



Arthur Highway at Eaglehawk Neck

RACT Submission to Department of State Growth

January 2020

The Royal Automobile Club of Tasmania

RACT enjoys a trusted position and extensive market penetration in the community. More than 200,000 Tasmanians are RACT members.

Formed in 1923, RACT is an apolitical and independent transport, infrastructure, road safety, tourism and mobility advocate.

It is committed to supporting and furthering the interests of Tasmanians and does this through a comprehensive program of consultation, education, awareness and public advocacy.

RACT is represented in a number of stakeholder reference organisations in Tasmania and undertakes liaison with government and other groups. It also has three regional advocacy committees which are made up of local volunteers and other relevant stakeholders.

RACT's advocacy activity is defined by a series of public policy documents developed and endorsed by RACT's Advocacy Committee and Board.

These policies have been informed by history, experience, statistical analysis, consultation, industry knowledge and, most importantly, our members.

Nationally, RACT is a constituent member of the Australian Automobile Association (AAA) which represents some 8 million Australian motorists.

Internationally, RACT has joined with other Australian motoring organisations as a member of the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) to work on road safety and related issues at a global level.

Arthur Highway Upgrades at Eaglehawk Neck

RACT's Mobility Strategy

The RACT Mobility Strategy contains three key pillars, which include road safety, future mobility and sustainability, with an underlying theme of representing Tasmanian road users. Within each key pillar sits RACT's vision statements. The statements most applicable to the Arthur Highway at Eaglehawk Neck project are as follows:

Road safety vision

- Improve Tasmanian roads so that they are rated no less than three stars under the AusRAP scheme by 2030.

Future mobility vision

- Provide for safe, separated infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians.

Sustainability vision

- To have active transport options that encourage Tasmanians to undertake increased physical activity.

Background

- The Department of State Growth is widening the Arthur Highway between Old Jetty Road and Blowhole Road (“the Neck”), improving the road surface, and providing improved turning facilities in and out of Blowhole Road.
- The department will also make provisions for a pathway between the Dog Line Memorial and Blowhole Road. This is a community-led project being completed in stages from the Tessellated Pavement car park to the whale watchers car park.
- The department has provided two options for the upgrades:
 1. Option 1 will include provision for a shared path, a right turn lane into Blowhole Road and widened shoulders to 1m, which will prevent vehicles parking on the side of the highway.
 - This option also has an auxiliary right turn treatment for north-bound traffic to drive around vehicles waiting to turn into the Eaglehawk Neck Community Hall.
 2. Option 2 will include provision for a walking trail, a right turn lane into Blowhole Road and widened shoulders at 0.5m, which will prevent vehicles parking on the side of the highway.
 - This option also has an auxiliary right turn treatment for north-bound traffic to drive around vehicles waiting to turn into the Eaglehawk Neck Community Hall.
 3. Option 1 has a longer right hand turn lane, while Option 2 has a wider turn treatment.
- Construction work on the project will start in late 2020.
- RACT has been a long-time advocate for improvements to the Arthur Highway at Eaglehawk Neck, reporting concerns and calling for action since 2007.
 - These concerns have related to the condition of the road surface, the need for maintenance funding and priority upgrade status and the unsatisfactory exit from the lookout area overlooking Pirates Bay to the Arthur Highway.
 - While the Arthur Highway was improved on the downhill section to Eaglehawk Neck, the section of road at “the Neck” is considered too narrow and substandard. There is a section of approximately 250 metres that narrows to 5 metres without sufficient shoulders.
 - This road has been listed on all three of RACT’s Tasmanian Road Futures funding priorities document (2017, 2018 and 2019).
- In April 2016, RACT wrote to then Infrastructure Minister Rene Hidding and State Roads General Manager Shane Gregory calling on the Tasmanian Government to prioritise this section of road. RACT said:
 - Due to the increase in tourist numbers and industry on the Tasman Peninsula, the narrowing of the highway raises some significant road safety issues.
 - There are currently no provisions for motorists to safely navigate parked and entering traffic in this section of road at “the Neck”. Furthermore, with the number of tourists estimated to grow, this problem will only worsen.
- Mr Gregory responded in June 2016, stating that the Department of State Growth had invested in improved safety measures at “the Neck” through no standing signs, a turning treatment at Pirates Bay Drive (north-bound) and larger 70km/h signage on the northern approach.
 - Mr Gregory also said that the department was also undertaking a review of the location to identify other solutions to improve safety. Traffic counters were also deployed.
- RACT responded in August 2016, stating that the no standing signs were being ignored, rendering them redundant. However, the club’s main concern related to the width of the road and its narrow shoulders, compounded by the presence of stationary vehicles.

- This created dangers for vehicles travelling on the road, the stationary vehicles themselves and vehicles entering the road.
- RACT called for the road to be widened and for shoulders to be constructed along the highway at “the Neck” to provide a safer environment for all vehicles.
- In October 2016, the department told RACT that it would make some short and long-term recommendations for “the Neck”, relating to the sealing of shoulders and relocation of the road entering the hall precinct.
- In 2017, RACT was told that the department would be releasing a report on the road later that year, with shoulder sealing listed in a 10-year infrastructure plan but not funded.
- In 2018, RACT was told that \$1 million had been pledged by the Liberal and Labor parties to widen the highway and commence construction of a pedestrian path.

Evidence

- There have been five reported crashes along the Arthur Highway between Old Jetty Road and just beyond Blowhole Road between 2009 and 2019.
 - One of these required first aid, while four caused property damage.

Position

RACT supports the department’s decision to widen this section of the Arthur Highway and its shoulders as this has been a long-standing road safety priority for the organisation.

RACT supports Road Widening – Option 1 for the following reasons:

- Option 1 has a greater shoulder size of 1m, compared to 0.5m in Option 2. This shoulder width will be safer for motorists and also prevent vehicles parking on the side of the highway.
- Option 1 includes the provision of a shared path along the Arthur Highway to Blowhole Road. RACT urges the department to ensure this path includes physical separation of cyclists and pedestrians from vehicles.
- Option 1 also has a slightly longer right-hand turning lane into Blowhole Road.
- Option 1 does have a slightly narrower auxiliary right turn treatment than Option 2, but not substantially. RACT urges the department to ensure this area is signed as a no parking area.