping situation now is different. We used to have roll-on/roll-off at all ports, now we do not have that at Bell Bay.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I am assuming these roads are being constructed to a national standard and your trucking associations would have input through the establishment of those standards?

**Mr WATERS** - No, we don't. We do not have any input whatsoever.

**Mr TAYLOR** - The restriction is Australian standards.

**Mr VALENTINE** - How they are developed is the important thing and whether your organisation is being listened to as to the problems. That is all I am asking - whether you are aware of any input that you are able to have?

**Mr TAYLOR** - The people we are affiliated with in Canberra - it is all a lot of legwork that happens and, as you know, it takes time to change things.

**Mr WATERS** - Sometimes it would be handy if, when they put all these road designs in, the blokes from State Growth take a ride in a B-double, just to show them what sort of problems we come up against. At the moment we are doing that with State Growth from Launceston about some of the problem roads in and along the Tasman Highway and things like that. They come back and say to us 'Well, they're not covered if they go for a ride in the truck'. We have to show them where the problems are.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Mr Stagg, basically you are supporting this?

**Mr STAGG** - Yes, definitely.

**Mr VALENTINE** - You have no outstanding concerns? It's all been taken care of?

**Mr STAGG** - Not anymore, no. The link roads have been off the agenda - that is me done. Yes, I think it is a great project.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Is there an issue for you with trucks not being able to use engine braking in residential areas? Is that ever a problem?

**Mr WATERS** - Well, what were they designed for?

**Mr VALENTINE** - I understand what they are designed for, but it is whether there is a real issue.

**Mr TAYLOR** - The noise from engine brakes has now been played to the nth degree. Trucks of today - some recent statistics show the Tasmanians road fleet is 12.2 years old or something to that effect. It is the same story with our trucks. There are very few trucks older than 10 years on

## **PUBLIC**

every day work. There are trucks doing three days a week or whatever, but ones on full employment - as in 24 hours a day - you will find those trucks are probably less than three years old. The noise that comes from, I daresay, engine brakes - the driver does not hear it let alone anybody else. We are talking about Australian design rules and emission levels - in Euro 5 now, soon to go to Euro 6. A lot of technology is going into these trucks now. They are probably closer to an aircraft than what it is driving a car nowadays.

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

**Mr TAYLOR** - Yes. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - We will swear in the next round of witnesses and then ask State Growth to come back to respond to the issues raised. Thank you very much.

**THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.**

## PUBLIC

**Mr ANTHONY BROWN, Mr DICK ADAMS AND Ms DEE ALTY WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.**

**CHAIR** (Mrs Rylah) - Thank you for appearing before us today. The committee is pleased to hear your evidence. Before you begin to give your evidence, I would like to inform you of some of the important aspects of the committee proceedings. 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 outside of parliament. It applies to ensure that parliament receives the very best information when conducting its inquiries.

It is important to be aware that this protection is not accorded to you if statements that may be defamatory are repeated or referred to by you outside the confines of the parliamentary proceedings. This is a public hearing. Members of the public and journalists may be present and this means your evidence may be reported. Do you understand? Thank you very much. Who would like to make an opening statement?

**Mr BROWN** - I am Anthony Brown. It is most likely that I will be working on this coming project. I am working on the current project and a lot of other projects around the area. I am also a road user. I am going to be using that road every day pretty well for the rest of my life. I have couple of concerns. I do not like spray seal - you can already see what it is doing up at the last thing, and is probably going to do it on the other projects. For the cost difference to hot mix, I am not sure of the exact numbers on it, but I know that it is not even double the price to put in. In the scheme of things, for only a sealing thing, it is not that much of a cost on the whole road.

They have already referred to the other stuff in respect of the roundabout at the southern end. I do not think it is a good idea. You are slowing everybody down for a few people entering and exiting that intersection. At the end of the day 90 per cent of the traffic will head north - probably 80 per cent actually - because Longford traffic will have to go south if they live around the area, but a lot of the traffic will go north. In some of the original drawings - I am not sure when they were - they had an overpass drawn into the things and at some point that has been cut out. I am hearing that is because of the reduced speed limit on that bridge. Did they say it was 80 kilometres an hour? It is 60? I thought it was 80 kilometres on the other side?

Why do we have to slow everybody down using a roundabout? Can we not just use speed limits? If that does not work, as a motorist, I hate to say it, but a speed camera will definitely slow down the traffic, and yet it will not slow everybody down to a point where they have to actually stop to get into the intersection - to go around it. Have they looked at different forms of roundabouts? On the Bass Highway in Gippsland in New South Wales, they have these roundabouts where the road is divided so much that the roundabout becomes a part of the road and the traffic going through is not interrupted by the traffic turning in. Why is it not an overpass anymore? That is my biggest question.

If a new bridge is being planned in so many years' time, will this roundabout be aligned in such a way that major delays will not occur in the next stage of redoing the road? In the stage being done at the moment, had they built the next bridge along in that stage, there would be fewer delays to traffic and motorists going along when that is being done up again. At the moment we are sitting through 5 kilometres of roadworks that are slowing everybody down. When the next stage starts,



## PUBLIC

on the brand-new bit of highway, we are going to be back into roadworks instead of having that extended further into the paddocks so the roadworks are out of the motorists' way.

It is not really relevant because of the speed; it is more that the speed limit changing the reasoning for the roundabout. If there is a roundabout there, why is there not more roundabouts down the highway? You are saying it is a safety issue to have the roundabout. Why is there not one at Leylands Road where just as much traffic goes out to Western Junction? You do not have them at Ross or anywhere down the Bass Highway - they all have overpasses. In the past you did not build roundabouts to get into towns, you built overpasses and did it properly the first time. That is it.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much, Mr Brown. Mr Adams?

**Mr ADAMS** - Thank you for the opportunity. I am wearing my cap because the sun is coming at me like a Spitfire pilot.

**CHAIR** - Would you like to move the table forward so you are out of the sun?

**Mr ADAMS** - I will be okay. Let me say the first ever parliamentary committee in which I sat is a committee which you now occupy. That was a long time ago.

I have been a long-time resident of these communities; I grew up on the other side of Cressy. I would like to deal today with two points that have been the subject of community discussion: the over-engineering of this enormous project and the issue of connectivity with the local communities.

The Longford-Cressy-Bishopsbourne outer area is pretty large; it has large farming communities and lots of industrial/rural pursuits and a lot of employment now within that area. An enormous amount, probably more than what you see. On the other side of Cressy, there is quite an enormous rural presence. There is an abattoir out there, a fish farm, which has doubled in recent times, and the grass seed industry has a large production out there. It has many other industries, such as dairy farming, which is set to increase with the irrigation taking place in those regions.

These communities have been connected with Perth through local roads since the 1820s and 1830s. My family turned up here about 1813 after they have left Norfolk Island, so that goes back a long way. The railway crossing at Drummond Street and Youl main road has been probably one of the worst connections in Tasmania for 50 years. It has probably been 50 years overdue to be redone, but somehow the decision-makers have never got onto it, mainly because they were probably waiting for the bypass of Perth; I do not know. It is very dangerous and has claimed many lives over the years.

With these major bypasses of other communities in this area - Deloraine, Westbury and then Brighton, the most recent - I believe the continued connection of local roading has always been considered and built on. My friend on my left mentioned about overpasses. You will see that Brighton that Tea Tree, Old Beach and other communities in the region continued to be linked into Brighton when the highway has gone through; the same applies with Westbury and with Deloraine as the one prior to that. Somehow here there has been this consideration you cannot have this continued link with Illawarra Road by having the highway go across the top.

There are other considerations of the over-engineering, of having two roundabouts, one as you come off the bridge and another one on the northern end of Perth to connect Perth. People are

## PUBLIC

finding it difficult to understand why. There was one proposal some years ago to bypass Perth by having a very large roundabout somewhere on the western side of Perth - I have been travelling, which is why I have missed your submission times, but there are places in the world where enormous roundabouts exist and take a lot more traffic than will ever pass Perth - to deal with our trucking industry and all the travelling public. That idea somehow has been totally dismissed, and it hasn't come on.

The building of the Devon Hills underpass for 100 residents under seems to be in question. Why would not we have continued the road that existed there along with a bike path, off the national highway and then the old highway into Young Town? Why not continue that road back right into Perth and then on to Longford? We have a slight problem with the bridge of getting people across the bridge. In my council work I have come across a department policy of not having even pedestrians walking across bridges, which is a very backward-thinking process and we need to look at that in policy terms.

My main submission, as I said, is about continuing to keep communities together. Everything points to that. All the evidence says we should keep our communities together, interlinked - putting people from an area onto a national highway then driving off it again and back in. Those communities are connected through family ties and sporting connections. I understand Mr Stagg has just given you evidence. Every time Mr Stagg has lobbied me, it has always been in the best interests of the department. The continuation of taking people into Kings Meadows to do their shopping might be what some people consider is the connection. The connectivity is enormous between family ties, sporting and community. That should be able to continue through local connections.

I do not know what happened to the concept of the large roundabout, which would have been one engineering solution that could have solved all the problems. I have never received a proper argument about why the highway could not go over Illawarra Road, with Illawarra Road staying exactly as it is now and continuing into Perth.

That is probably what I wanted to submit to you, Chair. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much, Mr Adams. Ms Alty?

**Ms ALTY** - Thank you for the opportunity of speaking to you.

I have a little bit more to add than what Dick has said. I represent the Business and Tourism Association of Longford, but I also regularly meet with nine elderly women who live in Perth who also put in an objection to the original proposal when it was first mooted. They still have concern. It is to do with the link between Perth and Longford. A lot of older women do not feel comfortable driving on highways. They tend to use the local roads wherever they can because they feel more confident in not having to deal with trucks and fast cars. I can understand that, being also a regular driver backwards and forwards from Longford and surrounds.

That link is very important. As Dick pointed out, with the roads all the way around, even up to the Devon Hills Road, it is important to be able to have those local links, as Oatlands, Westbury and various others do, where the major roads have gone through.

I repeat what was mentioned about the over-engineering of the roads. I have lived in Tasmania now for 40-something years and during that time, our population has not grown hugely. It has

## PUBLIC

grown gradually and the roads we have been getting bit by bit have been adequate for the general growth of population. I feel that up here we have a situation where we are dealing with another 100 years, not another 10 years. The volume is not growing any larger.

One of the department people commented that after you come from Launceston through Perth, onto the Midland Highway, the traffic drops off. I am wondering why that was; I did not quite understand what they were saying. They might like to point out where the traffic is going if it has come from Launceston and not going down the Midland Highway.

The bit around Perth is really over the top for what we need at the moment. The bigger roundabout suggested for the bottom, so it can curve off onto the Illawarra Road at some later point, would be a lot better. I cannot see the big picture from what happens after Pateena Road because they say it is beyond their brief. That is going to lock Longford people into their town because if all this traffic is getting to Pateena Road and going to that roundabout, we are not going to get out of Longford very easily because of all the trucks going around this roundabout.

I am concerned what happens next. It is not so much where it is going now, but what happens next and how it gets to the Bass Highway. That has not been addressed at all. I am worried that, because of the, say, 30-year time frame for some of these roads and bridges, we are going to be locked in for some years into Longford. That is on the bigger picture.

My other worry is about the national highway standards. I understand, from when I was originally dealing with something when the roads around Deloraine were being done, that they have to have certain things. They had to have the distance and the road separation and so on. It also did not have any people going in and out, off the road. It had to be on a side road.

There are a lot of things. If you look at the Midland Highway, a whole pile of people come in and off little roads. It strikes me that this is not the national highway standards anywhere along there, so why do we have to deal with it here? There is no reason why we cannot have the local roads interfacing with whatever road structure they desire to put.

Also the railway lines - two railway lines across a national highway. Where else in the world does a national highway have a railway line running across it? There is one at Conara and one at the Illawarra turnoff at the moment. I do not know what they are going to do with it.

My concern is that maybe we are trying to crack a nut with a mallet because I do not think we need that much concern at the moment. It should be done gradually. I am concerned that the roads that have been done are already breaking up. We keep seeing patches in the road on the Midland Highway now that are already breaking up and they have not even been opened properly yet. There is still the 80 kilometres per hour speed limit.

What are we doing? Are we spending a lot of money because we have to spend the money in a set time, or can we take a deep breath and have another look at this altogether and see if we can come up with a better solution, with some of the other comments that have been made in the community?

Can I put in a formal submission to you because I was away at the time you were calling for them, or will this be enough?

**CHAIR** - The submissions have closed and unfortunately this is it.

## **PUBLIC**

**Ms ALTY** - I have covered most of what I covered in the council ones. Thank you very much.

**Mr BROWN** - Can I make a statement in relation to your question?

**CHAIR** - Certainly.

**Mr BROWN** - If the roundabout does go ahead down there near the bridge -

**CHAIR** - The South Esk?

**Mr BROWN** - Yes, the South Esk. With the 50-year projections of the road's amount of traffic - I don't know the exact number; I saw something the other day that said a single lane roundabout can accommodate about 1800 cars a day, but I am not sure if that's 100 per cent correct - will a single lane roundabout be able to accommodate that? Will we have a problem such as that at Hobart Airport where, in rush hours, you have traffic backed up the road for 2 kilometres? The only way to fix that is to get traffic merging beyond the roundabout. You cannot have traffic merging at a roundabout; it does not work. You get a backlog because many people are not good drivers and will stop eventually in high volumes of traffic.

**CHAIR** - We have a lot of issues for the department and engineers to answer.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I was interested in Mr Adams' comment in respect to a large roundabout. Can you describe where you would see that large roundabout being?

**Mr ADAMS** - I think originally, on plans I have seen over the last 20-odd years, it was on the west side of Perth, probably around where Illawarra Road comes in at the present time. The proposal is to have the railway under the highway, with a cycleway, but somehow we cannot keep that going over Illawarra Road. I think the concept was to have a very large roundabout at the end of town.

**Mr VALENTINE** - The department also has to answer comments made on spray seal versus hot mix.

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

**Mr BROWN** - Yes, I do.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much; it is much appreciated.

**THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.**

## PUBLIC

**Mr TED ROSS, Mr CRAIG TARBOTTON AND Mr GREG McGUIRE WERE RECALLED AND RE-EXAMINED.**

**CHAIR** - Members, are you happy for the department to address each issue? If you then have questions, let me know.

**Mr ROSS** - Madam Chair, I did my best to record as much as I could during the giving of evidence. I will attempt to answer as best I can, but there will have to be some supplementary material provided.

**CHAIR** - We've taken some notes as well.

**Mr ROSS** - My colleagues will assist me if I have missed bits and pieces.

On concerns raised about the heavy vehicles: as to the space we provide on the highway, we are providing a 7-metre minimum width between the wire rope safety barriers, which is to allow for the over-dimension type vehicles. It is also to provide for breakdowns and maintenance of the road as that needs to occur.

In terms of managing slower vehicles, as part of the 10-year action plan we have attempted, every 3 to 5 kilometres - around every three minutes - to provide alternating north-south overtaking lanes with the 2 + 1 arrangement. That allows slower vehicles in those zones to be overtaken.

The provision of the 7-metre width, which is a 2-metre shoulder, a 3.5-metre lane and also the gap in the centre near the wire rope and also on the outside of the shoulder, means there is sufficient width to accommodate those larger vehicles.

**CHAIR** - Do we ever have loads greater than 7 metres wide on the road?

**Mr ROSS** - I guess that is the standard; similarly, some bridges over the highway are around 6.2 metres in height.

**Mr McGUIRE** - It is the department's policy to allow vehicles, particularly where we are redesigning roads, 50 metres long by 7 metres wide by 6 metres high to traverse the road. Those are the dimensions we have been given for designing access on the roads. There are general access arrangements for vehicles allowed on the road at any time. Vehicles in the oversize/over-dimension space need to apply for permits, I understand, through a system and are potentially escorted through that system.

**CHAIR** - It is a national system now, isn't it?

**Mr McGUIRE** - I am not sure how the state regulations correspond to the national ones, but those dimensions are the ones we have adopted locally.

**CHAIR** - The width of this road is about 10 metres on the dual carriageway. Is that correct?

**Mr McGUIRE** - That is from side to side?

**CHAIR** - Yes, from side to side.

## PUBLIC

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Again, I guess with tourism, there was mention of people slowing down, especially in the single lane areas, to 80 or 90 kilometres per hour. That is why we are providing those overtaking opportunities - to alleviate driver frustration. It recognises this can still occur. If you go down the highway now, in sections with long stretches of just single lane, part of the action plan is to implement additional overtaking lanes to allow opportunities to get around some of the slower vehicles.

On the truck stops that currently exist on the Midland Highway between Perth and Hobart: in areas like Campbell Town, Epping Forest, Mood Food, St Peters Pass and Spring Hill, the department has always tried to encourage, where possible, vehicles to go into townships. I will definitely take on board comments made by the trucking organisations and refer the department to concerns about the number and location of truck stops. I am happy to take that feedback back.

**CHAIR** - When people are going from Hobart to Burnie, whilst there are a number of stops on the Midland Highway, once you start to turn west, there are very few.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I assume they do not always want to pull up for an overstay at someone's business. They want to be able to pull up on the side of the road and sleep or whatever they do.

**Mr ROSS** - There were some questions about how we consult with the trucking industry. We regularly consult with the industry. Again, I am happy to take contact details and pass those onto our network managers. If a body does not feel we are consulting with them, I am happy to take that back as well.

About the bridge: to build on our evidence as to why the department does not consider that as a priority project, the Midland Highway is a \$500 million project, of which the \$80 million Perth link road project is our most significant project. If the department were to spend a significant amount of money realigning and replacing the bridge, that would take away from the priority of actually fixing other areas as part of the Midland Highway Action Plan. We would have to remove areas that have already been communicated and committed to as part of that action plan between Perth and Hobart.

Did you pick up anything else? Is there anything else that you had in that regard?

**Mr VALENTINE** - The large roundabout versus the smaller one.

**Mr ROSS** - That is part of the second set of comments. As well as constraints we have mentioned working with on this project, there are also the constraints of the landowners. Some landowners have, for example, significant pivot irrigators and other things. We have attempted to limit our impact on adjoining landowners by working with them. There are substantial businesses and there is substantial employment by those businesses. Especially in that area, we have been constrained somewhat by the structure plan of Perth and also by the operation of landowners around us. That is why, with the alignment, we are largely fixed on building the road around those.

**CHAIR** - Specifically about the interchange?

**Mr ROSS** - That is around the Illawarra interchange. If you were to replace that interchange with a really large roundabout, it might go further west from where it is, and you can see you would start to impact on the farms.

## PUBLIC

To answer questions about the spray seal: there is quite a substantial cost difference between spray seals and asphalt, but that is not the only reason the department stipulates spray sealing. A key reason we stipulate using a large - 14-millimetre - stone size is to provide more friction and grip on the road, which reduces the likelihood of crashes in very frosty and icy conditions, such as occurred this morning. That why we use spray seal, as well as it being a very cost-efficient surface. I acknowledge there have been some issues recently in regard to the quality. We are working with the contractors on that. We are not happy with some of the failures, for example, that have happened recently on the Perth to Breadalbane section. We are certainly making sure the contractors to fix that as part of our contract with them.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Just south of Mona Vale another section is breaking up as you are coming north. On that road towards Mona Vale, the aggregate is stripping off the top.

**Mr ROSS** - Where some of those defects have occurred, the contractors responsible have had to go back and fix them at their cost. I acknowledge there are some issues with that. We are working with the industry to rectify those issues.

**Mr VALENTINE** - That has been happening a lot over the last few years. Is it a lack of experience with some of these companies? Is there a workshop situation to be able to work through the way they are going about this? I have talked about this before - here, at Forcett and other locations across the state, it seems the top aggregate is being stripped off the tarmac. Is it just their technique?

**Mr ROSS** - It is a complex procedure to undertake, but while the result of failures you see look dramatic, they are not as significant as they seem. Some of the stripping on the Perth to Breadalbane section can be easily rectified. The problem is you cannot spray seal during the colder temperatures. The inability to be able to fix it straight away is one of the issues more than it being a big problem.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I passed a document to Madam Chair from an engineer I worked with at DMR in the Public Works Department about how you do that. I know it is teaching people to suck eggs, but the document is available if anyone wants it. I might have passed it on to one of your departmental guys. Was it you? Because of the amount of stripping occurring, maybe they need to go back to workshopping this with some of the contractors.

**Mr ROSS** - I will keep working through some of the issues. Some questions were around why we placed the roundabout and whether we considered other treatments at that location. Early on we considered a right-hand turn slot, similar to what we have down the highway for Oatlands, Ross and other townships. They do not have the same large traffic volumes entering and exiting as this location. The roundabout performs quite well with higher traffic volumes of 10 000 to 15 000 vehicles.

**Mr McGUIRE** - That is much closer to the mark.

**CHAIR** - As opposed to the 1800 to which Mr Brown referred.

**Mr McGUIRE** - Generally you would expect about 10 000 a day.

**Mr ROSS** - A right-hand turn slot at that location with vehicles having to cross over in front of another vehicle will have a higher chance of severe accidents. Where the angles of vehicles are more deflective, the severity of the type of crashes that happen with a roundabout are significantly

## PUBLIC

reduced. It also provides for the connectivity into Perth as well as acting as a natural slowing down of vehicles for the bridge. We chose that roundabout because a number of considerations are at play there. It is not just to provide access to Perth residents.

We looked at different designs. In terms of the future constructions, we looked at the alignment of a future bridge. That is also one reason we used roundabout construction. If we installed a grade separated interchange at that location and then the new bridge changed that alignment, you would effectively have a grade separated interchange in the wrong location. You would have a bridge in the middle of nowhere, which would be a significant cost, as opposed to a roundabout construction, which is less cost. If you have to realign a roundabout in 30 years' time, it would be better than having to realign a whole new bridge-type construction.

**CHAIR** - Can you address the overpass issue? Why not have an overpass?

**Mr ROSS** - If you installed an overpass at that location, you would have to build significant infrastructure that could in the future be in the wrong alignment and would almost require rebuilding. So you could spend \$3 million to \$4 million, for example, building an interchange at that location, but when you come to replace the bridge in the future, which might be downstream, you would have to relocate that interchange and the overpass structure at the same time.

It is a little hard to describe it, but I am happy to talk with some of the people here today after the committee hearing, to show them on a plan and talk it through with them and members of the community.

I do not think I have a significant amount more to add on the connectivity of the project because I think we have worked so hard to work with the community. Between Perth and Longford, the project has delivered on those outcomes.

The project is definitely not to create a new road between Perth and Longford. There is an existing road, Illawarra Road, between Perth and Longford. As part of this project, we are trying to make that road safer and improve its connectivity with Perth and with the highways.

I acknowledge many residents are concerned that over a longer period of time the traffic on that highway has increased and the number of heavy vehicles on Illawarra Road has also increased. That is why the department is having to invest in this highway - to improve and make it safer for the community and more efficient for vehicles and connection with communities and landowners. There is very much a balance between doing those things as part of what we are trying to do in this project.

There was a question about the railway. We are going over the top of the railway. The highway will go over the top of the railway in the future, so vehicles will not have to cross over it.

There was also a question about the national highway standards. We have tried to set the national highway standards as targets. We upgrade a section of road and attempt to achieve that new target. For example, in the future we will look to upgrade sections of Illawarra Road. We will upgrade that to the category 1 standard, which is to have, for example, a wire rope, 2 metre shoulders and 3.5 metre lanes, and to widen the cross section and create that new road. That does not mean instantaneously, but that is the national highway standard it will be all upgraded to meet. Over time the department will work through and upgrade sections to achieve those new standards.



## PUBLIC

**CHAIR** - Part of Dee's question was whether the other work done on the Midland Highway targets national highway standards and has that work met those standards.

**Mr ROSS** - Yes. Fundamentally, what we have done on this project is to achieve that cross section we are talking about, which is 2 metre shoulders, 3.5 metre lanes and 2.1 metre median with a wire rope down the middle, ensuring we have that 7 metre width and are achieving the higher speed alignment. All those things that are a consideration - making sure we have overtaking opportunities every 3 to 5 kilometres, focusing on ensuring that heavy vehicles have climbing lanes, improving safety and working with landowners around accesses.

**CHAIR** - Reducing the number of accesses?

**Mr ROSS** - We are consolidating accesses and making sure they are safe.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - To support Ted, as an example, the current Midland Highway, excluding our works, has an AusRAP star rating of approximately 1 to 2, and the AusRAP star rating goes to 5. Our goal for the Midland Highway is a minimum of 3, so we are taking the existing standard, which is 1 to 2, up to 3. There will always be budget constraints, and we achieve that through the cross section Ted just mentioned. We are increasing and achieving national standards.

**Mr VALENTINE** - It is not over-engineering?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - It is the best engineering we can afford within our budget. It is not over-engineering.

**CHAIR** - Any more comments?

**Mr McGUIRE** - No, but to reiterate: improving road corridors is an iterative process, and each project needs to achieve the best it can in a freight efficiency and safety process within allowable budgets and constraints. It is not possible to jump immediately from a current condition to an ideal scenario. Each project needs to be a stepping stone in that process. That is what we are trying to achieve.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - What Ted raised before is very important. The State of Tasmania has a \$500 million program which is not indexed per year, it is \$500 million over 10 years. For every passing year, that \$500 million loses value, but we have to upgrade the entire highway. We try to manage our budget as strictly as we can. That means making fairly tough decisions sometimes. We try to consider our decisions in a broader context for the entire community. Sometimes those difficult decisions upset certain parties.

**Mr VALENTINE** - The pedestrian access across the South Esk Bridge - obviously traffic is not getting any lighter; in some cases it is getting larger and longer. Do you see any problems with not having pedestrian access?

**Mr ROSS** - As identified as part of this project, because the department, through encouraging active transport modes, is trying to encourage cycling and pedestrian activity. The limits of this project are to Pateena Road; beyond Pateena Road, there are opportunities as part of the future upgrades to look at those sorts of things. The department needs to also continue to work with the Northern Midlands Council around what that might look like.

## **PUBLIC**

**Mr VALENTINE** - Community connectivity, as we have heard, is an important issue. I suppose the larger the project, the more isolating it can be if you do not build in those things. From what I am hearing, you have been working with the council, but how much consultation took place between Longford and Perth in terms of the needs for community interaction there?

**Mr ROSS** - The department has run a number of public displays and invited the community and has also worked with the Northern Midlands Council to make sure, for example, it has advertised on its Facebook site. We have advertised it in the newspaper and sent letters out, and have encouraged feedback as much as possible.

**Mr VALENTINE** - You have not been backward in coming forward.

**Mr ROSS** - Members of the Northern Midlands Council attended both public displays alongside the department. It presented some of its plans around the structure plan and other things. I think it has been a great opportunity to work with the community

**Mr TARBOTTON** - As part of our second public display, we used a different approach. We used social media opposed to the static or printed medium, which was a large success. It allowed people to visualise or to see our image and input likes or dislikes against our design, so it was a way to approach the broader community.

**CHAIR** - Are you satisfied that this project is value for money?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Do you believe it is fit for purpose?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

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

**Messrs ROSS, TARBOTTON and McGUIRE** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much everyone. I will now close the proceedings for our deliberations. Thank you very much for attending today.

**THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.**