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PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

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PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

# Huon Highway/Summerleas Road Intersection Upgrade

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*Brought up by Mrs Rylah and ordered by the House of Assembly to be printed.*

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## MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

### Legislative Council

Mr Farrell  
Mr Valentine

### House of Assembly

Mrs Rylah (Chair)  
Ms Ogilvie  
Mr Shelton

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The Committee has the honour to report to the House of Assembly in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Works Committee Act 1914* on the -

### **Huon Highway/Summerleas Road Intersection Upgrade.**

## 2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This reference recommended the Committee approve works to address safety issues at the intersection of the Huon Highway and Summerleas Road.
- 2.2 The Huon Highway passes adjacent to Kingston, one of Greater Hobart's fastest growing residential areas. Summerleas Road is a major connection from the Highway linking residential areas to major commercial, educational, sporting and other facilities at Kingston. The intersection has a history of crashes, notably those related to right-turn movements from the Huon Highway onto Summerleas Road and cross-highway traffic on Summerleas Road.
- 2.3 Despite a safety upgrade in 2003 and speed limit reduction in 2008 the crash rate has remained fairly consistent. As residential, industrial and commercial development increases within the Kingborough region and further south in the Huon Valley, traffic volumes at this intersection will increase and cause a decline in the level of service. This is likely to increase driver frustration and cause risk taking behaviour which could contribute to an increase in the number of crashes.
- 2.4 The grade separation that is proposed will reduce the risk of traffic crashes significantly, thereby enhancing safety for all road users, and will support population, traffic and freight growth, and improve traffic flow efficiency.

The proposed works include:

- A grade separated interchange, with Summerleas Road passing under the Huon Highway, to eliminate cross-highway movements and prevent lengthy queue delays;
- A dumbbell roundabout configuration and interchange entry and exit ramps for both traffic travelling along Summerleas Road to access the Huon Highway and for vehicles turning off the Highway onto Summerleas Road;
- Widening of the Huon Highway to accommodate an overtaking lane for southbound traffic travelling on the Huon Highway from the Kingston interchange, joining in with the existing southbound overtaking lane south of the intersection;
- Installation of a flexible safety barrier within a central median dividing the carriageway to eliminate head-on collisions;
- Relocation of the existing bus stops and removal of the informal gravel parking facilities from the vicinity of the intersection for safety reasons; and
- Provision of pedestrian and cycling facilities within the intersection area.

2.5 The proposed works will have the following benefits:

- Improved safety for all road users and a reduction in the number of crashes by eliminating cross-highway movements;
- Improved intersection efficiency to cater for growth in the number of passenger and freight vehicles;
- A reduction in head-on collisions by providing a flexible safety barrier in a central median;
- Improved connectivity and accessibility for the Kingborough community, including to the commercial centre at Kingston; and
- Improved bus, pedestrian and cyclists accessibility within the intersection area.

### 3 PROJECT COSTS

3.1 Pursuant to the Message from Her Excellency the Governor-in-Council, the estimated cost of the work is \$21.2 million.

The following table details the P50 and P90 cost estimates for the project:

Base Estimate (Owners Cost + Construction Cost)
Inherent risk allowance
Contingent risk allowance
<b>Base Estimate + Contingency (Inherent + Contingent)</b>
<b>Total contingency % above base estimate + Escalation</b>
<b>Escalation (Nominal - applied to base case + contingency)</b>
<b>Total Out turn</b>

<b>Total Out turn Cost</b>
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\$ 16,403,038.93	
P50	P90
\$ 1,340,713	\$ 2,354,787
\$ 645,086	\$ 1,461,297
<b>\$ 18,388,837</b>	<b>\$ 20,219,123</b>
12%	23%
<b>\$ 856,350</b>	<b>\$ 946,931</b>
<b>\$ 19,250,000</b>	<b>\$ 21,170,000</b>

P50	P90
<b>\$ 19,250,000</b>	<b>\$ 21,170,000</b>

## 4 EVIDENCE

4.1 The Committee commenced its inquiry on Tuesday, 17 May last with an inspection of the site of the proposed works. The Committee then returned to Committee Room 2, Parliament House, whereupon the following witnesses appeared, made the Statutory Declaration and were examined by the Committee in public:-

- Denise McIntyre, Manager Network Planning, State Roads, Department of State Growth;
- Andrew Knight, Section Leader Design and Delivery, Jacobs (appearing on behalf of the Department of State Growth);
- Kathryn Easter, Civil Engineer, Jacobs (appearing on behalf of the Department of State Growth); and
- Simone Watson, General Manager, Huon Valley Council.

### Project Overview

4.2 Ms McIntyre provided the following overview of the proposed works:

*We are here today to examine the public funding for the Huon Highway/Summerleas Road intersection upgrade. The project site has a very long history. This project is a safety upgrade. The project site has a long history of crashes at the intersection. There has been considerable work, on improving the junction arrangements, by the Department of State Growth or previous incarnations over some years. More recently, the speed limit was reduced. The junction arrangements were upgraded and the speed limit was reduced from 100 to 80 kph. However, that did not have an impact on the crash rate.*

*.....In 2012 the department put a submission to the then federal government's Nation Building 2 program. After consultants analysed different types of junction arrangements, the submission to the Commonwealth government was for a grade-separated intersection. That was in 2012. From that submission, funding was promised, committed, by the then federal government, and then it was recommitted by subsequent federal government. A total of \$21.9 million has been committed by a combination of the Commonwealth and Tasmanian governments.*

### Other Intersection Design Options

4.3 In his submission to the Committee, Mr Peter Cooke indicated that it was his view that the proposed works represented an unnecessary costly solution, and there were other, lower-cost options that would improve the safety of the intersection. Mr Cooke stated that:

*".....I make this submission to draw the attention of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works (the Committee) to the huge cost attached of the proposal when there are, in my opinion, lower cost options that are just as effective as the proposal being presented to the Committee."*

*"..... The design of the grade separation (with Summerleas passing beneath the Highway) is a **high-cost solution** to a much **lower-cost problem**.*

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<sup>1</sup> Mr Peter Cooke, Submission, Page 2

The challenge is to optimise the cost/benefit of the solution to solve the problem.”<sup>2</sup>

“.....I nominate two options for consideration in lieu of the grade separation design proposal:

1. Install traffic lights to provide control of movements of through and turning vehicles in collaboration with enhanced speed-control devices on the Highway. Include a measure of pedestrian 'on-demand' traffic-light control or pedestrian underpass(es).
2. Establish a 'roundabout design' together with measures to lower speeds of vehicles in the area to improve vehicular safety; and provide ground level and or pedestrian underpasses to meet pedestrian safety requirements.”<sup>3</sup>

4.4 Mr Cooke noted that both of these proposals were at grade solutions:

“.....thus avoiding the very high-cost of an elevated road/bridge and deep-cut (6.00+ metres) solution”.<sup>4</sup>

4.5 Ms McIntyre noted that the Department of State Growth had investigated other options, such as those suggested by Mr Cooke, before determining that the proposed solution was the most appropriate safety treatment for this intersection:

**Ms McINTYRE** - In the last couple of years our department has had another look at the intersection project to determine whether a lower cost solution could be accommodated. We re-looked at different types of grade junction arrangements such as roundabouts, or a combined semi-roundabout come improved junction. We brought Jacobs on board in September last year and their brief was to review the concepts for the intersection upgrade looking at some of the at-grade arrangements. Their brief was to provide us with a project which would improve the safety of the intersection. In that time Jacobs have undertaken a review of different types of options, different junction arrangements, undertaken traffic modelling to determine safety of different options, and also the longevity of different options being considered. They have concluded that the design you have before you is the most appropriate for this particular intersection.

4.6 The Committee sought further details from Mr Knight on why a roundabout would not be an appropriate means to address the safety issues apparent at the site. Mr Knight indicated that an analysis of a roundabout at the intersection highlighted additional safety and practicality concerns, in addition to a number of negative externalities such as excessive braking, noise, higher vehicle emissions, pavement wear and sub-optimal traffic flow:

**Mr SHELTON** - ... .. The question is, and I did ask this out there, when it comes to the design, particularly of the dumbbell roundabout, the kidney shape, that was the best design for the traffic. You mentioned the grades: getting the two levels of the vehicle movements separated. You also mentioned roundabouts were one issue; you might explain why the roundabout was not considered the best option.

**Mr KNIGHT** - Earlier on in the design process we went through the options analysis and obviously an at-grade solution was one of the first ones that we looked at. The reason we didn't progress with that any further was the roundabout would need a diameter of about 60, 64, 66 metres roughly, give or take roughly. You need quite an extensive area of flat land to accommodate that roundabout. If you had to have had that area of flat land, then the downgrade coming out of Huonville, travelling towards Hobart, would have been a lot steeper than what you have currently to match into that roundabout.

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<sup>2</sup> Mr Peter Cooke, Submission, Page 11

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, Page 8

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, Page 8

You also need an area of flat land approaching the roundabout, not just for the roundabout itself, but you need an area of flat land approaching the roundabout to get sight visibility into the roundabout to see who is in the roundabout and what is coming. That downgrade coming into the roundabout would have created issues with engine braking noise. You would have had capacity issues where we predicted that the traffic coming out of Kingston would have been the dominant traffic flow and potentially not letting the Huonville-bound traffic get into the roundabout, which meant that you would have people backing up the ramp. If you have people backing up the ramp, and big trucks and trailers coming down, there is the potential for nose-to-tails, and potentially serious nose-to-tails. If you've got a big 40-tonne log truck or another truck coming down that hill and it smashes into one car, there will be a cascade effect as well.

There would be potential sight visibility issues with cars coming out of Kingston because they would have come up, the roundabout would be over here, and you would be looking over the top of the roundabout, bearing in mind that it is nice to come in on a flat gradient. Coming up from Kingston would have had sight visibilities for vehicles trying to enter from Kingston, and likewise vehicles travelling southwards would have to stop at the roundabout on an angle and try to accelerate up through the roundabout, which would potentially cause collisions as well, especially with trucks trying to pull away on a hill. Once again, there would be more noise and higher emissions as well, especially for the surrounding properties on the Kingston side of the roundabout.

For a number of reasons, pavement maintenance would have been an issue with everyone braking and coming down the hill into the roundabout. From a cost perspective as well, there would have been ongoing maintenance on that area.

**Mr FARRELL** - So a roundabout probably would have created more issues than would be solved?

**Mr KNIGHT** - That was our opinion, yes, definitely.

### **South-Bound Overtaking Lane**

- 4.7 The project includes an extension of the existing southbound overtaking lane on the Huon Highway, commencing at the Kingston interchange, joining in with the existing southbound overtaking lane on the Huon Highway just south of the intersection.
- 4.8 In his submission, Mr Cooke called into question the wisdom of, and need for, the extension of the second south-bound overtaking lane when improving safety is the primary objective of the intersection upgrade. Mr Cooke noted:

*The introduction of a second 'climbing lane' on the Kingston side of the junction seems to lack logic. My reading of the traffic lanes is that they are intended to allow a 100km/h traffic flow southwards. **How can the construction of a second climbing lane be adding to the safety of the junction?** It is a corollary of the grade separation and the desire for climbing lanes to be a norm. It invites an increase in speed to the posted limit or higher. DSG should know that the Highway south of Lesley Vale has varying numbers of lanes in both directions, from one lane each way to a two-lane, concrete-barrier separated section; it seems DSG is using the junction as a stalking horse for the proposal to include a climbing lane. In my opinion, it should be considered separately. It is not a safety issue for the junction itself.*

*I am sure that the second lane will benefit many motorists Monday to Friday on their race home to the south, or shortly, to turn left into Summerleas Road, but there will be a vast swathe of tarmac idle for most of its life.<sup>5</sup>*

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<sup>5</sup> Mr Peter Cooke, Submission, Page 15

- 4.9 In response to questioning by the Committee on this aspect of the project, Ms McIntyre and Mr Knight noted that the extension of the south bound overtaking lane was a measure to address a specific safety issue that had been identified:

*Ms McINTYRE - If we go back to the objective of the project, this is a safety upgrade for an intersection ..... We have included a southbound climbing or overtaking lane to deal with an existing problem we have with slow, heavy vehicles driving along in the gravel reserve and then pulling back into the running lane. The southbound lane has been included in this project to improve the safety of that aspect.*

*Mr KNIGHT - ..... The reason for the southbound overtaking lane as well is that currently heavy vehicles do use that gravel shoulder. They pull over onto the gravel shoulder to let other vehicles pass, which is a safety issue in itself. You end up with little bits of rock and stone strewn out onto the road as well. Some trucks are doing that, others are not. As they come out of that first roundabout, it is a very slow haul to get up that hill, all the way up through the intersection.*

#### **Lack of a Second North-Bound Traffic Lane**

- 4.10 While the project includes extension of the south bound overtaking lane from the Kingston interchange, the project does not include a similar extension of the northbound overtaking lane from where it currently terminates, just south of the intersection, through to the off-ramp to the Southern Outlet.
- 4.11 That the north bound overtaking lane extension had not been included in the scope of works was a key concern expressed in the submissions from the Huon Valley Council and Huon Aquaculture. Both respondents suggested that undertaking this extension concurrently with the intersection upgrade would prove to be more cost effective than undertaking these works in the future.
- 4.12 Ms Watson noted these concerns, and suggested that the primary reason given for not including the lane north bound extension in the scope of the works, that is that the current project budget did not allow for it, was not sufficient reason to carry out this additional work:

*"..... the design needs to be amended to include a second lane travelling from Huonville to Hobart from the new Summerleas road overpass to the intersection with the Southern Outlet.*

*The advisability of carrying out the work is significantly impaired due to the lack of the second Hobart bound lane and the above would be addressed with a minor design change to this effect. Further the cost of providing a second lane is significantly reduced by carrying out works concurrently with the overall works as planned. In the event of having to undertake these works at a later date (which will occur due to the positive population growth in Kingborough and Huon regions) the costs are likely to be significantly increased without reason.*

*This matter has been discussed and it is understood the primary reason for this second lane not being included at this stage is the budget for the works. It is considered that this is an unmeritorious reason not to carry out what is essentially a minor adjustment to design and construction at this stage."*<sup>6</sup>

- 4.13 Ms Bender reiterated these concerns in the Huon Aquaculture submission:

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<sup>6</sup> Huon Valley Council, Submission, Page 1-2



*“The current plan to include an overtaking lane on the Huon Highway for traffic travelling towards the Huon Valley and not for northbound traffic appears shortsighted and I believe will disadvantage road users.*

*... As I understand, the reasoning for not including the second lane is that it has not been included in the budget for the overall works. With works being undertaken for the current plan this is the most cost efficient time to include the second lane, with any addition in the future requiring the same set up costs.*

*Servicing a fast growing residential area and significant industry activity further south, it is inevitable that traffic will increase in both directions. This is the most financially effective time to include lanes in both directions.”<sup>7</sup>*

- 4.14 The Committee questioned the witnesses representing the proponent extensively on the reasons for not including a second north bound lane in the scope of current project. Committee Members also sought some indication of what cost and other impacts that a second northbound lane may have. Ms McIntyre and Mr Knight indicated that it would not be a minor design change, and would in fact have unintended consequences, both from a safety and cost perspective due to the complexity of connecting to the Southern Outlet. It was also highlighted that it would come at a significant cost when traffic modelling indicated that a second north bound lane would not be necessary for at least 20 years:

**Mr FARRELL** - From the correspondence the committee received, there has been a question raised as to why a second lane was not included on the northbound journey. You are obviously aware of that proposal, so why was that not done? Was it considered and what sort of cost would you be looking at to do that extension to the overpass?

**Ms McINTYRE** - If we go back to the objective of the project, this is a safety upgrade for an intersection and we had a particular amount of money committed to this project. We have included a southbound climbing or overtaking lane to deal with an existing problem we have with slow, heavy vehicles driving along in the gravel reserve and then pulling back into the running lane. The southbound lane has been included in this project to improve the safety of that aspect.

From back in 2011-12 when this sort of project was being considered, it was acknowledged that there was already an issue there. In terms of providing a northbound lane, we have asked Jacobs to undertake traffic modelling to determine when that need might kick in. At this point we are looking at 20 years on a very optimistic traffic growth. To do that now when we actually do not have the budget for it within this particular budget means we are at our absolute maximum in terms of what we can deliver with the funding available. We would have to find funding from another project, in effect. When we are looking at our investment plan over 10 to 20 years, there are other projects that we would invest funding into before we would invest money into or see the need to invest into a northbound additional lane.

**Mr FARRELL** - Currently the cost of the project is \$21 million?

**Ms McINTYRE** - The P90 is \$21 million, yes.

**Mr FARRELL** - What would be the projected cost in addition?

**Mr KNIGHT** - We have done some costings on a potential fourth lane. If you look at a lane from the interchange northwards, we would be looking in the region of half a million dollars. That is for the pavement only. That does not include the earthworks, the traffic furniture or any of the other add-ons. That is just effectively the aggregates and the asphalt. What we are doing now as part of this project is accommodating for a fourth lane in our design. If somebody at some point in time decides that another lane is necessary, the footprint is

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<sup>7</sup> Huon Aquaculture, Submission, Page 1

there. We do not want people to have to redesign and start moving roads around. We are allowing for the fact that that fourth lane could just be added straight on.

The reason we are not doing all of the earthworks is that we are going to have an excess of cut to waste, or an excess of dirt, for want of a better word, as we excavate Summerleas Road down. Where a fourth lane would go we are doing all the earth works, the filling for that. I do not know if you noticed when you left the site, there is still some sort of rocky high and knobbly ground on the left-hand side. That will obviously just stay as it is. We have that surplus of dirt and we do not want to create more surplus dirt. We will do all the filling. At some point in time, and we have predicted about 20 years plus, then somebody could just knock those little knobs down and extend the pavement further on.

One of the flow-on effects, I guess, of adding in a fourth lane now would be that the current off-ramp onto the Southern Outlet is one lane only. Having two lanes coming through the current project to a one-lane off-ramp is very likely to create even further safety issues. We do not want to fix one problem on the intersection and then create another problem another 1.5 kilometres down the road as people from two lanes try to merge onto one off-ramp. If we wanted to fix the off-ramp, we would have to go to two lanes, which means we would have to extend the Groningen Road bridge as well. We have not costed all that out because that is outside of our scope, but I guess that just highlights the flow-on effects at this point in time of trying to add a fourth lane in now, given the fact that from a return-on-investment type scenario, it is not needed or not warranted.

... .. **Mr SHELTON** - I had a question about the northbound dual lanes coming down over the hill over the bridge and the discussion around the extension of those dual lanes to be incorporated right through to the Southern Outlet on-ramp and the bridge and the costs around that. Andrew mentioned \$500 000 but I don't believe that was dealing with a full extension of the dual lanes right through.

**Mr KNIGHT** - To clarify, the \$500 000 was for the aggregate layers and the asphalt from the intersection to the Southern Outlet off-ramp. It did not include a fourth lane from the intersection southwards and it certainly does not include any land acquisition and any of the other roadside furniture or a widening of the existing bridge or the proposed designed bridge. The \$500 000 was to extend the lane where the vehicles currently coming out of Kingston merge with the Huon Highway to link up with the off-ramp to the Southern Outlet.

**CHAIR** - Can you show the committee on the map, how far down and where?

**Mr KNIGHT** - It would be this on-ramp here - if we extended that from that point there down to the off-ramp there. That is the section we were talking about initially for the \$500 000. As I said, the earthworks are part of excavating that intersection. We would do all the filling along here that is required, but we would not do any of the cut where there are those cliffs and rocky areas along there because we currently have a surplus of dirt anyway.

The \$500 000 in simplistic terms was just the aggregate layers and that included the earthworks we would do as part of the excavation there, but not the additional and not the roadside furniture that would be required as well - certainly no acquisition. If noise walls were warranted because of the lane and the proximity to these houses, it did not include the noise walls, it did not include all of that. I would not at this point want to give a figure without having costed it properly as to what that would all take.

**Mr FARRELL** - Are you able to give a range, not holding you down to any figure, but just the vicinity?

**Mr KNIGHT** - I would say you would be in the \$4 million area, give or take. As I say, that then does not address the issue after that with the two lanes having to merge into one off-ramp. You are going to get people who are in the overtaking lane, or the right lane, suddenly realising they want to get onto the off-ramp and crossing that one lane of traffic to get onto the one lane off-ramp, whereas under this arrangement the vehicles are able to merge over here, they get into one orderly stream and they can then take the off-ramp. That merge

opportunity over there allows them to get into that one orderly stream before they take the off-ramp.

**Mr SHELTON** - If I'm right, Andrew, that also does not include the section of Summerleas Road and the widening of where the dual lane finishes now, coming south down the hill and then connecting with the on-ramp and so on.

**Mr KNIGHT** - Correct, yes.

**Ms EASTHER** - It does not include the bridge. That would be another significant expense.

**Mr KNIGHT** - Yes. Any fourth lane along here would see significant acquisition on these properties along here. Already you can see the proximity of that slope to the shed is pretty close. Of course another fourth lane here would push everything across and you would end up with a fair portion, especially the property owner over here, being quite adversely affected, and potentially even that one there as well.

**CHAIR** - Costing figure?

**Mr KNIGHT** - I don't know if I would like to say at this stage.

**Ms McINTYRE** - The other issue is that it puts the project into a different realm and it becomes a capacity project issue. That pushes it into another requirement regarding sound and regarding noise and whatnot, so it is not something that we could entertain. If we had a magic bucket that appeared with however many millions of dollars, it is not something we could achieve as part of this project. We would have to put in a whole new development application and basically redesign a considerable amount of the project from scratch, so it is not something we could deliver as part of this safety upgrade.

It is certainly something we have discussed internally as to when we might need four lanes through here. It was always part of the discussion when we were looking at a grade separation here. We have had it modelled and remodelled on very optimistic figures and the advice we have is that this is going to be quite fine for the next 20 years minimum.

#### **Relocation of Bus Stops and Removal of the Informal Gravel Parking Area**

4.15 As part of the proposed works, the bus stops currently located at the intersection will be relocated, and the informal gravel parking area will be removed. Respondents to the inquiry expressed concerns with these aspects of the project, noting that it may have an adverse impact on commuters.

4.16 Mr Cooke expressed his concern with these changes stating that:

Public transport routes should permit the pick-up and alighting passengers close to their desired targets. Locating two bus stops at **one thousand two hundred metres away from the junction** might be conveniently located for the existing sub-divisions' pedestrian lane-ways with the current underpass under the Highway, but it looks awfully like a solution ignoring the problem. The stops are remote from the junction area and could be intimidating for children and young women waiting in such remote locations, especially at night and in inclement weather.

If the bus stops are provided as shown, will other vehicular parking be provided? If not, will 'informal' parking be tolerated? If not, then adjacent suburban streets will be disturbed by vehicles parking close to the underpass and bus stop locations. Just examine where the underpass route leads and connects: quiet suburban streets and a cul-de-sac.

Someone picking up a passenger from the northbound bus stop but wanting to travel south, is going to have to travel north to the nearest roundabout or collect their passenger from

the suburban street serving the underpass. Hardly a good solution for the passenger, driver and residents.<sup>8</sup>

... .. The vehicles that currently park near the junction provide some evidence of the value of parking close to the junction. Drivers and/or passengers catch buses or take lifts to their destinations. In addition, there are the 'invisible' vehicles: for example, the vehicle that normally picks up or drops off passengers on its way south on the Highway – a parent of school-age children or the 'tradies' picking up co-workers – that need this to occur closer than **one thousand two hundred metres** from the junction? And where will the young co-workers leave their vehicles? In the adjacent cul-de-sac or on the sub-division street? Pedestrians' safety is not solved by separating them by **one thousand two hundred metres** from their target point.<sup>9</sup>

4.17 Ms Watson noted in the Huon Valley Council submission that:

“... .. The design also needs to be amended to locate the bus stop in a location where parking is adjacent to the bus stop to enable effective commuting from the Huon Valley”.<sup>10</sup>

4.18 Under questioning from the Committee, Ms Watson expanded on this point:

**Ms WATSON** - ... .. The second concern that has been raised is with respect to the bus stop. Currently there is an issue with children crossing across the highway. We understand this. However, in servicing the needs of Huon Valley residents, particularly given the growing traffic congestion in Hobart, the non-provision of parking, which is used at this stage in the informal gravel affair on the existing intersection, the removal of that and placing a bus stop off the side of what is a major highway, including the major high-productivity vehicle route, perhaps have left some of our residents questioning what they are to do to do their commuter interchange.

4.19 The Committee noted the concerns raised by respondents about the relocation of bus stops and the loss of the informal gravel parking area and sought further detail from the witnesses representing the proponent on the reasons for the proposed changes.

4.20 With respect to the relocation of the bus stops the witnesses noted that the relocation was being undertaken to improve safety, both for the students that use the bus stops and for the buses collecting passengers at the bus stops:

**Mr FARRELL** - There was a concern raised about the location of the bus stop. Has that issue been worked through?

**Ms EASTHER** - You will see in the design that we have proposed to relocate the bus stops away from the intersection. We initially looked at trying to keep the status quo and keep them in the vicinity of the intersection but that would have meant having them on the on-ramps to the highway. This is not a safe location to have the bus stops. There is quite a steep upgrade for the one that is going towards Huonville, so to have buses having to pull out when cars are accelerating up that ramp to try and merge with the highway traffic is not safe and is not a good location to have children walking around the intersection there, so we decided to relocate the bus stops further towards Hobart where there is an existing pedestrian underpass. That allows the students to access the bus stops through the pedestrian underpass with the wire barrier and means you are not going to get kids crossing the highway like they are doing at the moment.

We have done that in consultation with the two bus operators that use the stops and we understand that they are largely used as interchange points, where one bus pulls up and the

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<sup>8</sup> Mr Peter Cooke, Submission, page 14

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, Pages 14-15

<sup>10</sup> Huon Valley Council, Submission, Page1

*kids get off and get onto another bus, so they were quite happy with this solution. They are pretty worried about the current situation because it is just not a safe spot. We understand that some children get dropped off or walk there so for some of them it will be a slightly longer walk, but it is a safer solution so that is why we have planned it on that particular spot.*

**Mr FARRELL** - So currently they are crossing across the highway?

**Ms EASTHER** - Yes, currently they are crossing the highway.

- 4.21 The witnesses also noted that there was sufficient capacity in the residential street into which the underpass connects to cater for increase in traffic due to the pick-up and drop-off of students using these bus stops:

**CHAIR** - Where this underpass is, if parents are coming to pick up children getting off the bus, how do they pick them up?

**Ms EASTHER** - The bus stops are along here, so we would expect that parents would need to come along to the residential streets here. It is quite a wide residential street so there is space there for them to pull up and pick up and drop off children. Then there is a pathway here, there is an underpass if they need to get to the other side and go that way, and there will be connecting infrastructure to the bus stops.

- 4.22 The Department of State Growth's submission also highlighted that consultation had been conducted with the two bus operators licenced to use the bus stop currently located at the intersection. The submission noted that the bus operators were supportive of the proposed changes:

*"Two bus companies, Roberts Coaches and Goodluck, are licensed to use the stops currently located on the Huon Highway at the intersection. Telephone conversations were held with both companies on 4 November 2015 to discuss their operations. Both companies expressed safety concerns with the current location of the stops and were open to relocation of the stops, provided there wasn't a significant time impact.*

*A meeting was held with Jacobs, Andrew Mullen (State Growth), Roberts Coaches and Goodluck on 2 February 2016 to discuss the proposed bus stop locations at the existing pedestrian underpass. Both companies were receptive to this solution. It was agreed that installing stops at the underpass (about 800m from the intersection) is a safer alternative to having bus stops on the interchange ramps.*

*Whilst the stops are mainly used to exchange passengers, it was acknowledged that there are a small number of passengers who walk to and from the bus stops along Summerleas Road. This inconvenience was not thought to be a significant issue. Both organisations were happy about the inclusion of a southbound overtaking lane and mentioned that merging back into highway traffic will be safer."*<sup>11</sup>

- 4.23 In response to further questioning from the Committee the witnesses representing the proponent noted that the bus stops are only used by school buses, not for general commuter buses. It was also noted by the witnesses that it was not considered safe to allow the continued use of the informal gravel parking area at the intersection, and that there was a safer, alternative parking facility located very close by:

**Mr SHELTON** - A final question about the bus stop and the car parking. When we pulled up at 1 o'clock it was obvious that a number of vehicles use that as a car park, whether to drop kids off to the school bus or to park a vehicle. Was there any thought given about expanding an area around the bus stop for that possibility of more people?

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<sup>11</sup> Department of State Growth, Submission, Appendix B, Page 5

**Ms EASTHER** - That is an informal car parking area at the moment. It is not used for buses, it is used for car pooling so people can pull up and car pool. The two buses using these stops are school buses, so people are not driving and parking their cars and then getting on the bus there. The majority are exchanging buses, and a number of them are walking or getting dropped off by their parents.

Obviously we do not want to create another safety issue; putting a car park on the side of the highway where the buses are and to have people pulling off and parking there is not a safe thing to do, so we have removed the car parks from the intersection. There is an alternative car park which we have spoken to Kingborough Council about. We understand it is heavily under-utilised at the moment, so that is an alternative point that people can use to carpool. It is not very much further away; it is a lot safer and they can pull in there and use that as a carpooling spot.

**Mr KNIGHT** - This has been developed since this photo was taken. You can see the Kingston High School still under construction, but that is now a big asphalted area and has lighting at night as well, so it is a lot safer for people to park their vehicles there.

### **Installation of Flexible Safety Barriers (Mr Cooke, P15)**

- 4.24 In his submission, Mr Cooke was critical of the decision to include in the project scope the installation flexible safety barriers to divide the carriageway. Mr Cooke questioned the motives behind the installation of the safety barriers, which extend past the intersection itself:

*"Of interest is the perceived need to introduce kilometres of flexible safety barriers, although what they and their extent has to do with the public's concern about safety of the Summerleas junction evades me. Once again, DSG may be taking the opportunity to 'upgrade' a large slice of the Highway; or that the barriers are needed because of the number of 'incidents' on these extended sections of the Highway; or that DSG will not introduce speed limiting devices; or an admission that idiot-proofing is its default position about safety. This is not engineering a solution for the safety at the junction. So why is it in the Junction design?"<sup>12</sup>*

- 4.25 The Committee sought further information on whether the flexible safety barrier was being installed in response to specific incidents or based on a history of crashes. Ms McIntyre indicated that the flexible safety barrier was not being installed in response to a specific history of head-on crashes. However, she did note that current policy and best practice dictated that a safe system approach be adopted, which is based on the principle of recognising that people will always make mistakes and may have road crashes, but the road system should be forgiving and allow for human error and those crashes should not result in death or serious injury:

**Mr SHELTON** - ... While I am on wire ropes and the strategy around that, have there been any accidents between vehicles travelling in opposite directions, apart from the intersection? The wire rope is going to go from somewhere substantially north to somewhere substantially south to separate the traffic heading in the different directions. I am wondering if there have been any issues around that.

**Ms McINTYRE** - I am not aware of any head-ons; I assume you're referring to head-ons or out-of-controls in this section. No, the wire rope is the absolute best practice that we would apply and is consistent with what we have constructed on the Kingston bypass. It was the minister's view, basically, that this was a new project and his preference is for a safe system approach to be applied to new projects such as this. At this point in time we are lucky

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<sup>12</sup> Mr Peter Cooke, Submission, Page 15

enough with the budget as has been calculated to be able to include the flexible safety barrier. We will see how we go but at this point in time that is the absolute best practice and it is applying a safe system approach. It is more about managing a risk rather than dealing necessarily with an actual crash history.

### Consultation

4.26 In their submissions to the Committee on this inquiry, the General Manager of the Huon Valley Council, Ms Simone Watson, and the Executive Director of Huon Aquaculture, Ms Francis Bender, commented that there had been a lack of consultation with residents and businesses in the Huon Valley on the proposed works.

4.27 In the Huon Valley Council's submission, Ms Watson stated that:

*"The Huon Valley Council feels it necessary to make this submission as the consultation with respect to this project in the Huon Valley was largely non-existent. There was little to no engagement with the residents of the Huon Valley Municipal area or the businesses including large scale aquaculture and agricultural companies that use this route for the transport of goods."*<sup>13</sup>

4.28 In the submission from Huon Aquaculture, Ms Bender stated:

*"The lack of consultation with both business and community members in the Huon region has been disappointing. The Summerleas Road intersection and the Southern Outlet are critical infrastructure to the region and it should be expected that consultation occur beyond the immediate Kingborough area."*<sup>14</sup>

4.29 Ms Watson expanded on this concern under questioning by the Committee:

*The consultation with Huon Valley residents directly was brought about when council became aware, through a member of the public, that there was a public display being held in Kingborough. There was no notification before this time. The residents of the Huon Valley, by and large, including one of the leading founders of the aquaculture industry, were not aware until they saw the advertisement for the public display. I do not know what may have resulted from that consultation. Without it, I do not know that anyone will ever know what would have resulted from the consultation.*

*The stakeholder engagement, which was organised to be held at council chambers, had very little advertising, and therefore there are concerns on behalf of my council that people were not sufficiently informed.*

*.....It was only when, for example, some of our industries started discussing it at a networking function that several of the major agricultural players became aware that a second lane was not there on the southbound Huonville to Hobart road.*

*.... I am not sure that I can add much else other than the user groups that were consulted, such as the Kingborough Bicycle Group, Road Safety Group, access committee and the Kingborough Council, at length, which is of course appropriate. I find it quite surprising that our major industry groups were not consulted; they use this route and rely on it strongly as part of their lifeblood.*

**Mr FARRELL** - ... .. Getting back to the consultation, what was the consultation of the people of Huon? Was there a display at Huonville?

**Ms WATSON** - There was.

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<sup>13</sup> Huon Valley Council, Submission, Page 1

<sup>14</sup> Huon Aquaculture, Submission, Page 1

**Mr FARRELL** - Was that widely advertised?

**Ms WATSON** - No, the display at Huonville came from a discussion between myself and the consultant engineers. It was an offer by council to have the static display, which was very gratefully received, and to have feedback forms within council main offices.

I am not sure of the extent of advertising, although I know of none within the Huon Valley area directly.

**Mr FARRELL** - So that was initiated by the council?

**Ms WATSON** - Yes.

- 4.30 The Committee noted that the Department of State Growth's submission contained a dedicated appendix providing a Stakeholder Engagement Report. The Committee sought further detail on the consultation undertaken for the project and the feedback that had been received:

**Mr FARRELL** - A couple of items of correspondence we have had to the committee have been in regard to the consultation with local government - or the lack of consultation, it would appear. I was wondering what consultation processes were undertaken during this project and how long ago consultation started and the level of consultation that has been done.

**Ms EASTHER** - ... Really early on in the project we starting speaking with Kingborough Council, obviously a key stakeholder, and we have had a number of meetings to discuss the project with them. We gave a presentation on the concept design. On 11 February the presentation was given on the concept design, and you also had a meeting with a number of user groups.

**Mr KNIGHT** - Yes, there was the Kingborough Bicycle Advisory Group as well as the Road Safety Committee from Kingborough. The access committee was also invited to attend the meeting at Kingborough Council and unfortunately there was no representation from that group. We also met with Kingborough Council engineering staff as well as their senior management at the same time.

**Ms EASTHER** - We are now in the process of the DA with Kingborough Council and we met with Kingborough Council last week to discuss the DA and begin that process. We also did a presentation to the RACT to discuss the design. We have met with all the individual landowners who are impacted by the works. Anyone who is going to have an impact to their access or potential property acquisition we met with, that would have been in February as well, individual meetings with each of those.

We held a public display on Saturday 5 March at the Kingborough shopping centre from 11 a.m. until 3 p.m. Andrew and I were there, as well as members of the department with the concept design. We spoke to the community about the concept design and answered any questions. We did have feedback forms so the community had the opportunity to fill in a feedback form. Following that day, the concept design was also displayed at Kingborough Council and Huon Valley Council for two weeks and, again, the feedback forms were placed there so people were able to fill in the feedback form and provide some comments on the design.

**CHAIR** - What feedback did you get?

**Ms EASTHER** - Overwhelmingly we found the feedback was positive, especially from the people who live around the area saying that they do not like to use the intersection, they don't feel safe, they go the other way. There was a lot of positive feedback about the safety improvements, and also the efficiency improvement of having the additional southbound overtaking lane.

There was some mixed feedback. A number of people were concerned about potential increases in noise or potential loss of views if there were going to be any noise walls or



mitigation in that area. We explained that we were looking at noise and if there were going to be any noise problems we would be coming back to speak to residents.

**Ms McINTYRE** - ... Through the consultation process there were letters that went out to the aquaculture industry and the Huon Valley Council. We also had communication with the Tasmanian Transport Association and at no point were we aware of significant issues until contact was made by a Huon Aquaculture operator-owner. We were not aware that there were considerable concerns about the lack of the northbound lane for this project.

- 4.31 In light of the concerns raised with the Committee regarding a lack of consultation with residents and businesses in the Huon Valley, the Committee sought further detail on what consultation had been undertaken with these parties:

**Ms OGILVIE** - I would like to ask about the consultation issue we have heard about. Perhaps you could flesh out a little from your perspective some of the concerns that were raised.

**Mr KNIGHT** - Yes, certainly. It is easier to draw your attention to the submission made, at section 2.7 on page 7 at the back. In there it says that on 16 February we sent out correspondence to the Huon Valley Council, the RACT, Cycling Tasmania, the Tasmanian Salmon Growers Association and the transport associations, which we believe could have been transporting fish or smolt or any one of the products of fish food. We received no feedback from the Huon Valley Council, the Tasmanian Salmon Growers Association and the transport associations on the project.

**Ms EASTHER** - We also advertised the public display with message boards at the intersection for a week prior to the public display. Anyone driving through the intersection would have been able to see those message boards and been aware that it was happening.

**Mr KNIGHT** - Those were the big, bright message boards.

**Ms McINTYRE** - There was a newspaper ad as well.

**Ms EASTHER** - Yes; it was in the Mercury twice prior to the public display.

## 5 DOCUMENTS TAKEN INTO EVIDENCE

- 5.1 The following documents were taken into evidence and considered by the Committee:
- Huon Highway/Summerleas Road Intersection Upgrade - Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, Department of State Growth;
  - Submission from Mr Peter Cooke, May 2016;
  - Submission from Simone Watson, General Manager, Huon Valley Council, dated 9 May 2016; and
  - Submission from Frances Bender, Executive Director, Huon Aquaculture, dated 11 May 2016.

## **6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

- 6.1 The Committee is satisfied that the need for the proposed works has been established. Once completed, the proposed works will result in a significantly safer environment for all road users at the intersection. This will be achieved by eliminating cross highway traffic movements and by removing the potential for head on crashes. The proposed works will also improve the efficiency of intersection, which will cater for anticipated traffic and population growth, and will improve accessibility and connectivity for the community within the region. This will be achieved by eliminating cross highway movements and through the extension of the southbound overtaking lane.
- 6.2 Accordingly, the Committee recommends the project, in accordance with the documentation submitted, at an estimated total cost of \$21.2 million.

**Parliament House  
Hobart  
15 June 2016**

**Joan Rylah MP  
Chair**

