

PUBLIC

THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS MET AT DELORAINE COMMUNITY CENTRE AUDITORIUM, DELORAINE ON TUESDAY 17 FEBRUARY 2026.

NORTHERN ROADS PACKAGE STAGE 2 - BASS HIGHWAY - CHRISTMAS HILLS TO DELORAINE

The committee met at 2.00 p.m.

CHAIR (Ms Butler) - Welcome, everyone. Before we commence the hearing, I will introduce the members of the committee. To my left, we have Tania Rattray, Mark Shelton, myself, Jen Butler. We have Dean Harriss. We have Scott Hennessy, our secretary, and Karen from Hansard. Ms Burnet is an apology for the hearing today.

Secretary, would you please read out the message from Her Excellency the Governor in Council referring the project to the committee for inquiry.

SECRETARY - Pursuant to section 16(2) of the *Public Works Committee Act 1914*, the Governor refers the under mentioned proposed public work to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works to consider and report thereon. Pursuant to section of 16(3) of the act, the estimated cost of such work being completed is \$54 million: Northern Roads Package Stage 2, Bass Highway, Christmas Hills Road to Deloraine.

CHAIR - The committee is in receipt of one submission from the Department of State Growth. Could I ask a member to move that the submission be received, taken into evidence and published.

Ms RATTRAY - So moved, Chair.

Motion agreed to.

CHAIR - The witnesses appearing before the committee today are representing the proponent, the Department of State Growth. Could I ask each of you to state your name, your position and organisation and then make the statutory declaration?

Mr JACQUES van der HYDE, PROJECT MANAGER; **Ms CARY HICKS**, PROJECT MANAGEMENT TEAM LEADER; **Ms LIDIYA HUDSON**, PROJECT CLIENT, DEPARTMENT OF STATE GROWTH WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION, AND WERE EXAMINED.

CHAIR - Thank you for appearing before the committee. The committee is pleased to hear your evidence today. Before you begin giving your evidence, I would like to inform you of some important aspects of committee proceedings. A committee hearing is a proceeding in parliament. This means it receives the protection of parliamentary privilege. This is an important legal protection that allows individuals giving evidence to a parliamentary committee to speak with complete freedom without the fear of being sued or questioned in any court or place out of parliament. It applies to ensure that parliament receives the very best information when conducting its inquiries. It is important to be aware that this protection is not accorded to you if statements that may be defamatory are repeated or referred to by you outside the confines

PUBLIC

of the parliamentary proceedings. This is a public hearing. Members of the public and journalists may be present. This means your evidence may be reported. Do you understand?

WITNESSES - Yes.

CHAIR - Thank you. Mr Van der Hyde, would you or one of your colleagues like to make an opening statement, please?

Ms HUDSON - I will start. Good afternoon. Today you are considering the funding for capital works on the Bass Highway between Christmas Hills Road and Deloraine. The Australian and state governments have committed \$558.6 million to deliver Tasmanian roads and corridors improvements across a suite of projects. The Bass Highway, East and West Tamar Highways have a combined funding commitment of \$420 million, with \$336 million from the Australian Government and \$84 million from the Tasmanian Government. The Bass Highway Launceston to Devonport corridor has been allocated \$240 million from that package. The Christmas Hills project has a budget of \$54 million; of that, \$43.2 is from the Australian Government and \$10.8 from the Tasmanian Government.

The Bass Highway is a major transport route linking Launceston with Devonport, Burnie and the north-west coast of the state. It is part of the National Land Transport Network and is classified as a category 1 state road. The highway carries a mix of local traffic, freight vehicles and tourists travelling around the northern region. The Department of State Growth completed investigations and a strategic plan for the Bass Highway corridor between Launceston and Devonport. This work identified locations where the greatest safety and efficiency benefits could be achieved. The corridor strategy identified the sections between Christmas Hills Road and Deloraine as a priority due to safety concerns, traffic flow issues and the interaction between high volumes of heavy vehicles and general traffic. Issues included constrained road geometry, limited overtaking opportunities, junction safety concerns and an elevated risk of head-on crashes.

As a result of this work, including stakeholder engagement at the time, the focus of improvements was defined for this section of the Bass Highway with a scope designed to deliver the greatest safety and freight efficiency benefits. The chosen improvements will assist safety and freight efficiency by reducing the risk of head-on crashes through physical separation of traffic; allowing freight vehicles to maintain more consistent speeds by improving junction layouts and overtaking opportunities; improving travel time reliability for all road users; providing a wider sealed surface that improves vehicle stability and reduces wear and tear; and creating a safer and more predictable road environment for local traffic, freight operators, visitors and tourists.

Mr van der HYDE - Thank you, Lidiya, I will just add to that. Good afternoon. The proposed scope has been informed by technical investigations, safety analysis, stakeholder engagement and cost considerations, and refined period concept and detailed design. The project is currently at the detailed design and tender documentation stage, which is planned to be completed by the end of 2026. Construction is planned to start within 2027, and that's subject to approvals being obtained, all the relevant approvals, with full completion anticipated in early 2029.

The estimated cost of the works, we've gone through that earlier, is just over \$50 million based on the P50 estimate, and the P90 estimate, sitting currently at \$56.8 million. The project

PUBLIC

is funded under stage 2 of the Northern Roads Package Program and is currently forecast to be delivered within the available budget. Once delivered, the Bass Highway Christmas Hills to Deloraine project will primarily enhance road safety and improve freight and travel time reliability by providing a safer and more efficient highway corridor between Deloraine and Elizabeth Town.

Overall, we submit that this is an important project that aligns to the department's objectives of improving safety, efficiency and reliability on the state road network. We submit that the proposed works will make the Bass Highway safer for all road users, including freight operators, local traffic and visitors, while supporting economic activity in northern Tasmania. We submit that stakeholder and community engagement has been comprehensive and will continue as the project progresses towards construction.

Environmental, heritage and property impacts have been carefully considered and managed through the design process, with appropriate approvals being sought. The costs are appropriate in relation to the scope of the works and available funding.

In conclusion, we contend that the Bass Highway Christmas Hills Road to Deloraine project represents a good use of public funds.

CHAIR - Thank you. How we like to scrutinise the information in front of us is to move in a chronological order through the report, page by page. I will try not to jump too much to make sure there's a proper flow of information. I'd like to kick off with asking about the Christmas Hills Road intersection. If you could explain to us as a committee why that section of road, and the 3 kilometres surrounding that section of road, was prioritised for this upgrade?

Mr van der HYDE - Sure. I will start on an overall explanation. This project's been identified through the corridor strategy that the department developed sometime back, but I was hoping, Lidiya, if you can help me with just explaining the overall intent of the project from that.

Ms HUDSON - Yes. The corridor strategy was completed in 2022, and it looked at that whole section, Launceston to Devonport. Throughout that section, we looked at road safety issues and crash rates as a priority; we consulted across a wide range of stakeholders, including heavy vehicle industry councils, RACT and local community members to identify where the highest risks were, the most dangerous sections of the corridor were. It's also part of the national highway network, which is an important part of the network for freight movement and productivity across not only the state, but for the country, as produce goes to major ports and airports to be exported from the state and hence providing productivity for the state.

Through those, in addition to some technical assessments of the road itself, the deficiencies were identified and then prioritised based on those main criteria. Christmas Hills Road intersection has had a crash history that is not desirable at all, and it was highlighted as a key priority at that time. The network through that section from Launceston to Devonport was looked at as a whole and those priorities were filtered out in that process.

CHAIR - I'm not sure whether we want to share that information on the public record - but do you have statistics and the data around incidents and fatalities upon that section of -

PUBLIC

Ms HUDSON - There is some information that's contained within the corridor strategy, but that is now somewhat out of date. We could take that on notice and get back to you with some more recent information, particularly if you want just for that particular section of the highway.

CHAIR - It may be prudent for the other sections as well, for this whole proposed project. That way we may be better informed in making a decision on the need for the works to be conducted on that road.

Mr SHELTON - For the committee's point, and we do have some community members here: we're talking about a section of road from Bengeo Road through to Ashford Road - and that's all. To make it safer, to the safety standards, basically, there will be a wire rope up the middle of the road, except where there's a gap in it to go across to Christmas Hills Raspberry Farm and the two Ps. Will the rope go any further than that, or is that where it actually starts and finishes? Can you inform the committee about that detail around the rope up the middle, basically.

Mr van der HYDE - My understanding is currently at the Bengeo Road end of the project the wire rope median barrier is planned to stop quite a distance shorter from the -

Mr SHELTON - From the Christmas Hills side?

Mr van der HYDE - Yes. It doesn't lead-up all the way to the junction itself. There's a bit of a gap between where that barrier terminates and where the junction, the Bengeo junction, sits. There's no works proposed between where the barrier terminates and the junction at all. It's just that we've moved to the junction to provide that P-turn or turning facility - whichever facility we end up settling on. But the barrier is planned on the other side of the project, the start of works on the southern side. Basically, it's planned to start right at the start of works - the barrier. Not quite at Ashford Road - Ashford Road is quite close to where that information signage area is - it's a little bit further north from there where the project site extent starts, but that's where the barrier is going to start.

Mr SHELTON - Right, so there will - that barrier - be a break in it at Christmas Hills?

Mr van der HYDE - At Christmas Hills Road, yes.

Mr SHELTON - Are there any other breaks in it? Is there another P on the Deloraine side?

Mr van der HYDE - Yes, we have a turnaround planned for northbound near the start of works, which will add a gap in the barrier as well to enable U-turn movement to occur.

CHAIR - As a subsequent to Mr Shelton's question, will those U-turn bays be for heavy vehicles as well as light vehicles? Could you talk us through what the dimensions there are?

Mr van der HYDE - The Bengeo Road turning facility - I can definitely say that that will be accommodated for heavy vehicles. I'm not sure if the P-turn will accommodate for that. I can get back to you on -

PUBLIC

Ms HICKS - All our P-turn designs on category 1 roads are typically designed for the design vehicle for the road. But we can take that on notice.

CHAIR - A smaller vehicle?

Ms HICKS - No, a design vehicle would be like a B-double or a triple or whatever. It might be for that heavy vehicle route. We will need to take it on notice to find out the specific design vehicle for those turn facilities.

CHAIR - Thank you. Ms Rattray?

Ms RATTRAY - Following on from that, Chair, it's unusual, we go up to page 7, 8, 9, 10 and then we start again, and we start again at lower numbers. I'm not sure, I probably will be all over the place today.

I'm interested in that stakeholder consultation that's going to determine what vehicles can use what turnouts, particularly heavy vehicles. Visiting the site this morning, I didn't have enough hands and toes to count the number of heavy vehicles that were going backwards and forwards on that road. Even the Bengo turn-off, there was quite a lot of traffic on that going in and out as well.

I would like to have some understanding of what sort of consultation has been undertaken not only with the people who live on that stretch and work and have to facilitate and navigate that, but certainly the heavy vehicle fraternity that use all of that road very regularly.

Mr van der HYDE - Quite early consultation has already helped with the relevant heavy vehicle transport groups.

Ms RATTRAY - Is that through Michelle Harwood? Is that the group that she chairs or she's the president of?

Ms HUDSON - Yes.

Mr van der HYDE - That's been happening since the corridor strategy before this project's inception already, but most recently for this specific project, we have directly consulted with the following transport groups, which is the Tasmanian heavy vehicle regulator, the RACT, and the Tasmanian Transport Association. That's direct consultation that's occurred with these groups.

Ms RATTRAY - What about the Livestock Association? They're not on your list?

Mr van der HYDE - They are. There is a more extensive list that's listed within our stakeholder engagement plan for overall consultation throughout the project. I will mention them as well.

Apart from the ones we've just mentioned, there's the Tasmanian Transport Association, the Tasmanian Transport Council, the Tasmanian Bus Association, the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, Tasmania Heavy Haulage, the Livestock Carriers Association of Tasmania, the Livestock Transporters Association, the Tasmanian Graziers and Farmers Association, the Tasmanian Motorcycle Council, the Tasmanian Transport Council, Future Transport

PUBLIC

Tasmania, the Tasmanian Automobile Chamber of Commerce, RACT - I mentioned before, Sustainable Timbers Tasmania, Forest Industries Association of Tasmania and the Australian Forest Contractors Association.

Ms RATTRAY - Right, so they've all had input into the preliminary design of what's being presented here to the committee today?

Mr van der HYDE - I believe the first three I've just mentioned earlier had more direct input including to the later development of the designs, but that more extensive list, to my understanding, has been involved since the corridor strategy to provide input on their needs for this site.

Ms RATTRAY - If I might, Chair, in regard to that input, is there some way of articulating to the committee from the original concept plan to the preliminary plan and all that feed-in of that of stakeholders and the like, can you give us some indication of what changed, to what we have today, and what perhaps might change, if that's possible, when that consultation continues?

Mr van der HYDE - I don't have that data, but I can take that on notice.

Ms RATTRAY - That would be very much appreciated, to have some understanding of what has changed from concept to preliminary, and potentially what still might change into the future - because that's where I find being on the committee today and - not necessarily today being asked to make a decision - but certainly to be able to address my mind to what's presented and then make a judgment. I'm pleased to see that we have some key stakeholders here listening as well, so thank you.

Mr SHELTON - Along that consultation process, you mentioned this morning that there was some preliminary work done with the landowners along there. Basically it means now if there is a barrier through the middle that they will have left access and, left in, left out and then a U-turn somewhere. Now that we are getting to a more defined plan, what's the community consultation process from this point on, given that you now have something to show, particularly those landholders on either side of that corridor?

Mr van der HYDE - We've got our consultants appointed - ADDC consultants - that facilitate the stakeholder engagement process for us. By now we are aware of the landowners' impacts after the consultation phase has occurred. The next step in the process is, now that we've got designs to a certain level to be able to share with the owners, we're working with the owners to progress accommodation works for each of the properties.

That will be an ongoing negotiation with the landowners to show - for instance, if your access is getting impacted and a farming vehicle can't quite use your access as it used to with having both directions of access as before, we are going to start the process now negotiating how that access can get upgraded. That will then be reflected within a document that we call a notice of accommodation works, which will be provided to the landowners for comment and that's usually providing 28 days of response or formal response back from the landowner as well before that gets progressed further.

Mr SHELTON - I'm sure that the ears that are listening have had many years of driving that highway and as we talked about this morning in 110-kilometre zone with people basically

PUBLIC

following them very closely when they were wishing to turn into their driveways - the experience on the Midland Highway with the shoulder of the road. Can you just explain that and what's going to be in the plans when you talk to them?

Mr van der HYDE - I'm not quite familiar with the Midland Highway projects myself, but we are going to provide a three-metre-wide shoulder to the existing road. Where you're not currently seeing a three-metre width you will after the construction of the project, which will provide you that additional safety net should you drive it onto the highway and accidentally do that in front of another vehicle, so there is space to get out of the way for that additional shoulder.

Ms RATTRAY - Does that mean that there will be no barriers on that shoulder, that there will be none of those Armco barriers that virtually these days sit right on the road pavement?

Mr van der HYDE - There will be in some locations where there's either a road hazard or a drainage culvert or a very steep batter and that's to help vehicles to not veer off the road at those locations, but it's in the minority of locations within the project. Even if you do have the Armco barrier on the side of the shoulder, you will still have that three-metre shoulder.

Ms RATTRAY - On the inside.

Mr van der HYDE - On the inside, yes.

Ms HICKS - Sorry, do you mean on the centre median side?

Ms RATTRAY - On the outside.

Mr van der HYDE - Yes, it will always be the travel lane, then your white solid line on the shoulder, then a three-metre sealed shoulder, and then your Armco barrier in the minority of locations; most of that will just have the open shoulder and then the verge that steps down from there, or up.

Ms RATTRAY - Is the committee able to secure an actual physical design of where those Armco railings are proposed to be. Is that something we can take on notice?

Mr van der HYDE - Yes, I can take that on notice, but I can show you a cross-section of a drawing example of where that is already designed within our designs. I can show you the locations.

CHAIR - For the sake of *Hansard*, because this is a public hearing, the department will be providing the committee with the copies of these plans for us to take into evidence to form part of our report. If you can, because of the public who are listening today - can you talk through what you're showing us on that design for their information; otherwise they will have no idea about the evidence you've just provided us. Does that make sense?

Mr van der HYDE - Yes. I will distribute the drawings, or the committee will. Once you have a look at that, it's sheet number 1021 which provides typical cross-sections of certain sections of the design on the road. The top cross-section on this design drawing shows an example where you've got a flexible steel beam safety barrier on the shoulder side of the road,

PUBLIC

then your three-metre shoulder, and then your 3.5-metre travel lane, and then the median as the barrier on the centre. I'm happy to distribute that if you like. I did encircle with it being on my copy of where the three-metre shoulder is indicated. I might do it with black pen where the Armco barrier is shown through the side. That's just the example of such.

Ms RATTRAY - Thank you. The committee secretary will take control of that and distribute that.

CHAIR - Did you have any further to ask in that line?

Ms RATTRAY - No, thank you.

CHAIR - In relation to the community consultation, the Public Works Committee has previously dealt with projects where there was insufficient community consultation on designs on major highway areas. That consultation, or lack of consultation, did disadvantage or cause quite a lot of angst for landowners along those corridors. I believe some of those issues are still ongoing in certain areas. Can you provide assurances to the committee today that there will be a sense of goodwill and wanting to work with the landowners along this strip of this particular project? It's our understanding that the community consultation, i.e. these plans, have not been put to a lot of those landowners at this point in time.

I suppose the best that we can ask for is that a guarantee of goodwill and an ability for the designers to work with those landowners and listen to those landowners, because they have a much better understanding probably of what the day-to-day workings of that stretch of road would look like. Can you talk me through how the project managers of this proposed project will be able to facilitate good communication and goodwill with those landowners?

Mr van der HYDE - Yes. I do apologise if anyone would ever feel left out or in the dark about the project.

CHAIR - I'm not talking about this particular project: other ones.

Mr van der HYDE - I can't really speak too much about other projects outside our scope, but definitely if a person does feel ill-consulted, or not enough consulted with, such stakeholders are always welcome to escalate communications to the department's project manager as well. It would always be welcomed. We don't ignore requests. We do guarantee that we want to work with landowners within the appropriate spending of the funds and within the rules of using public funds in particular.

Ms HUDSON - From the planning phase we try to engage. It is a planning phase, probably a much wider scope because we're looking at corridor-wide or larger, extensive projects. As those projects move through the design process, I think we have a fine balance between going to the community too early with designs that might not be well enough developed from a technical aspect, and that can sometimes create more angst for the community because those plans do change as they get refined.

There is a sweet spot in that process where we try to engage with all stakeholders, where we are as close to what we think is a technically good solution that we can then take to the community members to then have that ongoing conversation about the actual practicalities of that working. If we go too early and find issues from the technical perspective and then have

PUBLIC

to change that and go back, that can sometimes cause more angst, because stakeholders wonder why we keep changing things, so there is a bit of a sweet spot. We endeavour at all points to keep the community informed about that progress and at the appropriate times we can then consult with them about those impacts and making improvements that work for everybody.

CHAIR - So, that will be proper consultation: not, look, this is what we're doing; but, this is what we'd like to, with your insights?

Ms HUDSON - At times we go out to inform that we're planning on doing something, but it's not a defined, detailed scope. As we get closer to that, we then go into more detailed consultation, as opposed to just informing of what potentially might be coming up. At different points in time, there is the appropriate type of consultation to undertake. It is a fine balance of trying to ensure that people understand what we're doing without feeling like we're rushing ahead and not taking on board site-specific issues. We want to get there at the right time.

CHAIR - Thank you. The stretch of road which is part of this project, probably just past Griffins Road and Ashford Road, both on the Bass Highway, they're notorious for poor surface and lots of potholes, especially in winter, where you can have seven to eight cars a day having to be towed away; will this project address any of those issues, because that is a hotspot for potholes?

Mr van der HYDE - If you'd like to add, you're welcome, Lidiya, but I'd just like to add that within our project extents, we will design the project to the relevant design standards and the pavement will be up to that standard to resist potholes. We do have our maintenance department within State Growth that does their routine maintenance as well once the project is constructed. But outside of the project extents I'm not -

Ms HUDSON - Anything that's outside the current extent will be part of either the existing pavement rehab program, or, depending on how far out, within one of the other projects that was identified for delivery from the corridor strategy.

CHAIR - We asked a question on our site visit this morning around additional drainage to mitigate dampness, I suppose, which might have something to do with what's causing so many potholes in that area. Could you talk us through how this design might help mitigate those issues in the future? It looks like it will happen again this winter. We don't want it to, but it has happened year after year. By 2029, upon completion, that's at least something for people to look forward to; how would this design improve the current situation?

Ms HICKS - This particular project site has pretty good hydraulic performance. The transverse and longitudinal drains - sorry, transverse across the road and table drains along the road - actually perform quite well. We've done an assessment of the existing transverse drains, culverts and pipes and box culverts to see if they're fit to be extended or whether they require replacement; because of their age, there are a number that we do need to replace. We have assessed them and generally we don't need to increase the capacity of those culverts. There is one location, which I can't point to at the moment, that when we widen the road we know that we will create a further drainage problem for a private property owner. In that location we are increasing the capacity of the drainage under the road to remove that increase in flood potential on their property.

CHAIR - Perfect.

PUBLIC

Ms HICKS - That drainage doesn't currently impact the pavement surfacing on the road. The failures that are on the surface of the road are related to the underlying strength of the pavement, which is various ages all throughout and older materials, and the quality of the surfacing. So, that will be treated separately as an independent item, where we either strengthen the existing pavement or we're providing brand new pavement over the top to a modern design standard.

CHAIR - Good news.

Ms RATTRAY - Supplementary if I might, Chair. In relation to the materials, on page 7 it talks about the road design as being completed in accordance with Austroads guidelines and the road pavement designed for the service life of at least 40 years. But the bitumen surfacing - well, it doesn't say but - it says the bitumen surfacing, whether sprayed or asphalt sealed, is also designed for a service life of 15 years. Can you walk me through how we've lost 25 years of pavement?

Ms HICKS - Bitumen surfacing is almost a sacrificial part of the whole pavement process.

Ms RATTRAY - It's a pretty important part.

Ms HICKS - Well, it's made up of bituminous binder, which oxidises in atmospheric conditions - in the sunlight. So, after about 12 to 15 years it's starting to get brittle and it will crack if we don't come back and resurface it. It does need to be resurfaced every 15 years or so and it will continue to live just fine.

Ms RATTRAY - Interestingly - I come from up in the far north-east and I think I've told this story about seven times in the last six months - the road between Scottsdale and Winnaleah is 40-plus years old and I could not point you to a pothole - 40-plus years. Even before John Beswick's time as a minister for Infrastructure. I keep on trying to understand how the materials just don't last like they did in the past, if we're meeting a really high standard of quality.

Ms HICKS - The materials tend to last. What changes is - so, even that section of road will have had resurfacings in that time; it has to have, otherwise it would crack. We have an annual reseal program that we run out each year across the network for any road that's about 12 to 15 years old to keep them in good condition so that they don't crack and cause pavement -

Ms RATTRAY - So, that would have been resealed within a 15-year timeframe? I must've been asleep that year.

Ms HICKS - It would have had a good couple of reseals in that time. The thing that changes, like an old pavement starts to deteriorate, is usually poor drainage and increasing traffic volume. It does change over - there's often a traffic growth in the order of 4 per cent, a lot more heavy vehicles.

Ms RATTRAY - My final question, before I move on and let somebody else have a question - it talks about whether sprayed or asphalt sealed. Do we know whether this is going to be sprayed or is it going to be an asphalt seal? Is that something that the department is looking at or is that one of the same?

PUBLIC

Ms HICKS - There's typically a combination of both on any of our projects on a category 1 road. So, our long, straight sections will nearly always have a sprayed bitumen surfacing, like a chip seal, and we use asphalt at our intersections because we need that extra strength for the slow-moving turning movements of heavy vehicles.

Ms RATTRAY - Right. So, the asphalt will be in landowners' driveways, for instance, or in the P-turns or -

Ms HICKS - Typically not in property owners' driveways. It would be the bigger intersections where we have a lot more traffic using it.

Ms RATTRAY - Do you use the sprayed or the asphalt seal for driveways? I mean, you must do something to, I suppose, really pay back to the landowner.

Ms HICKS - No, in most locations a sprayed surfacing will be sufficient for those accesses, depending on the individual accesses. If there is a large amount of heavy vehicles turning there, then we will provide a stronger surfacing for that particular access, but that's case by case.

Ms RATTRAY - Right. So, that's something that a particular landowner, or the likes of Christmas Hills or Van Diemens, those businesses would come to the department and say, 'Look, we get a lot of truck movements, we get a lot of traffic, we need something stronger than what is normal'?

Ms HICKS - Our consultation that our consultants have already done with the property owners to date has gathered a lot of data from all those businesses to find out how they use their accesses, to find out what types of vehicles and what volume of those vehicles. That's how they've come up with their solution to create a type of access to accommodate that particular property owner. I'm more talking more about the farming accesses at the moment. We will have further consultation to see if that's going to be appropriate.

Ms RATTRAY - Pretty big tractors bopping around the place these days.

Ms HICKS - Yes, but we've gathered that information already and come up with a treatment that we think is correct. As far as the intersections go, like the Christmas Hills Road intersection, we do our own traffic counts, so we know what volume and type of vehicles use those intersections, and we design a treatment to meet that requirement. We don't actually need that much information from the businesses in that sense because we already have the data.

Mr SHELTON - I'm still on page 2, actually.

Ms RATTRAY - I've gone everywhere.

Mr SHELTON - We know the need for the works are all about safety. Everybody knows around here that the Christmas Hills intersection and the devastation of, over 12 months ago, the last accident there. Apart from the rope down the middle, the biggest change that's happening is the fact that the dual lane coming up the hill towards Christmas Hills from Devonport end will be one lane coming up the hill and a dedicated turn-off into the raspberry farm and the ice creamery area. Could you talk us through the safety issues and that sort of thing? As far as I see, that's the other major change to this. You might add in how many metres,

PUBLIC

hopefully more metres, and that we're not losing any climbing or passing lanes that are going to be to the Deloraine end of the project, onwards from Christmas Hills to Deloraine. If you could just run through that, please?

Mr van der HYDE - I might, quickly, before the hearing confirms with our design consultant - it's been confirmed that we are not going to lose distance of the passing lanes regardless of the shift of passing lanes farther down south past the Christmas Hills Road. We're not losing the distance of passing lanes.

Mr SHELTON - Of course, I indicated that it would be helpful if we gained a few metres, but anyway.

Mr van der HYDE - Yes, it remains to be 12, so it's just a shift.

Ms HICKS - I can talk to that if you like. The primary safety issue with the intersection as it is, is that we have two lanes going through it in one direction or three lanes going through that intersection, which is not in accordance with our category 1 design guidelines. It is the primary safety issue. We need to remove the passing lane through the intersection as a priority. There is no other real way to make that a safe intersection without taking that away. In that sense, we have to remove a portion of the passing lane leading up to the intersection and add that on to the end. The passing lane will start effectively from that intersection heading south.

Mr SHELTON - My other question, while we're still going, is, on the other end of the works. You mentioned where the wire rope will finish on the Deloraine end of the works. Theoretically speaking, if a property owner heading out of Deloraine owned a property on the left and their main drive or a house was 10 metres to 15 metres inside where the wire rope was going to start, every time they wanted to get back to their property, they would have to travel 3 kilometres-plus up to Bengeo Road, do a U-turn, through the P-turn and travel all the way back, basically, to Deloraine before they could access their property. If there was a 15 or a 20 or a 30 metre reason to shift the wire rope towards Devonport to prevent that from happening, would you accommodate - would that be a possibility?

Mr van der HYDE - Yes, absolutely. We'll need to model that with our design consultants, but from the department's perspective we would encourage that to be looked at, so that we can tick all those boxes. If there's no safety breach, why not make a landowner happy about that?

Mr SHELTON - Unfortunately, for everybody else, if it ends up 100, 200, 300 metres in, they will have to do that trip. But a little bit of common sense around where it actually starts and finishes would be a good thing.

Mr van der HYDE - Yes, definitely. We'll always look at that if that would be the case. I'll also mention that the Christmas Hills Road is a little bit closer, just for the record. If you needed to turn around and didn't want to go all the way up north to Bengeo, that saves you another few hundred metres before you have to -

Mr SHELTON - If you're in a smaller vehicle. There's no P-turn there for larger vehicles, but you could turn in and do a U-turn on Christmas Hills Road?

Mr van der HYDE - Yes, correct.

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Ms RATTRAY - Do you think that's possibly what will happen more often than not, that people will do that? You don't see an issue with that, using the Christmas Hills Road entry? Given that we are here talking about this is for safety, and yet it might well be what people generally do, particularly locals -

Ms HUDSON - Turning right across one lane into a safe access is better than trying to cut across three lanes of traffic.

Mr SHELTON - Given that being the issue though, it might be the department's wish that they make a little bit better road of that section so that people can do that, as part of the scope.

Ms HUDSON - We always come back to budget.

CHAIR - Okay. Any more questions from pages 1 to 8?

Ms RATTRAY - Obviously, the new overtaking lane coming from the Devonport end, which will be a single one with the lane that can veer off left into the Christmas Hills and Van Diemens businesses, do you see that it will need to be really well signed so that there's not a level of frustration for people who get behind a slower vehicle and think, I will whop him or her here, and I will get around them now instead of waiting another 1.5 kilometres? Will that be well signed, that there will be an overtaking opportunity farther up? It will need to be signed well back so that they don't think, I will get them now and get on my way, because I don't know how long I will be following this truck or heavy vehicle or whatever for?

Mr van der HYDE - Yes, definitely. The Australian standards would require us to provide that warning signage for that shifted passing lane, and so that appropriate new signage providing notice of the upcoming passing lane will be provided.

Ms RATTRAY - It's going to be key.

Ms HUDSON - Part of the design package includes signage.

Mr SHELTON - Can I ask a quick one, and that's actually not to do with this scope, but the section of road that's beyond Bengeo Road down to Elizabeth Town, which is a long straight - when is that envisaged to be looked at as far as an upgrade? One of the problems in deferring this climbing lane or passing lane at Christmas Hills is that the last opportunity to get around a slow vehicle was opposite Ashgrove before you come into Elizabeth Town, and vehicles will be following them through the 90 and then the 70 of Elizabeth Town, then all the way up that straight. If they can't get past and there's other traffic, and then now a further half, three-quarters of a kilometre farther on, when is it likely that we talk about an upgrade of that straight, and possibly overtaking lanes in that? Crystal ball?

Ms HUDSON - When we've got some money.

Ms RATTRAY - You probably need to talk to the minister.

Ms HUDSON - Yes. It's about money.

PUBLIC

Mr SHELTON - Well, we're talking about - it's part of the strategy, Deloraine, or Launceston to Devonport, so it's been looked at.

Ms HUDSON - It was identified within the strategy, yes, and I can't remember off the top of my head, so I'd have to get back to you as to where it sat in the priority list. There is a number of other sections that were prioritised above that -

Mr SHELTON - A higher priority.

Ms HUDSON - based on volumes of traffic and crash rates. Cary?

Ms HICKS - Page 6 of the report shows -

Ms RATTRAY - Which 6?

Ms HUDSON - The first 6.

Ms RATTRAY - The first 6.

CHAIR - proposed works.

Ms HICKS - Section 3, just above proposed works, there's a map there that shows all the project sites, the priority project sites, that have been identified in the corridor study. They are all the highest priority in terms of the study's performance requirements, which is freight efficiency and safety upgrades. You can see there's a lot of gaps there. There is also a lot of very major projects ahead of that section. At the moment we are conducting some planning around Elizabeth Town; however, I don't know the extent of that, whether it will go all the way to Christmas Hills Road, but it's not on our current horizon of priority projects.

Mr SHELTON - Yes. I acknowledge that I'm trying to ask you to crystal ball stuff, but it's an issue when you move further on from that period.

Ms HUDSON - Yes, we have identified improvements across the whole section between Devonport and Launceston.

CHAIR - Okay, moving on to page 9, can I ask - there is a question, it's activities underway currently include, and we've got one, two, three, the fourth dot point, property acquisitions, partial and minor only, engagement with affected landowners including discussions regarding access and acquisition; can you talk us through what that's looking like at the moment? If this is potentially contentious or if those negotiations - some of them may not have even begun - but from your initial work, what's the feel for the property acquisitions at the moment?

Mr van der HYDE - Current feeling from engagement with landowners is that there's no contention or issues of what we've shown and proposed to date for acquisition. We haven't started any official process yet. It's still an ongoing consultation while the design is getting finalised, and then once we have our project blueprint established and 100 per cent confidence in that, then we will start to put the official process, which firstly involves seeking approval from our minister to proceed. The minister will not likely approve any acquisition to proceed if we aren't able to provide evidence as part of the issues brief that we've consulted in detail

PUBLIC

with those owners, and that there's no contention that we haven't been able to work through with them. All affected landowners, from my understanding, are now aware of the conceptual idea of what we need to acquire land from, but it's partial only and strips of land to accommodate for the widening of the road.

CHAIR - There are sections of the proposed project where the widening of the road will come quite close to some residential dwellings, and there was one that we saw today on our site visit, and it's already very close to the road; how many of those properties are there that could be impacted and how are those negotiations going?

Mr van der HYDE - It's a bit hard for me to know exactly how many -

Ms HICKS - We would have to take that on notice to get some specific data to you.

CHAIR - I imagine that consultation with those landowners could be quite difficult, because already they're very close to the Bass Highway, and if there is widening there, I imagine that'd be like having trucks going through your living room or your front room.

Mr van der HYDE - In such cases, we would try to take the commonsense approach of rather providing all the widening to one side of the road, still achieving the target width, but not widen any closer to the existing property on that side; so that's the first thing that we will try in such cases.

CHAIR - The one that we saw today, I thought, would not just be a case of noise mitigation; I think the whole structure of that house would shake the closer that road got, that the highway became, and the usage is just going to increase. The vehicles are getting heavier and bigger, well, the heavy vehicles. I'm interested to see how you deal with that as a department and how you start those negotiations, because they may need relocation if it needs widening, I imagine.

Mr van der HYDE - If it's possible, can I get back to you on that?

CHAIR - Yes, please do. Thank you, appreciate it.

Ms HICKS - Typical treatments that we've done in those situations before are noise mitigation. Options that we have are providing a quieter surfacing on the road, like an asphalt surfacing instead of a sprayed seal surfacing. In some situations, we've actually provided upgrades to the property for soundproofing, by double-glazed windows, for example.

CHAIR - Anti-shaking or something.

Ms HICKS - We would do additional noise modelling if there were a valid complaint and actually have a noise recorder there and work out the minimum levels, if they were exceeded, and if that were the case, then we will provide the best option to try to bring that down to an acceptable level.

CHAIR - On page 9, I wanted to have a chat with you about the working group. You have representatives from Latrobe Council, Meander Valley Council as well, as part of that working group. Do you meet very often?

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Ms HUDSON - That was through the corridor strategy period.

CHAIR - Okay. Alright.

Ms HUDSON - That was for the corridor-wide component. Since the project was handed over, I'm not 100 per cent sure.

Ms HICKS - Yes, we still meet regularly with the Meander Valley Council. It's at least every two months; in some situations I think it's been monthly. I don't think it's that at the moment - but we do regularly meet with them.

CHAIR - Latrobe, I suppose it's not their remit, is it?

Ms HICKS - No.

CHAIR - Any questions on page 9? Ms Rattray?

Ms RATTRAY - It's my annual or usual question - not annual, more than annual. Engagement with TasNetworks for power infrastructure relocation. I noticed this morning that if this proceeds, there will need to be some moving of poles. I'm interested in - it says, 'activities are underway'. Has there been some engagement with TasNetworks? Because they work to their own tune, certainly not yours, not mine or anyone else's. Their own.

Mr van der HYDE - We have engaged with TasNetworks for this project already. I've assigned the project number and everything for this project for the relocation of the infrastructure.

Ms RATTRAY - Right, so they're well aware that there will need to be some movement there?

Mr van der HYDE - Yes, absolutely. We're in the design process with them as well. They have their own consulting design company designing the relocation of the pole [inaudible]. Once we've got those designs sorted, they will end up providing us with potential easement plans if there's a new easement that will need to be registered for those poles.

Ms RATTRAY - I did notice a little bit further over that there's no final cost for the relocation of poles. How are you going to fit that in that very tight budget?

Mr van der HYDE - It's a minor relocation, so it's not expected to influence the budget in such a magnitude that can't - or that will need to be in the scope of the project. Those costs from TasNetworks, usually they're provided to us as a quotation once they've had a bit of the preliminary design provided to us.

Also, along with that comes the cost of what it will cost for their contractors to relocate the poles for us. Part of those costs that is not quantified at the moment, also, is the valuation for - it's not really called compensation but it is, in a way, compensation for the landowners for the registering of those new easements.

With those poles so close to the fence line, you will also have quite a lot of deemed easements there at the moment. It's already an easement with the six-metres clearance from

PUBLIC

each end of the pole, which prohibits a landowner from really being able to plant vegetation up to, close to three metres from that pole. Projects such as this with registering of those new easements are actually a good opportunity for a landowner to be compensated for what was previously a deemed easement becomes now a registered easement that has been paid for.

Ms RATTRAY - A bit of free advice - I've been on this committee for a while now. You need to get it in writing from TasNetworks because the price does move.

Mr SHELTON - They've got two years, surely.

Ms RATTRAY - But they still move the price.

Mr SHELTON - They need it all.

Mr HARRISS - Section 5 under 'Benefits' mentions that direct benefits associated with safety and movement efficiencies from upgrading the Bass Highway between Christmas Hills Road and Deloraine are in the order of \$18 million. How's that quantified? Can you give me some indication of where that figure comes from, I suppose? What's included in that? How do they come to that benefit?

Ms HICKS - We would need to get back to you on that one and take that on notice. Our consultants prepare the net benefit analysis. There's a lot of detail in there that we're not experts on, and that information is being provided to the Australian Government in our proposal for the funding. We can extract that information and send that through.

Ms RATTRAY - What is the status of the seeking Australian Government funding approval? The PPR?

Mr van der HYDE - Oh yes. That application has been submitted. I expect an approval or an answer from the Australian Government. It should be before -

Ms RATTRAY - Before you start digging up the road.

Mr van der HYDE - We're not allowed to tender for construction before that.

Ms RATTRAY - That was being quite flippant. I apologise.

CHAIR - She's being facetious; she didn't mean that.

Okay, page 10? I've asked questions about the property acquisition already.

Ms RATTRAY - Page 11?

CHAIR - I will ask a question about the changed traffic conditions during construction. Is it too early in the piece at the moment to talk us through what that would look like, to try to mitigate long waiting times, especially for heavy vehicles as you're undergoing work?

Mr van der HYDE - That will be up to the construction contractor to decide how that's going to look, but we do have, within the construction contracts that we tender out, limitations, guidelines and rules for the contractors to adhere to, standards they are obliged to adhere to

PUBLIC

themselves to remain compliant. I don't foresee this much different from any other road upgrade, where you have the occasional stop and go to enable them to complete those works.

CHAIR - Would the contractor communicate with landowners who are entering and trying to exit the Bass Highway? Would that be the job of the contractor?

Mr van der HYDE - Yes.

CHAIR - Are there assurances that they will do that in a meaningful way?

Mr van der HYDE - Absolutely. That's also part of the contractual obligations. That will ensure that the notice time giving rules are adhered to as well. Also, not just for the landowners but for the general public. We've got a roadworks round-up system that provides for a bit of route planning.

CHAIR - Okay. Page 11? Ms Rattray?

Ms RATTRAY - We spoke this morning, on our site visit - which is always very useful, because we read these, but you get a lot more out of a site visit than you do from the paperwork - about the EPBC act, which obviously is a federal matter, for impacts from the green and gold frog and the potential platypus waterway habitat. Do you want to put on the record what you're doing in that area, and where you think there might not be an issue?

Mr van der HYDE - We have expert design consultants employed through our design consultants, North Barker, who specialise in environmental matters. They have provided us with a report to provide confidence that there won't be significant impact from the works. For green and gold frogs, we have not found frogs to date, but we have found suitable habitat for the green and gold frogs. So, to comply with the department's guidelines for green and gold frog management, we are looking at measures to prevent further impacts, such as green and gold frog fencing along the way.

To clarify, when we're talking about fencing here, it's almost like a shade netting kind of material that will be installed against the existing fence line that's already there, so we're not talking significant costs. It's just a kind of fence which allows water and airflow, but which aims to stop any frog from crossing the road, for instance, should they be there. It's not a huge cost expenditure.

As for the platypus, there was a confirmed finding of a platypus in the area between Bengeo Road and Christmas Hills Road, but the design will be altered in a way to minimise and prevent any impact to the habitat for the platypus.

CHAIR - What does that look like? How do you design a road around ensuring its safe for platypus?

Mr van der HYDE - There could even be measures where if we need to widen the road, we can provide a retaining wall so we don't need to encroach with additional [inaudible] to that habitat, as an example.

Ms HUDSON - We could also move in the other direction; build it on the other side.

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Mr SHELTON - Can I inform the committee that while that's okay in theory, platypus travel substantially. In my situation, I've got some photos of a platypus at our property that was a kilometre and a half up a ditch from the river, floundering around in the mud and the muck and that sort of thing. They travel across land to another water source. You can find them in ponds. You can find them around the place. To try to mitigate where they might be is simply impossible. I hope we don't get to the point where we start spending a whole heap of money to try to mitigate against something that is a movable feast.

Ms HICKS - No, our design treatments are more about trying to minimise impact to the waterway leading towards the location that we noticed one frequents.

Mr SHELTON - I mean, you have the Rubicon River - basically the start of the Rubicon up one tributary comes to where we stopped on the top of the hill there. It's a part of the catchment and a platypus can be in any part of that catchment.

Ms RATTRAY - Bit of good advice from a local member there. I note under 'Declared Weeds' that potential action is 'nil'. I think that will be music to a lot of people here: that there will be no weed issue on behalf of this project. You don't see an issue?

Mr van der HYDE - It's not anticipated at the moment. However, the construction contract does include mitigation for not introducing weeds when the contractors start work where their machinery comes from other different sites as well.

Ms RATTRAY - So, they're all clean and they've gone through proper process. We don't want to introduce any new weeds because there are already enough on the road verges as there is, that are not being addressed by the state government.

CHAIR - Thank you. Shall we move to funding and costs on page 12?

Ms RATTRAY - I will leave this to the expert, Chair.

Mr HARRISS - There are no experts.

CHAIR - We might ask Mr Harriss; he's good with the numbers.

Mr HARRISS - With the base estimates: they're different in the P50 and P90. Is that standard or do we usually see base estimates the same and then contingencies and escalations added to the base?

Mr van der HYDE - I see what you mean. Usually, in my experience, the total is more than the base. But I can clarify -

Ms HICKS - There are some errors in that table, yes. The base estimate should be the same; you're correct.

Mr HARRISS - So, that's what normally works and then you have your contingency and escalation on top, which changes your P50 to P90, is that right?

Ms HICKS - Yes.

PUBLIC

Ms RATTRAY - Good pickup.

Mr HARRISS - The escalation, at 2.34 per cent, and that's on both P50 and P90 costs, I think that says somewhere over here, yes, 'the Australian Government determines the escalation rate for projects partially funded by the Australian Government.' Is that low? I just had a look back through some of them that we've done recently, and they sit between 4 per cent and 8 per cent. I thought that escalation seemed low.

Mr van der HYDE - It's the escalation rate the Australian Government directs us to use for these purposes of the projects, but whether it is low or high compared to other projects, I could get -

Ms HICKS - We will check that.

Mr HARRISS - So, that's just a standard escalation that the Australian Government says you use this year?

Ms HICKS - The Australian Government gives us a template, and we have to fill out that template and those escalation rates are populated.

Mr HARRISS - Yes, okay.

Ms HICKS - We will double-check, for the record, that that is correct from the PPR. But, yes, that's where we get them from.

Ms RATTRAY - Because they're 2025-26. You'd almost think the next one would be 2026-27.

Mr HARRISS - What type of works would escalations include?

Mr van der HYDE - It could be mostly latent conditions because we do our best to iron out any design omissions along the way. So, latent conditions being unsuitable ground conditions that weren't able to be foreseen during the design -

Ms HICKS - I will just add to that. That sort of thing is usually covered by our contingency items. Escalation usually covers things more like market rates that can be influenced by trends within the entire Australian economy, or the Tasmanian economy. That's how they work out the escalation rates.

Mr HARRISS - It'd be interesting to understand that escalation because I thought that worked on more so, I suppose, project contract -

Ms HICKS - Even the value of the Australian dollar can influence that.

Mr HARRISS - Yes, that's right, but it relates to Tasmania also, doesn't it? So, it'd be interesting to see what the Australian Government covers, I suppose, in that escalation pointed to it.

CHAIR - Just to clarify - that table - you will resubmit that as evidence to the committee?

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Ms HICKS - Yes, I can see two errors in that table, so we will resubmit that.

CHAIR - Yes. Just to make sure that when we're in our deliberations, we can make a decision based on correct information.

Ms RATTRAY - Actual facts.

CHAIR - Any questions on page 13? Did you want to talk through the timing of the proposed project?

Mr van der HYDE - Yes, I can. Currently we're - well, at the time of compiling this document, we were hoping to have our tender documents completed. That is not quite on schedule at the moment, but we are still looking to advertise for construction tenders around September 2026. That's still on schedule. The tender documentation is not actually on our critical path. To explain that, if we have our project program or schedule out in front of us, the critical path would be things such as TasNetworks, easements being signed off by landowners, for instance -

Ms RATTRAY - This committee.

Mr van der HYDE - This committee. But, timeframe-wise, we anticipated - we knew that we were going to have this hearing well in advance of when we would like to tender the project where the critical items are the ones that absolutely we need to finish. We anticipate we will finish right before tender. Even though we're not quite on the schedule as we've written here for tender documentation, we have a bit of contingency timeframe to finalise and that consists of our design drawings and our construction contract, and all of that.

CHAIR - Is that trying to be in line with the warmer months for the beginning of the construction? Is that correct for that road building?

Mr van der HYDE - It's always the preference to be able to tender as close within winter as we can so that we can maximise the construction period or construction season. Even though sometimes we do get into spring and we still haven't tendered so in this case we will if we tender in September, it means the construction contract may not be awarded until late this year to enable construction to commence in early 2027. It does take that time. So, there's only - you will lose a bit of construction season for the start of works and, seemingly, the seasons have shifted nowadays, so we'll hopefully be able to work a little bit closer to June for works that need drier weather and then completion of construction early 2029.

CHAIR - It's going to take two years to do the 3 kilometres, do you think?

Mr van der HYDE - Yes, we anticipate two construction seasons at the moment, but it's always up to the construction contractors tendering for the works to provide us with their own program and schedule to show us what they can do, which is a competitive process and it would be favourable if it can happen quicker.

CHAIR - Is there a particular urgency for one particular - because it's different stages of construction, is there a stage which has a higher priority than the others, or is that really up to the tenderer?

PUBLIC

Mr van der HYDE - We haven't specified a high-priority stage for this project being that it's only about just as a few kilometres in length, but if something like that does come up, we can specify that in our contract.

Ms RATTRAY - Do you think it's likely that there'd be any night works when there's potentially less traffic? Not necessarily less heavy vehicle traffic because they do tend to travel a lot later in the day and evening, but just for the general travelling public.

Ms HICKS - There could be situations, such as when we're replacing a full-width culvert, in those sorts of situations then we might have to go down to one lane at a time to be able to construct half the road at a time. Those sorts of things might be undertaken at night but, typically, we don't do that on the rural highways and if we do do anything like that or have any, like, full lane closures, there will be a lot of notification to the public in advance of that.

Ms RATTRAY - I noticed when I drove in on the Brooker Highway from Queenstown last Tuesday night there was quite a bit of roadwork happening. Wasn't there honourable member for Huon?

Mr HARRISS - Yes.

Mr SHELTON - There's work happening down south as well.

Ms RATTRAY - Yes, which I thought was a really sensible time to be actually doing it. There wasn't as much traffic.

Ms HICKS - I drove through there then as well; they were doing all the concrete pours for the central median. That's very heavy traffic volume there, so they would do that sort of thing at night.

Ms RATTRAY - There's a pretty heavy traffic volume on that 3 km stretch of the Bass Highway, too. Anyway, it's worth thinking about, from the department's point of view, that some of those night works be considered.

Mr van der HYDE - Just to add as well, the department's got a set of rules in place as part of the roadworks roundup notifications for certain roads being classed. So, for instance, the Bass Highway may have certain periods of peak traffic at times where you're not allowed to close a lane during those peak times, which the contractor must adhere to as part of the contractual obligation. If they identify within their order of works that that won't suit them, then the contractor may, out of their own initiative, do night works.

Mr SHELTON - If you're considering those things, then, heading up at 6 in the evening with all the northbound traffic heading to Devonport to meet the *Spirit*, they certainly wouldn't appreciate a 15-minute or a half-an-hour wait when they're running a little bit late to catch the *Spirit*, for instance.

Ms RATTRAY - Because they thought they were going to whip around Tassie in three days.

Mr SHELTON - There could be other issues.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - Page 14. Mr Harriss had a question here.

Mr HARRISS - Thanks, Chair. In section 10, under 'Conclusion and recommendation', it talks about the estimated cost of \$56.8 million, which we've heard. It says that that comes within the budget of the \$240 million allocated to the Bass Highway out of the Northern Roads Package Stage 2. Can we have an update of what's been spent out of that \$240 million at the moment?

Mr van der HYDE - I will need to take that on notice.

Ms RATTRAY - It was actually a total of \$420 million, wasn't it?

Ms HUDSON - The \$420 million is covering other projects as well, not just the Bass Highway.

Ms RATTRAY - Yes.

Mr HARRISS - It would be good to get an understanding of how much is remaining of that \$240 million.

Mr van der HYDE - That's easily obtainable.

Mr SHELTON - Part of the attachment talks about the corridor study. I know it's not part of this scope. On page 10 of the corridor study, where it talks about the 'Bengeo Road north of Parkham Rd (Elizabeth Town),' that's incorrect, for a start, because there is no Bengeo Road north of Parkham. Parkham is farther out. Anyway -

Ms RATTRAY - Yes, but it's north. It's north of Parkham.

Mr SHELTON - It talks about, in the comments, how 44 per cent of the respondents talked about the safety of Elizabeth Town, and they all thought it was because of the limit, that the speed limit going through Elizabeth Town was 110 kilometres an hour. It hasn't been 110 kilometres an hour going through Elizabeth Town for -

Ms RATTRAY - Ten years.

Mr SHELTON - I would say 50. I don't think it has ever been. When you're relying on information that's incorrect - I don't know what happened there.

It also talked about on page 19, one of the recommendations there, in section 5 at the top of page 19, 'Bengeo Road north of Parkham', again, Elizabeth Town it talks about:

There have been several deaths and many accidents on the highway between Railton Road -

They got that right -

and Samuel Street junctions. This section of the highway should have the speed limit reduced to 70 km/h

PUBLIC

It's 90 kilometres an hour at the moment. It would be absolutely frustrating to anybody travelling the Bass Highway to be reduced right through Elizabeth Town down to 70 kilometres an hour. I just highlight those couple of points in that.

Ms HUDSON - That was the feedback from the stakeholder engagement that we got from the community. Our response was to say that we will consider all options, but the Commissioner for Transport makes a final judgment call on that.

Mr SHELTON - I'm glad there's been some common sense.

Ms HUDSON - There's been no such submission to make any change to the speed limit at this point that I'm aware of.

Mr SHELTON - I understand that, but it's in the strategy. One of the problems of relying on the strategy is -

Ms HUDSON - It's the feedback we got. We document what feedback we got from the community so we get a flavour of what the community feels they would like to see, or how they see the situation, and then we provide a response to that.

Mr SHELTON - Okay.

CHAIR - On lessons learned, on that community and stakeholder consultation feedback report, it talks about COVID-19 restrictions without any face-to-face engagement opportunities that were available with the community. How long ago did all this -

Ms HUDSON - We started in - I want to say 2018, 2019. It was completed in 2022, so there were restrictions at the start of that process.

CHAIR - That feels like an age ago now, doesn't it?

Ms HUDSON - An age ago, yes. We're still working through getting those projects out.

CHAIR - Do we have any more questions for the department?

We might ask for you to step back from giving evidence for the moment. We may call you back. Thank you.

The witnesses withdrew.

The committee suspended from 3.21 p.m. to 3.24 p.m.

LANDOWNERS

CHAIR - Thank you for appearing today at the Public Works Committee meeting into the Christmas Hills - Deloraine road upgrade. Before you provide information to our committee today, I would like to inform you of some important aspects of committee proceedings.

A committee hearing is a proceeding in parliament. This means it receives the protection of parliamentary privilege. This is an important legal protection that allows individuals giving

PUBLIC

evidence to a parliamentary committee to speak with complete freedom without the fear of being sued or questioned in any court or place out of parliament. It applies to ensure that parliament receives the very best information when conducting its inquiries. It is important to be aware that this protection is not accorded to you if statements that may be defamatory are repeated or referred to by you outside the confines of the parliamentary proceedings.

This is a public hearing. Members of the public and journalists may be present and this means your evidence may be reported. Do you understand?

WITNESSES - Yes.

CHAIR - We have three witnesses today. Bradley McLennan, would you like to state your name and read the oath in front of you. Thank you.

Mr BRADLEY McLENNAN, Mr HARRY HAINES, AND Mr CLIVE GRIFFIN WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION, AND WERE EXAMINED

CHAIR - Mr McLennan, would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr McLENNAN - For sure. Thank you. I guess, the only, well, evidence - it's not evidence, it's just a statement - that I've picked up from the information we finally heard here today - being ill-informed up until this point, I must say - comes back to the design, as much as anything, at this point. I question the fencing through the centre of the road and the extended overtaking lanes, all accumulating without knowing the exact measurements - some half a kilometre or something up the road from where it does nowadays - and then we have a turning circle.

I see that as an accumulation of traffic trying to get to the end of a passing lane - and we all know what people do there. We all want to be there first - then suddenly, we have a turning circle that's crossing all that traffic. Are we not just transferring the problem up the road some hundreds of metres? Are we fixing the problem with this design that's being proposed? I take that with regard that I haven't seen the actual design properly, but this is the thing that I've concerned myself with what I've heard today. It doesn't seem like we're really fixing the problem. It feels like we're just transferring the problem up the road. Now, while the Christmas Hills Road might not get the publicity, the farmer up the road might.

CHAIR - Could you talk us through your understanding of the project and what communication you have had, and which property is your property?

Mr McLENNAN - My property is at the southern end, at the very beginning, on the opposite side of the road from Ashford Road, where it starts. I will not be directly involved or affected at this stage, as I see it. My concern is, where does this road design go into the future as we come back towards the outlet of Deloraine, et cetera, where, again, it's a bit of a bottleneck and, in my opinion, it's quite dangerous. There's a lack of vision, et cetera, there that needs to be addressed.

However, I still have concerns with these barrier fences up the centre of the lane - I know we're on a highway, I know they do good - we turn large machinery, as has been spoken about here today, on and off these roadways. We carry large tractors, with large machinery behind them. When we turn corners, they can swing four metres to five metres behind us out into the

PUBLIC

centre of the road. If you have a barrier fence there and a fool behind you that doesn't understand - I've seen people's private vehicles underneath machinery as we're turning in and how they've never hit me personally is beyond me. With a fence there, where do they go? It might prevent them from running into the bloke coming up the road the other way, that's good, but it's not going to stop them running into me because now they have nowhere to go.

Mr SHELTON - The number one question that comes up is about the consultation that's taken place. I understand there has been some consultation in the middle of last year or somewhere around there -

Mr McLENNAN - Yes, some time ago we had a very short meeting roadside, and I'm not even sure if it was with some of these - I can't remember that's how far back it was; I can't recall names.

Mr HAINES - Yes, I was there 12 months ago.

Mr McLENNAN - Yes, and I've had no other consultation at all. Until I had a message from a neighbour here today, this morning, I didn't know this was on today.

Ms RATTRAY - We were informed that there's been an organisation that's undertaken the consultation. You haven't been - I think they said ADC. They've not had any direct contact with you, Mr McLennan, with you, Mr Haines, or with you, Mr Griffin?

Mr GRIFFIN - Not that I can recall. I've had consultations with a lady called Sarah Dutton, I think. We've had a lot of trouble getting any information even though we've requested it. She just said, 'I'm not authorised to release it yet'. We've been very much kept in the dark. We have had some meetings and explained what we thought was the best outcome for our individual situations, but as far as this is what we're going to have, we haven't -

Mr McLENNAN - The other aspect of all of that too is, I've mentioned that the agricultural machining with the big machinery behind is the additional - it's seasonal for us as well. This time of year we're about to start harvest. The amount of truck movements in and out of our farm over the next two or three months is huge. We will be sending six or eight truckloads of potatoes a day out of our driveway. We don't need them having to travel another five kilometres either way to get in and out of our - even though I wish they'd do something with my driveway because it's a disaster waiting to happen. I do agree with that. How you fix it, I don't know.

The timeframe for travel from here to Ulverston, Devonport for a truck, we do not need them any longer away from the farm when we have harvesters sitting there that you're paying \$300, \$400, \$500 an hour to sit there and wait for them.

CHAIR - It's a very good point. Mr Haines, can I ask what your experience has been with the consultation? Which land for the record?

Mr HAINES - I own Gepeton, which is just past Ashford on the other side of the highway. I have two entrances onto the highway. My main entrance won't be affected, but the other one will be just past the start of the wire barrier. I'm not sure whether, coming out, trucks will be able to turn to go to Deloraine or they will have to go down to Bengeo Road to turn around.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - Come harvesting season, what kind of truck movements do you have? Entry and exit points from your property? Heavy vehicle, I mean.

Mr HAINES - Everything, stock trucks, poppy trucks, grain. The consultation hasn't been good. I think the last I heard was about 12 months ago. I actually thought the project had died.

CHAIR - Mr Griffin, can I ask you the same questions, if that's okay? What your experience with the consultation has been? Which properties? Which property area along the proposed project is yours? What kind of movements you have - in and out, entry and exit points?

Mr GRIFFIN - For sure, yes. I am in partnership with my son from where the Deloraine merge comes out at the cemetery, virtually, all the way to - what's that road there? Anyway, about approximately 3 kilometres on the right-hand side going towards Devonport. We have three farms there, but they're all joined together.

The consultation has been very limited. It's been hard to get information. They did come, they did say, 'Yes, we'll try to improve this and do this'. Some of my main concerns are, if they do the section that these people behind it have explained, what are they going to do into the future? If they extend that wire barrier and I leave Deloraine, do I have to go to Bengoe Road to turn around when my farm is virtually at the cemetery? If they extend, there's been no say, 'This is what we're doing in the future', because anyone in their right mind knows if you're coming out of Deloraine, it's a battle to merge let alone turn into a farm on the opposite side of the road.

Our driveway is the first driveway from Launceston off the Bass Highway with the new thing. We have a nightmare there all the time. Then, coming up to the next driveway, which is ours again, Ashford Drive, it's a nightmare then because you've got a lot of other tourist traffic, which - in my opinion, that whole thing should be just done away with. It's just a toilet or a rubbish dump. Not very many people come in and read the sign. Well, that's how it is. I pass there every day, three to five times a day and that's all it is. It's a toilet and a rubbish dump, that should be done away with. Then I own the next driveway along where the house is very close to the road, and the same thing applies. If you're coming from Deloraine to turn into that one, it's a nightmare.

We wanted a little bit more consultation on what's going to happen into the future because if they extend that wire barrier from where they're saying it's going to finish now, and, say, let's make it all the way, this very much limits my movements in and out for myself, my son lives in Deloraine at the moment, he comes to the farm on a daily basis. If we've got to go to Bengoe Road to turn around - we do a lot of silage, a lot of cattle, a lot of potatoes, a lot of onions in the past, a lot of everything. We have a lot of trucks coming and going from our multiple entrances along the way.

CHAIR - Even if you were doing a left turn, even with the wire barrier there, you may have a tractor that's pulling out still on 110 kilometres an hour traffic, is that correct?

Mr GRIFFIN - That's correct, yes.

CHAIR - You'd need a merge area or definitely quite a large area.

PUBLIC

Mr GRIFFIN - Yes.

CHAIR - Is that something that you're experiencing at the moment?

Mr GRIFFIN - Oh yes, definitely. It is very difficult to get large trucks in and out because of the access. It's just not wide enough, and you're merging out. Yes, some of the trucks have to virtually go onto the incorrect side of the road to get around. That has been addressed and they're going to look at doing way better there.

CHAIR - Your main concerns are with the wire barrier down the middle though?

Mr GRIFFIN - I want a safer road, but yes, what is the outcome into the future especially with school children. The school bus doesn't always come back the same way it went, it does a loop, so how do school children - and I have grandchildren, how are they going to be affected in the future?

Another concern I have is if you do have to go to Bengo Road. It hasn't been fully explained as of yet what is the difference between a P-turn and a G-turn? Do you turn up Bengo Road, then have to cross three lanes of traffic or two lanes of traffic heading back to Deloraine? Or are you going to have just a designated U-turn? And if it's just a designated U-turn, is it going to be suitable for a truck or road trains? I'm right beside the highway all day, every day, and trust me, road trains are getting very numerous and bigger.

Mr SHELTON - The department will be back in a moment and they will explain some of that. But the Bengo Road is designed to Australian standards to allow - your issue, and I completely appreciate it, because there are lots of driveways there and slow traffic and we talked about it this morning and what happens when slow-moving vehicles have to turn to the left? However, thinking about the problem, and you've mentioned it already, if the Bass Highway gets busier and the oncoming traffic is constant, then how do you turn right safely into your properties? I would hope you don't have to go right to Bengo Road to turn around and that there may be some engineering that can be done and another P-turn or something, but looking forward with -

Mr McLENNAN - It's an issue now, Mark. I've got two properties, one is in Deloraine, and we come out past the cemetery, meet the slip road and basically you get to the corner and you turn into my place. Do you know where it is?

Mr SHELTON - Yes.

Mr McLENNAN - We come out of there, I reckon sometimes five to six times a day with tractors and we have to turn in. We try and stay to one side of the road, we try and do everything, but as I said, we sometimes have large, long implements sticking out the back, and you don't turn, they don't follow you, they swing out. You've got a truck coming out down the highway. He doesn't know where you're going, what you're doing. Suddenly he's hammering down there, doing his 100 kilometres or so, and he's seeing me turning in, he's hitting brakes, he's blowing horns, he's got cars or somebody coming the other way. We need space. We need a lot of space.

CHAIR - Yes, they can't brake quickly.

PUBLIC

Mr McLENNAN - No. You know, just with the barriers there, they're good, they do their job. I don't doubt that at all. However, they restrict the space as well.

Ms RATTRAY - Clive, if I can ask you, would there be any opportunity in your mind to consolidate any of your entrances?

Mr GRIFFIN - Probably not.

Ms RATTRAY - No. Okay, I was just thinking, perhaps, there'd be some way of having the one entrance, and then another alternative might be able to be put forward, but that's not an option.

Mr GRIFFIN - Not really, there are three separate properties. In the future if we decided to sell one - we'd have, you know, 'you can't sell us a property without an access' - and just for the scale of our operation, we don't want to be taking onions all the way through our farm just to get out onto if they're at that end of the farm and the access is up there. It's got to be - potatoes or anything - we need multiple accesses.

CHAIR - Any more questions for the witnesses?

Ms RATTRAY - No, but it's really good, Chair, to be able to hear the practicalities because I mean there's part of the submission that talks about the overall functionality of the project and so now we're hearing about that functionality.

Mr McLENNAN - And really that is all that affects us, the functionality of it all. Cost doesn't worry me, well, it does worry me -

Ms RATTRAY - I was going to say you will be paying like the rest of us.

Mr McLENNAN - Obviously paying for it, of course, in the end, but you know what I mean. We don't have any input into that at all. We can't have any input into that. It's the functionality of the day-to-day comings and goings that concerns us all.

Ms RATTRAY - I don't think Simplot is going to give you any more for your spuds just to help with the road.

Mr McLENNAN - Trying to give me less, aren't they?

CHAIR - Thank you very much for providing the evidence because it gives us a much broader understanding of that consultation and the practicalities of a design. You are the people with that expert knowledge of that part of the Bass Highway because you live it, you breathe it, it's your work environment - a lot more than any of us here would have, so thank you very much.

As I advised you at the commencement of your evidence, what you have said to us here today is protected by parliamentary privilege. Once you leave the table, you need to be aware that privilege does not attach to comments you may make to anyone including the media, even if you are just repeating what you said to us. Do you understand that?

Witnesses - I do.

PUBLIC

The witnesses withdrew.

The committee suspended from 3.42 p.m. to 3.43 p.m.

THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE GROWTH

CHAIR - We've just received witness information from Bradley McLennan, Harry Haynes and Clive Griffin, all landowners along the proposed project site. One of the main themes that was raised by those witnesses was the lack of consultation to this stage especially with their expertise of that road and the practicalities of using it as a working road as well as a major national highway corridor.

Could you talk us through how, as a department, you may be able to improve that consultation with the landowners in the community along that path.

Ms HICKS - The consultation undertaken to date with the individual properties that are affected has been largely an information-gathering exercise. If our consultants haven't been getting enough information to work out the type of vehicle and seasonality of the volumes of the traffic, we'd definitely like to know about that, because it is our expectation that they get that information and then they design an access treatment suitable for that traffic, that type of traffic and that volume of traffic. That is our expectation.

They have only just completed the design and we are now at that stage. This consultation is ongoing, where they go back to the property owners and show them what they've come up with, see if that's applicable, and there would be fine-tuning if required to meet the property owner's requirements.

CHAIR - I definitely know that you've got two members for Lyons sitting here in the Public Works Committee today -

Ms RATTRAY - And the member for McIntyre.

CHAIR - And the member for McIntyre, so there's three local members at the table today.

Ms RATTRAY - I think this committee's just hit the jackpot for this area.

CHAIR - We certainly will have a kind ear to those landowners, but also of the understanding that this is a complex design to be able to provide the practicalities for farms and our primary producers, as well as navigate that corridor of national highway. I would really appreciate data on the usage of that stretch of the Bass Highway and see what the increases have been - your normal vehicles or normal cars as well as heavy vehicle usage, because I'd be interested to know that as a committee member as well.

Ms HICKS - We can provide that information for the highway network, probably not on a per-access arrangement. Is that the level of detail you're looking for?

CHAIR - More just that three-kilometre stretch, I suppose. I think that would be really interesting, especially when we heard today from those primary producers that there is an increase in traffic that they have noticed. It would be interesting to gauge that.

PUBLIC

Mr SHELTON - This is more or less a statement, but a question to the department: when dealing with national highway standards and therefore the envelope that you have to work in, it's five or six years since I've been on the Public Works Committee and -

Ms RATTRAY - Welcome back. Good to have you back.

Mr SHELTON - dealing with some of the Midland Highway issues with access and dealing with individuals, farmers - it was bad enough when you had 5000 to 6000 hectares worth of property, and you only had one every three or four kilometres. The difficulty in Tasmania that I see is that we're trying to apply national standards to the Sydney-Melbourne highway, which has very few access issues, whereas this is a part of the national highway and it's also a part of the farming community where you've got accesses every few hundred metres and dealing with that. Tassie is a different place when you start dealing with those regulations.

A statement to you, when dealing with your federal counterparts, is that you try to implore on them that the reality is you're working in a totally different space to any other state when it comes to dealing with private landowners onto national highways. I don't know how we make it work, but of course the safety of everybody - that's not just the travelling public, but the farmers and the employees that you're putting out on the road to travel back there 200 metres, when they go to go up there three kilometres to turn around and come back again.

That and the communication issue: we have to get better with communication. With public works - we've mentioned it in the last few meetings - in order to make a decision, this committee has to understand all the evidence. At this point in time, you're still going through consultative processes and that information needs to come back to the committee before we can make a decision. We're stuck between a rock and a hard place as far as where we go with these things. That's a statement, not a question. The only question would be -

Ms RATTRAY - Do you agree?

Mr SHELTON - I partly answered it, but if you could go through the design process of a P-turn, that was one of the questions that was put. I have no trouble with the national standards of P-turns, but you might just go there with any turning facility that is put in place has to meet standards. I don't know whether you can add to that more, or how you would like to.

Mr van der HYDE - For example, on Bengo Road, where we went through, or spoke about a few concepts that we want to look at for turning facilities, to confirm that we will accommodate for heavy vehicles and farming vehicles. Although we're working towards the standards, our design consultants also take into account and model the different heavy vehicles, sweep paths and turning paths and how that will work for that facility. So yes, that will definitely accommodate for heavy vehicles on Bengo Road.

Ms RATTRAY - I've just had a look at the timing again, because I share a very similar view to Mr Shelton and his statement that it is very difficult to make a decision when we've just received some really significant information about how this project is going to actually meet some of its expectations around the functionality of it.

Can I ask you, is there some opportunity to delay a decision - and obviously the committee will have a conversation - but I don't want to spring that on you, and that will be the Chair's job anyway, around pushing back. You said there was some flexibility around the

PUBLIC

timing. I feel like there hasn't been enough consultation with people directly affected to be able to, perhaps, make as informed a decision as what I would need to in this case. You don't want the project to fall over, but sometimes if you take some time - I don't know who can answer that, or if anyone even wants to.

Ms HICKS - There's probably no answer from us on that one. The decision to delay any decision by the committee is at the discretion of the committee. All we can do is explain what we plan to do to finish the project, and the consultation that still is yet to happen is ongoing, as per all projects, and will be ongoing through the construction phase as well.

Ms RATTRAY - But it does say that the Public Works Committee approval wasn't expected until May. I know that the Public Works Committee has a pretty heavy agenda, and sometimes departments take the opportunity to jump in earlier rather than hang around at the time. I'm really just asking: is there some opportunity to have some of those more detailed discussions and perhaps not expect -

Ms HICKS - I don't think we can probably pass comment on that.

Ms RATTRAY - That's alright.

Ms HICKS - I understand that we can actually prepare projects for presentation to this committee after we - with a completed concept design, so much earlier in the stage than we're at the moment, by explaining what we've done to date and what we plan to do to finish off. That's what we presented today.

Ms RATTRAY - I wanted to put it right on the record up front, so that was the question, but I appreciate that you perhaps don't have the answer. Thanks, Chair.

Ms HUDSON - The timeline probably just doesn't give enough detail as to the milestones that are still to occur within the project. There still will be activities occurring, such as the consultation, finalising designs; that sits around the timelines of things that are there in the paper.

Ms RATTRAY - It does say the Public Works Committee approval wasn't initially expected until May 2026.

Ms HUDSON - I guess there's time to do some of the other bits that we need to do.

Ms RATTRAY - That was really just my question. It might have been a long way of going about it.

Mr van der HYDE - For an example, the finalisation of land acquisitions: that process won't proceed until we know for sure how the accommodation works are going to look like, how the areas are going to be that we will need to acquire from the affected landowners, and the expectation there was for land to be vested by August 2026, for instance. By that time, we already would be knowing well enough of exactly these non-specifics that we have today and will have answers on that.

CHAIR - Subsequent to Ms Rattray's line of questioning, you must have a rough indication on your own timeline of when you expected to complete - not fully complete, but

PUBLIC

complete the bulk of that community consultation, do you know when that is? Is that six months away or is that two months away? The fact that we've had three landowners here today who really weren't even aware this meeting was happening and haven't had a look at the plans. These are the adjoining landowners of that three-kilometre site, so that's pretty basic community consultation. Do you have any idea when that section will be completed? Because that could help us with our -

Ms HICKS - Sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt.

CHAIR - No, please.

Ms HICKS - We don't have our designer's program with us today to show you the exact dates that they're looking to roll that out. But we have just completed the detailed design; that's with the department for review at the moment and they're commencing consultation with property owners now. So, they shouldn't take much longer.

CHAIR - Does 'much longer' mean -

Ms HICKS - They should be within the next couple of months.

CHAIR - Two, three months? Or?

Ms HICKS - Less than that.

CHAIR - Oh, okay. So, it's pending?

Ms HICKS - That's commencing now.

Mr SHELTON - Mr McLennan mentioned the overtaking lanes being moved farther up the road creating a problem. I'm curious to investigate the distance between where that extension of the overtaking lanes comes to and the P-turn to go back to Devonport is. I mean, there's only one way to fix the Christmas Hills intersection and that is - well, you can't fix it; it's a problem anyway - but the dual lanes coming up the hill is the major safety issue - to take it down to one substantially improves the safety of that intersection.

As a road user, I wouldn't like to lose any overtaking opportunities because of the fact that there are a lot of heavy vehicles on the road - a lot of caravans - and somebody gets stuck behind a car leaving Elizabeth Town and they're still there, and that's the only opportunity between Elizabeth Town and Deloraine to get around any slow-moving traffic. However, if it is too close to that P-turn, then you don't really want everybody scrambling to get off the two-lane and then back into the P-turn. I would assume that, through the Australian standards, there is a distance that has to be between emerging traffic and any other. You might explain that, or just give us your opinion on where that's at.

Ms HICKS - I could only talk in general terms, but you're correct in that assessment. Those sorts of things are how we decide where to terminate passing lanes. There could be other environmental structures like a rock cutting or large culvert or something, or a property access or an intersection, absolutely. We will be providing, I think, the general arrangement drawings to the committee, which will show the location of the P-turn in relation to the end of the passing lane.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - I'd like to follow up on, I think it was the question that Mr Griffin put to the committee, around where bus stops will stop when you have the wire barrier in the middle of the road and how you would mitigate the risks there to stop kids running across and jumping a wire barrier to get to the other side.

Ms HICKS - I'm aware that our bus transport operators have been consulted through this project, but I don't have specific details. We can provide that separately.

Ms RATTRAY - That would be good.

CHAIR - Thank you. I think that was a very good question.

Ms RATTRAY - Yes. Good point.

CHAIR - Any more questions? I have a series of questions if you can just answer 'yes' or 'no'.

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

WITNESSES - Yes.

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

WITNESSES - Yes.

CHAIR - Are the proposed works fit for purpose?

WITNESSES - Yes.

CHAIR - Do the proposed works provide value for money?

WITNESSES - Yes.

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

WITNESSES - Yes.

CHAIR - As I advised you at the commencement of your evidence, what you have said to us here today is protected by parliamentary privilege. Once you leave the table, you need to be aware that that privilege does not attach to comments you may make to anyone, including the media, even if you are just repeating what you have said to us. Do you understand that?

WITNESSES - Yes.

CHAIR - Thank you very much.

The committee adjourned at 3.59 p.m.