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THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS MET AT THE WEST COAST COUNCIL CHAMBERS, QUEENSTOWN ON MONDAY 9 AUGUST 2021

LYELL HIGHWAY - QUEENSTOWN TO STRAHAN SAFETY UPGRADE PROJECT

Ms ROBYN HAWKINS, PROJECT MANAGER, AND **Mr SVEN MEYER**, PROJECT MANAGEMENT TEAM LEADER, DEPARTMENT OF STATE GROWTH, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED

CHAIR (Mr Valentine) - Thank you. You have probably heard this all before but I need to read it. The committee is pleased to hear the evidence today and we thank you for the video presentation, it was most informative. Before you begin giving evidence, it is important that you understand that a committee hearing is a proceeding in parliament. This means it receives the protection of parliamentary privilege, an important legal protection that allows individuals giving evidence to a parliamentary committee to speak with complete freedom without fear of being sued or questioned in any court or place outside of parliament. It applies to ensure that parliament receives the very best information when conducting its enquiries. It is important to be aware that this protection is not afforded to you if statements that may be defamatory are repeated or referred to by you outside the confines of the parliamentary proceedings. It is a public hearing and members of the public and journalists may be present, which means your evidence may be reported. Do you understand that?

Ms HAWKINS - Yes.

Mr MEYER - Yes.

CHAIR - Thank you. Would you like to make an opening statement?

Ms HAWKINS - Yes, thanks very much. Good afternoon. My name is Robyn Hawkins and I am a project manager with State Roads, responsible for the delivery of the Lyell Highway Safety Upgrade Project, Queenstown to Strahan. With me today is Sven Meyer, project management team leader.

Today we are seeking approval for the Lyell Highway Safety Upgrade Queenstown to Strahan. The project involves upgrades on sections of nearly 40 kilometres of the Lyell Highway between the Queen River Bridge in Queenstown to Harvey Street junction in Strahan. The Lyell Highway Safety Upgrade is a road upgrade aimed at improving road safety for all road users and improving travel time reliability.

The section of the Lyell Highway is located within the Cradle Coast region. The Cradle Coast Integrated Transport Strategy was jointly developed by the Tasmanian Government and the Cradle Coast Authority in 2006 to provide a coordinated and strategic framework to address transport issues over the coming 20 years. The strategy identifies the section of the Lyell Highway to be a strategic road, providing access to the touring and nature-based tourism markets.

At the 2021 state election the state Government announced the west coast commitment that included joint Australian and Tasmanian government funding totalling \$18.75 million for upgrades to the Lyell Highway between Queenstown and Strahan. The funding commitment

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is for upgrades including stopping bays for slow-moving traffic, passing lanes and environment improvements.

The project involves two sections of the Lyell Highway, one being the Queenstown to Zeehan Highway junction, which is a category 3 road. This section of road from Queenstown to the Zeehan Highway junction is used by a range of high-productivity vehicles. The approximate volume is just under 1000 vehicles per day with approximately 10.7 per cent heavy vehicles.

The second section of the Lyell Highway is between the Zeehan Highway junction to Strahan. This is a category 4 road. For this section of the Lyell Highway from the Zeehan Highway junction to Strahan access is limited to general access vehicles. The traffic volume is approximately 423 vehicles per day with 8.5 per cent heavy vehicles. It should be noted that this section has a summer seasonal traffic volume variation that sees approximately 661 vehicles per day during January.

The recorded crash history for the Lyell Highway between Queenstown and Strahan has been obtained for the last 10 years as part of the project development and investigation and is as follows. There have been 74 vehicle crashes over the past 10 years. A high number of these crashes, approximately 29 per cent, have occurred during the peak tourism season of January and February during daylight hours, suggesting that unfamiliar drivers are having difficulty navigating the road. The majority of crashes, 77 per cent, are single vehicle run off curve or straight crashes.

The proposed improvements for the project include passing lanes and stopping bays and a slow turnout lane on the section of the Lyell Highway between Queenstown to the Zeehan Highway junction. Alignment and delineation improvements will also be provided on the section between the Zeehan Highway junction to Strahan. The alignment and delineation improvements will be prioritised where there are significant drops in operating speed at the curves.

The proposed improvements will deliver the following benefits: improved safety through improved curve delineation and targeted seal widening; improved travel time savings and vehicle operating costs; improved visitor travelling experience; and improved transport system resilience.

In terms of cost, the project is forecast to cost \$18.75 million at P90 value for the corridor. Costs for these proposed improvements on estimates are consistent with similar recently completed projects. Once delivered, road users will see improved road safety and more reliable travel times.

The proposed improvements are as follows. For stage 1, passing lanes, westbound carriageway two locations, eastbound carriageway two locations; stopping bays, westbound carriageway three locations, eastbound carriageway five locations. Signage will also be provided as part of stage 1.

In parallel with construction of stage 1, the design for stage 2 works will be finalised and then proceed to construction. The proposed works for stage 2 comprise a slow turnout lane on the section of the Lyell Highway between Queenstown to the Zeehan Highway junction and alignment and delineation improvement on the section of the road between the Zeehan

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Highway junction and Strahan. The work will be prioritised where there are significant drops in operating speed at corners. All works will be completed by mid-2023.

Overall, we submit that the project is an important safety upgrade. The upgrades will provide passing and stopping bays in both directions and improve safety and efficiency. A second stage of works will include alignment improvements on curves and a slow vehicle turnout lane on the section between Queenstown and the Zeehan Highway junction.

We have worked with stakeholders and will continue to do so to reduce convenience impacts of the project, both during and after construction. We are seeking other legislative approvals as required. The per kilometre costs are appropriate and in conclusion we believe that the project is a good use of taxpayers' money. Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you. So over questions, normally we provide an opportunity for an overview question or two. If there are any questions you want to ask in terms of the project as a whole, either that or we just move our way through the report?

Members, are you happy for us to just commence on the report? Okay, let us go to the first introduction and the project summary. To be quite honest, I think the main questions are in the body of the report, rather than the summary, to save us going over it twice. Members, are you happy to go over to 2.0?

Ms RATTRAY - Just 1.2. I think we need to correct the 'move': it's got 'more slow, more traffic', it should be 'moving'. Just when you re-update your information, thank you, Robyn.

CHAIR - It is at the end of the first paragraph. I picked up the same one. So, moving over to the scope, just a question on the second paragraph under 2.1. You talk about how the Department of State Growth consulted with the West Coast Council, Tasmanian Transport Association, transport operators through the consultations. It is understood that due to the safety concerns of operators travelling on this section of highway and travel time reliability, some residents and commercial operators choose to travel the additional 35 km from Queenstown to Zeehan to use the other road. I am just wondering how much opportunity general residents had to be able to have a bit of an input to this? I know you have gone to the transport associations and the like. Must appreciate that it was in certain libraries, but just wondering if you could just cover off on that consultation?

Ms HAWKINS - Sure. The project was open for public display between July 9 and July 30 and we focused on having the information available at a number of locations in Queenstown and Strahan, and at Derwent Bridge. The information was also on the department's website and continues to be there as well.

CHAIR - What about Derwent Bridge? Whereabouts in Derwent Bridge?

Ms HAWKINS - Just at the store.

CHAIR - At the store, okay.

Ms HAWKINS - And also on the notice board there.

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CHAIR - So, to follow up on that, with that consultation, are there any concerns that were expressed that you can't mitigate?

Ms HAWKINS - I don't believe so, I believe the general feedback that we received was overall positive for the project and welcomed.

CHAIR - Some of us drove that section this morning and I could see that most people would be happy to think that it is being upgraded. Do you have a question at all?

Ms RATTRAY - Not necessarily, just in one of the dot points that you put that this project will improve travel time, reliability for local traffic: Is it likely to take any time off the travel time?

Ms HAWKINS - I guess what is meant by that statement is that if you are thinking about having the opportunity to pass slower-moving vehicles or having slower-moving vehicles being able to pull off into stopping bays, I guess that is where the travel time reliability will come into it. Because at the moment it is quite challenging to find locations to actually pull off, as you would have witnessed if you have driven the road.

Ms RATTRAY - I doubt that it would be significant time-saving, though. Just a more, I guess, a better driving experience.

Ms HAWKINS - I guess, it just is dependent on who you happen to be following as you are driving the road. But going back to that statement about members of the community choosing to travel the alternate direction, the feedback we received was obviously about potentially visitors to the area that are not familiar with the road and travelling at much slower speeds.

Mr ELLIS - Chair, from personal experience, being stuck behind a caravan at the wrong corner on that drive can take 20 per cent longer, or even upwards of that. And particularly being an important commuter road, industry road, that mix with tourism vehicles. This is an important way that they'll be able to co-exist, in a more safe and efficient way.

Ms HAWKINS - Yes. I think that the stopping ways and the passing lanes are not just for tourists, they're potentially for anybody using the road.

CHAIR - Are you employing Armco railings in any of this upgrade?

Ms HAWKINS - Certainly where they are required to protect people in drop-offs or hazards along the road that's been part of the design development.

CHAIR - The reason I ask is because it's a windy road. I don't know whether you have any figures on the number of motorbikes that might use that road? Would you have that detail?

Ms HAWKINS - That's something I'd have to take on notice.

CHAIR - That's okay. I have to say it's not always the motorcyclist's fault, it might be that the driver of a vehicle hasn't seen the motorcyclist. For whatever reason they come to grief, if it's Armco railing then the lower rail can be put in place on the Armco railing to save a lot of damage to a rider.

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Ms HAWKINS - Yes, that's right.

CHAIR - Is there consideration of that in your design?

Ms HAWKINS - Yes, the rub rails are certainly provided on roads where it's deemed to have motorcycle traffic.

CHAIR - Yes. So, will that be the case here?

Ms HAWKINS - We'll be looking at it.

CHAIR - Okay. Thank you.

Ms RATTRAY - So, supplementary to that, will you be looking at it after you have a look at the number of motorcycle movements or get some feedback from the motorcycle association on the level of usage of that road before you decide? When and how will the decision be made to put that -

CHAIR - In regard to that.

Ms RATTRAY - In regard to that additional safety measure?

Ms HAWKINS - Yes. So, we'll be talking with our departmental colleagues to determine where the higher priority motorcycle routes are and where the rub rails are provided.

CHAIR - In terms of expense, it's not overly pricey to put an extra rail in, I would think. I might be talking out of turn there, but it could have a higher benefit in terms of someone's life.

Mr MEYER - It's not a large increase in price when you're looking from the starting point of construction.

CHAIR - No.

Ms HAWKINS - Yes.

Mr ELLIS - It might be worth noting in the crash history section it says, 'Significant number of crashes - 19 per cent - involved motorcyclists, indicating it's a motorcyclist touring route; 14 crashes involving motorcyclists, 12 are considered an off-bend type crash, signifying a lack of control; only one involved a second vehicle.' So, I suppose we are looking at quite a few incidents where people just skidded off and -

CHAIR - Yes.

Mr MEYER - Yes.

Ms RATTRAY - Yes. I think it's a really important point that you raised, Chair, and I'd like to see that specifically addressed by the department.

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CHAIR - It would be good to think that maybe the Motorcycle Riders Association could be consulted on what their impressions are of these sorts of upgrades.

Mr MEYER - Yes.

CHAIR - For the future.

Ms RATTRAY - Well, there is some crash data and they were -

CHAIR - No, but whether they were consulted.

Ms RATTRAY - I know, yes, but also the areas where the crashes were on that little map, so we would be able to find out -

CHAIR - Find out -

Ms RATTRAY - - where the hot spots are.

Mr MEYER - So, that's something we'll be looking at as part of the stage 2, the design development and further consultation.

CHAIR - Okay. Thank you for that.

Ms RATTRAY - Yes.

CHAIR - So, under 2.1 Long-term Strategic Approach for Upgrading the Section, are you confident, given the area it is in and the contrary weather we get, that the contractors will have enough experience in laying pavement on the west coast under these sorts of conditions? As we raise from time to time, the integrity of the pavement sometimes comes up wanting, I think is probably the best way to put it.

Ms RATTRAY - I think that's a very polite way of putting it, Chair.

CHAIR - And it may be that the contractors simply haven't had enough experience in these sorts of locations. They might be companies from the mainland. They just might not understand or be used to the colder weather. Are you confident that you're going to get people that are well and truly experienced in this sort of terrain and weather conditions?

Ms HAWKIN - I think that the department is fully aware that constructing roads on the west coast can be challenging, given the weather and the shortness of the construction season. So, as part of the tendering process that we go through to engage a contractor, we require a level of pre-qualification which demonstrates that the contractor is sufficiently experienced and able to undertake work of this nature. The level of pre-qualification is determined for each project. To back that up we also have specifications in place which control and mitigate risk in the way the project progresses and ultimately succeeds.

Mr MEYER - Just on the construction timeframe for the west coast, we try to get things out around June, so we can award them around August-September and have people on the ground around September-October. Hopefully they can do the majority of the clearing works and the pavements before Christmas. January-February is the peak sealing time. Towards the

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end of March is probably when they would stop doing any of the sealing works. If they haven't managed to seal all the prepared areas, that is when you might have to halt works for winter and come back again in November-December the following year. That is one of the reasons why we have got the two stages of works.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr TUCKER - I was just going to follow on from your comments. Looking at the roads that I have seen, they were constructed in 1960. I would hope that these roads would be constructed to the same standard as they were in the 1960s.

Ms RATTRAY - Bring back the good old methods.

Mr TUCKER - Doing them properly.

Mr ELLIS - On the section between Tullah and Pieman Road on the Murchison Highway, are you aware of the long delays and experience of that section of road? What guarantee do we have that this is not going to happen again on this road?

Mr MEYER - All we can do is plan as well as we can to get the contractors on site. Sometimes weather conditions do not go in our favour. I think last year it was quite wet in the January period, which delayed some works. We are open to seasonal issues like that.

Ms RATTRAY - So that is a no guarantee.

Mr MEYER - It is planning for the weather as much as we can.

Mr ELLIS - Have there been new controls put in place after that experience? It seemed particularly frustrating for a lot of the west coast road users?

Mr MEYER - Well, it depends on the sections of road, but sometimes they do some sealing works which we then have to remove and repair the following year in summer so it is not an extended gravel surface you are driving on through winter.

CHAIR - Things like tarmac that is very temperature sensitive and distance from where it is heated to where it gets finally laid, are there any particular arrangements that are made for that or do you leave it up to the contractor? Do you inspect their processes and procedures, because I think that is where a lot of this seems to come unstuck? The tarmac when it's laid and the aggregate that then goes on top of it just does not seem to embed properly. You get it stripping and those sorts of things.

Mr MEYER - That is left up to the contractor, but there are specifications and testing procedures that they have to adhere to which are quality checked by our project managers and superintendents.

CHAIR - So they go around and regularly check it?

Mr MEYER - Yes. There are temperature records and a whole bunch of test certificates that they have to record and then submit.

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CHAIR - So, do the contractors have to provide their own bitumen plans or how does that work these days?

Mr MEYER - That is up to the contractor.

CHAIR - It is up to the contractor, yes ok.

Mr TUCKER - Chair. When this whole section of highway is built in the 1960s, was that built by the Department of Main Roads or was it built by a contractor at that time?

Mr MEYER - I don't know the answer to that.

Ms RATTRAY - I am pretty sure it was Main Roads.

CHAIR - I am pretty sure it was Main Roads. I worked with them from 1971 to, sorry, from 1974 to 1984.

Mr TUCKER - Before your time.

CHAIR - It was before my time but they did all their own work, right up until probably the mid-'80s or a bit longer. So, I can't imagine it would have been contracted.

Mr ELLIS - What is the warranty period on a road on the west coast?

Mr MEYER - So normal warranty is two years, three years for a bridge, one year for shoulder sealing.

Ms HAWKINS - And I guess, just going back to your question about success of the project, as Sven was talking about in terms when we tried to get these projects out to tender so that they have sufficient time to be able to get going when the weather is good, we are on track with this project. It is currently out to tendering. We will be in a position, hopefully, to award, so that they can get started when the weather is good.

CHAIR - Okay, so are there any other questions under 2.1?

Move to 2.2: - options evaluation?

Ms RATTRAY - Thank you, Chair, just in the report, it talks about 'high-level option analysis report was completed' which identified different combinations of options for shoulder and curve widening. Was that just looking at the exact locations, or what does that entail?

Ms HAWKINS - So, it is more high-level. It is looking at the length of the road, determining where we have, say, curves, for example; where as a motorist or a vehicle is working their way through the curve, what's the drop in operating speed, so that determines a candidate for potential improvements. And looking at locations for stopping bays and passing lanes.

Ms RATTRAY - It is just really a due diligence.

Ms HAWKINS - Yes.

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Ms RATTRAY - Thank you.

CHAIR - Anything else on 2.3?

Ms RATTRAY - 2.3? Yes, I think Robyn gave a really good explanation when we looked at the video this morning about why there are only three locations in the west-bound carriage way, and five on the east-bound. I think that would be useful to have set on the record.

Ms HAWKINS - Certainly. So, the positioning of the stopping bays looked at locations where they would benefit motorists on the road, so trying to have them at regular intervals. But one constraint that is very present with this road is the actual opportunity to provide them. For this reason, we were trying to match the numbers in both directions but, unfortunately, there was not always a location for them to be provided. Also, it needed to consider safe sight distance for people to get in and out of the stopping bays, which was another constraint on the positioning, as well as the terrain.

Ms RATTRAY - And we noticed on our drive this morning for the length that we actually covered, the Chair and I, that there are quite a few informal areas that people must already use. How many of those will be formalised and how many will become redundant or perhaps, remain informal?

Ms HAWKINS - So, we will not be looking to take away any of the current informal. Essentially, from the video presentation this morning, you would have seen that the majority of the locations that we are looking at are currently gravelled areas where you can see that people are using them now. So they will be essentially formalised, with a full sealed width, so people can safely pull in and pull out.

CHAIR - So, in a sense, this would be the minimum of formal and there will still be some informal opportunities?

Ms HAWKINS - Yes.

CHAIR - And signage? That was brought up by one of the members. How much signage is there going to be to inform people that these opportunities will be available? Because obviously people who have not driven the road before won't know.

Ms HAWKINS - The stopping bays will include sufficient advanced warning signage to notify people that they are available and that they are coming up, so that they can safely pull in and out of them. And that will be part of the construction project.

CHAIR - And I have a question written down here, but after driving this morning I think it is probably a bit redundant. Were the locations mainly determined by the terrain, or settlement locations, or businesses? But I don't think there are too many houses between Queenstown and Strahan -

Ms RATTRAY - We didn't spot one this morning.

CHAIR - - On that road.

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Mr ELLIS - I think there are one or two maybe on the Strahan side.

Ms RATTRAY - Okay. There you go.

CHAIR - So, I'd suggest I've probably answered my own question, saying that it's mainly terrain.

Ms HAWKINS - Yes, that's correct.

CHAIR - Correct.

Ms HAWKINS - Correct and trying to get them at regular intervals as well.

CHAIR - Yes. Fair enough. So, unless there are any other questions on that page, over to project cost. So, overall project cost summary table. Any questions on that?

Mr ELLIS - I might just ask about the warranty costs. So, in a situation say, for example, if we had the section north of Tullah, where there's major break up of the roads in the first two years, that's paid for by the contractor out of their own pocket?

Mr MEYER - Yes, so that would be a defect and they would then have to repair that defect.

Mr ELLIS - Yes.

Ms RATTRAY - I am just having a look at - obviously you've looked at the road significantly in regard to the base cost estimate here. Do you realistically believe that the \$18.75 million that's been allocated will enable the works to be done as the concept plans that you've put in place? To me it doesn't seem like a lot of money in this scheme of things.

Ms HAWKINS - Yes, so I guess as you've commented, the road terrain is quite challenging but the benefit of having two packages, two stages of works, is that we will be able to get accurate project costing from the first tender and we will be able to adjust the scope as we need to, to make sure that we are sticking within our budget. But I believe that the proposed works that we're looking to deliver will certainly provide benefit for anybody using this road in the community.

Ms RATTRAY - And would it be fair to say that the sheer remoteness of this part of Tasmania for a workforce would mean that it would cost more to do the job because people will have to live away from home, if you like, and that comes at a significant cost for companies undertaking these works? Is that factored into the costs here at all?

Ms HAWKINS - In terms of the project costing, the department has the ability to look at recently completed projects in the same location to be able to provide more accurate estimates. So, I guess, in terms of their workforce, that is a contractor cost but the department does have the ability to look at recently completed projects and to have an understanding of what these projects are going to cost.

Ms RATTRAY - So, that is a fair comment, that there will need to be people working - and you're not going to drive in and out of this area, I expect, on a daily basis back to Burnie

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or back to Hobart, or wherever they might come from. They won't necessarily all live in this region.

Ms HAWKINS - I think that's up to the contractor, whoever the successful contractor is, and where their workforce is based. I probably can't comment on that other than that it's probably a reasonable statement but we won't know until we actually engage a contractor.

CHAIR - If it happens -

Mr MEYER - I was going to say, we've been doing upgrade works on the Murchison Highway for the last six years or so and I guess what we find there is because of the shorter season, prices are probably a little bit higher than you'd find nearer cities and towns.

Ms RATTRAY - To more built-up areas, yes.

CHAIR - Yes.

Mr MEYER - And a lot of the workforce do come in for the Monday to Friday and then leave again.

CHAIR - I've actually heard that it's very difficult to get accommodation for workers, even in St Helens because of a lack of rental opportunities. One expects that Queenstown has got quite a lot of accommodation opportunities; might even be cheaper because of the availability of beds. That's an interesting one, isn't it? But as you say, it's the contractor that determines these things. So -

Ms RATTRAY - But they'll build that into their price.

CHAIR - Yes, of course they will.

Ms RATTRAY - No contractor will just take that on the chin.

CHAIR - No, no, of course they don't.

Ms RATTRAY - Or they won't stay in business very long.

CHAIR - No, they won't. It can be a concern if there is very little opportunity for short-term rental accommodation. The Monte Carlo type of valuation you've got here, the P50 and P90, do you always choose the P90 or sometimes do you use the P50 when you are looking at the estimated costs?

Mr MEYER - We base the P90 on the budget commitments. We aim to construct the projects within P50. The difference between P50 and P90 is contingencies for any risks that might eventuate.

CHAIR - Yes, okay.

Ms RATTRAY - It is the Rolls Royce versus the Kia.

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CHAIR - I believe 90 per cent of estimates exceed the P90 estimate and 50 per cent of estimates exceed the P50 estimate, which means there is 50 per cent less and 50 per cent more than that figure. It is an interesting method to try to work out where you settle on the cost of a project.

Mr MEYER - It is. The majority of our products come within the P50 estimate.

CHAIR - Okay. It is interesting reading, I Googled it and we have done it before but it is interesting to see how that all works.

Any other questions on 3.1 or 3.2, the Budget Profile? Nothing? What about 4, project benefits?

Ms RATTRAY - I would say they are fairly clear.

CHAIR - Just in terms of improved transport resilience and system resilience, what are the traffic loads like with the other road from Strahan to Zeehan, for instance? Did you do a comparison with that? Maybe that is in here and I have missed it, but people travel 35 kilometres to use this other road because they simply do not want to negotiate what is presently there between Queenstown and Strahan. Do you have a comparison of the two roads in terms of traffic?

Mr MEYER - I am sure we do. When we talk about using the other road, a lot of that is for the freight movement because they generally do not like going up and down steep inclines. Henty Main Road and Murchison is a bit closer and better in grade.

CHAIR - So you wouldn't have a better understanding of, say, how many tourists would do the same thing, for instance? I suppose it's a bit hard without an origin destination survey.

Mr MEYER - I don't think we've done any work on that.

Ms HAWKINS - No. We obviously have traffic volumes but not so much the breakdown, other than vehicle class.

Mr MEYER - We just assumed maybe it was more the people with caravans or RVs who might choose the alternative route.

Ms RATTRAY - Some of that might well be the time of the year as well. They may choose to go the other way if it is very cold and there has been a snow drop or something.

CHAIR - But you're not going to know without the origin destination survey, I suppose.

Mr ELLIS - Can I just make a comment on the benefits, Chair? Certainly a lot of the feedback I have had from local communities has been that this will be extremely welcome. It is great to see that some funds are being spent on the west coast roads and Queenstown and Strahan are the two main tourist attractions on the west coast as well as two of the big hubs in terms of commercial activity on the west coast. It is great to see from a community perspective that this is getting spent and will be delivered.

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Ms RATTRAY - It would also be probably fair to say that the Cradle Coast Authority role in this has been quite significant in advocating for this upgrade.

Ms HAWKINS - Certainly West Coast Council have been pretty fundamental in terms of -

Ms RATTRAY - I'm not surprised about that; they would certainly be pushing the project absolutely.

Ms HAWKINS - They have been very good to work with.

CHAIR - So you have a preferred procurement method for the project under 5.1, open to tenders who meet the national pre-qualification requirements; you have covered a bit of that. Project timelines, you have given us that. Regarding risk and sustainability under 6.1, on your risk event there, the first one, you say that the scope of the project outputs cannot be delivered within in the allocated project budget or cash flows, and then you talk about project being over budget and you mention under risk mitigation strategy considering engaging specialists to undertake an independent first principles estimate. Does the department have its own quantity surveyors and the like these days or not?

Mr MEYER - We don't have our own quantity surveyors but we engage quantity surveyors sometimes external to the consultants who might be like a third-party check.

CHAIR - To run a check?

Mr MEYER - Yes, that's correct.

CHAIR - Is that what you mean there on that last point?

Ms HAWKINS - Yes. This project went through a constructability review before it went out to tender, just to give a bit of a check in terms of the estimates, so that has occurred.

CHAIR - So you engage an external quantity surveyor or a firm that has a quantity surveyor plus other specialists?

Ms HAWKINS - It was part of the design consultancy who engaged an independent check.

CHAIR - So rather than getting it designed independently, it is just to check on the design that the department has done? Is that what it is?

Ms HAWKINS - No, the design is done by a consultant engaged by the department and given the terrain and location for this project, the constructability and the estimate were reviewed by an independent party.

CHAIR - Just for the record, then, when you engage those sorts of people and specialists, one would expect that they would not be being engaged by a potential contractor.

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Mr MEYER - Yes. Normally contractors are prequalified to a certain value, so when we get constructive advice we would normally seek out a contractor that was not prequalified to the value of the tender we are putting out.

CHAIR - What I am saying in terms of the specialist you get in is that they are not likely, or one would hope, not being employed by the contractor that you get.

Mr MEYER - You mean as a subcontractor?

CHAIR - Yes, because of the conflict of interest.

Ms RATTRAY - They are independent.

CHAIR - They are truly independent?

Mr MEYER - Yes, they are independent, but I guess as subcontractors we do not have as much control as direct contractors. We'd make sure that they weren't of a standard that would be able to tender for a project. It's a bit more difficult to say whether they would actually work on a project on a subcontractor basis.

CHAIR - It is just that issue of making sure it is truly independent advice, as opposed to somebody who might know they are going to be employed by a contractor as part of the project and they want to, you know, make sure they get the job or something. You can understand what I'm saying in terms of conflicts, so do you, as a department, try to make sure that those sorts of conflicts are avoided?

Mr MEYER - We always try to make sure they are avoided as much as we can.

Ms RATTRAY - Chair, I have a question in regard to the possibility of closing the road. Given there is an alternative route, in my view it would probably make a lot of sense to close the road if you are going to do a stretch that is going to cause some significant delays, get it done and then open it up and get the traffic back on it in a more timely manner.

Ms HAWKINS - Our discussion with the Tasmanian Transport Association was that they are not in favour of having the road closed so we are not looking at that as part of the construction at this stage.

Mr ELLIS - Because the alternative route is about 20 minutes longer?

Ms RATTRAY - What was 35 kilometres longer?

CHAIR - It is 35 kilometres.

Mr ELLIS - It's about a kilometre a minute.

Ms RATTRAY - Okay, but there is no -

Ms HAWKINS - No.

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Ms RATTRAY - But I don't mean for the whole time, I mean for a week, where you go in and have a red-hot go at getting that particular stretch done, and then opening it up again. I would suggest that that is probably going to make some very good sense for the overall aspect. A week of inconvenience to -

Ms HAWKINS - I guess we go back to talking to our stakeholders with the feedback that we receive, so we will be looking to manage delays as part of the tender documents and the contract that will be formed with the contractor and it would be part of their responsibility to be able to manage traffic through the worksite and keep the delays to an acceptable level.

Ms RATTRAY - I thought that would have been a very sensible approach, but then I'm not in the business of contracting for these works.

CHAIR - It still doesn't hurt to ask questions. With stage 3, 'Unsafe or difficult management of traffic during construction due to the narrow and winding nature of the road', one of your mitigating strategies is contractor CEMP. I'm not quite sure what that stands for? To clearly identify a process of traffic management for superintendent acceptance as a hold point.

Ms RATTRAY - That's the stop and start arrangement.

Ms HAWKINS - So, it's just the construction environment management plan. It documents things like traffic management and the arrangements that are in place.

CHAIR - Yes. We brought this up the time before last, regarding after-hours signage and speed limits. Often there's a 40 kilometres per hour speed limit in place, slowing traffic down for no reason, because there aren't any workers there. Can you tell us how you might be communicating that to your contractors so that they cover those signs up or put a higher speed when there aren't any workers around?

Ms HAWKINS - From the department's point of view, we're very conscious that we want to have traffic management in place that people understand and see that there is a reason - for their safety and obviously for workforce safety. For that reason, we have traffic management audits that happen through a construction project. Regarding speed limits, unfortunately sometimes it isn't about workers being there. It might be about a hazard, such as a drop -

CHAIR - It could well be, yes.

Ms HAWKINS - - which people might not be able to readily see which can be an issue.

CHAIR - As we said before, when it's on a major highway -

Ms HAWKINS - Yes, for sure.

CHAIR - - and you're going from Hobart to Launceston, you're down to 40 and it's -

Ms HAWKINS - Agree.

CHAIR - - 10 p.m. and there's not a person in sight.

PUBLIC

Ms HAWKINS - I agree, but it's in everybody's interest to make sure that the traffic management is well understood and in place.

CHAIR - That's good.

Mr MEYER - Yes. So, in our high traffic areas, in large urban areas, it's always defined in our contracts the hours of work and the speed limit after hours that it needs to go back to.

CHAIR - Okay. So, you do communicate that to them.

Mr MEYER - Yes, so quite often if it's a 100 kilometres per hour environment you might have to put it back up to 80 kilometres per hour outside work hours.

CHAIR - For the record please explain what a deflectograph is and what that involves. It's on the fourth risk event there, testing of the existing pavement. What does a deflectograph do?

Ms HAWKINS - A deflectograph is a means of assessing pavement condition. It's a non-invasive means of assessing pavement. A truck drives along the road, which has a certain amount of weight and it's able to measure the deflection of the road as it's driving under that weight.

CHAIR - So, very sensitive equipment. So, you have another mitigation under that same risk of testing of the existing pavement, 'Staging of project will identify funding available for stage 2 after stage 1'.

We often think of costs blowing out and things that are outside the control of the department. Does this mean in such a contrary environment that stage 2 will always end up being underdone in any project like this? If that's a sort of mitigation strategy you're talking about?

Mr MEYER - As we've described, it's a very windy section of road and you could spend probably 10 times the amount straightening it. It's a matter of how much work we can do with the budget that we have.

CHAIR - Okay. All right.

Ms RATTRAY - I was going to ask about the additional requests -

CHAIR - This is the last -

Ms RATTRAY - - in the project by council or the transport association. You've talked about continuing engagement during the development phase. Is there something that either one of these two bodies have asked for that may be part of stage 2?

Ms HAWKINS - Not explicitly. As I said, we've taken on early engagement with both of these stakeholders. We're pretty confident that we are aligned with what we are delivering.

CHAIR - Okay. Any further questions up to 6.3?

PUBLIC

Mr ELLIS - I just want to clarify the potential disbenefits. We didn't find any threatened species or anything like that in the initial surveys.

Ms HAWKINS - No.

Mr ELLIS - So, this is just potential risks, yes?

Ms HAWKINS - Yes.

CHAIR - Okay. Now 7, stakeholder engagement. Well, we have stakeholder engagement further on.

Ms RATTRAY - We have a whole booklet of it. Well, a section of it.

CHAIR - Yes. So, are there any questions there? You say under 7.3 there is no land acquisition required for the nominated works but under 7.3 it says, 'Landowner consent is currently being sought from the various entities above for the nominated works.' Is it just a simple consent from Primary Industry, Parks, Water, Environment; Parks and Wildlife Service and Sustainable Timber Tasmania?

Ms HAWKINS - The landowner consent relates to the development application for the project, where it was required.

CHAIR - It's a council process?

Ms HAWKINS - Yes, that's right.

Mr MEYER - So, Robyn, just to clarify. Is this correct, that the majority of the corridor is owned by the Crown under different entities?

Ms HAWKINS - Yes.

CHAIR - Okay. Number 8, compliance. It says, 'Desktop investigations indicate that Aboriginal and historic heritage legislation are unlikely to be triggered by the project.' Is that desktop analysis that doesn't show any location for Aboriginal heritage? There aren't likely to be middens and things like that in this location?

Ms HAWKINS - We don't believe so. This project is operating on an unanticipated discovery plan.

CHAIR - So, if you do discover something, you've got to stop and negotiate it through?

Ms HAWKINS - At this stage we're pretty confident we're unlikely to encounter any -

CHAIR - Don't want a Brighton Bypass situation.

Ms RATTRAY - Would somebody have identified that back in the 1960s when the original road was put through?

PUBLIC

Ms HAWKINS - As part of the desktop assessment we've looked at any known records of Aboriginal or European heritage and none's been identified. With the widening, we're stepping outside the footprint of the current road so we just want to -

CHAIR - So, do you engage the relevant government department associated with Aboriginal heritage when you do these sorts of projects? How do you run that?

Ms HAWKINS - That unanticipated discovery plan was engagement to make sure that there were no issues identified.

CHAIR - Okay. And you go through established lists of heritage locations?

Ms HAWKINS - Yes.

CHAIR - Okay. Anything under 8.1, 8.2, 8.3? You have 'Natural values assessment recommended, ensure no impact to water quality'. You have some claims there. What processes have you used to confirm the claims?

Ms HAWKINS - In terms of the flora-fauna assessment, there was a desktop assessment done initially and followed up by an on-ground assessment, which would form the natural values assessment.

CHAIR - So, who do you get to do that?

Ms HAWKINS - It's a consultant.

CHAIR - It's a consultancy?

Ms HAWKINS - Yes.

CHAIR - What, North Barker or someone like that?

Ms HAWKINS - Yes.

CHAIR - Okay. Any further questions on that?

Ms RATTRAY - There is a typo in 8.4.

CHAIR - There is an 'and' missing in 8.1.

Ms HAWKINS - I apologise.

Ms RATTRAY - You do not have to apologise, we just read these.

CHAIR - 8.4. Where is the typo there - 'bot'.

Ms RATTRAY - Bot, just needs an 'h'.

CHAIR - 8.5. It is currently going through its planning approval process.

PUBLIC

Stakeholder consultation engagement plan: we move over to that. Any questions there that the members have?

Ms RATTRAY - We have got quite a bit of repetition there, Chair, but obviously that is part of the community consultation process.

CHAIR - Okay. You might want a few reports, purposes, page 5 of that. You have got the project is located on the west coast of Tasmania, local government authority area of West Coast Council, House of Assembly division of Braddon and Legislative Council division of Murchison there. They are around the wrong way.

Ms RATTRAY - The member for Murchison would never forgive us if we did not point that out, or the member for Braddon.

CHAIR - Page 6.

Ms RATTRAY - It is a repeat of what Robert has already shared with the committee.

CHAIR - Yes. Mining freight industry - which mine are we talking about down that way? You have got these various acts and configurations that are primarily used by the mining freight industry but, in this case, you would be probably more about aquaculture down that way.

Ms HAWKINS - Yes, probably speaking about the section between Queenstown and the Zeehan Highway junction.

CHAIR - OK, correct.

Ms RATTRAY - I have a question under engagement. Just talks about the consultation with affected landowners and it says that the project will require engagement with only a few affected landowners. Can we quantify a few?

Ms HAWKINS - I am not sure if it is in there already but the majority of the road corridor landowners are Crown.

Ms RATTRAY - Yes, so that is what we are talking about there, just Crown lands, parks and Sustainable Timber Tasmania, which are the three that have been identified.

Ms HAWKINS - Yes. I guess the other thing to take into consideration is because we are working in locations along the road, not the full week as well.

CHAIR - So, this is a living document, this is something that you update regularly as the project progresses.

Ms HAWKINS - Absolutely.

CHAIR - It is meaningful. It keeps you in touch with what is going on.

Ms HAWKINS - And if anything changes.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - Okay. I noticed under the escalation pathway, page 13, I do not see minister there anywhere and I am just thinking if any media releases and the like are going out that the minister might be interested.

Ms RATTRAY - Might be put out by the local member, Chair.

CHAIR - Might be put out to the minister himself, herself or whatever. Would it be that

Ms HAWKINS - We have processes in place in State Roads in terms of all of our stakeholder engagement, and the minister is certainly a part of all approvals processes in relation to consultations and media releases.

CHAIR - So that does happen?

Ms HAWKINS - Yes.

CHAIR - Yes, quite clearly. I am sure the minister would not want to wake up one morning hearing there is a problem that he had not been notified about. So, it is a given. Okay, any other questions on those processes and procedures? No? No other questions from the members? No.

We have a series of questions that we like to ask as we finish our scrutiny of these projects and they're pretty fundamental but it's important that we get an understanding of them. Do the proposed works meet and identify need or needs or solve a recognised problem?

Ms HAWKINS - Yes.

Mr MEYER - Yes.

CHAIR - Are the proposed works the best solution to meet identified needs or solve a recognised problem within the allocated budget?

Ms HAWKINS - Yes.

Mr MEYER - Yes.

CHAIR - Are the proposed works fit for purpose?

Ms HAWKINS - Yes.

Mr MEYER - Yes.

CHAIR - Do the proposed works provide value for money?

Ms HAWKINS - Yes.

Mr MEYER - Yes.

CHAIR - Are the proposed works a good use of public funds?

PUBLIC

Ms HAWKINS - Yes.

Mr MEYER - Yes.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Ms RATTRAY - Is there any gold-plating?

CHAIR - That's something you like to ask.

Ms RATTRAY - Well, Mr Brooks, a former member of this committee, always asked that question. He was always interested in whether we were gold-plating something or whether we were just keeping it at a -

Mr MEYER - Well, we don't believe so.

CHAIR - No. Well, thank you for coming today.

Ms HAWKINS - Thank you.

CHAIR - It's obvious that we need all the information we can get. I just need to remind you that what you've said to us today is covered by parliamentary privilege but if you walk out the door today and talk to the media you won't be covered by parliamentary privilege.

Ms RATTRAY - I think that's the *West Coast Gazette*.

Mr ELLIS - The *Zeehan Dundas Chronicle*, I think it was.

CHAIR - Is that what it is? Was it in there today? We've made the paper.

Mr ELLIS - I think they stopped operating about 1910 or something.

CHAIR - Did they? Okay. Thank you very much, it's been really valuable.

Ms HAWKINS - Thank you for having us.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.