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PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

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PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

# Tarkine Road

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

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## MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Legislative Council

Mr *Harriss* (Chairman)  
Mr *Hall*

House of Assembly

Mr *Best*  
Mr *Green*  
Mrs *Napier*

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## INTRODUCTION

To His Excellency the Honourable Peter George Underwood, Officer of the Order of Australia, Governor in and over the State of Tasmania and its Dependencies in the Commonwealth of Australia.

## MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY

The Committee has investigated the following proposal: -

### **Tarkine Road**

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

## SUBMISSIONS

The written submissions of the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources and Scott Jordan, Tourism Project Officer, Tarkine National Coalition Inc. are respectively Annexures 'A' and 'B' to the report.

## EVIDENCE

The Committee commenced its inquiry on Tuesday, 24 November last. The Committee was conducted on an extensive inspection of the site of the proposed works over two days as follows:-

Day 1	Start		
24			
Nov	0830	Smithton	Marrawah
	0915	Marrawah	Arthur River
	0930		Inspection and walk
	0945	Arthur River	Couta Rocks Rd Jcn
	1000	Couta Rocks Rd Jcn	Western Explorer Jcn
	1030	Western Explorer Jcn	Kannunah Bd
	1100		Inspection and walk Kannunah Bd
	1115	Kannunah Bd	Sumac Look Out
	1120		Inspection and walk at Sumac
	1130	Sumac Look Out	Julius Reserve
	1145		Inspection, walk at Julius
	1200	Julius Reserve	Lake Chisholm
	1225		Inspection and walk and lunch
	1305	Lake Chisholm	New Rapid River Bd Site
	1335		Point out new bridge site
		New Rapid River Bd	
	1340	Site	Tayatea Bd
	1410		Inspection and walk
	1420	Tayatea Bd	middle section 15

	1510		Inspection and walk
	1520	Middle section 15	Tarkine Look Out
	1620		Inspection and walk
	1640	Tarkine Look Out	Wynyard
Day 2	0830	Wynyard	Myalla Rd Jcn
25			
Nov	0845	Myalla Rd Jcn	Phantom Valley
	0930		Inspection and walk
	1015	Phantom Valley	Hilders Bd site
	1025		Inspection and walk
	1050	Hilders Bd site	Wynyard

On Wednesday, 25 November last the Committee convened in the Function Room, Returned Servicemen's Club, Wynyard whereupon the following witnesses appeared, made the Statutory Declaration and were examined by the Committee in public:-

- Phil Cantillon, Director Operations Branch (Roads and Traffic Division), Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources;
- Gar Foong, Consultant Project Services, (Roads and Traffic Division), Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources;
- Dion Lester, Consultant, Pitt & Sherry;
- Richard Gerathy, Consultant, Three Plus;
- Mike Peterson, Project Manager, Forestry Tasmania;
- Scott Jordan, Tourism Project Officer, Tarkine National Coalition Inc.

## **Background**

Mr Cantillon provided the following overview of the project:-

*Just as a little bit of background to the project, setting the scene, as you would have seen over the last few days the tourist road is connected at one end from Myalla Road through to the Arthur River township. It extends 131 km. There is a \$23 million budget set aside for it. Within the \$23 million, there's \$2.5 million set aside for tourism-related infrastructure; that's the infrastructure side, not so much the experience side. In addition, for the purposes of that \$2.5 million, there's in the order of 8.9 km of access roads and car parks, which bring the total road length up to 140 km. As you would have seen over the last day and a half, most of the existing roads and tracks are in place. The figure is almost 90 per cent and some of the roads are very substantial. DIER is very pleased to have this project and it has been a great collaboration with Forestry Tasmania through the development. It's a project that came across to DIER in February this year and it has been great to be involved in it and delivering it. It is very pleasing to be at the panel so quickly; it is roughly nine months since we first got the project so we have worked very hard at getting to the point where we can present it.*

*We also think that there are some enormous benefits in DIER's stewardship in delivering the project. We are very committed to it and we have a very strong team behind it. We believe that, through our wide consultation with both the broader community and environmental groups, we have a strong understanding of the issues. We have a clear process in terms of resolving any particular issues that are raised for the betterment of the project and also to create*

*something that is a legacy for future road projects around the State, so we think there are enormous benefits for DIER in this regard.*

*In terms of breaking down the road components themselves, what you would have seen over the last day and a half are existing sealed roads requiring no work - in the order of 20 kilometres. The project involves sealing existing roads in the order of 65 kilometres. There is widening of the current road and constructing sealed pavements in the order of 31 kilometres. There is a new link section, which you have seen either side, that joins onto existing gravel sections in the order of about 5.4 kilometres. Then there are a number of short deviations which are designed for engineering, aesthetic or safety reasons. We saw one such example at Rapid River, you may recall.*

*In terms of preparing for this project, we spent a lot of time in trying to determine the outcomes we wanted to achieve because if we knew what outcomes we were hoping to achieve it would well position us to continue to develop that project. Also, for us as a team, it is something that we would benchmark ourselves against. We scanned all the material, spoke to a number of people and we came up with four key outcomes we want to achieve through this. One was that we saw the project as improving accessibility. It was about providing safe tourist and recreational access to the region for all Tasmanians and wider visitors. At the moment only a very small group can get access to the area. This is a project that provides the widest possible accessibility and in doing so provides access to wilderness areas free of charge.*

*In terms of the tourism potential, we saw Phantom Valley before, a magnificent area. Once people get to see Phantom Valley they will be encouraged to go further and deeper into the road length. That varied experience, most importantly for the regional economy, will provide the opportunity to increase the overnight stays. At the moment there are day visits but there may not be necessarily be overnight visits. This project provides a key opportunity to increase those overnight bed stays and hold them for a number of days with the concept of the project being a number of loops within loops where you can get in and get off quickly and move onto another section as part of that development.*

*In addition to that we saw that it was very important for DIER to ensure that we met our environmental responsibilities and undertakings, so the project is about construction in full compliance with all regulatory requirements, whether local, State or Federal. The project is also about minimising the environmental impact and protection of the local flora, fauna and heritage values - and in particular things like the Tasmanian devil. As part of doing so, we have had to develop measures - and we are still developing measures now - which are adaptive throughout the entire life of the project. They are ones that we've conceived now, further into the design stage, construction and operation, which we will continue to respond to any of the challenges through the life of the project. They involve programs, management regimes and mitigation actions through that entire life cycle.*

*One of the key hallmarks of the project is communication. When we started the project, Gar, as project manager, was developing it technically but at the same time we saw it as very important to understand the issues of the community in the first sense, but then we extended that out into a much wider group. Our communications have been very positive. We think, on balance, there is very strong local support and demonstrated need for the project. All our consultation with all groups, including the Tarkine Coalition, have been open, transparent and thorough.*

Messrs Cantillon and Gerathy presented a *Powerpoint* presentation. A copy of the slides was received and taken into evidence. The full transcript of the hearing of the Committee, including the *Powerpoint* presentation may be found at:-

<http://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/ctee/Transcripts/25%20November%2009%20-%20Tarkine.pdf>

### **Transfer of land ownership**

The Committee asked the witnesses to clarify the need for Parliamentary action to enable the transfer of land title to enable the works. Specifically, to confirm that no Parliamentary action was required to transfer existing forestry roads to 'DIER jurisdiction' but that the revocation of the status of some of the State forest land did require Parliamentary approval. Mr Cantillon responded:-

*Yes, that is right.*

*... We are able to use one of the existing elements of the legislation to make substantial sections of the road public now. If there is an existing FT road there we can make that public. In those areas where the road may need to be widened beyond the current formation that we have, those sections will be required to go before both Houses of Parliament.*

*... That is using existing Forestry Act legislative requirements. We have had discussions with FT about introducing a legislative amendment to the Forestry Act that would enable us to carry out works on forestry roads with a similar ability to that which currently exists under the Local Government (Highways) Act so as a separate initiative to those two planks, which is using the existing Forestry Act and legislation, we are looking at amending it but it's something that we are in discussions with FT over at this point in time and that, again, would require going back to both Houses of Parliament in the new calendar year.*

The Committee questioned the witnesses as to what affect, if any, the requirement for such approval had upon the commencement of the works. Mr Cantillon responded:-

*We're approaching the project on a number of fronts. For example, you've seen us come before the parliamentary standing committee, you've seen the environmental referral submitted, development applications will be submitted. We plan through December to hold the industry briefing. We have recently received approval from the Department of Treasury and Finance for tendering the project. There is an early contractor involvement. All these measures would go on concurrently while we're waiting for the regulatory approvals to come into place. We've got all the planning done, we're ready to go and the minute that we can set foot on construction or some early works activities, they would be got under way early in the calendar year.*

*In terms of that particular question you asked, we wouldn't be able to award a contract to start physical construction until those legislative changes have occurred, but we believe that the time frame of those legislative changes are consistent with the overall timings that we're pursuing for the project. So no detriment, if I can put it that way.*

*...(provided it goes through both Houses of Parliament) ... for those sections of road that require it. The sections immediately to the west of Tayatea Bridge for the most part don't require it.*

## **Project justification**

The Committee noted the significant tourist visitation demand for Cradle Mountain and the Overland Track and questioned the witnesses as to whether the proposed visitor number of 215,000 would result from targeting the same market for those destinations. Mr Cantillon responded:-

*We've been working very strongly with Tourism Tasmania on this and we've been guided by them in terms of developing the tourism facilities. I suppose the key thing we've drawn from it is that this is about having a complementary tourism experience, not necessarily of the same nature. Diversity is very important in the tourism game, as we understand. It's not our background but this is what we're coming to grips with. This is about extending the number of stays that people will have in Tasmania. ...*

*... The key thing out of the Felmingham analysis was the benefit-cost ratio. It was quite a detailed analysis and the key outcome was the benefit-cost ratio of 1.9, which means a net increase in welfare to the community of 1.93 for every dollar spent on the project.*

Mr Gerathy added:-

*An example of that, anecdotally, was one of the honey producers we visited. He was really interested in the project and said it would enable him to put in an extra 1 000 hives. That would equate to an extra 130 tonnes of leatherwood honey so that has the potential of adding over \$400 000 to his turnover per annum. One of the things that excited him was that this road would enable him to tell the story of leatherwood honey and so for the broader region to develop their food brand as well. He was looking at diversifying his business from being a honey business to then interacting more with tourists and, just as we have wine tours, having honey tours as well. He was pretty keen on it. That's just one example of the type of spin-off activities. There will be economic activities out there that we haven't dreamt of yet; once you get the infrastructure in place entrepreneurs will come along and generate new employment opportunities and new economic-generation activities.*

Mr Cantillon concluded:-

*... in talking with a number of the operators who were consulted through the Moore work, whose views I think were captured in it, having that link road going through to the Western Explorer was seen as more complementary because it was about the diversity of the options that were available to travel around that area and it was a case of, 'Well, Phantom Valley is very important to it because it's diverse, it's a different experience to Lake Chisholm, a different experience to pulling up at Couta Rocks or other locations like that at the edge of the world' and it was about having a drawcard on a number of areas. So I don't think through our work since February that we've picked up any diverse criticism.*

*I don't think there's been any real views about not having that middle section to link up. I think it's been seen as more important from all the tourism operators, both small and award winning, that having that link and that continuity in link is about drawing them into that wider area. The Moore Consulting work was predicated on, I suppose, a number of links in there; it was saying that if you've got that infrastructure in place and you are investment ready, you then have the ability to encourage investors to come into the area like Phantom Valley. So one of the key planks of the project and \$100 000 being funded out of the \$23 million is about working out issues and options and constraints associated with Phantom Valley, what types of developments, both small and large, may fit*

*into that area and what sort of statutory planning requirements would need to be in place. So it's about while we're delivering the road, also trying to position ourselves to be as investment ready as is possible to try to achieve the sort of figures that Moore Consulting is suggesting that we might derive from the project.*

The Committee questioned the witnesses as to what extent the Department had in the development of tourism infrastructure. Mr Cantillon responded:-

*... The tourism development component is about the infrastructure, it is not necessarily the investment of it, so it is access roads, car parks, toilets, foot bridges and things of that nature and they are about positioning that area for future growth. The access and the car park into Lake Chisholm is an important part of the project but not necessarily the track hardening around the lake in terms of walks and things of that nature.*

*...Our bailiwick was to deliver a project of a certain scope, but what we are doing is from day one when we got the project we saw that it was very important to consult with the broader community and tourism operators both on a one-on-one level from a local operator in Stanley and we have gone out as wide as Devonport, the Tourism Association right across to Smithton. We have gone in as deep as people like Tarkine Trails and Richard Summers and we are working very closely with Tourism Tasmania so that we with Tourism Tasmania can provide that catalyst for future growth to occur through stimulating the private sector industry.*

Given such response, the Committee enquired as to what assessment, if any, had been made of the impact to the 'Tarkine experience' of tourists in the event any private infrastructure development had not taken place after the completion of the road and the consequent impact upon the environment of tourist visitations. Mr Cantillon responded:-

*What would have been very evident on the drive is that to the east of Tarkine Falls is existing infrastructure. You can get into Lake Chisholm, you can get into Julius River. There are toilets there. There are facilities for parking your Winnebagos and having a barbecue, shelters and walks and things so there is existing infrastructure in there. What we are doing is consolidating. We are grabbing a gravel access road and sealing it. We've got a car park at Lake Chisholm that's already in place. We are making it slightly larger so that buses can come in there, but we're sealing it. We're adding a toilet to Lake Chisholm and to Tarkine Falls. We think that the best way we can prepare for an onslaught of visitors and tourism operators is - and the very clear message we've got - that you must have the infrastructure in place and that's what this is about. It's about getting the access, about toilets and signage and people safely getting around that area.*

Mr Gerathy added:-

*I think it's also worth remembering that it will take three years to build. During the construction program, for instance, some of the visitor facilities will be constructed, so the capacity of the region will be built up over that time. As construction is progressing on the road, so it will on various facilities. That will sort of build up the capacity as time goes by to approaching the opening.*

Mr Cantillon continued:-

*I think another key feature is that the way we are contracting this isn't the way we normally do our business. We have a special contracting approach which is about the quality of the discussion, understanding the issues, dealing with the issues, being very transparent about it, responding to it, making sure all the controls are in place, not just in an environmental sense but also whether it's Richard Summers and the Tarkine Wilderness Lodge or having a set of trees that hides the road or shelters any noise from the road - things of that nature. We are getting down to all of the issues and wanting to deal with them and I don't necessarily see that we would be stepping away at any point. We have gotten very quickly to the point we are at. We will get into the job very quickly and will continue that continuity of people, of faces, of understanding the issues, closing out the issues, through the entire life of the project. Also, going into the maintenance area, having the stewardship that we think is necessary to deliver the project means that we are going to need to keep in touch. There will be some embeddedness with the job in terms of community issues and things of that nature and I think we'll have a presence right through the entire life of the job.*

Mr Foong concluded:-

*... there's one toilet at Julius River Reserve. The intention is to obviously turn it into a double one. Then there will be three additional ones: one at Phantom Valley, another one at Tarkine and one more at Lake Chisholm. They are reasonably spaced out and the whole idea is to give all tourists that kind of visitor road experience, so roughly wherever they want they know they can actually go to the toilet. We will also be consolidating a lot of the facilities at Julius River in anticipation. There will be an increase in the number of visitors. The toilets are being doubled and we will be putting in additional woodfired barbecues, sheds and parking. We will be doing some of the actual track hardening. The only other track we will be putting in is a very short section of the Tarkine. Another is a track across the Arthur River. There used to be one footbridge there. So we will build one footbridge as well as about a kilometre of the roughly 15 km of eventual track that you see on the map there. Under the budget there is an item there for tourists facilities, which is capped at \$2.5 million. That's the money that will be spent on providing access roads and car parks as well as the facilities that I've just mentioned.*

*... We are going to provide a minimum of 10 car parks in the facilities we are putting in and they will also have bus parking. They will all have two parking types, except at Kanunnah where there is only enough space for one and hopefully that will be sufficient. Obviously if there are going to be additional buses then probably someone will have to look at whether we would increase that. However, that is quite an increase. Given the number as predicted in the Moore report, that number of car parks along the whole route is quite a few. When you add up all the sites we are putting in 10 car parks. So you are looking at about 50 or so car parks, which is a fair bit.*

The Committee expressed its concern that there may be inadequate provision for camping facilities. Mr Cantillon responded:-

*We approached it via a group involving Forestry - the people who currently manage the sites. We have been speaking with Cradle Coast and Tourism Tasmanian and we got them all together. We even put out a brochure. One of the brochures that we put out was e-mailed ad nauseam to a number of people. It was about what we could do broadly at these locations and we were asking for feedback. The information we received, plus guidance by people like Tourism, is what informed the break-up of how the \$2.5 million would be spent.*

*Things such as toilets were fundamental and that is why they feature in there. The number of car spots was seen as about the right balance for the area. Winnebagoes camp at a number of these facilities already, plus the formal and more diverse facilities further to the west.*

Mr Gerathy added:-

*It is not as if an extra 100 000 people will turn up on day one. It will build up over time. As numbers build up then more facilities will be built as more businesses spring up. So it will take a little bit of time for the numbers to ramp up but there is no doubt that there will be increased demand from day one.*

*A north-west tourism forum was held at Strahan and we had a trade booth at it. We spoke to lots of tourism operators and they were very positive about the project. We used that venue to canvass some of the ideas in terms of visitor facilities and that is how we arrived at that list there. That was part of the consultation process. We spoke to the industry. They were very enthusiastic and said it made a lot of sense. They were the sites that those people were pointing to as well.*

### **Moore Report**

The Committee cited two findings of the Moore Report, namely:-

1. 'This is the single most significant tourism development available to the State after the introduction of the *Spirits of Tasmania*'; and
2. 'The Tarkine offers Tasmania the opportunity to recapture its pre-eminent position in nature-based tourism in the national market.'

and questioned the witnesses as to whether they concurred with such findings. Mr Cantillon responded:-

*We accept the prior work that has been done and, in terms of our own reconciliation of it, it is a groundswell of opinion out in the north-west, from as far as Devonport and going through to the west, that this is very necessary for the area. It is something that can be an icon that will rival similar facilities elsewhere in the State.*

*... I think the loops are a key attractor because they give you options. It is a big drive, as you no doubt felt the last few days; your back is probably a bit sore from those gravel roads. To do the entire loop is about six hours, it's a long drive, and some people might like that if they want to get around the State very quickly. Me, personally, I'd want to stop off somewhere. But, necessarily, if you don't have time to see the entire section of the road, you can get off very quickly; you can do the Phantom Valley area and come back out; you can go from Phantom Valley, Tarkine Lookout, come across Tayatea and end up in Smithton. You don't have to go and see that further western area. Alternatively, you can come to Smithton and just do the coastal bit. There are lots of options. There are lots of varied experiences offered by the project and certainly the message that we're getting from the private operators is that's why it's so important. It offers attractions at various levels, from a small business operator that wants to come into discrete areas of the Tarkine, to potentially to someone who might want to operate hiring facilities at the Phantom Valley.*

Mr Gerathy added:-

*The Moore report does recognise the fact that the Tarkine is a brand and the brand equity of the Tarkine is growing by the day; people talk about it. It's an interesting brand because it has developed on its own, of course. What this is doing is leveraging that brand equity. In other words, there is a certain level of latent demand in there and this project is going to tap into that latent demand; that's the idea behind it.*

The Committee put to the witnesses the proposition that “small, pleasant ecotourism experiences” would not attract the predicted number of tourists to the area and retain them for any length of time unless there was a significant, single ‘iconic attraction’.  
Mr Cantillon responded:-

*Personally, and I think as a broader project team, and certainly the feedback that we've had from the broader community, I think that the success of this project in realising the benefits of the Moore report will depend on having a varied platform of experiences, from the boutique ecotourism to a Winnebago person pulling up, to having an icon-type attracter there, and certainly that's what has motivated Burnie City Council to consult with DIER. We think there's a real wisdom in it. It's something that's been very collaborative with the Burnie City Council. It has been accepted, I think, by Circular Head, Wynyard. We've spoken to Devonport, Cradle Coast; they're involved in this in terms of making Phantom Valley work because they really do see this as being an important element of the project. Not necessarily that the project is not about developing the experience but it's about developing the infrastructure to enable that experience to occur under appropriate statutory planning guidelines.*

*... As we heard today, the concept of the road project, particularly in the Phantom Valley, is about touching the Tarkine and if they are encouraged to touch the Tarkine then they will be encouraged to go deeper into other areas, not necessarily into the Tarkine reserves but to see more on the west coast. So, yes, we are looking at it being a hook.*

Mr Gerathy added:-

*The Tarkine is a brand now and this is the beginning of the further development of that brand. So the hook is in the region. If you think about the Overland Track and Cradle Mountain, 20 or 30 years ago it was developing as a brand in itself and eventually it has turned into this huge brand that is a huge attractor. So it is the same here.*

*... obviously it will be marketed differently and that is obviously a job for Tourism Tasmania. But looking at it as a marketer, it is a brand and people do know it. So this project is about enabling people to go and experience the Tarkine.*

Mr Peterson concluded:-

*I will make a few comments about the Moore report. Warren Moore, Greg Hudson and other associates were consultants of the Cradle Coast Authority. They had prepared a latent-demand analysis, which was part of the foundation for the Cradle Coast Authority's report on the Tarkine. The report that you've been presented with here is, in essence, a further work. It's a much more detailed study of specific options only. These consultants are very well known, very qualified and well respected. What has been said to us and the advice they*

*have provided has been taken in very good faith by DIER and Forestry Tasmania.*

*The specific figures with respect to the breakdown between the east, west and the full link centre around what were identified as the key attractors of the Tarkine. Work that has been undertaken, and published in numerous studies before, identifies the Tarkine's key values as being the wilderness, rainforests, and to some extent the oceans and the sea. The concept of the loop road is to pull all those key attractors together, those key iconic elements where they build the icon. That is why the central link brings in the key rainforest and wilderness elements, which are not apparent with the east link or with the far west. That is a really important aspect to keep in mind.*

*Some initial research was done by Forestry Tasmania. One of our key people at the time was Jane Foley, general manager for tourism, who came from Tourism Tasmania and has a wealth of experience in tourism planning. When Jane first looked at Phantom Valley she identified particular issues, one of which was the backtracking issue and the potential for any significant development of a hub there having an impact on tourism visitation rates further to the west. There was some hesitancy about the concept of Phantom Valley at that time because people may just come in, get a touch of the Tarkine, but then they would go back out and maybe not even proceed further west; they may just head down the Wilderness Way. We thought that if we could link through to South Arthur Forest Drive and the west, and then the ocean, we could bring all these important elements together. A network of old forestry roads existed and the opportunity was to build a new bridge at Hilders and upgrade those roads to take us over a relatively short distance to South Arthur Forest Drive. What was identified then was that there are these loops within loops, within the bigger loop. The road is not just about building a road for the benefit of a drive. It is about linking experiences and key attractors which are being identified in the branding process. That is what the value is. The road is the basic infrastructure to bring all the attractors and link the attractors together. When you look at the broad scope of potential visitors, particularly those who are interested in this nature-based tourism component which is thought to, in time, maybe exceed 50 or 60 per cent of our market in Tasmania, a lot of those people are using hire-and-drive vehicle, self-drive components. Self-drive and hire-and-drive account for in excess of 90 per cent of the tourism market in Tasmania and even research that has been done by DIER in respect of southern Tasmania certainly showed that you needed sealed roads and you needed roads that if possible did loop to avoid the issue of backtracking which many visitors are not keen to do. Does that answer some of your questions?*

## **Speed limits**

The Committee noted the comments made on-site that the road was proposed to be tourist road and not a logging road and questioned the witnesses regarding the speed limits proposed for the road. Mr Cantillon responded:-

*We have put in the submission that they will be designed to have an operating speed environment of around 40 to 50 kph...*

*... The key issue is knowing what sort of operating travel speed you want on the road and designing the road to have sufficient sight distance for those road speed environments. That means that someone driving a car should be able to see a cyclist because they have sufficient sight distance for the speed they are travelling. We do not anticipate any issues with recreational cyclists on the route.*

*...we are building a road to an accepted design standard that is a forgiving environment for drivers, that provides all the right visual cues, that is very sympathetic to the environmental overlays and complexities of the area.*

*...Fundamentally it is about having the right visual cues. The visual cues in term of the driver but also if you turn it around the other way and look at it from an environmental point of view, some of those sections are going to be configured to provide a visual cue of the drivers approaching for wildlife. This is a very innovative job and this is going to create a legacy for Tasmania with the innovation that we are driving into this job. This has not been done before. You have had the Cradle Mountain and you have had Arthur River Road, but we are taking all the learnings from all of those jobs, putting them together, putting them into a melting pot, testing the good, bad and the ugly with all the experts and people who have a view on it and we are getting some really tangible measures. We have said that even if those measures are not right, this is going to be an adaptive approach and so part of that is having visual cues both for wildlife and for drivers.*

### **Road-kill mitigation**

Mr Lester provided the Committee with the following submission in relation to the road-kill mitigation measures included in the proposed works:

*At the moment we are undertaking periods of study to look at existing road kill on the busiest sections of road but also the abundance of animals outside the road environment - headlight surveys. That information will inform specifically what measures occur where. Clearly on the western sections - sections 25, 26 and 27 - that area has a high density of devils and quolls so the specific measures that Phil mentioned earlier about reducing the road width have come about because of that. Elsewhere on the road, to use one of Phil's terms, we have a kitbag and we can pull out various measures depending on the further studies. The next round of road-kill monitoring and headlight surveys is occurring in January and that will tell us the hot spots. That is pre-construction. Both during construction and following construction the monitoring will continue so that we can adapt those responses if it comes through the data that there have been further hot spots develop. If we use them where they are needed to be used, I guess, is the short answer to that.*

*There are a variety of cues (to driver awareness). The road width is one; different surface treatments, both colour and ruffle strips and that sort of thing, is another. Signage is an option. Each of these cues, particularly the narrower road and allowing good sight distance and the ruffle strips, not only keeps the drivers driving slow but it alerts the animals. The key thing with road kill is that people can see the animals and the animals can hear and see people. The other thing is that when on the road we give them good opportunities to escape off the road, so they are not hemmed in through poor culvert design, steep banks or those sorts of things.*

The Committee invited Mr Lester to explain the animal monitoring program being undertaken in anticipation of a Federal Government request. Mr Lester responded:-

*Monitoring has occurred once in October and November and is occurring again in the next stage in January. It involves daily road kill monitoring for three weeks and also headlight surveys. So we're counting the existing road kill, and the headlight survey is to get an indication of the abundance of animals in the area. Regarding the monitoring program, the Federal Government has not requested that information or does not need that information at this stage of the referral. The information requested relates to specifics about bridge designs and a few other issues. None of the questions that they have asked requires any*

*further work at this stage, so we anticipate being able to respond to that request for further information by no later than 9-10 December.*

Mr Cantillon added:-

*The nature of the information requested, in a sense, is very basic. One of the questions is to clarify the length of the road - is it 131 or 140 km? Can you tell us about the bridges' construction and the materials and specifications? Can you tell us about erosion and sedimentation control measures being employed? So it's very routine and we'll get the information to them very quickly. The clock will start again and we'll get an answer, we expect, before Christmas.*

Mr Lester concluded:-

*It's important to note, with the method of assessment, that they won't necessarily be deciding a yes or no to the project progressing; they're making a decision on whether they need to undertake an assessment or not. So whether this has a potential to have a significant impact on a matter of national environmental significance, such as the Tassie devil. So it's purely a preliminary - do they want to have a closer look at it or not? We have said in our referral information that we think it is appropriate that they undertake an assessment. So they will make that decision as to whether they need to undertake the assessment...*

*What happens with the documentation is that you refer the action, the project, to them and they'll make a determination as to whether they need to have a closer look at it or not, whether it is a controlled action or not under their act. Routinely they might say no, so if you were conservative in your approach then you refer an action to them, just to make sure that, even if you think it's not going to have a major impact, they are comfortable with your approach. With this one, where there is a degree of uncertainty over some of the impacts, we would expect that they would like to undertake an environmental assessment of the project. They will make that decision. A short time after that they will issue guidelines in relation to the key things that they wish to look at and the level of further information that we might respond to. That would be things like the January road kill monitoring.*

### **Tasmanian Devil**

The Committee noted that most of the presence of Tasmanian Devils can be demonstrated to be on the western loop and certainly on the Arthur Road, more so than on the east and cited public concern about the construction of the Hilders Bridge and the consequent potential increase in the likelihood of diseased Tasmanian Devils crossing into the Tarkine area. Mr Lester responded:-

*... We think there are higher densities on the western sections but the devils are spread throughout the project area. In relation to the Arthur River, we have had a look at the aerial photography around where Hilders Bridge will be built and there are in excess of 50 places where, during low water flow, so during the summer months, without having had an on-ground inspection but certainly based on the aerial photography, there is potential for devils to cross, so at the moment there is already significant potential for the devils to cross.*

*The second point is that there is no evidence to suggest that devils travel along roads. They are a forest- and woodland-dwelling animal. They do use runways within forests but there is certainly no evidence that we are aware of that devils travel along roads.*

*The third point: in relation to the devil facial tumour disease, the task force is collating the most recent data as we speak but with the 2008 data they found that the spread of the disease has slowed in its move west. It has not reached the Arthur River yet but it has slowed. There are a couple of reasons why that could be. One that has been put forward is that there is a greater genetic diversity within the western devils, which means that they are nowhere near as susceptible. With all that we are still taking the decision with the Hilders Bridge that, once built, we will monitor that bridge for devils crossing or not. If it is demonstrated that they are using that as a frequent crossing point then there are options for retrofitting the surrounding road environment to prevent that. There is a trial currently being undertaken at the Dunalley Bridge, for example. That has been closed off and prevents devils crossing into the Forestier Peninsula down there. That is to stop them getting down because I think that is also a fairly contained disease-free population.*

*So, in summary, they can probably get across reasonably well. Do they travel on roads at night? We are not 100 per cent sure. We probably think not. If neither of those were the case, then we are going to keep an eye on the bridge. The only period that they would probably use it would be during high water flows. Obviously during winter they cannot use those 50-odd crossing points. Devils can swim too but only short distances and they really need to be motivated. But we are going to monitor the bridge.*

*We are not just missing the issue. A number of factors there would tend to suggest, in addition to the genetic diversity of the west coast, it is a rapidly evolving field. There has been money invested by the State Government into the task force and we are certainly engaged with the task force and will continue to try to have the most available information and data to make our decisions in relation to this. I think one of the key things is that monitoring of the bridge to ensure that if all the other things turn out not to be valid, then we have the option to shut that off to devil traffic.*

## **Contract**

The Committee questioned the witnesses as to the comparative advantages and disadvantages of letting either one contract for the entire project or as three. Mr Cantillon responded:-

*There is no disadvantage to having a single contract. If anything, the benefit from having it is that you will ensure that the goals and aspirations that are sought for the entire route occur, through having one contractor that is fully familiar with all the issues from end of the job to the other.*

*In terms of timing, the procurement mechanism we are looking at is exactly the same as what we have done with Brighton where we are going out there, meeting people, understanding the issues better and responding. While we are responding to DEWHA we are building up our knowledge base, we are building up management plans, we are understanding the mitigations, doing further versions of them, doing any early works that we can.*

*At face value, DEWHA has said to us very clearly right from the very beginning, and we challenged it a couple of times, this is one referral for the entire job. They are the rules of engagement, so we have stuck with that. In the same breath, what we are aspiring to is that through a strong relationship with them, a very close engagement, we will be able to undertake early works in areas where we can. An example of that at the moment is the bridge beams - the bridge beams at Tayatea that you saw the other day. We want to take them out because we want to do some testing on them to see whether we can reuse them in the bridge, which saves us a few more dollars, and make sure the project is built within the \$23 million. We have been negotiating for that purpose. There*

*may be other elements of it. If we can give them confidence that we have good control and a good understanding of the mitigation measures that are required, they may be prepared to release it. Remember this project is being built in stages to enable us to start very quickly on the sections. It is a large job to build in two years; it is 140 kilometres. We can start west of Tayatea Bridge. If we get DEWHA's consent, we will start concurrently in the first 18 months on the Hilders Road section back to Myalla and we'll do the middle bit within the last 12 months. The reason we are doing the middle bit in the last 12 months is to get access to it because if we have a connection either side it makes it easier to build the bit in the middle. It also provides more time just in case DEWHA, from their Federal approvals processes, need more time with that middle section as opposed to the far-eastern and far-western sections. We are trying to be very adaptive in our procurement, in our contracting and we are working on a number of fronts to get out there as soon as we can and not be encumbered.*

The Committee questioned Mr Cantillon first, as to whether there was a discrete costing for each stage and second, what was their relative 'multiplier factor'. Mr Cantillon responded:-

*Not really. We've looked at it in aggregate rather than individually, so we'd have to weave that together. It's not readily available.*

*... For construction purposes there was a meeting to decide the best way to deal with this, given the scale of the job. It is 140 km of infrastructure; it is big so how do you approach it? Well, you've got to do it in stages; that's the inevitability of it. Stages 1 and 3 were seen together; we needed to keep the momentum going on Phantom Valley, so that's why stage 3 went into the mix with stage 1. The infrastructure wasn't as substantive. Also, the approach we've taken gives us a little bit more time to solve some of the issues associated with section 3. We hope that perhaps with DEWHA approval processes we can get earlier release of sites. We can, with our State regulatory bodies, get earlier release of sites. Our approach has been with DEWHA that we will make every endeavour to try to get early release of sites where they don't have an interest.*

Mr Peterson added:-

*Can I just go back to the point you made about the relationship with the benefit multiplier. The Felmingham report actually does deal with that. A costing has been done on the three options. The benefit multiplier of 1.93 for the full project was compared with negative values or almost negative values for the other two options. That was certainly done. I think if you were to look in the detail of the Felmingham report then that would potentially answer the questions you ask.*

*... My understanding of the data from the Moore report comes from numerous sources. It is based on very detailed analysis of the Tasmanian Visitor Survey data, travel data and vehicle data that came from numerous sources. I know that the statisticians who work for EMBA and SEA are highly qualified. They are leading industry consultants in Australasia and certainly a lot of background analysis was undertaken in that context of the breakdown for each of the options. For example, if you were to do the western option, just south of Forest Drive and seal around to Arthur River, what kind of attractors are there, what kind of opportunities are there and what kind of investment would likely occur? Their analysis and research suggested that it would be difficult, relative to the cost of that component, to justify doing major development.*

*What the tourism consultants have got from the branding analysis is that you need to bring all the key elements together to create the icon. The icon really is this large charm bracelet, this touring route, which links all those attractors. It is not just the attractors along this particular section of road that we want to*

*upgrade; it is all the other attractors like Stanley, Smithton, the wind farm, Edge of the World - they are all part of the package. That is what they looked at. They saw that as being very important.*

*One of the other comments I recall was that the return to the community, the benefit, which is calculated to be in the order of \$70 million, comes largely from the number of days that people stay, the increased number of bed nights - the accommodation values. When people stay that extra night it is worth something in the order of \$275 per person per night. If somebody is just travelling through you are only looking at \$30 or \$40 so there are quite substantial differences there. When you have people staying for two or three nights in a region, which is what they anticipate will happen with this series of loops within the bigger loop, the increase in value is significant - many times than the shorter options.*

*The other issue is the backtracking one. They stated very clearly, and it comes out in research in southern Tasmania, that you need to have loops. People do not like to backtrack. They need quality roads, loops and very high-class attractors that give them the experiences they desire, in particular in that nature tourism element.*

### **Burnie City Council**

The Committee noted that \$100,000 had been budgeted for a marketing strategy to be developed by the Burnie City Council and questioned the witnesses as to whether the disbursement of such funds had commenced and if so, whether such a strategy was entirely pre-emptive of the approval processes. Mr Cantillon responded:-

*We have draft contracts currently with the Burnie City Council for them to execute, so they will come back to us and we formally execute them. But, in effect, the agreement has been authorised by government. The contractual arrangements are currently being exchanged.*

*Essentially the contract provides for them to commence that work now and, as I said, we are just exchanging the executed copies of it. It provides them with the ability to undertake that work now.*

*... many months ago it was agreed formally with the council to provide them the \$100 000. The process we went through was to identify the detail of how that money would be spent and the governance arrangements that would apply to the expenditure of that money. In other words, when we say the 'governance arrangements', are there very clear outcomes? We wanted a steering committee - Cradle Coast, Tourism Tasmania, FT - and we wanted a clear consensus on the outcomes, the deliverables and the timings. We had our first meeting and we agreed those particulars. Those particulars then formed the basis of the funding agreement, which is now in the contracts that are being exchanged.*

*... we have viewed it (as part of the preparatory work).*

*...I suppose what we have seen is that it is not just important to Burnie; I think Phantom Valley is important to a wider area than just the Burnie City Council. It extends even to Devonport and other areas. We are spending money on the project now in a development sense by being here and presenting this to you and going through environmental approvals. We see the success of this project is through having the communication and engagement in terms of Phantom Valley. In a sense it is chicken and egg. We have discussed what we think are the infrastructure requirements for it but you have to necessarily have that to keep the momentum with the tourism operators and associations. Here is DIER on one hand developing the infrastructure, subject to certain approvals, and here is the goal to be kicked by developing Phantom Valley. You are leapfrogging from that to that position and what we are trying to do is to say, 'Okay, keep going',*

*so that when we have the road built over the next two years and it is being progressively released in sections, you have tourism operators and developers who have the appetite to develop it because they have a better understanding of what Phantom Valley is going to deliver. If we don't start that work now, if we waited until we had all the approvals in place - it is not something that is subject to an environmental approval, but it is very critical to the debate and the community in terms of what the project is going to achieve.*

### **Freshwater lobster**

The Committee questioned the witnesses as to what impact, if any, the proposed works would have upon the habitat of the freshwater lobster. Mr Lester responded:-

*That is probably a forestry question. We will put mitigation measures in where we have crossings and we will ensure that there is certainly no impact to the species through the construction of those crossing and then subsequent ongoing management.*

*...It's a very important issue but it's a management issue in relation to that species. There has been a lot of work done by DIER elsewhere in the State about what appropriate construction control measures are there and also how best to design stream crossings. There has been a lot of work done on that.*

Mr Peterson added:-

*The giant freshwater lobster is managed in multiple-use forests under the Forest Practices Code and we have specific descriptions in place on advice from the Forest Practices Authority and the Threatened Species Unit with respect to management of the giant freshwater crayfish. So for all of our existing roads we already have mitigation measures in place in terms of sedimentation control into existing streams and the like. I imagine that will happen in the design process with this. In the sections of new construction, I don't believe there are any stream crossings in which there would be suitable habitat for the giant freshwater crayfish. They tend to be very minor water courses. We're looking at the higher elevation areas, those very minor streams. There may be some breeding areas there but my understanding from experts whom I've spoken to in the past suggests that the likelihood of giant freshwater crayfish in those new sections is probably quite low - very remote.*

### **Aboriginal cultural heritage**

Mr Lester made the following submission during the presentation regarding Aboriginal cultural heritage:-

*... From an Aboriginal cultural heritage point of view there have been two areas of interest highlighted. One is on the west coast, the porcelanite Aboriginal stone quarry complex, but that's an existing site. Basically, the road goes through the middle of them. It's at Beckett Creek. Again, because we're sealing the existing road within the footprint there's going to be no impact, but we need to manage that appropriately through exclusion areas and such things.*

*Also, on one of the eastern sections there is an area where there is potential for archaeological sensitivity. What that means is that the conditions there were conducive to occupation in some form but the ground cover didn't allow a detailed inspection. So what is proposed there is a strategy of subsurface investigations to determine whether there is anything subsurface or not. At the moment nothing has been found there but the next stage is that we will develop a subsurface testing methodology, undertake some test bits and that will determine whether there are any Aboriginal relics there. Currently there are no known*

*sites impacted by the road works but that may change pending further investigations on that section too.*

The Committee alluded to the current controversy surrounding the discovery of Aboriginal artefacts at the construction site of the Brighton Bypass and noted that no evidence of the existence of such artefacts was presented to the Committee when it considered that project. In light of that experience the Committee questioned the witnesses as to the likelihood of any claims of this nature arising. Mr Lester responded:-

*Anything is possible. Talking with a specialist, the main concern that he had in relation to Aboriginal issues for this job was ensuring community expectations were met in relation to the existing sites on 25 rather than the uncertainty associated with section 2. However, until the subsurface investigations occur, we cannot say with certainty what we are dealing with there. It may involve some further investigations and a permit to destroy that site or, as you have said, some route realignment. But until we undertake other investigations we cannot say. The subsurface investigations will be occurring early in the New Year and can follow on relatively soon after that. We have accounted for that within the time frames to allow for that eventuality.*

*... We have had an Aboriginal Heritage officer, who is a representative of the community, and also a prehistorian archaeologist, who have viewed those areas. Both those individuals have extensive experience both in linear infrastructure but also in dealing with subsurface investigations.*

### **Federal Government Assessment**

The Committee questioned the witnesses as to what the assessment of the Federal Government would focus upon. Mr Lester responded:-

*The Federal Government's brief for their assessment is only contained to matters of national environmental significance. So on this job it is one orchid species, the Tasmanian devil, the spotted quoll, the crayfish and those matters. That is the extent of their assessment. They have certainly taken an interest in those areas of the road that go through the reserve that was put aside as part of the RFA amendment of the Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement, however, at this stage they have no statutory role in the assessment of rainforests. If, through the national heritage listing that has been put forward, that becomes listed then they will certainly be interested in looking at the specific values in that reserve and how that relates to the road.*

### **Community consultation**

Mr Gerathy provided the Committee with the following overview of the community consultation process that has been undertaken in relation to the project:-

*I have been assisting the team with engaging with the community and with stakeholders. We have been working fairly systematically to talk to people. One of the things that we have been doing is setting up a process whereby those people who are interested in the project we can brief them individually or in groups and we have met large groups of people - and I will go through the list in a minute. But it certainly centres on talking to people about aspects of the project that they are unclear about or that they are interested in. We have not gone about selling the project as such, but we have been presenting the facts to the stakeholders and then letting them make up their own minds. We put together a couple of information sheets to help that process as well. We also asked people if they would like to receive more information and we put together*

*an e-mail system where we updated them on a regular basis as to what was happening and how the process was going.*

*One thing we did talk to people about was access. It comes back to the project being about equity of access to the locations. We certainly found that, as we have seen, access to some of the locations is very difficult - four-wheel drive access. Lake Chisholm is fair, Julius River is good, Sumac is good and Kanunnah Bridge is dangerous. People would like to see that location but it is quite dangerous. That is part of the process. Talking to tourism people, they said they would like to see it upgraded and made safe. Cousta Rocks, we decided through the consultation, was not part of the development program.*

*So far the groups we have talked to, in a broad sense, are the north-west communities. We held a couple of information sessions, as you know. We have spoken to key media groups. We have spoken to a lot of the north-west businesses throughout Burnie, Smithton and Wynyard and so forth, the north-west business groups, local government, wildlife experts, business leaders, tourism operators, the RACT and obviously they had a keen interest in it, Grange Resources, government agencies, the Tourism Industry Council, Cradle Coast Authority, Ross Britton, Tarkine Trails, the honey producers and the Tarkine National Coalition. Talking is a two-way process and we have been encouraging people to give us their views. We have been capturing those and, where possible, taking them into account. So it has encouraged them to give us feedback on the project if they have problems with it or if they are not sure about different sections. As Phil said today, they met with Richard Summers again; he had a number of issues and they are working through them and working collaboratively together to resolve them. So it is very much a transparent process, seeing as many people as possible.*

*So there is the face-to-face process. We set up web site within the DIER web site where people can download any of the information. Obviously the information we are presenting today will be loaded onto the web site after this so people can download it and look at it. There is a 1300 feedback number as well. So we have been encouraging people, if they have issues, to e-mail them in via that web site or on the 1300 number or face-to-face.*

*We have put together some information sheets. It is not a promotional brochure or anything, purely the nuts and bolts of the project, an overview of design and timings and so forth. As things have progressed, of course, these are becoming a little out of date and they might need to be refreshed. One brochure centred on the proposed tourism facilities and has become out of date because we have adopted certain recommendations from consultation. We had information displays, maps, fliers, counter cards and posters. They were at Tall Timbers, Circular Head Council, the Stanley Visitor Centre, Boat Harbour Store, Waratah-Wynyard Council, Wonders of Wynyard, Burnie City Council Chambers, Bryan's office, the Central Coast Council, the Devonport City Council and the Circular Head Chronicle offices. So people have displayed them for us and interested stakeholders have come and grabbed copies and taken them away.*

*We have all found a lot of confusion out there amongst stakeholders about the project. They did not know what it was about. All they had heard was that this big road was going through. When we gave them some information they were able to have a more balanced view about it. As we said, we weren't there to sway them either way; we wanted them to be informed, ask questions and make up their own minds. Generally speaking, once people saw what was already there they were pretty comfortable with it. We have had a very good response and people have been really pleased that we had taken the time to talk to them, gone to see them, spent some time with them, shaken their hand and encouraged their feedback. That has been a very positive outcome of the project.*

The Committee questioned the witnesses as to which interests were identified as opposing the proposed works and what was the nature of their concern. Mr Gerathy responded:-

*The major groups that have concerns are the conservations groups. That is fair enough; that is their job... we are keen to get some feedback and we would like to hear their concerns. We would like to address those concerns. That is part of the process, that we want to capture that information.*

*One of the key groups that had some concerns about the project was the Cradle Coast Authority but as time has gone by we have taken on board a lot of the good information they've given us so we are getting closer to a really good working relationship with them.*

*...they can see merit in some components of (the project); likewise there is some great stuff in their plan that can really assist this project as well. We are taking some great information that they have and they can see merit in the approach we are taking.*

*Their major concern is that they have their strategy that approaches the development of the tourism industry in the Tarkine in a particular way and this project falls outside that strategy. Their strategy doesn't include the link and approaches developing the industry in a slightly different time frame. That is their major concern.*

The Committee questioned the witnesses as to what the view of local tourism operators was in relation to the proposed works. Mr Gerathy responded:-

*To tell you the truth ... the people we have all spoken to, the tourism operators up here (in the north-west region), are okay with it.*

*... I'm saying individual tourism operators. If we take the Circular Head Tourism Association, they are very positive; they are right behind it at an organisational level. When we had our trade booth at the tourism forum that Cradle Coast held at Strahan, the tourism operators who came along and spoke to us about it - and we gave them the information - all said, 'Okay, no worries'. They were very surprised. A number of them said to me, 'But I thought a bulldozer was going through and putting 130 kilometres of new road through', and I said, 'No, here's the map'. We presented them with the facts and they said, 'Now I can understand it' and they were okay with it. It wasn't a particularly scientific sample but once they got the information and understood the project they were okay with it. Like most things, when people don't know about things they're often afraid. Engagement and communication is about giving them information to break that fear down. So there was a level of fear there: 'I don't know anything about this project. Is it going to damage this fantastic asset? I don't know what to think about it.' Once they got some information it was, 'Right, I can understand it more and I've got a more balanced view about it'.*

*(As to Local Government entities)...Circular Head is right behind it. As time goes by, and I can't speak for Kevin here, and certainly from the meetings we've had with him and with the Waratah-Wynyard Council, they sort of warm to the project. I think they are much more positive and confident about it now than they were in the beginning.*

*Burnie is excellent. They are right behind it. The same with Central Coast and Devonport City Council.*

The Committee questioned the witnesses as to whether through the consultation process it became apparent that the proposal was a divisive one in the community. Mr Gerathy responded:-

*Well, the problem is that a project like this is fought out in the media. So the Government says we're going to build this road, the people that aren't happy with it say they don't want to run with it, there are the conservation groups and it's all fought out in the media. It's hard to know what you're actually dealing with.*

*... in terms of the community it's hard for them to get a feel for any project that is contentious. When you present facts to them that's when they can make up their own minds. That's the job that we've been undertaking - letting people make up their own minds based on the facts. What's there at the moment, what DIER are going to do and how they're going to build it, the standards they're going to use and how they're going to protect the environment, once they are presented with all of those facts then generally speaking people are reasonably positive about it.*

### **Tourist origins**

The Committee questioned the witnesses as to where the anticipated tourist patrons of the road would originate. Mr Peterson responded:-

*...we did quite a bit of research on this some time back. The main entry points into Tasmania are certainly Hobart and Launceston. Then progressively as you move west, Devonport and Wynyard are about the same in terms of numbers but they are still relatively small in the context of the total visitation to the State. There is a lot of data within the Tasmanian Visitor Survey that indicate where people are travelling in the context of the regions. You can establish how many are coming from Hobart in particular and which way they are coming. So, there are certainly still a lot of people who are doing the Tasmanian circuit but the shift in recent years has been more towards three- to four-day trips into the State and they're looking for regional destinations. So, in that context, we now believe that Launceston will be a key entry point for particularly the fly-in market; they will pick up hire vehicles there and Burnie is still only an hour-and-a-half from Launceston; people will move along the coast and if they're heading towards the Tarkine then that's probably a key entry point because of the cheaper flights that go into those major centres. Devonport and Wynyard airports or Burnie airport are certainly very important and I know that Burnie City Council sees the development of the Tarkine and Tarkine road as a key impetus for them to market further, particularly Wynyard airport.*

*People coming on the boat arrive quite early in the morning. A lot of them just shuffle along the coast. They tend to split; some head due east but there's quite a number heading west. I think the way that people move on the loops will in a large part be determined by the timing of their arrival at the entry point. If you look at a key decision point being at Myalla turn-off on the Bass Highway; if you arrive relatively early in the morning you might decide to head down to Phantom Valley and then spread out, have a look at the lookout in the afternoon and go back out via Tayatea to Smithton or Stanley and stay the night. If it is later in the afternoon they are more likely to head along the coast and stay in Stanley or Smithton, and then loop back over the next two or three days back to their departure points, whether it be Wynyard, Devonport or Launceston.*

*That is the kind of concept that is in the background about how people are going to move. You still have numbers coming up from the west coast - those who are doing the bigger tour. Hopefully we can get them to stay that extra night or two. There will certainly be a lot of people, particularly the grey nomads who will*

*grow in numbers - they are not huge numbers at the moment - who will take the opportunity to go down the Western Explorer, travelling at a nice pace. It is anticipated that places like Corinna will benefit from this. It is not about trying to concentrate everybody just within the loop area - certainly people will have many more opportunities. People in tourism to whom I have spoken suggest that tourists will go off in different directions - there will be some coming from Cradle Mountain. It is just increasing the opportunities and the pathways that people will use.*

Mr Gerathy added:-

*... at the last meeting we had with Kevin Hyland he was certainly a lot more positive about the road and he said one of the developments that his council were keen on in Burnie City was getting increased numbers of tourists coming into Burnie airport to do short stays and do a trip around the Tarkine Road and then go back out again. They can see that this is a good project to further develop their airport and its infrastructure in the volume passing through there.*

### **Tarkine National Coalition**

Mr Jordan provided the following submission to the Committee:-

*I guess, with our presentation, we've tried to address three questions regarding the project - first, is it necessary; second, is it economically sound; and third, is it environmentally sustainable? So, we've aimed our presentation at trying to answer those three questions.*

*In relation to the first question, is it necessary - we believe that fundamentally the answer to this question is no. We believe the Tarkine has incredible potential for tourism, a potential that is already yielding benefits to the area. The Tarkine already has more than 400 km of high-quality sealed and unsealed roads and more current and former forestry roads in the area that provide access to visitor sites. The network already accesses numerous lookouts, bushwalking tracks and features in the Tarkine and the tourism operators currently working in the area around the Tarkine have based their businesses on these existing networks.*

*The Tarkine National Coalition has recently produced a visitor's guide to the Tarkine region with 24 walks, lookouts and features that are all accessible by the existing road network. I have copies of that here for the committee. It was produced with funds from the Tasmanian Forest Tourism Initiative, which came out of the 2005 reserves. We worked with the Cradle Coast Authority on producing it and it contains a map in there with a number of visitor sites, many of which are actually managed by Forestry Tasmania and a lot of which are actually on the road and accessible now.*

*The Cradle Coast Authority's Tarkine Tourism Development Strategy was the result of more than two years of consultation and input from a wide range of groups representing tourism groups, Forestry Tasmania, Parks and Wildlife Service, Tourism Tasmania, four local government areas, the Aboriginal community and the Tarkine National Coalition as well as extensive market research and consultants' reports on the needs for tourism in the area.*

*The Tarkine Tourism Development Strategy did not support the Tarkine Road. Instead, quite rightly, it advocated a broad strategy of utilising existing road networks with the natural visitor nodes of Corinna in the south, Waratah in the east and Arthur River in the far north-west. The market analysis contained in the strategy predicted the creation of more than 1 100 jobs through the clever use of branding the natural values of the Tarkine, maintaining its integrity at the*

*heart of the tourism offering. The Tarkine National Coalition supports the Tarkine Tourism Development Strategy.*

*In relation to that strategy, I think the work done by the Cradle Coast Authority was quite remarkable in that, in the context of that agreement, we'd just come out of a fairly lengthy debate over many years about reserves in the Tarkine and whether they should or shouldn't happen and to get all those groups with quite divergent views into the room and working over two years to come together with a tourism strategy that we could all broadly agree to was remarkable. I don't believe anybody got everything they wanted but we all came to a position that we were comfortable with and were happy to proceed with. Certainly, from our perspective there are things that we would have liked to see that didn't get up but we felt we were able to support the consensus document as being a way forward. I think Cradle Coast needs to be congratulated on that work and they certainly did come up with a process that was workable and could be delivered without conflict.*

*(This road proposal) came in very late in the piece (in terms of consideration of the strategy). Forestry Tasmania proposed it and they lobbied for it and made presentations to various stakeholders. It was presented to the Tarkine discussion group who made up the consultation with those groups represented there and the final document that was produced did not support the road as it was. It felt that the strategy of using the three visitor nodes and building on the existing network that was there was the far better strategy. One of the criticisms of the current road project was that it actually left two of the three visitor nodes out of the picture - Waratah does not get a look in and Corinna does not get a look in - so those key stakeholders in the Tarkine tourism picture got left out, along with the west coast community that would benefit from those visitor nodes being part of the tourism picture in the Tarkine.*

The Committee questioned Mr Jordan as to whether his group was agreeable to the use of existing roads. Mr Jordan responded:-

*Certainly we are quite comfortable with using existing road. The contentious piece for us is the area between Hilders Bridge at Meunna and where it connects back up with the South Arthur loop at Tayatea Road.*

*... That section is the controversial part. It is not all new road - some of it is taking existing road that generally would not see traffic. It would see some forestry personnel, maybe the odd fisherman, but it is not a high traffic road as it would be under the current plan.*

*That whole section that we find contentious probably would be a 20- or 30-kilometre stretch.*

*... But we certainly have issues with some of the area outside of the reserves as well. We don't believe that the current reserve is adequate for protection of the Tarkine and so we certainly have not limited our comments to this particular reserve. We believe the new section does not service any existing attractions. It is premised on creating an experience at Tarkine Lookout and Tarkine Falls. They are both good attractions. They are currently accessed off a four-day wilderness walk. It's used by a commercial operator, Tarkine Trails. As well, a number of web sites around the place advocate it as a four-day walk. We have track notes at our office and I get four to five inquiries a month requesting those track notes. We don't widely publicise that we have them because we like to make sure that if we're sending someone in there for a four-day walk they are capable of doing it. I think most people would get those track notes off the Internet. In addition, I think Mike mentioned about 70 people that Tarkine Trails took through that area last year. I would estimate that another 100*

*people went self-guided, doing that four-day Blue Peak Walk, as it is commonly known as. It comes in off the area around Hilders Bridge, doubles in around Blue Peak, visits those sites and exits back out at the Farquhars Bridge site.*

The Committee observed that 170 tourists was not a high number of people patronising the area. Mr Jordan responded:-

*It's not, but in terms of Tarkine Trails, people are paying around \$2 000 for that experience so it is a high-value experience. In terms of their business, their indication to us is that they can't continue in that area with a road through the middle of it. You can't charge someone that sort of price for a wilderness experience and have them listen to buses pass by.*

*... We believe that those two attractions could still be attractions in the current way that they are, accessible on a four-day walk, much as various sites along the Overland Track are accessed by tourists who don't need a car to get there. It's important that, within the mix of Tarkine tourism, we actually have a range and diversity of sites, some that you go to in a car and some that are actually fairly special and you do have to travel to get to them. We think it is acceptable to have some spots that require an effort, and the value to the tourism sector is that it captures that end of the market.*

*... The routing of the road means that in a number of parts along that trail you would hear traffic. Given the type of visitor who wants to go out for a four-day wilderness experience, to hear traffic isn't part of what they're expecting.*

*... on this section of road you are talking about high levels of traffic, so you can't sell that walk as a wilderness experience. You would find a drop in the people who wanted to do it as a self-guided walk. Certainly Tarkine Trails' operators believe that it will end their operations in the area and would seriously jeopardise the nature of their business. They're not sure they'll be able to continue and they're trying to negotiate new agreements at the moment.*

Mr Jordan continued his submission:-

*In relation to the upgrade of the existing road network the coalition has remained willing right from the beginning to discuss alternative routing of the road to utilise existing road. Mike came and saw us about two years ago and presented the proposal initially. We indicated at the time that we had an issue with the new sections and the section between Meunna and Tayatea Road, but we were quite happy to look at alternatives. We think the alternatives proposed by Cradle Coast Authority - coming down from Smithton and accessing it via the South Arthur loop and continuing on to the coast - was a viable option. It would be a far cheaper option and it would remove the contentious section but still give a loop-road experience.*

*Backtracking has obviously been put up as an argument, but we do not necessarily agree with it. A lot of sites around Tasmania that get the highest visitor numbers already have backtracking, which debunks that position. In terms of highway traffic, the difference between turning in at Myalla to come in at the current entry point at Meunna or going to Smithton is about 20 minutes on the road. In terms of a six-hour drive, 20 minutes further on one road rather than another is not a big impact. The Government could save substantial funds, remove a lot of the controversy and we could be getting on with something that promotes tourism in the area in a far less contentious way.*

*Another alternative that we proposed was going 10 minutes along rather than 20 minutes and coming in along Dip Falls Road. You would then pass the Dip Falls Reserve - the waterfall there is a feature - and the Big Tree Reserve with*

*the existing Forestry Tasmania infrastructure around the big tree and the interpretation. You follow that road past the Waterwheel Creek tourism venture and the Blue Hills honey people. I am sure they would be just as happy with the road if it went straight past their door as if it went the other way, so we believe that is a viable option. That road network could then connect through, using existing road, to Tayatea Road just north of the Tayatea Bridge and come in over that access point, so there were other viable options. I am sure if we look at the maps we could come up with a range of other options.*

*Those options were not acceptable to Forestry Tasmania. We actually got no dialogue around alternative routing. We were told that they will either build the road as a tourist road or if they cannot get that then they will go ahead and build a logging road - now which would we prefer? That is not the basis to negotiate on. We were quite willing to look at what was a viable tourism offering and how we could make things work and avoid conflict on it. We spent 12 months trying to negotiate with Forestry Tasmania and then further with the Government. It was not until after the budget announcement where the Government had committed to the road in its current form that we actually took up a public campaign in the media. I think our group was very restrained in that first 12 months in making every possible opportunity to try and negotiate, rather than go to a campaign which inevitably ends up with people digging into positions and having the conflict that we currently have.*

The Committee sought Mr Jordan's opinion of the impact of a tourist road being constructed as opposed to a logging road. Mr Jordan responded:-

*About 650 hectares will be reserved. To put that into perspective, within the proposed area that's been nominated for emergency heritage listing and the Tarkine national park proposal that's been on the table since 2004, there is 1 600 hectares within that area to be logged in the current three-year plan. So it's a small part of what's currently going under the chainsaw now and that only includes a three-year plan. It's also small when you consider 650 hectares compared to the fire that started off in the Western Explorer last year which burned out 18 000 hectares. So the risk that you have in putting that road through that area is that it's relatively protected. Without an external starter, you don't tend to get a lot of fire within rainforest. You get an odd lightning strike but the dampness tends to protect it. When you start driving cars through and drying areas out with roading and breaks, you create the potential for fire in the rainforest. Rainforest doesn't respond to fire in the way eucalypt forest does. If you get a rainforest fire the result is usually that it re-grows as eucalypt forest and it takes many years, it could be centuries, before you start to get true rainforest colonies coming back in.*

*Our position is that the area is reasonably protected by the fact that it's so remote and is not accessible at the moment. There are huge areas in the Tarkine that are accessible and suitable for tourism but there are some parts of it where we do need to say that if we want tourism in that area then go on foot and there are other parts that we can access in a car.*

Mr Jordan continued his submission:-

*I will move on now to the second question: is it economically sound? Again the answer to that was no. We spent a bit of time working through the two reports that Forestry Tasmania commissioned - the Moore report and the Felmingham report. What stood out was that both were based on some fairly flawed assumptions. The two reports both worked on assumptions of a visitor number which was predicated on the numbers developed by Moore Consulting relating to the Tarkine Tourism Development Strategy. At the time those numbers were produced, very early in that consultation phase, we didn't have the road on the*

*table, so those numbers didn't relate to a road. So any attempt to argue that those numbers are appropriate to work out an economic value of the road is an exercise in circular logic. It's effectively saying that this many people come and visit, so if we build a road they will drive on it and therefore we create the benefit and the jobs are due to us. It's simply a flawed argument.*

*What the Tarkine Tourism Development Strategy said is that 1 100 jobs are going to be created from the visitors that come to the area, without factoring in a road. To take those numbers again and say that if they drive our road then how many jobs does that create, is circular logic. It's not based on independent work that asks how many extra tourists will come because we've built the road.*

*The other assumption that we were critical of was the assumption of investment expenditure. There seems to be no basis for how that figure was derived. I think Felmingham's report notes that his findings are predicated on those numbers as presented to him by Forestry Tasmania. Moore is probably not as outright in his statements but he hints that his investment numbers weren't investment numbers that came from him; they were investment numbers that were presented as part of the terms of reference. Both reports were framed in terms of assessing a west loop, an east loop or an entire road. This is the point that Mrs Napier made earlier on. We've effectively created a straw man scenario, particularly in terms of the east loop. We look at \$4.5 million of spending on the east loop with no visitor infrastructure and no further private investment, and weigh that against a scenario where we put \$23 million into a road, another \$25 million which is unfunded - it hasn't been allocated but it needs to come from government coffers - and another \$60 million of private investment. Clearly, if you create a \$100 million-plus scenario and then you weigh it against the \$4.5 million scenario then it shouldn't be a surprise that this one wins. If you were to fairly look at it and ask what would you be investing in, the east loop is probably not the biggest job driver of the area ...*

*This is our point; we have created a straw man scenario where we put some investment numbers on the table that don't seem to have a basis and then we compare them against a poor investment opportunity, but we don't actually have any rationale for why people will invest in this one and not in that one. When we look at the west loop option of coming down from Smithton, it seems to discount the fact that you've already got all of the South Arthur Forest Drive attractions which are currently being visited. You would expect that if you upgrade just the west loop then you are going to increase the visitation of those sites and then do some infrastructure work. The comparative analysis of the Moore report and the Felmingham report almost assumes they are not there. So that raises questions about whether those reports can be considered accurate in terms of how we spend government funds if we're not actually going to compare them against real options.*

*In terms of the costings that were put up, initially the argument was that the \$23 million was possible because Forestry Tasmania could build roads 40 per cent cheaper than the State Government. We didn't accept that proposition. If it is true then perhaps we should get them out of the forestry business and get them into road building because the Government would save a fortune in roads statewide.*

*We are starting to see the blow-outs. We have seen today that about \$25.5 million is where the budget probably is at the moment. We had discussions with Phil and Gar a couple of days ago in my office in Burnie and they indicated that the visitor infrastructure at Tarkine Lookout and Tarkine Falls would now only consist of the road to it, the carpark and the first 100 metres of track. So we've gone from being full-blown visitor sites - and the rationale for putting the road through there - to getting a road but somebody*

*else is going to have to build the sites. So why you are building the road there if you're not going to go ahead and build the sites?*

*The other issue, economically, is that no real analysis been done of the risk to the infrastructure in relation to the project. The Arthur River catchment has a fairly notorious record when it comes to taking away bridges. If you look at the Hilders Bridge site, it went about 20 years ago.*

*...So there needs to be a bit of thought put into risk analysis. If we create our Tarkine strategy based on a bridge at Meunna and, two years down the track, we have a flood and the bridge is gone, where does that leave our tourism strategy for the area? You are far better to go with the original Cradle Coast model of having three visitor nodes so that if you have an issue, whether it be a fire or a flood or whatever that damages one, the entire Tarkine industry isn't put on ice because of one of them.*

*Our final question was around whether it was environmentally sustainable. It's probably no surprise that we advocate a position that it's not. The road is likely to have significant effects on a number of threatened species. We commend the work that Andrew North did in terms of the assessment that formed part of the report for the EPBC assessment. We think he's done a fairly thorough job of identifying the impacts on species. We are still fairly critical of DIER's approach to mitigation. It seems to be a lot about putting in some management plans, coming up with some mitigation strategies, but we don't have anything hard and fast on the table. It all relates to doing further survey work and coming up with plans down the track. Particularly in terms of the impact on the Tasmanian devil, this is the last disease-free refuge. It's not an area where we want to try stuff. Whatever we put into place in the Tarkine needs to be proven beyond a doubt. We can't afford to be taking chances in that last refuge. We think that it's completely unsuitable. In the EPBC submission we've referred to that, that it's not appropriate to put in a submission lacking much of the survey work and then asking the government to come to a decision on whether or not it should proceed on the promise that we'll do the rest of that work later on. We need to be assessing exactly what's going to happen, knowing what those impacts are and whether those mitigation answers have been fully developed.*

*Particular issues around the bridges: there's talk in the EPBC referral about engineering the bridges in a way that would restrict access by devils. That's a fairly big task; devils are fairly small and agile creatures and generally speaking if you can get a car over a bridge there's a fair chance the devils will be able to get across as well. Cattle grates and those sorts of issues won't solve it; the devil will jump further than your car tyre can roll on, so it creates a lot of issues.*

*We suggested at our meeting with DIER the other day that they do have the bridge at Kanunnah and at Arthur River township and what would be appropriate for them at this point would be for them to look at what sort of mitigation measures they can put on those bridges as an attempt to trial some of their engineering solutions to see if they work. We believe trialling, not only at those bridges but possibly also other bridges around the State to see if they can engineer a solution rather than just presenting that we believe we can do it and we'll come up with a plan later on, would be a better way to go about it.*

## **Witnesses recalled**

The DIER witnesses were recalled and questioned regarding Mr Jordan's evidence. The witnesses were asked whether the Cradle Coast Authority process delivered a consensus position with regard to the proposed development. Mr Peterson responded:-

*I was a member of the Cradle Coast Tourism Development Forum representing Forestry Tasmania. There were representatives from the local councils, Tourism Tasmania, Forestry Tasmania as land manager, Parks and Wildlife Service and various tourism bodies, and Tarkine National Coalition representing the conservation groups. I do not think there was any direct submission by any one party about what should happen. Cradle Coast engaged consultants to identify a range of options and projects and to undertake a latent demand analysis and cost profile, which was done by Moore Consulting and that group. Throughout the process there was a lot of discussion. Cradle Coast prepared a preliminary master plan which the various parties were invited to provide comment on but there was never a vote. Speaking from my knowledge of Forestry Tasmania's comment on the master plan, we certainly had reservations about some of the proposals and that was made quite clear to the Cradle Coast Authority.*

*We understand that many of the other parties to that forum also made similar submissions to the Cradle Coast Authority so there was never a vote. I do not believe it was a consensus document.*

*Forestry Tasmania, principally myself, gave presentations to the forum. I cannot remember the dates but it was certainly in the order of about a year before they released their final document. There had been preliminary discussions about concepts and ideas. Within Forestry there was an internal process of approval which needed to be finalised before presenting publicly any proposals or concepts, and in large part they were concepts.*

The Committee questioned Mr Peterson as to whether it would be reasonable to suggest that the \$20 million commitment for a full loop road came so late in the process that many may not have been aware of it. Mr Peterson responded:-

*Forestry Tasmania was asked by the Government to engage stakeholders and to present them with the concept. The presentations were made to councils, the Cradle Coast Forum and all the people who were there representing the tourism associations and the like. We also gave a presentation to the Tarkine National Coalition as a conservation group and many politicians on both sides of the spectrum. There were certainly presentations to the Liberal MHR for Braddon and various Labor people including yourselves. There was endorsement in September/October by the MHR for Braddon of the project...*

The Committee questioned the witnesses as to the business situation of Tarkine Trails related in Mr Jordan's evidence. Mr Peterson responded:-

*... What happened was that Forestry Tasmania received a proposal from Tarkine Trails to go to the next step in terms of the development of the rainforest track. They have been licensed since 2005-06. They had been operating beforehand and that licence was to utilise a route. There was to be no development along the track other than some minor clearing of campsites and some obstructions along the route. It was only ever to be a ribbon-taped track between the Forestry roads which they were using. Their trail is 26 kilometres long. The bulk of it, some 17 or 18 kilometres, utilises old forestry roads and there is only in the order of 8 kilometres where they walk through the rainforest section. It is basically walking from two ends of a road and doing a link across with the forest. It is taped but the licence clearly states there is to be no infrastructure development.*

*What they asked us a year or two back was to consider a proposal to construct standing camps. They were looking to invest a considerable sum of money with*

*some potential partners and Forestry Tasmania advised them that that would involve quite an assessment process - an environmental assessment, presenting business plans and the like. As a requirement of that process in terms of our State forest activity assessment process, a process that any operator has to go through if they want to do any commercial development or put any structure in State forest, there is a very clear process that is based on the Parks and Wildlife Service reserve activity assessment process. We have adopted a similar thing. Forestry Tasmania advised them that we would have to consult with other interests in that area. That includes MRT, because their current track actually passes through exploration licences and the retention licences, which encompass the magnesite ore bodies. MRT came back and said that there was a likelihood that the retention licences would be converted to a mining lease and that a walking trail through the mining lease was incompatible. So for that reason the company has been advised that in the near future it's likely that they won't be able to utilise the existing route. Forestry Tasmania has worked quite closely with Tarkine Trails over the last three or four months in identifying an alternative route to the west of the pipeline, which MRT have agreed is outside the likely zone of mineralisation. So we're looking at a concept for an alternative rainforest track west of the pipeline, with a starting point somewhere near where the short spur goes down to the Tarkine Lookout and the Tarkine Falls. When we were at the lookout yesterday and we looked back down towards the Pipeline Road, just to the west of that there is what has been identified as a possible take-off point for this new track. It will be west of the pipeline so there will be no need for the public to have any interaction with Pipeline Road in the future. That's one of the requirements that Grange Resources actually asked for as well.*

*It will be fully within the State forest reserve. I've spoken with Parks and Wildlife Service about one little bit of the regional reserve that I believe the track should go to. One of the features of the new track is to have the end point or the turnaround point as being Mount Bertha, which is quite a significant feature in the landscape and you get magnificent views from the top of it. So you would spend a day or two walking in the rainforest, eventually come out onto a buttongrass mountain, just a short walk to the summit, and then you would walk back through rainforest on almost a parallel route but several kilometres apart, taking in other vegetation types. In essence a closed loop has been proposed at this time. That is probably an area that is compatible. Through negotiation with Grange we hope to arrange some access for provisioning and servicing of the track in the future, though very much controlled access. Then all the public use of the track will be entirely within the reserve and managed by Forestry Tasmania.*

The Committee questioned Mr Peterson as to such proposal would deliver a comparable experience to that which they now get. Mr Peterson responded:-

*That's what we're expecting, yes, certainly.*

*... The new track might be an extra one or two kilometres - so 28.*

*... It's three or four days. It depends on how fast you walk. A lot of the walk is in myrtle rainforest, open callidendrous forest. There is quite a range of different vegetation types.*

*... The total number of clients the year before last I recall as being something in the order of 260 clients. The rainforest track is only one of four or five tracks or packages that they market. From the calculations we did based on their client data, which they need to provide to us, the rainforest track is about 24 per cent or something of their total revenue stream.*

The Committee questioned the witnesses as to what measures, if any, were proposed to control the impact of phytosphora in the environs. Mr Lester responded:-

*Firstly, comparison with the damage caused by the construction of the Western Explorer is probably not useful because that was built in 1995 and the construction techniques and understanding of how to construct have changed quite dramatically. DIER has demonstrably managed the phytosphora risk elsewhere in the State on numerous occasions. I mentioned the examples earlier on of Sisters Hills and the Dip Range Regional Reserve. There is a well-established protocol for dealing with phytosphora - wash-down et cetera. There will be a detailed management plan prepared to deal with that and ensure it is covered through the construction phase.*

Mr Peterson concluded:-

*Phytosphora already exists along most of the length of the Pipeline Road. So it has already been introduced into the area some considerable time ago.*

## **DOCUMENTS TAKEN INTO EVIDENCE**

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

- Tarkine Road – Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources, November 2009;
- Presentation to the Joint Standing Committee on Public Works – Scott Jordan, Tourism Project Officer, Tarkine National Coalition Inc, 25 November 2009;
- “Tarkine Tasmania – A visitors guide to walks and experiences”; and
- Copy of undated correspondence from Scott Jordan, Tourism Project Officer, Tarkine National Coalition Inc to the Referral Business Entry point, EIA Policy Section (EPBC Act), Approvals and Wildlife Division, Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts entitled ‘Public Comment submission re EPBC referral 2009/5169 “Tarkine Road Project”’.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

This reference sought the approval of the Committee for the development of a sealed 131 km road connecting Myalla Road with the Arthur River township. The proponents of the proposed works argued that such development will improve tourism access to the Tarkine area and will consequently further connect a number of tourism sites via a series of access roads, which add a further 8.9 km in road length.

The objective of the project is to develop the tourist potential of the North West region by creating a self-drive experience for visitors which, it is argued, will facilitate the subsequent development of commercial tourist ventures and on that basis, over 10% of the \$23M budget has been set aside for the construction of tourism infrastructure. The proponents argued that the project is unique in that most of the required infrastructure is already in place in the form of existing roads and tracks. The proponents further argued that studies commissioned by the Department of Economic

Development have indicated that the project is likely to yield significant economic benefits for the region.

The submission of the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources detailed the communication challenge of addressing the public perception that the ‘Tarkine’ now elicits as a wilderness area. The Committee itself travelled over 300 kilometres on extant roads within the subject area over two days during the site inspection. The route of the proposed Tarkine Road skirts the northern boundaries of the Tarkine Forest Reserves. The majority of the proposed road will pass through registered Multiple Use Forest which has a 40 year history of management for wood production, recreation and conservation.

The Committee was surprised that given the prominence given to the proposed works in the media, particularly from the position of opposition to the works, only one member of the public sought to appear before the Committee at its hearings.

The Committee notes that notwithstanding the decision of this Committee, the transfer of land ownership for some of the subject road will need the approval of both Houses to enable the works to proceed.

The written submission of the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources is a comprehensive document which the Committee has taken the unusual step of annexing to the report *in toto* to enable full disclosure of the proponent’s proposed management of the project. Such submission details the existing situation/environment; project justification; other statutory approvals processes being undertaken; community consultation process; and construction program. The only other submission received by the Committee as detailed in the body of this report was from Mr Scott Jordan, Tourism Project Officer, Tarkine National Coalition Inc.

The Committee is of the view that the area now generally known as the Tarkine has exceptional potential to draw visitors. The principal question for the Committee was whether the proposed Tarkine Road was a desirable medium to facilitate increased visitor numbers. The Committee finds that on the balance of the evidence received, the Tarkine Road will enable access to many thousands of tourists, including the elderly and disabled, who have hitherto been denied the opportunity to visit this beautiful area by lack of infrastructural support.

The Committee finds that on the balance of the evidence received, the Tarkine Road will invigorate the local economy of the North West Coast. The Committee notes the result of the Social Cost Benefit Analysis of the Tarkine Road undertaken by Bruce Felmingham and Alex Wadsley which indicated that the most likely benefit to investment ratio was 1:93. The Committee concurs with the evidence that the Tarkine Road will facilitate future development in the North West region by:

- Opening up the area to organised tours;
- Providing access to new eco-adventure sites;
- Providing access to previously inaccessible areas with high tourist value;
- Creating a loop road or series of loop roads to encourage visitors to spend more time in the North West;
- Promoting existing attractions;

- Allowing visitors with hire cars to access areas previously off limits due to insurance restrictions or perceived issues on unsealed roads; and
- Developing and improving tourist facilities within the State Forest.

Potentially significant attractors, such as the Tarkine Lookout and Phantom Valley will become accessible as part of the project and will create ‘iconic’ Tarkine experiences.

The Committee is satisfied that on the balance of the evidence received, the management regime proposed for the existing natural environment, particularly in respect of: road kill; flora and fauna; and the Tasmanian Devil Facial Tumour Disease are consistent with contemporary standards.

The Committee is of the view that once complete, the Tarkine Road will provide the following benefits:

- consistent maintenance program over the entire length of the road, safeguarding the environmental assets of the area and enhancing the capacity for cross-government stewardship;
- increased safe tourist and recreational access to the Tarkine Region; and
- impetus for the development of the tourism industry in the region by leveraging the Tarkine experience.

Accordingly, the Committee recommends the project, in accordance with the documentation submitted.

**Parliament House  
Hobart  
21 December 2009**

**Hon. A. P. Harriss M.L.C.  
Chairman**

### **Division**

The following Division was recorded on the Question that the Chairman’s Draft Report be the Report of the Committee:-

**AYES**

*Mr Best  
Mr Green  
Mr Harriss*

**NOES**

*Mrs Napier*

## **ANNEXURE 'A'**

## **ANNEXURE 'B'**