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Executive Commissioner
Resource Planning and Development Commission
HOBART, TAS 7001.

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Bell Bay Pulp Mill re Road Safety and Transport Issues

Roberts Coaches operates a passenger bus service in the Huon Valley. We transport children to their schools within the Valley and in Hobart each school day and thus have a major responsibility of the safe carriage of the region's youth over hundreds of thousands of kilometers each year.

Road safety depends upon the skills and experiences of our drivers, the quality of our roads, driving conditions and other road users. A major road use in the Huon Valley is transporting logs to the major Hobart sawmills or beyond to the wood chip export mill at Triabunna.

As with the rest of the road system these are not the only heavy vehicles on the road, but due their open loads and exposed wheels and trailer the most visible part of forest industry. As the Commission will be aware from having its offices in Macquarie Street, Hobart, the trucks from the southern forest concentrate on the Huon Highway, journey up the southern outlet, through Hobart and then north to the mills.

As a school bus company we do not have a problem with log trucks. We find that the majority of drivers are well trained and courteous to other road users. Most trucks prominently display a driver's complaints hot line for the public to use. We find that the log truck drivers are vigilant near our busses on the look out for departing passengers and willing to let our busses into the traffic flow.

On occasion we have been able to talk to the drivers, or processing company to resolve local issues or to avoid future situations. The timber company is keen to confirm the bus routes and the times of the bus runs to ensure clashes are minimized.

From reading the Integrated Impact Statement, the road transport task along the company's school bus routes are unlikely to change perhaps decrease in the long term based upon the preferred option outlined in Volume 15

Appendix 43. Even on the East Tamar Highway at the Mill's access point the traffic flow will be within acceptable limits and will not have significant impact. This conclusion by the expert consultants is based upon today's vehicle technology and current road infrastructure. Based upon the improvements to roads, trailers and trucks in the last fifty years, it can be anticipated that road safety will continue to improve. (Compare the Midlands highway in 1956 to 2006)

The transport appendix is a good snapshot of today's transport task, and provides a lot of detail for future investment in the transport system. Such a detailed analysis of the tasking may also lead to the rail operator committing to the transport of this bulk freight, further reducing heavy vehicle traffic on the road system.

With the constancy of work generated by 60% of the pulp wood being processed domestically there is more certainty that vehicles will be thoroughly and safely maintained. As a bus operator responsible for the safety of passengers, it is fully acknowledged that trained, qualified and experienced drivers of heavy vehicles are professional "safety" workers.

The pulp mill will be value adding a resource to create jobs here in Tasmania, the taxes generated by the mill will in turn fund road improvements to benefit all road users. The income to transport contractors generated by the mill will ensure fleets are regularly maintained and upgraded.

The mill will add certainty to Tasmanian road users and operators and the IIS chapter on transport can be used as a basis for future discussion by industry stakeholders on the future direction of the State's freight transport service.

Sincerely yours,

Harry Roberts
Roberts Coachers