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THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS MET AT GREAT LAKE COMMUNITY CENTRE, 55 CIDER GUM DRIVE, MIENA ON FRIDAY, 8 SEPTEMBER 2017.

HIGHLAND LAKES ROAD UPGRADE

Mr GREG FOX, PROJECT MANAGER, CAPITAL WORKS AND **Mr FRANK GIANA**, PROJECT DIRECTOR, STATE ROADS, DEPARTMENT OF STATE GROWTH, AND **Mr DAVID CONLEY**, PROJECT ENGINEER, PITT & SHERRY, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

DEPUTY CHAIR (Mr Farrell) - Thank you, gentlemen, for appearing before the committee to outline the project before us. There are some specific things you need to know. Just before you begin giving your evidence, I would like to inform you of some of the important aspects of committee proceedings.

The committee hearing is a proceeding in parliament. This means it receives the protection of parliamentary privilege. This is an important legal protection that allows individuals giving evidence to a parliamentary committee to speak with complete freedom without the fear of being sued or questioned in any court or place outside of parliament.

It applies to ensure parliament receives the very best information when conducting its inquiries. It is important to be aware this protection is not accorded to you if statements that may be defamatory are repeated or referred to by you outside the confines of the parliamentary proceedings. This is a public hearing. Members of the public and journalists may be present and this means your evidence may be reported. If you could indicate with a vocal yes that you understand.

Messrs GIANA, FOX and CONLEY - Yes.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Thank you very much. Who would like to make an opening statement outlining the project before us?

Mr FOX - I was not aware I had to make an opening statement but shall attempt one.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Just a general outline of what we are looking at.

Mr FOX - A general outline is the Highland Lakes Lake Secondary Road from Miena to Haulage Hill. This project is under two separate contracts. The first contract is for the Miena to Liawenee section with two separate portions. Separate portion A has already been completed, separate portion B commences in October 2017, with the second contract being for the Liawenee canal to Haulage Hill. The second contract will also commence in October this year.

The project will basically be the culmination of sealing Highland Lakes Road all the way from Melton Mowbray to Deloraine. It has become a very highly sought after tourist road over the last three to five years and timely this sealing is now taking place all the way through.

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DEPUTY CHAIR - Thank you. We have a comprehensive outline here in writing here with the planning, but no doubt members will have some questions about the project. We are fortunate today having both members for Lyons. This is in their electorate and they travel this road frequently so I daresay they will have many questions. Mr Shelton looks ready.

Mr SHELTON - May I say, Mr Deputy Chair, that in the near future you will be representing this area after the Legislative Council changes.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Well, I said I would not take it on until the road is done.

Mr SHELTON - The job is in front of us and whoever put the map together is a fantastic effort. Normally we have to spread them out and put the together. It is great to see the whole job is visible. The issue was mentioned about it being a more important road now. The locals have been asking for a very long time - ever since the eight years I have been in Parliament and Mr Llewellyn could probably go back longer.

Mr LLEWELLYN - Yes, 2008.

Mr SHELTON - Nowadays with tourism, the cars cannot go on gravel roads. If you are in Hobart and type in Cradle Mountain, it will take you through this lovely part of the world. A lovely drive but not sealed and people often say, 'It is a gravel road, I am not going there'. Occasionally they get lost taking the wrong road.

A couple of technical questions: during the briefing I mentioned yellow lines. Has that matter been looked at, particularly in areas where it does snow - putting yellow lines on roads instead of white?

Mr CONLEY - My understanding is that it has been considered. The policy of the department is the orange high-visibility guide posts perform the function. That is the appropriate treatment and white lines are the standard throughout Tasmania. We probably need to take that as a question on notice to absolutely clarify policy.

Mr SHELTON - Thank you.

Mr LLEWELLYN - A question off the map, the alignment of the road between Mienna and Stony Creek Bridge is the alignment of the existing road whereas from Stony Creek Bridge through the sealed part of Breona, it is mostly to the west.

To the west of the existing road, at Brandum where most of the shacks are on the western side, was that associated with a better alignment of the road through there?

Mr FOX - The road had not been realigned. There is no actual design or realignment of the road itself. I need to look at that map.

Mr CONLEY - You may be looking at the old road. The old road was realigned.

Mr LLEWELLYN - So this is an old original road?

Mr CONLEY - That is the original road. The history is that in the 1980s, with the raising of Great Lake and sections of the Lake Highway, the old highway would be submerged in

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once-in-a-100 year flood. Quite long sections - certainly that section through Brandum and Breona - were realigned. Hydro paid for it and the old Department of Main Roads did a lot of the work. What you are seeing there is the original.

Mr LLEWELLYN - I can see that now, so that is the answer to the question.

Mr SHELTON - I drove that way home a few weeks ago. A technicality as far as the paperwork goes from Miena to Haulage Hill. The reality is that there is substantial work only on the road preparation from Miena out. They have been working on the road, the culverts have been done and there has been gravel coming up and down Poatina, preparing the road for sealing.

Mr CONLEY - That 4-kilometre section was done over the summer.

Mr LLEWELLYN - The technicality is that we are looking at this project now as a whole. In reality some of it has already been done.

Mr CONLEY - Correct, been built, yes.

Mr GIANA - A contract is already out, which is over two years, and in the first ever contract, they did a lot of the culvert widening for the second years' worth of work. That is probably what you have seen. That preparation for this summer's work under the contract is already in place.

Mr LLEWELLYN - The reason the Public Works Committee was not involved was because the expense for that section was under the requirement?

Mr FOX - Correct. When the additional funding was approved, it pushed over the threshold and triggered the parliamentary standing committee. It is an unusual situation where we are looking at a project that is already underway.

Mr SHELTON - Yes. That is from the technical point of view. Why then is the original contract, whether it be \$3 million, actually incorporated in this? I would have thought it would simply have taken over from whatever was above that figure, rather than being over the whole project.

Mr FOX - To be honest, I am not sure. I cannot answer that question. That one is above me.

Mr CONLEY - That might have been the way. Because a federal government contribution of \$5 million is being put towards this, they dictated that the project be considered in totality, rather than starting from this point.

Mr SHELTON - I can appreciate that. It is something I had not come across before. My last question is to do with Haulage Hill from the Deloraine end. As an ex-mayor of the Meander Valley Council, the Haulage Hill section has been talked about for a long period of time. I posed a question to a couple of guys and, thankfully, Greg, I know you have some information there. I understand this contract is for sealing, but there are people in the community who have suggested we just put a road straight over the top. That would be at a substantial cost. My question is: through this project, do you know of an instance previously where somebody has looked at Haulage Hill and the best way to overcome the issues of Haulage Hill?

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Mr FOX - Under this project, it was not a design element or design option that was considered. I came into the project, it was handed over to me, and as far as I am aware, it was not considered as a design option.

In the past, design options may have been looked at in relation to that. The area from the top of the lookout down represents a significant steep grade, approximately 7 per cent, as shown in the brief drawing. Apart from that, under this project, it has not been looked at as an option at this point. Could it be in the future? Possibly. Does that answer the question?

Mr GIANA - Yes, I think so. I vaguely recollect that when we first started doing work north of Haulage Hill - it must be going back almost 20 years - options were looked at the time but the cost was a significant burden, even when we probably had better budgets than we have nowadays. That is a vague recollection; I cannot be a 100 per cent sure.

Mr CONLEY - To give that recent history to 2007-08, a design was probably prepared for Haulage Hill. We spoke about it earlier. It more or less stayed on the hairpin bends, but widened them and endeavoured to get a higher design speed through there.

It was not affordable under this project. At the time that was looked at, I believe a number of options were looked at for Haulage Hill, and they arrived at staying on the existing alignment. I am fairly sure other options were considered at the time as well, so that information, if people wanted it, could be tracked down.

Mr SHELTON - Thank you. We are only pointing that out because we are on record.

I mentioned that Haulage Hill was designed originally back in the construction of the hydro scheme and so forth, when trucks were six and seven tonnes and were very underpowered. The gradients to get around there at their lower end, at the two U-turn bends, for trucks of significant size now or caravans et cetera, create somewhat of a safety issue when you are turning around there. A straight road would be safer but, of course, if the gradients were outside any design limit, that takes that option off the table.

Mr CONLEY - We think they would get quite challenging. Greg tabled the A to B, straightest journey, 7 to 8 per cent, but we know the gradients in very short sections around the inside of the curves at Haulage Hill are very steep. You can see where heavy trucks spin their wheels a bit.

Mr SHELTON - They do, on the inside there is significant cramping of the wheels and therefore corrugations, and then it gets worse.

Mr CONLEY - Yes, on the inside. That is part of the grade problem and in an effort to straighten it out, you have to make the road steeper somewhere else, or do more earth works. We have attempted to deal with that where there is minor regrading, if you like, and asphalt surfacing, but they are still going to be fairly steep. I think that is the whole challenge with Haulage Hill. Ultimately, those grades are quite challenging.

Mr SHELTON - Thank you.

Mr LLEWELLYN - Do you feel the \$8.6 million will adequately cover the costs of the road?

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Mr CONLEY - It is pretty bare bones. This is a tight budget. Ultimately, that is for sealing 22 kilometres of road. It is limited. In a perfect world, we would like to do more with things like safety barriers in some areas - perhaps a little better standard, perhaps some more drainage work. You could always say that is on the wish list but fundamentally it was make the work fit to the \$8 million.

We are putting the minimum amount of pavement material on the road. We believe it is a pretty strong road - a pretty well-built road, generally speaking - but, in a theoretical sense, we are probably on the limit of what depth of gravel ought to be put on there. One of the challenges is that the road, because it has been graded over many years, has an overly steep crossfall. It has 7 or 8 per cent. In some places it has 10 to 12 per cent of crossfall side slope on the road which, once you seal it, you could not seal it at those slopes because in icy conditions vehicles would slide off. We have had to correct the shape, and you use quite a lot of material in doing that.

That means on the outside of the roads we are getting more pavement depth, but more in the middle of the road we are not able to put as much on. These are the compromises we have had to make. Hence, \$8 million is a challenge but we retain a little bit of contingency and we have, I guess, adjustments we can make. As the work proceeds, we believe we can keep it within the budget. There is no spare cash.

Mr LLEWELLYN - You are saying there have been some compromises you have had to factor in to meet the budget?

Mr CONLEY - Yes, we have had to make it fit.

Mr LLEWELLYN - With regard to road construction material, was that any problem? Where did you source that from? Was it local?

Mr CONLEY - I think it came from Deloraine, but do not quote me absolutely on that. The company doing the work was Gradco. There is very little locally available material of the required specification quality.

Mr LLEWELLYN - So that would have been one of the major expenses then?

Mr CONLEY - Yes, that is the big-ticket item - the pavement material. We have - I just have to think of those numbers. I cannot recall exact volumes but that is a big cost. The sealing cost is fairly significant as well because ultimately we are putting two seal coats on. There is what we call a primer seal, which goes down for about 12 months, and then there is second seal coat that will go over that, and that is to cover the whole 21 to 22 kilometres. The second seal coat itself is over \$1 million so the combined cost of the bitumen is approaching \$2 million. The pavement material itself would be over \$3 million - probably closer to \$4 million, I reckon.

Mr LLEWELLYN - I guess it is also temperature-conscious or climate-conscious as far as sealing is concerned -

Mr CONLEY - As to when you can do the sealing?

Mr FOX - Yes, definitely.

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Mr GIANA - Up here probably the earliest is November and end of March would be the latest. Sometimes we might get good weather in April but you are starting to run a risk sealing in April up here.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Is there anything else you feel you need to tell us?

Mr FOX - No, I do not think there was anything untoward or anything different than the information you already have and the questions we have answered today so far.

DEPUTY CHAIR - There are a final couple of questions that come out of the act which Public Works is established under, to establish that this is a good use of public money. Would you think this project is a good use of public money?

Mr FOX - For comments stated in the opening statement, yes, I believe so.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Excellent. Do you believe the work being undertaken will be fit for purpose?

Mr FOX - Yes, we do.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Thank you very much. As mentioned at the commencement of today's proceeding, what you have said to us here today is protected by parliamentary privilege. Once you leave the table, you need to be aware that privilege is not attached to comments you may make to anyone, including the media, even if you are just repeating what you said today. Is that clear?

Messrs GIANA, FOX and CONLEY - Yes.

DEPUTY CHAIR - Thank you very much. The committee appreciates you taking the time to venture out on this lovely spring day to explain the project to us. We thank you for the video presentation. That was certainly the only option available to us because everywhere else you look, it is just the one theme. Thank you.

Messrs GIANA, FOX and CONLEY - Thank you.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.