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THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS MET AT THE CIRCULAR HEAD COUNCIL CHAMBERS ON MONDAY, 16 AUGUST 2021

BASS HIGHWAY UPGRADE - WYNYARD TO MARRAWAH

Ms MARY O'HARE, PROJECT MANAGER, AND **Ms LIDIYA HUDSON**, NETWORK PLANNER, DEPARTMENT OF STATE GROWTH, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Valentine) - Welcome. For the record, present are honourable members John Tucker, Tania Rattray, Rob Valentine, Jen Butler and Felix Ellis, secretary Mr Scott Hennessey and from Hansard, Mr James Reynolds.

As we do with these formal hearings, it's important that we point out to you that a committee hearing is a proceeding of parliament. This means it receives the protection of parliamentary privilege, an important legal protection that allows individuals giving evidence before a parliamentary committee to speak with complete freedom without fear of being sued or questioned in any court or place out of parliament. It applies to ensure that parliament receives the very best information when conducting its inquiries. It is important to be aware that this protection is not accorded to you if statements that may be defamatory are repeated or referred to by you outside the confines of the parliamentary proceedings.

This is a public hearing and members of the public and journalists may be present. This means your evidence may be reported. Would you like to make an opening statement to your submission?

Ms O'HARE - Good afternoon, my name is Mary O'Hare and I am the project manager for the Bass Highway Wynyard to Marrawah project. Accompanying me today is Lidiya Hudson, a State Growth network planner and project sponsor for the project.

Today we are seeking approval for the projects identified in the Bass Highway Wynyard to Marrawah corridor study. The Bass Highway Wynyard to Marrawah project was born from the 2018 state election with the Government committing to deliver upgrades west of Wynyard with a commitment for \$40 million.

A total \$6 million has been spent to date on Brittons Swamp Road rehabilitation and upgrade, the Boat Harbour Primary School turning facilities and Rocky Cape Hall relocation. This funding was then further supported by the Australian Government under the Roads of Strategic Importance initiative with a co-funding commitment of \$60 million. The Tasmanian Government commitment was included in the 2019-20 State Budget so the total budget for this project is \$94 million.

Given the scale of the project, a strategic approach to public community and stakeholder engagement and consultation was developed and adopted for this project. State Growth will continue to engage with key stakeholders throughout stages of the project and affected landowners are engaged as the design of specific projects are progressed.

The corridor study identified 80 sites for improvement and including four overtaking lanes, 13 alignment improvements and 63 junction upgrades. There were also around 55

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kilometres of shoulder widening identified throughout the corridor. Construction has not commenced on any of these projects. The projects are rated in order of priority of high, medium and low, with the high and medium projects expected to be delivered over the next five years under this funding arrangement.

The objectives of the road upgrade are to improve safety for all road users, recognising the growing transport demands on the corridor; to improve travel time, reliability and efficiency by providing an acceptable level of service for the diverse group of road users - commuters, freight, tourists and cyclists; to improve corridor resilience by minimising delays caused by unplanned incidents; and to support growth and social access by improving economic support for the region by providing a good quality transport corridor with reliable travel times.

A significant benefit to this project is increased safety. A total of 458 crashes were recorded on the Bass Highway between Wynyard and Marrawah from January 2009 and March 2019. Of these, a total of 220 resulted in casualties, which were made up of 13 crashes resulting in fatality, 26 resulting in serious injury, 134 resulting in minor injury and 47 requiring first aid. While there are some specific locations with crash histories, there are safety concerns for the full length of the corridor. This project will address the majority of those safety concerns.

Overall, this program of works is viewed as relatively low risk. Although there will be disturbance and delays to local road users during construction, many landowners and both councils have voiced their appreciation of the benefits that will be derived from these upgrades.

Overall, we submit that these projects are part of an important safety upgrade to a key highway in Tasmania. The upgrades will improve safety and travel times. We have worked and will continue working with stakeholders to reduce the inconvenience of any impact of the projects, both during and after construction, and we are seeking other legislative approvals as required. In conclusion, these projects are a good use of taxpayer money.

CHAIR - Thank you very much for that. Just to be clear, the \$94 million we are dealing with today is for the 80 projects and not those that are already under construction.

Ms O'HARE - There are three projects that have been completed for the \$6 million that was spent out of the state \$40 million funding, and the rest of the money is for the rest of the projects.

CHAIR - Thank you for that; I think it is important to have that on the record. Do any members have overview questions they wish to ask that are not likely to come up as we move through?

Ms RATTRAY - I would like to ask about the consultation stakeholder process. From the earlier briefing you indicated there were 146 projects and then they were shortlisted to the 80 that are the priority list.

Ms O'HARE - That is correct.

Ms RATTRAY - We were also informed that the remainder of those, which would be 66, will remain as a priority and are seeking further funding. Can I have some indication of how that works? Do they have to go back to a consultation process or do they just stay on the priority list for the state Government?

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Ms HUDSON - For any projects that can't be delivered within the funding envelope we are asking for at the moment, they will sit on the 10-year plan for the Bass Highway upgrades and will attempt to be delivered when further funding is made. Given that we have undertaken the initial stakeholder engagement, we identified them as being important to the community to deliver and further stakeholder engagement would be undertaken as those projects are funded and we start to go through the design and construction process again.

Ms RATTRAY - But they don't automatically go on a works program without going back and being re-consulted, if you like?

Ms HUDSON - If and when we get funding, we would then go out and specifically engage with potentially impacted stakeholders. Until then, it would sit on a list of potential projects that could be delivered in the future when funding is available.

Ms RATTRAY - I'm interested in how other areas of the state might compete against the remaining projects that have been identified.

Ms HUDSON - Infrastructure Tasmania has a commitment by the current government to develop 10-year corridor strategies or action plans for each of the main highways. They will all be undergoing a similar process to identify potential projects for work, and a plan will be put together.

The normal process of undertaking community consultation to gather those priority project lists would be undertaken. Then, as we move through and funding is available, specific consultation will be undertaken with those who may potentially be impacted.

Ms RATTRAY - I wouldn't like any other areas to completely miss out because these have already been consulted on.

Ms HUDSON - The commitment has been made to do highway plans for each of the highways.

CHAIR - When you deal with these corridor plans and different highways, do you work with local government to make sure there's some synchronicity, if you like, or collaboration?

Ms HUDSON - We have developed a corridor strategy template, whereby we'll undertake a similar process for each corridor. That includes the development of a working group, which would have representation by the local councils that are relevant within those corridors. As key stakeholders the RACT will be invited, the Tasmanian Transport Association would likely be invited, and the public transport division of State Growth would be included as well.

If there are any other particular key stakeholders, they will be considered at that point, but each corridor may represent slightly different constituents.

CHAIR - I'm aware that some councils go into quite significant strategic depth when it comes to developing roads that might intercept with state highways. I'd like to understand how that might be handled.

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Ms O'HARE - During the planning phase, which Lidiya starts with, the local councils are involved. Then, in delivery and design, it's very important for us to engage with council, particularly to understand if there are any statutory requirements - for example, a development application might be required for the upgrade on a highway - plus their local knowledge in drainage and particular stakeholders, et cetera. At the design phase, they're also involved in the project.

Ms RATTRAY - Would that include the type of resource that is available locally?

Ms O'HARE - Yes.

Ms RATTRAY - Councils would know what they use locally when they look after roads they have responsibility for.

Ms O'HARE - Yes. The only difference is that the type of papers for a local road might differ slightly to a highway - but we could definitely utilise their knowledge on local supply of goods and materials.

Ms RATTRAY - Does the department look at equity right across the state, or who's next in line for receiving funding for their particular project?

Ms HUDSON - At the moment, we're committed to looking at all the highways, and I daresay that priorities would be going into areas that have high crash rates and high fatality rates, where there is a big impact on safety - depending on what the co-funding commitment is. If it's a road safety priority funding initiative, then road safety would be prioritised. If it's a 'roads of strategic importance' initiative, then we would look at things like economic development and freight access.

In that freight space, we also look at freight safety for drivers. There are regulatory requirements to ensure heavy vehicle operators have safe and frequent stopping locations. That is a safety benefit for all road users, not just the heavy freight industry.

Ms BUTLER - For the record, I found the submission really good to read through, with lots of valid and interesting information. I was most impressed by the community and stakeholder consultation report as well.

Ms HUDSON - Thank you.

CHAIR - I think the benefits indicated today were particularly good in this submission - something that some other areas could maybe learn from.

Ms RATTRAY - Yes. Sven, who might be listening, might take that on board. We have been somewhat critical in the past about some of the level of detail and information, but this certainly has lifted up a notch.

Ms O'HARE - Thank you.

CHAIR - Let's move on to the submission proper. We'll make our way through page by page. We have a question on page 5 on the introduction.

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Ms RATTRAY - Thank you, Chair. I'm interested in the 110 kilometre section of the Bass Highway. That's the normal speed limit. I came down this morning and I didn't see very many 110 km sections of the highway. They were mostly signed at 100 km.

Ms O'HARE - It's 110 kilometres in length.

CHAIR - It's not the speed?

Ms O'HARE - It's not the speed. It's a 110 kilometre section of the Bass Highway.

CHAIR - It's slightly ambiguous, because it does say, to the 110 kilometre section, and you were thinking it meant a speed, didn't you?

Ms RATTRAY - Yes, not being a regular traveller to this part of the north-west coast.

CHAIR - Any other questions on that page?

Ms BUTLER - The first paragraph under Project summary 1.2 states that the election commitment included a \$40 million funding commitment for upgrades to the 110 kilometre section of the Bass Highway, between Wynyard and Marrawah. Then it states -

The Australian Government subsequently announced a \$60 million funding commitment, resulting in a total of \$100 million commitment for the Bass Highway.

Jumping to page 11, there is a different amount of funding under 3.1, in the first paragraph where it says \$94 million. That seems to be a contradiction. One has \$40 million and \$60 million, and \$100 million on 1.2, and then under 3.1 it states that it is \$94 million.

Could you please explain this again, for the record, because they contradict each other?

CHAIR - That was the opening statement, which I asked to clarify to start with, so I think it may have already been done, but you can do it again.

Ms O'HARE - Yes. The Tasmanian Government made an election commitment in 2018 for \$40 million towards the Bass Highway Wynyard to Marrawah project. The first \$6 million has been spent to date on the Brittons Swamp upgrade, road rehabilitation and pavement strengthening. The Boat Harbour Primary School turning facilities project has been completed, and the Rocky Cape Hall relocation has been completed.

So, \$6 million has been spent out of the \$40 million committed by the state government, which leaves \$34 million. The federal government has also contributed \$60 million to the project, which leaves us with a total budget of \$94 million.

Ms BUTLER - Thank you.

Mr ELLIS - Chair, I'd like to get a sense of the freight challenge through this section. What are we typically looking at in terms of people using the road?

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Ms HUDSON - Most of the freight through this section was as a result of agricultural activity, with the farms delivering and distributing vegetables and cattle and dairy products. That made up most of it. There is also some timber freight as well.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you.

Ms O'HARE - Around 20 per cent of the traffic is heavy freight currently.

Mr TUCKER - I would have thought that there would have been more. You were saying that the timber aspect isn't that high here in your last comment.

Ms HUDSON - I think it's mostly from agricultural activity.

Mr TUCKER - That's interesting to know. I thought it would have been a fairly high timber area.

Ms HUDSON - I can take it on notice and get more figures -

Mr TUCKER - No, that's all right. I just thought there would have been more timber there.

Ms RATTRAY - I have a question around the progress to date. It would be useful to put on the public record the fact that there have been tenders already let for projects under this particular reference. Can we have some explanation around that progress to date?

Ms HUDSON - Can you tell us which reference?

Ms RATTRAY - It is 1.2. I recall from our earlier briefing it was said that there have been some design and construction contracts already let because I think Shaw were mentioned.

Ms O'HARE - Correct.

Ms RATTRAY - Is that correct?

Ms O'HARE - Yes, I'm just trying to find -

Ms RATTRAY - It's on page 6.

Ms O'HARE - Which paragraph? The second paragraph?

Ms RATTRAY - Progress to date, under 1.2 - just some clarification around what has been let already.

Ms O'HARE - Six projects have been let as a design and construct delivery method in order to start the projects getting through their design phase. Obviously the design phase takes time with all the statutory approvals et cetera and that has been let. Do you want me to list those projects?

Ms RATTRAY - Yes, I think that would be useful.

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Ms O'HARE - No construction has started on that project as it's still in the concept design phase with Shaw. I'll just get those -

Ms RATTRAY - There was a table on your original PowerPoint presentation with that list of six. I didn't write them down but I think it would be useful for anyone reading the report at a later date.

Ms O'HARE - Okay. Gates Road junction improvement; Myalla Road realignment and junction improvement; Dallas Road overtaking lane, East Pollards Road; Dunn Street junction improvement, which is near the Crayfish Creek Caravan Park; Munatrick Road overtaking lane; and Mella Road junction improvement. They're the six projects that are out for design and construction.

Ms RATTRAY - Okay, and there's been a tender let for those?

Ms O'HARE - Yes, there has.

Ms RATTRAY - To Shaw Contracting?

Ms O'HARE - That's correct. They are in concept and design phase.

Ms BUTLER - I want to ask a quick question around the progress to date. Just for the record, could you run through whether you believe you will meet the deadline here - commence design mid to late 2021 under the second and third tranche of high priority sites? Are you on track?

Ms O'HARE - There is a big body of work in these projects and currently I have just completed the brief for the tranche 2 and 3 projects for design. That body of work is very large. What we will do as part of the concept and detailed design is concentrate on the high priority projects and move our way through. We will be able to stage those projects to meet our time frames. It is going to be difficult but I am confident, in all honesty.

CHAIR - In the second paragraph under 1.3 it is actually both the federal and state electorate of Braddon; as the member for Braddon sits at the end of the table I just thought I would point that out.

I have a question under 2.1 with respect to the improved travel time, reliability and efficiency by providing an acceptable level of service for the diverse group of road users - commuters, freight, tourists and cyclists. Are cyclists getting any special attention? Is it really improving it from a safety perspective for them? There is not going to be any hard barrier between the cyclists and the road traffic, is there?

Ms O'HARE - No. Shoulder widening.

CHAIR - It is just shoulder widening, no markings saying 'cycleway'?

Ms O'HARE - No. However, we are looking at that in detail at Tollymore, because there is a very keen cycling group in that area that rides through there to Table Cape, I believe.

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CHAIR - It is becoming an increasing pastime for a lot of people to cycle, especially with electric bikes and for perhaps the lycra set. There are more and more people able to use bicycles and I was just interested to know what you were envisioning there for cyclists?

Ms O'HARE - That is the one-metre shoulder but there won't be any physical barrier between a vehicle travelling on the highway and that shoulder.

CHAIR - Was there any consideration given to line marking there in relation to that?

Ms O'HARE - There will be an edge line, but not specific bicycle symbols.

CHAIR - Do we know what level of cycle tourism we get on the coast here?

Ms O'HARE - The example I gave is the only one I know of, which is the Tollymore St group. There is a very keen cycling group in that location but I am not aware of any others.

Ms HUDSON - Most cyclist groups tend to use the non-highway sections of connecting roads, so it is more of looking at where there are connections, as Mary mentioned, around Table Cape.

Ms O'HARE - We capture that in the concept detailed design phase. On my other projects we actually contact cycling bodies to tell us where they are and what needs to be catered for.

CHAIR - So you do that consultation?

Ms O'HARE - Yes, absolutely.

Ms RATTRAY - In regard to the Smithton to Marrawah stretch, there are two traffic lanes of approximately three metres width with no shoulders, so there are no areas where a vehicle can get off the road existing between Smithton to Marrawah at this point in time. Are there any informals?

Ms O'HARE - There are some informals but not a lot. Regarding that section, I would have to go back and look at the corridor study role plan to tell you exactly where the shoulders are in that location and how many kilometres we are doing, but I don't have that here.

Ms RATTRAY - I would be interested in having that information, so how many informals we have and what is the length of that particular stretch, thank you. The committee would formally request that information.

Ms O'HARE - Sorry, I was just looking for it.

Ms RATTRAY - That is fine, we will take that on notice.

CHAIR - It is not something you can provide now. Another question, unless other members have more questions is with respect to motorcycle crashes. I do not see them sectioned here. Do you have any idea of motorcycle crashes on this stretch over a certain period of time?

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Ms O'HARE - No, I do not.

Ms HUDSON - No, we do not have the specifics but we can find that out.

CHAIR - The reason I ask is are you intending in putting any armco railing at all on this whole section of road on the project?

Ms O'HARE - On the outside? Yes, depending on where the embankment and the steepness of the embankment on either side of the road as to what is required for Australian standard wise. Yes.

CHAIR - So would you consider rub rails to go down below to protect people?

Ms O'HARE - Yes, the rub rails is an interesting subject, because the major roads standards stay silent on whether they must be installed or not. When we talk about it for our own state road standards it is not a definite installation. It certainly can be done and where we consider the risk is high on a particular bend et cetera, especially for motorcycles, yes, we would install rub rail.

CHAIR - Some people do see the run rail stopping a collision with a post and helps to deflect the rider back into the road, but it might also make them go further out and into the path of another vehicle. There are places where they should or should not go. I am not the expert.

Ms O'HARE - It is a very definite rule as to where they should go with the double beam or guardrail and the wire rope barriers, but it is not such a fine art with the rub rail, but I have included on some projects where we believe there is a high risk.

CHAIR - Thank you very much, I am sure all riders would appreciate that. Okay, anything else?

Mr ELLIS - Chair, one of the challenges identified in terms of crashes were run off on straights. Can you give us a sense about how this project and some of the measures will help improve that situation and broadly talking, what sort of sections might be able to help?

Ms O'HARE - Some of the accidents on the stretch are driver fatigue and falling asleep. We are not proposing to put any centre wire rope barriers on the section of the highway, but, with the widening and improvement of alignments on some of those alarming curves, that would certainly help. Not on the straights, but...

Ms HUDSON - The overtaking lanes also will improve.

Ms O'HARE - The overtaking lanes will stop risk-taking in areas where they should not be.

Mr ELLIS - Would widening shoulders on straights, particularly?

Ms O'HARE - It gives you more sense of space. Yes, I do not know if anyone else has experienced as I have, where it is that narrow you will cross the centreline on occasions, particularly if speeding and going around a bend on a double wide line. While you should not be doing that, the wider it is, the tendency to stay within your lane is much higher.

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Ms RATTRAY - A supplementary to the running off road and certainly driver fatigue, no amount of investment in road infrastructure will ever address driver fatigue. What about better signage for some of those areas? Obviously, this would be a significant upgrade. When you talked about some of those driver conditions I asked in the briefing about signage. Is elevating signage something the department might also consider, such as telling people there is a sharp bend?

Ms O'HARE - Yes, each and every project will receive more improved signage as part of the detail designed, plus we are replacing any old with new signage.

In some places, we might reuse old signage if it's still applicable to the standard, but a lot of the signage is looking pretty old and dated. It will all be new signage within the project sites.

Ms RATTRAY - And some more of those 'Drive to the Conditions' signs might be useful.

Ms O'HARE - Yes.

Ms RATTRAY - I'm not sure that everyone reads them, but if they're there at least they can't say that there hasn't been a duty of care by the Government in that area.

CHAIR - The delineation facilities - the little posts with the delineators on them - are they just a standard flexible plastic that you are envisaging? The member to my left brought up an issue with harvesters and things like that moving around. It wasn't in relation to delineators, but knowing that this is a significant farming community, it may well be. I don't know whether harvesting happens a lot up here; it's probably more dairy farming. Have you had consultation with the farming community to know whether some of the structures you're putting in place might impact on them?

Ms O'HARE - Are you referring to moving their equipment on the highway?

CHAIR - Yes.

Ms RATTRAY - Big harvesters, big tractors, big everything.

CHAIR - It's more a problem with the wire rope barriers.

Mr TUCKER - Yes, that's more the problem, which you don't have in this section.

Ms O'HARE - There's not a lot of that. There are quite a few poppy farms coming up around the place, which is interesting. With the delineators, are you talking about the guideposts with the cat's eyes?

CHAIR - Yes, the guideposts.

Ms O'HARE - Yes, they're those plastic things. They're flexible so if they're hit, they will go over. A harvester might take it out.

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Mr TUCKER - It's more where you have a wire rope on the side protecting the vehicle from going over an embankment and you have a wire rope running up through the middle. You have a single lane and then you have a two-metre shoulder and you have a metre in the middle which gives you six and half metres. If you have a 2.4 metre truck or B-double on these freight routes that breaks down, it won't get hard on that wire rope; it's going to be a little bit away from the wire rope. 2.4 metres, you could nearly say by the time you finish this, you're talking that three-metre mark and then you have a four metre over 3.6 metre piece of agricultural equipment at 12 feet, it doesn't leave much area.

Ms O'HARE - In theory that fits.

Mr TUCKER - When you're driving those machines, it's totally different. I mean, 100 millimetres isn't much when you're sitting up high and you're looking down over a big wheel. Guess what, the wire rope goes and that's when I see it. But I don't see a problem here with this.

Ms O'HARE - No, we won't be having a centre wire so that access shouldn't be an issue. One would hope that the harvester isn't on the road for very long, and going slowly as well.

Mr TUCKER - It happens. It's not a high risk but it does happen. It's more that Illawarra Road was a bigger issue because there's a lot more agricultural use on that road.

Ms RATTRAY - And it's still an issue. I spent a couple of days in Longford and we have to do some more work on that.

CHAIR - Anything further on page 9? Page 10.

Ms BUTLER - I was wondering if you could talk us through the overtaking lanes. It says here that there are four new overtaking lanes. Is that for the whole 110 kilometres, four overtaking lanes?

Ms RATTRAY - There's already quite a few on it, aren't there?

Ms O'HARE - There's seven kilometres worth of new overtaking lanes. Are you asking exactly where they are?

Ms BUTLER - Whether it's correct that there are four new overtaking lanes and, for the record, if you could outline where they're going to be as well, on the map.

Ms O'HARE - I'd have to go through the plan. In the current -

Ms RATTRAY - They are burgundy.

Ms O'HARE - Yes, they're burgundy. On 7.2, you have at Edgecombe Beach, some overtaking lane. Then on the same page, near Pollards Road and Dallas Road that is in the current set of design and construct contracts. That is still on 7.2.

Ms RATTRAY - Are they both ways?

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Ms O'HARE - No. Because I don't have details of the design, I'm not quite sure which way it will be going. Monateric Road on figure 7.3, is an overtaking lane. On figure 7.3, between Black River camp site and Peggs Road, I think there's another overtaking lane.

CHAIR - Or is that shoulder work?

Ms O'HARE - It is both.

Ms BUTLER - Just noting that in the community consultation feedback, overtaking lanes were mentioned a number of times, as adding to safety.

Ms O'HARE - As something they want?

Ms BUTLER - Yes. Could you talk us through the practicalities of providing lots of overtaking lanes and the expense of overtaking lanes?

Ms O'HARE - They are not a cheap item, particularly in both directions. At this stage I am not quite sure whether they are east or west. Probably, the traffic volume should be informing my brain of that, off the top of my head, but it is not. Where we do have an existing alignment, to upgrade an existing two-lane highway is relatively simple, although it is still a big job; particularly considering the existing pavements are not going to be reused in any of these cases. We are putting in two new three-metre lanes and a metre shoulder and whatever barriers are required.

An overtaking lane, which is considerably expanding the width of the road, does increase the cost. It also can increase the amount of land acquisition involved on private property. In fact, probably, without a doubt you would have to take the frontage off someone's property. If that is farmland, that may not be a huge deal, but ideally, we do not encroach on houses in which we would have to take the house. Plus, all the service authorities would have to be relocated to the new alignment as well. That needs to happen with most widenings anyway, but it would be definitely an increased cost in overtaking lanes.

I think that these were the first four that came to mind, or the most predominant; and I am not quite sure if there were any that were sitting in the wings to be brought forward if it was all possible with any money.

Ms HUDSON - I think the overtaking opportunities were identified where it was safest to do so and also the most economical.

Ms O'HARE - The topography also has a lot to do with where we can put an overtaking lane in, because we need to get the appropriate sight lines. Between Wynyard to Smithton particularly, is so circuitous, you potentially could not get up to speed to pass a vehicle without doing a major cut into the earth or major raising of the existing ground, such as building bridges.

Mr ELLIS - Because as well, there are overtaking lanes between a number of spots between Wynyard and Smithton - Flowerdale; Boat Harbour, Rocky Cape...

Ms O'HARE - Yes, existing.

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Ms BUTLER - I don't expect you to have the answer here, but how many overtaking lanes are already along that 110 kilometre stretch? You might be able to provide that as additional information, or you actually might know the answer.

Ms O'HARE - We will take that on notice.

Ms RATTRAY - I think the local member has got a fair idea.

Mr ELLIS - I think four, off the top of my head. But there may be five.

Ms BUTLER - These would be in addition to that?

Ms O'HARE - Yes.

CHAIR - So, the construction of them isn't driven by crash statistics, in certain areas, where people get frustrated and try to overtake?

Ms O'HARE - Well, that is one factor.

Ms HUDSON - The junction upgrades were where we saw most of the rear-ending type of accidents, where people are stopped on the highway to make a right turn, usually, or slowing down to do a left turn into an access. So, looking at those junction improvements to reduce those rear-end crashes.

CHAIR - Okay, thank you.

Ms RATTRAY - You're supposed to drive far enough away from the person in front of you so that you don't rear-end them.

CHAIR - Well, that's exactly -

Ms RATTRAY - That's basic driving.

CHAIR - That's a basic consideration when someone's getting their licence, isn't it, really?

Ms RATTRAY - They're supposed to use their indicators as well, but that seems to be optional.

Ms O'HARE - I think there are some issues as well in that vehicles that have stopped don't necessarily look like they've stopped, so as a car is approaching from behind, by the time they get there they realise the car has stopped, but it's a bit of a visual issue as well.

Mr ELLIS - Some of the worst sections, in terms of needing junction upgrades, would be around those kind of shack communities at Edgecumbe Beach and Hellyer where there's not a lot of visibility. People might be turning right into them, that sort of stuff.

Ms HUDSON - That's where a lot of them are.

Ms O'HARE - That's exactly right.

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CHAIR - Okay. Any other questions on page 10 or 11? The overall cost of the out-turn cost estimate, between the P50 and P90, is significant I suppose, but what is really significant is the contingency. There's such a difference in that contingency, \$7.8 million to \$23.38 million. It's almost three times and I'm just wondering if the P-factor makes that much difference that you have to provide three times the contingency. It just seems a little excessive.

Ms O'HARE - I'll have to take that one on notice. That does look a bit excessive.

CHAIR - I mean the cost is \$16 million greater but that's commensurate with the contingency.

Ms HUDSON - Well, there are issues with industry being available, materials being available and escalation rates over a time frame for which the money is being asked and used, so you've got to take some of those factors on board. You might get a cost estimate for materials and construction, but when you go out to market those can vary quite a lot, depending on how many contractors are out there that can do the work and what they see their overheads as being, so there's a contingency that needs to be accounted for to ensure that.

Ms RATTRAY - Yet, we've already been told that the reason why this is already in design and construction is to meet the industry's expectation about what's available as well. They shouldn't be running the show both ways.

Ms O'HARE - I agree.

Ms RATTRAY - Let's tell them, then.

Ms O'HARE - It's a bit of a fickle thing. Contractors are telling us they're short of work - 'We want work, we want work' - and then no-one tenders or they put their price up and you only get one tender. I really don't know what's going on there. The contractors are telling us they're wanting work but we're paying a premium for it.

CHAIR - Anyway, it was that query. The only difference between the P50 and P90 is basically that contingency, no other component, given what a P50 and P90 means.

Ms RATTRAY - That would be one for Public Accounts to have a look at the end of this.

CHAIR - It could be.

Ms RATTRAY - A reference for Public Accounts.

CHAIR - I've never been on Public Accounts.

Ms RATTRAY - I haven't either but they tell me they do good work.

CHAIR - Any questions on page 12?

Ms RATTRAY - I note the information provided talks about this realising a 2.5-minute reduction in travel time across the entire 110 kilometres of highway network, so this is

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\$100 million to save 2.5 minutes and obviously we have safety upgrades as well, but to make that a point, I was a little bit bemused I think might have been the word.

Ms HUDSON - We will take every benefit we can get. Particularly when we're asking for money from the Australian Government we need to justify and every little bit of information helps. It's primarily safety upgrades and those are the biggest issues.

Ms RATTRAY - I wouldn't put too much emphasis on the 2.5 minutes saving but that's my own personal opinion, not the committee's. In a supplementary it talks about a benefit in dollars and it talks about percentage. I know this is on page 13 but I think it relates, or I'm wondering if it does relate. Is that 2.5-minute saving what's referred to here under 'Vehicle Operating Cost Savings and Travel Time', because it refers to travel time and vehicle operating? It's three-quarters of the way down page 13.

CHAIR - Freight and business productivity.

Ms RATTRAY - Yes, is that what that refers to, that 2.5 minutes - an average speed of 86 kilometres per hour to 88 kilometres - and then it talks about this \$14 million per year saving and therefore 'freight and business users realise a benefit of \$4 million per year'.

Mr TUCKER - You must have been reading a similar thing to me because I looked at the one above that where you have average vehicle speeds included with the vehicle operating costs. It says, 'average speeds increase across the entire length of the corridor, therefore vehicle operating costs increase as a result of this project by \$140 000 a year'. Are you saying that their costs are going up or going down?

CHAIR - The costs are going to go up.

Mr TUCKER - Yes, by \$140 000 a year. I wouldn't want to be driving a truck on that road.

Ms O'HARE - I will have to take that on notice.

Mr ELLIS - That is quite interesting because that doesn't seem to include stuff around vehicle maintenance which I assume would be improved by fixing the roads.

Ms O'HARE - Yes, exactly.

Mr TUCKER - That seems pretty high - a \$140 000 a year saving on a truck on that road.

Mr ELLIS - It would be net across all the trucks, wouldn't it?

CHAIR - No, it's not a saving, it's an increase.

Mr TUCKER - Well, that's what it says, an increase, but I took it that it was meant to be a saving.

Ms RATTRAY - Yet on the freight and business, it talks about travel time cost saving and operating cost savings of \$14 million per year.

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Mr ELLIS - It's an aggregated figure of \$140 000 across all truck users, essentially, along that road. Then the benefits are the \$14 million aggregated time saved.

Mr TUCKER - No, because it says, 'benefit indicator average change in vehicle operating costs for freight and business operators', so that would have been per truck.

CHAIR - It's increased costs, not decreased.

Ms RATTRAY - This one is increased but this one is cost savings.

Ms O'HARE - We'll take it on notice and check.

Ms RATTRAY - We were very impressed with the benefits indicator table.

Ms HUDSON - There's a whole process to go through. They're calculations and we don't have access to that data at hand so we can take it on notice and clarify and fix any irregular issues with wording or confirm that it is actually the case.

Ms RATTRAY - It needs some explanation when it's an increase and then it's a cost saving. I want to know whether that 2.5-minutes travel time saving equates to that \$14 million.

Ms O'HARE - Yes, whether that's the flow-on effect from that.

CHAIR - On that benefits indicator table, I thought it was terrific and really added meaning for me. I don't know what other members think. You have all of those benefit areas, indicator and units and then the value I thought was a really good way of approaching it, for the record.

Under the third one, 'active transport benefits', I notice that you don't have any values associated with those two additional kilometres walk and cyclepaths. Are you saying that those increased shoulders aren't going to be regarded as cyclepaths? The other one is 'increased walking and cycling activity' - you've got nothing you can measure to -

Ms HUDSON - A lot of people don't use the highway to walk on. It's not an active transport route or an identified cyclist route.

Ms O'HARE - A cyclepath, in Australian standards, is 1.2 metres wide and I don't think you can officially call something that's not that width a cyclepath.

CHAIR - That's why it doesn't have anything in the value column.

Ms HUDSON - Correct.

CHAIR - It's probably for local government to be considering what cycle paths, and so on, in their area.

Ms O'HARE - You don't really want them on our highways, particularly pedestrians.

Ms HUDSON - You don't want to add conflict.

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Ms BUTLER - Break O'Day Council has put their own in, next to the highway.

CHAIR - Where it can be provided, if it's near communities, you could put in safer facilities for cyclists, if they're going to be travelling from one small community to another. It may actually add quite significantly to their lifestyle. But generally, you steer clear of it where there's heavy traffic, heavy vehicles, especially at high speed.

Ms RATTRAY - There aren't too many parts of that 110 kilometre section that don't have heavy vehicles travelling at up to 100 kilometres an hour.

CHAIR - You don't want to get brushed by a B-double. It'd knock you over.

Ms RATTRAY - Coming down today, meeting a heavy vehicle that was significantly at speed - which they're entitled to - it almost takes you off. You're hanging onto your vehicle.

Ms O'HARE - You struggle in a car, let alone on a bike.

Ms RATTRAY - I don't know that you'd want to be riding or walking it.

CHAIR - Any questions on page 14?

Ms BUTLER - Under 5.2, Project timeline, it says, 'Land acquisition is undertaken through the compulsory acquisition process.' For the record, could you run through where you're at with any compulsory acquisitions at the moment as a department, and if those negotiations are going well?

Ms O'HARE - For projects that are in 'design and construct' at the moment, because we don't have a final design, we are unable to do the final detail survey plans. Paperwork is being prepared, and survey plans have been developed, but they are yet to be approved by the minister for DPIPWE or Parks for proceeding to acquisition.

However, we've certainly spoken to all the landowners who are affected by acquisition, and we haven't had any great opposition to any discussions about land acquisition. None of them are full takes. No houses are affected, and all land acquisition is on larger properties or farmlands, requiring maybe a metre or a half-metre strip along the front of their property.

Ms BUTLER - Okay. On that page, we also talk about flora and fauna. Where are you at with the investigations or background due diligence into the flora and fauna along that 110 kilometre strip, noting that you are working in different phases?

Ms O'HARE - We have done a fauna, flora and heritage survey on the entire corridor, which I only received last week. For each single project, a detailed flora fauna and heritage report will be done for every single site. The corridor study highlighted about six sites, I think, that have protected flora - eucalypts and melaleuca - and would perhaps require an EPBC referral, and I believe the report has highlighted an area with raptors, but I don't know where at this stage.

There have been no Aboriginal heritage issues discovered in the corridor. None that are close to any of the sites.

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Mr TUCKER - That's interesting with the raptors. Alongside the highway?

Ms O'HARE - Yes, the raptors can be within 1.1 kilometres.

Mr TUCKER - Right. You're talking about nests and things like that.

Ms O'HARE - If they're in line of sight of construction, it becomes an issue, and then we have to talk about breeding season.

CHAIR - Moving on to 5.1, the design and construct model. This was brought up recently at one of the hearings. If you have the same contractor doing the design as well as the construct, there is an opportunity to end up with a less than quality outcome, because they might compromise the design to fit the dollar available. How do you mitigate that when you are dealing with somebody who is designing it and then going on to construct it?

Ms O'HARE - For design and construct, the contract is with the constructor. They engage the designer, so they should be two separate entities.

CHAIR - But do you make it that they have to be two separate entities?

Ms O'HARE - Yes. The designer has to be an accredited design office. They have to be recognised by whatever the qualifications are for a design office, and a constructor is a constructor.

CHAIR - So you don't have both?

Ms O'HARE - No, I don't have both. Plus, the contract documents - or what we call our principal project requirements - are very clear on what has to be delivered as part of the quality design and then quality construction. That is where people like me, as a project manager, are greatly assisted by a superintendent, who is another independent person who acts on behalf of me as the principal, and independent of the contractor as well, to make sure that all are abiding by the contract.

Ms RATTRAY - So there is never a design company that is absolutely affiliated with the contractor?

Ms O'HARE - Not that I know of. There are contractors who probably prefer certain designers, but in this particular D&C they are not aligned in that fashion. The designers are very much independent of the constructor. Equally, the constructor would have a contract of some sort with that designer, but I am not aware of what is in that contract for them to be able to deliver. So, it is really up to that contractor. If the contractor does not manage that design well, that is when we will have a problem. But then it is up to us. I also verify the designs independently, so there are all these checking mechanisms involved.

CHAIR - That gives me some comfort. I know with software design, someone does a feasibility study, and then they go on to build it. You don't want that.

Ms O'HARE - No. I understand.

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CHAIR - While they do the feasibility, they are thinking, how can I take advantage of that? It is comforting to know that you have a superintendent who has an overview, and you yourself. Thank you.

Moving on to 'Early engagement with the relevant service authorities for any relocation works'. Are there any relocation works?

Ms O'HARE - Yes. Nearly all construction jobs have some sort of service relocations - in this case, mainly TasNetworks overhead powerlines, which are currently dotted along the highway and need to be put on the new alignment.

We try to do early engagement with service authorities. It isn't that they're slow, but obviously they have their own works going on, so I try to engage them at concept design to say start thinking about this.

Ms RATTRAY - They work within their own time frame, at their own pace, and when they wish. Good luck with that, Mary.

Ms O'HARE - I think they have been pretty good, but TasWater I struggle with.

CHAIR - Any questions on page 15? No.

At this point in time, the DAs have not been passed. Is that right?

Ms O'HARE - For the current six projects there was no DA required.

CHAIR - Okay, fair enough.

Ms BUTLER - Going back to Aboriginal heritage concerns, it's stated under 6.1 - mitigation measures have been identified in the risk register relating to environment, historical and Aboriginal heritage concerns. Could you run through where you're at with that, noting there is subsequent information on page 20, which highlights quite a few blue triangles which are Aboriginal heritage. Could you run through where the project is at with consultation with the Aboriginal community?

Ms O'HARE - I've only got black and white. Oh I see.

Ms HUDSON - Often those maps that are produced are a general location marker.

Ms O'HARE - A detailed Aboriginal heritage survey will be undertaken on each site that is any close proximity. From the report I've read, briefly, I don't think we're within one kilometre of any Aboriginal heritage sensitive area. However, with each project we'll engage an archaeologist to undertake a further Aboriginal heritage, and European heritage, and a flora and fauna survey of that specific site. If there are any Aboriginal heritage issues, then we obviously then we'll go to Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania and if we need to the Aboriginal Heritage Council; we'll do a mitigation strategy and go from there.

Ms BUTLER - Okay, thank you.

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CHAIR - Okay. Any other questions on 16, or 15, sorry? In terms of land acquisition, something this committee does, I suppose, is to make sure that those who are having their land acquired are provided a fair and reasonable go.

Ms RATTRAY - If we don't know who they are, it's very difficult for the committee to engage with them.

CHAIR - Yes, but the process you have -

Ms O'HARE - For land acquisition?

CHAIR - Yep.

Ms O'HARE - Well, they're paid market price, plus their legals are paid for.

CHAIR - They've paid market price?

Ms O'HARE - Yes, that's right.

CHAIR - Market price, not Government valuation?

Ms O'HARE - No, it's market price and we pay for a valuer to undertake an independent valuation.

CHAIR - So it's independently valued and they get reimbursed

Ms O'HARE - Yes -

CHAIR - Is there any change to that if it's a compulsory acquisition? I suppose you end up with that. Is there any room for movement when people say it's valued at this but because of my developments and what's going to happen in the future I think this land is worth more? Do they have an opportunity to negotiate?

Ms O'HARE - I believe they do. That's a question for the officer, the Valuer General, and the solicitors in that area, but I believe that type of thing is taken into account, yes.

Ms BUTLER - As a supplementary to that; I've been through this with community members whose property was a compulsory acquisition. The people whose properties would be acquired, would that valuation be made on the value of the property prior to it being designated as an area where the road is going to be widened, or what the value was prior to that? Prior or after; because I know that can make a lot of difference - if it's valued once it's actually been notified as this is going to be for a road -

Ms O'HARE - It's not so palatable. It might diminish. I don't know the answer to that question.

Ms BUTLER - Because that often is the contentious subject -

Ms O'HARE - Yes. I'd imagine it was prior, but I'd have to take it on notice.

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Ms HUDSON - In some instances, properties can increase in value after a certain development has been approved, as opposed to decrease. It is the office of the Valuer General that undertakes that whole process of property acquisition and we don't participate in that process.

CHAIR - You're not setting the value, as you said before?

Ms HUDSON - No, it's outside of our responsibilities.

CHAIR - Okay, anything else there?

Mr ELLIS - Are we expecting many homes to need acquisition on this process?

Ms O'HARE - A full take of a home? No.

Mr ELLIS - So it is unlikely to see a Boat Harbour type of situation?

Ms O'HARE - No, look I have to put my hand on my heart there. Without seeing the detail of every single project, I can't envisage it; but I guess, through the concept and detail design phase, if things can be changed, or tweaked, or altered once we've got the feeling from the stakeholders and the community, on the project as a whole - we can tweak designs to make changes so the effects on private property are not as bad as....

What I am trying to say is that if we can tweak the design without compromising on safety, we can do that. When we get into talking to stakeholders one-on-one it is a very good indicator, usually in that first meeting, to see how the land acquisition process is going to go. But I don't envisage that. That was a really long way to answer that question.

CHAIR - Okay; moving over to 17, anything further on that page? I just note, on the third last paragraph; you've got a list of the people involved in an initial meeting and investment logic mapping workshop that was held with representatives of State Growth, both councils, Cradle Coast Authority, RACT, and the Tasmanian Transport Association; but I do not see the TFGA.

Mr ELLIS - They do not go past Cressy, do they?

Mr TUCKER - Some would say that they are a government-run organisation.

Mr ELLIS - No, they are good people.

CHAIR - I mean, we do laugh about these things but it is a fact that there is a lot of road, there are a lot of farms, access issues, those sorts of things. Are you leaving that up to the councils to bring forward?

Ms HUDSON - Yes. The investment logic mapping process is about getting key stakeholders that have a representation for the communities that use that corridor. Councils are the main ones - they represent all of their community - and the Tasmanian Transport Association, that represents the heavy vehicle industry, who also represent a swathe of different industries across the state. RACT for safety and for tourism, and some touch points on freight. It is getting those groups in the room, and they have the opportunity to represent their

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communities and their constituents. Then we go through that public consultation period, where everybody and anybody can also come to the table with feedback.

CHAIR - The question is if it's likely the farmers would be aware of these sorts of things going on, and through what avenue? Councils might put out some sort of advertisement in a newsletter to say this is going to happen.

Ms HUDSON - Part of the infrastructure investment logic mapping process is to engage with those key stakeholders and to have them engage with their constituents. So, it is a responsibility for the whole group to go out as far and as wide as we can to get in touch with those people that use the corridor.

Ms O'HARE - In addition to that, where we are currently undertaking prelim or concept design, we speak to every single landowner in that project.

CHAIR - Okay, that is the important thing. If that is what you do, that is good.

Ms O'HARE - And I know, on a couple of occasions, they have said, we need to get the combine harvester through, and the gate isn't big enough. We don't do any private property works, but if we can make the turn better, or wider; we simply ask them what is coming in and out of here to get onto the highway.

CHAIR - And you do that with most entrances along the way?

Ms O'HARE - Yes. We need to make sure that the highway will marry into their existing entrance and if it doesn't then we need to make sure it will.

Mr TUCKER - It is probably not your section to be asking this question, but with property acquisition there is a problem when titles are taken to the titles office and changed with the acquisition, that farmer is then put back through the process of claiming the exemption with land tax. Is there any way we can circumvent that situation for those farmers and putting them through this situation?

Ms O'HARE - I cannot talk land tax.

Mr TUCKER - I did not think you would be able to, but it is something that does come up to me fairly often.

Ms RATTRAY - It might be something the Government could address.

Mr TUCKER - Yes, I have already brought up but thought the more avenues the better. Yes.

Ms RATTRAY - But it is a problem. It is an issue.

Mr TUCKER - It is a problem. Yes.

Ms HUDSON - It is outside of our responsibilities for road construction.

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Mr TUCKER - Because they already have land tax exemption but as soon as those titles are changed they then have to go through the process again.

Ms RATTRAY - Got to reapply.

Ms O'HARE - Right.

Mr TUCKER - It is a cost on that producer to go and get that done with their accountant and everything.

Ms O'HARE - We cannot answer that.

CHAIR - It is not something you can -

Mr TUCKER - You caused the problem but you cannot fix the problem. Yes.

CHAIR - Well -

Mr TUCKER - Or you do with the acquisition. Yes.

Ms O'HARE - Yes, okay. But I also did not know there was a problem.

CHAIR - I don't think he means that in any -

Mr TUCKER - No, it was not meant in a bad way.

Ms RATTRAY - Because of the work you are doing, an issue has been raised.

Ms O'HARE - Yes. Thanks.

Ms RATTRAY - That's what you should have said.

Mr TUCKER - Fair enough, boss. I am a bit more direct than that.

Ms RATTRAY - It is a very good point though.

CHAIR - Okay. Page 18.

Ms RATTRAY - A very good point.

CHAIR - Any - no? Nothing on page 18? Page 19?

Ms BUTLER - I have a quick question on page 19.

CHAIR - Yes.

Ms BUTLER - In the community consultation feedback, "Improvement to lighting and repairs for lighting" was mentioned. Twice on one page. I cannot see anything under lighting, so how do you go about ensuring there is sufficient lighting on the actual new project areas and incorporating that information from the community about lighting?

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Ms HUDSON - From memory, specific issues about lighting were at one particular intersection where it was faulty council lights. We try and address those through the appropriate avenues, but when it comes to lighting of the corridor -

Ms O'HARE - That is part of the brief that goes to the designers, they have to look at lighting.

Ms BUTLER - So, there is a standard there?

Ms O'HARE - They do a lux - yes, absolutely. They look at the existing lighting and what it should be for the speed and the carriageway and if we need to install lights, we install lights.

Ms BUTLER - Last night driving through it was quite dark, but it was a particularly dreadful night weatherwise and it was really dark.

Ms O'HARE - I do not know if much of the corridor is currently lit.

Ms HUDSON - Lit - no. It is not.

Ms BUTLER - No, there wasn't much.

CHAIR - Intersections might be.

Ms O'HARE - The intersections are different.

Ms BUTLER - I just saw it in the community consultation. Yes.

Ms O'HARE - Yes, intersections are definitely different, but if lighting is required then it will be installed as part of the project.

Ms BUTLER - And also noting it was a particularly stormy night.

Ms RATTRAY - Are we going to go to the community consultation or not?

CHAIR - Yes, we will.

Ms RATTRAY - Good. Thank you.

CHAIR - I thought you said - you were talking about a meeting there for a minute.

Ms RATTRAY - Well, I am happy to meet with the community.

CHAIR - Under 8.1, "Legislation and Land Use Planning and Approvals Act," you have likelihood as 'certain'. Is this because it does not require a DA and why you are saying 'certain' there? Or is it because most councils would be happy to have money spent in their electorate?

Ms O'HARE - Well, it is for the whole corridor. I would not guarantee we would not need DAs for a lot of the other projects on the corridor. I would say the likelihood of needing

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a development application permit would be certain, yes, for the whole corridor. At some stage we will need one.

CHAIR - Okay.

Ms O'HARE - Yes.

CHAIR - That is what you mean by that.

Ms O'HARE - Yes.

Ms HUDSON - It was an overall risk assessment at the planning stage.

CHAIR - That's okay, I wanted to clarify exactly what 'certain' meant, that you were certain of getting approval or whether you were certain to put it in.

Ms HUDSON - Yes. Certain we are going to need one. We'll need to have one. Yes.

CHAIR - Okay. You covered a little bit of the Aboriginal Relics Act. We're not going to get halfway through and find that things have been discovered like the Brighton Bypass situation? That's not likely to be an issue?

Ms HUDSON - We are going through the process and, as Mary said before, for each individual location where upgrades will be needed there will be further work just to make sure there is nothing there. We do a preliminary overall review of the whole corridor.

CHAIR - You're telling me the process covers it off? Okay.

Ms RATTRAY - Do those consultants or experts that are used make contact with the local indigenous community?

Ms O'HARE - Yes, it's compulsory.

Ms RATTRAY - There is certainly one in this area who is very active and engaged with their community.

CHAIR - There is a Circular Head Aboriginal community.

Ms O'HARE - Yes, all local Aboriginal communities must be consulted with as part of doing any archaeological survey on site.

CHAIR - Okay, and you also go to the state Government's Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania?

Ms O'HARE - Yes, they have to approve the report. They read the report and suggest mitigation strategies if required.

CHAIR - Okay, thanks for that. Nothing further on 19 or 20? That takes us to the consultation report at the back. Any questions?

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Ms RATTRAY - On page 8 it talks about the feedback that was given which I thought was very useful, and then there is State Growth's response to upgrades of the road surface along Smithton to Marawah, this length of road of 47 kilometres, and mentions various issues that have been raised. It says:

Some sections of the highway are already scheduled for improvement works in 2019-20 under the road network maintenance services contract for the north-west region.

Are works being carried out under this particular area and then they might come back and be redone? Are we wasting our money? Is it duplication?

Ms HUDSON - On that particular stretch there is a maintenance contract and they schedule their works based on the needs and whatnot. When we identified there was a section through there that required some widening, we coordinated with the maintenance contractor to carry out both works at the same time so we could do the widening and then they would come in and finish the sealing of that section so that we did not dig up new works and we got economies of scale by bringing in materials and workforce at the same time. We worked alongside them to try to get some benefits rather than wasting money on duplicating potentially or ripping up works.

Ms RATTRAY - So is that the same on page 9 where it says west of Smithton there is a narrow bridge in this section that needs to be widened? State Growth's response is that width alignment and camber of the highway is being reviewed as part of the corridor strategy, so does that mean that the bridge is going to be widened and that will be under the corridor strategy or is that not addressed?

Ms HUDSON - We looked at the works that were required and maintenance doesn't cover building new bridges, so where particular works were needed we ensured that that maintenance work did not occur and it was looked at as part of the concept and detailed design work to replace the bridge.

Ms RATTRAY - So there will be a bridge replacement?

Ms HUDSON - I'm not sure if that is the exact location.

Ms RATTRAY - West of Smithton - narrow bridge on this section needs to be widened.

Ms O'HARE - Yes, the Montague River bridge is being replaced and widened.

Ms RATTRAY - Again, I am just checking that we are not carrying out works and then ripping them up because, as governments and elected representatives, the community just came for that as an absolute waste of money, and I agree.

CHAIR - On page 7 I just want to comment on that visual. I think it's great.

Ms RATTRAY - The pinpoint heat map?

CHAIR - The pinpoint heat map gives us a good idea as to where the concerns might be. I don't know how much we can take from that; there might be lots of people who have lots of

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time on their hands and just want to make a comment, but it gives some indication as to where some of the issues might be. Do you get a feel for that?

Ms HUDSON - Yes, and it coincides with what we have found in a lot of the technical assessments as well, so it is a good correlation and it also coordinated or coincided with what the working group came up with, so it is a good way to check that we are all on the same page.

Mr ELLIS - It was interesting that you're taking on board comments through social media as well. I think it's a particularly effective way of getting feedback.

Ms HUDSON - Not great for the person who has to read all the comments, I'm being told.

Mr ELLIS - Story of my life as well.

CHAIR - I suppose it's like anything, isn't it? As members of parliament we get heaps and heaps of emails because people can do it so easily. They don't have to type it out and find an envelope and stamp like they used to years ago.

Ms HUDSON - It is a good way to remind people that we're still open for consultation because apparently you can boost the message or something after that. It sends out a message to that local community and we have found in recent times that when that happens there is a jump in the number of feedback messages or comments we get, so we're trying as much as we can to ensure that the public gets as many opportunities as they can to be reminded that we're looking for their feedback.

Ms O'HARE - We were also doing staffed public displays and then COVID hit and this was for a time there the only way we could get comment back because we couldn't stand there at a public display.

CHAIR - I am aware that there are some in the community who may not be computer literate, quite a significant number. You mentioned leaflet drops -

Ms O'HARE - Yes.

CHAIR - Is that how you cover them off?

Ms O'HARE - Yes. We also still do static displays at councils or local offices where we can get drawings put up and displayed and we leave feedback forms and a locked box for them to drop a feedback form in.

Ms HUDSON - And reply paid envelopes.

Ms O'HARE - Every possibly way. Also media releases go out prior to those public displays so that people are informed of it.

CHAIR - They are alerted.

Ms HUDSON - With the investment logic mapping process and the working group being representative of the constituents, we also get emails from various members of council to say

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that they have had a conversation with someone who won't be putting in a submission but we still take on board that comment. We are looking at every single possibility to obtain information from everybody.

Ms O'HARE - I even get phone calls the old-fashioned way.

Mr ELLIS - Going towards the discussion we have had around Brittons Swamp and Boat Harbour, they are the two hottest spots on the heat map and it is good to see that the community feedback is dealt with in a timely manner as well.

CHAIR - Any further questions on the feedback sheets?

Ms RATTRAY - Peggs Creek Bridge - Armco rails are too narrow for heavy vehicles, and the response is:

The width alignment and camber of the highway is being reviewed as part of the corridor strategy.

So is that going to be widened?

Ms O'HARE - I will have to take that on notice because we have not done any design on that project yet. What page is that on?

Ms RATTRAY - On page 10. They are only little page numbers

CHAIR - It is table 10.

Ms O'HARE - Peggs Creek Bridge you said, didn't you?

Ms RATTRAY - Yes. That wasn't the one we previously talked about?

Ms O'HARE - No, that was Montague River Bridge.

Mr ELLIS - I do not know if this reads right. I couldn't see where it was raised, but the Rocky Cape Christian Community. They also have an engineering business onsite there and I could not see anywhere where their little junction might be fixed. It is a bit of an awkward spot and there are quite a few people living there. It is near the Rocky Cape Roadhouse and Detention River shop.

Ms O'HARE - The Rocky Cape Roadhouse and the Detention River Store?

Mr ELLIS - Yep, between there is the Rocky Cape Christian Community.

Ms O'HARE - Is there a hotel and the Christian -

Mr ELLIS - I am just trying to think.

Ms HUDSON - There is a hotel.

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Mr ELLIS - Yeah, it goes Rocky Cape shop, the pub, then the Christian Community and then Detention River.

Ms O'HARE - Detention River Store is in there to look at all the parking issues et cetera. No, it is not in there, but because of consultation I have been a part of, since Lydia has done hers, it has been made very clear to me that from that store, Yans Road and those locations up to Detention, well in fact up to Pebbly Beach - is it Pine Avenue, Hellyer?

Mr ELLIS - Yep.

Ms O'HARE - Just beyond Pebbly, okay? That area needs to be looked at and no, it is not quite captured, but due to the feedback -.

Ms HUDSON - It has been subsequently, yeah?

Ms O'HARE - It is obviously an area of great concern to a lot of people in that location and there was also a speed study done there. I do not know the outcome of that at this point in time, but it is not in here but on the list.

Mr ELLIS - Yep, that is okay.

Ms HUDSON - Part of the process is it takes a long time to go from planning, through concept detailed design to construction and we attempt to consult with the community throughout that whole process. With something not captured at the beginning in this planning phase, all we can do is get the feedback, but then as it goes through these processes, Mary, and that team do pick up on additional opportunities for feedback. We still have project website, project phone numbers, project email addresses where people can contact. This is probably one of the bigger challenges where we want to try and encourage the working group to provide information to the working group as we go through the delivery of the projects, not just at the planning phase, so we can still continue to get that feedback and understand if things are changing on the road and then address it as we get closer to works on the ground.

Ms O'HARE - It is amazing actually how much with all the consultation you have done to date how useful that has been and people are now talking to me as part of delivery. It has been a great transition really and they are not afraid. As you would understand, we have the Lions Club, the Wells Wagons and lots of individuals in the corridor talking to me, plus the local council. It is good they know who they can go to now if they want to discuss anything.

Mr ELLIS - I was going to follow up and glad you mentioned Wells Wagons. Obviously, the Bass Highway is a common spot for school bus pickups and all that kind of stuff and has been considered along this stretch of highway?

Ms O'HARE - Yes, they call it general access bus stops, where it is a combined general access and a school bus stop. It will be formalised as DDA compliant bus stop, which means it will have a concrete slab, tactile pavers and a proper bus sign. Those bus stops will be improved out of sight, compared to just dropping a table drain on the side of the road.

Ms BUTLER - Will they also have an overhead shelter on them?

Ms HUDSON - Unlikely.

PUBLIC

Ms O'HARE - No.

Mr TUCKER - That is a council responsibility.

Ms O'HARE - Not on the highway.

Ms HUDSON - There's requirements under the DDA compliance requirements for different grades, different classes, in different settings and we follow those.

Ms O'HARE - Rural -

CHAIR - Often farmers provide their own little shelter for their kids at the front gate.

Ms O'HARE - You see a lot of that and unfortunately makes the bus drivers then stop where they shouldn't stop which is sometimes a problem.

CHAIR - Yeah, well it is probably a conversation that needs to be had with some of the landowners when things like this are happening, a conversation probably needs to be had with some of the landowners. With those little intersections, very minor roads come on, and you've marked them for treatment as one of the 80 things, I suppose. What sort of work do you do at those, to make sure the drop-offs aren't too sudden, and so on?

Ms O'HARE - At the intersection upgrades?

CHAIR - At the intersection of a minor road.

Ms O'HARE - It's a tricky one, but a lot of the accident history still involves rear-enders. Depending on how much traffic uses the local road, we may put in a widening and a deceleration lane to turn left, so that you can actually get off the highway to turn left into the minor road.

CHAIR - If it's only half a dozen residents in the area, obviously -

Ms O'HARE - It depends on the warrant for it.

CHAIR - Yes.

Ms O'HARE - If it's a road that does take you through to another community, like Myalla Road, that will get a left-turn deceleration lane, plus a right-turn protector pocket if you're turning right into Myalla Road, so that you can get off the highway into a protected pocket, and cars can go around you. It depends on the warrant as to how big or small the treatment will be, but generally it is localised widening at the intersections for safer turning movements.

CHAIR - Thank you. Any further questions?

Ms RATTRAY - There are a number of calls for change in the speed limit, such as on page 11. I would expect we're not spending \$100 million to reduce the speed limit, because that's usually pretty frustrating for people who are using the road. Is that issue addressed?

PUBLIC

Ms O'HARE - The speed limit on highways is a big issue throughout the state. On a lot of my projects, it's the people who live locally that would like the speed limit reduced, but obviously through-travellers don't want to be using a 100 kilometre highway at 80 kilometres an hour, so it really is hard to marry. Because it is a freight route, it is not a popular move to reduce speed limits. That decision is made by the Transport Commissioner, not us.

Ms HUDSON - Also, some of the other improvements would aim to reduce some of the conflicts, which then allow for that safer higher-speed travel.

Ms O'HARE - That's right.

Ms RATTRAY - Yes. You spend \$100 million fixing up the road and then you -

Ms HUDSON - Or just make it all 80 kilometres, and pocket the \$100 million.

Ms O'HARE - We get a lot of different comments, and we take on board as many as we can, but we need to make sure we still deliver a safe road.

Ms HUDSON - Correct.

Mr ELLIS - A lot of people who are concerned about the junctions seem to be the same people who are concerned about the speed limits, and I suppose if you fix the junctions, they don't have the same fear of a log truck bearing down on them from behind when they need to turn right or whatever.

Ms O'HARE - Yes, that's right.

CHAIR - This is something I meant to pick up on earlier. When I was coming up yesterday, I noticed that significant areas of this section - or at least the first half, because I only came to Smithton - have water over the road. There's a lot of rain coming out of the sky, but the pooling of water was quite significant. Have you looked at those sorts of problems in this corridor to see if you can mitigate some run-off and the like?

Ms O'HARE - Well, I don't think you found that there were water-over-road issues -

CHAIR - It was just pools. You can drive along, then all of a sudden you have 100 millimetres of water.

Ms O'HARE - That's a lot of water.

CHAIR - That was what it was like yesterday. If you'd have gone into it, you would have slewed off. It was sitting on the road. But it was raining very heavily.

Ms HUDSON - The issue didn't come up when we did the assessment in the planning phase. We did look at things like road geometry, but because of the topography, there are a lot of sections where water isn't going to pool, so it didn't come up as a great concern.

I wonder whether it is generally a big issue, or whether it was due to the weather at the time, because it was pretty bad.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - I might be exaggerating.

Ms O'HARE - It was very bad yesterday. I'd have to say, if we had a road or intersection on the Bass Highway that was leaving 100 millilitres on the surface of the incredibly -

CHAIR - Well, 100 millilitres is probably an overestimate, but it was definitely a pool of water. It wasn't just heavy rain that was trying to get off the road, it was actually pooling and the car in front of me splashed it everywhere.

Ms HUDSON - There are some sections where we have noted that the geometry and camber need to be fixed for safety reasons and it may well be that it coincides with that section.

CHAIR - There is no way of knowing until you go out on a night like last night, to be honest.

Ms HUDSON - And it's those sorts of things that we were hoping we would get through the public consultation, because that is the sort of things that the locals would pick up on that we would not have information on. And it did not come up whereas other sections that we didn't know about did.

CHAIR - It certainly caused me to slow down. I thought I am not going through that at speed. It was more than a few millimetres, maybe about 40 millimetres.

Ms O'HARE - You can be assured that all the sections that are being upgraded certainly have improved drainage as a standard part of the design.

CHAIR - Thank you for that. Unless anyone else has anything to add, we will call the hearing to a close and thank you very much for coming. I think it has been very informative for everybody. I know it has put you under pressure to answer various things. You are coming back to us with some information which will probably help us with other projects as much as anything else. Just to remind you, as I did at the start, that as soon as you walk out the door you are not covered by parliamentary privilege; that is only afforded you here during the hearings. Once you leave the table you have to be aware that you do not have parliamentary privilege if you speak to somebody outside in relation to this and any comments that may have been made here; if you repeat them outside it is not covered.

Okay. Thank you very much.

Ms O'HARE - Thank you for your time.

Ms HUDSON - Thank you.

Mr ELLIS - You've got to ask the questions.

CHAIR - I've got to ask the questions. It happened to me once before and I am not going to let it happen again. Now these are important questions.

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

PUBLIC

Ms O'HARE - Yes.

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

Ms O'HARE - Yes.

CHAIR - Are the proposed works fit for purpose?

Ms O'HARE - Yes.

CHAIR - Do the proposed works provide value for money?

Ms O'HARE - Yes.

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

Ms O'HARE - Yes.

CHAIR - Thank you. I appreciate that.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW