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THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS MET AT THE EPPING FOREST HALL, EPPING FOREST ON MONDAY 26 JULY 2021

ILLAWARRA MAIN ROAD UPGRADE

Mr STEFANO CONFORTI, PROJECT MANAGER, DEPARTMENT OF STATE GROWTH, Mr SVEN MEYER, PROJECT MANAGEMENT TEAM LEADER, DEPARTMENT OF STATE GROWTH, Ms LIDIYA HUDSON, NETWORK PLANNER, DEPARTMENT OF STATE GROWTH WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED

CHAIR (Mr Valentine) - Before we commence the hearing, I do have an official component that we need to go through.

First, thank you for appearing. It is very important for us. We have the submission but we do need you to be able to explain that submission to us and we are pleased to hear that evidence today. Before you begin, I would like to inform you of some of the important aspects of the committee proceedings, if you haven't been to a hearing before.

A committee hearing is a proceeding of parliament and it means it receives the protection of parliamentary privilege. This is an important legal protection that allows individuals giving evidence to a parliamentary committee to speak with complete freedom, without the fear of being sued, or questioned in any court or place out of parliament. It applies to ensure that parliament receives the very best information when conducting its inquiries. It is important to be aware that this protection is not accorded to you if statements that may be defamatory are repeated, or referred to, by you outside the confines of the parliamentary proceedings. It is a public hearing and members of the public and journalists may be present. This means your evidence may be reported.

Do you understand? I need a 'yes' from each. Thank you.

WITNESSES - Yes.

CHAIR - Would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr CONFORTI - I would like to go through the PowerPoint presentation just to summarise the content of the actual report and the raw plan that was included in our submission.

CHAIR - Yes, do that now, thank you.

Mr CONFORTI - I will go through the presentation which, as I said, will summarise our report and I will read the parts that I want to highlight and let you read the rest.

We have the agenda there that lists what we will talk about. The introduction is that the Illawarra Road links the Midlands Highway to the Bass Highway. It will improve the scope of the road and it will improve the safety and the freight efficiency from the north-west of the state to the south. It will contain overtaking lanes. It will contain some pull over areas for the

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heavy trucks to the rest areas and will upgrade the existing pavement. It will improve the horizontal section of the road and vertical as well.

There will be turning facilities at regular intervals so that all the landowners around the road and the general traffic will be able to turn, as necessary, to private properties or just to go back to Launceston or whatever the direction they are taking.

Mr TUCKER - Going back to that one -

CHAIR - I would prefer to finish the presentation then we will commence with questions. If you can just note the question you have.

Mr CONFORTI - The freight efficiency will improve the reliability of travel time, and the link between the Bass Highway and the Midlands Highway will provide an active transport link between Longford and Perth. It will upgrade to the Aus Roads guidelines; it will improve the cross section and formalise appropriate overtaking lanes.

As you know now, it is just two lanes, so all the junctions and accesses will be improved as well. This one is some traffic-counting so we have 10 000 vehicles from Longford towards the Midlands Highway, 5000 in the opposite direction towards the Bass Highway. The 20-year projection is that those vehicles will increase to 15 000.

The project has been identified in the Aus Roads Package of the road of strategic importance so that is exactly what is happening on the Midlands Highway. There are at present - or at least was surveyed in 2016-17, 2 million tonnes of freight travelling that road and some 130 000 truck movements. The current roadway is deficient in all sense. It is typically a rural road at the moment with all accesses that go in and out. They take the left and right turn as they please. But we want to improve the safety so that all of that will be rationalised and all of the accesses will be improved in terms of sight line, land and width as the current standard dictates.

The design assures the deficiencies that we have now is that there are not dedicated overtaking lanes and we would put one in each direction. The traffic is slowed because there are no overtaking opportunities. There are all types of freight vehicles and agricultural vehicles – all sorts of things – travelling on two lanes only. The existing road has been there for quite a while. In history, there were upgrades but their pavement is possibly inadequate so we will look at that again and we will be able to match the new to the old one and upgrade the lot.

We talked about the accesses that are not safe as they are at present so there is not compliance with the Aus Road standards. There are unsafe upgrade that stop crossing, apparently, and there are no U turn facilities. We will improve all of that as part of the scope of the works.

Here is a list of the main stakeholders in the area. I will let you go through that yourself, if that is okay. They are the local council, businesses, JBS near the Longford roundabout, vineyards and there is infrastructure, TasNetworks and TasWater. TasNetworks is all along the stretch of road between the Longford roundabout to the Bass Highway. It is on the north of the road. Potentially there may be some considerable power pole relocation.

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We have completed now all the site studies: that includes Aboriginal heritage, European heritage and heritage constraints due to mainly hedgerows one side and the other which perhaps pose the biggest physical constraint to us. Flora and fauna, and geo-technical investigations.

We didn't have any finding of Aboriginal heritage along the stretch of the road that we are considering. European heritage – we will have to work with it, around it and deal with it. If there is not significant flora and fauna, perhaps we may assume that there may be some green and gold frogs.

Our investigation revealed some area of weaknesses in their existing pavement which we will have to deal with as part of the design. That is what we want to upgrade to. We generally want to improve the cross-section of the road, as we will see in the next slide. There will be a median separation between the two directions of traffic; G turns, P turns as necessary; overtaking lanes, one in each direction. There will be some horizontal realignment, but mainly vertical alignment in two spots where you cannot see over the hill as you travel.

We will include two pullover areas where trucks can stop and rest. Some exercise areas will be included in those pullover areas, and also a picnic recreational area for those who need to rest and keep active.

At this stage, we will have to consider a shared path between Longford and Perth. A shared path means that pushbikes and pedestrians could go across between Longford and Perth. It is only a concept at this stage, because there is also a river in between. We do not have a defined scope for that, but that is part of stage 3 of the project, which will need lots of consideration.

This is the cross-section that we were looking at - 3.5 metre running lanes and 2 metre shoulders with a median in between. This is a typical G turn to help cross the road in a safe way for the landowner on the opposite side, if necessary. This is just typical; we do not know at this stage where and whether that will be there, but that is a way to cross the road safely.

Then there are the P turns that can be staggered. There are plenty of examples along the Midlands Highway that, as far as I understand, work very well. You can include the accesses from properties which will have left-in and left-out access, if it makes sense. Some of them are coming from this direction.

Ms RATTRAY - Hansard cannot pick that up, Stefano. Pictures are good, but not for *Hansard*.

Mr CONFORTI - Sorry, I forgot. We included the plan in the submission.

CHAIR - Yes, I think we have all received that plan, which is longer than our kitchen tables.

Mr CONFORTI - This is the cost of the project at this stage. We are just about to submit the project proposal report to the federal government to obtain the funding. Those are the figures that we are trying to match.

There is a bit of timing for our project. First of all, the procurement. To begin with, we were thinking to go to 'design and construct', but that perhaps posed too much risk. We also

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understand that the stakeholders do not particularly prefer that option, because there is their handover from the department to wait on tractors - so they cannot figure out who is doing what and what responsibility they have at different times so we will go out to a traditional tender, construct only, and it will be a lump sum contract for the three phases of the job.

The timing there is going to tender in August this year and that is just for the stretch of road between the roundabout and Tannery Road. That will include the rest areas. Then there will be phase 2: that is between the Longford roundabout all the way to the Bass Highway, that is the longest stretch. We'll go to tender in early 2022. Then phase 3: that is the one east of the Longford roundabout to the new Perth Link. Our projection is to go to tender in late 2022.

I have finished the formal presentation but as I said it's just a summary of our report.

CHAIR - Thank you for that. Normally what we do is provide an opportunity for any overview questions as opposed to detail because we'll go through this page by page to make sure we cover all the material.

I will just do an opening statement with respect to it. I have to say there are some things that concern me with respect to the documentation. One of the purposes of this committee is to make sure that we give opportunity for those who are affected by these sorts of projects to be able to come and present to the committee.

There are certain times in your presentation where you say, like the 'shared path is not a defined project yet;', 'not sure where the 'G' turns are yet', those sorts of things. Yet farmers who use this area may well be quite impacted by that.

I am just wondering, it seems to me on this particular documentation to be a little premature. I don't know whether you have any statement to make with respect to that but it just seems that there's a lot that's unresolved at this point that might well impact people who are living in and around or using this particular area of the highway.

Do you have any broad statement to make in regard to that?

Mr CONFORTI - Yes, it is a question of timing. The project has to be separated in different phases and so there is lots of stakeholder engagement, as we call it, talking to people and understanding their needs. That needs to be done. Even if we would have an idea of where to put this turning facility we want to be transparent and hear from the public first before coming out with conclusions. Also, there is the fact that we still have to obtain the funding for the project.

As you know, at the moment the department has quite a big workload so we are speeding up the process of doing things in parallel. I remember many years ago we used to do the full design and then we would come to see you but the old process would have lasted perhaps years while now we have to condense all these actions. That is the only reason.

I am not sure whether this is the place to exactly define all the characteristics of the design. As I said, we are in stage 1 and we have that pretty much firm but the rest hasn't been designed yet. That's the reason why.

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CHAIR - I think this is where some of the issues come in.

Has anyone got any other overview questions with respect to this? I mean overview as opposed to the detail.

Mr TUCKER - If I could ask Stefano just a quick question. There is \$80 million here in the budget to do this. With the way contract pricing is going at the moment, do you foresee that this will be enough to cover what you're proposing to do?

Mr CONFORTI - Included in that \$80 million there are contingencies, so, yes, it should be sufficient but we will have the certainty just at the end.

CHAIR - With so much unresolved, this is some of the issue I think. We are used to seeing a breakdown of the project, what is going to be spent, where it is going to be spent, what the contingencies are for each of the phases, all those sorts of things. That is some of the detail that is important when we come to examine a project like this: that we have comfort that the budget that is being put forward is sufficient.

Mr CONFORTI - What the designers do is a concept design that includes the width of the road and the volumes they have, they survey so they understand how much material they have to create those overtaking lanes. We know that there will be two overtaking lanes in each direction, we know how long they are but we do not know exactly where they are because we have not gone that far to design the exact location. For the volumes of material, we have a fair idea and that is where they create the estimate and to date, obviously they put some contingencies that can be the market, the condition of the market, the variation in the volumes and these types of things. So they should be sufficient.

Ms BUTLER - Insofar as the community consultation and the acquisition consultation with the landowners, where are you at with that, at the moment? Are you nearly finished that consultation with the actual landowners at this stage?

Mr CONFORTI - We didn't finish the consultation because the consultation is an ongoing process that actually goes through to construction. For stage 1 we saw all of them and they all know that they have acquisition. I think they may have also received the notice of acquisition that actually established the area. I should double check that that is the case. For phase 2 entry we just went to listen to what they need, how they use the Illawarra Road at the moment and what other characteristics of their business and how many vehicles they have in and out. That is the stage we are in now.

That will go on and on and we will progress; as soon as we go to tender with stage 1 we will go in more details in the design of stage 2 and we will talk to them and propose details of the design.

Ms RATTRAY - Chair, I want to endorse the words that you provided in your opening statement around this. I have not been a member for a long time on this committee. This is the most lightweight submission that I have seen in my time so I also had those questions.

I go to the community consultation report. One of the concerns is, and this comes to the nub of what we are dealing with, it talks about the Illawarra road as a 'rural service road that carries a high volume of tourists and commuter traffic'. We are making it into a highway when

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it is actually a rural road. Where was the conversation around changing the status of that road to make it a highway? That is why we are in this situation where we have not had that conversation that I am aware of in the community.

Mr CONFORTI - I mentioned that these are standard rural roads but we said that it is also used by the freight as the main link between the north-west and the south. We link port, we link transport hubs and of course it is used by tourists and the locals just like the Midlands Highway.

Ms HUDSON - Could I just add that the Illawarra Main Road is recognised under the federal roads act as a Category 1 road. It is identified as a major highway. That is a national highway network standard.

Ms RATTRAY - That broad conversation has been had then?

Ms HUDSON - Yes, it has been classified by the federal government as a link within the national highway.

Ms RATTRAY - There is obviously still some community concern around that, for them to put that into the feedback process - and we will get to that a bit later.

Mr ELLIS - Thanks for your time. The Illawarra Road has been classified as a road of strategic importance linking the Bass Highway, the Midland Highway, the north-west to the south. I drove on it this morning to get here. Can you give me a sense of how strategically important this section of road is to Tasmania?

Ms HUDSON - It's part of the national highway network, and it has been recognised as a key link to improve efficiency for the movement of heavy vehicles, and to provide a safer network for those heavy vehicle drivers and other users on that road. It does link all the primary activity that happens in the north and north-west to the ports, mostly through to Hobart. It gives that efficiency in the network.

CHAIR - Does that save them going via the Launceston route, for instance?

Ms HUDSON - Yes. There are obviously travel-time savings and fuel savings, and that lowers impacts on the environment, and it is safer for the drivers because they get a shorter trip. The rest areas on this link are also a requirement of regulations that heavy vehicle industry has to comply with, to give their drivers adequate rest stops. It is providing a number of those benefits.

CHAIR - How about we go to the report now. We will do it page by page. Thank you for the answers. It all adds to the information that we need to process when we look at this in committee.

We have the project summary. I have questions there, but I will go to members on that first page.

Mr TUCKER - Chair, I was going to ask a quick question on the submission that has been put forward. Are we going to ask questions on that after this, or now?

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CHAIR - Now.

Mr TUCKER - Stefano, in your introduction you talked about at-grade stock crossings. Can you explain to me more fully what an at-grade stock crossing is?

Mr CONFORTI - At-grade is of the same level as Illawarra Road.

Mr ELLIS - Rather than an underpass.

CHAIR - Rather than an underpass or overpass.

Mr TUCKER - Could you explain it a little bit further? The road is lifted a bit at the moment. You are talking about it being at the same level as what - to the gate, to the entrance?

Mr CONFORTI - Yes. For example, the JBS Meats business that at the moment just crosses from one side to the other, because they have property on both sides of Illawarra Road. What will happen there, which we have been discussing with them - and in agreement with them - is that rather than crossing, they will travel to Tannery Road and go out the back of the property to do their movements.

We will eliminate that upgrade crossing. There is an underpass in another business - I can't remember the name - that will basically cross under the road, so it is not an at-grade.

Mr TUCKER - With the accesses with gates along Illawarra Road, will they all be at-grade, or are there ones that won't be at-grade?

Mr CONFORTI - We have to provide crossing access for those who have property on one side and the other. It can be done by a stock underpass if there is one existing, or as we did with JBS Meats. Rather than crossing the road, they will have to turn left, and turn into Tannery Road where we will formalise a safe turn. If there are more of this crossing on Stage 2, we will have to see what is the best way for the landowners and to fit the design around the links.

CHAIR - Just to clarify, and for the record, there will not be on this road, actual stock crossing the road at any point?

Mr CONFORTI - No, we are trying to avoid that at all costs.

CHAIR - Otherwise you would not get Category 1 rating?

Mr CONFORTI - Exactly.

Ms RATTRAY - Chair, to follow on from the member's question, how do you tender a project when you actually don't know what you are going to be asking that contractor to do?

Mr CONFORTI - At the moment, in August, we are going to tender just with the project between the roundabout. At this stage, 80 per cent designed, so from now to August, we will complete the design 100 per cent, and be able to go to tender.

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Mr TUCKER - With your P turn and G turns that you talked about, how big a vehicle will they be able to handle? A B-double going in there?

Mr CONFORTI - Yes.

Mr TUCKER - They will be designed for a B-double? So what can go on the highway at the present moment, they will be able to handle that equipment?

Mr CONFORTI - Yes.

Mr TUCKER - The other thing I was going to ask quickly, with your two metres on the side there, where you showed the three and a half metres, is that sealed from the two metre to the three metre? It looked like on there it was a metre wide then gravel or aggregate from a metre on, back there.

CHAIR - Don't forget we have Hansard.

Mr CONFORTI - The 3.5-metre lane, then the two-metre shoulder, all of that will be sealed at the same grade. The verge will be unsealed.

Mr TUCKER - Will be gravel?

Mr CONFORTI - Yes.

Mr TUCKER - At the same level, or is that -

Mr CONFORTI - No, they just start, for drainage issues; they want to let the water run off.

CHAIR - So the question there is, with a harvester, if the person is transferring a harvester, a contractor is driving a harvester, from point A to point B, they are very wide. They are on that single lane part, not the double lane part. They are pulling over to let traffic pass. Are they going to be pulling over into a very steep batter with a risk of the harvester tilting and possibly rolling?

Mr CONFORTI - First of all they will have to use the same traffic management that they use now. They probably have flashing lights and perhaps a vehicle behind them, so that will still apply. With the two extra metres off shoulder - that does not exist at the moment - they will have plenty of room.

CHAIR - Do you have any indication, during your consultation, that that sort of use will be required with harvesters and the like? Has anybody queried or questioned the capacity of the new road to be able to handle their harvester?

Mr CONFORTI - I do not know the details of the consultation, Rob, but I can take that one on notice. I am sure we know by now the nature of every business, so perhaps they asked the question and perhaps they had an answer, but I would not have the details with me.

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Mr MEYER - The project is upgrading the existing roads, so for the harvesters or other traffic that is on the road now, all this project will do is improve it by having the 2-metre shoulders plus the overtaking lanes. If there is no room to pull over they can wait.

CHAIR - The question is, that central barrier, the wire barrier: no one has expressed a concern with the height of that barrier, that if there is a wide vehicle, like a harvester, that it is likely to connect with the barrier, or that there are concerns with that central barrier?

Mr MEYER - I am not aware, but we haven't gone through the community consultation phase yet. We have been talking to the stakeholders.

CHAIR - As far as you are aware, are there any outstanding issues that stakeholders have raised that you feel can't be addressed at this point?

Mr CONFORTI - We have lots of requests from McKinnon, that is the owner of the property just close to the Perth Link but that is phase 3. It is perhaps the most complex stage of the works so we left it later just so that we have plenty of time to talk to them. We have already had a number of meetings with them. Again, I cannot go into the specifics of it but we are talking to them.

Ms RATTRAY - Chair, there were 19 submissions and I rang the department to see if I could get a copy of the 19. I had a copy of one and I was told that the committee had the submissions. I asked the secretary and the secretary said that we don't have the submissions.

I am interested in where are the 19 submissions and can the committee have a look at those submissions?

Mr CONFORTI - I am not sure whether 'submission' is actually the right term but they were considerations made by -

CHAIR - Representations?

Mr MEYER - Meeting minutes.

Mr CONFORTI - Yes, they were meeting minutes from all of the stakeholders.

Ms RATTRAY - So there aren't actually 19 submissions? I have one here.

Mr CONFORTI - Not to us. There have been lots of discussions with the stakeholders so far.

CHAIR - How many would you have that you would call proper submissions like this?

Ms RATTRAY - Like a genuine submission.

CHAIR - We were provided with that direct to the committee once it was advertised.

Mr CONFORTI - The stakeholder engagement is conducted by our consultant, so there have been plenty of conversations with the landowners. Whether they have done submissions of formal documents I don't know. I will have to let you know.

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CHAIR - Okay.

Mr CONFORTI - At this stage, we are talking with these people so we'll have to come out with some conclusions. There is also a bit of privacy about the conversations that we are having with them.

CHAIR - I can appreciate some may not want their submissions or representations made public. I can appreciate that. For whatever reason, it could be commercial, who knows, but everyone has that right, I guess. It's just that whatever information we can get, it obviously helps us in assessing this project.

Mr ELLIS - Would I be able to ask, for the benefit of the committee, what is the time-saving that we're talking about if you take the Illawarra Main Road rather than, say, going through to Launceston? Roughly what is that benefit for people travelling in that direction?

Ms HUDSON - I would have to take that on notice and get that information for you. I don't know off the top of my head exactly but I'd say it's probably in the -

CHAIR - Twenty minutes.

Ms HUDSON - Yes, it's probably 20 minutes either end of Launceston.

Mr MEYER - It's significant. When you talk about freight efficiency every minute counts for the owners of trucks.

Mr ELLIS - This is a rural road conceptually and by the standard but people are essentially voting with their feet or voting with their vehicles to go along this road because it's saving them 15 to 20 minutes, hence the need to upgrade the road to the standard that people seem to benefit from.

Mr MEYER - It's part of the National Highway network. This project is to bring it up to the standard required for a national highway.

Mr CONFORTI - I suppose, as we mentioned, this rural road-type of standard that is how the road looks but we are not going to change the use of the road. The trucks are already there. They are travelling already on Illawarra Road; we are just making it safer for everyone.

CHAIR - For the record, you were telling us earlier that it doesn't have the flexible barriers on the left or right of the road, only in the centre?

Mr CONFORTI - Yes but if necessary, if the batter is steep or there is any another risk, we may put some barriers on the side as well, but only if there is the need for it.

Ms BUTLER - For the record as well, because here in the introduction it refers to the AusRAP 3-star rating, what are the countermeasures that are being considered to ensure the 3-star rating under the AusRAP Safer Roads Investment Plans?

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As part of the answer, are there alternatives to placing that wire barrier down the middle of that road which could still provide the proper star rating? Are there other alternatives that could be used?

Ms HUDSON - Often those alternatives include widening the carriageway. So you would have much wider carriageway and you would have almost like another lane in the middle to separate the traffic.

CHAIR - Like Bagdad.

Ms HUDSON - Yes, like in parts of Bagdad, similar to that. There are things that you can put in place but that would have a greater impact on property owners and the need for acquisition.

Ms BUTLER - Right. Are those alternatives being considered? It seems that the wire barrier down the middle will seem to be quite an inconvenience to many people. We know that that is not the Rolls Royce of design but it still fits us into that star category rating. Are other alternatives being actively investigated in relation to this project?

Ms HUDSON - There are impacts on the budget for those sorts of things so they would have to be weighed up as far as how much of your contingency are you going to potentially eat up. Property acquisition then becomes much more pricey and that comes out of the project budget. There are options for other things.

Mr MEYER - There are design constraints. As Stefano mentioned, there is quite a lot of European heritage along this road which includes hedgerows but also some old structures. If you don't use the wire rope and have a wide median instead, you would have to do more acquisition which would impact on that European heritage. There is also quite a significant increase in cost to take into account. To achieve the AusRAP 3 with the constraints that we have, the wire rope is probably the only scenario that would work.

CHAIR - Do you continue to hold with that AusRAP 3 rating, that the wire barrier is the safest option? We have had, over time as members of parliament, representations made to us by motorcyclists - I declare I am one of them - that wire rope barriers are anathema to them. Have you done any more research into that to see whether it is the most appropriate for this sort of circumstance?

Ms MEYER - The safest option is to drop the speed limit, but we are always trying to weigh up freight efficiency and travel efficiency. Longford is a large commuter area to Launceston now. It's the best scenario.

CHAIR - Okay. Any other questions on that first page? I have one and that is crash records for that area of road. It says: 'The upgrade is expected to also improve safety outcomes along this connector road'. Do we have any crash statistics that you can share for this particular section of road that point to the need for the safety redesign?

Mr CONFORTI - There would be, Rob, but I don't have them in front of me. I will have to take it on notice.

Mr MEYER - We can provide those.

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Ms BUTLER - On that, I did some background research on this and looked at the 2009 Illawarra Road Public Works Committee statement. That information was in that. In 2009, there was a lot [inaudible] to the committee. I wanted to state that on record. I know we can't use that information because we can only make our judgment [inaudible.] For the record, the 2009 committee hearing, the committee was provided a lot more information than this one has.

CHAIR - Okay, that is a statement. When does the reference design phase begin? You have the concept design phase, when does the reference design phase begin?

Mr CONFORTI - We are going to tender in August 2021 with phase 1, and will then immediately start the design of stage 2.

CHAIR - You think that by the time that tender comes up, you will have completed your stakeholder consultation, and will have firmed up the G turns, P turns and all the rest? Or is part of the tender going to be finalising the design?

Mr CONFORTI - Apart from Tannery Road and the Bishopsbourne Road intersection, which has already been designed and has basically been staggered - so rather than crossing, the two junctions have been spaced from each other. They are not P or G junctions. The P and G junctions will be in stage 2, which we will start designing immediately after going to tender with stage 1. Basically, we will start the design of the second phase of the project in September 2021.

CHAIR - No other questions on that page. Any questions on page 2, Project Scope?

Ms RATTRAY - Do we know how many landowners and access points are in phase 1? Do we actually have a number?

Mr CONFORTI - I cannot give you the exact number now, but we definitely know we have the whole list of stakeholders.

Ms RATTRAY - They have all been informed?

Mr CONFORTI - Yes, we talked to each one of them at least once; some of them already multiple times.

Ms RATTRAY - We know there was to be a wire barrier on the Mangalore straight, but there was significant community input - including me. That concept was changed to meet the needs of the community. Is that still an option for this community when it comes to access in and out of, and how far they have to go up the road to turn around to come back to get out of the area?

Mr CONFORTI - I suppose everything is possible with the design of stage 2. We cannot exclude anything, but I do not know anything specific to the Mangalore project because I was not part of it.

Mr MEYER - Mangalore had a lot more residents along a shorter length. While there are quite a number of stakeholders on this section of road it is mostly rural properties, so they are quite spread out. The only way you could achieve that design would be more acquisitions,

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with impact on the hedgerows and European heritage and those sorts of things, to achieve the width required for a central median.

Ms RATTRAY - You could have more breaks, though.

Mr MEYER - Breaks and a lower barrier? You, could, yes, but what we are trying to do with these P turns and G turns is to centralise those locations so that they are safe facilities.

Ms RATTRAY - But it is possible?

Mr MEYER - It is possible.

CHAIR - If you do have more breaks, it makes it harder to reach the ANCAP 3-star rating. Is that right?

Mr MEYER - The idea of the P and G turns is to turn off left, to then go straight across, to get good visual. The alternative would be to have central turning lanes.

CHAIR - Yes, like Baghdad?

Mr MEYER - Yes.

Ms BUTLER - I would like to ask a question about the three bridges over the South Esk River. Will those three bridges be able to meet the 100-year flood specifications? That is a flood prone area. Has there been any consideration of upgrades to those bridges along the project?

Mr CONFORTI - There are no considerations to upgrade the bridges; they will stay the way they are. The budget does not include them.

Ms BUTLER - And the 100-year flood considerations?

Ms HUDSON - The bridges have recently been reviewed for their integrity and they have all been identified as being fine.

Ms BUTLER - Whilst we are on that, so those stages, a lot of those areas are in flood prone, flood risk areas. With the Esk flooding - today for the record there is a flood risk warning for the Esk as well - those kinds of considerations, has the 100-year flood predicament for that area, which does have a vast history of flooding, been taken into account? Will that be taken into account with the design and drainage of the project?

Mr CONFORTI - I think we are still far away from the details of phase 3. The area prone to flooding is in stage 3 of the project. Obviously, all the design consideration for drainage will be applied.

Mr TUCKER - I was going to come back to the cross-section and the 3 metres on the shoulder. If we have a truck break down on that shoulder, they are putting out their cones, they are 2.4 metres wide with the truck, which puts you out onto that 3.5 metre running lane. Then if we have an oversize vehicle coming through, I suggest you probably have about a metre from

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the wire rope. You have 100 millimetres to get that vehicle through with that wire rope. Has that been considered, a situation like that?

Mr CONFORTI - I think we do risk assessments and will consider that eventuality and see the frequency of that risk appearing, and whether it is necessary to change the design for that eventuality.

Mr TUCKER - So does it take that in the future, or at the present moment, that risk?

Mr CONFORTI - The risk assessment is an ongoing process that goes all along the project from the beginning to the end. I am not quite sure how and how often that eventuality would apply.

CHAIR - I guess he is raising it because it's possible. It is possible that that could happen. At the moment there is no wire barrier, so they just go out into the other lanes. That is the reason I was asking the question about the height of those barriers. If there is something that is wider on a tray, whether those wire barriers are going to be - how high they are going to be and whether it is going to interrupt something that is very wide, like a house on a tray. Those sorts of things.

Mr CONFORTI - I suppose there would be special traffic management undertaken by the [inaudible] that has to go through with whatever, transferring a house from one place to another.

Mr TUCKER - Under 12 feet, which is your 4 metres, you can travel with agricultural machinery down a highway. What I am saying is, that a truck is 2.4 metres wide. That leaves you 100 mm between that wire rope barrier and that truck. That is it if that truck is right on the boundary of that 2 metres. I am saying to you that you are cutting this very, very fine with the measurements you have there, for something like that to occur.

Mr CONFORTI - So maybe it would be the case to stop the traffic behind the very wide load.

Mr TUCKER - But you don't have to stop the traffic with agricultural machinery of 12 feet travelling up the highway, or just under 12 feet.

I am saying that if you have a truck, and the truck breaks down on the highway, that adds to those measurements there on the side where you have only got the single lane. You have 100 mm to get that machine through, past, if it's a B-double. Nearly a 50-foot-long machine, at 100 mm between that and the wire rope. Yes you can do it, with skilled operators, but there is that risk. All I'm saying is maybe with the sections where you're putting the wire rope, we have to look at a wider section on the shoulder for this to not occur if we are going to put a wire rope down there. Like the Chair has said, where we don't have those wire ropes down the middle you can go out and around. It might even be that you move the wire rope across instead of being in the middle, across to that other running lane, closer there where this section is to give you that extra metre of width.

In my opinion, it's something that needs to be considered in the plan to correct an issue that could or most likely will occur somewhere along that road.

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Mr CONFORTI - At the moment my answer is appropriate, but I heard that actually the safety barrier can be pulled down in an emergency. Whether that will apply to that particular risk - but I would prefer to take the question on notice and come back with an answer. I'm pretty sure that they must have come across that particular risk many times before in all the projects that we've completed so far.

Mr TUCKER - Yes.

Mr CONFORTI - I'm sorry I don't have that specific answer but I will ask.

Ms RATTRAY - When you talked about there was going to be no work on the bridges, does that mean that the road pavement will be so wide and then it will narrow into the bridges and then widen out again on those three bridges? Is that effectively what will happen?

Mr CONFORTI - Yes.

Ms RATTRAY - Thank you. I wanted to clarify that.

Ms BUTLER - Will the wire barrier be on the bridges?

Mr CONFORTI - No, there wouldn't be enough room to put up a barrier.

Ms BUTLER - The traffic will still be travelling at 100 kilometres per hour in those three sections without the wire in the middle?

Ms HUDSON - The speed limit on the bridges is lower.

Ms BUTLER - So, each bridge lowers to 80 kilometres and then goes up again to 100 kilometres? Okay.

Ms HUDSON - They're all connected coming up to the roundabout so they're all slowing down to get to the roundabout. Then they'll be able to speed up on the other side to get through to the Bass Highway.

CHAIR - Okay.

Mr ELLIS - I note that they recently constructed the Perth Bypass. The impact and interface with this project I assume will probably mean more traffic going through that road than what we were seeing prior to the construction. Would that be right?

Mr MEYER - My understanding is that the volume of traffic has increased quite a lot. I understand that quite a lot of new houses have been built in that Longford/Perth area, so we're expecting quite a bit more traffic to be using the Perth Link through to Longford, which is one of the main reasons we're talking about the separated shared pathway for people to walk and ride from Longford through to Perth.

Mr ELLIS - So there's an increased need for safety as well as an increased need for user amenity based on these upgrades that have been taken?

Mr MEYER - Yes, that's correct.

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CHAIR - Thanks for that. Are there any further questions on that 2.1?

I talked about the crash history. We don't have any full detail on that at this point. That was answered earlier. Are there any other questions there?

Mr ELLIS - Can you give us a sense of what that 'hazardous objects in close proximity to the road' are?

CHAIR - You are under 2.2?

Mr ELLIS - 2.1.

Mr MEYER - It could be some of the European heritage.

Mr CONFORTI - That could be trees, plantings, perhaps infrastructure like power poles or, I understand, there are some brick walls and I cannot name but we will consider all of them. That is the nature of the objects.

CHAIR - Are you aware of much realignment of power poles and things, or is that not likely to occur?

Mr CONFORTI - I think it is very likely to occur. That is in phase 2 of the project.

CHAIR - Thank you. Further questions? Okay, under 3 -

[discussion with committee secretary]

CHAIR - We'll suspend scrutinising this report because we have a witness who is time-constrained. If you could allow the witness, Mr Swain, to come - perhaps you can take a seat while we provide Mr Swain an opportunity to talk with us.

Ms RATTRAY - Can we have Ms Skirving as well, so she can go if she wants to?

CHAIR - Both at the same time?

Ms RATTRAY - No, after Mr Swain.

CHAIR - Oh yes, we could do both witnesses.

Ms RATTRAY - That would be the nicer thing to offer. She's probably like the rest of us, freezing to death. We should have had some of those heat packs.

CHAIR - You'll have to move if you don't mind. Sorry about that. It's just that we've got a time constraint.

Welcome, and thank you for coming along and providing us the opportunity to hear what your concerns are. Secretary, can you please swear in the witnesses.

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Ms JILL SKIRVING and Mr ROGER SWAIN WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED

CHAIR - Thank you. I'll read the statement again, so you're aware. You may have heard it before, but I need to do that formally. Obviously we're pleased to hear your evidence today.

This committee hearing is a proceeding of parliament. It means that it receives the protection of parliamentary privilege. This is an important legal protection that allows individuals, such as yourselves, giving evidence to a parliamentary committee to speak with complete freedom, without the fear of being sued or questioned in any court or place out of parliament. It applies to ensure the parliament receives the very best information when conducting its inquiries. It is important to be aware that this protection is not accorded to you if statements that may be defamatory are repeated or referred to by you outside the confines of the parliamentary proceedings. It is a public hearing and members of the public and journalists may be present, and this means your evidence may be reported. Do you understand?

WITNESSES - Yes.

CHAIR - Thank you. Over to you to provide us with comments as you -

Ms SKIRVING - First, could I say that we did put a submission for the wrong day. It was a northern roads package that we noticed in the paper and we assumed that that would be the Illawarra Road.

CHAIR - Oh right, okay.

Ms RATTRAY - But it's all relevant to what we're talking about.

Ms SKIRVING - It is all relevant today and we did get a copy sent to Tania and Jen. I don't know whether you've -

CHAIR - I've received it.

Ms RATTRAY - I shared it with all members.

Ms SKIRVING - Thank you, Tania. We're here today, I guess, to make sure that it is going to be a suitable road for the epicentre of agriculture that the Longford-Cressy area is.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr SWAIN - That's right, Mr Chairman. Can I say that I'm impressed with you and your committee's thorough, if you like, interrogation here this morning. I hope that it continues when we leave. I guess as a proud Tasmanian, and you are also proud Tasmanians, we really want to see high-quality roads built in our municipalities that are both safe and functional. That's the issue. I know that Jill is very much on the case because you guys drive up and down this highway a fair bit and there's bits and pieces that are simply not functional.

Some of the roads we've had built in our municipalities are less than functional. The thing that we really want to see is, that if we're going to spend \$80 million, we want a road that

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is both safe and functional. As John has quite rightly pointed out, we don't want savage drop-offs on the side; there's a risk that someone's going to drop a truck or something over.

An example at the moment is Green Rises Road. In the four months since it has been rebuilt, I've been told four vehicles have gone off the road into the ditches, because that road has been built up, and the ditches are deep and wide - and the road is not wide.

So, if through your deliberations and the technical expertise you have here in the room - and I commend you on your efforts - we get the Illawarra Main Road functional and safe, and the landowners on either side of the road have their access points improved - I was a little concerned that one of the comments was that they will be rationalised, and they will be improved. Well, you can't have both. They will be rationalised, or they will be improved. I think that's a valid point.

I reiterate that functional roads, safe roads, is what we should be spending our money on. If the guys are getting that, then it should be a win-win situation.

CHAIR - Okay.

Ms SKIRVING - Following on from that is the heavy amount of machinery. It's just constant through the six months of harvest, with pea-viners and headers - and that's on top of all the log trucks that come through, and the normal heavy machinery that's around as well.

With the new Cressy-Longford Road, there are people living in Cressy who are on restricted licences and are now almost too scared to go to Longford to get their groceries because of the steep drop-offs, and because of building the road up, when there's all this heavy machinery on the road. Where do you go if there's an error of judgment?

It's really not practical for the people in our area at all. Everyone you speak to, they're all complaining about the road. The Cressy-Longford Road has such a wide verge on each side - why do they have to do it like that? Why not bevel it off? With all this wet weather, it's almost creating a dam, where all the water is settling in between the fences and the original ditch, which used to be very narrow along the fence line; the water has nowhere to go. I have to question why the roads are being built up so high.

We live on Green Rises Road. We talked to them when they started - I think it might be a local council initiative - and they said, 'No, it won't be very high.' They did a big spoon drain on either side, right to the fence. Green Rises Road isn't a very wide road anyway - not like the Cressy-Longford Road - and they have just built it up and up and up; layer on layer of gravel. Coming along the Midland Highway, which I don't usually travel, I could not believe that a new road has potholes everywhere, and pieces are cut out where they've had to repair already. I have to question the methods that are being used today compared with the old roads.

We were married in 1968, and Green Rises Road was sealed then; I think it was probably sealed in the early 1960s. That has stood the test of time, right through to now, with the minor bits and pieces that they've done.

To me, it's a lot of money that's being spent, and just repair after repair. Is it because it's not factored in with the amount of heavy machinery that's being used, particularly given that we are an agricultural state? It worries me that everywhere we are trying to increase the

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productivity in our agricultural sector and yet we have these sorts of things happening that are making it very difficult. Even taking sheep along our road now, because we're on both sides of the road, the sheep won't go down into the ditches. You have all the sheep up on the road where they were going over onto the verges to get along and cars would come along and the sheep would go over and you could easily get by. For us, even taking them on the road – we are right on the road now, not over on the grass verges. That's the main thing that I'd like to point out to you, the difficulties we are having.

Ms RATTRAY - Thank you, Jill, and particularly pass on our thanks to Elizabeth as well for the work that she has done on a submission. It is relevant to what we are talking about, and we particularly thank you for the pictures. I know that *Hansard* doesn't have pictures but it is very clear of how the slopes on the road verges has impacted on vehicles' ability to be able to pull off on the side of the road. I absolutely agree with you in regard to we should be taking more care or more investigation and consideration of how vehicles do move off the road when they need to for whatever reason.

You're not supposed to answer a mobile phone if you don't have hands-free so you may need to take a call, you may need to move off the road. I've seen from those pictures and other times where I've looked at people using the road that it is not practical to get off. I don't like getting off unless there's a large space. There isn't space any more, and what is there has quite a drop on it.

Even the pictures with the harvester, again, I will certainly provide a copy to those representing the state government here today and the department. I am sure there's one somewhere. No one seems to have their hands on them at this minute so I'll provide mine because I can get another one.

These are the practical aspects of upgrading our road. We all want to see upgrading of roads.

I want to particularly thank you for the time that you've taken and the interest you've taken. I don't have a question. It's a statement, Chair.

Mr TUCKER - Thank you, Jill and Roger. The question I was going to put to you - and you know I'm a farmer by trade and I've run into this issue as well. That is why I was interested with what they've put up there with the measurements - the way machinery is being built now where the standard that it meets, it has to be under 12 foot or you get into trouble where you have to get permits and everything like that.

I want to ask you the question: do you believe that we need to build our roads to meet the standards that were set for machinery, or are we going to have to change the standards of machinery to bring them smaller to meet our road with what is going on?

I fully understand what you're saying there. I fully understand what I've put forward up here but this is a quandary that we need to look at. It would be hard, in my opinion, to change the size of machinery now that it's already been set. We really need to be setting roads to meet the standards of that machinery, and machines are very much set that way now with their standards.

Would you be in agreeance with that, or want to add any other comments?

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Mr SWAIN - John, it's reasonably well-known that we don't make anything in Australia any more. Most of our machinery is imported from overseas. There's only one way it's going and that is getting bigger. If you are going to drive it on the road, you have to take all the precautions. We're fortunate in this municipality of the Northern Midlands that we have some very good, very professional contractors. They do the right thing at all times. All of their machinery is escorted and all of it is appropriately signed and lit.

To answer your question, I don't see that we'll see a diminution in the size of our agricultural machinery, particularly from the contractor's point of view. It is something we are going to have to be, I guess, collectively working on to make sure that we can continue to operate those machines on the roads.

The reality is that, I think if you were to draw a line through about Cressy, 80 per cent of this state's agricultural production occurs north of that line. The Northern Midlands itself, without using a very well-worn phrase, is a food basket. There is a lot of agricultural production in that area. Inevitably, that means that the contractors have to use the roads. It is just part of the summer operation.

CHAIR - So when you say that, you are talking about broadacre farming, as in cropping and those sorts of things?

Mr SWAIN - Pretty much. That is putting aside the need, because actually Illawarra Road is a very interesting section of agricultural area. Your stage 1 is from Perth to Longford?

CHAIR - We can't question someone who is not here. Longford to Tannery Road is stage 1.

Ms BUTLER - It will be stage 3, the section you are talking about.

Mr SWAIN - Stage 3 from Tannery Road out to the highway.

Ms BUTLER - From Perth to the Longford roundabout, that is stage 3.

Mr SWAIN - So stage 1 comes in from the highway. There are not a lot of landowners in that area. Probably two big ones. They are the ones who are going to be impacted greatly. Clearly, from the discussion that's been had here this morning, there has already been some very good consultation with those people. But they are big landowners and they therefore use a lot of contractors. To suggest that contracting won't still be occurring is probably not right.

I hope I have answered your question.

Mr TUCKER - This is probably more of a statement. Personally, I pulled a tractor from Devonport back to St Helens, coming through the back roads, and coming up the highway where the wire ropes were. I was moving along about 30 or 40 kilometres an hour. I couldn't transport it on a truck because I was over height and I would have had to get a permit; I was 4.3 metres on the tractor itself and 4.5 metres on a float.

Coming back to your point before, Chair, with these wire ropes up the middle of the road, if there was a truck pulled over, or a car pulled over, on that side of the road, there would not

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have been enough room for me. I would have been running up on the wire ropes and flattening it if something had gone wrong.

It worries me, the amount of room in these sections. There isn't enough room there for agricultural machinery to move along.

CHAIR - We can explore that in committee. This is about questioning witnesses.

Mr TUCKER - I realise that. I am just following on from that question.

CHAIR - Fair point. I am not knocking the point, I am just saying this is about questioning witnesses.

Do you have any other particular issues that you want to -

Ms SKIRVING - Just following on from that, I have talked to Nathan Richardson who is doing the code of conduct for contractors. I thought it was strange that there is not the marrying together of the building of the roads and the requirements of the contractors on the roads. It is making it very difficult for him to get anywhere. He said, 'The way it is going, I am worried that we are just going to be told we can't use the roads, that you have to truck everything'. That just isn't feasible in an agricultural state like this. The roads are so important to be right.

CHAIR - So you are saying that the contractors haven't been consulted at this point, or you only know of a couple of contractors that haven't, and others may have?

Ms SKIRVING - He has been to a couple of the, or put in submissions for his area, when there is roadworks being done, but the code of conduct, I think that is for all contractors. They are trying to address the frustrations of people being held up on the roads and the lack of understanding of the general public who are not agriculturally-minded. Some of the way the roads are now holding up the traffic because you can't get by with the barrier in the middle so it is causing a lot of impatience and frustrations with the general public. I think that is why they are trying to put a code of conduct together. Do you know any more on that, Roger?

Mr SWAIN - No.

Ms SKIRVING - To have more guidelines to help everyone understand how it all works for the contractors because if we are going to remain an agricultural state we have to make it work.

Ms BUTLER - This section of road is part of the agricultural hub of Tasmania. Longford is the agricultural hub of Tasmania. Then you have the combination of freight on top of that because it is the thoroughfare from the north to the south of Tasmania as well. On top of that, you have your local normal traffic. We also have not raised emergency vehicles and where that fits in that as well. Do you feel, for the record, that agriculture has been a main consideration around the functionality of this road design?

Ms SKIRVING - No.

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Mr SWAIN - If the consultation process that we have been told has occurred has been thorough and rigorous, and all those landowners along the way have been consulted as to their needs and requirements, and that other parts of the industry have been consulted, then I think it can be made to work. I don't really think that I am in a position to make a statement as to whether or not that has been thorough because I don't know. That would be unfair on these guys here and on yourselves as well.

Ms SKIRVING - I was referring to more of what has been done rather than what is coming.

Ms RATTRAY - Hence the reason we are here today, to assist. I have been told that is a very popular road for cyclists.

Mr SWAIN - I'm like the Chair, I ride a motorbike.

Ms RATTRAY - You probably see some cyclists on the road when you ride your motorcycle.

Mr SWAIN - Yes, I do. They tend to use the road heading back towards Perth from Longford. Not a lot on Illawarra Road - if you travel Illawarra Road or even if you pull up with your car on Illawarra Road, it is a frightening place to pull up.

CHAIR - It's one of the reasons we didn't have a presentation on site today.

Mr SWAIN - It is a nightmare piece of road. It really does need to be improved.

CHAIR - Thank you very much for coming. Is there anything else you wish to make as a closing statement?

Mr SWAIN - Thank you, Mr Chairman, for your time and allowing us to make the presentation.

Ms SKIRVING - Thank you. We were glad we found out and we could come today rather than the next one which is Birralea Road.

CHAIR - It would have been irrelevant.

Ms SKIRVING - Yes, it is irrelevant. Just being able to get off the road if you have a flat tyre, where do you go with the way the roads that have already been done? Thank you very much.

Ms RATTRAY - Your concerns around the quality of materials being used is something that has been shared by many Tasmanians. We will keep working on that from this committee's point of view.

CHAIR - Thank you. I do have to reiterate to you the issue of making statements outside of this committee. When you walk out of here if any questions are asked of you, you have to be careful as it is not covered by parliamentary privilege.

The witnesses withdrew.

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Mr CONFORTI, Mr MEYER, and Ms HUDSON returned to the table.

CHAIR - Thank you for your indulgence.

Now, pipe projects go over the page, 2.2 basically, or the dot points that were above. I think somebody was talking about hazardous objects -

Ms RATTRAY - Power poles or brick walls.

CHAIR - That's it. We will move from there to the department. You may wish to respond to things you've heard from the other witnesses, and we will give you an opportunity to do that, but we'll just continue to go through this first.

Is there anything under 2.2? We have dealt with options, evaluation earlier. Scope of the project?

A 'Safe Systems' approach. They're words that are used: 'A Safe Systems approach will be adopted in the design and construction of the upgrades.' Can you explain a little what that means? It's pretty obvious, but for the record.

Mr CONFORTI - Basically, widening the existing lanes and providing a 2 metre shoulder and a 2.1 metre median in between would widen the existing road quite dramatically, so that is definitely the biggest safety achievement - and when we put in the U-turns, P-turns, G-turns, they would be able to do those manoeuvres. It will make it safer.

CHAIR - They're all features. It's just that it has capital letters - 'Safe Systems' - and under 2.3, Scope of the Project, I want to fully understand what that 'Safe Systems' approach means.

Mr CONFORTI - It is probably in capital letters because all the Australian standards will apply.

CHAIR - It's an Australian standard? A national standard.

Mr CONFORTI - It's not an Australian standard, but all of them will be applied.

Ms HUDSON - It's a recognised approach to achieving the AusRAP 3 criteria.

CHAIR - That's fine. I wanted to clarify that for the record.

Are there any other questions on that page? We are going over to project costs, dealt with a little earlier in the presentation - \$80 million, with \$16 million coming from the state government, and the balance from the Australian Government.

Ms RATTRAY - Is that guaranteed?

Ms HUDSON - Once we get the project proposal report through, the federal government assesses it, and provides the funding based on the assessment that it meets the requirements that they're after.

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CHAIR - Okay.

Mr MEYER - The Australian Government has made a commitment to funding the [inaudible] credit report essentially like a business case to secure the funding and the budget profile.

CHAIR - We've already stated that most other submissions we receive have a good breakdown. That is not present in this process. We understand what you're trying to achieve in terms of running things in parallel. That's something the committee will have to consider when it sits in judgment on this particular one.

Ms HUDSON - The cost breakdown is required as part of the project proposal report, so once we get through that 100 per cent design for that next stage, it will be included in that project proposal report to the federal government, because they require it as well. It's just when you break it up into stages you might step through that process of providing that documentation.

CHAIR - The problem is that when we ask the question, 'Do the proposed works provide value for money?', it's very difficult for this committee to say, 'Yes, you've demonstrated that is the case' when we don't have that breakdown. How we deal with that in the future might be something we need to talk about with the department, as to whether or not we deal with these things in phases. When you have all that information together you then come to us. The last thing this committee wants to be is simply a rubber stamp. It is here for a purpose. That is something we will need to discuss.

Moving on - budget profile for the project. Any other questions?

Property acquisitions: you think you have most of the property acquisition issues taped? Are there any outstanding issues with property acquisitions that you are aware of at this point? Or concerns that people might have that their property is going to be acquired and you have not satisfied their concerns?

Mr CONFORTI - We are talking to Mr Linos - there is a landowner in the north-west corner of Tannery Road who was trying to acquire some land from the Crown because they were concerned that trucks stopped there to rest. That situation will be resolved by formalising truck-rest areas just down the road from where he lives. There is some overlapping in the process of him trying to acquire Crown land and us acquiring the same parcel of land. We found that out just last week and we are in the process of resolving that situation.

CHAIR - Is it that he will be able to acquire and you are providing other areas for truck pullovers?

Mr CONFORTI - Yes, he doesn't need to and we need to explain to him. But he was already in the process, apparently, for a number of years. We came to understand that just last week because there has not been, from what he was doing with the Crown Solicitor and us doing our design. It will be a question of meeting with him, explaining to him that the actual Tannery Road will be moved further away from his property and that we will protect that area with some safety barrier so that the trucks do not stop there any more. They will now have a formal area so they do not need to look for an area to stop.

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CHAIR - You think that will be resolved?

Mr CONFORTI - I am positive that will be resolved for the landowner and for the department.

CHAIR - Any further questions on that page? Moving to chapter 4.

Ms RATTRAY - In the supplementary documentation of appendix B it talks about heavy vehicle rest areas with a capacity of five vehicles. I think you have mentioned three and then I think you mentioned two. I would like to have a firm number on the area that will be covered by the heavy vehicle rest area.

Mr MEYER - Is that three on one side and two on the other?

Mr CONFORTI - My understanding is three each side of the road. I can't remember to have mentioned two or five, but maybe it is in other parts of the report.

Ms RATTRAY - That is in this document.

CHAIR - Are we talking about three B-doubles?

Mr CONFORTI - Yes. If it is okay, maybe we will take that question on notice as well so that I can make 100 per cent sure and confirm it.

Ms RATTRAY - My next question is, if you are going to have a rest area with a picnic table you have to, in my view, have some facilities beside it as well. Otherwise where are people going to go to use a bathroom? You can get some pretty good examples where you don't need to have it into a sewerage system. If you are going to have something like that, then you need to have the full facilities available.

Mr CONFORTI - The department has been in consultation with the transport industry. As I said, there is another location where the department provided toilets and it is not part of the scope to provide them here.

Ms RATTRAY - I think you have taken that question on notice around where is the closest -

Mr CONFORTI - And the reasoning why we don't put toilets here.

Ms RATTRAY - The main street of Perth is not going to be suitable, I doubt, so let us see if we can work out something.

CHAIR - Further questions on chapter 4, Project Benefits?

Just the issue of cycleways. In reading, it seems that access for cyclists from Perth through to Longford is something that would be desirable, because it provides access to a lot of back roads for cyclists to be on, rather than on main roads. Can you please expand a little bit on how serious the project is in terms of being able to provide for cyclists? Is this just a vague idea that it might, or is it established as a concern that has been picked up and you are seriously considering providing it?

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Mr CONFORTI - We are seriously considering to provide them. There is a river, the South Esk River, that will be left to cross, so we are in discussion with the local council whether we should build a new bridge. The council apparently has some funding which probably will be inadequate to construct that bridge, but it can come to the party, if necessary, to build that bridge.

For a period of time we also considered perhaps widening the bridge, our road bridge. There are a lot of issues with crossing the river and crossing the rail, so we are really just at the concept stage and will continue to talk to all the parties involved to try to find a solution to put this shared path.

CHAIR - When considering that solution, are you looking at soft solutions like line marking to delineate cycleways on the shoulder, or are you looking at extra width at certain points. How are you -

Mr CONFORTI - All of the above. We won't exclude anything and we will look at any possible solution.

CHAIR - Have you had any consultation with cycling clubs?

Mr CONFORTI - We did, yes, with bicycle users' associations.

Ms RATTRAY - TBUG, I think they are referred to.

CHAIR - Tasmanian Bicycle Users Group.

Mr CONFORTI - And the local council and landowners.

Ms RATTRAY - The cycleway is part of the Northern Midlands priority projects documentation.

CHAIR - Are you talking about the Northern Roads Package?

Ms RATTRAY - No, I am talking about Northern Midlands Council, their own priority projects. They are very keen for that to occur.

Mr CONFORTI - Yes, we noted that. We put phase 3 for that very reason, to try to fit it in but it is a very constrained area.

CHAIR - So it is phase 3 that that would happen?

Ms RATTRAY - That is the issue, isn't it? That is part of what we are looking at here today, as well. So how do we get a firm commitment from the department that that is going to be included, when we are not sure whether it is going to be or not?

Mr CONFORTI - Our intention is to include it, but because we haven't done any engineering around it I cannot describe how it will happen.

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Ms BUTLER - I can tell you that I have gone on the cycleway from Perth to Longford, and you can see Longford in the distance, but you can't get to it. It just stops.

Mr CONFORTI - There is a river in between.

Ms BUTLER - It would be great to link up the two.

CHAIR - We must move on because it is 10 past 12. Further discussion on chapter 4? No.

Chapter 5, the finance considerations, procurements. Preferred procurement method of the project. You have in 5.1 there, a design. You did mention it earlier: 'A design or construct procurement model was considered in the early phases of the project development area. However, this has not been adopted due to limitations identified, relating to the likely design solution to be adopted'.

Can you please explain that a little further for the record?

Mr CONFORTI - What I said is that the design and construction method of procurement hasn't been considered any further because of all the landowner concerns of dealing with different parties, and also to give the department the opportunity to engage with the stakeholders and make sure that all the needs will be addressed. It is a big risk for the department to go to design and construction when there are lots of stakeholders' issues to be managed.

CHAIR - I understand that's what you're saying.

Are there any questions on the project timeline?

Ms RATTRAY - I would say it's already out of date.

Mr TUCKER - We had an election - come on.

Ms RATTRAY - I know. That's why it needs to be amended.

Mr CONFORTI - At the time we submitted this report we didn't have a date.

CHAIR - No, you didn't know that an election was around the corner.

With respect to some of the dot points, they're the key assumptions. No environmental or heritage delays impact the project. You are talking about European heritage. You are talking about Aboriginal heritage at this point in time. You're not aware of any Aboriginal heritage?

Mr CONFORTI - No, nothing was found from the investigations. The development application for stage 1 has been submitted to the local council so it is under consideration at present.

Ms BUTLER - There could be some environmental issues. Even though we can't use that evidence in this committee hearing I note there was significant flora and fauna concerns in 2009 with the Illawarra Road. There's not much information at all in this about those potential

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environmental issues. Do you think that it won't be an issue? We can go back to it in section 8.3 but it's listed here that you don't think there will be an issue. Do you think that that's practical?

Mr CONFORTI - As far as I am aware, as I said, there is the potential for the green and gold frogs to be present around phase 1 of the works. I am not sure. Lidiya, you read the previous submission; I didn't.

Ms HUDSON - The current design's looking at the impacts through the areas where the flood plain is that might impact the frogs and design mitigations have been included to minimise those impacts.

Mr TUCKER - Could I ask quickly, Chair, precisely where the flood plain is on the road?

CHAIR- Mr Conforti is pointing out on the map where it is.

Mr CONFORTI - This is the South Esk River, which comes down here. I don't know exactly the extent of the flood plain but the flood prone area is around the South Esk River.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Chapter 6: risk and sustainability. I think we've covered a fair bit of this in certain ways.

Ms RATTRAY - Is this where we talk about the quality of product that is being used? About the risk and sustainability?

CHAIR - Well, it's 6.3. I don't know where you would put that, particularly. The quality of it.

Ms RATTRAY - I'll be guided by you, Chair.

CHAIR - Let's deal with it under Major risks, proposed mitigation strategy, 6.1, if you would like to ask the question?

Ms RATTRAY - Yes. There has been a continual concern in the Tasmanian community about how, whether it's the way the roads are being rebuilt, or whether it's the quality of the resource that's being used, but the new roads are just not standing up to any of the traffic. I've asked questions in parliament and I've been told by the minister that it's okay, the contract is going to fix it. In my view, that's not good enough. It should have been better in the first place. Is there any way the community can be assured that we do use the best possible method, and we do use the best possible resource and materials?

Mr CONFORTI - I cannot comment on other project because, obviously, I don't have the background.

Ms RATTRAY - Not even the Midland Highway? That's been terrible.

Mr CONFORTI - I can answer in relation to the Illawarra Road project. We have just completed a new traffic count, so we know the amount of traffic travelling along that road, and

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we will increase the thickness of the pavement to take that amount of traffic. And we have specifications that are quite detailed, so the contractor will have to address those specifications, and the characteristics of the design.

Recently, the department has increased the defect liability period from 12 months to 24 months. So, if for some reason a defect appears in the first two years, the contractor will have to address and pay for those defects.

CHAIR - I think sometimes mainland contractors are engaged, and maybe they're not used to working in colder environments or something. I used to work for the Department of Main Roads for 10 years - many years ago, I've got to admit - and the design engineers had a very precise way of putting down tarmac and aggregate and the double-size aggregate that was needed on heavy-duty roads and the like. Can you give us some comfort that the specifications you're using are actually specifications that deal with heavy-duty? We're talking about B-doubles. We're talking about heavy farm machinery - probably not as heavy as a fully laden B-double, but there are some pretty heavy pieces of farm equipment. Will the road surface be laid in such a manner that it will have longevity? Clearly, the one coming out of Launceston stripped within the space of a month or two.

Ms RATTRAY - Within a matter of weeks.

Mr CONFORTI - The department gives the contractors very specific and stringent guidelines, and there are milestones and testing that the contractor has to apply during the life of the project. So, really, there are all the details in the tender documentation, in the design and the specification, for the contractors to do a good job. There are quality tests that they have to do on the material that they use, so everything should be right.

Of course, as you mentioned, there are jumps in temperature in Tasmania, or sudden rain may compromise the quality, but as I said, if that is the case, then the contractor will have to go back and fix it at their own expense for the first two years. If there are no defects appearing in the first two years, we can safely say that the quality is good enough.

CHAIR - I think we've mentioned here before areas that have stripped off, and I know on certain areas of the Arthur Highway I was mentioning some, and the Launceston example, and a few others where you get the aggregate just strips off and you have bare bitumen. Obviously, the bitumen wasn't at the right temperature when the aggregate was laid on it, and those sorts of things. If you're telling us that there's greater attention paid to that, that would be of comfort.

Mr CONFORTI - Yes, there is.

Ms RATTRAY - Perhaps it's time to put a penalty in, not just a repair, but a penalty for not achieving the standard that it was meant to be at. I'm not in charge of your contract, but I'm sure it's food for thought. Your departmental people would be driving on those roads as well, seeing what we're seeing as Tasmanian motorists.

CHAIR - Under 6.1.

Mr TUCKER - Chair, I have a question.

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CHAIR - Go for it, sorry about that.

Mr TUCKER - Heavy vehicle transporting: what standard will this road be at? What tonnages will this road be able to withstand with heavy hauling as a major arterial road, between the north-west and Hobart?

Mr CONFORTI - The specification and the standards will apply for B-doubles and all the trucks that are travelling.

Mr TUCKER - But I'm talking about heavy equipment.

Mr CONFORTI - Heavier.

Mr TUCKER - Heavier equipment. They'd have to get permits to go across these roads and I'm talking about freight so that you can move. Say you've got to move a 100-tonne excavator from point A to point B. Will this road meet those standards to be able to move that machine?

Mr CONFORTI - In terms of geometry or the permit?

Mr TUCKER - Well they can get a permit to travel on it, but if the road won't meet that standard you can't travel on that road carrying that heavy machinery.

Mr MEYER - My understanding was that the objective of this project was to design it for oversized, over-mass vehicles, that includes the width, which is the cross-section that we've shown and also the depth of the pavement.

CHAIR - Basically it will be as durable, not as durable, it will take the maximum loads that any other road in Tasmania would take?

Mr MEYER - All your Category 1 roads, so Bass Highway, Midlands and (inaudible) yes.

CHAIR - Does that answer your question?

Mr TUCKER - Yes.

CHAIR - On 6.1, overall the project dispute is relatively low risk as it has the support of all levels of government, key stakeholders and the local community. How do you know local government supports it? Have you had consultation with them?

Mr CONFORTI - Yes. There are two councils along this stretch of road, which is the Northern Midlands Council and Meander Valley, yes.

CHAIR - But they haven't sat in judgment on it yet, because this hasn't been put to them, has it?

Mr CONFORTI - There is a development application in place at present. It hasn't been approved yet.

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Mr MEYER - Is that for stage 1?

Mr CONFORTI - Stage 1, yes.

CHAIR - For stage 1?

Mr CONFORTI - Yes.

CHAIR - So stages 2 and 3 you don't know yet because it hasn't gone to them?

Mr CONFORTI - Not formally, no.

CHAIR - Stage 1, you've put in the submission but you're not sure what the outcome will be but you believe that there haven't been any concerns raised at this point?

Mr CONFORTI - The preliminary talks with the councils, they are in support of the project.

CHAIR - So the administration side of it are in support but you don't know about the elected members at this point? That's all I was trying to clarify.

Mr CONFORTI - Yes, exactly.

Mr ELLIS - Chair, I noted only one extreme risk. The election - that if there was potentially a change of government at the previous election that we've just had. Is that right?

Mr MEYER - Sorry, was that noted as a risk?

Mr CONFORTI - That risk is obviously passed at this stage.

CHAIR - Second paragraph under 6.1.

Mr ELLIS - Only one extreme risk. I wanted to clarify is that if there was potentially a change of government, is that what the extreme risk is?

Mr CONFORTI - No, I think the risk was more in relation to the election and this particular meeting, the timing for this meeting. At the time we didn't know.

CHAIR - We're talking about timing. You're not talking about political cut-up, okay?

Mr ELLIS - Sorry, I just had to ask that.

CHAIR - Okay, that's not for them to be commenting on, thank you. I suppose the timing issues we've talked about and how it's important for us to be aware of the various things and risks and some of that work hasn't been done yet we know.

The major disbenefit, 6.2.

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Mr TUCKER - Chair, just before we move on, with the access points that these beef farmers have along this road, are there any major risks with their gate accesses and things like that, or not?

Mr MEYER - Do you mean the current access on and off the highway?

Mr TUCKER - Yes, the current accesses they have on the highway, like their gate entrances and the entrances to their homestead, or whatever you like to call it. Are there any major risks?

Mr MEYER - I don't have the specifics but the major risk is you're moving a slow vehicle from a driveway into a 110-kilometre zone and often there are sightline issues, especially if there are hedgerows and fences, those sorts of things.

Mr TUCKER - How will that be managed? Will some of those gate entrances be closed or how will that be managed as a risk?

Mr MEYER - Look, I don't know the specifics, that's around the P-turns, the G-turns and just making sure that each site access is assessed and made safe for use.

Mr CONFORTI - Especially where there are overtaking lanes it's very unsafe to cross the lanes and so in that case we provide a proper facility which is a G-turn or P-turn or we just provide a left turn to get to the next formalised point.

Mr TUCKER - So they will still have those accesses but they will be formalised in a different format? Is that what you're saying to me?

Mr CONFORTI - Yes, I can tell you with certainty in stage 1 we will just eliminate the crossing for JBS Meats so they will have to turn left and then go through their property in the opposite side of the Illawarra Road through Tannery Road so that they can then do that movement very safely.

For stage 2 and 3 we are not at that point yet but basically the same concepts apply.

Mr TUCKER - What you're saying is they will not lose the accesses they have at the moment but they may be realigned?

Mr CONFORTI - Yes. Actually, for JBS we will close the access in the north; that is in agreement with them. They understand and they want to maintain the safety for themselves in the first place. It's not just the department that wants the safety. They are very happy to have access through Tannery Road at the back of the property rather than on the frontage on the Illawarra Road. That is for stage 1 only.

Mr TUCKER - And the same system will be taken forward with stage 2 and stage 3 with those other farmers further up?

Mr CONFORTI - I think all the accesses have to be treated differently depending on the location and the type of movements that they have to do. But, as I said, the crossing side to side is just for those who have the property on both sides of the highway. For some it may be the case that if they have to go to Longford and they live on the west side of Longford they

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will have to turn left before turning back and go towards east. They may not be able to cross the two or three lanes and turn right directly towards the east.

Mr TUCKER - I'm just trying to picture this in my mind with tractors and feedout wagons through the winter, how this is going to operate. What you're saying is that they will have to go up and around the wire rope and then back up on some of these accesses.

Mr CONFORTI - In some cases, that may be the case, yes, but if they have their property on the G-junction then that will be business as usual. It's just that the old turning will be more formalised with one of the junctions that we are proposing that was shown. For the P-turns property accesses can be included in the turn. It is really based on case by case.

Mr TUCKER - I realise you have a safety thing to do as well but the other implications are the traffic movement.

Mr CONFORTI - Safety is the priority for everyone.

CHAIR - We are getting tight on time. They are very important points you raise on some of this. Any other questions on that page? Nothing on stakeholder engagement. We have the community consultation feedback report. We have made the statements about, it is a bit early in some ways to get the feedback if we do not know the people who are going to be impacted. It is a bit hard for us in that regard.

7.3: directly affected landowners, property acquisitions not totally resolved but we believe there aren't likely to be too many more considerations of property acquisition. Is that fair?

Mr CONFORTI - Yes.

Mr ELLIS - There is a rail line that runs along there and TasRail is one of the stakeholders listed. Is the rail corridor particularly close, or just as a general concern with money?

Mr MEYER - It doesn't cross the highway, does it?

Mr CONFORTI - No it doesn't.

Mr ELLIS - In terms of expanding, if the road needs to expand there won't be any issue in terms of encroachment onto the corridor?

Mr CONFORTI - No.

CHAIR - It is a fair way from the road, isn't it? Any questions on 8? 8.2?

Ms BUTLER - Just a statement for the record. With the Perth Link road, there has been some issues around noise there where the community was advised during the consultation process that there would be sound barriers put into place, then that did not eventuate. If there are noise issues that are raised in the consultation and those concerns are taken into it and the community is advised, if you have a landowner that is advised that there would be some sound barrier or buffers put into place, that will be honoured as part of the project?

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Mr CONFORTI - Please correct me if I am wrong. The planning scheme doesn't require to do any noise mitigation on existing roads, so we are going to improve this road but we are not going to increase the traffic. I think the Perth Link was fundamentally different from this one because that was a brand-new road on greenfield. If there was some property there that was nice and quiet, and the road goes over near to it, they will have to consider the noise. I do not think we have any planning issue regarding noise with this project.

Mr MEYER - Generally we do noise assessments; we would be able to do acoustic noise monitoring as part of the design work. If there are residents nearby and increased traffic as part of the project [inaudible] noise mitigation. That can be asphalt or it could be sound barriers or a number of other factors, even double glazing, not necessarily just noise walls which some consider as excessively unpleasing in some locations.

CHAIR - Any further questions on 8.1, 2, 3 or 4?

Ms RATTRAY - Yes, 8.3, in regards to the hawthorn hedgerows, obviously they often have some significant family connection. Will there be some negotiation with landowners around those?

Mr CONFORTI - Definitely we will talk to the landowners and understand the attachment or whatever they have.

Ms RATTRAY - I know that can be something that is quite significant.

Mr CONFORTI - Hopefully it will be possible to avoid them but if not, we may talk to the landowners and see whether they will consider the replacement of them.

Ms RATTRAY - In the regard of weed control, when you work out how to eradicate those on the road verges in this area, can you let you let DPIPW know so they might look at the rest of the state? Thanks.

CHAIR - I think we will take that as an opportunistic comment. You have four native vegetation communities present. Two are listed as threatened under Tasmanian legislation, and one is listed as threatened under Commonwealth legislation.

If there anything significant found it will be referred to the Commonwealth in accordance with the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act, as it says on the bottom of page 8.3.

Mr CONFORTI - Yes, of course.

CHAIR - We have already talked about the Aboriginal heritage and historic heritage, I think. There is none that will be impacted as far as we are aware.

Mr CONFORTI - We are not aware of any Aboriginal findings along that stretch of the road.

CHAIR - No doubt if you do discover any it will go through the due process.

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Mr CONFORTI - Of course. Yes. It will.

CHAIR - Thank you. Any further questions on either the Community Consultation and Feedback Report or the Illawarra Main Road Upgrade Main Report.

There being no further questions, I will say thank you on behalf of the committee. Not to forget that anything that is stated outside the committee process is not subject to parliamentary privilege.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.

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Ms VANESSA KING, PROJECT MANAGEMENT TEAM LEADER, DEPARTMENT OF STATE GROWTH; **Mr SIMON BROWN**, PROJECT MANAGER, DEPARTMENT OF STATE GROWTH; **Mr TREVOR GIBSON**, PROJECT MANAGER, DEPARTMENT OF STATE GROWTH WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

MIDLAND HIGHWAY 10 YEAR ACTION PLAN - MIDLAND HIGHWAY FINAL STAGES: OATLANDS, ROSS AND NORTH OF CAMPBELL TOWN

CHAIR - There is a formal notice that I have to read to you to make you aware of the committee proceedings today. Thank you for appearing. We always appreciate the opportunity to be able to not only receive a submission but to hear explanations around it and understand it. That's most important for us. The evidence that you're going to be giving today is obviously an important aspect of the committee proceedings. It's a hearing. The hearing is a proceeding in parliament. This means it receives the protection of parliamentary privilege. It's an important legal protection that allows individuals giving evidence to a parliamentary committee to speak with complete freedom without the fear of being sued or questioned in any courts or place out 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 accorded to you if statements that may be defamatory are repeated or referred to by you outside the confines of the parliamentary proceedings. This is a public hearing, members of the public and journalists may be present and this means your evidence may be reported. Do you understand? I need a firm yes from each of you.

Witnesses King, Brown and Gibson - Yes.

CHAIR - Thank you. You may like to make an opening statement.

Ms KING - Thank you. Good afternoon, thank you for having us. My name's Vanessa King. I'm a project management team leader, as Scott introduced me, within State Roads and we have two of our project managers here with us today: Simon Brown and Trevor Gibson.

Today, we are seeking approval for the final stages of the Midland Highway 10 Year Upgrade. These final stages comprise around 50 kilometres of highway across three sections: Oatlands; Jericho to south of York Plains; Ross, which is Mona Vale Road to Campbell Town; and north of Campbell Town, Campbell Town to Epping Forrest.

The Midland Highway 10 Year Action Plan is a safety upgrade. The crash which occurred only a week ago was in the Ross section that we'll be talking about today, south of Campbell Town. There was another major crash in this section in October 2020. We don't discuss specific crashes. Sadly, these crashes are a matter for the Coroner.

We do use formal, technical language when discussing highway safety. These words can sound clinical or cold and this may be upsetting to people who are impacted. Behind this formal, technical language is a project team: well over 40 people so far who care deeply about making our highways safer. For many of us, highway safety is why we do what we do.

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The Midland Highway 10 Year Action Plan is making this highway safer through upgrading the identified sections to a three-star AusRAP rating. The works improve safety, specifically decreasing head-on crashes and reducing the severity of loss-of-control crashes through a flexible safety barrier in the centre median plus barriers on road edges, as required; widened sealed shoulders and protected overtaking opportunities, which are locations where road users can overtake while they're still being protected from oncoming traffic.

Around 60 per cent of fatalities on the Midland Highway are the result of a head-on crash. The flexible safety barriers catch out-of-control vehicles and absorb the energy of the impact, reducing the physical trauma for vehicle occupants.

We know this program's working. We know there are vehicle strikes to the barriers in the completed sections. Some of our colleagues have stopped on the highway at the scene of a minor crash and had people say to them, 'That barrier saved my life'. Of the vehicle strikes that we're recording, we don't and we can't know how many of those strikes would have resulted in a fatality if the barrier wasn't there. It depends who else is coming the other way. We do know we are preventing people from crossing onto the wrong side or running off the edge.

Saving lives is the reason for this program and for these projects that we're discussing today.

It's important to note that these projects do impact the people who live and work along the highway. The most obvious impacts are impacts of convenience. It is more convenient to turn right out of an access or a driveway onto the highway than to turn left and travel to a safer crossing location before heading in your original direction. It is more convenient, we know that.

People who live and work along the highway can use this road every day, multiple times a day. We don't want this usage to be deeply frustrating. We do want it to be safe.

The project team works with people who live and work along the highway to achieve the best possible outcome for them; however, we don't always make everyone happy in doing it. We do our best. We have to prioritise safety.

In terms of cost, these sections of the Midland Highway are forecast to cost approximately the same per kilometre as the completed similar sections. As stated in the report, we're looking at the total for these 150 kilometres to be in the order of \$166 million to \$185 million. That's a lot of money.

Road users, all of us, are getting a lot of highway upgraded for that money. We are getting over 50 kilometres of highway. We are getting around 69 kilometres of flexible safety barrier and 14 kilometres of W-beam barrier. We are getting 74 hectares of new seal and we are getting over 21 000 cubic metres of topsoil, on the batters which will then be grass.

We have done a lot of work over the last couple of years on these sections with our designers. We have used a contract model called Early Contractor Involvement, where we have civil contractors engaged with us, in the room with our designers, working through the design. How would you build it? How do you build it like this? What if we did that? Would this be a bit better? How about this to improve the design, to make it safe to construct, and to

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make it efficient to construct, and to get the right quality outcome for the long term. So, that's a piece of work we have been doing on those jobs, this Early Contractor Involvement model. Those contractors are not signed up for construction yet. We can't do that before a series of approvals including the pro-performance committee.

These works do involve trade-offs between construction efficiency and impact on the travelling public too, during construction. So, there is a construction cost: number of months on road and the delays to the travelling public. The trade-offs are between being held up a lot for a fewer number of months, or not being delayed as much but the project goes on a long time.

We do try to get this balance right. We do quite a bit of work to try to get that impact duration balance right. Overall, we submit that these projects are part of an important safety upgrade to the key highway in Tasmania. The upgrades will prevent head-on crashes and reduce the impact of loss of control events. The upgrades will save lives and reduce long-term injuries, both physical and psychological.

We have worked with the stakeholders to reduce the inconvenience impact of the projects both during and after construction. We are seeking other legislative approvals, as appropriate, for the projects. The costs are appropriate and we have done those comparisons on a per kilometre basis to other similar projects.

In conclusion, we submit that these projects are a good and appropriate use of taxpayers' money. Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you. Normally we invite overview questions from members. I will go first with one question, which I think would be classed as an overview question, and that is the quality of pavement. It is something that we are aware of, and it needs to go on the record, that over the last few years pavements haven't seemed to be very well lasting pavements. The aggregate seems to strip from the bitumen, et cetera. Could you address what the department may be doing to improve that situation so that when money is spent putting roads together that we are indeed getting good value and a serviceable product?

Ms KING - There are a number of things the department has recognised that it would like to see done better in the future. Some of those have included reviewing our designs and the way that we specify the seals, particularly in reference to the sealing of the highway. When I say 'specifying' them, I am talking about the section of the document that is the technical description of what contractors need to do.

On highway, we have reviewed our specifications, and we are making changes. We had made changes partly in consultation with the Civil Contractors Federation in that area.

We are reviewing the way we also audit the implementation of the construction contracts. In other words, what the contractors are doing on ground. There is also some work around managing the timing of the projects. It is challenging to get a high-quality seal down in Tasmania in certain months, in the colder months. In order to have the sealing occur in the summer sealing season, we need to get prep work done earlier. To get prep work done earlier, you need to get on road at the right time. To get on road at the right time, you need to go to tender at the right time. You need to finish your design at the right time, you need to get your approvals in place.

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It is quite a juggernaut in these projects, and if we get some slippages in the early stages we can end up, if we are not careful, with the construction not quite fine-tuned for the climate.

There are a number of fronts on which the department is reviewing and making changes to the way we work too, to make sure that we are delivering the best quality possible.

CHAIR - Other views?

Mr TUCKER - We have heard you talk a lot about safety within the highway system. You also mentioned that you are using two different distinct types of barrier: the W-Beam and the wire rope. Around the state there's a number of different barriers. Which is the safer and why?

Ms KING - One the great advantages of the flexible safety barrier, colloquially known as the wire rope, is that it absorbs the energy of the impact so it slows vehicles down. However, you cannot put flexible safety barrier in every location. Sometimes where the distances are short or the curves are a bit tight, it is not suitable for the flexible safety barrier. We tend to use the W-Beam in those locations, and the W-Beam also has an impact-absorbing role to play. There are other barriers around; sometimes they are what was used 30 or 40 years ago and sometimes there are other reasons, especially in constrained locations where there is not a lot of room. We are confident that the flexible safety barrier, which is the dominant barrier on the Midland Highway, is the right engineering solution for this environment.

Ms RATTRAY - You said that you are aware that there have been a number of vehicle strikes to the flexible safety barriers. Do you have any idea of how many? Does someone assess them?

Ms KING - I don't have the numbers off the top of my head. I know that we were looking at numbers in the office. I can take it as a question on notice, if that would be suitable.

Ms RATTRAY - I thought it would be interesting to have that detail.

Ms KING - That is why we have talked about it internally. I'll take that as a question on notice.

CHAIR - This is just a general interest?

Ms RATTRAY - Yes, it is. I do have another question. Around the three stages in this project there has been some criticism, and I am responsible for some of that from time to time, where we see a section of the road and they make a start and then nothing happens for a while but then they go onto another section, 10 or 15 or 20 kilometres, and then it seems to be a hotchpotch of a bit here and a bit there. You are inconvenienced more often than what it feels like you should be as a motorist. Can you give me some indication if that is going to be the same arrangement for these three stages in this project? Or is there a reason why it has to be like that?

Ms KING - It can be. Just for clarity, from our perspective from the Australian Government's perspective these are three separate projects: Ross, Oatlands, north of Campbell

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Town. We are running Ross and Oatlands as one construction contract and north of Campbell Town as a separate contract.

Ms RATTRAY - So, we might say -

Ms KING - It doesn't really matter what we call them but that's the bundling.

Ms RATTRAY - Thank you for that clarification.

Ms KING - Within each of the three zones, let's say, the three sections, we are approximately splitting each of them in half for a section to start to work on this summer and then a section for the following summer. So, we're trying to manage the length of road that we've got open at any one time because that does create challenges for everybody.

Ms RATTRAY - And frustration.

Ms KING - Yes. In terms of staging the work within, say, the first summer, we don't define too tightly exactly what the contractor must do or when. We are defining traffic management performance standards so that it is the contractor's responsibility how they set up the site. They're the specialists at setting up the site and working through the details of the staging.

There are times when different work activities are required in one location, for example, they might come through and do the drainage work ahead of another package of bulk earthworks or of road reshaping; they want to get a productive length ready and the right shape before they seal it. There's a number of interplays and, as in any project, for one sub-unit the timing may not work from an outsider's perspective.

We and the contractors are very conscious of the traffic management impact that we have during construction and we do work very hard to balance the impact on the travelling public against getting the jobs done as quickly as we can so that we can get off highway in a reasonable time frame.

Ms BUTLER - So, to clarify for the record, the project itself will be divided up to be Ross/Oatlands and north of Campbell Town.

Ms KING - They're two contracts.

Ms BUTLER - Two contracts.

Ms KING - Yes.

Ms BUTLER - So, is there a priority for which one will be completed first, or which one will be started first?

Ms KING - We'll be starting on both the Ross and Oatlands sections, all going well, in the late spring. So, part of Ross and part of Oatlands for this summer and then the subsequent approximate halves the second summer. The north of Campbell Town section will be starting later into the summer. We have some environmental constraints north of the Campbell Town

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section for which we need to seek federal environmental approvals and that can take some time to be processed and approved.

Ms BUTLER - And once this project is complete, that is it for the Midland Highway - overall, the whole thing?

Ms KING - That's the end of the sections. If we have some money left over within our 565 we might go back and do a little bit of fine-tuning in a few locations but I'm unable to commit to that at this point because we really need to see how these substantial projects come in.

Ms BUTLER - There could be surplus but if there are insufficient funds and that is the windup of the project is there a contingency plan for that?

Ms KING - There are contingencies in these estimates. We always have contingencies in our estimates, and those contingencies are documented in the reports you have here. Those contingencies are informed by risk analysis of the project. Yes, we make them on estimates, but they are informed estimates, so they are good judgments on how much contingency is needed.

Having said that, projects are projects and things happen. If there is a significant overrun, I'm in terrible trouble. We are really clear this is taxpayers' money. We are conscious that additional funding has already been provided to this program; there are reasons for that. Our job as a delivery team is to bring them in on budget.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr ELLIS - Chair, given this is the Midland Highway 10 Year Action Plan and we're in the overview stage, maybe it would be helpful if you could give the committee a sense of where we were when we first started, where we're going, and how far along we are?

Ms KING - Sure. The first projects commenced construction in the beginning of the 2013-14 year, I think?

Mr BROWN - I would go 2014-15.

Ms KING - I think you're right. I think we were first on-road in the spring of 2014. We've completed around 100 kilometres so far, and we have about 50 kilometres to go, which are these projects. I would love to have some very concrete data on the lives saved. It's extraordinarily difficult because, as I said earlier, when we get strikes to the barrier, we know about the strikes and we get the data. We can sometimes tell whether it was a big strike or just a glancing blow; somebody may have self-corrected anyway. What we never know is how many and what sort of vehicles were coming the other way -

CHAIR - What the circumstances were at the time. It could have been dodging an animal. It could have been any number of things.

Ms KING - Yes, but it's not only the cause; it's also what would have been the impact. For the head-ons, it does depend who is coming the other way, and where they are when a vehicle crosses onto the wrong side. With the Midland Highway having around 4000 to 5000

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vehicles a day - up to 6500 in these sections - luckily, there are not very high numbers of fatalities, so it takes a while to get enough data to be clear on exactly how many lives are saved.

Mr BROWN - Because a good performance indicator is going to be that you finish the 10-Year Action Plan, all the works are complete, then you wait 5 to 10 years and see what reports you get from the police in terms of crashes and so on, and then you have some solid data. Now it might take more than five years to really feel like you've got a good grip on the crash patterns on the highway. It's a bit hard to refute that the safety barrier in the middle isn't going to make a difference to what we've experienced on this highway before this action plan began.

Ms KING - We know it does; I just can't quantify it yet. Was that the kind of information you were looking for?

CHAIR - Another thing, just as an overview, lots of members here travel that road a heck of a lot, and sometimes very late at night.

Speed limits that are put up by contractors are often 80, 60, 40. We all know why the 40 is there, because it's to protect the workers but not at 6 o'clock at night 'til 4 o'clock in the morning. It is the most frustrating thing when you're doing 40 kilometres an hour, there's not a worker in sight. It is a simple thing of changing those signs to a more appropriate speed. I'm not saying it would be 110 but when you're talking about a stretch of road that could be like any country road where you're travelling at 80, there ought to be some way of being able to handle that and giving instructions to those contractors.

Can you just cover that as an overview thing? I don't know about other members, I'm pretty sure, you get frustrated and sometimes that can actually breed accidents too. Am I right?

Ms BUTLER - I'm sure we always all go the 40.

CHAIR - Am I right?

Mr TUCKER - I would agree with you.

CHAIR - Thank you. I want to make sure I'm not verballing the members of the committee. Can you cover that?

Ms RATTRAY - I think you've been reading my mail.

Ms KING - That's very legitimate feedback. We do work with our contractors to remind them and to reinforce that speed limits when they're not working need to be returned to appropriate limits. Yes, I agree completely.

Sometimes it would be unusual to be 40 but there are sometimes 60 speeds out of work hours which may be managing a risk that's not apparent to people in vehicles. Those can be things that are out of sight but are close off the edge of the road, drop-offs to culverts, that sort of thing. It's a mix of things. There are times when we need to do a better job of making sure the sites are returned to the appropriate speed at the end of the day, especially before weekends. There are also times when the speed is reduced for a safety reason which is not apparent to the

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traffic. So it's a balance of those things but, yes, I accept your feedback. I think it's legitimate, absolutely.

CHAIR - And another one, on the way here today. You may have seen it yourself coming up from Mangalore, up that hill, coming north. The sign says, 'slow down to 60', there is no sign saying: 'speed back up'.

Ms KING - I did notice that.

CHAIR - It's that sort of stuff too but I've made the point and it's important to address it.

Ms KING - We discussed that in the vehicle and it was a question to ask because those works at Mangalore today should be works under permit. They're works by another service authority which owns assets in that region. They're works under permit so they're not works by our contractors. We had a discussion about what's our role in that traffic management when they're works under permit. So that's something we were already planning to take up internally.

CHAIR - I appreciate that you've taken that on board because I know the member for McIntyre travels back very late at night sometimes.

Ms RATTRAY - She does.

CHAIR - And I'm sure she has an issue with some of those.

Ms RATTRAY - I'll attempt to be more tolerant now I know that there are unforeseen reasons as a motorist of why they're at that level of speed.

CHAIR - We now go to the report itself. Usually we go through page by page to make sure we cover most things. If we go to the introduction. I think we've done the project summary to death in a way with our previous presentation as well as the opening information.

There's only one question I wrote down when you were speaking before about travelling. Some landowners need to come out, do a left, and then travel up the road, and then turn back. Is there are a specific or maximum distance that you allow that to happen, in terms of how far a landowner is to travel before they have the opportunity to go in the opposite direction?

Ms KING - Looking at four to five k's for turns.

Mr GIBSON - The department's desired guidelines for a Category 1 road says approximately 3 to 4 kilometres, it should be provided. But, it really depends on who is around and the frequency. The guidelines are approximately 3 to 4 kilometres.

CHAIR - The reason I ask that is on one of them, and members may remember, but it was near Antill Ponds. There is a heritage house that was looking at putting in a B&B operation. Of course it can be all the difference between having a customer and not having a customer if they have to travel too far. They just think, 'Oh, I won't bother going back'. That is the reason I ask that question. It can actually be quite a game-changer for those who are trying to run a business and attract customers.

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I don't know that there are any on these stretches, but there might be. That is why I asked that question about minimum distance. Do you take that sort of thing into account?

Ms KING - We do. It is a bit challenging for us to make major accommodations for intended businesses, but we do work carefully with landowners, particularly where there are established businesses. There are examples where farm businesses are moving to a model where they attract more of the general public to their farm, and we have had conversations with businesses around those issues. Yes.

CHAIR - Any other questions on the project summary? No. Moving over to 1.3: Location. I think we all well and truly understand where that sits.

1.4: Related Projects and Strategic Context. I think that has been well-explained.

Ms KING - I can confirm this document was written in March. The original date for this hearing was the end of March. [inaudible] all been completed.

CHAIR - Melton Mowbray, the Lovely Banks Road, Spring Hill, Tunbridge and Powranna Road.

Ms KING - Yes, they have all been completed.

Ms RATTRAY - So the repairs to road pavement at Powranna Road has all been -

Ms KING - There's a couple of sections that we are keeping an eye on in that location.

CHAIR - I think that's one of those examples, though, isn't it, that you were talking about before. Project Scope?

Ms RATTRAY - I have a question there. I know that there has been some criticism in the community around that we are actually losing overtaking opportunities. I am interested for the public record, if you could explain, or put it on the record what the community will gain and whether there are any losses in those overtaking opportunities.

Ms KING - The overtaking opportunities that we are providing through this program are protected overtaking opportunities. They enable people in faster moving vehicles to overtake slow-moving vehicles without the risk of a head-on crash.

There are some sections where we appreciate that the community may perceive a loss of what appears to be an appropriate overtaking opportunity at the moment, but the current overtaking opportunities are not protected in the way that the future ones will be. There are some convenience losses, but people will get home.

Ms RATTRAY - But there are some that are being moved further up.

Ms KING - We are relocating some. There's an overtaking opportunity on the lead into a town and we are relocating that overtaking opportunity to the exit to the town because once everybody's slowed down for the 60 or the 80 for the town, it's when they're leaving the town that the slower vehicles are taking longer to come up to speed. We've provided overtaking

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opportunities on the exits from the town so that the vehicles which can accelerate faster can get around those slower-moving ones.

Ms RATTRAY - So, overall there is no net loss or was it minus one? I think Trevor might have mentioned it in his contribution.

Mr GIBSON - So overall, within the project limits of the Campbell Town north project, there's four right now and there will be four in the future, but when you factor in the overall Midland Highway there will actually be one more within Campbell Town north than there is currently.

Ms KING - Because of the Epping Forest.

Mr GIBSON - Because the work that's already been done north of Epping Forest, yes.

Ms KING - Done in Epping Forest, yes.

Ms RATTRAY - Right.

Ms BUTLER - If I can just make a statement, I think part of the problem is that in 2014 the population was told they would get a four-lane Midlands Highway. I think that's why we get so many complaints from people about, 'this was meant to be four lanes'. That will always be overriding that narrative, I suppose, because whether or not that was what was practical, that was what won an election.

Ms KING - The objective of a four-lane highway remains when the traffic volumes are suitable to justify the expenditure.

CHAIR - Yes.

Mr ELLIS - Ms King, prior to 2014 can you give us a sense of what the typical 1-star safety stretch of the Midland Highway would look like and maybe a 2-star as well?

Ms KING - The difference between a one and a two. Simon, do you reckon you can -

Mr ELLIS - Sorry, what does a one look like, what does a two look like, and now we're getting three across the whole structure.

Mr BROWN - Yes, so to get the 3-star you definitely need the flexible safety barrier in the median down the centre of the road. So, yes, it would have been those sections without a central flexible safety barrier. The difference between AusRAP 1 and AusRAP 2 would be something along the lines of what sort of lane width you've got that's actually sealed and what sort of shoulder-width you have sealed. I don't know the exact answers to that but the narrower you go then you're closer to AusRAP 1-star.

Mr ELLIS - So, we're essentially talking prior to 2014 narrow one and one highway with nothing in-between?

Mr BROWN - Yes.

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Mr ELLIS - In a 1-star section on the Midland Highway.

Mr BROWN - Yes, 1 or 2-star.

Ms KING - Yes.

Mr BROWN - I couldn't say specifically whether it was one or two but -

Mr ELLIS - Yes.

Mr BROWN - It's in that range, that's right. To get the 3-star we need the flexible safety barrier down the middle. We also need a more consistent wider cross-section and also at least one metre of sealed shoulders. In some cases we do have that in some parts of the highway but some other parts of the highway, we don't.

Ms KING - We've looked at a bit of curve, the horizontal curves and the vertical curves too. That's part of the assessment of the design, how tight is this? I'm not across the detail of exactly how that feeds into the star rating. The other thing on the star rating is the number of accesses and intersections, I think. We can point you in the direction of some summary material on it if that's helpful.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, that might be helpful.

The other thing I was going to ask, this is part of Highway 1 nationally. How will the completed project compare to the rest of Highway 1 around the country? Is this a reasonably high star rating for the total of Highway 1?

Ms KING - The star ratings, the appropriateness of a star rating for a road is partly a function of - so, upgrading the Midland Highway to a five-star rating for the traffic volumes we've got would not be an appropriate expenditure. Whereas some of the rest of Highway 1, and I'm not across the volumes, but conceptually in your head driving the Princes Freeway, driving the Hume, the volumes are massive and their targets may be more appropriate to be a 4-star for those and perhaps 5-star in the more urban areas.

So, there is a real connection between matching the expenditure to the need, and part of the need is the number of people using the road.

Mr TUCKER - I was going to follow on with the crash history pre-2014, when this road was started. What was the crash data then compared to now?

Ms KING - The crash data we have, that we commonly report, is over the last 10 years before we started designing this. I do not have a breakdown today of different years, but we can provide that.

Mr TUCKER - Just to compare what was there, to what is now, and how much change there has been.

Mr BROWN - To clarify, are you asking about sections that we have already treated, upgraded?

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Mr TUCKER - Yes, that is probably the best way of getting that comparison. I did word the question across the whole of the Midland Highway, but that is probably a better way to do it.

Ms KING - Because in year one we treated this much, and in year two we treated this much. It is a bit complex. We will take that as a question on notice.

CHAIR - Moving away from 2014, to 2019. I don't know why we would worry about 2014.

Mr TUCKER - That is when the road was started, Chair.

CHAIR - Anyway, moving on. I have a question under Project Scope. The traffic counts interest me. The Ross-Mona Vale Road to Campbell Town is 5031 vehicles a day, and Jericho is 4457; it climbs even higher past Campbell Town. Past Campbell Town, is this purely driven by farming activity, or is it heavy vehicles? Do you know the type of vehicles in these counts, and the differences in the counts?

Ms KING - There are two primary populations on the Midland Highway. There is a primary population, which is a north-south through-traffic -

CHAIR - And local.

Ms KING - That's one primary, and then local is the other primary. For the through-traffic that is travelling from Hobart to Launceston and back again, those numbers should be the same in every section, on average. I do note that the Oatlands numbers are 2018 and the Ross numbers are 2019, so they are not directly comparable.

CHAIR - It's just that the heavy vehicles with the 6595 vehicles is 20.6 per cent, and the other one is 21.5 per cent, and yet the vehicles are higher.

Ms KING - I think the changes in the heavy vehicle percentages are likely to arise from farming and local activities. The Woolworths trucks, or whatever goes through, won't stop one way.

CHAIR - The reduction in heavy vehicles is what I am pointing at, and yet the vehicle numbers are 6595 in the same year. It just seems odd.

Ms KING - Would you like me to take that as another question?

CHAIR - It is just interesting. I thought you might have had an explanation. I wouldn't put you to that level of work; it is not particularly pertinent.

Mr ELLIS - Broadly speaking, the further north and west you go, the more productively the economy is run.

CHAIR - I forgot, you are a north-wester, aren't you?

Mr ELLIS - It is worth mentioning for *Hansard*.

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CHAIR - Does the east coast want to have a response to that? Anyone from the south? Let's move away from the politics and to options evaluations. Do we have any questions there, apart from the four-lane, two-lane, one-lane scenarios? Any further questions on Scope, 2.3?

A question on flexible barriers. We raised this a few times, about motorcycles absolutely hating them. They call them cheese graters. They're anathema to motorcyclists and yet they do prevent accidents. From what you're saying, the evidence seems to be there that they're preventing accidents. Do you have any upgraded statistics on the number of motorcycle accidents that might be happening that are adverse serious accidents as a result of flexible barriers?

Ms KING - No, not that I'm aware of. I do know on some sections - Trevor - I think in the north we are putting some motorcycle attenuators on some of the curves. We are conscious of that motorcycle issue. We've looked at some higher risk locations and we're looking at some work on the barriers there. We tend to know in our head about the fatalities on the Midland Highway and I don't think we have motorcycle crashes.

CHAIR - Serious accidents?

Mr BROWN - I couldn't say about their seriousness, but they're not generally the fatality crashes.

Ms KING - The fatalities we tend to hold in our heads and there's not a motorcycle one.

CHAIR - I just wanted to ask the question. We're continually getting emails - I am and I'm sure other members probably do - from motorcycle groups saying, 'Let's get rid of this, let's get of these.' I wanted to ask the question to be able to go back and say, 'Well, this is the reality'. I'd certainly be interested in as a member in anything you have on motorcycles.

Mr ELLIS - Do we have a sense of what the impact is on motorcyclists who hit a wire rope versus a W-barrier?

Ms KING - I think the flexible safety barrier for someone on a motorbike when they hit it at high speed is distressing.

CHAIR - It's not pretty.

Ms KING - Yes. The flexible safety barrier does prevent vehicles on the other side of the road crossing in the motorcyclist's path. As well, the protective nature of the barrier works for all vehicle types. That motorcycle question has been around for a while.

Mr TUCKER - I know what you're going to say but obviously the wire flexible barrier started in 2014. Can we get a comparison on that with the accidents?

Ms KING - With the crashes in the treated sections?

Mr TUCKER - Yes, with the sections before, since and after for the same time period so we can get a comparison. Do you understand what I am saying?

Ms KING - Yes, I do.

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CHAIR - It would assist us going forward and I'm not sure that this is necessarily the forum to be asking those questions, Mr Secretary, but if we had the information like that, it would help us in assessing projects.

I know that with W-barriers that you're talking about: quite often they put in a lower level linear barrier which means that they don't hit the posts of the W-barrier.

Mr TUCKER - I've learnt something new. I thought that was there for the possums.

CHAIR - No, it's for motorcycles. Mr Bertrand Cadart is responsible for those on the east coast.

Ms BUTLER - There is also a question if you're thinking about the comparison of motorcycle accidents on the Midland Highway. Motorcyclists tend to not use the Midland Highway any more like they used to because of the barriers. You'd be having to look at the whole of the state because they're using other routes now. They used to go up and down the Midland Highway a lot but now they tend to use the east coast.

CHAIR - They use the Lake Leake Road, I know that.

Ms KING - They may find other highways more scenic for motorcycle touring as opposed to motorcycle as a transport.

CHAIR - Moving on, I think we've asked that question. Are there any questions you want to come back with on that score? Is there anything else on Scope? Project cost?

Ms RATTRAY - Can you remind me what the difference between P50 case and P90 case is?

Ms KING - We use statistical methods in estimating the costs on the highways for all the road projects and the - if we do it, when we do it right it means that across a portfolio of projects the projects should, on average, half of them should be under the P50 and half over the P50. Then the P90 is 90 per cent of projects; there is a 90 per cent chance the project will come in under that amount. It's a measure to take into account uncertainty in forecasting without just making things up and providing a reasonable estimate and a reasonable high estimate.

Ms RATTRAY - Thank you. I'm sure the people who read this report afterwards might be interested in that.

CHAIR - I'm sure they are. Okay, no further questions under 3?

Moving over to 4. I think we understand the reason for upgrades. No questions there?

Moving to 5, Finance and Procurement: any questions there?

Ms BUTLER - Can I just say, for the project timeline that it looks like you're meeting your timeline objectives at the moment?

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Ms KING - Yes, we're going well. The award of contract in September 2021 will, all going well, work for Ross and Oatlands. As I said earlier, with environmental approvals required we'll be a bit behind those time frames for the north of Campbell Town section.

CHAIR - Land acquisitions. You've got some key assumptions there of property acquired prior to the start of construction. Do we have much land acquisition associated with this project?

Ms KING - We have several affected landowners. The type of acquisition on the Midland Highway is thin strips. So, we don't have any homes that are being acquired. We don't have any buildings, do we, any outbuildings?

Mr BROWN - No, no buildings. It's all land that has been acquired, yes.

Ms KING - I mean there are buildings on occasion quite close to the Midland Highway but we're not taking any of those buildings. It tends to be for us just a strip. There's an occasional widening of that strip where there is a turn facility, so we take a bit more for the shape of the turn facility.

CHAIR - Are there any problem issues that you perceive might be - well not perceive - you might have had an inkling of certain issues and problems with regard to acquisition that you've got on foot?

Ms KING - No, the acquisition side of things is pretty under control.

CHAIR - Access issues?

Ms KING - There are the inevitable concerns because people don't like having to turn left in the future, having to turn left only out of an access where they are currently turning left and right. That is a consistent and reasonable concern by people. We work with all the landowners. The members of the project team meet with the landowners on site, talk through their issues. Talk it through looking at the issues, not close to the highway, but looking at the locations.

We do our best to address the concerns from the people who live and work alongside the highway. For example, we have relocated turn facilities from where we thought the turn should go. We've moved those in response to landowner feedback and that can ameliorate or at least mitigate the access concerns. Sometimes we have an access off the back of a turn facility and that can help manage the vehicle movements for those as landowners too. So, we prioritise safety. We can't give everybody everything but we do try to get a really good outcome for the people who live and work along the highway.

Mr TUCKER - I'm thinking back to the property at Symmons Plains, actually. That changed ownership after the design was done and some of the building of the road was done, I think. That business substantially changed what it was doing on that farming property, and now, is probably one of the biggest truck moving properties along that piece of road.

Does any planning come into anything that like, into the future, with changes? With the use of properties and the amount of truck movements coming out of a property?

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Ms KING - Where landowners have 5- and 10-year plans for their businesses, we listen to those plans. It is hard for us to make substantial changes on the basis of intention by landowners, so it can really depend how well developed the plans are at the time we are speaking to them.

Changes in markets, and access to markets, and those sorts of things make a huge difference to how quickly a particular farming business is able to implement the long-term plans for the business. It is somewhat case by case, in the sense of, it depends a bit how big a change, how soon, some assessment of how likely those changes are.

In terms of major changes after a project has gone through, often major changes to land use require a planning permit. Not always. It depends how the change works. But if you are thinking about a farming business which might branch into a tourism-type business, there would often be a planning permit required to get the building permit for the tourism buildings., whether they be day use, or day and night use.

The planning permit process that runs through council: we are a referral agency, so council will receive a planning permit for a new tourism business. The access is onto the Midland Highway. That is our highway. They will refer that planning permit to us, and we have an opportunity to make a submission to provide information on the traffic impacts associated with a substantial change of use in the business.

A farming to a tourism change is a change that really does affect the traffic at that location. If you think about if it was just growing grapes, and now it is a winery with tasting, well that really changes the vehicles, and we may, in some cases, condition a planning permit to say the new development needs to fund a turn lane.

Mr TUCKER - With this particular case it was just a farming operation change where it was. There had been a substantial increase in truck movements out of that driveway, and it is the only driveway that hasn't even been sealed right to the entrance off the highway. That is a concern. Just something that has happened in the past but it is hard to predict what is going to happen in the future.

Ms KING - And the tricky ones are the ones where there is a change during the design, or during the construction of the project, because we get to a point where we really can't reinvent something. They are quite tricky those ones.

CHAIR - Do you go back to the local council for an amendment of some sort, or not, when you do this? When you have to change something, and it is a minor change?

Ms KING - There have been multiple projects across our network when we go back to the planning permit and consider. We ask ourselves, initially, do we think this is a minor change? Planning permits in my experience usually lead with condition No. 1, which is: construct substantially in accordance with the design.

There is a discussion about what 'substantially' means. We review that internally. We have town planners on staff, we have consultant town planners and we often will have a conversation with council too to understand their interpretation.

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CHAIR - Depending on how many people are impacted by whatever it is, the changes, I suppose.

Ms KING - And whether it is something that is a change to the fundamental intent of the project or whether it is fine-tuning an element, and if we are changing the design in an area that was particularly sensitive in the council, I suspect. As I said, we assess it internally and we liaise with council to get their interpretation.

CHAIR - Any further questions under 6? No? 7: Stakeholder engagement. I asked a question about any outstanding major issues in regard to acquisition and the like. Any other issues that we ought to be aware of?

Ms KING - We are still working with a number of landowners on fine-tuning some arrangements.

CHAIR - Of what nature?

Ms KING - Around their accesses.

Mr TUCKER - With the land acquisition, you take a parcel of land from a landowner and they are still doing the same thing as what they were doing with that land originally. Do they have to go through the land tax requirements again? Providing all their details over the last three years and the costs involved in that with the land acquisition?

Ms KING - I don't know. What I can tell you about how the land acquisition process works from our perspective is that we define a piece of land that we wish to acquire, often existing title. We do all the administration of making sure the title gets changed: the government departments, the Office of the Valuer-General gets involved with that and they live under DPIPW but we work closely with them, so I think of it as we, the team.

Mr TUCKER - The land tax would come under the Valuer-General as well.

Ms KING - Yes. When we acquire land there is compensation for the purchase of that. I am sorry, I don't know how the land tax works. That is not our area.

CHAIR - Not something to do with this particular project.

Ms RATTRAY - In regard to the consultation, earlier today there was some reference to engagement with agriculture contractors who use heavy machinery going from farm to farm. I note that the TFGA have been part of the stakeholder consultation process. I am wondering if you know whether they drilled down into agriculture consultants and contractors as well in their needs for big machinery on roads.

Ms KING - The TFGA were not as involved in these projects as they had been in some previous ones so we made sure that we reached out to them. We did not get a strong engagement from them on these jobs as we have had in the past. I could not tell you what their - several of the landowners we are dealing with on these projects are landowners that we have worked with in the past on previous projects so they know us, they know the issues, they know the routines, and some of it is not new to them.

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Ms RATTRAY - I was interested in how far that consultation drills down into individual areas of agriculture uses.

Mr TUCKER - We did talk about the shoulder widths being 2 to 3 metres whereas previously in discussions we have only talked about 2 metres on the shoulder width. Can you go into a little more depth where you would go out to 3 metres from the 2 metres? That is a big thing with what Tania is saying in regards to the machinery moving past. If a truck is broken down, it just gives you that extra metre of width to get past that oversize machine.

Ms KING - Yes. As a result of the early contractor involvement process, some sections have a slightly wider highway cross-section than others, because of the advice from the contractors about construction efficiency. So, that extra width makes it a bit more efficient for them to get in and build it. We've looked at where we distribute that extra width. Some of it is in making the medians a little wider; some of it making the shoulders a little wider in those sections. It's not everywhere.

There are other constraints. We all need to come in again as we get to the bridges, and come out again, and also environmental and other constraints mean we don't end up with the wider cross-section.

Mr TUCKER - And with the pieces you're narrowing in, you haven't got the wire rope barrier in the middle, where you come across those bridges.

Ms KING - Yes, the flexible safety barrier stops before the bridges, then starts again on the other side of the bridge. Tunbridge isn't a great example, because it stops for the intersection.

Mr BROWN - As well as the bridge, only because they're so closely spaced.

Ms KING - As well as the bridges, yes. And that's a tight area, because you have an intersection, bridge, bridge, intersection.

CHAIR - Okay. Continuing on. Chapter 8, Compliance - any issues there? I have one. Where it talks about Commonwealth, state and local government, under 8.1, it doesn't mention the Heritage act. Does the Heritage act come into play?

Ms KING - We certainly have done heritage assessments, for both Indigenous and European heritage. We have submitted our applications for Indigenous heritage, and there's no significant European heritage impact arising out of these projects.

CHAIR - You cover that a bit further on, don't you? Yes, under 8.4.

Ms KING - Yes, that's right. We have considered these topics and done quite a bit of work.

CHAIR - I just didn't see the Heritage act listed under 8.1.

Ms KING - That's a very good pick-up, thank you. I think it's because we really haven't triggered anything significant, but we have done the work to check that we aren't triggering something significant there.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - Okay. I'm aware of the time, so we'll move on.

Mr TUCKER - Chair, one question on threatened species. What's the difference between a smooth New Holland daisy, a fuzzy New Holland daisy and a woolly New Holland daisy? Are they all cousins, or -

CHAIR - It's exactly that: one's fuzzy, one's woollen and one's smooth.

Ms BUTLER - To some people there's a very good difference.

Ms RATTRAY - And don't forget cut-leaf.

Ms KING - I'm unable to answer that question in detail.

CHAIR - I don't know how *Hansard* will deal with this.

Ms RATTRAY - I think the member should organise his own briefing.

Ms BUTLER - I have a question about that flood-prone area around Ross, and drainage. Could you quickly run us through any mitigation surrounding it.

Ms KING - Yes. That area around Ross is already vulnerable to flooding. As a safety upgrade, we're not primarily focused on the broader landscape impacts. However, we are currently doing some work to make sure we're not adversely impacting the surrounding communities and surrounding assets.

It's very tricky through there, because it's so flat that a tiny change in height can mean that it's wet much further into the paddock. So that's the work we're doing at the moment, to unpick the impact and make sure that we're not doing anything that is a significant adverse impact.

Ms BUTLER - Thank you.

CHAIR - Just at the bottom of the page under 'threatened species' right down the bottom, you talk about, 'with targeted surveys for avian species undertaken in February 2021, final impact to these species, and species habitat can be determined following the completion of the targeted surveys and finalisation of construction footprints'. What happens when you find out that it's actually a significant impact? You don't think there's likely to be significant impact at this point in time?

Ms KING - Since this report was written we've got some conclusions out of that work.

CHAIR - Yes.

Ms KING - The main avian species we were looking at were eagles and owls. We're confident on both those species. Some of the work that gets undertaken includes tree climbing to assess the suitability of hollows. So, from the ground the specialists can identify there's a potential hollow that might make a great nest for an owl. We got some additional, deeper work done to get that tree climbing work done to confirm that.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - Verify one way or the other.

Ms KING - Yes, that we don't have owls living in the trees, that that had been identified. So, we're pleased we've been able to mitigate that risk.

CHAIR - Okay, no worries. Any further questions on 8? No? Turning over the page to 8.5 planning approvals plus the summary of heritage features. Any questions there? No? We have the maps. I think we've been taken through that well and truly.

If there aren't any more questions, thank you for that. Thank you very much for coming and presenting today. I have a series of standard questions and I'd like a response to each of these.

Does the proposed works meet an identified need, or needs, or solve a recognised problem?

Ms KING - Yes.

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

Ms KING - Yes.

CHAIR - Are the proposed works fit for purpose?

Ms KING - Yes.

CHAIR - Do the proposed works provide value for money?

Ms KING - Yes.

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

Ms KING - Yes.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Ms RATTRAY - Chair, I'd just like to say what an excellent presentation it was today from everybody.

Members - Hear, hear.

CHAIR - I agree, it was very good. Thank you very much for coming and doing that. Just to remind you again that what you've had to say to us today is covered by parliamentary privilege but when you walk out of this room if you speak to anyone about it, that won't be the case. So as long as you understand that.

Ms KING - Yes.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - Thank you for your presentation.

Ms KING - I've been sitting here thinking what a pleasure it is to work in this team. It's a really good team on the Midland Highway and we are doing our best to do a good job on these projects.

CHAIR - Excellent, thank you.

Ms RATTRAY - Travel safely on it.

Ms KING - Yes, everybody, that's right.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.