

**Deputy Premier
Treasurer
Minister for Infrastructure**

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Ms Jen Butler MP
Labor Member for Lyons

By email: Laura.Ross@parliament.tas.gov.au

19 July 2024

Dear Ms Butler

Thank you for your constituency question you asked in Parliament on 20 June 2024 regarding the proposal to compulsorily acquire land at Westbury for a Heavy Vehicle Driver Rest Area as follows:

"Carol and John Firth of Westbury are concerned about the Department of State Growth's plans to compulsorily acquire their land for a heavy vehicle rest area. They say there was no consultation with them and the first they heard was a letter in the mail with the title, 'Project Update'. Noting the poppy yield of the land has the highest alkaloid levels in the area, these concerns were raised with the government in January this year. Mr and Mrs Firth have advised that the acquisition of their prime agricultural paddocks will proceed. Are you concerned about the way they have been treated and will you step in to find a suitable resolution?"

Managing driver fatigue is essential for road safety and for ensuring our heavy vehicle drivers comply with National Heavy Vehicle legislation, and the ability for heavy vehicles to safely and productively navigate the road network is a key consideration of the Tasmanian Government's investment in infrastructure to support economic opportunity and enhance productivity.

The Tasmanian Liberal Government partnered with the Tasmanian Transport Association (TTA) in the development of a Tasmanian Heavy Vehicle Driver Rest Area Strategy, which was released in 2020. The Strategy identified potential sites for new Heavy Vehicle Driver Rest Areas (HVDRA) in key locations that will allow heavy vehicle drivers to take mandatory rest breaks across Tasmania, better manage fatigue on key Tasmanian freight routes and check their load security.

I have been advised that the Department of State Growth undertook a thorough scoping exercise of land suitable for the HVDRA, to be located between Westbury/Birrilee Road and Deloraine. After undertaking this work and once the project team had a clearer understanding of those who may be affected by the project, the Department commenced a process of consultation with landowners and other potentially affected. Consultation did not commence until the scoping exercise was complete so as not to cause unnecessary concern to landowners whose land was subsequently determined unsuitable for a HVDRA.

I can advise that after suitable locations were identified, landowners were informed on 31 January 2024 of the draft plans and associated land acquisition for the HVDRA. The first in-person meetings and the original project update letters were intended to be the start of a program of targeted consultation with directly impacted landowners. These meetings were intended to assure landowners that acquisition plans would not be finalised until after the preliminary design was complete and to be the beginning of an open and ongoing relationship with landowners throughout the project. This was also an

opportunity to advise landowners about the compensation and acquisition process for property that is needed for projects, which is run by the Office of the Valuer-General.

I understand that the Secretary of the Department of State Growth wrote to Carol and John Firth on 15 March 2024, providing a detailed update on the scoping exercise and the consultation program. Mr and Mrs Firth were also advised that fair compensation would be paid for the acquisition of their land, which would include compensation for the loss of future revenue from the land.

I have been advised that representatives from the Department have endeavoured to continue to engage with Mr and Mrs Firth but have experienced some difficulties.

Westbury was identified in the 2020 Heavy Vehicle Rest Area strategy as a priority HVDRA site. I am advised that, while other westbound locations on the Bass Highway were considered by the Department, there were no other locations deemed appropriate. For this reason, the Department has been attempting to work with the Firths to develop the site on their land, understand how the Department can minimise impacts on their land where possible, and to ensure that the Firths are fairly compensated.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael Ferguson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael Ferguson MP
Deputy Premier
Treasurer
Minister for Infrastructure