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 Minister for Infrastructure and Transport  
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Hon Robert Armstrong MLC  
 Chair  
 Legislative Council Select Committee – Greater Hobart Traffic Congestion  
 By email: [ght@parliament.tas.gov.au](mailto:ght@parliament.tas.gov.au)

Dear Mr Armstrong

Thank you for your invitation to participate in the Greater Hobart Traffic Congestion inquiry.

As you are aware, the Tasmanian Government is committed to keep Hobart moving, with a wide range of initiatives being delivered to achieve this. These include taking responsibility for Macquarie and Davey Streets; implementing the traffic incident response measures, including our rapid response tow trucks and improving communication protocols with Tasmania Police; enabling more efficient public transport on the Southern Outlet and within the Hobart CBD to complement new park and ride facilities; and investment in intelligent transport systems such as on-road travel time information and lane-use management systems.

While for a significant part of the driving population congestion is a subjective and relative issue (for example, some interstate visitors not recognising congestion as an issue in Hobart), it is a condition that is defined and measurable. When traffic demand equals network capacity saturation occurs and when traffic demands exceed the available capacity congestion occurs. Congestion results in lengthy delays and queue formation until demands reduce to levels below capacity.

The 'acceptable' level of congestion is a subjective concept related to both urban planning and customer expectations, with five defining factors.

- *Commute time.* How many minutes per day are required to travel to work on average in a city?
- *Stability of Commute Time.* Is commute time better or worse than it was last year?
- *Scheduling.* How variable is the travel time, and what extra time should be scheduled for delays? Can travel time be reduced by travelling earlier or later?
- *Productivity.* How much traffic flows through a given road compared to its theoretical capacity?
- *Economic.* Can investment to reduce congestion be justified?

Absolute Travel Time and Travel Time Reliability are both important to road users and performance can be measured and benchmarked against the following standard parameters.

1. Average speed;
2. Travel Time Delay – *how much the 24 hour mean travel time differs from the minimum travel time over that period;*
3. Peak Travel Time Reliability – *the percentage variance in peak period travel time from day to day, for the same journey;* and

4. Peak Period Travel Time Delay – *the percentage increase in travel time in peak periods from the minimum travel time for the day.*

A clear understanding of network operation conditions and influencing factors is critical to managing congestion and data is the foundation for that understanding. For context, I can offer some key information that assists in framing the current situation.

- The definitive work on congestion in Australian and New Zealand Cities, the *Austrroads Congestion and Reliability Review AP-R534-16*, shows that Hobart is one of the best performing cities in Australia and New Zealand.
- Hobart's traffic capacity constraints generally only occur during network peak demand, that is, 7:00am to 9:00am and 3:00pm to 6:00pm on weekdays.
- Travel demand is concentrated in very short peak periods when commuting trips combine with school traffic, i.e., congestion is much less during school holidays.
- 83 per cent of commuter journeys in and around Hobart are by car – higher than any other capital city in Australia. An abundance of cheap parking in the central Hobart area contributes to this.
- 76-79 per cent of vehicles travelling on the three key arterials (Tasman Highway, Southern Outlet and Brooker Highway) in peak times are travelling to and from the CBD and surrounding inner-city area.
- School transport accounts for a significant proportion of morning peak travel, specifically, parents taking children to school, and then continuing to work, noting that there is around a 10 per cent decrease in traffic volumes on these key arterial during school holidays.
- 81 per cent of dwellings in greater Hobart are detached separate dwellings, which is more typical of smaller towns, and results in dispersed, car-reliant population.
- Hobart topography limits infrastructure and modal options.
- Population in the greater Hobart area is expected to grow by 20 000 people (nearly 10 per cent) over next ten years.

Hobart is a successful small city, which has had significant economic growth over the last five years. As Hobart grows, it is recognised that if we do nothing, the current commuter transport patterns are unsustainable. The State Government is committed to retain the Hobart CBD as a vibrant, successful city and region. Successful cities limit traffic congestion in CBDs in favour of a high level pedestrian and cycling access as there is a strong positive correlation between good pedestrian access and city economic success. The City of Hobart is planning for more residential development in the CBD, which will change the character of city streets from access roads to pedestrian thorough-fares.

The Greater Hobart area transport network is based on radial network of arterial routes leading to the City of Hobart, which means the vehicle capacity of feeder corridors exceeds the vehicle capacity of CBD streets. During the morning peak, these CBD streets are primarily used to reach commuter destination car parking and the network is sensitive to disruption due to lack of alternative routes.

Hobart's radial network can be an advantage in that it is suitable for point-to-point mass-transit improvements. The largest increases in dwelling growth is expected on the fringes of the greater Hobart area, which presents risks and opportunities for mass transit. Due to large numbers of commuters travelling to and from CBD, bypassing the city would only take a relatively small proportion of existing traffic off key CBD roads and would not reduce the need to address commuter mass transit challenges.

It is important to note that that dispersal of business and retail centres within the greater Hobart area will make commuting demand more complex and much more difficult to effectively address. That is why the State Government is initially investing in passenger transport prioritisation measures on the southern corridor, with planning underway for the eastern corridor and planning on the northern corridor to commence soon.

This planning includes dedicated passenger transport, emergency vehicle and recovery vehicle lanes, signal priority and provision of park and ride facilities.

The Derwent River ferry services planned by the Government have some value in addressing congestion and need to be supported by active transport network planning in Clarence and Hobart – in-principle agreement exists to assist both councils with this.

Incident management planning is an essential measure and has already proved successful. Improvement of traffic management coordination with Tasmania Police, alternative route formalisation, advance warning signage using automated traffic flow detectors and contracted tow trucks stationed around network at peak times will lead to significant improvements to delay times caused by unplanned events on the key arterial routes.

To assist with the inquiry, I wish to submit a number of reports prepared by the Department of State Growth as well as the Hobart City Deal, City of Hobart Transport Vision and the RACT 30-year Transport Vision. Additionally, a catalogue of important traffic data has been included.

It is noteworthy that the Hobart City Deal includes a Greater Hobart Transport Vision that has been endorsed by the Tasmanian and Australian Governments as well as the greater Hobart councils. To have this level of agreement on such a complex and controversial planning challenge is an exceptional achievement.

To further demonstrate agreement on the nature and solution to the problem, the Hobart City Deal's Greater Hobart Transport Vision draws extensively on Infrastructure Tasmania's Hobart Transport Vision and is largely consistent with the RACT 30-year Transport Vision. The City of Hobart Transport Vision in turn supports and makes reference to Infrastructure Tasmania's Hobart Transport Vision.

While the Government and City Deal partners have articulated an agreed short- to long-term strategy to address Hobart's peak city commuting challenges in the Greater Hobart Transport Vision, the Government is also undertaking a Western Bypass Feasibility Study. The feasibility study will examine options to complement this strategy with a bypass of the Hobart CBD for through traffic. The contract for the feasibility study was tendered earlier in the year and was recently awarded to national consultancy firm GHD.

I would like to make staff from the Department of State Growth available to brief the Committee and I look forward to providing the Committee with any further assistance it requires.

Yours sincerely



Michael Ferguson MP

**Minister for Infrastructure and Transport**