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**THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS MET IN VICTORIA MEMORIAL HALL, MAIN ROAD KEMPTON ON THURSDAY 27 JUNE 2019.**

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### **MIDLAND HIGHWAY 10 YEAR ACTION PLAN - MELTON MOWBRAY TO LOVELY BANKS**

**Ms VANESSA KING**, MANAGEMENT TEAM LEADER AND **Mr CRAIG TARBOTTON**, PROJECT MANAGER, PROJECT SERVICES, DEPARTMENT OF STATE GROWTH, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** (Mr Valentine) - Thank you for appearing today. I think you have met all the members - Mr Mark Shelton, Jen Butler, Tania Rattray and myself, Rob Valentine.

The committee is pleased to hear your evidence today. Before you begin giving your evidence I will inform you of some important aspects of committee proceedings. A committee hearing is a proceeding of parliament and 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 afforded 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 and members of the public and journalists may be present, and indeed members of the public are present, and this means your evidence may be reported. Do you understand?

**WITNESSES** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. You now have the capacity to make an opening statement. Please feel free to do that. I also introduce Roey who is here from Hansard - I forget to do that every time - and she is recording the proceedings today.

Over to you for an opening statement and then members will question you on this submission.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Thank you. Just to summarise the project, as mentioned, the project is six kilometres of highway upgrade along the Midland Highway. It is part of the greater or broader Midland Highway upgrade program. The objective of the Midland Highway program is to create an AusRAP three-star highway, a safety program. The configuration to achieve the three stars, the lane configuration, is what we call a two plus one, so that provides overtaking lane opportunities.

The project starts approximately 250 metres north of the current Highland Lakes Road and finishes one kilometre north of the Lovely Banks Road junction. We have climbing lanes in both directions, both north and south, and we have a significant property north of the project into the Lovely Banks property itself. There are a number of smaller property accesses positioned along that 60 kilometre section which provide access to the Lovely Banks property. The project does not impact on any threatened vegetation communities outside of the road corridor. We have adjusted the geometry of the highway so that we avoid the acquisition of private land. Within the body of

## PUBLIC

the project we have a left turn into the Muddy Plains Road. That functionality is remaining as it currently stands so we are still providing a left turn lane into Muddy Plains Road.

That is essentially a broad summary of the project.

**CHAIR** - Thank you for that. Perhaps I can commence the questioning and my colleagues will have questions to follow. We will work our way through the report. One of the main issues here is that it appears that there is less opportunity for overtaking than what is currently available. Perhaps you could address that particular issue. I know that is of interest to members. If you could put that in the context of the whole project and what is happening here that would be appreciated.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Certainly. It is correct that within this project that current climbing lanes and overtaking lane lengths are being reduced. That is clear. We are. However, as far as overtaking opportunities along the entire Midland Highway, we are not reducing the opportunities to overtake. Let me just clarify that.

Back to the project specific impact, at the moment we are in the south bound direction reducing the lane length, the overtaking lane, currently considered an overtaking lane, by 1.3 kilometres. I would like to clarify that. With this project these lanes that we are discussing are technically called climbing lanes. An overtaking lane is predominantly positioned on a flat terrain to allow standard vehicles to overtake the slower vehicles. In this instance, the function of the lane is to allow the heavy vehicles to move to one side and allow the standard vehicles to pass by. Technically they are a climbing lane.

In the south bound direction we are reducing the length by 1.3, and in the north bound direction we are reducing the current lane length by 400 metres, 0.4 kilometres. That is not 1.3 kilometres off one end of the south bound or 400 metres off the north bound. It is distributed over both ends so the start and finish points in both directions are adjusted, modified slightly.

I would like to elaborate on that. We have designed those lane lengths to not affect the travelling public. The goal for us is to ensure that heavy vehicles can still use the highway efficiently and light vehicles can also operate on the road with efficiency and effectively. The lane lengths have been designed so that at the starting point heavy vehicles will be at an above average speed. We are governed by our national design guideline. We comply with those national design guidelines as well as our own internal design guidelines. The starting speed that we have adopted for both the lanes in south and north direction is greater than the minimum that is allowed under the national design guideline.

Similarly, the end point of both lanes, both north and south, has been identified or adopted so that the speed of the heavy vehicle will be greater than the allowed minimum speed under the national design guideline. What we are trying to provide here is an outcome or a product that is better than the minimum allowed under the national, whilst managing our budget constraints. We have achieved that.

All the lane lengths, whilst they are shorter, and they are shorter, they are not substandard by any means. They satisfy all the national design guidelines and we believe they will still allow the users of the highway to use that effectively.

**CHAIR** - To continue to focus on this, the issue of safety, you were saying during our site inspection, that is of paramount importance.

## PUBLIC

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - In this particular instance, it seems like there is not going to much gain in safety for the reduction of overtaking opportunities. Do you want to comment on the safety aspects and what it is actually delivering, compared to what there is currently?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Yes, certainly. We are referring to a project specific at the moment, but I cannot avoid referring to the Midland Highway program. We have a task of upgrading the entire highway to a minimum three-star safety level. The way we achieve that is by putting a central flexible safety barrier in the highway. The reason we are putting the barrier in the centre of the highway is that the predominant fatalities are due to head-on collisions. That is what we are trying to limit.

For this particular project, there has not been any head-on fatalities, so one might say that we are not necessarily improving that. But what we are creating is a driving environment that is consistent from the south to the north of the state. That means, that as drivers travel through this project, they can comfortably rely upon that their awareness does not have to change of the environment. In the event that an errant vehicle did try to move across the highway, we have that central barrier there, so we are improving safety outcomes. For this particular project, there has not been an accident or a head-on collision, but we cannot design for that. We have to design for what we believe might happen and we are putting a central barrier in there to prevent that if it did happen. We cannot prevent the errant vehicle from becoming errant, but what we can prevent is the impact that errant vehicle has on an adjacent motorist, and that is the central barrier.

**CHAIR** - The shoulders? Are they changing?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Yes. The Midland Highway program, the entire Midland Highway has adopted a 2 plus 1 configuration with a central median, that is 2.1 metres wide and 2 metre shoulders. The 2 metre shoulders provide multiple functions. One is, it allows breakdown vehicles to pull over to one side and allow the traffic to pass by. It also allows a vehicle, if it becomes errant, meaning it starts to leave the highway lane, it has sufficient width to correct itself before impacting on either the adjacent land or the barrier, the shoulder, so yes.

**Ms RATTRAY** - In regard to the heavy vehicle users of the road, what engagement have you had with the industry itself before you have gone down this path, particularly in reducing that overtaking or climbing lane scenario?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - I refer back to the more broader highway. This is one project of many projects and we liaise with all stakeholders as best we can. The heavy vehicle industry and the heavy vehicle association is one such stakeholder. Our design consultants that we engage across many projects do that liaison for us. We inform them of our intended outcomes and we ask them to provide feedback. That has been the extent, or the type, of engagement and liaison on this particular project.

**Ms RATTRAY** - With regard to that broader stakeholder engagement, can the committee be apprised of what engagement there has been and what feedback there has been from all stakeholders?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - There is a priority listing of stakeholders from key downwards. We focus our attention on those impacted by the project, so that is the adjacent landowners or if they are

## PUBLIC

immediately impacted, we focus on them. The priority drops further down from that. We contact the RACT, which represents the general motorists within the state. We also contact the heavy vehicle industry whether it be the owners or the association, and we try to involve the general public through our website. We may not contact the general public but we certainly put the information on our website to, if they are interested, become informed.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Right down to the detail, Craig, of reducing from four lanes back to two plus one?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Yes.

**Ms RATTRAY** - They are well aware of that through the website?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - There is always going to be an interpretation of the information and we try to present this information clearly as we can. I cannot say that everybody interprets it the way that we would hope them to. I have had calls from the public who have felt that we are reducing the highway speed down to 70 kilometres per hour, which is not the case. We are starting an overtaking lane, or climbing lane, when heavy vehicles reach 70. Unfortunately, the public have interpreted that as the highway has been reduced to 70. Yes, we do provide detail, but how that is interpreted is often up to the individual.

**Ms RATTRAY** - I asked for the issues that were brought forward by the stakeholders.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - The issues that I am aware of are predominantly from the adjacent landowners. They have presented some concerns. The concerns presented to us are the reduction in lane lengths and the sight visibility as they exit properties. I will explain what the concerns were: the concerns are that the current overtaking lanes are being reduced and that is at a loss of functionality and at a loss of safety. I have explained that we have designed these climbing lanes so that they are within the national design guidelines. They will not or should not affect the functionality of the highway. I cannot guarantee that of course because it depends on the individual driver, but from design modelling it can be shown that the heavy vehicles will reach above average design speed when the lane starts. They should be at operating speed by the time the lane finishes. That is an average.

The adjacent landowner feels that these lanes should be longer. I can understand that. But I can say that the current lane lengths are beyond what we consider desirable - that does not mean they are not fantastic, they are. From a design perspective, and we used the national design guide called Austroads, there is a length called the desirable length - it could be not just length but desirable sight distances, desirable length, desirable speed. That is the preferred. The current lane lengths are beyond that, meaning they are very generous. Our lane lengths are at the desirable. So we satisfy that and that is our constraint. We try to achieve that. Anything beyond that becomes unnecessary.

**CHAIR** - One might say, why reduce the amenity? What is the real reason there? Is it the cost of pavement for the given length? Is it that you have to move into land acquisition more than you would want to?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - We do have to focus on that. What we are providing is we are improving safety of that entire highway. We improve the safety by providing that central flexible safety barrier

## PUBLIC

and the 2 metre shoulders and a central medium. Whilst we are reducing lane lengths we are improving, in theory, the safety of this highway to the general public.

Land acquisition always comes into play with any of our projects. Even this project of itself, land acquisition was a matter we had to consider. It is not just the purchase of the land or the acquisition of the land from the landowner, it is what that land may contain. On this particular project there is threatened vegetation that we have to consider. We have two different levels of threatened vegetation - one is federal and one is state. State-listed vegetation is a little easier to manage. When you start impacting on federally listed or federally endangered species that becomes a completely different challenge and it can be quite time consuming.

We do try to minimise or limit land acquisition where we can. It is not necessarily a cost or a budget; it is the impact on the project. If we impact on a federally listed species it can be a two-year process to get a permit. We have 10 years to deliver this entire program, so we try to minimise impact on those species and that means avoiding land acquisition. If there were no listed species, or endangered species, the acquisition of land itself is a minor cost. But that is not why we have avoided land acquisition. We have avoided land acquisition to not impact on these species.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Ms BUTLER** - I have a question around the central safety barriers. You are talking about the main reason for those central safety barriers is the prevention of head-on collisions. If you look at it from a different perspective, can those central safety barriers contribute to other car incidents and potentially cause fatalities as well?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - The answer is 'yes', but we have to prioritise. When you impact the flexible safety barrier, you will sustain some injury, to the vehicle or even the person. What we are trying to do is minimise the scale of the impact. By providing the central safety barrier we should prevent fatalities. It does not mean the person who impacts that barrier will not walk away with an injury. They might; it depends on how they are driving. It depends on the vehicle type. A motorcyclist that impacts that central barrier will sustain a greater injury than a person within a vehicle. We cannot avoid that, but what we can do is minimise the fatalities.

**Ms BUTLER** - Yes, it has been very noticeable that there are no motorbike riders any more on the Midland Highway. They do not use it any more.

I have a question about the length of the overtaking lane. We were recently at a public committee meeting in West Tamar and there they were seeking to lengthen their overtaking lanes because they saw that as meeting safety requirements. Is it a State Growth policy? Is there a policy? We had conflicting advice from them of the length of the overtaking lanes and them wanting to extend it and that being a priority because there had been fatalities, whereas here we are minimising. Can you run through where that policy sits within State Growth as a state policy, and why the northern perspective of the length of the overtaking lane may be different to this particular project?

**Ms KING** - Without being across the particulars of the West Tamar, the approach taken by State Growth is that we use Austroads design criteria. As Craig said earlier, the Austroads guides give you a minimum length for overtaking lanes. I do not think they give a maximum; they give you a desirable band. The West Tamar, for example, may have been a lane that was substantially shorter than the desirable length. In this situation we are talking about lanes that are currently on road longer than the desirable length. In all cases we are working to Austroads' design standards.

## PUBLIC

**Ms BUTLER** - Very much with the information we received in that particular committee was that the longer the overtaking lane the safer and the greater chance they had of meeting that safety requirement. It just seems there are two different perspectives here on overtaking lanes.

**Ms KING** - I am sorry I am not able to comment on the details of that project. I am not able to give you a detailed response on that.

**Ms BUTLER** - We might be able to get some further advice with that. I perceive conflicting information from the same department a week apart when it comes to the length of overtaking lanes. I probably need to clarify that in my head. I know they are different projects.

**Ms KING** - We are not saying that a shorter overtaking lane, a desirable length overtaking lane in this case, shorter than currently exists, that that is more safe or less safe. We are saying that the desirable length is the appropriate length. That is the appropriate length to put our money into and to maintain the extra-long lanes here is not an appropriate use of public funds. We do not get enough safety. You might get a tiny safety benefit from an extra 1.3 kilometres, but it is not an appropriate use of public funds to maintain all that additional length if you do not get a substantial safety benefit out of a long length.

My expectation of West Tamar without knowing the detail is that we are talking about a really short lane there which does need to be brought up to standard. That is a different situation to this situation here.

**Ms BUTLER** - Here we have a long lane which is being minimised, I understand that, but I do not really understand - to me it does not make much sense, that is all.

**Ms RATTRAY** - To take it away when it is already there.

**Ms KING** - It is already there but the road pavement currently is -

**CHAIR** - Hansard cannot record that.

**Ms KING** - If you think about the road as it currently stands in the sections, there are sections that are currently four lanes wide which, once the project is completed, will be three lanes wide. They will have a central median and the wider shoulders as well. Some of those sections, if we were to maintain the length of the overtaking lanes as very long, plus the medians plus the shoulders, would involve significant additional expenditure of public funds which would not result in a commensurate safety benefit for that expenditure. It is important that the Midland Highway 10-year upgrade program as a whole manages trade-offs up and down the highway to make sure that we don't overdo one section because then you run a risk of underdoing another section.

**Ms BUTLER** - That leads into my next question about the entirety of the Midland Highway action plan, and that the central safety barriers being in place and a two lane each side highway. That was the plan. Do you have any idea of the percentage of the work that has been undertaken where there are two lanes on either side, to date?

**Ms KING** - That data is available. I cannot provide it to you off the top of my head. Can I just get the question exactly?

## PUBLIC

**Ms BUTLER** - How much of the Midland Highway action plan, how much of the completed work in a percentage has two lanes on either side with the barrier in between.

**CHAIR** - A four lane highway.

**Ms KING** - Yes, two lanes each way with the barrier. Sure.

**Mr SHELTON** - A couple of points and questions as we are talking about the dual lanes. You mentioned AusRAP is about overtaking opportunities and single lanes. On this one I do notice, and we have talked about the four lanes and having two and one. There is a substantial section in the middle that is still four lanes -

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Correct.

**Mr SHELTON** - overtaking both directions. I do not think that needs to be lost in the whole debate about two and one.

Just a comment on the project brief that we received. When the department talks about additional safe overtaking opportunities, I take it you are talking about the project as a whole - the Midlands Highway safety opportunities as a whole. It is obvious when you look at this project that there is less, although you could actually argue that safe with a barrier is better than safe with no barrier.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Correct.

**Mr SHELTON** - That is the first point. My main concern always as a farmer is the conversations that went on with the property owners either side and up north further. I know there was a number of legal and illegal opportunities to get into property, some of which the department had to close because they could not be maintained. Have there been any issues like that in this section? In conversations with landowners, have all the accesses been agreed to as such?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - There is one minor access point which currently is not licensed. I can provide a bit of history or context: the Midland Highway is a limited access highway, meaning we cannot allow too many access points or vehicles entering onto the highway.

**Mr SHELTON** - Is that because it is a national highway, under the national highways?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Yes, it is part of the national highway and it has limited access, meaning we need to limit the number of vehicles that enter onto it from a perpendicular direction. Every time that happens, there is a possibility of, or the potential for, an accident, so we limit the number of accesses properties can have.

**Ms KING** - We do not limit it; state legislation limits it. Let us be clear about that. There is a legislative requirement and my understanding is that even a minister cannot create new accesses onto the Midland Highway. It is not a departmental policy; it is legislation.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Up and down the highway, we are encountering challenging circumstances in relation to existing property access points. On this particular property a minor access point has been recognised but it is not licensed. A licence means the owner has approached

## PUBLIC

the state Government and the road authority and has asked for permission to enter onto the highway, and that is a licence given or not given. It is a licence, which means it can be removed.

There is one that has been recognised as not being licensed. If the project needs to, we can close it. That is recognised. Our design consultant has been in discussion with the landowners since the early part of this year. This is not the first project to impact on this landowner. This landowner is a significant landowner and we have other projects that have impacted on this property owner, and other discussions have been held by other design consultants.

We have consulted with the landowners. That landowner does have some concerns and I believe we have addressed those concerns. When I say 'addressed', it does not mean the landowner accepts or is happy with our position. I cannot always guarantee that our position will be acceptable to them.

**Ms KING** - In terms of accesses, the accesses are resolved.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Yes. Only that one is recognised that it can be closed. The other access points have been agreed to and discussed.

**CHAIR** - Is that the one directly opposite Muddy Plains Road?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - I will have to take that on notice, unless our design consultant can respond.

**Ms KING** - There are some substantial works at the main access to the property, towards the north of the project. In the drawings provided in the report, that's shown. There are substantial works for that to make sure significant access for that landowner, that the functionality, is maintained. They have quite a lot of traffic movement through that major access, including quite a lot of substantial farm vehicles, large, heavy vehicles as well as the lighter farm vehicles. Yes, there has been considerable work with the landowner to manage what your question was about - the accesses onto and off the highway for the adjoining owner.

**CHAIR** - We will hear from the landowner at a later stage.

**Ms RATTRAY** - I have a question in regard to the double lanes. Where you said a significant part of this project will still have two lots of double lanes, do they have the 2 metre run-off on either side?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Yes.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Right, so in that case, why would it be that much more expensive to put in the run-off and continue the overtaking lane when it is already going to meet up with the new part anyway?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - At the moment our new highway and new design is fitting within the current road corridor. There are areas where the current corridors widen to actually cater for our current design.

**Ms RATTRAY** - So the double lanes are currently wide enough?



## PUBLIC

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Yes. Beyond that, it is not an unreasonable question to ask why we don't continue those two lanes.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Straight up.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Yes. One answer is that in the southbound downhill we try not to have overtaking opportunities. We can put them in there if we have the funds, but the rationale for trying to limit that is that when you have a downhill overtaking opportunity, if in the left lane a vehicle is already doing the operating designed speed - 110 kilometres per hour - and if there is a person behind them wanting to overtake them, they will, because there is an opportunity to do that. That is an illegal manoeuvre, so we try to restrict that where we can.

In this instance where we have shortened the lane, it is not so that we reduce the functionality; it is so we improve the safety of that. It is not about a budget constraint, even though we have a constrained budget. It is more about by reducing the lane length, we improve the potential safety outcome. Yes, we could have extended it; we could have spent more money on it, but our objective for the whole program is to improve safety.

Not everyone is going to agree with our position but we have been targeted with achieving a 3-star safety outcome. We have a highway configuration which achieves that, and there will be times when we make a design decision which is not acceptable to other persons but we can justify it based on design rationale. In that instance we do not want people going downhill at greater than 110 kilometres per hour just because they want to.

**Ms RATTRAY** - It is not about the money?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Not always, but I cannot exclude budget.

**Ms RATTRAY** - In this case, it is not about the money?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - No. It is not specifically about budget in this instance. Please let me say that we are constrained in our budget so we have to watch how we spend our money and we are doing the best we can. We are making decisions that still satisfy the design safety outcomes required of us and managing our budget, which is required of us.

**CHAIR** - If we can go to page 4 and we will work out way forward through the report. Does anyone have questions on page 4 at this time? I have one. You were talking about road cross section at 2.2 at the base of this report, you talk about batters -

The department's two plus one lane arrangement includes a flexible safety barrier within the centre of 2.1 wide medium. In addition to the central medium barrier flexible safety barriers have also been provided to protect motorists from embankment batters with heights of 2 metres or greater and where flat safety batters cannot reasonably be provided.

When you talk about a height of 2 metres are you talking about, for instance, if you have to go into your left, the height of the batter up to the road as well as the 2-metre height going up from the road as well. Do you understand what I am trying to say?

## PUBLIC

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Yes. When we say embankment, that is normally uphill where the road is higher than the adjacent land. We need to protect motorists from driving off that height and the two metres is the vertical level difference between the driving surface and the natural ground over here. That is greater than two metres vertical and if we cannot run a nice flat batter out - a flat batter has a gradient of one in six where a vehicle can drive on it and come back - if we cannot achieve that, we put a barrier there to protect the motorist.

**Mr VALENTINE** - The flexible barrier?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - We can either use a flexible safety barrier or we can use the steel guard rail.

**Mr VALENTINE** - The Armco-type railing.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - It is similar for when you go through a cut in the hill. You do not have a level drop-off, what you have is a wall either side, you have a stone wall often that we protect motorists from. Sometimes we will put a barrier there as well.

**Mr VALENTINE** - It might come off rocks too, for that matter.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Correct.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Any questions? Page 5 - any questions there?

**Ms BUTLER** - I always ask a question about drainage. Are there any potential drainage or flooding issues in the project?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - To my knowledge there are no issues. We are in our early design phases; we are still working through our designs and still talking with our landowners. We ask for their knowledge. We have only just passed through our preliminary design, we have a long way to go before we get to the detailed design. All throughout that design process we will look at drainage and flooding.

**Ms BUTLER** - Is there any potential landslip areas as well?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Our designers assess that; to my knowledge there is not. We are cutting through or covering through cuts where we need to assess the stability of the rock base. That stability has been undertaken and to my knowledge there is no concern.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Given that this is not the final design, there are opportunities for amendments. We cannot make them as a committee but obviously as a department, you can take on board the issues that have raised and perhaps still outstanding. Is there an opportunity?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - As the design process progresses, the opportunities become fewer because they have become more expensive to implement so we are at the preliminary design - let's say 50 per cent through, for argument's sake - our design is final. We believe it is the best design available to us for the budget we have. When we progress from preliminary through to detailed, that means we start looking to finer detail in how we can build this road. What issues will we encounter? Will there be drainage issues? If so, how do we cater for them? That is our detailed design.

## PUBLIC

Obviously our conceptual design is really what you see here in front of you - just a line on an aerial image.

**Ms RATTRAY** - We actually do not know how much it is going to cost because we do not know what might unfold.

**Ms KING** - That is universal for all projects.

**Ms RATTRAY** - I am fairly new to the committee so I am just working my way through this.

**Ms KING** - All capital projects, whether they are road upgrades or building upgrades, at the start of the project there is an idea about what people want out of the project and there is an initial estimate. As the project proceeds, as everybody finds out more, finetunes decisions and accepts criteria, then you refine the accuracy of the estimate. As the project proceeds, the estimate becomes more accurate and more realistic.

**CHAIR** - On page 5, the 2 metre shoulder. Given that in some parts of this there are climbing lanes, is a 2 metre shoulder wide enough? Heavy vehicles quite often will fail going uphill, more so than going down. They can always travel down and find a safer spot unless it is a major tyre blowout. Is a 2 metre shoulder wide enough these days for B-doubles and things that might encounter problems?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - The answer is yes. Will a B-double fit in two metres? No, it will not but what is the likelihood of a B-double or any vehicle breaking down? We consider that. In the event that a vehicle does break down, whether it is light vehicle or a heavy vehicle, the majority of the vehicle width will be in the shoulder. It might still sit in the left lane, but that means all other through traffic still has the right lane and a portion of the left lane to use. We cannot provide, and this is because of budget constraints, a 3 metre shoulder because it is simply dollars and it is not required. If vehicles were breaking down every 100 metres - and they do not - yes, we might have to consider that. It is all about likelihood and value for money.

**CHAIR** - And most of the climbing lanes have two lanes. The climbing sections have two lanes.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Yes.

**Ms BUTLER** - Can I ask a supplementary question to your question? With the shoulder area being two metres and you have a barrier on this side and then you have the barrier in the middle as well as the roads, there is not really anywhere for someone to go. For instance, if you have to pull over to change a tyre on a light vehicle or if you have a heavy vehicle and you need to check your stock or potentially change a tyre on a heavy vehicle, is there enough space to do that at all if you have got the barrier here on the left? It does happen. You have the barrier here as well as the one in the middle.

**Ms KING** - In some locations. Not all locations.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - You have the 2 metre shoulder where most of your vehicle can sit if you need to; depending on one or two lanes adjacent to you, you have another metre before your central barrier. There is sufficient lane,

## PUBLIC

**Ms BUTLER** - But if you are in a single lane, which this will have going up from Lovely Banks, Muddy Plains? I am concerned that if a vehicle, a heavy or even a light vehicle, has to have a tyre changed, will there be enough space there for the driver to do that safely? I am sure that will happen at some stage.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Yes, it does happen. You are correct. A light vehicle will fit in that two metres. A vehicle will. They are about 2 metres wide, an average standard vehicle. A heavier vehicle will not, but a heavier vehicle has more than four wheels so it is expected that if a heavier vehicle loses a wheel or loses a tyre, not loses as one runs free but blows a tyre, they will then continue driving until there is a safe opportunity to pull over. We provide those at regular intervals up the highway, currently every 5 kilometres. That is what we would expect. A light vehicle cannot travel too far on three tyres but they can fit in. Yes, it is still hazardous but it is certainly better than what we are currently providing, which is 1 metre.

**Ms BUTLER** - But the barrier is not there is it, at the moment? It is hemming them in, isn't it?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - No. The barrier does not occur the entire length. It only occurs when there is a hazard to the motorist.

**Ms KING** - The left-hand barrier, the side barrier, is only there when there is something really nasty on the other side of it, like a big drop-off.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Nothing on The Sidling, and there are a few nasties there.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - The highway configuration is a 3.5 metre lane, 2 metre shoulder and then a 1 metre gravel verge. Beyond the verge, it becomes road reserve with drains et cetera. Where there is no hazard to the vehicle, we do not put a barrier. That means that if you happen to blow a tyre - hopefully not near a barrier - you have the shoulder plus the verge, plus the road reserve to pull over. If you happen to blow a tyre against a barrier, then yes, that is regrettable but you still have two metres.

**Mr SHELTON** - I will make a comment as a person who has walked the highway. In certain sections of the old highway, there is only half a metre's worth of gravel and there is also, at one particular point, a guard rail where the white line and the guard rail probably has only a metre between the edge of the lane and the guard rail. If any trucks at the moment breakdown in that section, they actually take up the lane because there is nowhere for them to go. It is certainly an improvement.

**Ms RATTRAY** - We can talk about other parts of the road network around Tassie.

**CHAIR** - At the base of page 5, you state, 'Some culvert extensions are likely to be avoided by the provision of 1V2H fill batters'. Can you explain that, please, to the uninitiated?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Yes, I apologise for the use of that jargon. That is one vertical, two horizontal. That is the gradient.

**CHAIR** - It is 45 degrees. Is that what you are saying?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - No, 33 or something less than that. It is one vertical to one horizontal.

## **PUBLIC**

**CHAIR** - Okay.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - So one in one is 45.

**CHAIR** - That is right. Thank you for that. On page 7, you talk about chainage. Are those figures - 4080 - metres?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - They do not use chains any longer, surely?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Yes, we do, for our designs, so again my apologies for jargon. It is simply a reference point on the highway.

**CHAIR** - Yes, but are they metre reference points, not chainage reference points? Not chains?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Yes.

**Ms KING** - They are not links and chains, the somewhat old surveying measure.

**CHAIR** - They are not 22-yard measurements?

**Ms KING** - Correct.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Before you go on to the second one, it says, 'Additional acquisition may be identified as the preliminary design phase progresses'.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Correct.

**Ms RATTRAY** - So it could be more than what is identified in land and/or property acquisition?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Yes. From our concept design, which is essentially what you are viewing in front of you -

**Ms RATTRAY** - Which may change?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Yes, it might, there is a possibility for that. We have again adjusted our preliminary concept designs to avoid acquisition. Under this drawing here, it was always anticipated that we might need to acquire private land; however, we have adjusted our road geometry to avoid that.

There is still a possibility, but as we progress through it, it is becoming less likely and our designs are becoming firmer and better. I expect that there will be no acquisition.

**Ms BUTLER** - For the record, could you provide us with some information about flora and fauna that would potentially stop any potential acquisition?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - What sort of information would you like?

## PUBLIC

**Ms BUTLER** - The threatened species. You said previously that the reason some land area may not be acquired is because there could be a threatened species.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Within the project extent, there are two groupings of listed flora communities. A community of flora is a broader grouping, not only an individual flower. I cannot give you the exact locations here, but there are two.

Our concept design had it that we were impacting on those communities. We wanted to avoid that for a number of reasons. One is we do not want to lose the vegetation if we can help it and, two, because of the time impact on the project. Again, we have adjusted our design geometry to avoid impact.

There are vegetation communities and vegetation itself - small groups - beyond the road reserve, or even in the road reserve, that are listed as threatened, state-listed not federally listed.

**Ms BUTLER** - Such as?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - I will have to get the species name to you.

**Ms KING** - Do you remember whether that was small plants or trees?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Some of them are the native trees.

**CHAIR** - That is on table 4, on page eight? There's rough spear grass, woolly New Holland daisy -

**Ms RATTRAY** - You are taking out some significant trees.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Trees, correct, we are. There is a difference between a community and an individual tree. We are impacting on trees; there are trees in our road reserve, which we are taking out. They have been determined by both our internal environmental unit as well as by an external environmental consultant to not be a significant flora community. We can impact that, meaning we can take -

**CHAIR** - Those trees you are taking out are towards the Lovely Banks turn-off.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Correct. They are on our road reserve; they are not on private land.

**CHAIR** - On the left on the way down just before that.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Yes. The reason we are taking those out is that the landowner does have a concern that as they exit the property, the Lovely Banks property, as you look south it is difficult to see oncoming traffic. We have modelled that and the road geometry does allow clear vision but we have to remove those trees. Those trees are with road reserve; they are not listed as threatened, but even if they were, they are not a community of listed trees.

**Ms RATTRAY** - And they are not heritage-listed?

**CHAIR** - No. They are not that old.

## PUBLIC

**Mr TARBOTTON** - To reinforce that, as we progress through our design we try to remove as many unknowns or uncertainties as we can. The flora vegetation was an uncertainty to us; it had the potential to (a), require a permit to take and (b), it also had the potential to slow down the project. We sent out an environmental consultant with a land surveyor who accurately located not just the species of plant itself and vegetation, but the location to ensure this project did not impact on them. We have a high level of confidence that we will not impact this vegetation.

**CHAIR** - Just a question on those. 'Rare and vulnerable': vulnerable is higher risk, higher level of concern than rare?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Correct.

**CHAIR** - I just wanted to clarify that because we do read it and you think, 'One is vulnerable and one is rare, which comes first?' So vulnerable is a higher concern?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - I am just re-reading the report and there is a time lag between this report and even this presentation. We had to submit this report to you - I am quite happy update that information and indeed we probably should - but between submitting this report to yourselves, we have subsequently gone out with our surveyor and environmental consultant, to not have a minimal impact but to have zero impact on these vegetation communities.

**CHAIR** - You mention at the top of page eight that the department will apply for a permit to take from the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment. Where is that up to?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - We have identified that there will not be an impact.

**CHAIR** - Sorry. You have just said that, okay that is what you are referring to. Thank you. You talk about decommissioning wombat burrows: what is the score there?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - In our concept design, when we prepared this submission to you, there was a wombat burrow that might be populated by either a wombat or a Tasmanian devil. That immediately triggers a requirement, under DPIPW, to either avoid impacting on that or translocate the animal. We sent out consultants out; they inspected the burrow - there were no animals present a wombat or a Tasmanian devil, and they boarded off that burrow.

**CHAIR** - All right. I wasn't quite sure what that meant.

**Mr SHELTON** - I have a quick question on some impacts, not on flora or fauna, but on the human activity on the area. The main intersection of the whole design is the Lovely Banks road intersection and its changes, and the significant change to access to the Lovely Banks property itself. Can you talk the committee through the design issues around that section and your involvement with the local landowners and that particular design? That is the critical design from a farming perspective of the whole project.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - You are correct. Possibly the greatest impact we have on the project is on the entrance to this property. At the moment, what we are showing is that landowner has both light and heavy vehicle movements in and out of the property. We have designed that junction - it is a junction between both a private landowning and a public road on the opposite side - to allow heavy vehicles, which has the larger turning radius -

## PUBLIC

**Mr SHELTON** - Including B-doubles? It has always been an issue where radius is not quite good enough for B-doubles to turn in and so on, and vehicles always getting longer and larger.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Correct. As a minimum design for B-double movements now, we expect or anticipate that into particularly farms. We do not design for B-triples. They are not allowed in the state, to let you know that. They may be in the future, but certainly not now.

That entrance caters for B-double movements. They have all-direction access. That means they can turn left in, left out, right out et cetera. They can cross the highway and enter into Lovely Banks property. That was a requirement of the landowners, a fairly strict requirement, and I believe we have achieved that requirement.

That junction, in itself, allows for emergency vehicles, fire and ambulance et cetera to do a 180-degree turn within the lane widths without actually having to enter into private property. That has also been allowed for at that junction.

Heading south and turning left into the property, we provide what we call a basic left turn. Essentially that is a 3-metre shoulder. We have two metres, which is standard. We now provide three metres of sealed shoulder. It is not a dedicated left turn; it is a basic left turn.

The number of vehicles turning into that property does not justify a dedicated left turn. A dedicated left turn is wider, longer and, given the volume of vehicles both coming in and out, a basic left turn, a 3-metre-wide shoulder, is sufficient in model.

When you are heading south and you need to turn right into Lovely Banks property, we are providing a dedicated right turn. That is currently there so we are not changing that.

When you are heading south from Launceston and you wish to turn left into Lovely Banks Road, we are providing a basic left turn, the same as if you were turning into the property. Again, that is a 3-metre-wide shoulder, a very large wide shoulder. It is not a dedicated lane. Again, we based that decision on the volume of traffic turning in; we based it on crash history records. There are no crash history records showing that vehicles turning left into Lovely Banks Road have been collided with from the rear, so that again supports the use of a basic left turn.

For the Lovely Banks property itself, full functionality has been provided across the highway and all-directional travel.

**Mr SHELTON** - For anybody who has looked at the plan or, if they have any time, looks at the *Hansard* to read about this in the future, they may look at that intersection and say, 'Well, it is not completely opposite each other. Why would they not align that intersection?'

A quick response from you as you have already indicated to the committee when we were out looking at it, but it would be preferable to get it on the *Hansard*.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - The junction has been designed to the Australian national design guidelines. Please do not have a concern about the configuration of that junction. The reason the two accesses are not directly opposite each other is because there is a very large physical constraint - a vertical drop - directly opposite Lovely Banks.



## **PUBLIC**

To avoid that, we have moved the entrance to Lovely Banks slightly north of Lovely Banks Road. It is not directly opposite.

**Mr SHELTON** - It still fits in with the guidelines of what it needs to?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Correct.

**CHAIR** - Is there an opportunity though, when you put in that 3-metre sealed area, to provide better access to, say, Lovely Banks in this case? As you are travelling north, is it configured so as not to lead the public to think it is a pull-over area?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - That is certainly a benefit of it.

**CHAIR** - If they do that then, anything, especially heavy traffic, coming down wanting to turn left could be impeded. They could be impeded if there is a vehicle parked there because they think it is a pull over area as opposed to an entrance.

**Ms KING** - We haven't completed the signage design for this yet. That is a consideration for this.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Driver behaviour is something we can't control. We do our best through our design to control it.

**CHAIR** - I appreciate that.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - If a person wishes to park their vehicle there, then they might do that.

**Ms RATTRAY** - We wouldn't need wire barriers if we could control that.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Anything further on page 10? Page 11?

**Ms RATTRAY** - We will have the opportunity to hear from some stakeholders where we will get some more information.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Page 12? The access realignment at Lovely Banks entrance is covered by the planning permit previously acquired for those works. How long ago was that?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Unfortunately I can't answer that, I can get back to you.

**Ms KING** - We have been in ongoing liaison with council.

**CHAIR** - It is just a general interest. I was wondering if it has run out of its time.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - No, the permit's still valid.

**CHAIR** - It's still valid?

## PUBLIC

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Any other questions on page 12? No, page 13?

**Ms RATTRAY** - The time frames, are they firm?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Nothing is ever firm. We do our best and these are estimates. We try to achieve our estimates and generally we do, but it is never set in concrete, forgive my expression there. At the moment we are looking at going to tender in early October.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Does that mean that all the works further up the road will be completed? We do not have an abundance of specialised roadwork companies in our state. We don't have a plethora of contractors to get the tenders from.

**Ms KING** - Projects which have recently completed on the Midland Highway, completed in May were the works at Mangalore. One contract of the two adjoining contracts in the St Peter's Pass area is completed. It is not clear -

**Ms RATTRAY** - I might see those 80 kilometre signs moved fairly soon?

**Ms KING** - At Mangalore the project is complete. In the St Peter's Pass area, there were two contracts, the five kilometres south of the rest area was one contract and that has been completed. The 10 kilometres from the pass heading north towards Tunbridge is still under way. That will run through until this summer. The other project which has been completed on the highway recently is the 11 kilometres at Epping Forest. We are coming into a time when the highway will be a little quieter from a construction perspective than it has been over the past 18 months to two years.

**Ms BUTLER** - I have one more question about the actual project. My question is around the Muddy Plains Road and the single lane. As a truck or a vehicle would head north, certainly for the record, we would have potentially trucks pulling out onto that at 0 to 10 kilometres an hour with oncoming traffic of 110 kilometres an hour.

**CHAIR** - The traffic coming from the south at 110 kilometres an hour.

**Ms BUTLER** - Can you run through how you have navigated risk around that section and that potential problem?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - As a broad statement, whenever we undertake a road project we look at the volumes of traffic and the types of traffic - the percentage of heavy vehicles and how often they are using it. We then refer back to the Australian design guidelines, Austroads, or our internal, and we arrive at the best design that is suitable for those conditions. In this instance, we know that Muddy Plains road is a public access road. It is a low frequency use road both by light vehicles and heavy vehicles. That means the frequency of vehicles exiting that road and turning onto our highway is low. Consequently, the need for generous treatments is reduced. We have not provided a dedicated acceleration lane heading north for those vehicles exiting Muddy Plains Road because we believe the likelihood of encountering one is so low that we cannot justify the expenditure of public funds.

**Ms BUTLER** - Where do you gather that data from to justify not having an acceleration lane?

## PUBLIC

**Mr TARBOTTON** - We collect traffic statistics for all the state roads, particularly the Midland Highway and the larger highways. I do not have traffic statistics for Muddy Plains, it is anecdotal. We asked the landowners, we asked the general RACT, we might ask the stakeholders, that nature. Anecdotally, it is a very low frequency used road.

**Ms KING** - We also do an assessment of the number and the type of properties on Muddy Plains Road, or any side road. We look at what is upstream in terms of what is generating demand or generating volume. If, for example, there was a distillery up that road, an important tourism facility up that road, then we would obviously assess it differently and we may do more traffic counts on a side road where it is not clear what the usage would be. For these smaller roads off the Midland Highway we are comfortable that the assessment is valid.

**Ms BUTLER** - When it comes to risk, obviously the risk is based on frequency. There is still a risk that if a large vehicle or a truck moved onto that part of the highway and it will be a single lane there is really nowhere for that truck to go. There is nowhere for oncoming traffic to come and they are coming at 110 kilometres, that is if they are sticking to the road rules, and there is wire in the middle of that barrier too. So, really, it is a perfect storm that could be created there.

**Ms KING** - In this instance the sight lines are considerable and that ameliorates the risk. We need to put our public money into the highest risk locations. We are not able to eliminate all risk on the highway. Yes, you are correct.

**Ms BUTLER** - I just wanted to make sure that that was on the record, that I did raise that.

**CHAIR** - Anything else on page 13 as far as the costings are concerned. P50, \$16.8 million; P90, \$19.7 million. You believe that the amount of dollars available for contingency covers off enough on this project? Do you foresee any real issues that are likely to blow the budget out?

**Ms KING** - We are comfortable with that estimate.

**CHAIR** - Does it state what the contingency is on this?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - We do not provide that level of detail here. The project out turn costs, the forecast estimated project cost, is still \$16.8 million. As the project progresses through the design, we better understand the uncertainties and then contingencies can be adjusted.

**CHAIR** - One of the concerns I raised in general discussion was pavement failure, and soon after a project is completed. We have seen north of Perth where the pavement was degrading before it was really officially opened. Most members of the public would find that disturbing. Can you give us any indication that the department and/or the various parties involved understand that that is a concern to the public, and what can be done to address that?

**Ms KING** - It is of considerable concern to the department also.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - If I can reference north of Perth, that was a contractor defect. It was identified that the contractor failed to perform and we instructed the contractor to remedy that at their cost and they did so. That was a considerable cost to them.

## PUBLIC

All of our road contracts have specifications. We have a contract and they have to comply with that contract. There are always tolerances within a contract and there is bit of give and take. Provided they do not exceed or drop below our minimum tolerance, then it is acceptable.

As a department we understand that when people drive on our roads they see our roads and there is that visual impact as to whether they determine have we spent their money well. We are always thinking about how do we satisfy that. Beyond the visual, structurally performance-wise, it might satisfy all of our specifications. We are always trying to achieve how the public perceives how we have spent our money. How do we achieve that? We meet with our contractors. We meet with the CCF - the Civil Contractors Federation - the governing body for all of our road contractors. We inform them of our concerns. We express our concerns regarding the performance of seals. One of the ways that we have directly, hopefully, improved the outcome is in our contracts we now request that the contractor select the appropriate seal type. In the past we would have done that. Other road jurisdictions across the country do that - they identify and nominate the seal type. But we have experienced too many issues. We get our civil contractors, road contractors, to identify. There is a reason for that. One is, they own it, it is theirs. If they believe that is the best and then it does not perform, it is clearly their responsibility. It is their workmanship that has not performed provided they have selected the appropriate seal within the design guides. Again, a national design guideline nominates what type of seal, surface treatment, would be suitable for the traffic volumes, climate, the terrain, the geometry, et cetera. That is one way we have directly tried to improve the outcome.

**CHAIR** - Thank you for that. It certainly is a concern when it comes to the value for money.

**Ms RATTRAY** - We have not been getting it.

**Mr SHELTON** - Back on the design again and running south of the Lovely Banks Road and Lovely Banks intersection, I can understand the loss of the dual lane. The way you have explained it on top of the hill and once you come over the top going down because the reality is the whole project, the Midland Highway upgrade, allows you another overtaking opportunity when you get down on the flat just beyond the old Melton Mowbray pub, and so there are more opportunities there. The loss as far as I can see, and I can only urge the department to look at what they do, is the start of the overtaking lane heading south after you move past that intersection is half way up the hill as you go up whereas, from my view, it starts at the bottom at the moment basically. That is a loss for the travelling public, the opportunity to overtake. If it was incorporated into a slow lane exit from Lovely Banks and the road, then it would be a better design at the end of the day in my view. I am not an engineer -

**Ms RATTRAY** - We are good road user.

**Mr SHELTON** - We are up and down the highway all the time. What we need to also state, and I feel the Chair is about to, is that this committee can only approve or disapprove the project. We cannot do anything other than that.

**CHAIR** - We cannot ask for a modification. We can only make observations and either approve or disapprove of the project that is before us. Just to make that quite clear. I was going to clarify that with the following witnesses so they understood as well.

**Ms RATTRAY** - When I looked at this stretch of road from a very regular road user, my first thoughts were given that it is in reasonable condition why would you not have gone somewhere

## PUBLIC

else in that time frame and spent our money somewhere else beforehand? This does not look like it is in the most need. I really need to understand that.

**Ms KING** - Your concern is about the sequencing of this project within the broader highway?

**Ms RATTRAY** - Yes. Compared to the priority of these 6 kilometres, particularly when there appears to be some outstanding concerns.

**Ms KING** - I am sorry, I cannot answer that. That decision was taken before I was in this current role and I am not able to answer that today.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Okay, so that is something that I would take up with the minister?

**CHAIR** - Could be, possibly. A policy issue.

**Mr SHELTON** - That was mentioned before. I took note going north bound when we had that look and there are sections on the uphill section that are starting to break up which would need some maintenance in the next period of time. Whether you do it now or later, that would have to have taken some money to maintain.

I was of the same opinion until I really started looking at the surface and thinking, 'Would it be able to withstand another three years or four years'?

**Ms RATTRAY** - Most of us probably travel in the right-hand lane because we are overtaking someone. We do not travel too much in the left-hand one. It is not a question for these people, so thank you, Chair.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much for your time. You will be coming back before us before the afternoon is out, so I will not read the final statement yet.

## PUBLIC

**Ms KYLIE DONAGHY, TFGA, Mr DON JONES, Mr JOHN JONES AND Mr ANDREW McSHANE WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.**

**CHAIR** - Welcome to the hearing. I notice you have been over there listening to the presentation so far. We are pleased to hear your evidence today. It is important for us as a committee to get the feedback from the community. Before you give evidence, I need to inform you of some of the important aspects of committee proceedings. You have probably heard this before but I want to formally do it on the record.

The committee hearing is proceeding in parliament. It means it receives the protection of parliamentary privilege. This is an important legal protection that allow 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 in conducting its inquiries. It is important to be aware that this protection is not afforded to you if statements that may be defamatory are repeated or referred to by you outside the confines of these parliamentary proceedings. This is a public hearing and members of the public and journalists may be present and this means your evidence may be reported. Do you understand? I need a clear 'yes' from each of you.

**Messrs Don JONES, John JONES, DONAGHY and McSHANE** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - John, would you like to make an opening statement?

**Mr John JONES** - I am John Leslie Jones, OAM for transport; I am a life member and a founding chairman of the Tasmanian Truck Owners and Operators. I am life member of the National Transport Federation of Australia. I am also a past president of the Transport Council.

With what I have heard today and what I have observed, I am very worried and concerned that State Growth is actually working in the interest of all Tasmanians. Why I say that is for the past 30 years it has been the national standard to put Tasmania and its people in a competitive edge. In other words, to be competitive transport must average 100 kilometres an hour on our Highway 1, et cetera. That is a standard. Anything less than that puts us at a great disadvantage. The main factor has been from what State Growth has ignored - the time and movement study. We have been building roads for over 2000 years and we have not learnt from that. That is why, because it is not only heavy transport - it is people's movement and time so that we can benefit from labour sources and deliveries throughout the state.

The next factor has been a total ignorance or disregard for what I call health and safety in our road structure. Health and safety means if you have an ambulance or special services vehicle, every minute might mean a life-or-death situation. With this design, they have no capacity for emergency services in any way to pass what I call 'an over-dimensional load' that has broken down or trucks with seizures of engines and other parts. A wire rope - we have not learned from that - is the divider. While we are talking of this project I am talking of the wire rope situation at the top of Dysart Hill where the truck's actual tyres climbed the wire rope, the vehicle turned upside down and the driver was killed. That road was closed for over five hours. We were fortunate because at the top of Dysart, the traffic was able to be directed through and coming into Kempton. That was five hours. That is only one incident and there are more, but we will not go into that because I am afraid State

## PUBLIC

Growth has not learnt from previous incidents already. We have had one at Mood Food as well. They have not learnt or admitted an error in design and actual practical use.

**CHAIR** - You are talking in particular about the wire rope barriers?

**Mr John JONES** - The wire rope and changing to one lane with no access past it.

**CHAIR** - Okay.

**Mr John JONES** - One lane. At the same time with our animal health and welfare: if we considered that life is important, we should consider that. If we should consider State Growth is important to all users, we should consider the time and movement study. If we consider animal welfare, we should also put it under the same microscope. I have been told this design is perfect provided people do not use it. Hypocrisy. All I want is for us to be competitive, to consider life with our people and to consider our animal welfare. You tell me between here and Launceston, how many points you can actually pull off with a truck to check your livestock? In the meantime we have people with cameras, and there are cattle down or sheep down or goats down or whatever and everyone has their own idea about animal welfare, where can they pull off and check in safety? Where are the lay-bys? There are none. I think it is time on principle to reject this idea because the greater matter is overall for the state. That is my statement.

**CHAIR** - Thank you for that. Any questions from members?

**Ms BUTLER** - When you talked about safety and examples of accidents, I have seen an accident in the section of the road where an ambulance had to go up one side of the road and then turn around and come back. Have you seen any examples of that as well?

**Mr John JONES** - Our problem now is what they call '3-star' safety. They are putting barriers down the side and barriers down the middle, where before we could go around or pull over to the verge and go around. We cannot do that anymore.

You imagine, in this 1 kilometre, with one lane and you are two-thirds the way up and you have a kilometre of traffic behind you, how are you going to get past, to the ambulance?

**CHAIR** - How is the ambulance going to get past those cars, is that what you are saying?

**Mr John JONES** - Yes. That is correct. There is physically no ability to do that in width, and that is provided it is not an over-dimensional truck, of which we have quite a few. They block 80 per cent of it.

Also, the fire - while we talk about fire and burning - the time and movement, to get there is critical because the cost is phenomenal as is the anguish to the people. You then get road rage and everything else, because everyone is affected by the delay.

**Ms BUTLER** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Okay, thank you for that. That is on the record. It is not our place to provide policy response from this work. We are here to look at this particular project.

## PUBLIC

**Mr John JONES** - At this point, I would ask that it be rejected or removed. There is no other thing you can do.

**CHAIR** - Okay, thank you.

**Mr John JONES** - I would like to see State Growth more accountable for its actions is in overall principle for all of us.

**CHAIR** - Okay, it is understood.

**Mr SHELTON** - I do not disregard what you have said; from a farming perspective and that sort of thing, I completely understand the reason for your argument and being amongst this discussion significantly. The safety issues of a barrier between vehicles travelling in one direction and vehicles travelling in the other, and we have even had the issue on the Brooker Highway where there has been separation between the two, a hedge and a there has been a couple of metres and a vehicle has come through the hedge and there has been a head-on collision, with a fatality occurring.

From your perspective of no wire rope, where should we be going as far as the safety issue on our highway?

**Mr John JONES** - We were designed and promised a four-lane highway for years, and now, as I have said, time, movement and safety factor, well, you should spend that extra money on that short area, whatever it is and to have that extra width.

**Mr SHELTON** - To continue debate on that, given the Brooker Highway situation where there was a significant distance between one lane and the other lane, how wide should there be between vehicles going one way and the other way?

**Mr JOHN JONES** - I agree that totally, the Brooker Highway with the subdivide in the middle, is the ideal. The Romans did that 2000 years ago. That is how they developed our outer areas. That is how England built its economy by rail and road.

Here we are - we want diversification, we want employment and development in our rural areas to promote our growth, and transport is the goal to do that. Nothing else. Regarding the safety factor - and I served on council for a number of years - how many road deaths are on the section we are talking about? Zero, exactly. We could not get road funding for councils for black spots, because we had to count the number killed.

**CHAIR** - Some might say that by constructing the road this way, they are preventing fatalities into the future. Do you have any comment on that?

**Mr John JONES** - In all due respect we have a social problem. I am talking about common sense, attitude and so on of drivers' responsibility. Cars are now so much easier to use; it is so much easier to use a telephone where you should not do so - we have a social problem, not a road problem, but it has created a road problem by drugs, alcohol and other things.

**CHAIR** - That is an interesting statement. Any others wish to make a statement? I must reiterate that anything you say to the media outside or to anyone outside the committee is not



## PUBLIC

protected by parliamentary privilege. You have parliamentary privilege while you are presenting to us.

**Mr John JONES** - I understand that.

**CHAIR** - You have probably heard this at any inquiries you have attended, but if you leave this premise and make statements outside, you will not be protected.

**Mr JONES** - No. I will not. I will wait on decisions but, if not, the public has a right to object to State Growth's problems.

**Mr Donald JONES** - My name is Donald Jones; I am a resident of Kempton and have property here. I have been involved in heavy transport and road-building from the year dot; I have worked with all the major construction companies in this state so I know a little bit about roads. I have also driven on major highways around the world, particularly in Europe, England, United States, Canada and so forth, so I know how to see what some roads look like and particularly the German autobahns where you are travelling at 130 and 140 kilometres per hour.

I ask this committee to reject this design because it is not really pursuing the safety issues we are looking for. My reason for saying that relates particularly to the over the hill section where we currently have a four-lane section of highway. The Government said we were going to have a four-lane highway from Launceston to Hobart, which should be a major issue for everybody because it transports the lifeblood of the state.

The three-lane highway is in the Ark before it starts. Let's not have a joke about that - we spent millions of dollars on the highway in different areas and now the Government says we will have two lanes and one lane. That is fine, but please tell me why sections of the new highway are being constructed where there is only one lane on either side - at Antill Ponds - which is a disgrace for that design with so much money spent there and not coming up to the original design standards. The same thing has happened in Epping Forrest where you have a magnificent straight and suddenly halfway along it, there is only one lane on either side. Doesn't that amplify the questions that were answered on safety of ambulances and things like that?

I would ask State Growth, which designed the highway that was going to be three and two and one to suddenly become one and one, why have four-lane sections in different sections of the Midland Highway been reduced to three? The ultimate for road safety in everybody's mind is a four-lane highway because it covers the needs if there is an accident or crash or things like that. Designs where we are closing down four lanes is taking us backwards; it is not moving us forward.

In the construction industry, when you are building a four-lane highway, and the same as on the West Coast, you have two lanes built. Your traffic moves backwards and forwards. Major construction companies will tell you that in building the other lanes it is cheaper per lane than what we are doing now because they do not have to take their equipment or construction equipment off the site. They do not have to close the highway down to reduce speed limits - 40, 30, 20, stop and all that. That does not take place when you are building separate lanes.

They are the things when you are talking about letting tenders and things of that nature. We know the four-lane highway is the safest way to go. We would have been better to build half the

## PUBLIC

road structure in a proper and safe manner than building something that is already in the Ark before we start.

Has anybody seen the three-lane highway design where it features the fourth lane for the future - in 10-, 15- or 20-years' time? I am led to believe it does not exist. I am led to believe that the acquisition of land that would encompass a four-lane highway between Hobart and Launceston does not exist either. Do you see why I say we are in the Ark?

We look at the Perth to the Launceston Airport turnoff coming south. Somebody said they have put four lanes in there, but we come down the road and we have four lanes which only need widening on either side if you are putting the fence down the middle, but, no, it has been cut back to three lanes. Hasn't that deterred the safety future for the state?

The safety aspect of the highway has been taken away in areas where it existed. In this area here, over the hill, and that is pretty particular because you are going up and down in a very short area, with heavy transport going both ways. To take away the four lanes in that particular area is nothing short of a disaster. All I can impress now is on this committee to reject that plan on its safety issues as well.

I would also ask this committee if they could possibly view where they have planned this here, where is the future plan that says, 'That will become another lane and that will become another lane may be in five years or 10 years of design'. We are talking about road safety, we are talking about time and movement, but we have a design from State Growth that does not even encompass the future.

We want the state to go forward, not backwards. I rest my case.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Any questions? That is a statement from Mr Jones and it is on the record.

**Mr Donald JONES** - I will be interested to see the plans though, if they become available.

**CHAIR** - Okay, thank you Mr Jones.

**Ms DONAGHY** - I am Kylie Donaghy from the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association and one of the senior policy advisers there. I am here as an observer today; however, I will ask permission of the committee to ask State Growth a couple of questions on my behalf.

**CHAIR** - There is no question about that.

**Ms DONAGHY** - I would like some clarification on broad stakeholder engagement. Some stakeholders were mentioned as being consulted about these particular works - the RACT, Heavy Vehicle Industry Association and the general public via website. I would like to ask State Growth: can they name other stakeholders that were consulted, and who were they?

**CHAIR** - Okay.

**Ms DONAGHY** - My second question is, the report that you have been referring to today, would a copy be available for the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association?

## **PUBLIC**

**CHAIR** - Yes, it can be provided. We will make sure that the TFGA gets a copy of that.

**Ms DONAGHY** - Thank you. I cannot remember my third question.

**CHAIR** - If you want us to go to Mr McShane and you might remember.

**Mr McSHANE** - I will say my conflict of interest obviously to start with. It is pretty obvious that our family farm is the Lovely Banks property.

**CHAIR** - I have a conflict too because I have a convict ancestor who worked on your property back in 1843, I think.

**Mr McSHANE** - There you go. I hope he was well looked after.

**CHAIR** - I do not think it provides a conflict for me today.

**Mr McSHANE** - Hopefully, this has all come through, I think it has, all of the five issues that I have identified. I hope it came through in that report. I do not exactly know what you received and what you did not receive.

**CHAIR** - We do not know anything that is identified with your concerns, so if you would cover them, please. That would be good.

**Mr McSHANE** - I will cover the five points in what I think are priority down to lower priority.

The first one, as has already been identified, is heading north out of Highland Lakes Road. The overtaking lane, as everyone knows, is ridiculously short. It always causes problems there - slow vehicles, or people think there is an overtaking lane and suddenly it disappears on them. It has always been problem and everyone can see it. It needs to be extended further up and join the climbing lane. It is just so obvious. There is no land acquisition that needs doing. The corridor is plenty wide enough. We can only assume that it is a cost issue. Okay, it would cost a bit more for some more pavement there. I just cannot believe that that would not be in the state's interest to have extra pavement to join the climbing lane. That is the first one.

**CHAIR** - Just as an observation. I think the project starts just north of that climbing lane.

**Mr McSHANE** - It does. The southern limit of the works, if you come along there, that is actually where it merges. Instead of merging there - look at the distance between Highland Lakes Road and where it actually merges. I do not know what they call that, an acceleration lane, it is definitely too short to be a proper overtaking lane, but it is an overtaking lane. People try to use it and they get caught so many times there.

**Ms RATTRAY** - You do actually. It cuts off really short, yes.

**Mr McSHANE** - We travel this road every day. You could ask anyone in the local area, does that cause a problem? Every day it causes a problem. There are always issues. The problem is going to be now, put a wire there so that you do not have room to breathe. At the moment when there is a problem there you go out onto the other side a bit to make room to merge together. That is not going to happen with a wire rope.

## **PUBLIC**

**CHAIR** - Is this particularly with heavy vehicles you are talking about?

**Mr McSHANE** - Heavy vehicles heading out of Bothwell. Coming from Bothwell they are heading north. They are coming out there and then other vehicles are trying to overtake. Heavy vehicles are an issue but even if you have just a line of traffic coming from Hobart, especially going to the football or something in Launceston, it might be a 500 metre long line of traffic, they get to there and they go, 'We can overtake'. They all go past a slow vehicle but it is so short that it does not provide the proper opportunity to overtake.

I understand that the wire rope is going to happen. I am not going to try to go against what is happening with the wire rope. But the wire rope is going to make it even less safe than it is now and it is not safe now. You will not have the room to breathe when that bottle neck happens. There will not be the room to breathe.

**CHAIR** - Some say that it will simply just slow the traffic at that point rather than the traffic being able to overtake. They will not certainly be able to go over as you say, breathe, because the wire rope will be there.

**Mr McSHANE** - They somehow have to form two lanes into one. It is too short. You have vehicles coming up behind that are also thinking, 'We are all overtaking', and they do not realise there is a bottle neck there. It happens every day now at the moment.

**CHAIR** - Do you see that as being a safety issue more so than a time slowing down the traffic issue?

**Mr McSHANE** - Both. Safety number one because we see it now and it is going to make is worse. The second one is, 'Let's have some vision here. You guys are the politicians. Let's have some vision'.

**CHAIR** - We are not the policy makers though. We can only deal with what is in front of us.

**Mr McSHANE** - I realise that. This group can only do one thing - accept it or reject it. You cannot amend it. I have my briefing on what can actually happen here. On this alone, I would say that this committee should reject this one. I also ask the question: how long since the standing committee on Public Works has rejected one? It has been about seven or eight years.

**CHAIR** - Devonport Police Station, I believe.

**Mr McSHANE** - Okay, it is not normal to reject. If this was a project that was not going to get done properly in the next few years, I would say do not reject it. Especially where we are, this Lovely Banks Road entrance, even though I have some issues with it, that is a major improvement for all the people who work on our property and the transport. The design here is a major improvement to what it currently is. It can have some extra improvements but the design is an improvement. So for me to say to this committee, reject it, make State Growth go back to the drawing board and do an improvement, it will happen. It is not like you are going to reject it and then the project gets shelved for 10 years, it won't. It has to be done as part of the whole Midlands Highway project, but at least send the message back that doing designs with absolutely no vision or improvement for, yes, I know there is improvement for safety, but there are some areas of safety that have been overlooked.

## **PUBLIC**

**CHAIR** - So what would be your area of most concern with this project?

**Mr McSHANE** - That's the number one. Out of Highlands Lake, the safety issue of the bottle neck from an extremely small overtaking lane, and the lack of vision to extend it to the climbing lane which would create a huge amount of amenity and use for the whole of Tasmania who travel the Midlands Highway. That is not from a personal gain point of view here; everyone who travels it would get a lot more use if that was extended to the climbing lane. That is the first one. There are five of them here. I am going to try to make them quick.

**CHAIR** - Sorry, we need to get the clarification right. You are saying to extend the overtaking lane that is coming out of Highland Lakes Road up to where the overtaking lane starts, or where this project starts?

**Mr McSHANE** - No. Extend it to the climbing lane north of Muddy Plains Road.

**CHAIR** - Now I am clear, I just wanted to make sure.

**Mr McSHANE** - You have a huge big long straight here, there is easement galore, no extra acquisition needs to be made. For some reason there is not even vision to say, 'Why aren't we making that?'. I think some people have figured it out in areas now that, that is what needs to happen. Unfortunately, it has all happened to quick to get to this point. It has not been consulted properly. I am going to say something about consultation at the end of this as well.

**Ms BUTLER** - Can I just say for the record, on that point, as a local member I have received complaints from constituents about that intersection, and there is concern about that short overtaking lane, and that it should be made a priority, and that it is an accident waiting to happen, adding a barrier could be a potential further risk.

**Mr McSHANE** - The next point. As Mark identified as well, this is the second most important one, is the south bound climbing lane heading south from Lovely Banks Road that they want to shorten that. Mark said it exactly right, that just does not make sense. Do not shorten it when you are starting to head up the hill and make everyone slow down behind a slow-moving truck before they all overtake. At least if you are going to shorten something, shorten it on the down hill, do not shorten it on the uphill. It does not make any sense at all.

**Mr SHELTON** - Hear, hear.

**Mr McSHANE** - That is a vision thing. Why would you do it?

The other three points I am going to put all into one because they are probably more specific to our property entrance. I do not want to confuse these with why you should reject the plan as it is. These ones are to do with, even though it is an improvement for our entrance, it does bring it a lot close to that cutting which is really poor sight distance.

**CHAIR** - The cutting to the north of Lovely Banks turn-off?

**Mr McSHANE** - The cutting to the south.

**CHAIR** - It is not a cutting, is it really?

## **PUBLIC**

**Mr McSHANE** - There is cutting there and they have looked at it a number of times. It is interesting. State Growth has been to us over the past five years or so a couple of times saying, 'Can we do some shaving off of more of that cutting?', so they need to do some acquisition. We obviously said, 'Yes, that is no problem', because it is going to make the sight distance better for us.

**CHAIR** - You are talking about on the north side of the road or the south-east side of the road?

**Mr McSHANE** - The western side of the road, south of the Lovely Banks intersection.

**CHAIR** - Just south of your cattle underpass?

**Mr McSHANE** - Yes. There is quite a big cutting there and very little sight distance coming out of Lovely Banks Road or Lovely Banks entrance. State Growth has been to us a few times saying they are looking at shaving off some more of that cutting so it increases the sight distance. We have said yes, no problem, because it is going to be an improvement for us and all the people who work with us. Those couple of times, for some reason, they have shelved the project, or then gone back and said it is probably not necessary. We have said okay, whatever, that is fine. We did not suggest it to start with, so it was not like our suggestion that we need more sight distance. They suggested it and then looked at it and said no, we do not need to do it.

Now the new entrance comes back south another 100 metres -

**CHAIR** - You are saying it is not improving the situation?

**Mr McSHANE** - It is not improving the sight distance situation. All we are saying is, for that specific situation where there is hardly any sight distance, at least have a dedicated left-hand shoulder, get off the road safely and also, heading north out of Lovely Banks entrance, an acceleration lane so to speak. Whether it is people coming out of Lovely Banks farm or whether it is people coming from Lovely Banks Road and heading north, don't funnel them into one lane when there is hardly any sight distance from north-bound trucks coming down there. Maybe do more like what they have done here at Mood Food where they have made an accelerating lane which just ends up turning into an overtaking lane. That seems to work really well, that merge lane which ends up being an acceleration lane. It is a bit novel but I think it was a good outcome there and they should do that where they do not have sight distance.

**CHAIR** - Some would say that that will increase the dollar value of the project to the point where it might be detrimental to somewhere else on the whole project north to south. What I am asking you is, do you see this as a safety issue or do you see it more of a nice to have because it simply will reduce people's travel time? Do you understand what I am saying?

**Mr McSHANE** - If you are specifically talking about the Lovely Bank's intersection of Lovely Bank's Farm and Lovely Bank's Road -

**CHAIR** - Just north of that you said to put in an acceleration lane. Are you saying that provides something, or it is a convenient thing or are you saying it is safer?

**Mr McSHANE** - It would be safer and it is nice to be safer, so that is what it is. If there was a really good field of view, like there is at Muddy Plains Road, that is the safest entrance anywhere. You can see all the way up and down the highway so there has never been an accident there because

## PUBLIC

the field of view is so good. If the field of view was good, I would not even be talking about it. It is to do with safety because the sight distance is very short and you are dealing with trucks coming down quite a steep hill trying to get a run up to go up Spring Hill and you are bottling into one lane. It gets back to the wire rope thing again. I am not against the wire rope, but the wire rope does have an effect of funnelling traffic. Once you have a wire rope in a one lane situation it funnels traffic. You do not have anywhere to go. Maybe, what I am trying to say is, that by having the wire rope, and I think everyone is on board with it as a safety factor making the road safer -

**CHAIR** - Most are on board with. Some aren't.

**Mr McSHANE** - It definitely has some safety benefits, by having the wire rope maybe they actually just have to put some more pavement in to make the wire rope safety not be traded off against safety for bottle necking.

This section of the road has been underdone. You ask how much more would it all cost. The things I am suggesting here, nothing is major. This is all just a pavement, it is not that much extra. So of the \$16.8 million, I do not know how much of a percentage it would be to do the extras. You can only ask State Growth that, or you can't because we cannot amend or ask questions about that.

**CHAIR** - Are you suggesting that it will not take any more land acquisition to do the acceleration lane?

**Mr McSHANE** - The acceleration heading -

**CHAIR** - Heading north.

**Mr McSHANE** - Out of which one?

**CHAIR** - From Lovely Banks.

**Mr McSHANE** - From Lovely Bank's Road.

**CHAIR** - No, Lovely Bank's property.

**Mr McSHANE** - That would be land acquisition if it needed any more. No, I do not think it would need any more.

**CHAIR** - We can ask the experts if that is the case.

**Mr McSHANE** - I can see on here the actual size of the easement and it wouldn't need any more. If it did it would be something we would happily do anyway because it would make it better for us.

If this committee can reject this project and send it back to State Growth it should be able to be done on the back of two things alone: the north out of Highlands Lake Road being not safe and lacking vision; and south out of Lovely Banks Road reducing the overtaking lane especially at the bottom of the hill. On those two things I would say this committee should reject it and send it back to State Growth.

## PUBLIC

I realise there will be some safety factors that we will lose while State Growth is relooking at it and this project might be delayed by a year or more. That is unfortunate. The only benefit of this committee rejecting this project or any project to reject is that it is going to be done anyway. I would rather it be done a year or two later and be done properly. When you do a project like this it is going to be done for 40 years and you would want it to be done well and not done to the absolute minimum.

I realise this all probably fits the guidelines - State Growth said it all fits the guidelines. You can only reject it, not on not fitting the guidelines; you can only reject it on some major concerns. The fact is, the consultation - I hope I am not taking up too much time here - of this project has been much different to other projects that we have dealt with in the past. State Growth seems to have outsourced consultation to the engineers. Jacobs, the engineers, were tasked to do the consultation, which ends up not being consultation at all. It is, 'Okay, tell us what you think so I can type that up'. Then that goes to State Growth and they do a reply.

That is not consultation. That is not sitting at a table with someone discussing options, discussing concerns. That is not consultation. That has been where this has fallen. Why I am here even saying this is, in previous projects we have had consultation. We have had consultation with State Growth and they have set parameters around things on how they want to do things, and we have said well okay can you give us another option, they have given us other options and we have thrown things across the table. That has not been the case with this. They have outsourced consultations to Jacobs and that has not worked at all. It has not been real consultation. It has not worked.

**CHAIR** - Okay, you are saying it has not been two-way consultation.

**Mr McSHANE** - Yes. You need to have the consultation with the person who is doing the design, not a third party who is just sending a message, you basically send something and then they do a response of okay, but, but, this, this and this, and it all fits the guidelines.

**CHAIR** - Any questions of Mr McShane?

**Mr SHELTON** - As a local and as a member for Lyons, I've taken my wife on a few roads that she has never been on within Lyons electorate. One that I have never been on, and I do not know if the other member for Lyons has ever been up the Muddy Plains Road. You sort of answered if in what you said before as far as that access goes. There were some issues raised by Ms Butler regarding trucks coming onto the road and you have said that sight distance is quite adequate for the vehicle traffic that comes out of there. It is amazing with Google now that you can go on and have a look and that sort of thing. I have been around the Jericho Road and out through and so forth. From your point of view, the design around the Muddy Plains Road is adequate? You do not need anything to happen there? It is adequate enough where it is.

**Mr McSHANE** - It is so safe it is not a problem at all. The interesting thing is, while you mention Muddy Plains Road, Muddy Plains Road is a less used road than Lovely Banks Road but has a dedicated left turn in.

**Mr SHELTON** - I can see where you are coming from.



## PUBLIC

**Mr McSHANE** - Muddy Plains Road does have one - and that is one of the points I didn't bring up here. But Lovely Banks Road does not have a dedicated left turn in. It has a 3-metre shoulder that is not dedicated or lined or anything. I said to the designer, or maybe it is the response I got back from State Growth, 'This should have a dedicated left turn in; it is down at the bottom of a hill and there is not a lot of sight distance. It is going to be a confusing intersection'. They said, 'Well, there is not one there now. We do not need to upgrade anything to a standard that it is not at the moment. If it is not dedicated now it does not need to be'.

I am looking down the road at Muddy Plains and I am saying, well talk about equal treatment of roads - that one is a minor use road, Muddy Plains Road has a dedicated left in; Lovely Banks has more people living on it, more traffic on it and there is no dedicated left in. I can't see how that works.

**CHAIR** - Okay, any other questions. I was just doing a Google Earth on Muddy Plains Road.

**Mr SHELTON** - Hutton Park appears to be the only property up there.

**Mr McSHANE** - Yes, Hutton Park, and the other Jones's have a property up there as well.

**CHAIR** - Are there any other closing remarks?

**Ms DONAGHY** - I have remembered my third question. The TFGA would like the committee to ask State Growth on our behalf to open up a consultation process about these and all future works via a submission process so that we are able to consult with our members and their neighbours who are actually affected by these works, to put their view forward and their position, regarding this issue.

**CHAIR** - I am led to believe they canvass local landowners but you are saying TFGA -

**Ms DONAGHY** - I want the TFGA to have some input and consultation or the opportunity - if we could ask whether that would be an opportunity we could have.

**CHAIR** - Okay, I will put that to them and see what the situation is there.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Even a notification.

**CHAIR** - I will ask the question on your behalf.

**Mr Donald JONES** - One of the big issues on the single lane wire rope thing is the movement of agriculture equipment, particularly headers and big combines. They are slow moving and once they move into a single lane structure and there are no pull-off areas within those structures, all traffic, whether it is north- or southbound, has to stay behind the equipment until they reach where it can on the highway to pass, whether it is a kilometre line, and that is one of the major problems with agricultural equipment moving along the state road.

**Ms RATTRAY** - It is getting bigger and bigger, the equipment.

## **PUBLIC**

**Mr Donald JONES** - You have the wire barriers and a header that takes up the majority of the road. There is no passing it and there is no pull-off, so that is a major problem that has been aired by agricultural contractors and farmers themselves.

**CHAIR** - Can I get this clear? Are you saying that the single lane with the wire rope barrier on either side, they cannot negotiate that or that people cannot pass them when they are in that lane, where clearly it is not a passing lane?

**Mr Donald JONES** - No. The header will take up the majority of the highway, therefore the traffic within the bounds of that single lane will have to reduce to the probably 20 kilometres per hour of the tractor or header for the distance it has to travel. Contractors in Oatlands have had huge difficulty moving their headers from Oatlands to Tunbridge in this last season. At one stage they had to talk to the contractor to actually close part of the construction of the highway both ends so they could get their header through.

When the road is completed, it will be a major problem in that area of movement, particularly through the summer months when all the harvesting takes place.

**CHAIR** - Do you know whether the height of the wire barriers presents an issue or not?

**Mr Donald JONES** - No, the height of the wire barrier does not present an issue to them. It only means that nobody can pass them.

**CHAIR** - I understand.

**Mr Donald JONES** - No. They can be contained within the width from wire rope to wire rope.

**CHAIR** - Yes, but the components on the harvesters do not go low enough to impact the wire barriers?

**Mr Donald JONES** - No, they would take the front off and tow it behind them.

**CHAIR** - Okay, thank you. Thank you very much. I remind you that whatever you say outside the room is not covered by parliamentary privilege. Thank you very much for attending. We appreciate you taking the opportunity to put your concerns across. Thank you.

**THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.**

## PUBLIC

**Mr CRAIG TARBOTTON** AND **Ms VANESSA KING** WERE RECALLED AND EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** - You have heard the concerns that have been coming forward. I can run through some of them if you could address some of these.

First of all, we heard from Mr John Jones about the 100 kilometre per hour average. Is that something you wish to comment on? Is that the case - that the highway is to achieve 100 kilometre per hour average?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - I have spoken with Don Jones on the phone. He contacted me about four weeks ago and expressed similar concerns and we had a fairly healthy discussion. Don explained his position.

How do I put it? Given our terrain, our topography, we cannot guarantee that every heavy vehicle is going to achieve 100 kilometres per hour on average. We design our highways so that we do not restrict their movement. We have to consider not just heavy vehicles, but also other users and our budget. We always have to bring the budget in because it is a real constraint.

On this particular project the climbing lanes will still allow heavy vehicles to pull over to the left. They currently slow down. If you travel up from the southbound lane, they drop down to speeds of 40 to 50 kilometres an hour. It depends on the vehicle, of course. They will still do that. They will still get down to that lower speed. However, we have designed our lanes so that by the time those new climbing lanes merge into a single lane, they will be back to operating speed. That is approximately 100 kilometres per hour. I cannot guarantee Don that he will achieve 100 kilometres per hour but we have made our lane lengths sufficient that the average vehicle will not be any slower than it currently is. The light vehicles travelling behind it will still have opportunities to overtake that slow-moving heavy vehicle and the heavy vehicle will achieve design speeds by the time the lane ends.

**CHAIR** - Okay. There was one point made about the points where heavy vehicles can pull over and check their tyres, their stock et cetera between here and Launceston. I know that is entirely on this project but it is in part, I suppose, in terms of where those opportunities might be in this. Do you have any comment on that?

**Ms KING** - That is a program level.

**CHAIR** - It is, yes.

**Ms KING** - We have a number of turn facilities. I cannot give you the number off the top of my head today. All the turn facilities along the highway are in appropriate locations for vehicles to pull over and check their stock.

**CHAIR** - All the P turns and G turns being designed in are designed for that as well?

**Ms KING** - Yes. Those vehicles may stop there if they have a legitimate road user need to stop, such as checking their stock. We would prefer they do not use those turns for the types of breaks drivers need for their own safety. That is a longer break that they need and they need to take those breaks off-highway.

## PUBLIC

**Ms RATTRAY** - Where?

**Ms KING** - Mood Food is one of the locations. I understand that works well for truck drivers when they need the breaks required for health and safety and they need to spend half an hour or whatever it is out of the vehicle. Mood Food and the other towns are appropriate locations for longer breaks. That is the sort of break I am talking about. Meal breaks, rest breaks. For short stopping for checking stock, which was the issue raised, the turns are available. I know on another current project we are looking at there is a truck stop and we will be looking at the spacing of all the turns and looking at the existing truck stops. I am thinking there is a heavy vehicle inspection point, at least one I can think of, in one of the future locations.

**CHAIR** - North of Campbell Town.

**Ms KING** - That is part of the overall program review to make sure that the spacing of those is appropriate.

**CHAIR** - At the top of Spring Hill, there is a spot there?

**Ms KING** - Yes, there is.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - St Peters Pass.

**CHAIR** - I do not know whether the one at St Peters Pass would handle trucks, but certainly for light vehicles.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - South of St Peters Pass rest area there are currently truck pull-over bays or areas for both south and north. They are existing now. Both pre-existing and post-design, they are there.

**Ms KING** - Again, if you needed a longer break, the St Peters Pass rest area is a rest area obviously.

**CHAIR** - The issue of fire trucks being able to have access. The wire rope barriers presenting some issues there. Do you have any comment on that? Obviously having to go further north to turn to come south or further south to turn to come north. Any comment on that design aspect in the whole highway length? Do you feel sufficient concern is being given to emergency vehicle access, to things like where you get a person in a single lane that actually has a breakdown or could catch fire - all sorts of things can happen in a single lane where you cannot get through.

**Ms KING** - Yes, that is the case that things can happen in a single lane. Could something happen in a single lane and people say that should have been a double lane? That could occur anywhere on a single lane each way.

**CHAIR** - He was commenting more about the policy of having wire rope barriers on each side of a single lane. That really does not leave much room to move for emergency vehicles to get to somebody who is obviously in a state of peril in the middle of the lane.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - We consider we do not design our highway for those extreme events. We consider them in our approach so emergency authorities have every authority to remove that

## PUBLIC

barrier; they do not have to ask us - they can just do it. They are actually geared up and equipped to do that, and they are informed how to do that; that is their own training. If the emergency was for an extended duration, five hours as the man suggested, as a state road authority we would go and lower that barrier. We would be there within an hour, so to speak, and that would allow traffic to use the alternate lanes.

It is not as though we cannot cater for those events; we do not design for them because you cannot design for such extreme one-offs. It does get down to the frequency and the likelihood. How often would this occur? It will occur but it would be so infrequent that we cannot justify the expenditure for such an infrequent event.

**CHAIR** - You can remove the wires from the posts?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - You do not have to remove them; you drop them. You release them and drop them on the floor.

**CHAIR** - Dropped the wires down, but then you still have the posts in the way. Can those posts be removed?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - You can cut them off if you have to and they can be replaced, they get damaged every week. Yes, they can - if we have to, we would, but you can also drive the vehicle through them or over them.

**Ms KING** - To clarify, in an emergency situation such as a fatality, the road is under control of police. Police can and do instruct us but it is a police decision and it is police who choose whether they need the road closed for five hours so that they can undertake their investigations for the fatality. We need to be clear about what the responsible authority is - it depends on what the emergency is and where it is - a fire in a paddock is a different situation to a fatality on road. A fatality on-road means the police are in control; they direct and we do what they tell us.

**Mr SHELTON** - For clarification, I have heard that example at previous public works meetings where the wire rope is designed to be lowered. There are several different designs - one slips in from the side and the authority or whatever it is can just run along and flip the top off them and lay the ropes on the road. It is not that simple, but the reality is the ropes can be lowered if emergency access through the rope is needed.

**CHAIR** - That was a comment about health and safety of the design itself and emergency service access. Mr Jones talked about the Antill Ponds and Epping Forest single lane both ways and an emergency vehicle access. Do you have any comment on the single lanes both ways rather than 2:1 design? Why is it that we are building new roads with single lane either side, only two lanes?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - It will occur on the Midland Highway program where there are short sections of highway with a single lane in each direction.

**CHAIR** - The question is why? There was a promise that there was going to be a 2 + 1.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - I cannot comment as to the political decision to make it a dual lane in both directions. We have been tasked with achieving a 3-star highway; we have adopted a design

## PUBLIC

which is a 2 + 1 that achieves that provided we put the central barrier in. I understand the Government still has a policy, or a desire, to achieve a dual carriageway from Hobart to Launceston but that is a matter for the Government, not the department. Why is there a single lane in Epping Forest is simply because -

**CHAIR** - And Antill Ponds.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Unfortunately, I cannot comment on Antill Ponds but I can comment on Epping Forest. Again, we were given the task of the 2 +1 configuration. That means at some point there will be a one lane configuration for the shortest length possible we can achieve before we start impacting on motorists and before it starts branching back out to a dual. That is the answer. It still satisfies the 3-star rating.

Could we continue for Epping Forest, 11 kilometres of highway, that dual lane? Absolutely true, but where is the money? I know that is a bit harsh, but it does come back to that. So, we have a 2 + 1 policy. We have achieved that. It satisfies the safety requirements and it does not affect traffic flows. Yes, some people will say 'Why didn't you put a dual carriageway through there', and I might be one of them, but policy is satisfied, the budget is satisfied and the performance is satisfied.

**CHAIR** - Other questions from the TFGA: Were any other stakeholders consulted? Would you explain exactly who was consulted with regard to this?

**Ms KING** - In addition to the project?

**CHAIR** - And indeed whether it was only an advising of the project as opposed to a proper one-on-one consultation.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Particularly given the comments made by Mr McShane around the engineer appearing to be undertaking the consultation process. I certainly hope that was not the case, but you will let me know.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - I will provide a response to both TFGA and to Andrew McShane. Yes, we are outsourcing our stakeholder engagement to our consultants. Yes, previously the state Government and State Roads undertook the stakeholder engagement. That is correct. Yes, it is correct that at times an engineer will go to landowners and undertake consultation.

I say here that we are endeavouring to improve, and we are outsourcing to our consultants because we wish to improve our performance, and it is a process. We do not have it right yet, but we are trying to get it better.

It is disappointing to hear that Andrew feels we have not consulted; he might be correct and we will take that away and talk with our consultants. Our consultants are here today so they have heard very clearly what the landowner thinks. We will go away and we will take it on board.

**Ms KING** - On that stakeholder engagement, the requirement on our consultants now is that they provide stakeholder engagement specialists who are not engineers, who are people-people. Occasionally engineers, and I am one, are accused of not being people-people. We are really clearly stating that the stakeholder and community engagement is a specialised skill. It is a skill we have

## PUBLIC

in the department, but we do not have enough numbers of those specialists in the department to be able to implement all the projects we have across the department. That is why we are using external providers who are skilled in this area.

**CHAIR** - You don't see it as an opportunity for the learnings they get by going through these processes from time to time to be fully passed back to the department so the department is actually missing out on what has been brought forward there for future projects?

**Ms KING** - I understand the question. There are a couple of things. One is that when the stakeholders are unhappy, that is always escalated to the department. We are always clear on that. We have individual project conversations with the consultants where they raise issues.

We meet with our consultants at a whole-of-business, not only whole-of-project, level regularly. We hold consultant workshops with all representatives of, at the moment, five core businesses that work for us come, and we talk openly about issues that are working or not working. We also run individual project debriefs.

We have a number of mechanisms by which we can identify, 'Oh this thing that perhaps did not go so well, is that particular to that project or that individuals. or are we seeing a theme here? Do we need to improve our processes and the manner in which we work?' I believe we have a number of mechanisms to get that feedback yet.

**Ms RATTRAY** - It appears to me that this is all after the event, though - here we have a project that appears not to have had that adequate consultation. It is fantastic to take on the learnings, but that is not going to help this project and the people who are stakeholders with this project.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Is it a learning process. I know it is one of the catchphrases people use but we learn all the time. We are learning and we have created a stakeholder engagement framework which we are socialising to our consultants. This is to try to improve the quality and to get to a common quality. This project is not finished; our stakeholder consultation is not finished.

**Ms RATTRAY** - I am getting the feeling that this is not finished.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - But a project is never finished. Even once the construction is completed, we have interactions with stakeholders for many years. I have to say, often our communication and interaction with landowners are not well done, thank you very much.

**Ms KING** - We do not hear that very often.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - For doing that there are challenges. They do not stop and it is all about taking away after the event what a person has said and somehow improving it. We can only improve when people say, 'You have not done well'; we do hear that and we try to improve.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Here is an opportunity - this is only about halfway through - to get that stakeholder engagement where you are talking about those learnings back into action before there is a shovel-ready process.

## PUBLIC

**Mr TARBOTTON** - There is a consultant here today with us who has heard everything the panel has said and the landowner and the stakeholder. I can guarantee you that they have heard clearly what you have said, and so have we, so there is a learning and we have taken that away.

**Ms KING** - Having said that stakeholder engagement and consultation does not mean that the stakeholders design the road. There is constantly a balance.

**Ms RATTRAY** - I am not suggesting that, but if you do not take people on the journey, you very rarely get a project that sits well anywhere. I have learnt that in my short time around this place.

**CHAIR** - I do not want to hog the questions. I can run through the rest I have but I want to provide other members with an opportunity.

**Ms BUTLER** - I did want to have a very quick discussion about those consultants: How are they classified? Are they classified as subcontractors? Do they come under the Tasmanian Government guidelines about subcontracting? Are we using consultants because there is not enough people in our public service? Where do they fall - under the same obligations with Tasmanian apprentices and so forth? I am a bit concerned about that.

**Ms KING** - The consultants we use are engaged under a panel contract. State Growth several years ago established a panel contract for consultants. There are five businesses on that contract, three are coded as tier 1, and two are coded as tier 2. Those tiers are about the complexity and scale of work that they provide to us. They are multidisciplinary businesses, predominately with engineers, but the larger three also employ town planners, environmental scientists and stakeholder specialists. They are engaged on consultancy contracts so they are not regarded as staff; they are regarded as, 'This is the scope we want this business to deliver?'

**Ms BUTLER** - They are not subcontractors, they are consultants.

**Ms KING** - They are consultants. We say, 'This is the scope we want you to deliver', they provide a price to deliver that scope; often as the project evolves, that changes slightly and we work together to say, 'Is that a big change? Is that a small change? What do we do next?'

**Ms BUTLER** - Does that still attract the Tasmanian First policy? Are we using Tasmanian consultants as much as we can?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - Yes.

**Ms KING** - All five of those businesses are Tasmanian. Four of the five are also mainland. Two are international as well. Of the smaller two, one is wholly Tasmanian. The second one might have a mainland office or two. I am not sure, but predominantly Tasmanian. The larger ones, as I said, two of them are international as well as Australian but, between those three businesses, they would employ 300 or 400 people in Tasmania. They are substantial businesses within the state, but they are national businesses as well.

**CHAIR** - If we can move onto some of the other concerns. The TFGA was wanting to be notified of projects affecting farmers.



## PUBLIC

**Ms KING** - We have heard that, yes.

**CHAIR** - You are happy to undertake that in the future?

**Ms KING** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Moving onto Mr McShane's concerns. There are quite a number here.

The overtaking lane out of Highland Lakes Road. I think we have all experienced it. You have probably experienced it as well. Everybody does going north. Why hasn't the project taken that into account?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - First of all, I do owe Andrew McShane an apology because we sent out a communication to Andrew indicating that we would not be considering upgrading the Highland Lakes Road junction. However, we are currently considering that. There is no guarantee that we will create a dedicated lane turning north out of Highland Lakes Road. We are certainly considering it.

If we do undertake it - again we do have to identify that it demonstrates value for money for the greater community - it will be an acceleration lane. It will eventually join up to what is currently this short overtaking lane which, as Andrew has said, does not perform. You are right, it does not. We cannot provide a second lane from Highland Lakes Road all the way through to where the current climbing lane starts. We cannot justify it from an engineering point of view or a budget expense. If it stacks up we can justify and support an acceleration lane from Highland Lakes heading north. That will allow the heavy vehicles that do come from Bothwell to Highland Lakes an opportunity to get up to speed before they join into or merge into a single lane. That single lane will still exist for several hundred metres before it diverges or splits into an overtaking opportunity, a climbing lane. We can look at that and we are looking at that. The apology to Andrew is because he has received information saying that we would not be looking at that, but we are.

**CHAIR** - That is clarified for the record.

The south-bound climbing lane. Shortening downhill not uphill is fair enough. Any comments on that? If you are turning left out of Lovely Banks Road going south or if you are travelling from the north, why have a single lane there when quite clearly the trucks are going to be slowing down significantly?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - The starting position of the climbing lane heading south has been determined when a heavy vehicle reaches a certain speed. That speed is above average; above the minimum design. The current climbing lane starts well before where we are starting, a few hundred metres before we are starting, and they are currently at 110.

**CHAIR** - In the design, it is starting earlier than what it currently is?

**Ms KING** - The other way around.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - It is starting later. The current overtaking lane starts earlier further into the flat, further down the hill than what our proposed design will. Our proposed design, again the starting point does appear less than ideal but it is not because it has been designed so that the speed

## PUBLIC

of a heavy vehicle when it enters that or when the climbing lane starts are already faster than what the minimum is allowed. Yes, it is slower than what they currently are, but what we currently have, to use an expression, is gold plating. We do not have the funds to gold plate our Midland Highway, so we have to make decisions. Some of those decisions will not be accepted by people. All we can do is try to explain them. Perhaps in our stakeholder engagement, we have not performed successfully. But our design, our climbing lane lengths, are better than the minimum, better than what is allowed under the national design guideline. They are less than what is currently there, however what is currently there is gold plating. We would love to provide the best, but we cannot do that.

I know Andrew feels that we should bring our new climbing lane back to where the current one starts but there is insufficient traffic volume coming out of Lovely Banks Road to justify that. The heavy vehicles coming down the hill from Launceston are currently doing 110 kilometres per hour when they get to the junction and they will still do 100 when they get to that junction. As they travel south up the hill, they will get to a speed of, I don't want to use it, but above the minimum design speed before the climbing lane is allowed. That speed they will achieve is better than the minimum allowed under the design guide. We believe we have satisfied it. We have tried to keep everybody happy including those who issue our budgets.

**Mr SHELTON** - Before we get off that one. I accept your engineering argument for that, yes. From a point of view of a traveller on the Midlands Highway, and I have overtaken many vehicles where that overtaking lane starts and I am a mechanic by trade, trucks now have more powerful engines, they can get up to road speed quicker and that sort of thing. Using your logical argument, we would not have overtaking lanes because one day they will be able to keep up at 110 and you will not need to overtake them. Therefore, it is not specifically the commercial traffic that is an issue.

If you have been stuck behind a slow-moving vehicle travelling south down towards Lovely Banks, it is a single lane next to where the fatality happened, all the way from the top of the hill. You are following a caravan, an 80 k driver, an L-driver all doing 80 kilometres per hour or even slower at times, and I know you are only deferring the overtaking by 150 metres until you get up the hill, but there maybe half a kilometre of vehicles behind that slow-moving vehicle. Therefore, any length you can get is an advantage because more vehicles can get around and you will have less frustration on the road.

I would not be arguing it from a commercial truck perspective. They will always keep up with the speed limit coming down there and around and yes, your argument they would be slowing down by the time they get half-way up the hill and you would get around them. But there are many other users on the road and many other reasons why the road traffic is travelling slower than only the commercial side.

**Mr TARBOTTON** - You are correct. We have chosen a speed which is hopefully a compromise. We believe it satisfies everybody. The heavy vehicle will be at such a speed that the number of vehicles behind it will be less. They should not be queued up behind them too much because the climbing lane starts at a point closer to the base of the hill and technically we are allowed to. We could have started it further up the hill and still satisfied our design guideline but that would have annoyed everybody.

## PUBLIC

We have taken a point that is a compromise. It does not start at the base of the hill where it currently does because we cannot afford that. We have tried to adopt a compromise where those vehicles behind the heavy vehicle, there won't be so many of them that they become a concern to us. I hope we have tried to satisfied the majority.

**Ms BUTLER** - Going back to the gold plating, and this is nothing on yourself, but obviously we have invested heavily in roads at some stage where we did create really safe four-lane roads at that stage which is now going to be minimised to three because we cannot afford that any more.

I am wondering why we have the Rolls Royce versions of the safest roads possible in electorates such as Braddon and Bass, yet we are minimising and trying to cut as much as we can. I am very concerned about the direction we are going. We are minimising costs as much as we can where we have obviously invested heavily and well in that infrastructure and investment in the past, and I am very concerned about that.

**CHAIR** - That is a statement not a question.

**Ms BUTLER** - Yes, it is a statement not a question, I am sorry. It has to said.

**CHAIR** - Shaving off the cutting just south of Lovely Banks Road going north. As you are coming down toward the Lovely Banks Road travelling north there is a cutting and it is being talked about shaving that back so that increases sight lines. That was raised by Mr McShane. Do you have a comment on why that cannot occur? Why it is not desirable? What is the reasoning?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - First of all, it can occur, we can do that. However, it has been modelled as not necessary. I know that is not what Andrew wants to hear. A previous project manager might have said, yes, we will do that; I can't comment for the previous person. We have modelled that it is not required, it is not necessary. We have a requirement to make sure our highway designs are safe for the use that is expected and this is safe.

I will give this commitment: we will go back to our designers and we will consider whether that has to be, we will triple check it. We have already double checked it and we have responded it is not necessary. We will go back and triple check it. If it is found that we are incorrect, we will adjust that. That is my commitment to you. I am fairly confident that we do not have to. That is not going to appease the person asking the question. Andrew still won't be happy. I understand that but, again, I have to get back to this: we have constraints. We satisfy the safety requirements, we must. We also have to satisfy a budget, we are. As projects I believe we are achieving everything we are asked.

**CHAIR** - Do you think taking out the trees is sufficient enough to provide the sight lines necessary?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - The trees will improve what is currently there. Andrew mentioned that by moving the entrance to the property further south by 100 metres might worsen it. I understand it will not. We differ on that view point. The translocating or the moving of the entrance 100 metres south should improve that sight distance. Again, I will go back to our designers and I will sit down and ask them to triple check this. If we have made an error, we will stand up and say we have made an error. I do not believe we have. The trees grow where they grow. We have trees that grow

## PUBLIC

within a few years and they are a full-sized tree - it is one of our biggest banes - we will remove them because it will be an improvement.

**Ms KING** - As a general engagement with stakeholders because when we go to stakeholders early, as we like to do, early in the design process we are often saying we might do this, we might do that, and as we refine the design things drop out, come in and they do evolve. Many stakeholders understand that. Clearly Mr McShane does too, that things change over the life of the design. That is why something that perhaps was talked about in the early stages, once you get right into the detail of the model you say, 'Oh, that thing we thought we might have to do, we don't have to do it'. That is a common process through our projects as it is with all capital works projects.

**CHAIR** - Thank you for that. The issue of consultation is very important; that it is consultation and not just information that is put forward. That has come out quite clearly today. Any other questions?

**Mr SHELTON** - On consultation, this one never went through council because it was deemed it was within the road reserve. Most of the big projects do go to council and there is another level of consultation or at least community awareness. Do you believe that might have led to some of the issues as far as people saying there has not been enough consultation?

**Mr TARBOTTON** - I would say the opposite to be honest. We put this information up at council, it was up there for two weeks. I believe that has generated public interest. I believe Don Jones' comment, because he telephoned me a few weeks back, was because he was aware of this because these drawings were at council. So, I think that has worked. The project is exempt from a development permit because we are not impacting beyond our road reserve and we are knocking back on vegetation. But you are right, stakeholder consultation the wider it is the broader it is the more effective it is. But, like everything, you have to consider your time constraints. We can't go out to a public consultation that is open ended. We have to restrict it because we have to; we use our internet, we put information up on the web. I know not everybody uses the internet or even likes looking at it but it is there if you wish to.

**CHAIR** - You have to know it is there.

**Ms BUTLER** - Southern Midlands has one of the lowest use of access to information in digital.

**Ms KING** - We are finding - and this project was an example of it - increasing engagement with our Facebook page, which is still electronic and you still need internet access and all of those things, but it is a less formal way of interacting electronically. When the plans for this project were put up on public display from council, there was an associated Facebook post and there were quite a few comments that came through that process. We certainly believe we did receive feedback as part of the process.

**CHAIR** - There was one other comment made. I do not know whether you want to address this on a project-wide basis, the whole Launceston to Hobart process, but providing for the future that eventually we are going to get to the point that four lanes are needed because the traffic volumes dictate that. Yet there is no acquisition happening on the way through with this project. Do you want to make comment on that?

## **PUBLIC**

**Ms KING** - I believe that falls into a policy area that is not appropriate for me to comment on today.

**CHAIR** - Okay. Unless there are any other questions, I remind you about the fact that if you go out to the public you cannot expect parliamentary privilege. Before you go there are some basic questions we do have to ask of each of the projects that we have.

Does the proposed works meet an identified need or needs or solve a recognised problem?

**Ms KING** - Yes.

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

**Ms KING** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Are the proposed works fit for purpose?

**Ms KING** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Do the proposed work provide value for money?

**Ms KING** - Yes.

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

**Ms KING** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Thank you for taking the time to come.

**THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.**