



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

**Midland Highway Safety Upgrade – St
Peters Pass to South of Tunbridge
and
Midland Highway Safety Upgrade – York
Plains to St Peters Pass**

*Presented to Her Excellency the Governor pursuant to the provisions of the
Public Works Committee Act 1914.*

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Legislative Council

Mr Farrell
Mr Valentine

House of Assembly

Mrs Rylah (Chair)
Mr Llewellyn
Mr Shelton

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1 INTRODUCTION

To Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Kate Warner AM, Governor in and over the State of Tasmania and its Dependencies in the Commonwealth of Australia.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY

The Committee has investigated the following proposals:-

**Midland Highway Safety Upgrade – St Peters Pass to South of Tunbridge
and
Midland Highway Safety Upgrade – York Plains to St Peters Pass**

and now has the honour to present the Report to Your Excellency in accordance with the Public Works Committee Act 1914 (the Act).

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Midland Highway Safety Upgrade – St Peters Pass to South of Tunbridge and Midland Highway Safety Upgrade – York Plains to St Peters Pass projects are components of the *Midland Highway Strategic 10 Year Action Plan*, a 10-year plan with a commitment of a total of \$500 million from Australian and Tasmanian Governments to upgrade the Midland Highway.
- 2.2 The *AusRAP Star Rating Australia's National Network of Highways 2013* report found that the majority of the Midland Highway rated either only 1 or 2-star, in its 5-star safety rating scale. This low rating can be primarily attributed to the Highway's absence of adequate safety features in many areas. The key objectives of Tasmania's 10-Year Action Plan are to undertake safety improvements to provide a minimum of a 3-star AusRAP rating for the entire length of the Midland Highway, integrated with additional overtaking opportunities and a staged approach to capacity improvements.
- 2.3 The Midland Highway upgrade projects utilise the 'Safe System' approach, which has been adopted by all Australian state and territory road authorities to achieve a minimum 3-star AusRAP rating. The 'Safe System' approach recognises that people will make mistakes which result in crashes and, therefore, road infrastructure needs to be designed to take account of these errors.
- 2.4 The upgrade design being employed along the Midland Highway employs several safety measures that will result in a minimum 3 star AUSRAP rating. These measures include:
 - Lane separation with flexible safety barriers, to reduce serious road trauma caused by head-on and run-off road crashes;
 - Audible edge lines (rumble strips) to alert drivers when they deviate towards the edge of the road and provide time to recover;

- Extending sealed shoulders to 2.0m to allow for correction in the event of loss of control when a vehicle crosses the edge line;
- Clearing roadside hazards or providing roadside barriers where hazards can't be removed;
- Upgrading junctions (including large farm accesses) by providing turning lanes to allow turning vehicles to move out of the traffic flow;
- Constructing 2+1 lane arrangements and alternating overtaking opportunities with a minimum length of 1.2km to provide additional safe overtaking opportunities and to avoid driver frustration;
- Minimising breaks in the flexible safety median barrier;
- Providing turning facilities at 3-5km intervals, for residential access, maintenance and emergency services; and
- Lane widths of 3.5m.

Midland Highway Safety Upgrade – St Peters Pass to South of Tunbridge

2.5 This reference recommended the Committee approve upgrade works to improve the safety of the Midland Highway between St Peters Pass and south of Tunbridge.

2.6 The proposed works include the following elements:

- Widening of the existing carriageway for the provision of sections of 2+1 traffic lanes;
- Extending sealed shoulders;
- Lane separation with flexible safety barriers;
- Reduction of roadside hazards;
- Alignment and junction upgrades;
- Provision of a heavy vehicle turning facility at Sorell Springs Road, Antill Ponds Road and Old Tier Road;
- Provision of light vehicle turning facility at Antill Ponds Road for vehicles coming from the north;
- Relocation of Glen Morey Road further north to improve safety;
- Connection into the new highway design to the north; and
- Associated earthworks with the proposed widening requiring moderate to significant cutting or embankments in some sections due to the nature of terrain and road gradient.

2.7 These works will contribute to achieving the projects objectives, which are to:

- Provide a National Land Transport Network standard 110 km/h speed environment;
- Provide a 3-star AusRAP rating for this section of the Midland Highway;

- Improve freight transport efficiency; and
- Improve intersection safety and efficiency.

Midland Highway Safety Upgrade – York Plains to St Peters Pass

- 2.8 This reference recommended the Committee approve upgrade works to improve the safety of the Midland Highway between York Plains and St Peters Pass.
- 2.9 The proposed works include the following elements:
- Widening of the existing carriageway for the provision of three sections of 2+1 traffic lanes;
 - Extending sealed shoulders;
 - Lane separation with flexible safety barriers;
 - Reduction of roadside hazards;
 - Alignment and junction upgrades;
 - Provision of a heavy vehicle turning facility at York Plains Road and the reinstatement of the York Plains Road junction to an appropriate standard;
 - Connection into the new highway design to the north; and
 - Associated earthworks with the proposed widening requiring moderate to significant cutting of embankments in some sections due to the nature of terrain and road gradient.
- 2.10 These works will contribute to achieving the project objectives, which are to:
- Provide a National Land Transport Network standard 110 km/h speed environment;
 - Provide a 3-star AusRAP rating for this section of the Midland Highway;
 - Improve freight transport efficiency; and
 - Improve intersection safety and efficiency.

3 PROJECT COSTS

Midland Highway Safety Upgrade – St Peters Pass to South of Tunbridge

3.1 Pursuant to the Message from Her Excellency the Governor-in-Council, the estimated cost of the work is \$27.9 million.

The following table details the cost estimates for the project:

Cost Item	Estimated Value
Development Phase costs (including design, application fees and project management)	\$300,830
Property Acquisition	\$64,280
Delivery Phase costs (including contract management, project management, and insurance costs)	\$2,743,380
Estimated construction contract costs, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earthworks • Drainage • Pavements • Bituminous surfacing • Bridge structures • Traffic facilities • Landscaping 	\$18,922,739
State Growth supplied construction costs, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services relocations • Street lighting • Reseal of pavements 	\$247,000
Expected contingency on base estimate outlined above (P50) plus Escalation	\$1,665,850
<i>Expected project out-turn cost (P50)</i>	<i>\$24,840,000</i>

The above is based on the contingency required to provide a P50 level of confidence in the cost estimate. The equivalent project out-turn cost for a P90 level of confidence is \$27,960,000.

Midland Highway Safety Upgrade – York Plains to St Peters Pass

3.2 Pursuant to the Message from Her Excellency the Governor-in-Council, the estimated cost of the work is \$15.872 million.

The following table details the cost estimates for the project:

Cost Item	Estimated Value
Development Phase costs (including design, application fees and project management)	\$1,070,341
Property Acquisition	\$100,000
Delivery Phase costs (including contract management, project management, and insurance costs)	\$754,141
Estimated construction contract costs, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earthworks • Drainage • Pavements • Bituminous surfacing • Bridge structures • Traffic facilities • Landscaping 	\$11,592,514
State Growth supplied construction costs, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services relocations • Street lighting • Reseal of pavements 	\$370,000
Expected contingency on base estimate outlined above (P50) plus Escalation	\$828,917
<i>Expected project out-turn cost (P50)</i>	<i>\$14,716,000</i>

The above is based on the contingency required to provide a P50 level of confidence in the cost estimate. The equivalent project out-turn cost for a P90 level of confidence is \$15,872,000.

4 EVIDENCE

4.1 The Committee commenced its inquiry on Friday, 2 June last with an inspection of the sites of the proposed works. The Committee then returned to the Oatlands Community Hall, Oatlands, whereupon the following witnesses appeared, made the Statutory Declaration and were examined by the Committee in public:

- Ted Ross, Project Director, Department of State Growth;
- Damien Dry, Project Manager, Department of State Growth;
- Jonathon Elliott, Consultant Project Manager, Jacobs Pty Ltd (for the St Peters Pass to south of Tunbridge project);
- Greg McGuire, Consultant Project Manager, GHD Pty Ltd (for the York Plains to St Peters Pass project);
- Allen Cooper, owner, Woodbury House (public witness for the St Peters Pass to south of Tunbridge project);
- Gavin Nicholas, Brooklands Pty Ltd (public witness for the St Peters Pass to south of Tunbridge project);
- Mark Cornelius, owner, Woodbury Hill (public witness for the St Peters Pass to south of Tunbridge project); and
- Chris Merridew (public witness for the York Plains to St Peters Pass project).

Midland Highway Safety Upgrade – St Peters Pass to South of Tunbridge

Overview

4.2 Mr Dry provided an overview of the proposed works:

The project we are presenting today is St Peters Pass to south of Tunbridge. It is a 10.7-kilometre project; it is part of our Midland Highway 10-year action strategy, which is all about improving safety on the highway. As part of this, we are looking to increase the star rating - AusRAP rating - to a nationally accredited three-star rating along this section of road that we are improving. We are doing this through a variety of treatments. The first of these is a central median flexible safety barrier which will reduce head-on collisions. We are also looking to remove roadside hazards and also protect them where we can't remove them. We will be providing a 2-metre sealed shoulder. We will also be installing audible edge lines, which make the rumble sound when you drive over them. We are also looking to minimise breaks in the flexible safety barrier.

So a little bit more about this project: as I said, we are looking to upgrade a 10.7-kilometre section of highway this summer. We will be installing three northbound overtaking lanes and three southbound overtaking lanes, in a 2 + 1 configuration that will leapfrog along, which is in line with our state strategy for the highway. We will be installing three turning facilities - one at Sorell Springs Road; one at Antill Ponds and also one at Old Tier Road.

Additional Overtaking Opportunities

4.3 The Committee noted the project involved additional overtaking opportunities, but also noted there was a section that would be reduced from dual overtaking lanes (i.e. 2+2) to a 2+1 overtaking arrangement. The Committee sought further

information from the Departmental witnesses on how the additional overtaking opportunities would be achieved:

Mr SHELTON - In this section we have some overtaking lanes, how many metres of overtaking lane do we have now compared to where we will be in the future? Is there a calculation about that or not?

Mr ROSS - At the moment there is only one section of separated overtaking, if you like. Just north of St Peters Pass Rest Area, there is a dual overtaking lanes (sic), so if we made an assessment and said that currently there's two overtaking areas, one for north and one for south. In the future, there will be five across the project, so there will be three north and three south.

Mr SHELTON - So there will be significantly more overtaking opportunities under this design than we have there presently?

Mr ROSS - Yes.

Access to the Woodbury House Entry

4.4 The Committee received a number of submissions regarding the changed access arrangements at Woodbury House. Currently, vehicles are able to turn into and out of the Woodbury House entry, which is a multi-use entry for a number of business and residences, without restriction. There is also an unlicensed access cut in the fence north of the Woodbury house entry to allow access for large heavy machinery.

4.5 However, once the wire rope median barrier is installed, vehicular access at this entry will be restricted to left-in left-out. Vehicles wanting to travel south as they exit the Woodbury House entry will have to exit to the left and travel north 1.3km to the turning facility that will be constructed on Old Tier Road. Light vehicles travelling south that wish to turn into the Woodbury House entry will need to travel 2.9km past Woodbury House to the turning facility that will be built at Antill Ponds for a round trip of an additional 5.8km, while heavy vehicles will need to travel 4km to the turning facility at Sorell Springs Road, a round trip of an additional 8km. In addition, the unlicensed access north of the Woodbury House entry will be closed.

4.6 The Committee sought further information on the proposed turning facilities and the additional distance that property owners and residents would be required to travel to access their properties:

Mr VALENTINE - In relation to the median barrier, the turning points - some of submissions - and one of them from Woodbury - talks about the need to go, under the original proposal, a further 8 kilometres - 4 kilometres up, 4 kilometres back - to get to the property because you cannot directly turn in to the right if you are going south. Can you explain how you might have mitigated a bit of that due to that concern?

Mr ROSS - The overall strategy of the Midland Highway is to provide regular turning facilities, and we do that every 3 to 5 kilometres. Generally all accesses are left-in, left-out, so therefore, it is not going to be a break every location where we have an access. Generally all accesses are left-in, left-out. At the Woodbury access, they have to turn left. If they want to head south out of their access, they will have to turn left and go north.

Mr VALENTINE - How far?

Mr ELLIOTT - About 1.3 kilometres.

Mr ROSS - So 1.3 kilometres north to Old Tier Road where they can turn and head south. If they are heading south along the highway and they want to turn back into their access, they will have to go beyond their access for a distance of 2.9 kilometres for a light vehicle and further, 4 kilometres, to Sorell Springs where they can do a turn and then travel back. That is within our strategy of 3 to 5 kilometres.

- 4.7 Mr Allen and Mrs Linda Cooper are the owners of Woodbury House, which they are restoring with a view to opening it as a tourism venture incorporating various forms of accommodation, tours and an antique shop.
- 4.8 In his submission, Mr Cooper noted that the Woodbury House access was a multi-use entry, and there would be significant inconvenience caused by the installation of the wire rope median barrier:

*“We object to the proposed Highway upgrade on the grounds that the basic right of entry to our property has been restricted to left in left out. We feel that it is totally unreasonable to expect the users of the ‘Woodbury House’ entry to travel an extra **8.0klms plus** each journey to gain access to the property. **There is a marked inconsistent design methodology to the allocation of property entry/exit points on the Highway upgrade.***

*The current ‘Woodbury House’ entry is **not a single use entry** but is the only licensed entry for two residences and three different business enterprises. It is also the only entry for an air strip that is used by local farmers for the fertilization of their crops and similarly also for our neighbour to service and harvest his renewable hardwood tree plantation. There are more movements per day through the ‘Woodbury House’ entry than are through most minor road access points.”¹*

- 4.9 Mr Cooper also noted the negative affect the new access arrangements would have on his proposed business at Woodbury House:

The business potential relies heavily on its high visibility and proximity to the Heritage Highway with easy access to and from the major cities of Hobart and Launceston. The need to capture ‘bums past the door’ was also an important factor for the success of the antique shop and bed and breakfast accommodations. The left in left out situation as is proposed in the D. A. will severely affect the amount of visitation we will receive.”²

- 4.10 In his submission, and subsequently at the hearing, Mr Cooper disputed the Department of State Growth’s assertion that light vehicles would only need to travel 2.9km to use the turning facility at Antill Ponds. Mr Cooper noted that the plans he had “clearly shows a P-turn facility allowing traffic travelling north (toward Woodbury) the opportunity to turn south. It does not allow traffic travelling south to perform a U-turn to return north to ‘Woodbury House’ as they claim. We reiterate that we will need to travel in excess of 8.2klms each journey which is totally unreasonable and again inconsistent with the rest of the Upgrade.”³ Mr Cooper further stated:

¹ Submission from Allen and Linda Cooper, page 14.

² Submission from Allen and Linda Cooper, page 14

³ Ibid, page 17.

That 4.1 kilometres - I do know that State Growth has said has said 2.9 kilometres to Antill Ponds. If I can refer you to my submission on page 17, I've actually shown the Antill Ponds intersection. From that you can see, that it is a turnaround P-junction, which services traffic travelling north. Traffic travelling north can do a U-turn to travel back south.

... .. My objection to that one is that travelling south, which is us to get back home, no provision has been made for us to do a P-turn or a U-turn. We would have to drive into there, either try to do an illegal turn within the entry of traffic coming from the north to do the U-turn or perhaps drive down the old highway, across an ungated railway line to try to find where to turn round in the railway yards. So that is not a U-turn for us to use. So 2.9 kilometres they say for light vehicles but there is no provision made for it. I think you can see that on that page quite clearly.

- 4.11 The Committee asked the Department's witnesses to confirm, or otherwise, whether south-bound light vehicles could use the Antill Ponds turning facility to turn back to Woodbury House. The Department's witnesses confirmed that changes had been made to the design to allow this:

Mr ROSS - - The space we have provided at Antill is sufficient for light vehicles to do a turning movement and then to go back north.

CHAIR - It is not illegal?

Mr ROSS - - No. In fact, we will have a new holding line and a line there which will be for vehicles to prop there, ready to turn right. It is designed in terms of what we have provided as part of that access because not only is it a P-turn for people to turn, it is also the access into a road in there as well. We're also allowing vehicles that actually come out of that road to turn right as well.

- 4.12 Mr Gavin Nicholas uses the Woodbury House entry to access his farming property behind Woodbury House. Mr Nicholas also uses the unlicensed access cut in the fence just north of the Woodbury House entry to enable large machinery to access his property. Mr Nicholas' main concern was that the wire rope median barrier and closure of the unlicensed access would result in "great difficulty getting in to our property with machinery and trucks".⁴

- 4.13 Mr Nicholas expanded on these difficulties at the public hearing. In particular, Mr Nicholas was concerned that the wire rope median barrier would restrict his access at the Woodbury House entry:

Mr NICHOLAS - Our main concern is getting our machinery and so forth into Woodbury House. We have land on either side. We go down the highway and at the moment we go in one entrance of Woodbury House, and we have a big gate there that we use. If the proposed wire road goes down either side, we cannot get wide gear into Woodbury House over the ramp. We have a lot of stock trucks that go in there. At the moment they swing out to get in straight. They will not be able to get over the wire barriers to get in, so they'll obviously knock the ramp down if they can't get out and swing in.

... .. If a wire rope goes in and we haven't got a hole to pop in, it is no good going down the whole road because we have to come right the way back to Sorell Springs turnoff, which we would come out anyway so we are on the road. If the wire rope goes on the edge of the road, we cannot get into Woodbury House because the gap is not big enough.

⁴ Submission from Gavin Nicholas, page 1

....I was trying to get an entrance, a wide gate, to get in because our equipment just won't. Like I got a silo the other day, and that wouldn't fit over - or it fitted over Allen's ramp by that much. So we got to have an entrance - a big gate somewhere - just to get in. At the moment, with the proposed wire rope, I can't get in.

Mr VALENTINE - You can't swing out to make it out?

Mr NICHOLAS - Well, if the ramp's too narrow - like, I have contractors who come down -

Mr VALENTINE - You have to come straight on?

Mr NICHOLAS - It does not matter if it's straight on. I have contractors come in; they have got their big equipment - they are wider than -

Mr COOPER - They are wider than my gate.

Mr NICHOLAS - I just cannot get in. I can now because I have a big gate; I just cut a hole in the fence, just north of Allen's, but we are not allowed to have that entrance, just gates we can pop in and out. I have to get in and at the moment I can't. That's my biggest concern - I have to get in.

- 4.14 Mr Ross noted that the Woodbury House entry could be widened to facilitate access by large vehicles and machinery. Mr Ross also noted Mr Nicholas' issue with the wire rope barrier potentially restricting his access to this entry and committed to ensuring this did not occur. Mr Ross also noted that the Department would continue to negotiate to ensure that access for heavy vehicles and machinery is not compromised:

CHAIR - I am giving you the right of reply to these. Are there any questions you can address quickly?

Mr ROSS - Yes. The first one is around the size of the access.

CHAIR - This is at Woodbury House?

Mr ROSS - Yes. That is Woodbury House. The size of the access. It is what it is in terms of we went there today and saw the gap there. But they have the ability to vary that use, the Woodbury access, if that is increased to allow whatever vehicles they want -

CHAIR - But that's not a State Growth limitation whether there'll be private access? Is that what you're saying?

Mr ROSS - There is no limitation in place as to what the landowner does. Also happy to look at the sweep paths of the machinery, though. If, you know, we will review that in terms of ensuring that the vehicles when they are turning into the access are not forced to, for example, the concern for having to go out wider than, say, where our median barrier is, we want to make sure that our median barrier is not the limitation allowing vehicles to enter into the property.

CHAIR - Do you think you can achieve that?

Mr ROSS - Yes. That is no problem.

Mr VALENTINE - Okay. I do not know how I handle this question, but I guess what we have here is the significance of two commercial operations effectively not being able to access their land with significant-sized machinery unless an entrance is provided. How do you see that being overcome? I am talking about an entrance that is currently there, because they have an access through a fence which allows them to carry on with their work. Of course, it's not a certified access. I understand that creates an issue, but do you have any suggestions as to how 4.4-metre wide machinery can negotiate the properties they are needed to operate on?

Mr ROSS - I guess it's the same with any property or business along the highway - if they need to upgrade their access to allow larger machinery, the department works with them in that regard.

Mr VALENTINE - Where would you put it? That is fine, but given all the restrictions we have been talking about - 2 + 1 and too close to a bend and too far away - where would you put an entrance like that which they could even work with you on?

Mr ROSS - I suggest they most likely select the location where the entrance currently is, and widen it....

Mr SHELTON - It has been indicated that the ropes could be moved back. As I understand it, they do not have to go right to be edge of the road. The obvious radius into the gateway is a concern when trying to swing out. If the ropes aren't in the road and the culvert was wider, that would be a better access.

As mentioned, individuals then have the responsibility of their own access. In this case the Government is creating a better highway and if this access is an issue, with contractors and so forth onsite, if it was agreeable by the owner, I would hope an arrangement could come together that this is solved as far as the width of the access.

... .. From the department's point of view is there further opportunity to negotiate a process around that access?

Mr ROSS - When questions were being asked about this, the first thing I wrote down was around us going back and looking at the design of access and making sure that it was an appropriate size. I think the department can definitely work with the landowner around the size of the machinery and to make sure that they could access the property. I think that is very reasonable.

Mr VALENTINE - So that means that the department might move the stone wall component further to the south to make it wide enough to accept any width machinery that needs to go through those gates, including the log trucks?

Mr ROSS - Yes.

4.15 Mr Mark Cornelius has a timber harvesting business and accesses his property from the Woodbury House entry. Mr Cornelius has “a large road system of approximately 30km behind this access that services my tree plantations of about 350 hec and also 700 hec of native production forests.”⁵ Mr Cornelius’ concern stems from the additional distance that will need to be travelled by contractors to access his property when he is harvesting this timber.

4.16 Mr Cornelius noted that the additional travel distance would impose a significant, additional cost on his timber harvesting business:

....There is 350 hectares of plantation and all the roads are set up for that 350. All up, I've actually got 600 hectares of plantation there, which is a fairly big chunk - but 350 hectares of it is set up and comes down that road. The tonnage on an average figure is 250 tonne; there are accredited plantation foresters up there at harvest time and they make viable harvest. That is why I say it will be 15 to 20 years before it could be harvested. Two hundred and fifty tonnes a hectare and that comes up to a total for plantation wood that will need to come down that access - of 87 500 tonnes, give or take 10 000 tonnes or more.

There is also probably 700 hectares of hardwood forest, production forest there as well. That is treated different to the plantation stock. It is not clear-felled. So it would be a fair thing to say that in those 700 hectares, there could be 80 tonne of hectare harvest there. I wrote down

⁵ Submission from Gavin Cornelius, page 1.

a figure here - 700 hectares at 80 tonne, 56 000 tonnes. That is a substantial amount of truck movements.

... .. Having to travel 4-plus kilometres extra down the road and back up, you get charged cents per kilometre per tonne, and it's anything from 14 to 17 cents a kilometre per tonne in today's prices right now. So, if you add those two, 87 000 tonnes and 56 000 tonnes,... .. If the trucks have got to travel over 8 kilometres, it will be 60 to 70 cents a tonne extra. To put that into perspective, the price of plantation wood chips is only \$14 a tonne. That is what I was quoted just recently. So I would be getting \$13.40. It is the harvest and the cart come in and then I get what's left of the market price. That is today's figures.

If you add up all those tonnes, that is how much it is going to cost me over a period if this break in the highway that we would like to have does not go ahead.

- 4.17 Based on the figures provided by Mr Cornelius, the additional travel distance may cost him approximately \$85,000-\$100,000.
- 4.18 The Committee noted that a number of alternative entry arrangements had been put forward, including by Mr Cooper and Mr Nicholas, to overcome the issues they had raised. Mr Nicholas stated:

Mr NICHOLAS - We thought that if we could get a turn further up from Allen's... .. What we propose is to come up on the lucerne paddock there, and they could put a G-turn in because there is plenty of room even if you have to take a little bit of our paddock, because this is going to affect us for another 50 years - well, not me, but my sons.

... .. about 200 or 300 metres up from Allen's turnoff. We could put a big gate in there and go down the old highway and cut across the highway there. We thought there would be enough room even if they took a couple of metres off our lucerne paddock to make a turn so we can pop in and get a big gate to get our machinery in. That is the main reason I am here. We can go to the Woodbury Road, come south for about a kilometre and go in.

... .. That is the main thing. Well, we've got to get in and we've got a big gate there now that we've cut a hole in the fence so we can get in, because our machinery - well, we're down to sort of that - Allen's ramp - we don't want to knock it down otherwise he won't talk to me.

Mr LLEWELLYN - From Allen's point of view you would create another better access also?

Mr NICHOLAS - Yes, to go down... ..Up there, from between the road and the railway line, there's - well, I could measure it; but it's probably 50 metres up there from the edge of the road and across to the railway. Put one of those G-turns in

- 4.19 Mr Cooper also commented on his negotiations with the Department of State Growth about the Woodbury House entry, including the alternatives he had put forward:

The other thing with the highway is that we have tried to negotiate with State Growth about putting entries into positions.

... .. We've got three businesses and we cannot get an entry, so I've asked, 'Okay, can we start the highway just south of our entry?' That way you might lose 300, 400 metres of 'the dual highway, because the highway is not actually starting right on the bend; it's starting off the bend. I said, 'In over 200 kilometres, surely that's not a great deal? As soon as you're flattening out the bend south of Woodbury, that extra 300, 400 metres could be made up there. That would afford us the status quo', and the answer was, 'No, it is interfering with our rationale for what our highway is meant to be.

I asked whether we could put an entry where our trees are. just where that is, you know, because it is too close to the bend. Yet a lot of those entries they are proposing - Antill Ponds and that - are no further away from the bend than what that actually would have been.

We also then suggested that - this is what Gavin was saying - just south of our existing entry, there is a big kink in the highway. It does not really show up on the plan, because the plan

does not show the whole stretch in one length. If you went out to sight the place, you can see that kink in the highway quite plainly. Gavin doesn't mind losing that couple of metres off his land to straighten that up. If that is straightened up there, you can turn right here or turn right there, or they could put us a turn on the other side where the railway is.

Whether they put a turn right lane to come in and out, or they put the U-turn bay opposite, there's plenty of room there with the highway - between the ramp, the highway and us. You could get six lanes in. There is not a problem there, but the only answer I got from them verbally, unfortunately, but, as we are under oath, it's the truth - was, 'Well, we're not putting access across two lanes', but if you drive from Hobart to Launceston, I can show you many accesses across two lanes in the finished roadworks.

- 4.20 Mr Cornelius noted that the Department had listened to his concerns, but that other options were not possible:

My negotiations - yes, State Growth has consulted me. They have listened to my concerns. They said they were going to look into other options. I know they have tried a little bit. I think they get it slightly. They said it was not viable; basically they were just saying they were going to do what they want to do.

- 4.21 The Committee sought further information on what other options had been considered and why they had been discounted. Mr Ross noted that a number of alternatives had been considered and detailed why alternative entry points were not viable:

Mr VALENTINE - Just for the record, with respect to the possible future use of that property as a tourism venture, which is mentioned in their submission, they were thinking it would obviously be better for them to have the direct left-right turn out of their property. You know the turn that is done at Bisdee Tier. As you come north, you get to the Bisdee Tier turnoff and they tell you to turn left and then go straight across the road at the first opportunity, just so you are not stopped in the fast-moving traffic. Is that not an option here?

Mr ROSS - We have met with the owners of the property on a number of occasions and undertaken considerable work to look at different alternatives and options. We have not been able to find the path to develop a suitable option to put a break in the barrier at this location.

Mr VALENTINE - Is that because of the distance between the railway line and the road?

Mr ROSS - There are a number of reasons. One is the location and the fact we have the location of the overtaking lanes which constrains the section. The railway is also located on one side and is very close. We also have the heritage property on the other side. Also the assessment of the turning movements in and out of the property and the degree of those movements has not warranted a break in the barrier.

Mr VALENTINE - The other option was a 1 + 1 at that point rather than a 2 + 1. What is your opinion on that?

Mr ROSS - If we remove the overtaking section, it would be against the strategy because we would no longer have the frequency of overtaking that we are trying to achieve to reduce driver frustration. Right now as you drive along that section, it is a single dotted line down the middle where people regularly overtake. I think it would be very difficult to justify removing the overtaking lanes from that section.

Mr LLEWELLYN - What about the issue, though, of moving 400 metres south and making the Woodbury access combined with the farmers' access at that point?

Mr ROSS - I think what I was hearing was that they were proposing that as you head further south from Woodbury access there is more width in the corridor between the road and the rail. The point we are making in regards to the allowance for a G-turn is not solely based on

the width of the road between the road and the rail. We outlined a number of reasons why, in accordance with our strategy, we weren't providing a gap in the fence.

It is not purely just because we couldn't just fit a G-turn in. That's not the only reason why.

Mr LLEWELLYN - Can you tell us what the other reasons are?

Mr ROSS - As well as the constraints on the property, we highlighted the fact there is the overtaking lane. Turning across two lanes of traffic - we want to put turning facilities in 1 + 1 areas. Our strategy is to locate turning facilities in 1 + 1 areas where you only have to travel over the one lane instead of having to travel over the two lanes. That is part of the strategy.

The second one is the requirement to provide the overtaking opportunity. Pushing this location further south actually gets you closer to where not only do we have the southern overtaking end, we also have the northern overtaking ending. You actually start getting closer to the transition between the two, which is even less, because when people get to the end of an overtaking lane, they are actually at their highest speed, so people in the overtaking lane will be travelling at significant speed. Again, it is related to the safety of the access.

That is why we are unable to provide it at this location. Also, as I said, the turning - the left-in, left-out we are providing in this section and in other areas of the highway - is what we have done in this strategy, and providing those regular overtaking opportunities.

..... I guess the other point I wanted to make is the overtaking lane is a standard of 1.2 kilometres. That is part of our strategy. It provides a distance we're trying to keep consistent all the way down the highway. It also provides for the most efficient overtaking of vehicles. If we suddenly put in a 700 metre or varied the length of overtaking lane, motorists coming down wouldn't have the same opportunity to overtake and could actually be in a position where they think it's going to be a 1.2 kilometre overtaking facility and it's actually a lot shorter. It has been demonstrated that actually creates a lot of problems. We had some people come down from Queensland where they actually have some substandard overtaking lanes which they are actually going back and extending because of the problem with the length.

Mr VALENTINE - A statement was made about the distance of an entry from a bend. A statement was made that you told them they could not put an entrance in north from their current access because it was too close to the bend in the north.

Mr ROSS - Yes..... We said before that we looked extensively at a series of alternatives, including moving the access further north and further south. The curve that you have to the north has limitations in terms of your sight distance to vehicles and that's the concern there.

Old Tier Road Turning Facility

4.22 The Committee noted that the turning facility on Old Tier Road was located some distance from the highway, in part due to the location of a heritage grave site near the junction with the highway. The Committee questioned the Department's witnesses on this turning facility, noting that if it were able to be moved closer to the highway there may be an opportunity to provide an access to Woodbury House off the turning facility, which would mitigate concerns about south-bound traffic wishing to access Woodbury House:

Mr SHELTON - I didn't ask this question beforehand, but it's sort of a heritage question. Where the U-turn opportunity is on the northern end of it, what's that gravel road that goes out to the dam?

Mr ROSS - Old Tier Road.

Mr SHELTON - Old Tier Road. That is significantly off the highway. There was an issue, as I understand it, that it could not go close to the road because of the heritage roadside. I am wondering whether it is a possibility, because from my point of view, if a U-turn is right beside the road where people can see it, it's obvious and accessible.

If it's 300 metres off the road and there is just a sign there, I wonder how much inconvenience that would be. I don't know how important that heritage roadside is with the local owners of the area, but to overcome that issue, if it could be placed - and I do not know how you do that - in another spot, and that U-turn put in that corner, it would be a significant advantage for the road users. I am not suggesting for anybody else, but for road users, it would be a significant advantage. I do not know whether the department has followed that up or not.

Mr ROSS - I think the heritage constraints on us are significant at that location. That is our current position. I am happy to go back and have another discussion with the designers. I understand another issue with that location is that stock cross there, from one side to the other. It starts to complicate that area significantly if your stock crosses there to then go down into the stock underpass as well as having a G-turn. I think the current location is the safest location with the least impact on adjoining landowners.

Mr LLEWELLYN - Pursuing Mr Shelton's suggestion, and not wanting to alter the heritage aspect of the roadside, I am not sure whose property it is, now from that road back to Woodbury House, whether that is a significant property or not, but there may be a way - and it would involve conversations, I suppose, and so on - to have access to Woodbury House behind the heritage site and back down to where it is at the moment. That would avoid a fair bit of the concern that he has, but that would obviously involve going through a paddock which I think is irrigated.

Slow Moving Vehicles and Machinery on the Highway

4.23 Mr Cooper noted that the restriction to left-in left-out access at the Woodbury House entry would result in heavy vehicles and large machinery having to travel longer distances on the highway which he considered to be a safety risk magnified by the installation of the wire rope median barrier. In his submission, Mr Cooper stated that:

"If the left in left out syndrome is adopted the farm machinery will be required to move 4klm from Sorell Springs Road to Woodbury House along the proposed single south bound lane confined by wire barriers; as the machinery travels at about 15klm per hour it could result in a large build up of traffic. When they have a large transport truck or machinery it is necessary for it to cross over the centre of the road to gain access through the gates, if there is a central wire barrier the hold up could be quite a while, as the wire barrier will not allow them to take a wide turn they will be required to shunt back and forth to gain entry. At the present time they bring their large machinery down the old road (which is part of their property) turn on to the Highway and after 600meters turn right into 'Woodbury House', therefore not travelling a great distance on the Highway which they find is a much safer option. The left in left out will not allow this to happen.

*At the moment, without a central barrier, vehicles can pass their machinery safely along the 'Woodbury Straight' when there is no oncoming traffic. The view corridor along this section of the Highway is second to none."*⁶

⁶ Submission from Allen and Linda Cooper, page 15

4.24 Mr Cooper reiterated this point at the hearing:

...You have a 4.2-wide machine-plus coming 4.1 kilometres down the highway governed by wire rope, doing 15 kilometres an hour, you have no room for a cyclist. You have no room for nothing, and then you have to try and get into the entry. It is not - if this is a safety upgrade, where is the safety in that? There is no safety.

4.25 The Committee noted the potential danger presented by slow moving vehicles and machinery travelling on the highway and sought comment from the Department's witnesses on this matter. Mr Ross noted that the width of highway was designed to accommodate such vehicles and allowed large vehicles to pull over to the left to allow traffic to pass and there would be additional overtaking opportunities:

CHAIR - *My question is about farm machinery. It concerns me to have very slow-moving, very large machinery on a major highway, no matter how infrequently. Very large machinery is so dangerous; people do not slow down and comprehend the slowness of the speed.*

...From your understanding of the evidence we heard from Mr Nicholas, can you explain how, with this single lane, large machinery would enter and exit at the Woodbury entry from the south and then go up and turn around? I assume that it would have to turn north, go up to whatever that road is called up there and then turn and go all the way back down to the dual highway.

...I am trying to get an understanding of how that will work. but how are they going to get very big machinery in and how are they going to get it up and around and back out again?

Mr ROSS - *The actual road is designed to take these large vehicles. As we said before, the minimum size of the width of the highway is 7 metres. When even a 3.8 metre vehicle travels along the highways, if there are no cars, it generally takes up the middle of the road, then it will pull off to the side if there are a number of vehicles in behind them. It is very much a common sense approach.*

CHAIR - *How can they turn when are they exiting Woodbury to return into Mr Nicholas's property? They have to go north, then they have to go down the road to the P-turn, do they?*

Mr ROSS - Yes.

CHAIR - *To turn around down there, then drive back and then cross the highway and turn south. Is that what you are proposing?*

Mr ROSS - Yes. *That is the case all the way down the highway with these vehicles, with all vehicles. We've largely provided left-in, left-out and vehicles are having to turn and go up to the next turning facility, turn around and go back down the other way.*

Mr VALENTINE - *A 4.4 metre vehicle? That is what we are talking about?*

Mr ROSS - Yes.

CHAIR - *Will that be able go down that road?*

Mr ROSS - Yes.

Mr SHELTON - *I would just clarify that point. From the road south, which is where Mr Nicholas is coming out of, from Sorell Springs Road, it is single lane right through presently. Under the new design, there will actually be some other overtaking ones in that section?*

Mr ROSS - Yes, there is one northbound overtaking lane midway between Sorell Springs Road and -

Mr SHELTON - So if there was wide equipment on the road travelling that way, which Mr Nicholas prefers not to at this point in time because it is single-lane all the way, there would be an overtaking lane or opportunity in that? If Mr Nicholas turned left out of the Woodbury House and back up to Glen Morey Road and took the old road back around, it would not interfere with the department, but that would be an avenue for him to stay off going south, to stay off the highway all together.

Flooding Problems at Woodbury House

4.26 One of the key points raised by Mr Cooper was the flooding problems encountered on his property, which he believes is caused by the location of the highway, with the road surface acting as a dam, preventing water from escaping. Mr Cooper also indicated that flooding events had compromised the restoration of the historic buildings on the property. In his submission, Mr Cooper stated:

“The existing road has been constructed in what was a large natural flood water channel and as such has restricted (dammed) the flow of water thus resulting in the flooding of two of our Heritage Listed buildings; namely ‘The Barracks c1828 and the Stables c1830.

Historically, prior to the relocation and subsequent construction of the existing c1970’s Highway, the affected buildings did not flood. This information was given to us by Mr. Rex Dransfield who was one the gardeners employed at ‘Woodbury’ and confirmed by various members of the Lawrence family who were in residence from 1940 until the death of Mrs. Lawrence c1970. We were told that the area between the gardens and the rail line (now the current road reserve) and to the old road would flood but the water never came as high as any of the buildings on ‘Woodbury’.”⁷

*The proposal to construct an extra lane within this tight area of 12 meters, between the existing road and rail line, with an extra pavement height of 250mm will not allow any water to escape past the rail but will definitely direct the waters across our lower lying land, **exacerbating the flooding problems to our Heritage listed buildings.***

The Currajong Rivulet runs through the property and connects to the Tin Dish Creek, in order for this to occur the Currajong waters are required to pass under the road to meet with the Tin Dish but during flood events the junction at the Tin dish is running at capacity, being fed by huge run offs and creeks situated on the St Peters Pass lands and therefore the two waterways flood into what was historically a huge unobstructed natural flood plain. The construction of the existing road into this flood plain without an adequate hydraulic solution, has resulted in it now contributing to the current flood problems by causing the waters running off our lands and the Currajong to

⁷ Submission from Allen and Linda Cooper, page 5

flood our internal small creeks; these small creeks cannot flow across the road reserve, due to the heightened road acting as a dam, causing the paddocks parallel to the road to flood. The road has been constructed at a height far above the level of the land to keep it free from water but in doing so has caused irreparable damage to our Heritage listed buildings.⁸

We undertook an envelope repair to the external walls of the c1830 stables in 2004/5 with help from the Tasmanian Heritage Grants Programme; this was a necessary action as the stone walls had suffered badly from salt erosion and dampness being in a state of near collapse. At that time we were in the middle of a seven year drought and did not realise there were any flooding problems; we spent approximately \$50K undertaking external stone repairs in order to stabilise any further deterioration....

After stone repair work was completed to the main house we moved the team onto the c1828 barracks building with the intent to undertake envelope repairs in readiness for its adaptive reuse into two studio apartments. Not long after commencing works we had drought breaking rain with the results that both buildings were inundated with flood water.

..... Sadly the restoration works to the stable building walls have been compromised by flooding three times since 2005 and are now again showing signs of erosion. The 'beehive' chimney of the barracks collapsed following the second flood but was just above the water level of the last flood (3rd). See photo below.⁹

4.27 Mr Cooper expanded on these concerns at the hearing:

Mr COOPER - The flooding issues: we are very concerned about the flooding, very concerned. The distance between the house and the rail - the house and the road, the road and the rail is very tight. We do know that. There is no room to put a turning circle outside Woodbury House gate because the rail line is too close. If it was a 1 + 1 lane, then there is room, of course, but to put the extra lane in, there is not room.

Our major concerns with putting the extra lane in down around there is the flooding. The flood breached the road. The flood did breach the road; the photos are back. I know I sent lots of photos to State Growth showing the flooding which - some of those photos are in my submission here - but the flood - two floods back - it actually breached the road.

..... My problem is that it is a huge catchment area, a massive catchment area. The water comes down at Currajong; it goes under the road, and then treks down to Tunbridge Creek and then you have all the waters coming off St Peters Pass as well. In flood events, it completely fills that channel between the railway line and the old road - so that's full up - where they've opened another lane. So that gets full of water. It gets full of water from the railway line across our property and into our property, which is evident from the photographs in my submission with water all through our buildings.

⁸ Submission from Allen and Linda Cooper, page 6

⁹ Ibid, page 8

4.28 Mr Ross noted that the project would include measures to mitigate the risk of flooding. These include construction of an additional culvert, increasing culvert capacity, clearing vegetation and ongoing maintenance to maintain drainage:

Mr ROSS - in relation to flood risk, the department has undertaken a significant amount of modelling and monitoring of the catchment. As a result of that analysis, we are actually increasing the capacity of the culverts underneath the road. We are also removing a lot of the vegetation - there are a lot of suckers through there that we are removing -

Mr LLEWELLYN - On the eastern side of the road?

Mr ROSS - Yes, on both sides of the road. On the railway side of the road we are putting a concrete swale and doing a number of measures around reducing the risk of flooding to the property.

Mr VALENTINE - That culvert you are talking about - you are actually putting in another culvert? So you will have two culverts?

Mr ROSS - Yes. We have an existing 1200 culvert and an existing 3 metre by 1.5 metre culvert. We will be installing an additional 1200 culvert directly in front of Woodbury House.

Mr SHELTON -On the issue of vegetation: I travel up and down the highway all the time and I have particularly noticed - not necessarily on the Woodbury side, but on the left-hand side coming down the eastern side - a significant amount of sucker regeneration between the railway line and the highway. As part of this development, from a farming point of view, in order to prevent flooding, you need the water to get down the creek or down the river so it is not backing up. Anything that prevents that - keeps the water back - holds the water back and creates a larger flood upstream. Is that vegetation being removed? I would not like to think that vegetation is classed as some sort of heritage vegetation. I would not consider that to be. What is the department doing about that?

Mr ROSS - The only area we are protecting in terms of that is the screening in front of Woodbury House. Along the opposite side of the road, where we are adding an additional lane and widening the road, we will be removing any vegetation within the envelope of the works or within the drainage envelopes.

Mr LLEWELLYN - That continues north down around the curve as far as the water downstream of Woodbury homestead in order to get that water away? You are not intending to plant anything down there and create -

Mr ROSS - No, there will be no plantings. The works we're undertaking will be clearing out drains and improving them and, as I said, reducing the risk of flooding out there.

CHAIR - In terms of the ongoing maintenance in that area of the highway, I see an issue with the slashing and clearing of the roadsides. What is the State Growth Department's arrangements in regard to making what I would see as a better job in terms of getting that water away and making sure the water can get away?

Mr ROSS - There are a couple of things in regard to that. One, we have existing routine maintenance, which would be routinely slashing roadside vegetation. Second, where we are putting in this concrete swale we are trying to install infrastructure that has minimum maintenance requirements. Third, as part of the design handover to our maintenance team, we will explain to them certain aspects of the project that will require ongoing maintenance.

4.29 Mr Cooper did not agree that these measures would result in any improvement in the risk of his property being inundated by flood waters:

Our problem with it is that they are putting another culvert south of the property, but, you know, you can only fill a bucket once. If that water is full up, how can you put more water in? It doesn't matter if you put 10 culverts in if there's nowhere for that water to go. When they put that middle lane in, there is not many metres between the edge of the new lane and the railway line outside the house. There is not much room there, but there is one heck of a lot of

water that has been taken up or that is not allowed to flow because of the inclusion of a new lane within that floodplain. My problem was that it is flooding, our buildings are flooding - [inaudible] it is going to compound the issue because the road and the rail has formed a dam.

The hydrologist's report that I read did not address what was happening with that. I know State Growth talk about runoff. I'm not talking about runoff on impervious surfaces - non-impervious surfaces - because the runoff's the runoff. I am talking about when it's flooding. If there is that much water, I cannot see where it is going to go

- 4.30 Mr Ross further noted that while the proposed works would improve the ability for water to drain away, he conceded it had not been designed to cater for severe flooding events:

Mr ROSS - In terms of the flooding, there was discussion about the capacity between the road and the rail. The concern is that because we are installing the lane, we are narrowing the ability for that area. We are actually increasing the capacity of that by 20 per cent in terms of getting the water away - doing those things like clearing it out and concrete-lining that area will improve the ability by 20 per cent for the water to go away. It is again reducing the current risk.

Mr VALENTINE - Twenty per cent, but if you are taking 50 per cent of the volume of that area out, how does it increase? It increases by 20 per cent the capacity for water to get away, but the amount of water going into that space is going to be a lot more than the volume would have allowed in the past. Do you understand what I am trying to say here? You have two factors involved: let's say, two swimming pools' full of water, you are increasing by 20 per cent the capacity for it to flow out, but now you have -

Mr LLEWELLYN - That's right. On that point, I didn't realise until hearing these submissions that the water is coming out of Gavin's dam on both sides - once it fills and spills, it actually goes across the road and into that channel as well -

Mr VALENTINE - Reducing that by half, by 50 per cent - possibly.

Mr ROSS - I do not have all the details with me, but in terms of storage time, when you have a flood event, it might be the difference in that area filling up in five minutes or 10 minutes. As you were saying, the dam upstream is still going to fill up and overflow. What we have done in this project is increase the capacity for water to actually get away and that reduces the risk of flooding.

When you get a really significant flood event, we are not saying that we've designed this for every single flood event that could possibly happen there.

Mr VALENTINE - If the road was not there, it could just as easily be flooded naturally. That was before the 1970s.

Impact on Cultural Heritage

- 4.31 Submitters to the Committee raised a number of concerns about how the proposed works would impact on the significant cultural heritage present in the area. Key concerns raised were the damage to and loss of historic plantings and the potential damage to the historic buildings at Woodbury House.
- 4.32 In its submission, the National Trust Tasmania noted the importance of this area from a heritage perspective, stating that:

“This section of the Midlands (sic) Highway contains the most important elements of the Midlands (sic) Highway in it's (sic) original form, known to Tasmanians throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, from 1817.

*It embodies the atmosphere, plantings, curving of the road, proximity of Inns, watering places for travellers and the traditional half way point of the road from Hobart to Launceston.*¹⁰

Historic Plantings

- 4.33 The National Trust Tasmania also commented on the significance of the curtilage of Woodbury House, including the significant trees and historic plantings, and maintained a strong desire to see these retained:

“We would please request that the curtilage of Woodbury House, its poplars, elms and 1828 flowering hedge be retained. Woodbury House is a rare example of the first generation of permanent farmhouse in the midlands in the early 1820s.

... .. A print of Woodbury House, published in 1828 shows the house as today, with the hawthorn hedges to the present locations. These would have been planted in 1823 to be mature by 1828.

This evidence makes the setting of Woodbury House amongst the earliest documented examples of Colonial hedging to survive in Australia. Woodbury House will be adversely affected and its heritage values permanently diminished if the proposed removal of plantings and further moving of the Midlands (sic) Highway closer to its boundary is allowed to proceed.”¹¹

- 4.34 Mr Cooper also had significant concerns regarding the loss of historic trees and vegetation from Woodbury House, both through potential damage from construction works and the planned removal of some vegetation as part of the proposed works:

*Under the current proposal the road pavement levels are to be widened and raised 250mm; all growth within and up to the boundary will be removed thus affording a ‘nude’ frontage to the house. **This proposed diabolical rape of these last remaining footprints will adversely compromise the important Heritage streetscape setting and will impact substantially upon its loss of Cultural and Heritage significance.**¹²*

There are a few remaining Cupressus Macrocarpa and Ulmus Minor Atinia (English Elm) that remain from the original plantings situated on and near the road reserve that are both a footprint and delineation of the old original entry.

We must now preserve the trees that are the only remaining footprints left depicting the original entry to the property.

The current proposal is for the removal of these exotic trees, which will result in a loss to the Heritage streetscape appeal and the Cultural Heritage significance to the listed site that can never be replaced.¹³

¹⁰ Submission from the National Trust Tasmania, page 1

¹¹ Ibid, page 2

¹² Submission from Allen and Linda Cooper page 2

¹³ Ibid, page 3

Any considerable road works under taken up to or near the boundary of our property will have an adverse effect upon the root systems to the unthreatened significant trees and plantings that are both against and within our fence line and result in their demise.¹⁴

4.35 Mr Cooper expanded on these issues at the public hearing:

Mr COOPER - ... The front of Woodbury House is very important - how it sits in its environment; what it says about its environment; what the whole highway says - it's the Midland Heritage Highway - and we want to remove 'highway'; the trees, the flowering hawthorns - everything is an integral part of what Tasmania is.

It is what the Midland Highway is - it is not a super highway. It is not the Gold Coast Highway. We have to take these things onboard. The streetscape - at the moment we have some sucker growth, which State Growth has said today are going to be left or may be left.

We had a big talk about not losing trees, although they're suckers. How old does a sucker have to be before it's a tree? Woodbury House, 1823 - suckers from the original trees in 1823 would be a 100-year old, 120-year old, 150-year old. When does it become a tree when it's not a sucker growth? The thing is, the streetscape appeal of Woodbury House is looking through that greenery with the house behind. That is what it was; that is what it always was. That is what it was in the 1920s. That is what it was when the road went through, and that is what it should be now.

... I said to them, 'Lay the hedges.' They said it would be right to my fence, because they are not coming onto our land - because this goes back prior to Jonathon or Damien - this goes back to when the heritage days before the start. I said, 'Look, there should not be any more encroachment upon Woodbury House.' They said, 'That is fine', and they have pushed everything along.

The trees - I asked if he could lay them and leave a metre of land, 750 to a metre of land, outside my fence so that I can lay a hedge, which I believe has been done at Langley's, up in the north. You can see that all these hedges are roped off. That is in the road reserve, where they've been roped off. They have not been touched. They have all been saved. I said, 'Well, can we save them?' - 'We will think about it. We do not know. We cannot give an answer.' But then after my objection went in, I got an answer, 'We might be able to save that one big one, but we have to have an arborist's report and make sure it is not unsafe and it is not going to fall down, so it might be able to be saved.'

... Really, the whole length of Woodbury House and these large elms - the sucker fruit growth - is important to Woodbury House in a heritage sense to what Woodbury House is. Woodbury House now cannot show how it was self-sufficient, how it supported a whole community of people. That is why the trees are very important. The -

4.36 The Committee sought further information on what trees and vegetation Mr Cooper understood would be removed:

Mr COOPER - ... The proposal was to remove all of my sucker growth and also the elms, the large elms that are at the old entry - the only defining fact, the only footprint of the original entry. They were proposed to be moved as well. We will not have anything. There has been a lot of consultation -

Mr LLEWELLYN - But that is not happening now?

Mr COOPER - It is happening. I dispute that, because I have got emails and verbal confirmation that 'Yes, whilst we are building the highway, we may be able to leave'.

¹⁴ Submission from Allen and Linda Copper, page 4

Mr VALENTINE - This one is for Mr Cooper. The old entrance to Woodbury House - are you talking about the original entrance compared to the new entrance?

Mr COOPER - The old entrance.

Mr VALENTINE - The old entrance is further north? You seemed to raise concerns that the original entry would be taken out with this -

Mr COOPER - The tree, yes, exactly right.

Mr SHELTON - That is where your trees are.

Mr COOPER - That's where the elm trees are.

Mr VALENTINE - The elm tree is being saved, I believe.

Mr COOPER - Well, no. Only if they pass muster, and only one. They said only one large tree, not all the trees, just one - one only. It is not all the trees.

Mr VALENTINE - The elm trees aren't on your property?

Mr COOPER - No, they are right on the boundary, but they were located on the property until the road went through in the 70s. They are just outside the fence line. They are in the road reserve, they are in that first metre, but, as I said I can see that any that are far out where the table drain is going to go, they'll have to go. But the ones along the fence that form the hedge is what we would want to keep.

4.37 Given the comments by the National Trust and Mr Cooper and the historical significance of many of the plantings in this area, the Committee sought further clarification on what vegetation (other than that being removed to mitigate flooding issues) the Department planned to remove:

Mr DRY - In this space, the department has engaged an arborist and also a landscape architect to look at the features of the landscaping through this section of highway. They have come back with a plan that we will be looking to implement, which will bring to light the Pioneer Avenue nature of this section of the highway. We will also be looking to remove some vegetation in some areas for safety reasons. We will be looking to offset that with additional plantings in line with the nature of the highway in this area. That is what we are doing with the landscaping area.

In the heritage space, we have consulted with all the property owners, especially those who have heritage properties along the section. In some other areas, we have also consulted with other landowners that have heritage properties and taken some of their concerns on board regarding plantings

Mr VALENTINE - What percentage of trees marked as heritage trees are actually going to be taken out in this project? What are you actually doing with regard to the heritage trees taken out of the system?

Mr DRY - Certainly. From memory - I'm sure Jon can correct me - there are only two Pioneer Avenue heritage trees that we're looking to move as part of this project -

Mr VALENTINE - Move or remove?

Mr DRY - Remove. In terms of re-establishing other trees, we have been looking to follow a similar vein of existing plantings with the European trees that were planted as part of the Pioneer Avenue. I cannot speak to how many exactly we will be replanting, but it would be vastly more than two. I would say in the range of potentially 100 additional trees will form part of this new avenue.

Mr ROSS - The suckers on DSG land - what we've had to do there around balancing the maintenance, the screening and storm water. We have worked with the landowner and tried

to assure them that the design will show us keeping, I think, 750 millimetres of suckers which will allow us to have the benefits of actually providing the suckers along the fence line. In terms of the fence line, we're allowing 0.75 metres of those suckers, then we're removing the ones that actually impact on the drainage. We have tried to find the balance. That is where we came at - it's at 0.75 metres. That is what our design is showing and that is what we are planning on installing.

Similarly, with the retaining of the other trees in that area, we have worked very hard. We like trees; we do not want to take them out, but there is a balance of trying also to maintain the clear zone in terms of the traffic and also the managing of the flooding, which is a key issue that was also raised.

CHAIR -... .. In regard to the large elms at the old entry, are they on DSG land?

Mr ROSS - There is one right near; it is very close to the border. Yes, some of it is on the DSG side of the fence line.

CHAIR - DSG is not making any requirements on elms on the inside?

Mr ROSS - No. There is no acquisition through that section at all.

Damage to Historic Buildings

4.38 In his submission, Mr Cooper detailed his belief that the proposed works would cause significant damage to the heritage listed buildings on the Woodbury House property:

"We object to the proposal on the grounds that the use of heavy machinery will have a detrimental effect on the foundations to four of our Heritage listed buildings that are close to the proposed works.

The c1828 Barracks: *the c1828 barracks building which has already been compromised by flooding etc. resulting in washed out core fill to the external walls and a chimney collapse, is in a very unstable structural condition and is situated only 5 meters from the proposed road works. There has been no engineering assessment study undertaken to assure the building will not be further compromised and or collapse due to large and pulsating machinery used during the proposed Highway upgrade/construction. This assessment can only be undertaken by a suitably qualified structural engineer conversant with and approved by Heritage Tasmania. It is not a task that can be undertaken by a standard building assessor, as proposed by State Growth, because construction methods and materials employed in its construction require an appropriate expert having relevant knowledge and experience of heritage buildings of this design from the 1820's.*

.....This is a huge problem given the immense Cultural and Heritage significance of the building. This was one of the buildings offered to the Government by Robert Harrison to house the road gang during the construction of the road.

*... .. **It is our professional opinion as suitably qualified Heritage professionals that irretrievable damage will be caused by the proposed works.***

The c1830 stables: *the stable building is approximately 18 meters from the proposed work site and has already undergone a large exterior restoration in 2005, see page 8 paragraph 1 and 3. We again fear that underground vibrations*

and tremors have the propensity to render faults in the exterior walls compromising its structural competence.

The c1823 Homestead: 'Woodbury House' is situated approximately 25 meters from the proposed works site and has been over the last 10 years fully restored at a cost so far in excess of £1M; all that is left to complete internally is the final decorating. Eighteen months by three tradesmen were required to complete stone repairs alone, two years of pointing works and all this without the time spent on the solid plastering etc; these non elastic walls of rubble stone construction with solid plaster finishes and lathe and plaster ceilings are at great risk of being compromised by heavy machinery movements and ground tremors etc.

It is our measured and Professional opinion that the Structural integrity of these historic important buildings will be compromised under the present application."¹⁵

- 4.39 Given Mr Cooper's concerns, and the heritage significance of the buildings on the Woodbury House property, the Committee sought further information from the Department's witnesses on what measures would be employed to ensure the proposed works would not cause damage to these buildings:

Mr DRY - Allen was talking about damage caused by the construction works. This is something we are quite regularly faced with doing works in close proximity to heritage structure and landscaping trees. We deal with this by including details of our specifications to the contractor to beware that these things are there. We also ensure that there's no vibratory rollers in close proximity to the heritage structures so that constant vibration to compact the road does not affect those or damage them.

Mr VALENTINE - You use multi tyre rollers instead?

Mr DRY - Yes, or just heavy rollers.

Mr ROSS - We will be undertaking surveys of Woodbury House before and after construction and we have contractual obligations on our contractor to make sure that they do not do any damage. If by chance there is damage, they have to make good any damage. So we have all that in place.

Southern Midlands Council Development Approval

- 4.40 The Department noted in its submission that it had submitted a development application for the project to the Southern Midlands Council, and while the Council planning officer recommended granting a planning permit for the project, the Council rejected the application. The Committee noted the grounds for refusal were based on some of the concerns raised in evidence received by the Committee. The grounds for refusal were:

"1) Access to Woodbury – lack of break in flexible safety barrier was considered unfair treatment, traffic volumes were discussed as being considered substantial enough to warrant it, lack of consultation, and inconsistency of treatment for other accesses along Highway

¹⁵ Submission from Allen and Linda Cooper, page 10 - 11

2) Stormwater – concerns that flooding and drainage issues for Woodbury were not resolved in Hydraulics Assessment.”¹⁶

4.41 The Department indicated that it would appeal the decision to the Resource Management and Planning Appeal Tribunal. The Committee sought further information on the Council’s refusal to issue a planning permit and the Department’s appeal against this decision:

CHAIR - I would also like to ask another question about the DA approval. You said in your submission that the DA was refused and you are intending to appeal that decision. Can you just update us on where that is at?

Mr DRY - Certainly. When we wrote the submission, we were going through the process. We just recently received the rejection from council. As of last week, we have forwarded our appeal to that decision. We are now going to go through that process.

CHAIR - How long is that likely to take, Damien?

Mr DRY - Our hope is a couple of weeks.

Mr ROSS - I will just clarify: in two weeks we have a directions hearing, at which time all parties will come together. I think it can take up to three months from the date of our appeal to hear the appeal and resolve the situation.

CHAIR - Does that not affect the critical path? Is that not a critical path issue for this project?

Mr ROSS - Yes, it does. I think it is noted down that the development application is part of the critical path.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr VALENTINE - The development application was knocked back by council. Why was it knocked back? Can you give us an understanding of what was objected to?

Mr ROSS - The grounds are in the notes... .. That is their grounds of appeal. I guess in the appeal we are trying to make clear that we appeal against those grounds.

Mr VALENTINE - It is the break in the flexible barrier?

Mr SHELTON - Along those lines - this is where ex-mayors come into play - the planning officer recommended it for approval, but the council actually overrode the planning directive and voted against it.

Mr ROSS - That's correct.

¹⁶ Submission from the Department of State Growth, page 13

Midland Highway Safety Upgrade – York Plains to St Peters Pass

Overview

4.42 Mr McGuire provided an overview of the proposed works:

Mr MCGUIRE - I will give a rundown on the scope of the project and the intent. This project connects directly to the south of the previous project the committee has just heard about. It has the same philosophy of increasing safety on the road and efficiency by implementing a 2 + 1 traffic lane scenario.

We will be introducing two southbound overtaking opportunities and one northbound. The works for the project will be predominantly undertaken on western side of the road to minimise impact on this historic heritage landscape as best we can and to improve constructability by keeping it on the single side. The geometry of the road is similar to the other sections undertaken on the Midland Highway. It incorporates a flexible wide road median - 2.1 metres wide down the centre, 2-metre shoulders and 3.5 metre lanes. Additional safety works include reduction of road site hazards, and provision of protection where we cannot remove them; improved alignment of junctions; and the provision of a heavy vehicle turning facility at the York Plains Road junction area. The project also includes three existing stock crossings used by the landowners that have been extended as part of the works.

Overtaking Opportunities

4.43 The Committee sought some clarification on the extent of the overtaking opportunities across the length of the project:

Mr VALENTINE - Of the 1.3 kilometres, how much 2 + 1 is in that?

Mr MCGUIRE - That is 2 + 1 through that section pretty much. What we have through this area is 2 + 1s from the southern extent through to York Plains junction, where it reduces back to single for the junction there. Then it is back to 2 + 1s for the remainder of the work so it is three lanes for the extent of the works except that that York Plains section.

Mr SHELTON - So it's pretty much 100 per cent?

Mr MCGUIRE - Effectively, yes

Design Standards

4.44 The Committee enquired as to any specific standards that the upgrade is expected to meet given it is part of the National Highway System and significant funding is provided by the Federal Government:

Mr SHELTON - It is part of the National Highway System. Because typically the majority of it is federally funded, any upgrades need, I would assume, need to meet certain standards in order to gain access to that.

Mr ROSS - There is certainly an expectation of level of safety and there's national guidelines around the geometry and the cross-section of the road and all these things. The expectation would be that all works on national highways are done to at least the minimum standards that are expected within those guides.

Mr SHELTON - When I was talking about this project with someone in the Midlands committed and commented that this project was costing a fair bit of money, they commented, 'Well, yes, but it is national money. There's national highways on the mainland and why shouldn't the Tasmanian motorist expect the same standard of road that they travel on the mainland? Just to balance it out, as a motorist, why should I have drive on inadequate roads in Tasmania

because you want to expand and get more work done with the same amount of dollars?' That was his comment to me and I thought it was quite enlightening from a motorist's point of view.

Mr ROSS - My only other point is that in a 110 kilometre an hour zone, it is expected that you have separated traffic. Largely that is the expectation, of not only the federal government but also motorists and everybody.

Proposed Removal of Historic Vegetation Plantings

4.45 The Committee noted that significant amounts of vegetation would be removed to accommodate the upgraded highway. The submissions the Committee received on this project highlighted the heritage significance and beauty of vegetation that surrounds the highway in this area and expressed concern that this would be lost.

4.46 The National Trust Tasmania made this point well in its submission and urged for the retention of this significant and historic roadside vegetation:

“The flowering hawthorn hedges leading to, surrounding and beyond the Kenmore Arms at St Peter’s Pass has for generation charmed Tasmanians, visitors and travellers with it’s (sic) stone walls, fountains, elms and hawthorn. This tunnel like approach and seasonal change is seminal to an understanding of Colonial, 19th and 20th century Tasmania.

With its high flowering hawthorn hedges, clipped Hawthorn in the form of animals (from at least the late 19th century) and Soldiers Memorial Plantings of Poplars this is the most beautiful remaining section of the highway.

..... These unique plantings and clipped forms must be retained as visual proof of the education of settlers and plantsmen, as well as adding to the pleasure of the Highway.”¹⁷

4.47 Mr Merridew also expressed his concern in his submission at the loss of this vegetation:

It is of great concern that the Midland Highway upgrade including St Peters Pass curtilage; being these wonderfully scenic avenues of deciduous trees, appear to be mostly likely lost to Tasmanian’s and over 1.2 million tourists forever in its current beauty. All the North bound flowering Hawthorn Hedges, including the remaining example of the WWI Memorial Avenue Trees are to be lost.

I strongly urge the Public Works Committee to instruct the design engineers to carefully reassess ways of tweaking their design to incorporate the retention of the current 2 way single lanes into a recommended best plan for this singularly special highlight of the Heritage Highway.

The St Peters Pass Heritage enclave commencing Southward at the rest station including the Topiary hedging and completing at the classic gateway close to where the current dual lane commences south should be retained on its current alignment.¹⁸

¹⁷ Submission from the National Trust Tasmania, page 1

¹⁸ Submission from Chris Merridew, page 1

4.48 At the hearing, Mr Merridew expanded on his concerns:

I really wonder why we, the Tasmanian taxpayers, whoever, are thinking of spending all the money to make 1.3 kilometres of a most beautiful section of road in the southern half of Tasmania into a two lane for some of it - three lanes for some of it; it comes back to just two lanes when you have turn-ins to the rest centre. I really wonder what the advantage is for motorists on the Midlands Highway to go through to see this happen.So to leave 1.3 kilometres - 2 kilometres maximum - as a most enjoyable section of the whole Midlands Highway, which is pretty boring. Inattention is one of the hazards of driving on that road. Everybody just thinks what a wonderful break that is in the journey to see those trees, whether it is the hawthorn hedge in spring or the autumn we were seeing last week.

... ..I am sorry to be a bit strong about it, but so many people I have spoken to since your advertisement are totally up in arms, as no doubt you have had in your evidence, about the fact that this most beautiful avenue is to be completely wiped out on the left-hand side. Yes, you are going to put some trees back, but I would say that some of those trees have taken - well, they are World War I memorial trees. They are part of the Heritage Highway. They have taken more than 15 years to grow.

4.49 The Committee sought further information from the Department's representatives on what vegetation was to be removed, how much would be removed and why. They noted that much of the vegetation on the western side of the highway, including hawthorn hedging, poplars and Pioneer Avenue trees would be removed to accommodate the upgraded roadway and for safety reasons. They also noted that the landscaping plan included significant replanting to recreate the avenue feel and heritage style:

Mr VALENTINE I have a concern... .. about the plantings as we go north past St Peters Pass. Plantings on the right, topiaries, the heritage trees that are around that property called Kenmore Arms, and also on the left side.

Can you give us an understanding as to how many the heritage trees are being taken out, that are marked heritage, and what is happening to those plantings.

Mr McGUIRE - I will speak as far as my knowledge goes about the heritage aspects of vegetation and that side of things. Certainly, the extent of impact, I can speak openly on.

The works were considered very early in the project as a significant issue. It is an area that is well regarded not only in the local community but in the wider community itself. It is a landscape aspect that they'd like to keep retained and managed. That actually led to one of our decisions - to try to keep the works on one side of the road. As you've noted, we are doing the majority of our work predominately on the western side. The widening of the road is generally up to about 10 metres in width, so it takes out the vast majority of the hawthorn hedging, the larger poplars and a few of the avenue trees along the edge of the road - Pioneer Avenue - so there's a few.

Mr VALENTINE - When you say 'along the road', the vast majority of the hawthorns, are you talking about on both sides of the road?

Mr McGUIRE - No, on the western side only.

Mr VALENTINE - On the western side only?

Mr McGUIRE - Yes. The department has subsequently engaged a landscape architect to come up with a strategy for replanting to re-establish the Pioneer Avenue, to highlight the alignment of the old highway and also to reinstate the hawthorn hedge arrangement through the area opposite Kenmore. Now, obviously, at the completion of the works those trees will not be mature, but over time it is expected it will go some way to re-establishing the current landscape.

Mr VALENTINE - I notice some poplars in there - are they heritage or not?

Mr McGUIRE - No, again it's not my area of expertise but I understand from being involved in the process that those particular poplars are not heritage.

Mr VALENTINE - Even though they are probably 40 years old?

Mr McGUIRE - They have probably been there some time, yes. The other aspect of the poplars being in close proximity to road is that they are a safety concern as well. Of those particular poplars, already one or two have fallen over in storm conditions and caused not only safety incidents for the road itself but also for the people in and around the Kenmore facility. After speaking with the landowners, they are actually more than comfortable to see them - that's those poplars there - disappear as much as much from that safety perspective as anything else.

Mr SHELTON - The new highway going through there versus where the original old highway, where it swings out round behind the houses and so forth, there were significant trees in the gap between the new highway and the old one has traversed its way around. I hope that all those old trees which were planted for a reason within the landscaping plantings stay. I hope that the only trees, shrubs and bushes removed are those that needed to be removed in order to widen the road.

Mr McGUIRE - Directly affected by the works - yes, that's correct. That's the intention.

Mr DRY - Further to that, we are working to infill some of those plantings where there are gaps in the roads in some instances, so just to continue the aesthetic of that Pioneer Avenue.

Mr VALENTINE - So this landscaping plan that you have will actually enhance the heritage style of the road for people to view from the highway as they travel?

Mr DRY - That is our intention.

Mr LLEWELLYN - Just looking at this proposal, it seems to me - and it was acknowledged - that the new plantings that might happen, there is probably up to or in excess of about another 100 trees that will be inserted to preserve - ultimately, once they grow up and so on - the heritage aspects and the aesthetics of the western side of the road particularly.

Mr McGUIRE - Yes.

Mr ROSS - Also by setting back some of that vegetation, you are going to have significantly improved forward sight distance.

Mr VALENTINE - So, it is not going to be a really wide open canopy once you've finished? At the moment they sort of come across -

Mr McGUIRE - No, I suppose directly after construction, it will initially feel quite open.

Mr McGUIRE - But within - I would say within five or 10 years particularly with the hawthorn. If it's well maintained, that'll grow reasonably quickly and divide... .. I think, as I said, within that five-to-10 year period, you'll get that sense of avenue back a bit, yes.

Other Options - Maintaining versus Upgrading the Highway

4.50 Both the National Trust Tasmania and Mr Merridew offered alternatives to the treatment proposed by the Department. In its submission, the National Trust Tasmania recommended this section be upgraded as a 1+1 section separated by a wire rope median barrier:

“It would recommend a dual carriage way, with safety wires between as has been carried out elsewhere to good effect recently on the Midlands (sic) Highway improvements.”¹⁹

4.51 Mr Merridew also made a similar suggestion:

“I strongly urge the Public Works Committee to instruct the design engineers to carefully reassess ways of tweaking their design to incorporate the retention of the current 2 way single lanes into a recommended best plan for this singularly special highlight of the Heritage Highway.

The St Peters Pass Heritage enclave commencing Southward at the rest station including the Topiary hedging and completing at the classic gateway close to where the current dual lane commences south should be retained on its current alignment.

This section of Heritage Highway works quite safely and the additional metre of road width for the provision of the wire safety barrier between the existing single way lanes could be achieved by shared widening of the verges.”²⁰

4.52 The Committee questioned the Department’s witnesses on what other options had been considered and whether this would enable the vegetation targeted for removal to be saved. Mr McGuire and Mr Ross noted that most of the vegetation targeted for removal would still need to be removed even if a 1+1 lane arrangement was employed, due to width required to install the wire rope median barrier and to widen the shoulders of the roadway:

Mr VALENTINE - *With respect to the width of the road: have you got as far east or south-east as you can to try to steer away from having to take out those hedges?*

Mr MCGUIRE - *Yes, I suppose one of the first - I suppose recognising the public sentiment towards the vegetation in the area. We actually ran a few different scenarios as to how we could minimise the impact. One of those was actually looking at only putting the wire rope in and still having one lane each way. That was one of our considerations, but even with that concession - and widening the shoulders for safety of cyclists et cetera - we would still be taking out the vast majority of the vegetation.*

So we were very mindful of the concerns around that, but we found that compromising the additional lane et cetera was not really going to help us much at all, so we were better maintaining the safety outcomes, given that we were still having effectively a very similar impact on the vegetation.

Mr ROSS - *As Greg mentioned before, we looked at the opportunity for the 1 + 1 through this section and that required widening that would remove the vegetation anyway.*

If you go through there at the moment you have very minimal shoulders. You have probably 1 metre shoulders, 3.5 metre lanes and 1 metre shoulder on the other side - very minimal verges through this area. As soon as we add a 2.1 median in the centre, as soon as we add another metre to each shoulder, we are having to widen beyond where the vegetation currently sits. That is the argument around even if we provided the 1 + 1, it would still necessitate the removal of the vegetation there.

¹⁹ Submission from the National Trust Tasmania, page 2

²⁰ Submission from Chris Merridew, page 1

4.53 The Committee also questioned the Department's witnesses on the impact of maintaining this section under its current configuration:

Mr VALENTINE - *If you touch that road, I suppose there are two options: you either maintain the road or you replace it. If you were to maintain that road - in other words, if you were putting a total resurfacing on that road - do you have to adhere to any standards under today's law that would make you put in a wider road?*

Mr ROSS - *The department - the 10-year strategy, is -*

Mr VALENTINE - *I understand the strategy. I am asking -*

Mr ROSS - *Within that we also have a category 1 guideline that talks about having a wire rope down the middle of the road for any national highway works, but if the department was not undertaking these major upgrades and was just doing re-surfacing project -*

Mr VALENTINE - *That's what I'm talking about.*

Mr ROSS - *Then that is all it would be; there wouldn't be any -*

Mr VALENTINE - *No stricture that makes it wider than what it is at the moment?*

Mr ROSS - *That's right.*

4.54 The Committee also sought further information on the possibility of implementing a 90 km/h speed zone, coupled with the retention of the heritage plantings, so as to retain the character of this section of the highway as a special experience for travellers:

Mr VALENTINE - *Why not have a 90 kilometre an hour zone through this very special area? It is an area that seems to generate an amount of passion. Why not restrict the speed rather than give the full treatment - make it a full experience for the traveller rather than just a quick skirt through? I know policies are there; I understand that.*

Mr ROSS - *In summary, we have worked very hard with the local community and the professionals to enhance this section of road. The work we are doing, we want people who drive through this section to see beautiful pioneer trees and to see a hawthorn hedge and these beautiful landscapes. A considerable amount of resources of the project are going into making that happen.*

Mr VALENTINE - *I understand that, but some would say they would be travelling slower through it, they're going to appreciate it. It is a policy thing, I think. I do not know that it is something you should be expected to answer. I was just wondering why - 90 kilometres an hour through there gives people the opportunity to enjoy the experience without pulling out all the heritage plantings.*

Mr ROSS - *If we just point a sign limit of 90 through here, one of the issues is that I would not believe you would get compliance. So there's an expectation around the highway that people are travelling 110 kilometres an hour and therefore what we are trying to do through the works is to enable them to safely travel at that speed.*

Stock Underpasses

4.55 The Committee noted that there was a substantial sheep farming property encompassing both sides of the highway through the length of this project. The Committee sought some assurance from the Department's witnesses that the stock crossings to be extended as part of the proposed works were acceptable to the landowners and would meet their future needs:

Mr SHELTON - *On another issue, stock underpasses and movement between one side of the road and the other. This is a substantial property which has property on either side of the*

road. I understand there is a stock underpass and a vehicle underpass on the northern end. Is there anything to facilitate stock movement down around the shearing shed? I actually tried to view that travelling up the road, but you can't slow down too much -

Mr McGUIRE - No, it's actually quite well hidden by those hawthorn hedges you don't like so much. There are actually two stock crossing facilities there. Not large enough for vehicles, but they run predominantly sheep through. One each side of the Kenmore building itself - so there's one about 200 metres south and another one about 500 metres north of the property.

Mr VALENTINE - Is it under the road?

Mr McGUIRE - It goes under the road, yes.

Mr SHELTON - And they are adequate? There is no intention to upgrade those or anything? I mean considering this road has gone in and is supposedly going to be there for another 50, 80, 100 years. If there is going to be any upgrade, it needs to be done now and therefore thought of now.

Mr McGUIRE - Yes. Again, we have had those discussions with Kate and Neston Morrison, the landowners, and they are comfortable that those extensions are suitable for their stock movement purposes as regarding this section.

Do These Projects Meet Identified Needs and Provide Value for Money?

4.56 When assessing any proposed public works, the Committee seeks assurance that each project is a good use of public funds and meets identified needs. The Committee questioned the Department's representatives who confirmed that both the St Peters Pass to South of Tunbridge project and the York Plains to St Peters Pass project would meet the objectives of the *Midland Highway Strategic 10 Year Action Plan* by improving safety and achieved this in a way that provided value for money:

Mr ROSS - our approach down the highway is we are taking a 'safe systems' approach. The safe systems approach is about doing multiple things. It's not just about the wire rope down the middle - it is about providing the 2 metre shoulders; it's about protecting road users from hazards on the side of the road; it's about the audible edge lines; and it's about reducing driver frustration by installing the 2 + 1 overtaking lanes. All these approaches together help to improve the safety.

A big part of what wire rope use is aimed to do can be explained by the following: head-on crashes represent around 60 per cent of the fatalities on the highway; by putting wire rope down the centre of the highway, we are instantly removing the ability for that type of accident to happen.

... .. In regards to hazards, my other point is we are protecting hazards - especially things like stone walls and such. We were talking about vehicles travelling at 110 kilometres per hour - if they hit any solid object, whether that is a tree or a brick wall, that will result in a fatality.

What we are trying to do for you is actually protect motorists from those hazards by again putting wire rope barriers in place, putting separation in terms of the 2 metre shoulder and so forth.

CHAIR - In conclusion, in regard to both projects that we have heard today, do you believe what you presented to us is fit for purpose?

Messrs ROSS and McGUIRE - Yes.

CHAIR - Do you believe they are value for money?

Messrs ROSS and McGUIRE - Yes.

5 DOCUMENTS TAKEN INTO EVIDENCE

5.1 The following documents were taken into evidence and considered by the Committee:

- Midland Highway St Peters Pass to South of Tunbridge - Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, Department of State Growth;
- Midland Highway York Plains to St Peters Pass - Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, Department of State Growth;
- Submission from Gavin Nicholas, dated 7 May 2017 (St Peters Pass to South of Tunbridge project);
- Submission from Allen and Linda Cooper, dated 8 May 2017 (St Peters Pass to South of Tunbridge project);
- Submission from Mark Cornelius, dated 18 May 2017 (St Peters Pass to South of Tunbridge project);
- Submission from Gary Thomas, dated 18 May 2017 (St Peters Pass to South of Tunbridge project);
- Submission from Matthew Smithies, Managing Director, National Trust of Australia (Tasmania), dated 19 May 2017 (St Peters Pass to South of Tunbridge project and York Plains to St Peters Pass project); and
- Submission from Chris Merridew, dated 22 May 2017 (York Plains to St Peters Pass project).

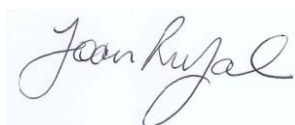
6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 The Committee recognises the concerns raised in submissions and at the public hearing by the users of the Woodbury House entrance. The Committee notes that because of the proposed installation of the wire rope median barrier, access will be affected at the Woodbury entrance in two main ways:
- It may be more difficult for heavy vehicles and machinery travelling north to enter the property; and
 - There will be no opportunity for south-bound vehicles to make a right-hand turn into the property, with a need to travel some distance past Woodbury House to access dedicated turning facilities.
- 6.2 The Committee notes the commitment made by Department of State Growth representatives at the hearing to ensure that placement of the wire rope median barrier is such that it does not impede access to the Woodbury House property for north-bound heavy vehicles and machinery. The Committee also notes that the Department of State Growth representatives committed to continue to work with the property owners to ensure that the access is sufficient to accommodate large machinery. The Committee encourages the Department to continue its negotiations with the landowners and users of this entrance to ensure that access for heavy vehicles and machinery is not compromised.
- 6.3 The Committee also recognises the heritage significance of Woodbury House and the significant work the owners of Woodbury House are undertaking to restore the property as a multi-faceted tourism and accommodation venture. The Committee notes that the turning facility at Antill Ponds has been redesigned to accommodate south-bound light vehicles that wish turn around and access Woodbury House, reducing the return distance from around 8km to 5.8km. However, the Committee recognises that the requirement to travel past, turn around and drive back to the north, may discourage road users, especially tourists unfamiliar with the Midland Highway, from visiting Woodbury House.
- 6.4 The Committee considers that there is an opportunity to provide an alternative access to Woodbury House for south-bound light vehicles off Old Tier Road, thereby alleviating the need for vehicles to travel past Woodbury House. The Committee suggests that the Department investigate the feasibility of redesigning the turning facility on Old Tier Road by locating it closer to the highway and incorporating the heritage grave site as the centre piece of the turn, with a slip road for light vehicles to access Woodbury House commencing on the southern side of the turn facility and running adjacent to the highway.
- 6.5 Submissions made to the Committee on the York Plains to St Peters Pass reference commented on the heritage significance and beauty of the vegetation that surrounds the highway in this area. The Committee recognises the heritage significance of the section of the Midland Highway near the Kenmore Arms, and notes the sense of heritage that is apparent when driving through this area. The Committee also recognises that the roadside vegetation, such as the hawthorn

hedges and poplars, and the seasonal changes that are a highlight, are well recognised and contribute to the overall atmosphere when travelling through this area.

- 6.6 However, the Committee also concedes that, to accommodate the upgraded highway and for safety reasons, there is a need to remove, and replant further away from the road pavement, much of the roadside vegetation that makes this section of the highway so picturesque and contributes to this heritage feel.
- 6.7 Therefore, to retain some sense of the ‘Heritage Highway’ feel that is apparent in this section of the Midland Highway, the Committee recommends that the Department of State Growth reconsider the need to install the wire rope barrier in the central median in the avenue adjacent to the Kenmore Arms.
- 6.8 Despite these matters, the Committee is satisfied that the need for the proposed works has been established. Once completed, the proposed works will result in a much safer road environment for all users by:
- reducing head-on collisions through the provision of a flexible safety barrier in the median;
 - providing additional safe overtaking opportunities while eliminating the opportunity for dangerous overtaking manoeuvres;
 - providing additional safe turning facilities;
 - changing the road alignment in sections where the current road geometry contributes to reduced driver visibility;
 - upgrading junctions; and
 - removing, or protecting drivers from, roadside hazards.
- 6.9 Accordingly, the Committee recommends the:
- Midland Highway Safety Upgrade – St Peters Pass to South of Tunbridge, at a cost of \$27.9 million; and
 - Midland Highway Safety Upgrade – York Plains to St Peters Pass, at a cost of \$15.872 million,

in accordance with the documentation submitted.



**Parliament House
Hobart
26 July 2017**

**Joan Rylah MP
Chair**

