



Huon Highway – Sandfly Road Intersection Upgrades

RACT Submission to Department of State Growth

August 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.

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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 this project is:

Road safety vision

- Increasingly improve Tasmanian roads so that they are safer. Tasmanian roads under the AusRAP scheme will be rated no less than three stars by 2030.

Background

The Tasmanian Government has committed \$7 million towards safety improvements for the Huon Highway – Sandfly Road Intersection. This is up from the original \$2 million commitment as part of design revision.

According to the Department of State Growth, the revised design will improve road safety, and provide safer bus and freight transport movements at the intersection.

The revised design has been reconfigured in the following ways:

- To address the issues of confusion in the centre of the intersection and obscured driver vision.
- Wider medians, providing room for buses and trucks to wait safely, and traffic islands.
- One of the uphill lanes through the intersection has been removed by relocating the overtaking lane to the west of the intersection.
- The deceleration/exit lane for Huonville-bound vehicles turning left into Sandfly Road south has been relocated to improve vision for those entering the Huon Highway from Sandfly south
- A new deceleration/exit lane has been implemented for Hobart-bound vehicles turning into Sandfly Road north. This will reduce the risk of turning vehicles being struck from behind.
- Improved pedestrian, cyclist and car parking facilities, better access to the bus stops, and improved lighting through the intersection.

In terms of the potential for a grade separation solution at this intersection, similar to Summerleas Road, the Department claims this is not viable at the Sandfly intersection. This is due to topography, costs, and impact to local residents and businesses.

Evidence

Over the past 10 years there have been 33 reported crashes at the intersection. The main type of crash involves vehicles turning right out of Sandfly Road towards Kingston (Department of State Growth, 2019).

Of these crashes, one resulted in serious injury, eight caused minor injuries, seven required first aid and 17 caused property damage.

Position

RACT has indicated in previous rounds of consultation that it is very supportive of the Tasmanian Government's investment in the Huon Highway – Sandfly Road Intersection upgrades.

However, RACT does not believe safety risk can be completely eliminated at this location without a grade separated solution. While RACT is conscious of budget constraints in relation to such a project, it believes grade separation is the safest and optimal solution.

In regards to the proposed designs, RACT has some concerns. These are outlined below:

1. The new design may cause a dangerous and confusing manoeuvre for motorists entering and exiting the median from Sandfly Road north and south, via the 100km/h Huon Highway.
 - In particular, the design does not appear to reduce the risk of side impact crashes. Vehicles crossing the highway from either side of Sandfly Road to enter or exit the median may still be susceptible to these types of crashes.

2. RACT believes the new cycling refuges on Sandfly Road south and north, which connect to the median cycle lane, are confusing for cyclists as they must first cross Sandfly Road then cross the highway. They are also too small in size.
 - RACT is also concerned that cyclists on Sandfly Road, approaching the intersection, will need to cross a lane of traffic to enter and exit the median refuges on Sandfly Road.
3. RACT would like to be provided with examples and the demonstrated benefits of similar intersections in use elsewhere.

In a submission to the first designs for this intersection, RACT urged the Department to incorporate a number of design elements, some of which were not considered. As such RACT urges the Department to incorporate the following:

1. Retain the two-lane configuration of the south-bound section of highway through the intersection. RACT is concerned that reducing this section of highway to one lane could cause conflict between slow and fast vehicles. The road should be widened to accommodate two south-bound lanes.
2. Left turn slip lanes should be installed at both Sandfly Road south and north for vehicles entering the highway but not using the median.
4. Lengthening the exit lanes for vehicles entering Sandfly Road, on both the north and south-bound approaches.
5. More advanced options for traffic to be notified of a dangerous intersection. This could include side-road activated lights that warn drivers on the Huon Highway of entering traffic, as well as variable speed limits.
6. Installing stop signs and/or solid white lines for traffic entering the Huon Highway from Sandfly Road.

Once these upgrades are completed, RACT will be monitoring the intersection and public response to gauge the appropriateness of a 100km/h speed limit. RACT policy states that speed limit reductions of 10km/h are warranted if road improvements fail to enhance safety outcomes.

RACT would also like to re-emphasise the need for investment in this intersection and is open to working with the Government to ensure an outcome accepted by the community is reached.