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PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

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PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

# Illawarra Main Road Upgrade

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*Presented to Her Excellency the Governor pursuant to the provisions of the  
Public Works Committee Act 1914.*

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## MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Legislative Council

*Ms Rattray (Deputy Chair)  
Mr Valentine (Chair)*

House of Assembly

*Ms Butler  
Mr Ellis  
Mr Tucker*

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

To Her Excellency the Honourable Barbara Baker AC, Governor in and over the State of Tasmania and its Dependencies in the Commonwealth of Australia.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY

The Committee has investigated the following proposal:-

### **Illawarra Main Road Upgrade**

and now has the honour to present the Report to Your Excellency in accordance with the Public Works Committee Act 1914 (the Act).

## 2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This reference recommended the Committee approve works to upgrade approximately 11km of the Illawarra Main Road between the Midlands and Bass Highways to provide improved road safety outcomes, travel time reliability and overall road capacity.
- 2.2 Illawarra Main Road is currently a single carriageway road with three bridges over the South Esk River, a roundabout taking traffic to the south to Longford and a bridge over Back Creek. Illawarra Main Road is a key link in the Tasmanian State road network and provides access to the freight task between Hobart and the northern and northwestern regions of Tasmania. It eliminates the need to travel via Launceston, reducing travel time by providing a time saving transport link between the Midland and Bass Highways.
- 2.3 However, previous assessments of Illawarra Main Road identified the lack of overtaking opportunities for freight vehicles and other road users. A road safety audit also identified a number of issues, including:
- There is cross-sectional inconsistency along the whole road. Lane widths are generally a minimum of 3.5 metres but shoulder and road reservation widths vary considerably along the length. The narrow shoulder restricts the ability of drivers who inadvertently move out of the traffic lane to recover and potentially contributes to the number of run off the road crashes;
  - Delineation is inconsistent along the whole length of the road;
  - Hazardous objects are in close proximity to the road;
  - Issues with obscured regulatory signage by other signage;
  - There are a number of side roads which connect onto Illawarra Main Road;
  - Numerous private accesses connect to the road.
- 2.4 As a result of its importance as a key freight link and the identified deficiencies, the Illawarra Main Road Upgrade project has been identified in the Tasmanian Road

Package of the Roads of Strategic Importance Initiative to improve productivity and efficiency on key freight networks.

2.5 The project is expected to enhance freight productivity, connectivity and efficiency on this key freight network, by providing better connections between agricultural regions and ports, airports and other transport hubs and better access for tourism, mining and other sectors. It will also improve the road network to a Category 1 Road under the Tasmanian State Road Hierarchy and achieve an AusRap 3 star safety rating, and expected to provide a safer road environment for all road users.

2.6 The proposed works will deliver an improved and consistent road cross section, with the provision of wider lanes and wider median with flexible safety barrier. The project will be undertaken in three stages and will include the following elements:

Stage 1:

- Staggered 'T' junction at the Tannery Road and Bishopsbourne Road intersection for increased safety;
- Inclusion of a formal heavy vehicle rest area at the Longford Roundabout providing for a minimum of five vehicles either side;
- Road safety provisions with inclusion of a flexible safety barrier in the median.

Stage 2:

- Road safety provisions with inclusion of a flexible safety barrier in the median;
- Overtaking lane travelling towards Bass Highway of some 1330m total length;
- Overtaking lane travelling towards Longford of some 1400m total length;
- P-Turn facilities for property owners to have a turnaround facility where the flexible safety barrier restricts crossing of the carriageway;
- Crest improvements to improve the vertical alignment sight distance in accordance with AustRoads;
- Consolidation of property access into the P-Turn facilities for improved safety benefits;
- Upgrading of existing utilised stock underpass.

Stage 3:

- Road safety provisions with inclusion of a flexible safety barrier in the median;
- Bridge strengthening works on the existing bridge network – i.e., South Esk River bridge;
- Provision of a new stock / vehicle underpass;

- Shared User Path linking Longford to the current extents of the Perth Links shared user path;
- A dedicated shared user path bridge spanning the South Esk River.

### **3 PROJECT COSTS**

- 3.1 Pursuant to the Message from Her Excellency the Governor-in-Council, the estimated cost of the work is \$80 million.

Committed funding for the Illawarra Main Road Upgrade will be split between the Tasmanian State Government (\$16 million) and the Australian Government (\$64 million). The Department of State Growth will use a probabilistic cost estimation process to assess the total outturn cost. The project scope will be refined using the results of the cost estimation to ensure the project is delivered in within the project budget.

Expenditure of the \$80 million allocated budget will be refined during development of the concept design and finalisation of the staging of the works.

## 4 EVIDENCE

4.1 The Committee commenced its inquiry at the Epping Forest Hall on Monday, 26 July last with a video presentation of the proposed works. The Committee then commenced the formal hearing, whereupon the following witnesses appeared, made the Statutory Declaration and were examined by the Committee in public:-

- Stefano Conforti, Project Manager, Department of State Growth
- Sven Meyer, Project Management Team Leader, Department of State Growth;
- Lidiya Hudson, Network Planner, Department of State Growth
- Jill Skirving; and
- Roger Swain.

The following Committee Members were present:

- Hon Rob Valentine MLC (Chair);
- Hon Tania Rattray MLC (Deputy-Chair);
- Ms Jen Butler MP;
- Mr Felix Ellis MP; and
- Mr John Tucker MP.

### Overview

4.2 Mr Conforti provided an overview of the proposed works:

*Mr CONFORTI - ... .. It will improve the scope of the road and it will improve the safety and the freight efficiency from the north-west of the state to the south. It will contain overtaking lanes. It will contain some pull over areas for the heavy trucks to the rest areas and will upgrade the existing pavement. It will improve the horizontal section of the road and vertical as well.*

*There will be turning facilities at regular intervals so that all the landowners around the road and the general traffic will be able to turn, as necessary, to private properties or just to go back to Launceston or whatever the direction they are taking.*

*... .. The freight efficiency will improve the reliability of travel time, and the link between the Bass Highway and the Midlands Highway will provide an active transport link between Longford and Perth. It will upgrade to the Aus Roads guidelines; it will improve the cross section and formalise appropriate overtaking lanes.*

*As you know now, it is just two lanes, so all the junctions and accesses will be improved as well. This one is some traffic-counting so we have 10 000 vehicles from Longford towards the Midlands Highway, 5000 in the opposite direction towards the Bass Highway. The 20-year projection is that those vehicles will increase to 15 000.*

*The project has been identified in the Aus Roads Package of the road of strategic importance so that is exactly what is happening on the Midlands Highway. There are at present - or at least was surveyed in 2016-17, 2 million tonnes of freight travelling that road and some 130 000 truck movements. The current roadway is deficient in all sense. It is typically a rural road at the moment with all accesses that go in and out. They take the left and right turn as they please. But we want to improve the safety so that all of that will be rationalised and all of the accesses will be improved in terms of sight line, land and width as the current standard dictates.*

The design assures the deficiencies that we have now is that there are not dedicated overtaking lanes and we would put one in each direction. The traffic is slowed because there are no overtaking opportunities. There are all types of freight vehicles and agricultural vehicles – all sorts of things – travelling on two lanes only. The existing road has been there for quite a while. In history, there were upgrades but their pavement is possibly inadequate so we will look at that again and we will be able to match the new to the old one and upgrade the lot.

We talked about the accesses that are not safe as they are at present so there is not compliance with the Aus Road standards. There are unsafe upgrade that stop crossing, apparently, and there are no U turn facilities. We will improve all of that as part of the scope of the works.

Here is a list of the main stakeholders in the area. I will let you go through that yourself, if that is okay. They are the local council, businesses, JBS near the Longford roundabout, vineyards and there is infrastructure, TasNetworks and TasWater. TasNetworks is all along the stretch of road between the Longford roundabout to the Bass Highway. It is on the north of the road. Potentially there may be some considerable power pole relocation.

We have completed now all the site studies: that includes Aboriginal heritage, European heritage and heritage constraints due to mainly hedgerows one side and the other which perhaps pose the biggest physical constraint to us. Flora and fauna, and geo-technical investigations.

We didn't have any finding of Aboriginal heritage along the stretch of the road that we are considering. European heritage – we will have to work with it, around it and deal with it. If there is not significant flora and fauna, perhaps we may assume that there may be some green and gold frogs.

Our investigation revealed some area of weaknesses in their existing pavement which we will have to deal with as part of the design. That is what we want to upgrade to. We generally want to improve the cross-section of the road, as we will see in the next slide. There will be a median separation between the two directions of traffic; G turns, P turns as necessary; overtaking lanes, one in each direction. There will be some horizontal realignment, but mainly vertical alignment in two spots where you cannot see over the hill as you travel.

We will include two pullover areas where trucks can stop and rest. Some exercise areas will be included in those pullover areas, and also a picnic recreational area for those who need to rest and keep active.

At this stage, we will have to consider a shared path between Longford and Perth. A shared path means that pushbikes and pedestrians could go across between Longford and Perth. It is only a concept at this stage, because there is also a river in between. We do not have a defined scope for that, but that is part of stage 3 of the project, which will need lots of consideration.

This is the cross-section that we were looking at - 3.5 metre running lanes and 2 metre shoulders with a median in between. This is a typical G turn to help cross the road in a safe way for the landowner on the opposite side, if necessary. This is just typical; we do not know at this stage where and whether that will be there, but that is a way to cross the road safely.

Then there are the P turns that can be staggered. There are plenty of examples along the Midlands Highway that, as far as I understand, work very well. You can include the accesses from properties which will have left-in and left-out access, if it makes sense.

... .. There is a bit of timing for our project. First of all, the procurement. To begin with, we were thinking to go to 'design and construct', but that perhaps posed too much risk. We also understand that the stakeholders do not particularly prefer that option, because there is their handover from the Department to contractors- so they cannot figure out who is doing what and what responsibility they have at different times so we will go out to a traditional tender, construct only, and it will be a lump sum contract for the three phases of the job.

The timing there is going to tender in August this year and that is just for the stretch of road between the roundabout and Tannery Road. That will include the rest areas. Then there will be phase 2: that is between the Longford roundabout all the way to the Bass Highway, that is the longest stretch. We'll go to tender in early 2022. Then phase 3: that is the one east of the Longford roundabout to the new Perth Link. Our projection is to go to tender in late 2022.

### **Strategic Importance of Illawarra Main Road**

4.3 The Committee noted that Illawarra Main Road was a key link in the Tasmanian Road network and upgrading the road formed part of the Tasmanian Road Package under the Roads of Strategic Importance Initiative. The Committee sought further information from the Department's witnesses on its strategic importance:

**Mr ELLIS** - ... .. The Illawarra Road has been classified as a road of strategic importance linking the Bass Highway, the Midland Highway, the north-west to the south. I drove on it this morning to get here. Can you give me a sense of how strategically important this section of road is to Tasmania?

**Ms HUDSON** - It's part of the national highway network, and it has been recognised as a key link to improve efficiency for the movement of heavy vehicles, and to provide a safer network for those heavy vehicle drivers and other users on that road. It does link all the primary activity that happens in the north and north-west to the ports, mostly through to Hobart. It gives that efficiency in the network.

**CHAIR** - Does that save them going via the Launceston route, for instance?

**Ms HUDSON** - Yes. There are obviously travel-time savings and fuel savings, and that lowers impacts on the environment, and it is safer for the drivers because they get a shorter trip. The rest areas on this link are also a requirement of regulations that heavy vehicle industry has to comply with, to give their drivers adequate rest stops. It is providing a number of those benefits.

### **Project Benefits**

4.4 The Committee noted the benefits of the project included improved travel reliability and safety and sought further detail from the Department's witnesses:

**Mr ELLIS** - Would I be able to ask, for the benefit of the committee, what is the time-saving that we're talking about if you take the Illawarra Main Road rather than, say, going through to Launceston? Roughly what is that benefit for people travelling in that direction?

**Ms HUDSON** - I would have to take that on notice and get that information for you. I don't know off the top of my head exactly but I'd say it's probably in the -

**CHAIR** - Twenty minutes?

**Ms HUDSON** - Yes, it's probably 20 minutes either end of Launceston.

**Mr MEYER** - It's significant. When you talk about freight efficiency every minute counts for the owners of trucks.

**Mr ELLIS** - This is a rural road conceptually and by the standard but people are essentially voting with their feet or voting with their vehicles to go along this road because it's saving them 15 to 20 minutes, hence the need to upgrade the road to the standard that people seem to benefit from.

**Mr MEYER** - It's part of the National Highway network. This project is to bring it up to the standard required for a national highway.

**Mr CONFORTI** - I suppose, as we mentioned, this rural road-type of standard that is how the road looks but we are not going to change the use of the road. The trucks are already there. They are travelling already on Illawarra Road; we are just making it safer for everyone.

### **Design and Budget Uncertainties**

4.5 The Committee noted the Department's evidence did not provide the depth of information that the Committee had come to expect for a project referred for inquiry. The Committee highlighted their concerns focused around the lack of detailed designs and the adequacy of the budget. The Committee discussed this with the Department's witnesses, noting the difficulties this presented for the Committee. The following exchange took place:

**CHAIR** - .....I have to say there are some things that concern me with respect to the documentation. One of the purposes of this committee is to make sure that we give opportunity for those who are affected by these sorts of projects to be able to come and present to the committee.

There are certain times in your presentation where you say, like the 'shared path is not a defined project yet;', 'not sure where the 'G' turns are yet', those sorts of things. Yet farmers who use this area may well be quite impacted by that.

I am just wondering, it seems to me on this particular documentation to be a little premature. I don't know whether you have any statement to make with respect to that but it just seems that there's a lot that's unresolved at this point that might well impact people who are living in and around or using this particular area of the highway.

Do you have any broad statement to make in regard to that?

**Mr CONFORTI** - Yes, it is a question of timing. The project has to be separated in different phases and so there is lots of stakeholder engagement, as we call it, talking to people and understanding their needs. That needs to be done. Even if we would have an idea of where to put this turning facility we want to be transparent and hear from the public first before coming out with conclusions. Also, there is the fact that we still have to obtain the funding for the project.

As you know, at the moment the Department has quite a big workload so we are speeding up the process of doing things in parallel. I remember many years ago we used to do the full design and then we would come to see you but the old process would have lasted perhaps years while now we have to condense all these actions. That is the only reason.

I am not sure whether this is the place to exactly define all the characteristics of the design. As I said, we are in stage 1 and we have that pretty much firm but the rest hasn't been designed yet. That's the reason why.

**CHAIR** - I think this is where some of the issues come in.

**Mr TUCKER** - ..... There is \$80 million here in the budget to do this. With the way contract pricing is going at the moment, do you foresee that this will be enough to cover what you're proposing to do?

**Mr CONFORTI** - Included in that \$80 million there are contingencies, so, yes, it should be sufficient but we will have the certainty just at the end.

**CHAIR** - With so much unresolved, this is some of the issue I think. We are used to seeing a breakdown of the project, what is going to be spent, where it is going to be spent, what the contingencies are for each of the phases, all those sorts of things. That is some of the detail that is important when we come to examine a project like this: that we have comfort that the budget that is being put forward is sufficient.

**Mr CONFORTI** - What the designers do is a concept design that includes the width of the road and the volumes they have, they survey so they understand how much material they have to create those overtaking lanes. We know that there will be two overtaking lanes in each direction, we know how long they are but we do not know exactly where they are because we have not gone that far to design the exact location. For the volumes of material, we have a fair idea and that is where they create the estimate and to date, obviously they put some contingencies that can be the market, the condition of the market, the variation in the volumes and these types of things. So they should be sufficient.

4.6 Given the lack of certainty with respect to securing funding for the project, the Committee discussed with the witnesses the funding process, again highlighting the difficulties this presented for the Committee:

**CHAIR** - ... We are going over to project costs, dealt with a little earlier in the presentation - \$80 million, with \$16 million coming from the state government, and the balance from the Australian Government.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Is that guaranteed?

**Ms HUDSON** - Once we get the project proposal report through, the federal government assesses it, and provides the funding based on the assessment that it meets the requirements that they're after.

**Mr MEYER** - ... The Australian Government has made a commitment to funding strategic road projects essentially like a business case to secure the funding and the budget profile.

**CHAIR** - We've already stated that most other submissions we receive have a good breakdown. That is not present in this process. We understand what you're trying to achieve in terms of running things in parallel. That's something the committee will have to consider when it sits in judgment on this particular one.

**Ms HUDSON** - The cost breakdown is required as part of the project proposal report, so once we get through that 100 per cent design for that next stage, it will be included in that project proposal report to the federal government, because they require it as well. It's just when you break it up into stages you might step through that process of providing that documentation.

**CHAIR** - The problem is that when we ask the question, 'Do the proposed works provide value for money?', it's very difficult for this committee to say, 'Yes, you've demonstrated that is the case' when we don't have that breakdown.

### **Use of Flexible Safety barriers**

4.7 The Committee understood that one of the main safety measures the Department would employ in this project was the use of flexible safety barriers. The Committee sought to understand how and where these would be employed, and what alternatives might provide a similar safety outcome:

**CHAIR** - For the record, you were telling us earlier that it doesn't have the flexible barriers on the left or right of the road, only in the centre?

**Mr CONFORTI** - Yes but if necessary, if the batter is steep or there is any another risk, we may put some barriers on the side as well, but only if there is the need for it.

**Ms BUTLER** - For the record as well, because here in the introduction it refers to the AusRAP 3-star rating, what are the countermeasures that are being considered to ensure the 3-star rating under the AusRAP Safer Roads Investment Plans?

As part of the answer, are there alternatives to placing that wire barrier down the middle of that road which could still provide the proper star rating? Are there other alternatives that could be used?

**Ms HUDSON** - Often those alternatives include widening the carriageway. So you would have much wider carriageway and you would have almost like another lane in the middle to separate the traffic.

**CHAIR** - Like Bagdad.

**Ms HUDSON** - Yes, like in parts of Bagdad, similar to that. There are things that you can put in place but that would have a greater impact on property owners and the need for acquisition.

**Ms BUTLER** - Right. Are those alternatives being considered? It seems that the wire barrier down the middle will seem to be quite an inconvenience to many people. We know that that is not the Rolls Royce of design but it still fits us into that star category rating. Are other alternatives being actively investigated in relation to this project?

**Ms HUDSON** - There are impacts on the budget for those sorts of things so they would have to be weighed up as far as how much of your contingency are you going to potentially eat up. Property acquisition then becomes much more pricey and that comes out of the project budget. There are options for other things.

**Mr MEYER** - There are design constraints. As Stefano mentioned, there is quite a lot of European heritage along this road which includes hedgerows but also some old structures. If you don't use the wire rope and have a wide median instead, you would have to do more acquisition which would impact on that European heritage. There is also quite a significant increase in cost to take into account. To achieve the AusRAP 3 with the constraints that we have, the wire rope is probably the only scenario that would work.

**CHAIR** - Do you continue to hold with that AusRAP 3 rating, that the wire barrier is the safest option? We have had, over time as members of parliament, representations made to us by motorcyclists - I declare I am one of them - that wire rope barriers are anathema to them. Have you done any more research into that to see whether it is the most appropriate for this sort of circumstance?

**Ms MEYER** - The safest option is to drop the speed limit, but we are always trying to weigh up freight efficiency and travel efficiency. Longford is a large commuter area to Launceston now. It's the best scenario.

**Ms RATTRAY** - ... We know there was to be a wire barrier on the Mangalore straight, but there was significant community input - including me. That concept was changed to meet the needs of the community. Is that still an option for this community when it comes to access in

and out of, and how far they have to go up the road to turn around to come back to get out of the area?

**Mr CONFORTI** - I suppose everything is possible with the design of stage 2. We cannot exclude anything, but I do not know anything specific to the Mangalore project because I was not part of it.

**Mr MEYER** - Mangalore had a lot more residents along a shorter length. While there are quite a number of stakeholders on this section of road it is mostly rural properties, so they are quite spread out. The only way you could achieve that design would be more acquisitions, with impact on the hedgerows and European heritage and those sorts of things, to achieve the width required for a central median.

**Ms RATTRAY** - You could have more breaks, though.

**Mr MEYER** - Breaks and a lower barrier? You, could, yes, but what we are trying to do with these P turns and G turns is to centralise those locations so that they are safe facilities.

### **Access for Heavy Vehicles and Agricultural Machinery**

4.8 The Committee sought confirmation from the Department's witnesses that the P-turns and G-turns would cater for the types of vehicles that currently use the road:

**Mr TUCKER** - With your P turn and G turns that you talked about, how big a vehicle will they be able to handle? A B-double going in there?

**Mr CONFORTI** - Yes.

**Mr TUCKER** - They will be designed for a B-double? So what can go on the highway at the present moment, they will be able to handle that equipment?

**Mr CONFORTI** - Yes.

4.9 The Committee noted that Illawarra Road was key freight corridor, and supported a large amount of heavy vehicle traffic. The Committee also noted the predominately agricultural nature of the area, which meant a relatively high volume of slow-moving agricultural machinery used the road. The Committee had some concerns that the addition of a flexible wire rope barrier in the median, and potentially in some areas, on the side of the road, would present difficulties for large vehicles or agricultural machinery. These concerns related to there being sufficient space for large vehicles or slow moving agricultural machinery to pull over to let traffic pass or in the event of a breakdown. The Committee sought further information on the proposed road cross-section and the capacity to deal with these issues:

**Mr TUCKER** - The other thing I was going to ask quickly, with your two metres on the side there, where you showed the three and a half metres, is that sealed from the two metre to the three metre? It looked like on there it was a metre wide then gravel or aggregate from a metre on, back there.

**Mr CONFORTI** - ... .. The 3.5-metre lane, then the two-metre shoulder, all of that will be sealed at the same grade. The verge will be unsealed.

**Mr TUCKER** - Will be gravel?

**Mr CONFORTI** - Yes.

**Mr TUCKER** - At the same level, or is that -

**Mr CONFORTI** - No, they just start, for drainage issues; they want to let the water run off.

**CHAIR** - So the question there is, with a harvester, if the person is transferring a harvester, a contractor is driving a harvester, from point A to point B, they are very wide. They are on that single lane part, not the double lane part. They are pulling over to let traffic pass. Are they going to be pulling over into a very steep batter with a risk of the harvester tilting and possibly rolling?

**Mr CONFORTI** - First of all they will have to use the same traffic management that they use now. They probably have flashing lights and perhaps a vehicle behind them, so that will still apply. With the two extra metres off shoulder - that does not exist at the moment - they will have plenty of room.

**CHAIR** - Do you have any indication, during your consultation, that that sort of use will be required with harvesters and the like? Has anybody queried or questioned the capacity of the new road to be able to handle their harvester?

**Mr CONFORTI** - I do not know the details of the consultation, Rob, but I can take that one on notice. I am sure we know by now the nature of every business, so perhaps they asked the question and perhaps they had an answer, but I would not have the details with me.

**Mr MEYER** - The project is upgrading the existing roads, so for the harvesters or other traffic that is on the road now, all this project will do is improve it by having the 2-metre shoulders plus the overtaking lanes. If there is no room to pull over they can wait.

**CHAIR** - The question is, that central barrier, the wire barrier: no one has expressed a concern with the height of that barrier, that if there is a wide vehicle, like a harvester, that it is likely to connect with the barrier, or that there are concerns with that central barrier?

**Mr MEYER** - I am not aware, but we haven't gone through the community consultation phase yet. We have been talking to the stakeholders.

**Mr TUCKER** - .....I was going to come back to the cross-section and the 3 metres on the shoulder. If we have a truck break down on that shoulder, they are putting out their cones, they are 2.4 metres wide with the truck, which puts you out onto that 3.5 metre running lane. Then if we have an oversize vehicle coming through, I suggest you probably have about a metre from the wire rope. You have 100 millimetres to get that vehicle through with that wire rope. Has that been considered, a situation like that?

**Mr CONFORTI** - I think we do risk assessments and will consider that eventuality and see the frequency of that risk appearing, and whether it is necessary to change the design for that eventuality.

**Mr TUCKER** - So does it take that in the future, or at the present moment, that risk?

**Mr CONFORTI** - The risk assessment is an ongoing process that goes all along the project from the beginning to the end. I am not quite sure how and how often that eventuality would apply.

**CHAIR** - I guess he is raising it because it's possible. It is possible that that could happen. At the moment there is no wire barrier, so they just go out into the other lanes. That is the reason I was asking the question about the height of those barriers. If there is something that is wider on a tray, whether those wire barriers are going to be - how high they are going to be and whether it is going to interrupt something that is very wide, like a house on a tray.

**Mr TUCKER** - ..... Under 12 feet, which is your 4 metres, you can travel with agricultural machinery down a highway. What I am saying is, that a truck is 2.4 metres wide. That leaves you 100 mm between that wire rope barrier and that truck. That is it if that truck is right on the boundary of that 2 metres. I am saying to you that you are cutting this very, very fine with the measurements you have there, for something like that to occur.

**Mr CONFORTI** - So maybe it would be the case to stop the traffic behind the very wide load.

**Mr TUCKER** - But you don't have to stop the traffic with agricultural machinery of 12 feet travelling up the highway, or just under 12 feet.

I am saying that if you have a truck, and the truck breaks down on the highway, that adds to those measurements there on the side where you have only got the single lane. You have 100 mm to get that machine through, past, if it's a B-double. Nearly a 50-foot-long machine, at 100 mm between that and the wire rope. Yes you can do it, with skilled operators, but there is that risk. All I'm saying is maybe with the sections where you're putting the wire rope, we have to look at a wider section on the shoulder for this to not occur if we are going to put a wire rope down there. Like the Chair has said, where we don't have those wire ropes down the middle you can go out and around. It might even be that you move the wire rope across instead of being in the middle, across to that other running lane, closer there where this section is to give you that extra metre of width.

In my opinion, it's something that needs to be considered in the plan to correct an issue that could or most likely will occur somewhere along that road.

**Mr CONFORTI** - At the moment my answer is appropriate, but I heard that actually the safety barrier can be pulled down in an emergency. Whether that will apply to that particular risk - but I would prefer to take the question on notice and come back with an answer. I'm pretty sure that they must have come across that particular risk many times before in all the projects that we've completed so far.

- 4.10 The Committee subsequently received further advice from the Department of State Growth relating to this matter, clarifying the width of the road cross-section and informing of design changes that would provide additional slow vehicle turnouts in single lane sections of the road:

..... The batters will be at a 1 in 6 slope which is quite flat, and where it is required to be steeper to minimise the effect on the road corridor and neighbouring properties/features there will be a road safety barrier present.

The upgraded road corridor will have a minimum width between barriers of 7.00m which is consistent with the Department's strategy for Category 1 Roads and the Midland Highway projects and will allow for oversize and over mass vehicles to travel the highway.<sup>1</sup>

..... Where there is a barrier in the central median and a road safety barrier on the outside/left hand side of the road, there is 7.00m clear width between these barriers for the full extent of the proposed works.

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<sup>1</sup> DoSG response to request for additional information #1, page 1.

In addition, a further design review has concluded that in the single lane sections of road, turn-outs facilities will be provided for slow moving agricultural machinery to turn into at spacings of no greater than 600m. For example, in the 1400m stretch of road between turning facilities we will be providing two equally placed agricultural localised shoulder widening of 100m in length. This will widen the shoulder from 2.00m wide to 4.00m wide over this localised length to allow slow moving agricultural machinery to turn into and consequently this will provide a 9.00m clear width between barriers at this location.<sup>2</sup>

4.11 The Committee also sought to understand if the upgraded road would meet the standard for use by oversized and over-mass vehicles:

**Mr TUCKER** - Heavy vehicle transporting: what standard will this road be at? What tonnages will this road be able to withstand with heavy hauling as a major arterial road, between the north-west and Hobart?

**Mr CONFORTI** - The specification and the standards will apply for B-doubles and all the trucks that are travelling.

**Mr TUCKER** - But I'm talking about heavy equipment.

**Mr CONFORTI** - Heavier?

**Mr TUCKER** - Heavier equipment. They'd have to get permits to go across these roads and I'm talking about freight so that you can move. Say you've got to move a 100-tonne excavator from point A to point B. Will this road meet those standards to be able to move that machine?

**Mr CONFORTI** - In terms of geometry or the permit?

**Mr TUCKER** - Well they can get a permit to travel on it, but if the road won't meet that standard you can't travel on that road carrying that heavy machinery.

**Mr MEYER** - My understanding was that the objective of this project was to design it for oversized, over-mass vehicles, that includes the width, which is the cross-section that we've shown and also the depth of the pavement.

**CHAIR** - Basically it will be as durable, ....it will take the maximum loads that any other road in Tasmania would take?

**Mr MEYER** - All your Category 1 roads, so Bass Highway, Midlands and Brooker Highway, yes.

### **Tannery Road Heavy Vehicle Rest Area**

4.12 The Committee sought information from the Department's witnesses about the number of vehicles that would be catered for at the Tannery Road Rest Area:

**Ms RATTRAY** - In the supplementary documentation of appendix B it talks about heavy vehicle rest areas with a capacity of five vehicles. I think you have mentioned three and then I think you mentioned two. I would like to have a firm number on the area that will be covered by the heavy vehicle rest area.

**Mr MEYER** - Is that three on one side and two on the other?

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<sup>2</sup> DoSG response to request for additional information #2, page 1.

**Mr CONFORTI** - My understanding is three each side of the road. I can't remember to have mentioned two or five, but maybe it is in other parts of the report.

**Ms RATTRAY** - That is in this document.

**CHAIR** - Are we talking about three B-doubles?

**Mr CONFORTI** - Yes. If it is okay, maybe we will take that question on notice as well so that I can make 100 per cent sure and confirm it.

- 4.13 The Committee subsequently received further advice from the Department of State Growth relating to this matter, clarifying the number of heavy vehicles that could be accommodated:

*There is one heavy vehicle rest area of 150m length of parking proposed on each side of the road. This will facilitate parking for five B-Doubles both sides of the road.<sup>3</sup>*

- 4.14 The Committee questioned the Department's witnesses on the decision to exclude toilet facilities from the rest area:

**Ms RATTRAY** - My next question is, if you are going to have a rest area with a picnic table you have to, in my view, have some facilities beside it as well. Otherwise where are people going to go to use a bathroom? You can get some pretty good examples where you don't need to have it into a sewerage system. If you are going to have something like that, then you need to have the full facilities available.

**Mr CONFORTI** - The Department has been in consultation with the transport industry. As I said, there is another location where the Department provided toilets and it is not part of the scope to provide them here.

- 4.15 The Committee had concerns about this decision, and wrote to the Department of State Growth seeking clarification as to reasons why toilet facilities would not be provided. The Committee subsequently received the following further advice:

*The inclusion of toilets at these facilities are not part of the overall strategy for the provision of heavy vehicle driver rest areas in this region. It is worthy of mention that toilets will however be provided at the facility proposed for the Bass Highway near the Birralea Road intersection.<sup>4</sup>*

- 4.16 Noting this response, the Committee again sought further clarification as to why inclusion of toilets at the proposed Tannery Road rest area was not part of the overall strategy for the provision of heavy vehicle driver rest areas in this region. The Committee subsequently received the following further advice:

*The heavy vehicle rest area has been designed in accordance with the National Guidelines for the Provision of Heavy Vehicle Rest Area Facilities. This guideline is adopted by the Department and forms the basis of the Tasmanian Heavy Vehicle Driver Rest Area Strategy, 2020 and the strategy has not recommended toilet facilities at this location but rather at other locations nearby.*

*The Longford heavy vehicle rest area has been designed to HVRA Classification 5 formal area which is the minimum requirement for creating a formal area. Heavy*

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<sup>3</sup> DoSG response to request for additional information #1, page 3.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, page 3.

vehicle driver rest area key design features are shown in Table 1 for a formal area and for a HVRA Classification 5 area including capacity of 5 bays, as proposed for the Illawarra Main Road project, toilets are optional.<sup>5</sup>

### **Ensuring the Quality of Work**

4.17 The Committee noted there had been a number of issues with the quality and durability of road works, in particular on the Midland Highway. The Committee sought further advice on measures the Department employ to ensure the works were undertaken to an appropriate quality standard:

**Ms RATTRAY** - Yes. There has been a continual concern in the Tasmanian community about how, whether it's the way the roads are being rebuilt, or whether it's the quality of the resource that's being used, but the new roads are just not standing up to any of the traffic. I've asked questions in parliament and I've been told by the minister that it's okay, the contract is going to fix it. In my view, that's not good enough. It should have been better in the first place. Is there any way the community can be assured that we do use the best possible method, and we do use the best possible resource and materials?

**Mr CONFORTI** - I cannot comment on other project because, obviously, I don't have the background.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Not even the Midland Highway? That's been terrible.

**Mr CONFORTI** - I can answer in relation to the Illawarra Road project. We have just completed a new traffic count, so we know the amount of traffic travelling along that road, and we will increase the thickness of the pavement to take that amount of traffic. And we have specifications that are quite detailed, so the contractor will have to address those specifications, and the characteristics of the design.

Recently, the Department has increased the defect liability period from 12 months to 24 months. So, if for some reason a defect appears in the first two years, the contractor will have to address and pay for those defects.

**CHAIR** - I think sometimes mainland contractors are engaged, and maybe they're not used to working in colder environments or something. I used to work for the Department of Main Roads for 10 years - many years ago, I've got to admit - and the design engineers had a very precise way of putting down tarmac and aggregate and the double-size aggregate that was needed on heavy-duty roads and the like. Can you give us some comfort that the specifications you're using are actually specifications that deal with heavy-duty? We're talking about B-doubles. We're talking about heavy farm machinery - probably not as heavy as a fully laden B-double, but there are some pretty heavy pieces of farm equipment. Will the road surface be laid in such a manner that it will have longevity? Clearly, the one coming out of Launceston stripped within the space of a month or two.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Within a matter of weeks.

**Mr CONFORTI** - The Department gives the contractors very specific and stringent guidelines, and there are milestones and testing that the contractor has to apply during the life of the project. So, really, there are all the details in the tender documentation, in the design and the specification, for the contractors to do a good job. There are quality tests that they have to do on the material that they use, so everything should be right.

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<sup>5</sup> DoSG response to request for additional information #2, page 1.

Of course, as you mentioned, there are jumps in temperature in Tasmania, or sudden rain may compromise the quality, but as I said, if that is the case, then the contractor will have to go back and fix it at their own expense for the first two years. If there are no defects appearing in the first two years, we can safely say that the quality is good enough.

**CHAIR** - I think we've mentioned here before areas that have stripped off, and I know on certain areas of the Arthur Highway I was mentioning some, and the Launceston example, and a few others where you get the aggregate just strips off and you have bare bitumen. Obviously, the bitumen wasn't at the right temperature when the aggregate was laid on it, and those sorts of things. If you're telling us that there's greater attention paid to that, that would be of comfort.

**Mr CONFORTI** - Yes, there is.

### **Property Accesses**

4.18 The Committee noted that property access arrangements would need to be changed to accommodate the upgrade and achieve the project's safety objectives. The Committee was interested to understand how property accesses would be managed:

**Mr TUCKER** - Chair, just before we move on, with the access points that these beef farmers have along this road, are there any major risks with their gate accesses and things like that, or not?

**Mr MEYER** - Do you mean the current access on and off the highway?

**Mr TUCKER** - Yes, the current accesses they have on the highway, like their gate entrances and the entrances to their homestead, or whatever you like to call it. Are there any major risks?

**Mr MEYER** - I don't have the specifics but the major risk is you're moving a slow vehicle from a driveway into a 110-kilometre zone and often there are sightline issues, especially if there are hedgerows and fences, those sorts of things.

**Mr TUCKER** - How will that be managed? Will some of those gate entrances be closed or how will that be managed as a risk?

**Mr MEYER** - Look, I don't know the specifics, that's around the P-turns, the G-turns and just making sure that each site access is assessed and made safe for use.

**Mr CONFORTI** - Especially where there are overtaking lanes it's very unsafe to cross the lanes and so in that case we provide a proper facility which is a G-turn or P-turn or we just provide a left turn to get to the next formalised point.

**Mr TUCKER** - So they will still have those accesses but they will be formalised in a different format? Is that what you're saying to me?

**Mr CONFORTI** - Yes, I can tell you with certainty in stage 1 we will just eliminate the crossing for JBS Meats so they will have to turn left and then go through their property in the opposite side of the Illawarra Road through Tannery Road so that they can then do that movement very safely.

For stage 2 and 3 we are not at that point yet but basically the same concepts apply.

**Mr TUCKER** - What you're saying is they will not lose the accesses they have at the moment but they may be realigned?

**Mr CONFORTI** - Yes. Actually, for JBS we will close the access in the north; that is in agreement with them. They understand and they want to maintain the safety for themselves in the first place. It's not just the Department that wants the safety. They are very happy to have access through Tannery Road at the back of the property rather than on the frontage on the Illawarra Road. That is for stage 1 only.

**Mr TUCKER** - And the same system will be taken forward with stage 2 and stage 3 with those other farmers further up?

**Mr CONFORTI** - I think all the accesses have to be treated differently depending on the location and the type of movements that they have to do. But, as I said, the crossing side to side is just for those who have the property on both sides of the highway. For some it may be the case that if they have to go to Longford and they live on the west side of Longford they will have to turn left before turning back and go towards east. They may not be able to cross the two or three lanes and turn right directly towards the east.

**Mr TUCKER** - I'm just trying to picture this in my mind with tractors and feedout wagons through the winter, how this is going to operate. What you're saying is that they will have to go up and around the wire rope and then back up on some of these accesses.

**Mr CONFORTI** - In some cases, that may be the case, yes, but if they have their property on the G-junction then that will be business as usual. It's just that the old turning will be more formalised with one of the junctions that we are proposing that was shown. For the P-turns property accesses can be included in the turn. It is really based on case by case.

**Mr TUCKER** - I realise you have a safety thing to do as well but the other implications are the traffic movement.

**Mr CONFORTI** - Safety is the priority for everyone.

4.19 Noting that property accesses may be incorporated into P-turns and G-turns, the Committee sought an assurance that property accesses would still be accessible by the same type of vehicles that currently access those properties:

**Mr TUCKER** - With your P turn and G turns that you talked about, how big a vehicle will they be able to handle? A B-double going in there?

**Mr CONFORTI** - Yes.

**Mr TUCKER** - They will be designed for a B-double? So what can go on the highway at the present moment, they will be able to handle that equipment?

**Mr CONFORTI** - Yes.

### **Stock Crossings**

4.20 The Committee sought further information on what measures would be used to accommodate the stock crossings within the scope of the works:

**Mr TUCKER** - Stefano, in your introduction you talked about at-grade stock crossings. Can you explain to me more fully what an at-grade stock crossing is?

**Mr CONFORTI** - At-grade is of the same level as Illawarra Road.

**Mr ELLIS** - Rather than an underpass.

**CHAIR** - Rather than an underpass or overpass.

**Mr TUCKER** - Could you explain it a little bit further? The road is lifted a bit at the moment. You are talking about it being at the same level as what - to the gate, to the entrance?

**Mr CONFORTI** - Yes. For example, the JBS Meats business that at the moment just crosses from one side to the other, because they have property on both sides of Illawarra Road. What will happen there, which we have been discussing with them - and in agreement with them - is that rather than crossing, they will travel to Tannery Road and go out the back of the property to do their movements.

We will eliminate that upgrade crossing. There is an underpass in another business... .. that will basically cross under the road, so it is not an at-grade.

**Mr TUCKER** - With the accesses with gates along Illawarra Road, will they all be at-grade, or are there ones that won't be at-grade?

**Mr CONFORTI** - We have to provide crossing access for those who have property on one side and the other. It can be done by a stock underpass if there is one existing, or as we did with JBS Meats. Rather than crossing the road, they will have to turn left, and turn into Tannery Road where we will formalise a safe turn. If there are more of this crossing on Stage 2, we will have to see what is the best way for the landowners and to fit the design around the links.

**CHAIR** - Just to clarify, and for the record, there will not be on this road, actual stock crossing the road at any point?

**Mr CONFORTI** - No, we are trying to avoid that at all costs.

**CHAIR** - Otherwise you would not get Category 1 rating?

**Mr CONFORTI** - Exactly.

### **Need for Noise Mitigation**

4.21 The Committee noted the community experience with increased traffic noise for some residents associated with the nearby Perth Links Road project. The Committee sought further information on the expected noise impacts of this project and any mitigation measures that would be necessary. The Department's witnesses noted there was unlikely to be any need for noise mitigation, as it was not expected to increase the volume of traffic, however, did note a number of noise mitigation measures that could be used where necessary:

**Ms BUTLER** - ... .. With the Perth Link road, there has been some issues around noise there where the community was advised during the consultation process that there would be sound barriers put into place, then that did not eventuate. If there are noise issues that are raised in the consultation and those concerns are taken into it and the community is advised, if you have a landowner that is advised that there would be some sound barrier or buffers put into place, that will be honoured as part of the project?

**Mr CONFORTI** - ... .. The planning scheme doesn't require to do any noise mitigation on existing roads, so we are going to improve this road but we are not going to increase the traffic. I think the Perth Link was fundamentally different from this one because that was a brand-new road on greenfield. If there was some property there that was nice and quiet, and the road goes over near to it, they will have to consider the noise. I do not think we have any planning issue regarding noise with this project.

**Mr MEYER** - Generally we do noise assessments; we would be able to do acoustic noise monitoring as part of the design work. If there are residents nearby and increased traffic as part of the project then we employ noise mitigation. That can be asphalt or it could be sound barriers or a number of other factors, even double glazing, not necessarily just noise walls which some consider as excessively displeasing in some locations.

### **Concerns raised by Other Witnesses**

4.22 Ms Skirving and Mr Swain appeared before the Committee to express their view that the design for the upgrade of Illawarra Main Road needed to ensure it was both safe and suitable for, and met the needs of, the local agricultural community. In particular, Mr Swain and Ms Skirving highlighted issues with a recent upgrade to Green Rises Road that they believed did not meet the needs of the local community. Based on their experience, they were very keen to see that any upgrade of Illawarra Main Road was well designed and of a high quality, with improved safety and functionality for road users:

**Ms SKIRVING** - ... We're here today, I guess, to make sure that it is going to be a suitable road for the epicentre of agriculture that the Longford-Cressy area is.

**Mr SWAIN** - ... That's right, Mr Chairman... we really want to see high-quality roads built in our municipalities that are both safe and functional. That's the issue.

... Some of the roads we've had built in our municipalities are less than functional. The thing that we really want to see is, that if we're going to spend \$80 million, we want a road that is both safe and functional. As John has quite rightly pointed out, we don't want savage drop-offs on the side; there's a risk that someone's going to drop a truck or something over.

An example at the moment is Green Rises Road. In the four months since it has been rebuilt, I've been told four vehicles have gone off the road into the ditches, because that road has been built up, and the ditches are deep and wide - and the road is not wide.

... I reiterate that functional roads, safe roads, is what we should be spending our money on. If the guys are getting that, then it should be a win-win situation.

**Ms SKIRVING** - ... Following on from that is the amount of heavy machinery. It's just constant through the six months of harvest, with pea-viners and headers - and that's on top of all the log trucks that come through, and the normal heavy machinery that's around as well.

With the new Cressy-Longford Road, there are people living in Cressy who are on restricted licences and are now almost too scared to go to Longford to get their groceries because of the steep drop-offs, and because of building the road up, when there's all this heavy machinery on the road. Where do you go if there's an error of judgment?

It's really not practical for the people in our area at all. Everyone you speak to, they're all complaining about the road. The Cressy-Longford Road has such a wide verge on each side - why do they have to do it like that? Why not bevel it off? With all this wet weather, it's almost creating a dam, where all the water is settling in between the fences and the original ditch, which used to be very narrow along the fence line; the water has nowhere to go. I have to question why the roads are being built up so high.

We live on Green Rises Road. We talked to them when they started - I think it might be a local council initiative - and they said, 'No, it won't be very high.' They did a big spoon drain on either side, right to the fence. Green Rises Road isn't a very wide road anyway - not like the Cressy-Longford Road - and they have just built it up and up and up; layer on layer of gravel.

Coming along the Midland Highway, which I don't usually travel, I could not believe that a new road has potholes everywhere, and pieces are cut out where they've had to repair already. I have to question the methods that are being used today compared with the old roads.

... .. To me, it's a lot of money that's being spent, and just repair after repair. Is it because it's not factored in with the amount of heavy machinery that's being used, particularly given that we are an agricultural state? It worries me that everywhere we are trying to increase the productivity in our agricultural sector and yet we have these sorts of things happening that are making it very difficult. Even taking sheep along our road now, because we're on both sides of the road, the sheep won't go down into the ditches. You have all the sheep up on the road where they were going over onto the verges to get along and cars would come along and the sheep would go over and you could easily get by. For us, even taking them on the road – we are right on the road now, not over on the grass verges. That's the main thing that I'd like to point out to you, the difficulties we are having.

**Mr TUCKER** - ... .. I want to ask you the question: do you believe that we need to build our roads to meet the standards that were set for machinery, or are we going to have to change the standards of machinery to bring them smaller to meet our road with what is going on?

**Mr SWAIN** - ... .. To answer your question, I don't see that we'll see a diminution in the size of our agricultural machinery, particularly from the contractor's point of view. It is something we are going to have to be, I guess, collectively working on to make sure that we can continue to operate those machines on the roads.

The reality is that, I think if you were to draw a line through about Cressy, 80 per cent of this state's agricultural production occurs north of that line. The Northern Midlands itself, without using a very well-worn phrase, is a food basket. There is a lot of agricultural production in that area. Inevitably, that means that the contractors have to use the roads. It is just part of the summer operation.

**Ms SKIRVING** - ... .. Just following on from that, I have talked to Nathan Richardson who is doing the code of conduct for contractors. I thought it was strange that there is not the marrying together of the building of the roads and the requirements of the contractors on the roads. It is making it very difficult for him to get anywhere. He said, 'The way it is going, I am worried that we are just going to be told we can't use the roads, that you have to truck everything'. That just isn't feasible in an agricultural state like this. The roads are so important to be right.

**CHAIR** - So you are saying that the contractors haven't been consulted at this point, or you only know of a couple of contractors that haven't, and others may have?

**Ms SKIRVING** - He has been to a couple of the, or put in submissions for his area, when there is roadworks being done, but the code of conduct, I think that is for all contractors. They are trying to address the frustrations of people being held up on the roads and the lack of understanding of the general public who are not agriculturally-minded. Some of the way the roads are now holding up the traffic because you can't get by with the barrier in the middle so it is causing a lot of impatience and frustrations with the general public. I think that is why they are trying to put a code of conduct together... .. To have more guidelines to help everyone understand how it all works for the contractors because if we are going to remain an agricultural state we have to make it work.

**Ms BUTLER** - This section of road is part of the agricultural hub of Tasmania. Longford is the agricultural hub of Tasmania. Then you have the combination of freight on top of that because it is the thoroughfare from the north to the south of Tasmania as well. On top of that, you have your local normal traffic. We also have not raised emergency vehicles and where that fits in that as well. Do you feel, for the record, that agriculture has been a main consideration around the functionality of this road design?

**Ms SKIRVING** - No.

**Mr SWAIN** - *If the consultation process that we have been told has occurred has been thorough and rigorous, and all those landowners along the way have been consulted as to their needs and requirements, and that other parts of the industry have been consulted, then I think it can be made to work.*

**Ms SKIRVING** - ... .. *I was referring to more of what has been done rather than what is coming.*

**Mr SWAIN** - ... .. *if you travel Illawarra Road or even if you pull up with your car on Illawarra Road, it is a frightening place to pull up.*

... .. *It is a nightmare piece of road. It really does need to be improved.*

**Ms SKIRVING** - ... .. *Just being able to get off the road if you have a flat tyre, where do you go with the way the roads that have already been done?*

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

4.23 In assessing any proposed public work, the Committee seeks assurance that each project is a good use of public funds such that it meets identified needs and provides a public benefit. The Committee sought an assurance on these matters from the Department of State Growth and received the following confirmation:

*Yes, the Illawarra Main Road has been identified in the Tasmanian Road Package of the Roads of Strategic Importance Initiative to improve productivity and efficiency on key freight networks. The project will provide better connections between agricultural regions and ports, airports and other transport hubs, and better access to tourism, mining and other sectors. Importantly, it is also expected to provide a safer road for all road users.*

*The works will address safety and efficiency objectives with the proposed upgrades to the Illawarra Main Road delivering an AusRAP 3-Star safety rating in accordance with the State Governments' Policy for all Tasmanian Category 1 Roads to be upgraded to the AusRAP 3-Star safety rating road network as a continuation of the Midland Highway 10-Year Action Plan.*

*The road design meets the Austroads Design Guidelines for Category 1 roads for horizontal and vertical curves and provides 3.5m lanes with sealed shoulders of 2.0m and a minimum 2.1m median with Flexible safety barrier. There is the heavy vehicle rest area in Phase 1 of the project where any maintenance of vehicles could occur.*

*The Departments' standard competitive tender procurement process for the Construct only contract will be adopted in accordance with Treasurers' Instruction to ensure a value for money outcome for the delivery of the Illawarra Main Road Upgrade works.*

*Yes, the works are a good use of public funds as it will deliver safety and efficiency improvements and consistent road environment for this key link in the Tasmanian State road network that is also the primary freight route between Hobart and the northern and north-west regions ports. The Illawarra Main Road eliminates the need to travel via Launceston, reducing travel time by providing a time saving transport link between the Midland and Bass Highways. The upgrade of this key link between*

*the Bass and Midland Highways would provide a safer and more efficient trip for all road users.*<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> DoSG response to request for additional information #1, page 4.

## 5 DOCUMENTS TAKEN INTO EVIDENCE

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

- *Illawarra Main Road Upgrade*, Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, Department of State Growth, 10 June 2021.
- DoSG reponse to request for additional information #1;
- Illawarra Road - Crash Statistics;
- DoSG reponse to request for additional information #2;
- DoSG reponse to request for additional information #2-Attachment Table 1;
- DoSG reponse to request for additional information#2-Tasmanian Heavy Vehicle Driver Rest Area Strategy.

## **6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

- 6.1 The Committee did hold concerns with respect to the road width being sufficient to cater for large vehicles and agricultural machinery. However, the Committee is now satisfied that the clarification provided on the road cross section and the inclusion of slow-vehicle turnouts on single lane sections of the road has resulted in a design that will be safe and functional for all road users.
- 6.2 The Committee also had difficulty in assessing the public value of this project, given that so many elements of the project were still at the concept design stage. While the plans for Stage 1 were more detailed at the time of the hearing, the plans for Stages 2 and 3 had little detail. Since that time, however, the Department has provided further detail on the design for the project.
- 6.3 The Committee also holds concerns relating to the lack of toilet facilities at the Tannery Road heavy vehicle rest area. The Committee acknowledges the Department's explanation that this heavy vehicle rest area does not meet the criteria where toilet facilities must be provided and are an optional feature. The Committee also notes that toilet facilities will be provided at other locations nearby. However, the Committee also understands that the rest area will include exercise areas and a picnic recreational area. The Committee is of the view that including such facilities will encourage use by not only truck drivers but also other drivers, including families, and not including toilet facilities at this time would be short-sighted. The Committee strongly urges the Department to reconsider its position on this matter.
- 6.4 Notwithstanding that this matter remains a concern to the Committee, it is satisfied that the needs for the proposed works has been established. The proposed works will contribute to improved safety, productivity and efficiency on what is a key part of the Tasmanian freight network.
- 6.5 The project is expected to enhance freight productivity, connectivity and efficiency by providing better connections between agricultural regions and ports, airports and other transport hubs and provide better access for tourism, mining and other sectors. It will also upgrade the road network to a Category 1 Road under the Tasmanian State Road Hierarchy and achieve an AusRap 3 star safety rating, which will provide a safer and more efficient travel environment for all road users.
- 6.6 Accordingly, the Committee recommends the Illawarra Main Road Upgrade, at an estimated cost of \$80 million, in accordance with the documentation submitted.