

Submission to: Parliamentary Standing Committee – Public Works
Subject: Northern Roads Package



Key Contact:
Role:

Elizabeth Skirving
Chief Executive Officer



29 March 2021

Rural Business Tasmania welcomes the invitation to provide input to the public consultation to proposed published works of the Northern Road Package

Introduction

Rural stakeholders, clients and community members have recently highlighted concerns with current design of local rural roads. Road upgrades have been undertaken in rural and regional communities with both Federal and State funding over the past 18 months. The improvement in road surface has been welcomed and further upgrades of roads encouraged.

Whilst feedback collated has been extremely positive regarding general improvement for use, despite verbal complaints and voiced concerns, the upgrades continue to be implemented in a way that impacts on farm businesses, safety, and practical use of roads.

Members of the community have voiced their concern to local members (Tasmanian Government) and have been advised that the roads are designed to meet current Australian Standards. The Department of State Growth has also been contacted by some members of the public and similarly been advised that Australian Standards have been met and designs are not likely to change.

This paper sets out some of the key concerns voiced by members of local rural communities to raise awareness and understanding of local needs and practicalities. It is hoped that proposed works for the Northern Roads Package will consider these concerns and the needs of community in future design planning.

The paper includes photos and individuals' letter regarding concerns raised and reference material.

Submission matters raised:

Safety and local industry use have not been considered in design.

Agricultural contribution to the Tasmania economy is significant and supportive practices and infrastructure in rural and regional Tasmania should complement and support the agricultural sector.

- Highway design for country roads require generous shoulders for wide farm machinery that frequent rural and regional roads.

Design flaw specifics

There is no shoulder as normally available on highways.

- No ability to pull over safely impeding emergency access points.
- Review of school bus stops on rural roads have recently been deemed unsafe by some operators and alternative stops have been required which impact on access of rural school children.

Safety

Tasmania has failed in past years to meet road safety targets, according to RACT Chief Executive Mark Mugnaioni in Tasmanian Sunday Examiner reports published February 14th, 2021. He states that this is despite advances in vehicle safety, increased policing, and significant road network funding. In the same paper announcements by Federal Infrastructure Transport and Regional Development Minister Michael McCormack and State Infrastructure and Transport Minister Michal Ferguson advised \$45.6 million in funds for road safety upgrades.

Despite significant funding the safety of rural and regional roads remains a matter for concern.

Agricultural Use of Roads

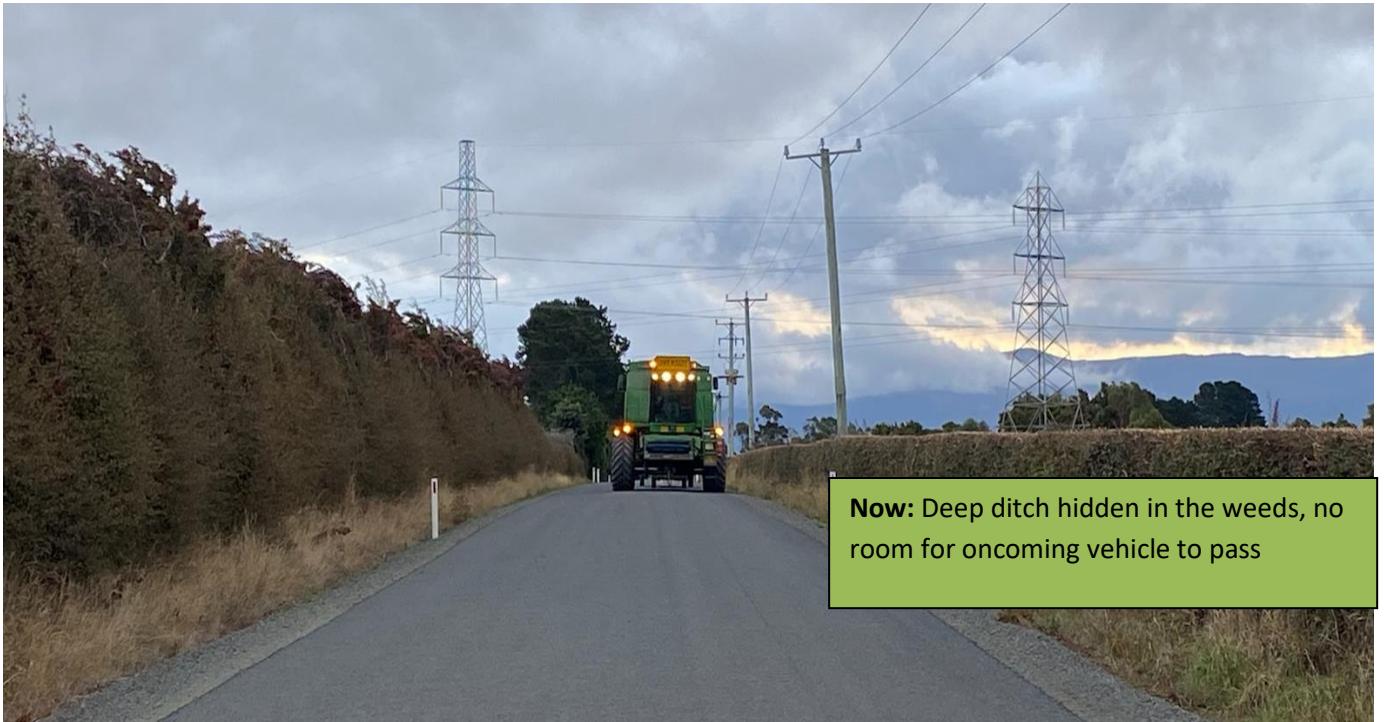
Rural and regional road designs should complement usage needs of the community they are built for. The agricultural industry is the 2nd largest contributor to the Tasmanian economy, exceeded only by health care and social assistance. Agriculture contributes 10.9 % of economic output, employs directly and indirectly thousands of Tasmanians and contributes to regional community.

Rural Tasmania roads are constantly utilized. Movement is continual in rural areas where public roads divide property to both sides. Stock and large machinery including harvesters, freight trucks, tractors and implements may take up the full width when travelling roads. The movements meet current legal requirements of larger vehicles and implements.



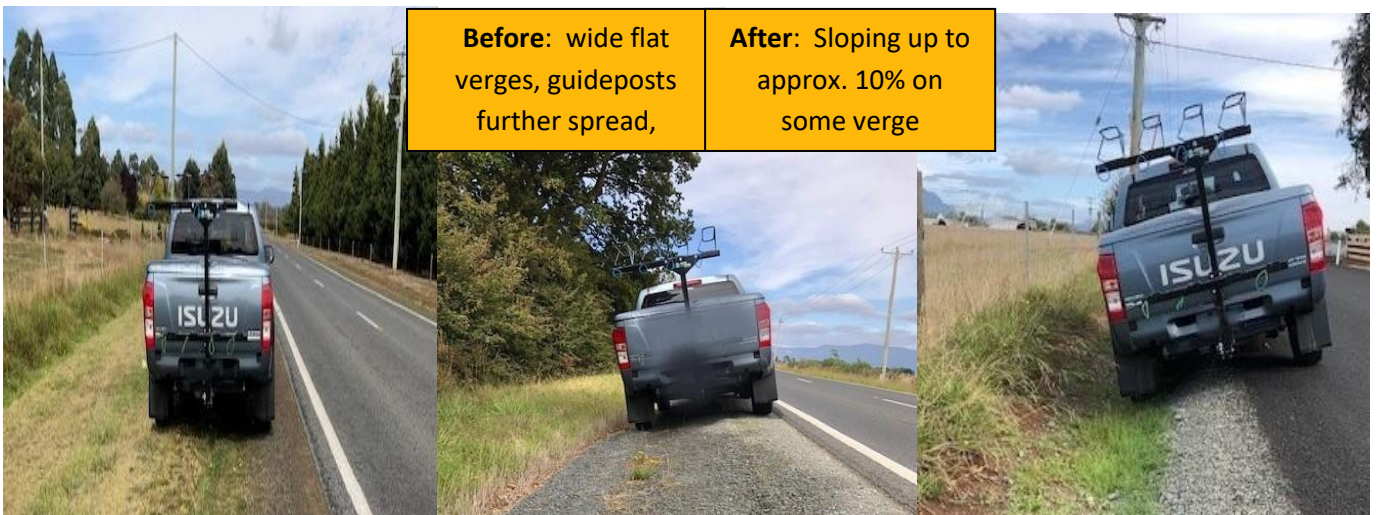
Funding to provide underpasses has been provided by the Tasmanian Government but many rural and remote roads do not have infrastructure available where properties are situated on both sides of the road. Underpasses are costly and are designed for stock and small vehicle access only.

Access to farm paddock gateways is compromised where levels of road have been increased above that of the paddock entry way. This impedes access for agricultural equipment and results in scraping of machinery on bitumen which will increase maintenance of roads long-term.



Rural operators have a business and legal requirement to provide safe workplaces and processes. Use of signage and warning lights, escorts where required and appropriate, are all utilized. Local citizens are understanding of the movements and comfortable with pulling to the side of rural roads to let large equipment to pass. With recent design this option has been removed and the only alternative is reversing, sometimes for significant distance, of the vehicles to a gate way.

Whilst observing speed limits, lead time may still compromise a driver’s ability to determine space for passing when meeting oncoming traffic on narrow country roads with no readily accessible alternative, particularly on rises and corners.



DESIGN FLAWS

Current design of roads that have been built in the last 12 – 18 months in at least two regional areas (Northern Midlands and Dorset) have not incorporated areas to safely pull off in a timely manner. Deep ditches either side of road edges have removed safe access to road verges. Road design has decreased usable road area in some instances. Although bitumen road area may have been widened by some 30 cm, the loss of verge has impacted on movement. Design has roads at considerable height with up to 200 – 500 cm ditches either side.



The key concern raised has been in safe passing opportunities. Large farm and transport machinery movement on these roads is common with harvesters for example taking over 4 metres of the road with full road approx. 6.2metres.

A passing driver may see oncoming traffic and look to pull to the side. They may not be aware of ditches in the side area or the built-up nature of the road and when on steep slope there is potential for rollover (as occurred recently with a delivery truck). No thought has been given to access for emergency situations and verge/curb requirements – e.g., tyre blowout, cyclist access, medical emergency, rubbish bins.

Compromised or hesitant drivers who are faced with oncoming traffic with little room to move to the side are impacted in their confidence to even utilize these roads or are more prone to accident when trying to traverse this newly designed roads. Rural landholder access and safety where a road intersects and is part of daily farm work is hazardous, does not enable smooth flow of traffic and has already resulted in accident.

Recently school bus stops, which have been in place for over 30 years, have been removed as bus operators have no safe space to pull over.

Common sense and understanding of the practicalities has not been evident where in response to flattened guideposts, a recent remedy has been to move guideposts into the ditch below road level compromising safety particularly for driving at night.

An example is the section of road between Cressy and Longford, completed only around 12 months ago, now experiencing broken edges, potholes, and flattened guideposts.



The design may impact weed control providing a healthy growth vessel for weeds to sprout through water retention in deep ditch areas. Slashing although possible is more difficult and may not provide the complete removal of weeds in the steep ditch design. Tasmanian Government support to weed control through recent Bio-Security initiatives are also compromised and management of weeds impact financially on farm businesses. When weeds are not kept in check road users who are unaware of the deep ditches may attempt to park or swerve to side of road and may incur accidents when hitting these deep hidden ditches.

CONCLUSION

Previous design has served rural community well. Anecdotal evidence suggests other municipal areas may have similarly been impacted with truck drivers and heavy vehicle access users commenting informally on the concerns raised.

We ask that the Parliamentary Standing Committee review current design requirements for Tasmanian regional roads to ensure that agricultural industry, local community and visitors to our rural and regional areas have safe, usable and practical roads to travel.

References: Australian Automobile Association – Benchmarking the performance of the National Road Safety Strategy 2011 – 2020

Submitted to:

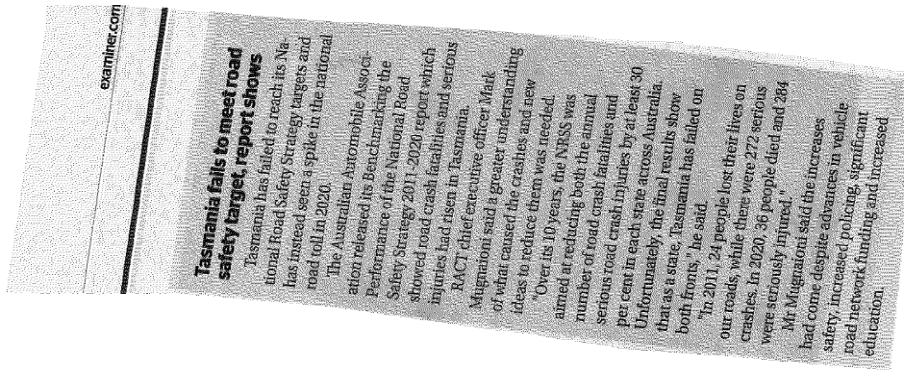
The Secretary, Public Works Committee, Parliament House, Hobart Tas 7000

Via email: Scott.hennessy@parliament.tas.gov.au

Attachments:

- A. Examiner articles 14th February 2021
- B. Email letter from concerned road users – Sarah and Daniel Greig
- C. Letter from Minister Michal Ferguson, Minister for Infrastructure

A:



examiner.com

PREVENTION Additional government funding to deliver 'lifesaving measures'

Tasmanian roads to get safety upgrade

Don Anderson

TASMANIAN roads will get new safety upgrades and improvements due to funding from both the state and federal governments.

Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development Minister Michael McCormack said the additional billion Road Safety Program would commence immediately.

"This funding will deliver lifesaving measures such as shoulder sealing, rumble strips to alert drivers when

they are moving out of their lane, prevention of head-on collisions and barriers to prevent run-off-road crashes," he said.

A variety of works will be delivered across Tasmania, including installing line marking, signage and safety barriers on Glenwood Road in Launceston, to enhance the capacity, safety and accessibility of the roads.

"This is all about getting Tasmanians home sooner and safer."

Tasmanian Infrastructure and Transport Minister Michael McCormack said \$456 million would be delivered across Tasmania to fund road safety upgrades in an effort to reduce the number of fatalities and serious injuries occurring on the roads.

"The project being funded, no matter how big or small, could make the difference in someone getting home safely to their loved ones, which is why we continue working to move closer to zero fatalities through these investments."

Mr Ferguson said the investments would also provide a boost to local jobs and the economy.

"Road Safety and Freight

Transport Assistant Minister Scott Buchholz agreed the upgrades would boost the economy while also strengthening road safety. It is a shared responsibility and collaboration between communities and all levels of government will help us move towards achieving Vision Zero," he said.

"Projects are already underway through the \$500 million Targeted Road Safety COVID-19 stimulus package and this additional funding complements that work, resulting in an even greater

roll-out of improved infrastructure and roads throughout the state.

The Australian government is also supporting the National Road Safety Strategy through the Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020 report which showed road crash fatalities and serious injuries had risen in Tasmania.

RACT chief executive officer Mark Mignatoni said a greater understanding of what caused the crashes and new ideas to reduce them was needed.

"Over its 10 years, the NRSS was aimed at reducing both the annual number of road crash fatalities and serious road crash injuries by at least 30 per cent in each state across Australia. Unfortunately, the final results show that as a state, Tasmania has failed on both fronts," he said.

"In 2011, 24 people lost their lives on our roads, while there were 272 serious crashes. In 2020, 36 people died and 284 were seriously injured."

Mr Mignatoni said the increases had come despite advances in vehicle safety, increased policing, significant road network funding and increased education.

B:

22/03/2021

Gmail - Unsafe road conditions



Sarah Greig <danielandsarahgreig@gmail.com>

Unsafe road conditions

2 messages

Sarah Greig <danielandsarahgreig@gmail.com>

Wed, Jul 15, 2020 at 7:46 PM

To: michael.ferguson@dpac.tas.gov.au, council@nmc.tas.gov.au, des.jennings@nmc.tas.gov.au

Bcc: Daniel Greig <daniel.greig@fire.tas.gov.au>, lowlands260@gmail.com

Dear Minister

We write to you in relation to some recently completed upgrade works to the Cressy-Longford Road. These works appear to have been completed to a very high standard and have certainly increased the overall safety and longevity of the road. However, we have safety concerns with the road intersection at Green Rises Road Cressy.

Prior to the roadworks, there was sufficient space to pass by a southbound vehicle awaiting to turn into Green Rises Road. Although this space was a gravel verge it did allow southbound traffic to continue moving towards Cressy without the need to stop the flow of traffic completely. The current construction necessitates southbound traffic to come to a complete standstill whilst a southbound vehicle awaits a break in oncoming traffic to turn onto Green Rises Road.

As residents of Green Rises Road, we have had first hand experience of defensive driving required to be undertaken to avoid a collision (albeit due to inattention of following drivers not expecting a stationary vehicle in their path in a 100km zone).

The road works undertaken, a short distance away from this intersection (on the Northern side), has included an additional sealed verge for a private driveway.

As there is sufficient verge space to facilitate this, we ask that similar provisions be provided to allow for the safe movement of vehicles at the Green Rises Road intersection.

Our second point relates to the height that the road has been built up to and the resultant inability for vehicles to pull off the road in the event of a breakdown, flat tyre, or pulling over to allow for wide loads to pass.

The Cressy/Longford area is an agricultural epicentre, and this road experiences significant oversized vehicle movements, many of which are also slow moving. With the new road height there is insufficient means to allow these slow moving vehicles an opportunity to pull over at least intermittently to allow following vehicles to pass safely.

We appreciate your attention and consideration of these matters and look forward to your response.

--
Regards

Daniel and Sarah Greig
260 Green Rises Road
Cressy TAS 7302
0408 553 906

Des Jennings <des.jennings@nmc.tas.gov.au>

Thu, Jul 16, 2020 at 6:59 AM

To: Sarah Greig <danielandsarahgreig@gmail.com>

Cc: Gail Eacher <gail.eacher@nmc.tas.gov.au>, Leigh McCullagh <leigh.mccullagh@nmc.tas.gov.au>

Hi Sarah,
I acknowledge receipt of your email.
Regards Des Jennings

Sent from my iPhone

> On 15 Jul 2020, at 7:46 pm, Sarah Greig <danielandsarahgreig@gmail.com> wrote:
>

[Quoted text hidden]

Northern Midlands Council Confidentiality Notice and Disclaimer:

C:

**Minister for Finance
Minister for Infrastructure and Transport
Minister for State Growth
Minister for Science and Technology
Leader of the House**

Level 5, 4 Salamanca Place, Hobart
Public Buildings, 53 St John Street, Launceston
GPO Box 123, HOBART TAS 7001
Phone: (03) 6165 7701; Email: Michael.Ferguson@dpac.tas.gov.au



23 SEP 2020

Mr Daniel and Mrs Sarah Greig
By Email: danielandsarahgreig@gmail.com

Dear Mr and Mrs Greig

Thank you for your email of 15 July 2020 regarding the recently completed road works on Poatina Main Road from Cressy to Longford. I apologise for the delay in responding to you.

The Department of State Growth has advised me that the project scope for these works was limited to road rehabilitation to strengthen and improve the condition of the road surface. This involved removal of the existing road surface and the placement of a pavement overlay, which resulted in an increase in the road height.

I am further advised that the project scope did not include safety improvements to the junction with Green Rises Road. Prior to the recent road works there were no formal turning or passing facilities at this location. While this location is not scheduled for upgrading in the current forward works program, I have asked that the Department take your feedback regarding driver behaviour into consideration in any future works in the area.

I trust this information clarifies the matters you have raised.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Ferguson".

Michael Ferguson MP
Minister for Infrastructure and Transport

Rural Business Tasmania

Established in 1986, Rural Business Tasmania Inc is a not-for-profit charitable organisation primarily offering business and financial management support, counselling, coaching and expertise to rural and regional communities.

Through the provision of numerous programs, the organisation assists rural business enterprises manage the ever-evolving demands and challenges facing the primary industry sector and regional communities.

These programs include the State supported and Australian Government funded Rural Financial Counselling Service, Small Business Support Program, our State Government supported Rural Business Programs including the Cultivating Rural Excellence, Cadetship programs, Forest Contractors Resilience Program, the Forum of Rural Stakeholders and the Rural Relief Fund.

RBT Vision

A sustainable and prosperous future for rural and regional Tasmania

RBT Mission

To develop and deliver services and projects within the rural business sector that foster viable and sustainable economic development for Tasmania

The organisation seeks to support and grow rural enterprise by:

Developing success and sustainability through innovation.

Empowering clients to achieve improved outcomes.

Being advocates for the sector.

Providing immediate assistance when required.

Facilitating positive change.

Providing education and support.

Helping farmers understand their current position and where they are at.

Fostering partnerships with primary production sector facing organisations.

Providing support to deal with emerging changes and challenges.

Helping its clients in times of crisis.

Rural Business Tasmania's focus is on growing a more robust, resilient, and productive rural sector for the State through increased business and micro and economic skill training and sharing of financial expertise.