

**THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS MET IN
COMMITTEE ROOM 2, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, HOBART ON TUESDAY 11
MARCH 2003**

GLEN HUON ROAD PROJECT

**Mr BOB GORDON, GENERAL MANAGER, MARKETING AND Mr STEVE DAVIS,
DISTRICT MANAGER HUON, FORESTRY TASMANIA, WERE JOINTLY
CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.**

CHAIR (Mr Harriss) - Gentlemen, we will hear your evidence in whichever way you feel is appropriate to present it. You would be well aware that the committee has previously met to consider the reconstruction or upgrading of the Glen Huon Road. The committee postponed any decision on the matter and, after some recent developments, felt it was appropriate to first of all call Forestry Tasmania to provide evidence to the committee and allow us the opportunity to ask you questions on this project and the impacts of Southwood. Then we will also be recalling, at a later time today, the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources representatives and their consultant. We will also be hearing from the Fix the Glen Huon Road Committee who did not see the advertisement when it was placed to identify the previous hearing. That is the process for today.

Bob and Steve, we are in your hands at this stage and please feel free to lead your evidence however you see fit.

Mr GORDON - Can I firstly ask whether the committee has a copy of the letter that the Deputy Premier sent?

CHAIR - No. I have provided committee members with a copy of a letter which the Deputy Premier wrote to Alan Duggan as President of the Huon Resource Development Group.

Mr GORDON - Yes, it is the same that was sent to the people who were interested in the road.

CHAIR - Okay. With Mr Duggan's sanction, I have circulated that to committee members this morning. Would you like to have a look at that one? Is that the same?

Mr GORDON - It is the same letter. I just thought it might be worthwhile people reading that first - it probably answers the majority of questions - and I am happy to elaborate after that.

CHAIR - Members might give me an indication when they are ready to proceed. Is everybody clear? All right, thanks Bob.

Mr GORDON - I thought I might start, Mr Chairman, with just giving an outline of the marginal impact that processing on the Southwood site would have on transport along Glen Huon Road.

Log traffic currently uses the road both ways; both to cart logs to Hobart-based sawmills and to Triabunna. Log traffic flows in from the Huon end along Glen Huon Road to service the sawmill at Watson's on the way in and some logs flow in that way also, to go to Watson's sawmill. When the regrowth sawmill starts on the Southwood site, which I expect to be later this year or early next year, about 50 000 cubic metres of logs will go into that sawmill and, because it is going to convert it to sawn timber, about 15 000 cubic metres will come out as finished product. That finished product will move from the Southwood site, along Glen Huon Road and out to either Hobart or Bell Bay Port, depending on what shipping arrangements are arranged. That transport will be the responsibility of the sawmill owner, which will not be Forestry Tasmania.

In about 18 months to two years' time when a rotary veneer plant starts at the Southwood site, it will take in about 150 000 cubic metres of logs a year and will produce about 75 000 cubic metres of dried veneer, which is basically - excuse the imperial measurement - 8 ft by 4 ft finished packs, which looks a bit like plywood. That product will also move down the Glen Huon Road and out of the Port of Hobart.

It is likely that for the first year or two of operation of the veneer plant it will not get full production levels. It might be something between 50 000 and 60 000 cubic metres a year of finished product. That will be the impact, if you like, compared with the current situation. There are currently log trucks using the road and our expectation is that about the same number of log trucks would use the road before and after Southwood. There will be fewer log trucks using other roads because 200 000 tonnes of logs is going into Southwood and only 90 000 is coming out because it is going to be finished product rather than logs.

That is, I suppose, a summary of the stuff that is directly relevant to the Glen Huon Road issue, Mr Chairman. I am just wondering whether I have explained that correctly or if people wanted to ask any questions about the Glen Huon Road component.

CHAIR - Members, any questions for Mr Gordon? I have some and they are based upon the Deputy Premier's letter. You have given those figures, Bob, which we can check later from the *Hansard* and do all sorts of comparisons. But the Deputy Premier's letter puts it in a nutshell, I suppose, where he suggests that an extra 90 000 tonnes of finished product approximately -

Mr GORDON - Which is the 15 000 plus the 75 000.

CHAIR - Yes - will travel along Glen Huon Road. Then he says that that translates to an average of five extra trucks per day, based on a 40 tonne load per vehicle. My understanding is that a 40 tonne vehicle is not a normal triaxle vehicle. We are then talking about high-productivity vehicles - B-doubles - to accommodate 40 tonnes because a normal triaxle would not be able to cart anything in excess of about 30 tonnes, in round figures.

Mr GORDON - I do not know the source of the Deputy Premier's calculation. If you are asking me for an estimate of the number of trucks and their carrying capacity carting finished product out, that will obviously be a matter for the owner of the sawmill and the owner of the veneer plant. I expect that they will probably cart more than five days a week because both plants are expected to run seven-day shifts. I am not aware of any proposal to allow this route to be a B-double route.

CHAIR - It is a fundamental issue that we need to have clarified because the advice that I have is clearly that any vehicle carrying a 40 tonne load is not a triaxle vehicle. We are talking about high-productivity vehicles. If you cannot give that information to us now, can I suggest that at some stage either you or other witnesses during the day will need to provide that advice to this committee because it was a major consideration when we met last time as to the appropriateness of this new design and the safety for this new design to accommodate whatever vehicles are travelling on the highway.

Mr GORDON - Can I suggest that that is probably a matter for the Department of Infrastructure. Forestry Tasmania currently has some log trucks using the road where we are delivering to the mill door. As I said before, the people that own the sawmill and own the veneer plant will be the ones carting product out, not Forestry Tasmania, and, as I said, as far as I am aware there is no proposal to use B-doubles on this route. I do not know where the Deputy Premier got the 40 tonnes from. Perhaps it was a rough calculation; I do not know. Somebody needs to do the maths. The number of trucks per day, the number of days a year, what weight does it need to carry? I do not know.

CHAIR -Yes, and to pursue that a little further, in my judgment, someone also needs to advise this committee as to what sort of trucks are going to be using this highway because if the Deputy Premier has just used a 40 tonne load per vehicle to make a rough calculation to tell us - or tell the various people that he has written to - that that equates to about five extra trucks per day when if high-productivity vehicles are not permitted to use the highway and they are 40 tonnes then we are talking about more than five extra truck movements in one direction per day. Then the next question arises: what about the return cycle for the trucks? These same trucks will be going back out along that highway at some stage to pick up more product. The Deputy Premier is talking about five trucks. Let us talk about truck movements. If that is right then we are talking about 10 truck movements for a start. If my advice is accurate that a triaxle will only cart 30 tonnes, let us quickly do the sums as to what the effect of that is on truck movements.

I want to also challenge the 90 000 tonnes extra of finished product because the Deputy Premier has mentioned to me that it is probably more like 102 000 tonnes extra. That is only 12 000 tonnes extra but we are still talking about figures which to me and I do not know about the rest of the committee - at this stage seem fairly rubbery, to say the least.

Mr GORDON - What was the 102 000?

CHAIR - The current usage of Glen Huon Road being 124 000 tonnes and the projected usage being 226 000 tonnes; the simple difference between the two being 102 000.

Mr GORDON - Okay. I think the maps you are referring to - in any one year the number of log truck movements along that road will vary depending on where the logging occurs, so depending on where the coupes are, and I would have thought that 10 000 or 20 000

tonnes was well within the annual fluctuation. The figures for the product off the site that I have given you are correct and they are based on conversion of round logs to sawn timber and recovery of dry veneer from round logs.

CHAIR - So back to your previous comment, Bob, that the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources would be able to give the committee evidence as to the carrying capacity of various types of vehicles, maybe I can get a nod from Mr Todd. We will to get that later. Okay, that is fine. We can pursue that.

Mr DAVIS - If I might just confirm Bob's comment there that the 90 000 is consistent out of the Southwood site and that any differential in between the numbers that you are quoting - up to 102 000 - is simply a matter of scheduling out of existing harvesting operations, which is outside of Southwood. What we tend to do is to balance between the numbers of access roads within the district and we can actually move volumes around and they are subject to the shortish cart distances from different operations. So once Southwood starts there will be fluctuations in those amounts of volumes over the particular roads involved.

Mr GORDON - With or without Southwood there will be fluctuations, depending on where the particular coupes are located in any one year. Over a five-year period it will pretty well average out, but depending on where the particular coupes are located, it fluctuates now.

Mr BEST - I think we had some figures presented on current truck movements on the road at some stage; I do not know if you would be aware. There is some usage currently of log trucks. Will that alter in the sense that those trucks going certain ways at the moment with Southwood, rather than being additional, they would pick up, so where we are talking about five extra truck movements, some of those might be additional trucks?

Mr GORDON - All of the finished product truck movement will be additional.

Mr BEST - Right.

Mr GORDON - There will be fewer trucks using other roads as a result of 200 000 tonnes of logs being converted to 90 000 tonnes of finished product. So there will be fewer trucks going through Huonville and Hobart and everywhere else because we are processing on the site instead of having the logs processed elsewhere but the log truck movement along Glen Huon Road will maintain at about the same level, give or take annual and seasonal fluctuations in the location of logging coupes.

Mr BEST - So it is fair to say that there will be a fair balance of what is existing - I guess that is what I am trying to get a picture of.

Mr GORDON - I would suspect that log truck traffic is only a fairly small component of traffic along that road, but I do not have those numbers; I presume the department does.

CHAIR - On that matter then of log truck usage, current and projected, has any account been taken of private forest supply to Southwood from areas such as Cygnet or Cradoc on that side of the river and therefore coming into Huonville across the Huonville bridge and heading out to the Southwood site via Glen Huon Road? At the moment there are not

that many log trucks going in that direction. Some do, of course, to supply Rick Watson's mill. Has any account been taken of that possibility in the future?

Mr GORDON - I do not know the log truck movements on private property going to Watson's mill but it might even be 10 000 tonnes a year because I know they buy some logs from that area. We have not based the economics of throughput at Southwood relying on the private property wood. If we do buy it, I imagine it will be moderate volumes, not all of which would come in on Glen Huon Road. Anything south of Geeveston would come in on our own rating system. Anything from the Derwent Valley would come down the Plenty Road. I do not know how much suitable volume there would be in the Channel area because we would be targeting stands of forest suitable for rotary peeling basically. So regrowth: about 20 cm to 30 cm diameter.

I know when the private forest resource review was done there was not a large volume of regrowth resource in the south. I do not have those numbers but I suspect it would be tens of thousands of tonnes at the most.

CHAIR - During the process of investigating the viability of Southwood, my understanding is that Forestry Tasmania did have a specific officer or officers who were taking account of the likelihood of private supply to Southwood. How far did that advance and where are we now situated with that assessment?

Mr GORDON - There were some discussions with some owners about basically updating them about where we were with the project. Obviously, a log that goes into sawmilling or rotary veneer is worth more to a forest owner than a log that is going to pulp wood. I do not believe we have signed up any wood and we are probably at least six months off doing that.

But, again, in terms of the volumes, we did not include those volumes in any of the feasibility study analysis with proponents, although I expect that we will be standing in the marketplace and picking up some private property wood. How much is partly a matter for the market but it will be nowhere near the volumes that we expect to put through from State forest. If we picked up 10 000 or 15 000 tonnes I think we would be going pretty well.

CHAIR - In terms of the impact of inward traffic along Glen Huon Road, you have mentioned Rick Watson's sawmill. You probably do not know the impact of what happens there specifically but I refer to some information provided to me by the Deputy Premier where he suggested that 15 000 tonnes per annum goes into that mill.

Mr GORDON - From the Huonville end?

CHAIR - Yes.

Mr GORDON - Not all would go from the Huonville end.

CHAIR - That is right.

Mr GORDON - So depending on where the wood is coming from, it could come down Glen Huon Road to Watson's mill or in from the Huonville end, depending on where the coupe

was. I think they buy about 10 000 to 15 000 tonnes from us. They certainly buy quite a bit of private property as well but I do not have those numbers. I suspect it would be maybe 10 000 tonnes.

Mr DAVIS - I think the 15 000 tonnes is indicative of what is likely to go to the mill in any particular direction. So I think it would be a fair assessment to say that that would come from the Huonville side but with another possible 5 000 tonnes coming from the other way.

CHAIR - So it could be 20 000 tonnes or it could be 25 000 tonnes.

Mr GORDON - Yes. I am sure Rick would know the sources. We know the sources from our land but I know they do buy private property logs.

CHAIR - Yes, they do.

Mr DAVIS - The 15 000 tonnes that you talk about is actually sawlog material that comes from us and he gets additional volume for his pulpwood chipper.

Mr HALL - Mr Chairman, Mr Gordon might be able to elaborate and clarify for me. It mentions on page two of that letter - we talk about the Plenty link. The Plenty link via Feilton remains the principal transport route for Southwood. That is going back towards the Derwent Valley, is it?

Mr GORDON - Correct.

Mr HALL - So that is for finished product?

Mr GORDON - The road was built partly to allow logs to come down to the Southwood site. So there is a significant source of regrowth logs from the Plenty link down, on that plateau; which will segregate the rotary peeling logs out of the pulpwood pile and bring them down to augment production at the rotary peeling plant in the sawmill. We currently sell about 140 000 tonnes a year of pulpwood to Boyer to make the *Mercury*, amongst other things. That is hardwood regrowth logs and I expect it will be carting chips off the site, in similar volumes, back over the hill.

Mr HALL - Right. But then with the finished product, is there an option to go back out that way rather than along the Glen Huon Road? That is what I am trying to say.

Mr GORDON - The main finished product will be veneer and sawn timber. The veneer - all the work that we have done with shipping companies has been based on shipping out of Hobart; that is by far the cheapest. There are two bulk freight options to courier which only exist out of Hobart. To cart to Bell Bay on either truck or rail is about another \$15 to \$25, depending on which way you do it, and it does affect the feasibility of the projects. So we are expecting that bulk finished product will be out of the port of Hobart.

Mr HALL - And along the Glen Huon Road, in that case.

Mr GORDON - Yes, well, to go over the other way is quite a distance if you have to go to Hobart.

Mr HALL - Thank you.

CHAIR - The matter of Glen Huon Road being approved for use by B-doubles, this committee at its last hearing heard from Mr Todd from the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources that the Deputy Premier has given an undertaking that B-doubles would not use the road. What is your understanding about that issue now that North Huon Road is off the agenda, now that North Huon Road cannot be used? My recollection is clearly that the Deputy Premier had given that undertaking at a time when the decision about Southwood and its transport routes had not yet been made. What now might change with regard this road and the most cost-efficient transport of product from Southwood?

Mr GORDON - What happens on the public road system is not really a matter for Forestry Tasmania or the sawmill proponent or the veneer proponent. If the Deputy Premier has said that B-doubles will not be using the road then we will accept that decision.

CHAIR - But, again, I mention to you that he made that comment pre-RPDC determination about the transport routes for Southwood.

Mr GORDON - I am not sure of the timing of that. I can remember two or three public statements immediately after the RPDC's decision. But I have not got then with me and I certainly cannot remember the timing. Certainly Forestry Tasmania has no proposal or is even contemplating using B-doubles on the Glen Huon Road.

CHAIR - B-doubles were going to be the most cost-efficient transport method if North Huon Road had been approved.

Mr GORDON - Correct.

CHAIR - They were always factored into any discussion with the community about the intrusion into their lifestyle, if you wish. So B-doubles, extrapolated into truck movements, was always the debate. Will a prohibition on B-doubles or superdogs challenge the viability of Southwood?

Mr GORDON - The discussions on North Huon Road had both options, of non B-double configurations and traditional configurations, and obviously there were different truck movements depending on the configuration - fewer trucks with B-doubles, more with standard triaxles. The decision not to use North Huon Road obviously had an effect on the Southwood proponents. With carting finished product - sawn timber and veneer leaf - the transport economics are not as critical as they are for logs. So, for instance, if you are carting 25 000 cubic metres of sawn timber - I do not have the distances in my head; it is probably about 90 km from Southwood to Hobart Port. If you did want to use B-doubles - and there is a bit of a problem with that because you are generally talking about relatively short lengths of timber; they are not long like logs, they are only 5, 4, 3, 6, 2, 4 type lengths - there are not huge savings in using B-doubles and also the volume is not quite enough to justify a fleet. So if you are carting sawn timber you tend to use just standard flat tray trucks like Watsons do. With the veneer leaf -

CHAIR - If I can interrupt. To get things correct: you said, 'like Watsons do'. Their sawn timber goes out on a triaxle.

Mr GORDON - Yes.

CHAIR - You mentioned just a flat tray truck.

Mr GORDON - Sorry, I meant rather than a double articulation.

CHAIR - Okay.

Mr GORDON - So the advantage in B-doubles, for instance, is long transport distances. The longer you go, the more efficient they are. For short transport distances people tend not to use them because you are not working your capital as hard. There is no proposal to use B-doubles to cart either sawn timber or veneer off the site.

CHAIR - What has changed then from the very strong intention - not only proposal - to use B-doubles if North Huon Road had been approved? What has changed the economics of transport?

Mr GORDON - North Huon Road was not approved, which means that instead of having more chipping done on site and carting a greater volume of chips to Triabunna, we now will not be. We will be carting logs.

CHAIR - Given that and given your earlier statement that long-haul can be more cost-effective by the use of B-doubles, why then would you not use B-doubles to haul logs to Triabunna, that being a long haul?

Mr GORDON - Along Glen Huon Road?

CHAIR - Yes.

Mr GORDON - There is not an approved B-double route. All we are doing is accepting the law of the land. If the law of the land says you cannot cart B-doubles along Glen Huon Road, we will not cart B-doubles along Glen Huon Road.

CHAIR - Is that a political position rather than a technical, practical position?

Mr GORDON - We cannot use B-doubles on lots of other routes as well, and we do not. Neither do Gunns and neither does anyone else. The process of approving a route to be a B-double route is handled by the Department of Infrastructure. Forestry Tasmania, like any other company carting log products, accepts the rules.

CHAIR - To return to an earlier question, because I do not think I recall your direct contribution, does that then affect in any way the viability of Southwood, the fact that you cannot or will not be using B-doubles? Let me rephrase it: what impact does that have on the viability of Southwood?

Mr GORDON - I think it makes marginal, if any, impact on the economics of the sawmill and the veneer plant because to them it is a short-haul distance. It is a fairly bulky, difficult-to-pack product anyway and there is no great advantage in using B-doubles versus other configurations to cart what is basically a rectangular product. To cart logs out, it is currently not an approved B-double route and log trucks are using it. After Southwood starts up the same log trucks will use it. If it is not an approved B-double route, B-doubles will not use it.

The economics of Southwood is dependent on the finished product, not on the log transport. The efficiency we get from Southwood is that we are carting logs on FT roads short distances, converting round logs, which are half water, into finished product and then carting the finished product. We will continue to use on FT roads whatever the most productive vehicle configuration is to cart into Southwood. In doing so, we take a whole lot of other traffic off the public road system. That is what drives the economics. At the moment we spend a lot of money carting logs that are half water - and they are round - to Korea to be made into plywood. We get about 50 per cent recovery. Instead of carting those logs about 10 000 km, we will be carting them 40 km, converting them into dry veneer and then transporting the dry veneer. That is what drives the economics of the project. Whether we use B-doubles or not on the Glen Huon Road is not a matter for Forestry Tasmania; we simply obey whatever the road rules are. It will not substantially affect the economics of the Southwood project.

CHAIR - Thank you. There is just one other question that I would like to pursue with you. In the assessment of the Southwood project the council, in its planning approval, attached a condition relating to hours of usage for the roads. Was that only applicable to North Huon Road? I am referring to the RPDC consideration of Southwood. The council placed a restriction in its planning approval on Southwood truck movements, essentially requiring that there would be a curfew between 9 p.m. and 7 a.m. Was that only going to apply to North Huon Road?

Mr GORDON - I think that was the case but I would have to check.

CHAIR - I have not studied this any further than that. Has the RPDC handed down any decision which impacts upon any curfew for transport movements on public roads for Southwood?

Mr GORDON - Not that I am aware of but can I take that one on notice and get back to you?

CHAIR - Please.

Mr GORDON - I am pretty sure the original permit conditions proposed by the Huon Council and agreed to by the department of the environment were effectively overruled by the RPDC deciding that product could not go to or from the site along North Huon Road.

CHAIR - Bob, the only reason I raise that is because if there is that time restriction it will impact on the truck movements. Because all of these calculations have been done on 365 days a year, presuming 24 hours a day operation. It will compress the movements into a really tight time period. That is the only reason I raise it.

Mr GORDON - It might just be worthwhile asking Steve to comment on the sort of consultation he has had, as part of our normal process, with people on the Glen Huon Road about the current transport arrangements, and the sort of process we would expect to happen regardless - just as being a good corporate citizen.

Mr DAVIS - Can I just make a comment on the fact that, in terms of whether or not there is a restriction by the council relating to the operation of Southwood, currently there are 10 to 12 trucks per day that come from our operations and, as was previously suggested, that will continue to be so. That is outside of the Southwood operation, so given the decision by the council or given the decision about the operation of Southwood, then those operations will continue 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If there is a restriction on truck movements about the Southwood operations, it would only apply to a very small subset of the trucks that use Glen Huon Road. So there is a little bit of - I would not call it an anomaly, but in terms of an argument to be put against the usage of trucks it does not apply to, as I see it anyway, our current operations that actually bypass Southwood.

In terms of trucks on the Glen Huon Road, most of our business interacts with and is of most concern to locations of schools and the use of trucks through school times, that mainly being from 7.30 a.m. to 9 a.m. and from 2.30 p.m. to 3.30 p.m. when the schoolkids are either being picked up by the bus operators or dropped off at school - and then the reserve happens in the afternoon. We do what we call a risk assessment, which looks at our truck movements and how they interact with the community and to those particular times. In doing so we talk to both the community - which we have done to date at Glen Huon - and also the bus operators to see how we can minimise our operations on those particular times.

One way to do that that was brought up both by our colleagues and the bus operators is to work in with the buses, particularly if they are travelling in one particular direction. Then you either avoid the particular times when they are getting picked up at school or in fact travel in the same direction. So by simply discussing with the bus operators which times are important to them, then we can schedule trucks to operate either before set times - and therefore be in the bush and go through empty or loaded in particular directions - or in fact travel. Because there are no restrictions on empty trucks going through Ranelagh and North Huon Road in fact there is a round route that is utilised at the moment where the empties go to North Huon and come back, laden, the other way.

So it is a matter of us discussing with the operators a scheduling system that we agree to in writing. We discuss it with the truck operators and the companies and the council to have an agreement up front where everyone abides by a particular way of moving traffic. We would pursue that particular direction when Southwood starts operating and we would go through the same process. I think what we are talking about then is alleviating people's concerns and minimising impacts.

CHAIR - Thank you. I have, not surprisingly, studied in some detail the information provided in the Southwood DP and EMP and the projected truck movements. My research would suggest to me that there has been a change in the projected truck movements from the DP and EMP to what we now have from the Deputy Premier and your evidence as well. What has brought about that differential?

Mr GORDON - When the RPDC decided it could not use North Huon Road, then we looked at other options for transporting product off site, including what we would process on site. The RPDC decision only referred to product off the Southwood site or into the site. We have actually made it more economic to cart logs to Triabunna than to take them into Southwood and chip them in some circumstances. The movement of finished product is pretty well what it was except that instead of using North Huon Road it will use Glen Huon Road.

CHAIR - Members, any further questions? Thank you both, Bob and Steve. You are welcome to stay if you wish. We have further evidence to take. If you could get back to us on the matter that I asked you about - I do not think I wrote it down.

Mr GORDON - I thought I answered it.

CHAIR - No, you said you would get back to us.

Mr DAVIS - We tried.

Mr GORDON - Hours of operation for trucking.

Ms HAY - The curfew. If there is a curfew imposed now.

CHAIR - Yes, thank you.

Mr GORDON - The question was: did the council permit originally applying to North Huon Road, which had restricted hours of operation on that road, apply to any other roads. I am pretty sure it did not, but I will check that - which was why I asked Steve to give the outline of what we were currently doing in terms of managing risk and community expectations, which we would do anyway, and I expect that the operator of the sawmill and the owner of the veneer plant - although I cannot, obviously, commit them - would do exactly the same process as we are doing and consult with the community to try to minimise any road traffic conflicts on the road.

CHAIR - Steve?

Mr DAVIS - Just a further comment. It seems that it is pretty clear that we need a clear definition of what people say is a B-double because at the moment we are using triaxles and trucks less than 19 metres that are already using the road. So I think we are talking about, in trucks less than 10 metres, the triaxles and superdogs and then a B-double is a configuration over 19 metres. That probably will be clarified at a later date by someone else.

CHAIR - And a superdog would be referred to generally as a mini B-double?

Mr GORDON - I do not know what non-trucking people refer to trucks as. It could be 'a bloody great truck'. But I take your point. At the moment, as I understand it, permits are not required for trucks that are within the existing normal truck length but have better following characteristics.

CHAIR - We might pursue that with the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources representatives.

Mr GORDON - All we are saying is: whatever the rules are on the road, all operators of trucks on that road must meet the rules.

CHAIR - Thank you.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.

THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS MET IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, HOBART ON TUESDAY 11 MARCH 2003

GLEN HUON ROAD PROJECT

Mr GARRY YOST, Chairman, AND **Mr ROBERT MENZIES**, DEPUTY CHAIR, GLEN HUON ROAD COMMITTEE, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR - When the committee last convened you had mentioned to me that your committee did not see the advertisement in the newspaper. As I have apologised to you privately, I could have invited your committee to be involved in this process. We were tearing into the process at the time and so simply overlooked that. Hence we felt it appropriate to give you an opportunity, now that we have reconvened the hearing, to take further evidence. The committee would like to hear whatever evidence you want to give us, in terms of your committee's feeling about the proposals, both prior to our last hearing and subsequent to the Deputy Premier's letters to yourselves and to Alan Duggan. Robert, if you would like to kick off and then Garry can lead off from your contribution, if you wish.

Mr MENZIES - The Fix the Glen Huon Road Committee was elected at a public meeting involving approximately 150 residents who met in Glen Huon Hall. That meeting was convened by Harry Quick and there was a huge public turnout. The committee was elected then. We subsequently met and set ourselves up appropriately; Garry is the chairman and I am the deputy chairman. We have been in fairly constant contact with the department since then about the road and the type of road that they were going to provide. We had extensive discussions with Paul Lennon when he was the Minister for Infrastructure and we have had some subsequent discussions with Jim Cox's office also since then.

The brief that we had was to assist the department and the community to get a road which was consistent with what had been publicly announced by the Deputy Premier, which essentially was a 6 metre road. At that stage we were looking at a road which was really only going to be used for residential and light commercial use. Obviously the decision in relation to North Huon Road has changed the dynamics of the Glen Huon Road and what its possible uses were. So our committee has spent some considerable time trying to get a feel for that and some sort of feeling of the Glen Huon community itself as to that and the users of Glen Huon Road.

Our committee has met almost fortnightly since the middle of last year after the public meeting was held and we have only seen what I call the first stage of the plans for the road, from the Huonville Bridge to the cemetery. We have raised with the department a host of safety issues in relation to that portion of the road. We have not yet seen that I am aware - unless Garry has seen some recently - any plans of a detailed nature for the rest of the upgrade. I suppose the only comments we can make from a safety perspective relate to that portion of the road that we have actually seen the plans for. We see our brief as really being not exclusively but largely directed at ensuring that any safety issues

are properly looked at and assessed. We have made detailed submissions to the department, we have put in a detailed submission to the council, we have had further discussions with the politicians - as in the Deputy Premier and Mr Cox - about these issues.

I suppose the general situation was that there were a number of safety issues that we did not feel were adequately addressed by the first-up design that came from the department. Essentially, they have been addressed in the most recent letter that we received from the Deputy Premier.

We have a number of safety issues that were raised. The first of those was the Glen Huon Road/Huonville Bridge intersection. The next major issue was the Alburys Road intersection. The Alburys Road intersection has been specifically mentioned in the Deputy Premier's letter, that additional funds will be made available to upgrade that intersection so that - well, presumably - it will not be the safety concern that it was, given the current design. We obviously have not seen any design work in relation to that so we do not really know what the department would be proposing as far as that is concerned but we think that whole issue is one that we will need to keep under review and we will need to look at the designs when they come through. On the question of the bridge and the intersection of the bridge, the advice I think that Garry received from the Deputy Premier, in which we understood there might have been some figures provided to you, Mr Chairman, as to the extent to which this additional \$2 million would also be enough to pay for some work on the Huonville Bridge intersection - Garry, was that what you understood?

Mr YOST - Mr Chairman, with the meeting that was held with the Deputy Premier, the additional sum of \$2.1 million was actually what was spoken of at the time. However his letter refers to \$2 million. At no stage during those discussions did the Deputy Premier allude to the Huonville Bridge/Glen Huon intersection. However, in our submissions we have made it probably our number three priority in terms of all the presentations that we have made both to the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources and to the political arena. He did not mention it at any stage. It has only been in subsequent discussions where we believe that the \$2 million or \$2.1 million ought to be sufficient to do Alburys Road intersection, the Huonville Bridge/Glen Huon Road junction, as well as the very difficult bends through the Horseshoe Bend section of the road. There ought to be enough money to do the three, not the two - Horseshoe Bend and Alburys Road intersection - as was indicated.

Mr HALL - Can I just ask, Mr Chairman: what is the quantum of work you think is needed at the intersection with the Huon Road at the bridge there?

Mr YOST - To be perfectly honest, I would not profess to be a civil engineer but I would have thought the main issue there is the way that there is not enough radius for the semitrailers and the log trucks turning out of Glen Huon Road to actually get onto the bridge. So to move that intersection around slightly: probably \$150 000, I would have thought, would be a fairly good estimation of the cost to do that work. I do not believe it is a major process.

Mr MENZIES - The current situation with log truck movements and general truck movements off the Glen Huon onto the bridge is that effectively they get to the

intersection, they sit and wait until the road is clear in both directions and then they actually have to go across onto the other side of the carriageway in order to get around. That, in a lot of cases - not necessarily all but in a lot of cases - would also involve the back wheels going up onto the footpath on the inside of the corner. So there is a fair bit of work. There is probably enough room there, as Garry was saying. If that intersection was simply redesigned; the way the road was put together was redesigned, and so on, it ought not to be insurmountable.

Mr YOST - In fact the truth, Mr Chairman is that they do not actually use the left-hand lane. They go over into what is the centre lane to either go straight ahead or to turn right to Franklin and then wheel around because it the only way they can get sufficient radius to get the trailer around. So it actually creates a very dangerous situation.

Mr HALL - Have there actually been any accidents there or it is just a matter of convenience?

Mr YOST - I would not be able to confirm if there had been any accidents at that particular intersection. Our review of the accidents on the Glen Huon Road started from 200 yards down the road. So I honestly could not comment on that.

CHAIR - Anything further, Robert or Garry, you wish to contribute before I open it up for other questions?

Mr YOST - Robert did allude to the fact that we have not been issued any further design details for the next sections of the road. In September we were promised phase 2 or the second section of the road. We were subsequently told, about two months ago, by the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources project manager and engineers that the designs for the next section of the road were very close and that we would probably have a draft copy of those within three weeks. We still have not received any of that and we believe that they have probably been held back pending the outcome of just what the overall requirements were going to be on that first section of the road. That is probably why we have not seen them. The Deputy Premier has probably gone a long way to resolving some of those issues but we would have liked to have seen more of the design.

The other comment that has been very frustrating from our point of view is that we have been given quite a number of different project dates. Originally the project was to be done in two phases over two years. We were then told that it would be done in one year as a complete project. We have subsequently been told it would be a three-year project. We are now back to a two-year project, with one year having expired with nothing done at all. So it has been very frustrating from our point of view and we have had to take a lot of criticism from the community at large because we have not been able to tell them the facts because we just have not known them ourselves. So it would be good if this hearing could identify what is going to be the correct and proper time frame for the project.

Mr MENZIES - Can I also just address a couple of remarks, before we go to questions, on some of the issues that were raised by the Forestry people and so on. We have a letter, firstly, from the Deputy Premier, addressed to our committee, in which he clearly states that high-productivity B-doubles would not be permitted on the Glen Huon Road. We hold the Deputy Premier to those undertakings. Those were undertakings which he made

not only to the committee but, if my memory serves me correctly, Garry, also in a public letter which he distributed to the community that uses the Glen Huon Road. I have no doubt at all that there would be a huge uproar by the day-to-day users of Glen Huon Road if in fact as a result of North Huon Road not being able to be used, then high-productivity B-doubles were permitted on that road. The public discussions that we have had essentially are that people do not want the high productivity B-doubles on the road. That is particularly so in light of the transport studies that were done prior to Southwood getting the nod when it was indicated that the Glen Huon Road was essentially not a suitable road for the output from Southwood because of the number of access points onto that road. It is almost a residential ribbon right up that road and there are a huge number of points where vehicles access that road. So the prospect of having those sort of high productivity B-doubles on the road is one which has never been contemplated. I suggest it ought never be contemplated, given the safety issues that would inevitably flow from their use.

Mr YOST - There is, unfortunately, evidence to support that those B-doubles are actually using the road at the moment.

CHAIR - Yes. I was going to ask both yourselves and the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources representatives at a later time as to whether B-doubles are using the road.

Mr YOST - There is evidence to support that that activity is currently taking place. That is correct.

CHAIR - In both directions, Garry?

Mr YOST - My knowledge is only in the one direction - that is, Huonville-bound, what would be east-bound.

CHAIR - So they would be coming into the sawmill, would they?

Mr YOST - No, they are going down to the Huon Road, as I understand it. The increase in the collection of logs from the forest - the Denison and that area out there - is causing a huge increase in volume of traffic on the Glen Huon Road at the moment. There are log trucks seven days a week, pretty much 24 hours a day.

CHAIR - So if B-doubles are using that road at the moment and they are going out onto the Huon Highway, how do they negotiate the bridge intersection?

Mr YOST - As I said previously, they move out into what is almost the oncoming lane and swing a big swing around - and they actually go up over the island nature strip.

Mr MENZIES - That is the section of the intersection which would permit you to turn south towards Franklin.

Mr YOST - One of the members of our committee owns a transport company with large semitrailers and he has indicated that the only way that he is able to turn north is to go out into that oncoming lane.

Mr MENZIES - Can I also pick up on one of the comments made by Mr Davis, one of the Forestry representatives, when he talked about the school bus issue; the times when the buses travel and the supposed community consultation that has gone on. It is my understanding that there has been some consultation with the bus operators but, as a committee representing the community and elected at a public meeting, to my knowledge we have never had any contact from Forestry to address those issues with us directly. We have never been spoken to; we have never received correspondence. I have certainly never received a phone call from anyone at Forestry where they have addressed those supposed issues with us. Garry is nodding his head in the negative direction, if I understand him correctly.

Mr YOST - We have never received any consultation and I suspect that if that is what they consider community consultation, it leaves a fair bit to be desired.

Mr YOST - We did in fact go to a great deal of trouble to provide the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources with the chainages of both the inbound and the outbound school bus stop requirements on the road and obviously through consultation with parents of kids who catch the bus we then laid out the bus stop requirements for the section of road that had been designed to the cemetery. To the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources' credit they did come back to us and confirm that they would add those bus stops into that current design. So we did quite a bit of work in that regard.

We have been subsequently advised by the Deputy Premier that, through the good community-type program, it is the intention that two-way radios - I guess UHF radios - would be installed in the buses and that there would be a program that the log trucks were only travelling in the same direction as the school buses in the morning and in the evening and that they would have the ability to talk to one another, to know one another's location. But that was a verbal undertaking and has not been included in the letter.

Mr MENZIES - The only other thing, Mr Chairman, is to pursue some of the questions that you asked Forestry about - the number of extra truck movements per day. Those figures are certainly rubbery and they do not have a lot of substance, from what we understand and so we are concerned about those. We have done the numbers with a member of our committee who is actually a trucking operator, as indicated by Garry, and I do not have on the top of my head now the numbers that we came up with but they were certainly vastly different from this 'five extra' number that is mentioned in the Deputy Premier's letter.

Mr YOST - The Deputy Premier has indicated that the loads would be, as he has been advised by Forestry, no greater than 15 000 tonnes per annum. We have been advised by both the woodchip operator and the mill operator that their tonnages would be almost double that as they stand at the present moment. The other part of that that we thought was also a major obstacle was the fact that the woodchip production that is meant to go over the Plenty link, over time gets converted back to an LDP process board and all of that would then come down Glen Huon Road, so the commitment from the Deputy Premier to review the traffic on the road over time, depending on the productivity of Southwood, I think needs to be probably a little bit firmer than just an arbitrary comment because if you look at the production schedules, the woodchip falls completely out and

that 300 000 tonnes get converted to board which would be a considerable increase of traffic on the road.

Mr HALL - I noted in your original submission on 4 December you talked about the school bus lay-bys, so you are happy that problem has now been addressed?

Mr YOST - Yes, we actually have a schedule from DIER nominating those positions and they correspond directly with the request that we made.

Mr HALL - Right.

Mr YOST - Having said that, it is only to the cemetery but we would assume that they would continue that with any further design.

Mr HALL - Mr Chairman, just one further question I have. The community, I think as you both mentioned, were opposed to the use of B-doubles on the road and you had that promise from the Deputy Premier. What is the rationale behind not wanting B-doubles as opposed, say, to triaxles? What is the issue there with B-doubles on the road as opposed to triaxles?

Mr YOST - Essentially because they are 50 per cent heavier in load. The average triaxle is 32 to 33 tonne, sometimes up to 40, B-doubles are 60 tonnes and obviously because they are longer, I think that is the biggest concern.

Mr HALL - So in terms of people wanting to get past them, you think that is an issue?

Mr YOST - Yes.

Mr HALL - Although the road will still be limited to 80 km/h, I think.

Mr YOST - During the discussions with the Deputy Premier we said that we were more than happy for it to stay at 80 km/h; there was no way we wanted that increased. The situation at the moment is that when you travel on the road, you can only travel safely if you have crossed the centre white line and you then take your life into your own hands when you need to negotiate an oncoming vehicle. If it is a big truck then you are seriously putting your life at risk and if it is a big long B-double that is 60 tonne up, then that is a pretty precarious situation to be in on a day-to-day basis.

Ms HAY - Is the B-double also wider? I know it is longer but is it wider as well?

Mr YOST - I couldn't honestly comment on that directly.

Ms HAY - Okay.

CHAIR - Mr Todd is shaking his head but he can give us that advice later.

Ms HAY - I'm getting lots of shaking heads.

Mr YOST - I wouldn't have thought so.

Ms HAY - Is it proven that they are not as safe as the triaxles or do you know any background there as well?

Mr YOST - Just simply watching them go up and down the road, the second set of wheels do snake. I guess if you are experienced and you know what is happening it is all okay, but if you were a mother with a car full of kids then they go bush and invariably that is what happens quite regularly on that road. They just get scared and end up in the gutters and drains or whatever.

Ms HAY - My memory is a bit sketchy but at the last meeting we were told that B-doubles will still be allowed to use that route. Is that from Watson's mill?

CHAIR - My memory is sketchy, too.

Ms HAY - I know that there was an undertaking from the Deputy Premier with an understanding that they would still be able to use that route so I'm just wondering are they the ones that are using it at the moment, the B-doubles on the Glen Huon Road?

Mr YOST - From the evidence that we have been given, the B-doubles that are currently using the road are trucks that relate to new contractors who have moved out to the back of Glen Huon that are actually recovering timber from the forests at the moment. There are four new contractors that have moved out there and they have varying loads of four, six or eight truck loads a day each, depending on their volumes.

Ms HAY - Can I just go through. You had three priorities. Can you give them to me in order? You have Alburys Road intersection, is that your first priority for the improvement?

Mr YOST - Alburys Road intersection was our number one priority.

Ms HAY - Was it the Horseshoe Bend?

Mr YOST - No, we wanted some attention to what we call Bend 1 or what they call the Yule Woolley corner, where they had their very serious accident.

Mr MENZIES - It is the first right-hand bend after you come onto the Glen Huon Road.

Mr YOST - It is after what you would call a bit of a straight section of road. There is a very dangerous -

Mr BEST - Is that the one that goes down the river?

Mr YOST - Yes, and it drops off.

Mr BEST - Yes, and around and then up again.

Ms HAY - And the third one?

Mr YOST - The third one was the Huonville Bridge.

Ms HAY - And that is up until where you have the proposed plans?

Mr MENZIES - That is correct.

Mr YOST - We have only addressed our safety issues to the set of designed plans that we have at the moment. Horseshoe Bend was always further down our list; however that has been brought forward through the offerings of the Deputy Premier.

Mr MENZIES - But it was only further down our list because in fact it is not in the first 4 km of the design work. Had it remained as it is and had it been included in the design work then it presumably would have been a lot higher up that list. The other thing, flowing on from that, is the whole concept of the design work from the cemetery through to the end of the road. There is a whole host of issues there about both vertical and horizontal alignments of the road. The Horseshoe Bend is only one of those areas that will need some attention. There is a whole host of vertical issues immediately following the Horseshoe Bend on the Glen Huon side and if they are not dealt with, they will be an issue. So there is a whole host of safety issues that we have not addressed because we have not seen the design work and we do not know what the committee will get from here and what the plans will actually show. We can only ask that those issues be examined carefully by the committee in terms of what sort of end product we get.

Mr YOST - Just to elaborate on that, the comment was made earlier that when the original consultant's survey was done on the suitability of the North Huon Road and the Glen Huon Road, it was very clearly stated in that submission that the Glen Huon Road was not suitable for the Southwood traffic. They invented a term called 'rural suburbia' and that was the term that they gave to the Glen Huon Road. There are 130 accesses that lead onto the road so one of the other major safety factors that we had included in our list of issues was that the visual clearances needed to be addressed at all of those intersections because, at the present moment, until the nose of your car is halfway out on the road, you often cannot see if there is anything coming or not. Prior to this letter from the Deputy Premier, that was going to form a part of our submission to the Regional Services Council and one of our objections was that the council had not gone far enough with their submission, from a safety point of view.

CHAIR - Robert, with regard to your comments about 'no high productivity vehicles would be used on the road' and the Deputy Premier has written to you and confirmed that that will not be the case, what was the date of that letter?

Mr MENZIES - There were two public meetings held at Glen Huon Hall. The first of those, Mr Chairman, you were at and spoke. Then there was a second meeting that the Deputy Premier physically attended and made some announcements. We received that letter, to the best of my knowledge, a few days prior to that second public meeting and in fact the letter was circulated to electors who lived on the Glen Huon Road at the same time as we received our meeting so that in fact the Deputy Premier pre-empted some of the announcements which he made at the public meeting by distributing them prior to that meeting.

Mr YOST - I believe it was in the third week of August that we received that letter. Sorry, September.

CHAIR - Which was pre the RPDC decision to take North Huon Road off the agenda.

Mr MENZIES - That is correct and this is about a week before.

CHAIR - And clearly then, with no intention whatsoever to use Glen Huon Road for Southwood - generated traffic, the Deputy Premier would have been on solid ground to say, 'I will not allow B-doubles to use Glen Huon Road', because the clear intention and the hope was that they would be able to go out through North Huon Road.

Mr MENZIES - That is correct.

CHAIR - So he was on pretty solid ground to have advised your committee and the community that he was going to place that kind of a restriction or prohibition on Glen Huon Road. It could well be argued that since North Huon Road has been taken off the agenda for Southwood, that issue ought reasonably be revisited and it ought reasonably be revisited as this committee has done in its previous deliberations and our great concern when we previously met that Glen Huon Road was being reconstructed, if you wish, in a mickey mouse manner given the impact of Southwood. That was a major concern of this committee hence reconvening and seeking to call new evidence and fresh evidence from both DIER and Forestry. So the point that I am getting to is that the Deputy Premier has given you that undertaking in writing when North Huon Road was still clearly and firmly on his agenda as the preferred and the hoped route for Southwood traffic. How do you react to that?

Mr MENZIES - But surely he would also have understood that that was not a fait accompli and that that was not something which was set in concrete and that the whole purpose of the planning process is to ensure that a whole variety of people get an opportunity to make an objection, that their objection is heard and the decisions are taken in the long term. So to suggest that the Deputy Premier would not have known that there was a risk that North Huon Road would not go ahead I do not think is an appropriate conclusion to draw and I think that he must have inevitably had information and submissions, material prepared both by Forestry and by his own department which would have suggested to him that there was always a risk that that would occur.

CHAIR - We can only surmise.

Mr YOST - The other comment, Mr Chairman, is that that has been the whole impetus behind our request to reconvene meetings with both the Deputy Premier and Minister Cox together because it tended to be, after the North Huon Road was cancelled and then the Deputy Premier's portfolio changed, every time we tried to speak to Minister Cox about the fact that the goalposts had changed, the parameters had changed and the basic 6 metre road that we had been promised - and, as you say, the 6 metre road in a very hotch-potch sort of deal - was no longer suitable if we were going to have imposed all this increased traffic from Southwood.

The whole impetus behind that, our request to meet them both, was to just put in front of them the fact that the goalposts have moved, the parameters have changed and they really did need to review all the aspects of the Glen Huon Road, not just the width, the vertical horizontal alignment, the visibility from the 130 access roads, the Horseshoe Bend - I mean, a classic which hasn't been mentioned and I don't know if too many people are

even aware of it, but the little bend just next to the mushroom farm, the downside or the river side of that bend is actually eroding away and so there is actually not a lot of road left - there is not a lot of bank left. There are some fairly major roadworks required there. We think that it certainly did need to be addressed.

CHAIR - So can I conclude from those contributions then that the proposal which is before this committee, which you have seen, taking the road to the cemetery, in the view of your committee still has many, many deficiencies?

Mr YOST - It certainly has deficiencies from a safety point of view, yes. It has deficiencies from the vertical and horizontal alignment process, particularly along the section in front of the mill, along the river section. Bend No. 1 is a major problem. They haven't offered to infill any of that to straighten that particular bend. We have been advised of the school bus allowances so that has been fixed. The other issue there is that the road floods. We are not sure what the hydrology arrangements are on the road as far as getting the water off the road as well. There are clearly still some deficiencies in the design, yes.

CHAIR - One of the issues which concerned this committee at a previous time was that it seemed that the impact of Southwood hadn't been factored into this new design.

Mr YOST - Correct.

CHAIR - It seems on the surface that that probably still hasn't been attended to apart from the Deputy Premier writing to your committee and others to the extent that \$2 million extra will be provided essentially for attention at Alburys Road and Horeshoe Bend.

Mr YOST - If I may, Mr Chairman, generally there has been a difficulty in relaying to the community the fact that a 6 metre wide road is in fact quite sufficient for the requirements. The Cygnet Road is a 6 metre road. The Lyell Highway is a 6 metre road and I have seen log trucks passing one another and I have passed them on that road every second day. However if the alignment, the vertical and horizontal alignment of that road with the visibility and some of the other major safety issues there are not attended to with the increase of Southwood traffic then we still have a dangerous road. In the letter the Deputy Premier alludes to the fact that where possible they will add in some extra sealing on some bends. That is what they have done on the Cygnet Road and it works very well and we would be very pleased to see that happening on the road. Although this does go a long way to solving the issues on the Glen Huon Road, I think it is fair to say that there does need to be a bit more detailed work done on both the tonnages and the quality of the road. There's no question.

CHAIR - Robert, if then I could come to the comments that you made about B-doubles and that there ought never be any contemplation for the use of B-doubles due to safety concerns, I suppose given the matters that Garry has raised - and that is of numerous accesses onto that road either residential or road accesses, et cetera - what mitigates the danger by the use of triaxles as opposed to B-doubles?

Mr MENZIES - The issue with B-doubles is their length. They are a bigger truck. I don't know that there's too many more than that really. I don't profess to be an expert on trucks and truck design and truck usage but as someone who lives there and owns property that directly fronts onto the Glen Huon Road and with six children, including some young

ones, I'm concerned about the safety issues and they are a paramount consideration for me and I suspect that they are for a large number of other users. Certainly the biggest single issue that I've received in the seven or eight months that this committee has been in operation, the single biggest factor which has constantly come back to me from all of the public representations that I have heard is the safety issues. We're worried about that; we're worried about the dangers of large trucks; we're worried about the increase in the number of trucks. We can't send our children to ride their bikes down the road, it's too dangerous. We can't do lots of other things on the road which we would like to be able to do because of the safety issues and I just think that the B-doubles are an inevitable safety risk when compared with the existing trucks. That is not to say that the existing trucks are not a safety concern. Given the existing state of the road, they are a huge safety concern. But I think that the 6 metre road will alleviate a large proportion of the safety issues for standard triaxles, but being a novice I'm not as convinced about the capacity of a 6 metre road as outlined or any particular road to alleviate those safety concerns for B-doubles.

Mr YOST - I think the inherent issue, the safety issue is that because they are 50 per cent heavier, they've got three and four times the stopping distance requirements and so in the event of an incident, a B-double is going to take a lot longer to stop than even a triaxle truck. A 33 tonne truck will stop - and I'm not 100 per cent sure on this - but a B-double is going to take probably four times the distance to stop simply because it is more than double the weight.

CHAIR - We made our own comments earlier on, Robert, about the figures - whether it is 90 000 tonnes or 102 000 tonnes - and your contribution was a long the lines that the figures are very rubbery and didn't have much substance. What do you base that on, given that you did hear Mr Davis' evidence to the effect that the 90 000 tonnes is clear, that they can quantify that?

Mr MENZIES - The understanding that we had was that you were looking at approximately a 30 tonne load as opposed to a 40 tonne load which is referred to either in this letter or which came up in the discussions. In the letter from the Deputy Premier to our committee this translates to an average of about five extra trucks per day based on a 40 tonne load per vehicle. We did some figures with the member of our committee who is a trucking operator and our figures -

Mr YOST - Can I just clarify those numbers. Originally under the public information that is available there's 88 000 tonnes of sawlog, there's 180 000 tonnes of veneer board and there's another 300 000 tonne that is converted to LDP veneer board or compressed board. We spoke to the various technical people in those areas and our understanding - and it is fairly common knowledge - is that from 90 000 tonnes of sawlog you have about a 30 per cent waste in sawdust and you have a 30 per cent waste in bark and pit and edges and so on. So we said that at least 30 per cent, which would be 30 000 tonnes of sawlog, would be on the road - not 15 000; there's 180 000 tonnes of veneer logs and, as we understand it, the productivity rate on those logs is between 60 and 70 per cent, so 60 to 70 per cent of that 180 000 tonnes would be converted to product that would be coming back down the road. Similarly, with the 300 000 tonnes of chip that's going over the Plenty link, which in 2005 is converted back to MDF and LDP board, so we are just using simple mathematics; we aren't able to get to the quantities that are being suggested will be the volumes on the road at the moment.

Mr MENZIES - But if you divide those by a 30-tonne load as a round figure, as we were doing, then you get a vastly different figure and Garry might correct me - and I don't have the numbers in front of me - but my head was telling me that we were looking at somewhere between 15 to 20 extra.

Mr YOST - We had 16.8 extra semitrailers per day when Southwood was up and running.

CHAIR - In one direction?

Mr YOST - That's outbound, yes - that's loaded. We only talk loaded.

Mr HALL - Fifteen to 20 extra a day?

Mr YOST - The actual sum was 16.8 trucks per day and that was based on a 300-day year, not 365.

Mrs NAPIER - Could I just ask was that out or was that out and in?

Mr YOST - No, that's only outbound - load of trucks.

Mrs NAPIER - Could you tell us what the increase will be in-coming in the road?

Mr YOST - It would be similar - no, it won't, sorry -

Mrs NAPIER - It would be more, wouldn't it?

Mr YOST - The intention is that all of the harvested timber would all come from out the back and be carried straight to Southwood and therefore none of that traffic would be on the Glen Huon Road, although there is fairly minimal of that now. Empty trucks returning to Southwood, I would assume that they would go up Glen Huon Road the same as they come down it. That would make sense.

Mrs NAPIER - But you are saying the logs that are going into Southwood for processing will come either via the Huon-Plenty link or from southern roads access?

Mr MENZIES - The majority of them we're expecting will go in that fashion.

Mr YOST - The plant needs 805 000 tonnes of product per annum and it's our understanding from Forestry that they produce 505 000 tonnes, not 485 000 as is documented. There's 505 000 tonnes would come from the Huon region and the other 300 000 tonnes would come from the Derwent region, which would come down the Plenty link and to Southwood and the 505 000 and 300 000 would make up the tonnages. On the bar charts that they gave us showing the product output or the use of that 805 000 tonnes, there was 300 000 tonnes of woodchip that would go back out the Plenty link and to the chip-mills, whereas by the year 2005, which has been corrected now to the year 2007 because of the two-year delay in the project, that 300 000 tonnes by the year 2005 on those bar charts is no longer woodchip - woodchip has completely gone - and it is now what they call an LRP board which is a compressed panel the same as an NDF board and all of that would be then finished product which would come down the Glen Huon Road.

Mrs NAPIER - And that's catered for within the 16.8 extra truck movements?

Mr YOST - Correct.

CHAIR - At this stage then the only thing we can do is take the Deputy Premier's letter to you which suggests 90 000 tonnes of finished product will be coming down Glen Huon Road - that's the increase. If you take that at 30 tonne loads over a 365-day year, that equates to eight truck loads in one direction. The Deputy Premier has used a 40 tonne load and we've visited that issue with Forestry previously and might visit it again with DIER, so it could be five or it could be eight.

Mr YOST - Yes.

CHAIR - But you are saying fifteen.

Mr YOST - Correct, with the plant fully operational, and I guess we are not sure how many of the sections of the plant - at the moment it appears as though there's only two of the four sections that are actually going to be up and running.

Mrs NAPIER - But you are saying that chip is going to go out the Plenty link road?

Mr YOST - That's correct at this point, until 2005.

Mrs NAPIER - Until value-added processing at Boyer?

Mr YOST - Yes.

Mr MENZIES - Subject only to the comments made by Bob Gordon this morning, if I understood him correctly, that it is now perhaps more economical for them in fact not to take the chips out in chip form but in fact to road the logs. That's the impression that I had from his comments this morning. I don't know enough to make an assessment about that or to even say that I necessarily understood all of what he was saying but that was the impression I had from what he said, so that there's some question about whether the chips will in fact be going over the Plenty link or whether they will come out in log form.

Mrs NAPIER - But if they were going in log form, under the definitions we have been talking about, they would go out the Plenty link road, wouldn't they, because you were indicating that whatever logs were coming in for processing other than that which came in from the Huon would be coming in through the Plenty link road, so one would assume that whatever logs had been determined to be suitable for chip would be in fact routed back through the Plenty link road.

Mr MENZIES - Well, I don't know what the proposal is but I would have thought in fact the opposite. I would have thought that they would then be coming down the Glen Huon Road because that would be a more efficient method of getting the logs from the Southwood site out to the chip-mills. My understanding from the transport operator that we have is that the log drivers don't want to use the Plenty link road at all if they can help it. Certainly the fellows coming from our end don't want to use it.

Mr YOST - Mr Chairman, one of the real problems that we've had with the committee is to actually try to pin down some actual parameters that you could work out the numbers and the processes with. In essence, if they're not going to chip the log and then take it out, it would make sense that the 300 000 tonnes that's coming out of the Derwent Valley to Southwood, well why bother bringing it, just send it straight the other way. That brings in another set of variables and it keeps changing - we just don't know sometimes what we are actually dealing with.

Ms HAY - I was just saying that Bob did actually say it would be taken to Triabunna.

Mr MENZIES - Yes.

Ms HAY - To answer your question.

Mr MENZIES - Via the Plenty link?

Ms HAY - I think so.

Mr YOST - The Deputy Premier indicated in his meeting last Thursday night that there was a considerable sum of money that was being spent on upgrading the Plenty link to make it more suitable - it was a lot of money.

CHAIR - Maybe a million.

Mr YOST - I seem to remember a larger sum than that, but anyway.

CHAIR - No, his comment was a million dollars - a million for that, a couple of million for this. Well, for the edification of members, there was a meeting at Huonville last Thursday night and the Deputy Premier spoke and he said, 'There might be another \$5 million floating around and we can probably put a couple of million dollars to this project, a million to the Plenty link road' -

Mr YOST - The million dollars was to the Lonnavele Road to Judbury and I understood there was \$3 million being spend on upgrading the Plenty link because they have to seal it.

CHAIR - No, they weren't his comments on the night.

Are either of you aware of any exemptions which may be provided to Rick Watson's sawmill to continue receiving product or to receive product in the future using B-doubles, notwithstanding the Deputy Premier's comment that there won't be B-doubles used on this highway?

Mr YOST - Mr Chairman, I was present at the public meeting when the Deputy Premier undertook to give Rick Watson a siding or a lay-by on that section of road near the mill so that his trucks entering and leaving had a siding to be able to pull over into so they didn't affect the mainstream traffic on the road. We put that into our documentation to DIER and it was clearly thrown out right from the beginning and it has not been included in anything subsequent but that was promised at the time and it is my understanding that

the mill has priority over mill logs and that it would be able to continue to do what it does.

CHAIR - My question was, the continued use or an approved use, should there not be current access to that mill by B-doubles. If there is current access, is he going to be given an exemption?

Mr MENZIES - Can I jump in there? Mr Chairman, Bob Gordon raised that issue of what is the definition of a B-double. The letter that we had from the Deputy Premier, as I recall its terms, was to the effect that there would not be any approval given for the use of high-productivity B-doubles. I understand - and I am not a trucking operator - that to be different to the type of B-doubles which are actually delivering timber to Rick Watson's mill and which Clancy and Grant Woolley have; that they are a different type of B-double. I understand that the high-productivity B-doubles which would be used to cart product from Southwood were the ones which were to be specifically excluded. We, as a committee, do not have any objection to a continued delivery of log supplies to Watson's mill by the use of vehicles that are currently being used. How that fits into your question in terms of B-doubles, I will leave you to sort out. I don't know what the definition of a 'B-double' is and, if we are not careful, we are using terms in a different way and I don't want to be confusing or confused.

CHAIR - Thank you very much for coming along.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.

**THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS MET IN
COMMITTEE ROOM 2, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, HOBART ON TUESDAY
11 MARCH 2003**

GLEN HUON ROAD PROJECT

Mr PETER TODD, MANAGER, DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS, ENERGY AND RESOURCES, AND **Mr STUART HUGHSON**, DESIGN ENGINEER, SINCLAIR KNIGHT MERZ, WERE RECALLED AND FURTHER EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Harriss) - Welcome back, gentlemen. It has been a little while. Can we do as we have done with the other witnesses and just throw the forum over to you for you to provide further evidence for us. There are some issues which were raised last time which need some clarification. There is certainly the matter of the Deputy Premier's letter to the various groups, and you might like to address your mind to those, please.

Mr TODD - Mr Chairman, I have only become aware of this letter today. We have had a bit of a review of this 90 000 tonnes, and obviously we can only go on the evidence given to us from Forestry. I can only assume that in the analysis of how many vehicles per day that would be that 40 tonnes, which is really the gross mass rather than the tare weight, was used. Our belief really is that it would be between 10 and 12 trucks per day, not five, I will come quite clean on that now, and I am not sure how that mix-up has occurred. It may be due to a confusion between a gross mass and a tare weight. That is based on 300 days a year, as an approximation.

CHAIR - Just a quick matter of observation, if we are talking about finished product, we are talking about 90 000 tonnes of finished product -

Mr TODD - Yes.

CHAIR - and we can hardly then be talking about a 40 tonne load per vehicle.

Mr TODD - No. I have done an estimate on, say, 25 to 30 tonnes as a rough estimate, which equates, if you say 300 days, that is 300 tonnes per day - divide that by 25 or 30 and it gives you 10 to 12 vehicles per day, as a rough estimate. We need to be quite clear about that.

The other issue that I would like to mention is with regard to the design and the cross-section and the proposal you have before you is for a 6 metre lane with a half metre unsealed shoulder and a half metre unsealed verge. The department has had a look at that and we believe now that we can actually seal those shoulders, so it will now give us a 7 metre sealed cross-section with 3 metre lanes. So the lanes will remain the same but we can seal the shoulders which will improve the road particularly for larger vehicles so we will get a little bit of extra width.

CHAIR - A half metre sealed shoulder?

Mr TODD - That's right. We already have the shoulder there so it is a case of really just sealing that shoulder so we can do that during the construction to just seal it a little wider but come back and mark the 3 metre lane so that would remain the same.

CHAIR - Do you now believe you can achieve that shoulder seal as a result of the allocation of this extra \$2 million?

Mr TODD - Well, we believe that it doesn't really need to come out of that. It's only a small area. If you work it out, it's approximately 13 kilometres long by 1 metre so it's 13 000 square metres at \$2 or \$3 a square metre because we've already built the pavement and it's a case of placing a seal on it, so it's only a marginal increase in the cost of the project. So it would be of the order of \$50 000 to \$70 000 which we could incorporate within the project if we let that be the case.

CHAIR - It might be some interesting information which we'll recall at other times because I can recall challenging the department with regard to bicycle lanes and being told that to seal a bicycle lane to half a metre is an exorbitant expense.

Mr TODD - It is if you have to build the pavement underneath it but we're already building the pavement here so that all we're doing, the additional cost is purely the bitumen and the stone to go on it. We're already expending the funds to build the new pavement so that's already being done and that's the expensive part. To seal it is only a marginal extra cost and I think that probably addresses the issue that you've just raised.

CHAIR - And when you mentioned 13 kilometres, refresh my memory as to whether that -

Mr TODD - Ten kilometres, sorry, should I say.

CHAIR - Well, we need to be clear on that, so we're not talking about going to Judbury at all, we're only talking about going to Cane Road.

Mr TODD - That's right - 10 kilometres. I am just trying to remember some of the other issues that have been raised.

Mrs NAPIER - Alburys Road?

Mr TODD - In the letter that you have seen before you from the Deputy Premier there's been a commitment to look at that project and our consultants - and Mr Hughson might like to comment on the stage of that - are looking at the concepts at the moment and there are a number of options. It's a reasonably difficult site with a crest, a vertical curve, a horizontal curve and a junction all occurring at one point so it is quite a complex area, so we are looking at some concepts for that design at the moment. That's happening now and it would be part of that \$2 million. We'll also be looking at what can be done in the area of Horseshoe Bend but we haven't done that yet so that work needs to be done now to scope up exactly what can be done within the limit of that \$2 million.

With regard to the issue of curves which was raised at the last meeting of the committee, Mr Hughson has done some analysis, I believe, of curves because there was some

concern that vehicles wouldn't be able to get around those curves so I was wondering if you might be able to comment on that analysis you did.

Mr HUGHSON - It was only late last week that we were asked the question to formally look into it but we did that. With the extra seal widening that Mr Todd's proposing in terms of doing the sealed shoulder, we've only got sufficient detailed design of the first 7 kilometres to be able to make firm comment on that. The last 3 kilometres of the widening works we haven't got sufficient design to actually make any sort of comment on but in that first 7-odd kilometres there are 35, I think, corners that would fall into a category of requiring the seal to be widened; however out of those 35 corners there's only about five or six that would require widening beyond one extra metre. So with this extra metre of seal that we're talking about on the shoulders, we would actually pick up the bulk of the corners and therefore provide safe passing by two trucks going in different directions. The other five or six corners would need widening, actual physical pavement construction, earthworks et cetera, by another half a metre to achieve safe widening on those corners. So that is in the first 7 kilometres. Extrapolating out for the whole job you might have a total of 50 corners and a total of 10 to 12 corners that would require additional widening beyond what was originally proposed in the cross-section.

Mrs NAPIER - Through you, Mr Chairman - could I just clarify the widening that might be needed for the additional five, for example, in the first section of 7 kilometres, is that built within this \$2 million that has been identified or is this additional funding that would be required?

Mr HUGHSON - I don't believe so. Unfortunately, I was only myself informed this morning about the sealing of the shoulders. I did some estimates to fix up the entire 50 corners and that was of the order of \$700 000 plus there is the chance we would have to take a house or two so you might add another \$400 000 for the fact that physically the corner will widen far enough that we have to demolish a house or two but these were in the section that we haven't done sufficient design on yet so I can't fully comment on those. As I say, that was before I was advised this morning that the proposal is there to seal the existing shoulders in which case a lot of that \$700 000 disappears because we're not physically widening 40-odd of the corners that I was looking at.

Mrs NAPIER - Through you, Mr Chairman - could I just ask, so what we are proposing is that rather than earthworks that would shave off the hills or push it out towards the river or whatever might be needed, what we are going to do is put an extra half a metre seal on both sides of the road. I haven't driven a truck but I've driven a van down some pretty narrow streets. Is that logistically still possible where you have two trucks passing one another? Are you going to take the window off on the side of the wall as you go past?

Mr HUGHSON - We've run the computer simulation through every corner in this first 7 kilometres that we had sufficient design for and the extra half a metre widening of the seal on each side is sufficient such that two trucks can pass each other on those corners and will not touch each other and, at the same time, they also will not fall off the seal and will not cross the centre line.

Mrs NAPIER - And won't drop down to the river on the other side.

Mr HUGHSON - And won't drop down to the river on the other side.

Laughter.

Mrs NAPIER - It would be bad luck if there's a bicycle going along the road at the same time.

Mr HUGHSON - The bicycle needs to stay over on the unsealed shoulder.

CHAIR - We've got a couple of minutes and we might exercise a little licence. Mrs Napier, if there's anything of major consequence which you wanted to raise, given that you probably won't be able to join with us this afternoon, do you want to take the opportunity - and if this upsets your flow of thought there, Peter, we might just have to be tolerant.

Mr TODD - The only other issue that I wanted to raise was with regard to the number of vehicles and I was talking about 10 to 12 vehicles but that will increase the trucks by around 10 per cent at the Huonville end so that just gives it a bit of context in terms of the number of vehicles. It's around 96 vehicles a day now and another 10 or 12 so that just puts it into perspective. Thank you, Mr Chairman.

Mrs NAPIER - Unfortunately I couldn't be here for the first part of the meeting but, Mr Chairman, have we received evidence that corroborated or otherwise the projections for increased logging activities that are already happening in the area?

CHAIR - Yes, from Forestry.

Mrs NAPIER - So we have that on record. I can read that. Does your figure take into account that increased logging activity that is already projected to be occurring now and into the next two years?

Mr TODD - Well, the advice from Forestry is that there are seasonal fluctuations and variations and in fact there won't be a huge change in terms of the logging that's being transported along that road now and the evidence that we heard this morning, as I recall it, was that there will be minimal change in terms of logging traffic on that road. The main change now is the transport of finished product.

Mrs NAPIER - As I understand it - through you, Mr Chairman - you're projecting an additional 10 truck movements. Is that one way?

Mr TODD - That's one way. Yes, that's correct.

Mrs NAPIER - Okay. So we've got an additional total truck movement of 20 and from Forestry they anticipate that could be closer to 33 on the basis of their evidence.

Mr TODD - Well, this is based on -

Mrs NAPIER - But when it is at maximum level, projecting into the future - 2007 I think, wasn't it?

Mr TODD - I don't have that information. I can only go on the information that was provided this morning from Forestry and what is in the letter from the Deputy Premier.

Mrs NAPIER - Could I come back to this issue of the realignment that you were just referring to and on the next section, which you have not had an opportunity to do yet, you also talked about realignments that would involve the taking of a few houses. Is that in the area that I recall is called the Pitts Hill realignment, is that that section or which section is that?

Mr HUGHSON - That's either through Glen Huon township itself or beyond towards Judbury.

Mrs NAPIER - On the other side?

Mr HUGHSON - Yes.

Mrs NAPIER - Okay. One of the other issues that we had that I'm interested in is the Pitts Hill realignment. What assessment has been made of that?

Mr TODD - I'm not familiar with that particular location. I'd need a little bit more information on exactly where Pitts Hill is. It is difficult with local names sometimes.

Mr HUGHSON - It's the bypassing over near where the coaches are.

Mr TODD - Roberts corner is the other name.

Mrs NAPIER - Roberts corner, we'll call it. That's fine. I have got it down that this area was quoted as being dangerous - 17 accidents, five driveways, corners, hydro poles to be relocated. The estimated additional cost of doing the realignment taking into account the \$700 000 that's currently proposed to be spent on that section - no, wait a minute, the current \$250 000 that was to be spent on that section would require an additional \$500 000 to be spent on the realignment, the total cost being \$700 000. So I want to know is that \$700 000 an accurate figure, has it been costed and have we got a way of trying to get that into the project?

Mr HUGHSON - That's still my best guess at it. We have not done any work on doing a redesign through there, no.

Mrs NAPIER - Okay. So that issue hasn't been pursued?

Mr HUGHSON - No.

Mrs NAPIER - The Huon Highway intersection was one that was referred to and costed at somewhere between \$100 000 and \$150 000 and I know that the council has raised that as an issue that they would like to see done as part of the road redevelopment as much as might be the rest of the people involved on the road. Where are we with that?

Mr HUGHSON - No further than what you have in front of you, other than those figures that there was a design undertaken by someone within the department, which is what was used to produce that figure. I produced the figure that you have in front of you dollar-

wise based on that redesign. I have had no opportunity to determine its adequacy or otherwise. I am assuming that, as it was designed in the department, it would meet the needs of the turning paths as discussed earlier.

Mrs NAPIER - Might I redirect my question, please, to Mr Todd about whether there has been any further consideration of the Huon Highway intersection?

Mr TODD - No, that hasn't been considered any further. Remember that the scope of this project actually starts just after the intersection so this has not really been considered as part of this project. Nevertheless, we are aware of council's concerns and issues that are raised from time to time on this junction. Our records indicate - and I stand to be corrected - but I am not aware of that being a major accident site, notwithstanding that it is not delivering the level of service that people would like at that site. But there has been no further progress made on any further concepts, as Mr Hughson has already discussed.

Mrs NAPIER - Going back to the Pitts Hill realignment, what reassessment has there been of that?

Mr TODD - There has been no further work on that. Through you, Mr Chairman - if I can just let the committee know that design was suspended for some time following the imposition of a number of conditions by council on our development application. It gave us some difficulties with progressing the project and we thought it was appropriate at that time to stop the design at that point, so we are now just reactivating that process. That is probably why you heard from Mr Yost that he hadn't received any more information just recently.

CHAIR - Your licence is about to expire, Mrs Napier. Last question.

Mrs NAPIER - Am I to understand that the \$2 million or so that has been identified of works that are to be done are predominantly those that have been put forward by the Huon Council as their conditions towards the approval of the project?

Mr TODD - They are certainly two of them - well, no, only the first one because our development application only covered the first section through to the cemetery and the council hasn't had an opportunity to put conditions on the next section. But we have had discussions with them and they have raised this issue and that is why that has been included with Alburys Road as those two projects. But certainly Alburys Road was a condition of the first permit.

CHAIR - Okay. We shall suspend and, if it is convenient with members, we will reconvene at 2 p.m.

The committee suspended from 1.05 p.m. to 2.02 p.m.

CHAIR - If we can come back to you then, Mr Todd. We will continue on with whatever other evidence you wanted to share with the committee.

Mr TODD - Thank you, Mr Chairman. I wanted to make a comment to the committee that there are limited funds for upgrading roads in Tasmania; there are limited funds for everything. We are trying to be here very strategic in the way we are approaching this. I believe that with this extra \$2 million we can address most of the concerns - particularly at these sites - that have been raised, both by the council and the local community through the Fix the Glen Huon Road Committee. I believe particularly also now with this additional seal width that we will certainly deliver a road that is going to give better access to the local community, improve the safety and deliver significant benefits. I think that we will now - and I think you can see through the tone of the letter from the Deputy Premier - need to have close liaison with council and with the local community, as we work out and finalise how we invest this \$2 million. So we will be working very closely with them in how we do that.

Notwithstanding that this project was originally envisaged before the RPDC decision on Southwood, I believe that the road will cater for the trucks that have been indicated to be additional to this road. Mr Chairman, with that comment, I would be happy to receive any more questions.

CHAIR - Thank you very much. Members, any questions to either Mr Todd or Mr Hughson?

Mr BEST - We heard some mention about waiting to get back with some plans on some other areas, just before we went to lunch. I guess it depends upon what happens and how you can juggle it with the additional funds as to how you proceed.

Mr HUGHSON - The other plans for - ?

Mr TODD - For Alburys Road.

Mr BEST - I will not go through the names again because it is too confusing.

Laughter.

Mr HUGHSON - At this point in time the department have instructed us to prepare a couple of concept designs for Alburys Road junction and Horseshoe Bend so we are currently undertaking those design works; they are concept designs so sufficient design work to come up with a fairly reasonable estimate of cost and indeed confirm that they are practically possible. With the Alburys Road junction I think we are on target to deliver some designs and costs on that by early next week. The Horseshoe Bend works have not commenced. They will start immediately after and we are targeting the end of March to have that work done.

Mr BEST - And then - through you, Mr Chairman - it comes back to widening the road, what shoulders need to be removed or edges. I think you said something about 25 bends or something, was it?

Mr HUGHSON - It was 35 in the first five.

Mr BEST - So there might have to be earthworks. The other issue is where it sits with the Huon Road intersection. I know that has been raised a few times so I do not want to go

over it ad nauseam. From what I gather that is very much outside the brief but depends upon what happens with the ambit of the money that you have. Is that roughly the scenario?

Mr TODD - That would be right. We will need to continue to discuss this, particularly with council, and that junction in particular. We will need to look at the options Mr Hughson mentioned. Some estimates have been done on some preliminary drawings but we will have to look at those again and it will go back in to looking at what can be done and what sort of costs we would be looking at for that junction.

Ms HAY - What time frames are you looking at now for the completion of the project?

Mr TODD - Quite clearly we have missed this construction season. As you would probably appreciate, once the rain starts coming we have missed this construction season. Our intention would be to start later this calendar year, I expect. I think in the letter from the Deputy Premier there was some indication of that.

Ms HAY - Over the next two financial years?

Mr TODD - We will be building over the next two financial years, that is correct. We have missed this year and it would be pointless to start groundworks at all. We might do some minor works but I would be very surprised if anything is done now.

Ms HAY - And in your planning are you going to look at the water that remains on the road and, as we have heard today, sometimes floods a section of the road?

Mr HUGHSON - We have, as part of our design process, undertaken drainage analysis through what we have done so far to ensure that the water gets away as best as possible. The area is very flat in a few places and, barring raising the road metres and metres, you are not going to avoid that situation. So we are undertaking drainage analysis to ensure that the culverts are in the right locations and that there are sufficient of them to get the water from one side of the road to the other. And that is ongoing. The first 4 km is the only bit that has had the final design finished on it.

CHAIR - If I can just interrupt there, Kathryn. It is within that first 4 km - in fact, it is within the first 2 km on the low-lying side which actually has in the past flooded. So it is in that area. It is not in the next design stage at all; it is in this design stage.

Mr HUGHSON - That is where I am told the worst of it is, yes.

Mr TODD - That would be the section which was at highest risk from flooding from the river, that is what you mean.

CHAIR - It is the only section.

Mr TODD - Yes, that is right.

Mr HUGHSON - And, as I said, barring raising the road by several metres, we may not avoid the situation of once a year or once every couple of years it actually going under.

But that will not be a fault of water coming down the hill and crossing the road and causing it to flood. It will be the river level itself rising.

CHAIR - Members, any further questions?

Mr HALL - Just one other, Mr Chairman. Returning to the issue of B-doubles - and you heard what the Fix the Glen Huon Road Committee representatives had to say - Mr Todd, could you expand on the safety aspects in your view in regard to B-doubles as compared to, say, triaxle? Will this new revamped road handle the road in an engineering sense in terms of the extra loadings if B-doubles - in a hypothetical sense - were to go on that road?

Mr TODD - That is very hypothetical and the Deputy Premier has undertaken that there will not be B-doubles. Notwithstanding that comment, I am prepared to make some comments on the adequacy of the road.

The axle loadings will remain the same so if it is a longer vehicle it means it has more axle. So the individual loading does not increase. In actual fact, the overall loading goes down because you are carrying less dead weight of the vehicles because you have fewer vehicles. So the loading makes little difference. The B-doubles are more technologically advanced; better braking systems, better tracking systems. My understanding is that they perform equally as well as conventional vehicles or general access vehicles.

Ms HAY - So they do not take two to three or maybe four times the time to stop over the same distance?

Mr TODD - Certainly not. In fact, my understanding is that they generally have a very good safety record because there is a higher requirement for driver training, better equipment and they are more modern vehicles. So across the State they have had a very good record, as they have had nationally in fact. They are some comments in terms of the performance of the vehicles. I understand the issue of length; that can be an issue. But that has nothing to do with the safety of the vehicle or its performance per se but just its presence on the road. I think in many ways it is more about perception than reality.

Mr HALL - So you are basically saying that perhaps some of their fears are unfounded, in terms of safety?

Mr TODD - They could well be. But nevertheless the Deputy Premier has given the undertaking that they will not be permitted on the road.

Mrs NAPIER - Can I ask, relative to that, what your view is - in a technical sense - of the stopping capacity of a B-double compared to a triaxle with the same load?

Mr TODD - With the same load?

Mrs NAPIER - The ability to stop.

Mr TODD - I am not a vehicle expert but my understanding is that they are pretty similar. They are similar because they have more brakes, more axles and they are a more

technologically advanced vehicle - and they need to be. So I think the stopping distance is pretty similar. It might be marginal, I do not know exactly.

Mrs NAPIER - I actually thought the B-double was better.

Mr TODD - It may well be, in fact, because of that.

Mrs NAPIER - I have a question in relation to the \$2 million. It has been identified through the Deputy Premier that \$2 million will be added to the Glen Huon Road project. You have talked about the Alburys Road intersection and on the day that we had the briefing that figure was identified as costing \$700 000. For Horseshoe Bend it was suggested that additional funds of \$250 000 would be needed to straighten it, noting that there is \$60 000 that is currently allocated to be spent on that section. So that gives me roughly \$1 million. What is it anticipated that the other \$1 million might be spent on?

Mr TODD - To be honest, I think they were very indicative figures. We are now getting some better ideas on Alburys Road and it may well be significantly more than the \$700 000 - it may be closer to \$1 million. They were very indicative figures so there may not be a balance of \$1 million. The approach that we will be taking would be working with the council and the local community to say, 'These are the projects that are the absolute priority: Alburys Road and Horseshoe Bend' and working with them to identify where those other funds could be expended to deliver the maximum benefits. We would be working very closely with them, as we do with other local groups, in terms of their priorities. That would be the approach that is taken. I am sure there would be a number of candidate projects that would come up for consideration but we would work with the local community on those.

Mrs NAPIER - On the basis of the previous rough estimates that were provided when we were having the briefing, we have half a million more being needed for the Pitts Hill realignment or the bus realignment, whatever you want to call it. So that is an extra half a million there. Then if we look at the Watson's sawmill and Golf Club Road improvements that were needed, I believe the Deputy Premier has made a promise - not in this letter but previously - that there would be better facilities provided for Watson's sawmill - parking bays for trucks, intersections. And there is a dip apparently; one of those vertical alignment issues that could be addressed. Is it anticipated that they could be catered for within that \$2 million?

Mr TODD - It may be but it will depend on what the scope of works are and the priorities of those works when we talk with council and with local government. Really that work needs to be scoped up before we could make any firm commitment to any of those, apart from those that the Deputy Premier has already nominated. Mr Chairman, I am not sure how the committee intends to deal with this additional \$2 million because I believe the project you have before you doesn't actually include that part of the work so I'm not sure how the committee would deal with that and I'll leave that to the committee to discuss, but that does raise some issues.

CHAIR - The committee only becomes involved - firstly we have the message from the Governor which requires us to deliberate on the allocation of \$3 million and your documentation suggests another \$3.8 million through the contractor for your maintenance work. My judgment would be that the \$2 million being promised by the Deputy Premier

isn't for our consideration because my understanding is that that is coming from another budget and I presume that is coming maybe from Forestry, I really don't know.

Mr TODD - I'm not sure how the arrangements for that budget would be made but I think within the scope of the project you have the \$3 million, as you have said, and I am not sure how you deal with that other part because it would be public funds nevertheless which I presume the committee needs to look at.

CHAIR - It does raise an interesting point, though, that if the \$2 million is coming from your funds and if we are now being presented with a project using \$5 million of your funds and \$3.8 million of the Emoleum contractor, we have a different proposition and I would need to take some advice on that from Mr Donnelly as to the impact of that with regard the message which we have received from the Government.

Mrs NAPIER - Through you, Mr Chairman - I think we had some serious concerns about the project as it stood but with the additional \$2 million, it is a much safer project.

CHAIR - And just to continue that for a moment, it is appropriate for us to consider the impact of the \$2 million and whether that will address the safety deficiencies which this committee had some concerns about at an earlier time and, if that is the case, then we should rightly flesh those out.

SECRETARY (Mr Donnelly) - At the end of the day the committee's terms of reference, for want of a better term, are defined by, as you say, the message and the nature of the project as defined by the department for the amount of money in the message. The committee can only report on that. The Government can refer the additional expenditure that is coming out of the Consolidated Fund to the committee but it would be a separate reference, although obviously it would interrelate. At the end of the day, the committee can only report on the project as defined by message and by the submission of the department.

Mr TODD - Mr Chairman, could I ask Mr Douglas to have representation?

PETER DOUGLAS, DEPARTMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE, ENERGY AND RESOURCES, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

Mr DOUGLAS - Mr Chairman, perhaps if I could just start off by saying that the figure of \$3.8 million that was actually quoted as the contractor's contribution to this project is not in fact a set figure. By way of explanation, the contractor for the southern part of Tasmania has the responsibility to manage the network within certain parameters and I suppose when we first explored the scope of this project we noted that we actually form a partnership with our southern maintenance contractor who had indicated that he would be undertaking some pavement strengthening and resurfacing work on the Glen Huon Road in the current financial year, which of course is now delayed by virtue of design considerations. We formed a partnership with him. However our contribution to the

project was the actual widening work and the extent to which he invested funds to actually do the pavement strengthening is really a matter for him to consider. His obligation is to deliver a stronger, smoother pavement with a new surface and what it actually costs is perhaps something that we may never know because that could actually be commercial-in-confidence information.

Having said that though, yes the project as funded by the State Government was originally \$3.2 million and now an additional \$2 million will be made available over the next two financial years, 2003-04 and 2004-05. The total cost of the project and how that would be actually reported in the committee's decision needs to be one I think that perhaps relates to the \$5.2 million and acknowledges a contribution from our maintenance contractor but doesn't necessarily specify it. Would this be acceptable?

Laughter.

CHAIR - So then I read this as a further submission coming to the committee because of an allocation of \$2 million and of course our threshold commences at \$2 million. The Deputy Premier has indicated that he is going to allocate that - will - so therefore we are looking at the expenditure of \$3 million plus whatever from your maintenance contractor and at this stage the detail in front of us goes to the cemetery, 4.2 kilometres. We understand the concept from thereon, and from thereon of course embraces Horseshoe Bend which is an area which the Deputy Premier has undertaken to attend to, so somewhere in the next financial year - and at an earlier time of course we were told that there was going to be an appropriation of \$1 million a year for three years out of three separate budgets, so I guess we can only read into that that there will be \$1 million hanging around for this financial year, \$1 million appropriated next financial year - so you will have \$2 million to start the work with - and whatever from your maintenance contractor. So there will be, as I read it, a future submission - a future message from the Governor for this committee to consider the expenditure of \$2 million.

Mr DOUGLAS - I think that would be an appropriate response really because having regard to what has prevailed today and, as Mr Todd has indicated, with the deployment of the additional funds that the State has now made available to this project, we would actually like, within a working party arrangement, to work closely with the community and council as to the best way of deploying those funds. So it could quite possibly be that we might come back to this committee with the project scope as it was originally scoped plus these add-ons and have you deliberate on a \$5.2 million project now rather than necessarily the originally \$3 million or \$3.2 million one.

But I think today's discussions really have been important in that we are now able to go away with the full knowledge of the questions that need to be answered in our next submission.

Mrs NAPIER - Can I just check - one option is to agree to the 4 kilometre section, which is arguably within these documents, anticipating the next one which would be a separate submission or we don't agree to this and we wait for a new submission. Which one are you suggesting would occur?

Mr TODD - Through you, Mr Chairman - the project you have in front of you is for the whole length of the project. What you have there is the planning and the development

application which has gone to council which is for the first 4 kilometres, so the project before the committee is the whole project which is \$3 million but, as Mr Douglas has indicated, with this extra \$2 million there will be some add-ons to that project.

Mrs NAPIER - We need a new submission that encapsulates what is going to be done.

Mr TODD - I think it would be good to get some direction from the committee as to the way they felt best to move. The committee has an option of approving this project and not understanding what is going to be in the next lot that could be a risk for the committee and you may not choose that way.

Mrs NAPIER - You have already decided not to proceed with physically starting the project so there is time enough, isn't there, to be able to wait for a new comprehensive submission that picks up those other issues we have been talking about.

Mr TODD - Indeed, I think that is appropriate.

Mrs NAPIER - Presumably it will be quicker for it to go through the committee because we've already had a look at it.

Laughter.

CHAIR - Just let me intervene for a moment. The issue we have before us is this submission which has the drawings to take us out to Cane Road for the reconstruction and so on. The submission also tells us about what will happen from there to Judbury, the safety issues with regard markings and so on. This committee may well report to the Parliament or to the Governor and this issue will be finished with. This submission will be finished with. Because there will be extra works taking place, that of Horseshoe Bend in the next stage, then the department will have to return to the committee if that is going to be \$2 million or more. So if this stage takes your \$3 million, which it won't, as I understand, that is what puts the committee in an awkward position and we may have to deliberate on this later after we have taken the evidence and then communicate with you as to where it goes from there. It puts the committee in an awkward position when we now have this proposition from the Deputy Premier that \$2 million is going to be provided to attend to ostensibly Horseshoe Bend and Alburys Road junction. You may find that once you have done your costings those two components don't take \$2 million and if they don't, is there still an undertaking from the Government to appropriate \$2 million extra to this project? My understanding is that that is the case, the Government is prepared to appropriate an extra \$2 million and if that can then attend to things like Pitts Hill that we have discussed and/or the Huonville Bridge intersection and many other issues, then they ought be attended to. But here we have stage 1 in front of us and Pitts Hill is part of stage 1. You may well construct to the cemetery and come back and say, 'We've got some money left out of the \$2 million. We could now realign, we can reconstruct on the completely new route, Pitts Hill'. If that ought be properly considered now as part of stage 1, if it can be included in your \$2 million, then that is why I say the committee is being presented with a difficult position right now because it could well be that you have money left over from the \$2 million extra, and where ought that be appropriately spent? It might be on that first right-hand bend that people talk about - the Yule Woolley accident corner - and it may well be constructing Pitts Hill in a straight line rather than down by the river because when we took evidence last time,

Mr Bennett gave evidence about the huge tree which is being undermined by the river wash and if it falls over then it is going to wreck your road anyway, with no opportunity to reinstate the road because it will be wrecked and you just don't have movement through those houses to widen in any situation.

When we deliberate, as a committee, as to what our decision is, it could well be that we reject this proposition before us because of those competing circumstances which we now have in front of us, only one of which is in stage 1 - Alburys Road.

Mrs NAPIER - Well, potentially your Golf Club Road is in it, too, with Watson's mill.

CHAIR - Yes, it is.

Mrs NAPIER - Potentially.

CHAIR - Yes.

Ms HAY - If we choose to go that way.

CHAIR - Yes. I guess, members, what we should do is continue to question the delegation before us so that we can be in a better position to reach some decision at some stage as to the whole project but indeed the allocation of \$5 million as opposed to \$3 million.

Mrs NAPIER - However we do it, basically what we are saying is we are getting closer to having a little bit of road that we would all like to see built.

CHAIR - Yes. Let us continue then with questions to the delegation.

Mr BEST - I know we would need to discuss it in committee but I think Mr Todd was about to comment in relation to that, that if this project was approved what may then eventuate - how would you see - I know it is a bit of tangled mess but you would see that your plans would proceed as you are under way at the moment regarding the first 4 kilometres.

Mr TODD - Through you, Mr Chair - we need to very clearly delineate between the two processes which are the project that is before this committee in terms of being the whole project, and the first 4 kilometres which is a planning application currently with the council. They have approved that subject to some conditions to which the department has appealed and I think we need to keep those very separate. It is just my opinion, but the committee has the option of approving the project and if it chooses that option it is then approving the widening of that 10 kilometre section and the traffic management on the rest of the project. It is not approving just the design of the first 4 kilometres, it is approving the whole project, so I think we have got to keep those things quite separate.

I think that does put the committee in a bit of a difficult position in the fact that it can't work out whether that is appropriate because I'm not sure what is in the other \$2 million; so it puts the committee in an awkward position that way. I am not sure of the processes and your timing for reporting and all those sorts of things and whether this can be suspended while another message comes and whether that can be co-joined or whether there is some way - we would just like to make it as easy as possible for you and I

assume that rejecting a project isn't always a very popular thing to do. So I'm just looking for ways that we can help the committee whatever way that might be and I'm not sure because I'm not that familiar with those processes.

CHAIR - What we will do, we will deliberate after we have taken the evidence today and we will take some further advice as to what the processes might be available to us and we will communicate that to you post haste so you know exactly where you are going.

Mr TODD - Thank you.

CHAIR - That is why I suggested earlier that we probably should just continue to receive evidence and pose questions and clear our minds of the issues which have concerned us at an earlier time and then deliberate.

Mr TODD - Address the procedural issues as separate.

CHAIR - Yes. We will continue to discuss the impact of this \$2 million on the project.

Mrs NAPIER - It makes their budget look a million dollars better in about three months' time.

CHAIR - Yes. Any further questions, members? I have a number. I mentioned just a few moments ago this matter of the tree near Francis Roberts' house along the waterfront that Mr Bennett gave evidence to the committee about last time and the undermining of it by the river and the potential for it collapsing into the river at some stage and wrecking the road as well. You are familiar with that section of road where all of the houses are right up to the road and the proposition that has been previously put to go behind those houses in front of Mr Harry Roberts' bus depot. My quick look at the drawing suggests that it would be between chainage 1 040 and chainage 1 780. Have you addressed your minds to that proposition at all, given the evidence which Mr Bennett shared with some clarity at the last hearing?

Mr TODD - We haven't progressed that any further since the original estimates and some concepts that our consultants did. We haven't progressed that any further but, now that these extra moneys are being made available, it could be considered. But it would depend on the total cost of that and I think I recall the marginal cost over the widening of that section was about \$500 000.

CHAIR - About \$500 000 to widen?

Mr TODD - Yes, I think that was the marginal cost. That is a very rough estimate and it would need to be costed up more.

Mrs NAPIER - That's an additional amount.

Mr TODD - That's an additional amount, yes.

Mrs NAPIER - Given that \$250 000 is already allocated -

Mr TODD - For widening.

Mrs NAPIER - and it is going to cost \$700 000 -

Mr TODD - We would have to work that up. With regard to the tree falling over and wrecking the road, I would suggest that it is not going to cause an absolute disaster. It doesn't take a lot to come in and to be able to fill up a hole where a tree has damaged the road. I'm not sure that we'd be relocating a road because of one tree, but if we had the funds it would be a very good project in the sense that it does eliminate a number of accesses. But with limited funds we have to look at what is going to give us the best benefit for the investment of those funds. So, without any more detailed work, we haven't got a more firm estimate of those works.

CHAIR - Just for my information, chainages are in metres, are they?

Mr TODD - Yes.

CHAIR - So 1 060 is 1 060 metres and the next one is 20 metres away.

Mr TODD - That's correct, yes.

CHAIR - Okay. So in that area we're talking about, three quarters of a kilometre of road, it is not a huge proportion of road. Given the constraints which face you with those houses - and that is probably the most difficult section of road with houses up to the road, maybe half a dozen houses no more than 5 or 6 metres off the road - then it just seems to me that it would be a reasonable suggestion that you ought cost those two alternatives.

Mr TODD - We will do that as part of the project.

Mr HUGHSON - Mr Chairman, I might just add that the official front boundary of most of those houses is actually quite some way off the existing road as it stands at the moment. They have built their front yards all the way out to the road. In the worst case scenario, widening could actually go a lot closer towards those houses. Politically, that is an unwise decision and so we have chosen not to do that. We have gone as far as we could without annoying too many people there, but officially the land is crown land for quite a deal of their front yards and so if you really wanted to be annoying you could get in there and use it.

CHAIR - That's true, but you're right about the politics of the issue - people have built. But if you take that argument to the next level then you are making everything even less safe than it is now because of the road being closer to the houses, and the access points and the egress points from properties onto the highway would be even worse than they are now. So I hear what you are saying, you are right. Okay, that is that issue. Has anybody else got a question about that area, Pitts Hill?

Mrs NAPIER - What did you call it?

CHAIR - Pitts.

Mr BEST - Harry Roberts.

CHAIR - You need to become more familiar. Somebody asked the question - Mrs Napier - earlier about the B-doubles and Mr Todd you responded by saying you are not a truck expert but you understand that they do in fact have better tracking, that their braking requirements are at a much higher level than even a triaxle or a flat tray and of course we heard evidence this morning from people who made it clear that they weren't experts but their understanding was that the impact of B-doubles was quite substantial in terms of safety, stopping and so on. If B-doubles are substantially safer, on my understanding, and if we are widening this road now - widening the seal - then aren't we providing a highway which will be eminently more suitable for B-doubles than the previous proposal of a 6-metre seal, if we're going out to a 7-metre seal?

Mr TODD - It will certainly be a higher standard, yes.

CHAIR - Won't it be eminently more suited to B-doubles because they track better anyway?

Mr TODD - Well, by the nature of the case, yes.

Mrs NAPIER - We will want passing lanes next.

CHAIR - And that issue seems to be out of the hands of everybody around this table because an undertaking has been given, in writing, but again I say for the record that that undertaking was given in writing prior to the Southwood decision.

Mr TODD - That's correct.

CHAIR - And the fact that Glen Huon Road will be used for substantial Southwood traffic and, again, I go back to my questions for the Forestry people this morning when I questioned them as to the impact on the viability of that project with not being able to use B-doubles and they said it would be minimal. Well, at some stage we might consider that.

Are you aware, as a department, of the use of Glen Huon Road at the moment by B-doubles? Are there B-doubles on Glen Huon Road? We have heard anecdotal suggestions this morning in fact there are.

Mr TODD - There is access to Watsons from the Huonville end, and I think we discussed this at the last hearing, that Mr Watson does have access there but that is the only access that I'm aware of. If people are aware that there are B-doubles on that route when they shouldn't be the department is more than happy to receive that information and follow it up through our traffic inspectors, so that is a normal course. We hope that all truck drivers are law abiding but we are quite happy to pursue any information that is given to us that indicates otherwise.

CHAIR - Okay. Can I then finally ask you to please advise our secretary of a real concern that I have and that is that in the lead-up to our first hearing, Alan Ashbarry, who was putting together submissions for the Huon Resources Development Group and others, consequential to the advertisement being in the paper, rang the relevant number and asked for the documents to be provided to him so that he could make a reasoned submission. My understanding is that he never received any of the information and that is a source of real concern. Would please take that on board and let our secretary know

as to why that was the case because the Huon Resources Development Group found themselves in a very difficult position in terms of making a thorough submission - and, indeed, they did make a thorough submission as it turns out - but that is a source of concern.

Mr TODD - Yes. Certainly, I will follow that through.

CHAIR - Mr Ashbarry did phone me a couple of days after the formal issue of submissions was to be raised and said he hadn't received the information which he had sought. Any further questions, members?

Okay. Thank you very much, gentlemen. If you would all be so good as to leave us to deliberate on the project we shall do so.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.