The business case for the NEL Project outlines the benefits of the Project and some of these benefits, such as improvements in travel times for road users would result in positive social impacts.

While the benefits as assessed as being substantial

The Project would also result in negative social impacts, resulting from:

- Displacement of businesses.
- Displacement of formal sporting activities.
- Alterations to neighbourhood amenity during construction and operation.

The negative social impacts of the project are the focus of my evidence.

Social impacts comprise the experience of changes brought about by a project

Social impacts are distinct from changes, as individuals and groups experience change differently.

The significance of a negative social impact is a function of the magnitude of disruption to valued community assets or activities and the adaptive capacity of those who are affected.

In my evidence I focus on identifying the changes brought about by the project, which have the potential to result in significant negative social impacts. The impacts which may arise as a result of these changes in my view should be the focus of the Inquiry when making its assessment of the project’s net benefits and also the focus of mitigation.

The ratings should not be taken to imply that the experience of all affected individuals and groups would be equivalent, and I accept that, ratings aside, it is possible that changes brought about by the project may have particularly negative consequences for certain individuals.
The Project displaces a significant number of businesses. Impacts will reflect, in large part, the ability of the affected business to relocate and retain staff.

However, a number of factors point to potential difficulties for business and employees, including:

- Limited relocation opportunities in surrounding areas
- Some businesses have a local customer base
- Affected businesses have a relatively stable and mature workforce, drawn from the local area
- For current employees the implications of the Project may be particularly serious, as their livelihood is at stake and they may not be eligible for any financial compensation. Given the profile of the existing workers (includes a high proportion of older/blue collar workers) at least some may experience difficulties transitioning into alternative employment and/or face acute financial challenges.

Customers of affected businesses would be required to access services elsewhere, potentially resulting in reduced convenience.

- In this context, I note that including BAAG and the Bulleen Swim Centre are thought of more as community faculties than businesses, and their displacement would be very disappointing for many people in the community.

At the time I wrote my evidence, I assigned a ‘High’ rating to impacts associated with displacement of businesses. This reflects the potentially serious outcomes for affected individuals, the significant number of people affected, and also the uncertainty regarding the capacity of affected businesses to successfully re-locate. Since then sites for relocation identified, and EPRs altered to provide support to business and employees.
SLIDE FIVE

• Implementation of the reference project would require acquisition of 36 residential dwellings.

  Given the scale of the project and its location in existing urban areas, the number of dwellings that would be acquired is relatively small. Notwithstanding,

• Forced relocation may displace households from the local area and interrupt well-established and valued lifestyles, and

• The relocation process will be a source of stress and anxiety for many of those affected.

• EPR SC1 requires that a case management approach be used and that consideration be given to the circumstances of affected owners-occupiers, as the acquisition process unfolds, which is appropriate.
SLIDE SIX

• The Project would displace a substantial number of sporting and recreation organisations/activities and this would have implications for thousands of members and associates as well as casual sporting participants.

• Ideally, the EPR(s) which seek to minimise associated impacts would ensure that displaced formal recreational activities are provided with suitable replacement facilities at a location and in a timeframe, which does not unreasonably compromise the continuity of the affected activity.

• If this approach was taken impacts which arise due to displacement of recreational activities would be limited to those associated with navigating the relocation process.

• A significant amount of work has already been undertaken to identify relocation options for affected clubs and groups and in most cases, notwithstanding a level of disagreement between the parties regarding the most desirable relocation site, a viable relocation option has been identified.

• There is however, a notable exception
This figure shows what are referred to as Option 3 and Option 4 for the Bulleen park area (option 3 being on the left and option 4 on the right).

The Options are the same in terms of how the sporting grounds to the north of the Precinct are rearranged.

However the options differ in terms of how the implications of the Project for the Freeway golf course are addressed, and there are flow on implications for the future use of the archery field and the siting of the relocated Boroondara Tennis centre.

Specifcally, Option 3 involves extending the Freeway golf course onto land currently occupied by the archery field, to allow for the delivery of an 18 hole 69 par facility. This approach would displace the current users of the Archery field, the Yarra Bowmen and the potential for the Yarra bowmen to share the area immediately to the east with the aero modellers is currently being investigated to deal with this issue.

However, the owner of the archery field land, the City of Manningham, does not support the proposal. That is, while Option 3 has the potential to enable all existing user groups to be provided with suitable replacement facilities, at this stage NELP cannot guarantee that Option 3 would be implemented.

If the golf course cannot be extended as set out in option 3, then option 4 represents an alternative. In this scenario, the golf course facility would be re-designed as a 9 to 12 hole facility, leaving the Yarra Bowmen in place. In addition the Boroondara tennis facility would be re-located on a site to the west of the current site, rather than to the north.

If option 4 was implemented, the Freeway Golf course may be less attractive to more advanced casual golfers and the operating capacity of the course would be reduced. However, the course would still provide opportunities for the local community to play golf in the local area, and may appeal particularly to beginner golfers.

The Camberwell Golf Club (330 members) and Harp Golf Club (62 members) currently use the Freeway Golf Course as their home course. A shortened course would allow members to play casually, for the clubs to field teams in interclub competitions, and for the clubs to run social competition days. However, the attractiveness of the course may be diminished in the eyes of some members, and the course’s operating capacity would be reduced which may influence how competitions are programmed.

Given these issues, the revised wording of SC4 stops short of providing an outright guarantee that all existing formal recreation activities will continue in their current form.

Given this, and the fact that not all aspects of the relocation plan are finalised, it would be appropriate for the final relocation plan developed by NELP to be endorsed by the Minster for Planning, to ensure issues relating to the golf course are resolved appropriately and that any disagreement between parties in relation to other sites can be settled.
The Project would result in construction activity and road infrastructure being located on land occupied by community facilities, or in close proximity to community facilities, including recreation facilities.

Ideally, the EPR(s) which seek to minimise impacts for facility users would:

- Apply to all facilities where changes resulting from the Project have the potential to result in material impacts for operators and/or users.

- Ensure continued operation of affected facilities, suitable access and the reasonable protection of amenity.

I note that SC1, SC2 and SC4 have been amended since I prepared my evidence. These amendments go some way to meeting these objectives. I note however that the revised version of SC4 (SC2 NEW) only applies to directly impacted facilities. This wording could be interpreted to mean facilities which are at least partially within the project area.

I am aware of cases of facilities, including recreational facilities, which are not within the Project Area, but yet where consultation to facilitate development of measures to avoid or reduce impacts may be a reasonable approach.

It is possible that there could be disagreement between parties regarding what constitutes a reasonable protection of amenity, or the nature and timing of the construction activities may be change as the project progresses necessitating a reconsideration of mitigation strategies. It would therefore be beneficial if there was a clear process and line of communication to allow such issues to be resolved. In this context the proposal to provide for the appointment of a dedicated liaison officer is worthwhile.
SLIDE NINE

• The amenity of a neighbourhood is a function of all the features, benefits and advantages inherent in the environment in question.

• Construction activity will be perceptible to large numbers of households, across a wide area, affecting many households and neighbourhoods

• Of greatest significance....

• Amenity would be substantially reduced for an extended period near the northern TBM launch site. Amenity would be reduced as a result of a number of different construction activities, including:

  occupation of open space areas including borlase reserve; acquisition of property resulting in changed access for some residents (Debra court); Tunnel launch site prep including construction of acoustic sheds, spoil removal, and earth works associated with trenching including use of rock breakers.

  At times during the construction period residents may not feel comfortable using outdoor areas and/or feel the need to close doors and windows. It is also possible that construction activities may be audible indoors in some locations.

  The sensitivity of affected residents would vary depending on where they live and their lifestyle. However, the length of time over which amenity would be reduced will challenge even the most resilient of neighbours.

• In other areas changes to amenity also have potential to result in negative social impacts, although the changes would be less intense and/or relatively short lived, for example:

  • Significant construction noise would be associated with some construction activities such as bridge demolition, but would last for shorter periods

  • Open space supporting passive recreation would be occupied during construction and/or construction activity may diminish the amenity of open space areas, over several years.

The Project would occupy a substantial amount of open space during construction and this has potential implications for neighbourhood liveability and the health and wellbeing of residents. Notwithstanding, with a small number of exceptions, a proportion of each affected open space would remain available to support passive recreation and/or there would be other open spaces areas located within 400 metres which could support passive recreation (although these are not always of comparable scale and/or character to the spaces affected by the Project).

In my evidence I indicated that I think SC1 should specifically reference public open space, and include parameters to guide efforts to reduce disruption when occupation and/or acquisition of public open space occurs. I note that SC1 has since been revised and now explicitly refers to public open space and seeks to limit the extent of and/or duration of occupation, and to have land returned to its former use in a timely manner.
In the operational phase, the Project would result in localised reductions in the amenity of residences and neighbourhoods, such as

- Dwellings subject to PNL exceedances.
- Changes to the location and height of noise walls, removal of plantings
- Loss of open space areas

While the dwellings and neighbourhoods in question would remain habitable, I acknowledge that affected residents could potentially perceive a significant reduction in amenity.

In relation to open space, the majority of the land that would be occupied during construction would be returned to public access, and during operation no neighbourhood areas would be subject to significant reductions in access to the open space to support passive recreation. Notwithstanding, residents may consider that the amenity and character of discrete sections of the Koonung Reserve has been negatively impacted due to loss of land.