EES Submission North East Link Project

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Accessibility & the Koonung Creek Trail

The Koonung Creek Trail currently allows for access to Belle Vue Primary School for students without the risk of road crossings.

A significant number of children access the school through the Koonung Creek Trail.

My eldest son is Vision Impaired and this has been assessed by Vision Australia as the only safe route for him to independently travel to school.

The construction areas marked in the EES in Figure 8-33 give rise to concern that the ability to travel through to the school without additional road crossings will be removed.

The school will lose access to an open space used for events such as the cross-country.
Accessibility & The Koonung Creek Trail

Image Source: Google Maps / EES Chapter 8 Project Description
Potential impacts

Loss of independent travel opportunities for my son and other students

Loss of the social benefits to be gained from children travelling together in groups

Loss of amenity of the parklands for the children to enjoy as they travel to and from school

For those unable to make other arrangements, increased risk of traffic accidents for students travelling to and from school

Increased risk of accidents resulting from construction impacts (eg temporary pathways)

I have enquired at NELA community sessions and those present have been unable to confirm any details beyond the very limited information included in the EES

These mobility concerns also apply to other users of this parkland including parents with prams and young children, elderly residents and others with physical disabilities
Impacts to Dog Walking Accessibility - Manningham

Construction impacts to Bulleen Park, Banksia Park, Koonung Creek Linear Park.

All are either off lead reserves or have a dedicated off lead space within the reserve (Banksia Park).

Other off-lead spaces in this area are much smaller, lack fences and have other issues such as co-location of playground, sports and skate facilities.

Where access to existing off lead spaces is impacted dog walkers will in many cases have to travel a material distance to Finns Reserve, shown at location 10, to access comparable space and facilities.

Other green spaces shown on the map are Parks Victoria owned (Birrarung and Westerfolds Parks). Dogs are not permitted off lead in these spaces.
Impacts to Dog Walking Accessibility - Boroondara

Construction impacts to Koonung Creek Reserve. During the construction period the EES indicates 83% open space impacts for this area.

Residents will need to travel into Manningham, with issues as noted in the prior slide or to Boroondara parks such as Hays Paddock (off screen), Hislop or Macleay Parks, which also have co-located play and sports facilities that impact on usage.

Image Source: Boroondara Council Website/ EES Chapter 8 Project Description
Impacts to Dog Walking Accessibility

While the EES notes construction impacts ranging from 14-83% for these spaces, designs are very far from clear and questions regarding ongoing access have not been able to be answered by NEL representatives.

Construction zones are marked around park entrances. This may significantly decrease the accessibility of off lead spaces for dog walkers.

People visiting these spaces often form close communities, with benefits for both owners and pets. Loss of these relationships will have detrimental social and community impacts.

The loss of off lead spaces will also drive greater concentration of dogs within remaining facilities, with risks to both dogs and owners.
Environmental Concerns

Personal observation of the following animals in the local parks with construction zones marked:

• Possums, both Brushtail and Ringtail
• Microbats and Fruit Bats
• Platypus
• Wombats
• Owl
• Tawny Frogmouths
• Reptiles – Snakes and Lizards
• Birds including Bellbirds, a range of different parrots, galahs, cockatoos, kookaburras, birds of prey (type unknown) and water birds.

The urbanised nature of these environments does not make them less precious, it makes them more so. We should be looking to improve these areas, not degrade them further via actions such as taking Koonung Creek underground, removing significant tree cover and disrupting habitat areas with construction noise and mess.

Image Source: Manningham Council Website
The Bulleen Park Mystery

Hundreds of trees marked as is the practice in the case of removal. Council has no knowledge of the responsible parties, has not granted any permits for removal and have confirmed with Melbourne Water that they also have no knowledge of this action.

I saw men in a work vehicle present at the park on the day the marks appeared.

If NEL related, this is a disturbing action taken outside marked construction zones and without approval from the relevant authorities.

Image Source: Catherine Morris
NEL Social Effects Assessment – The Best Case Scenario?

Loss of the Bulleen Industrial Zone rated as Medium – Low despite no recovery expectations at all for the existing site.

Loss of public space along the freeway corridor which will impact on many residents in a range of ways from noise to visual outlook, usability of this space only rates a Medium.

Despite the very material impacts on residents, business owner, recreational facility users etc in these areas not a single Major or Severe assessment has been made on any Risk assessed.

Image Source: EES Chapter 17 Social
Hundreds of Pages of EES documentation and I still don’t know ... 

• Can my child get to school safely?
• Where can I walk my dog?
• Where can my children play?
• What sports clubs can I safely sign my children up to in the knowledge that they will have facilities?
• How adversely impacted will my local parks and native fauna be?
• And given available time I didn’t even bother trying to cover:
  • How intrusive will construction be on my children’s school experience?
  • How can I possibly get to work on time through the construction disruptions?
We need our questions answered

We are tired of being fobbed off – I’ve heard variations on the following more times than I can count during NEL engagement sessions:

‘We can’t tell you until more detailed design stages’  ‘We’ll only build within the freeway reserve’
‘That will be for the successful bidder to determine’  ‘We won’t interfere with Doncaster rail options’
‘Don’t worry about it, the construction might even start up one end’ ...

I’ve been to all the sessions, I’ve read all the materials and I am left with more questions than I started with.

What we need:

1. An independent assessment of the design and the need for elements such as the massive and intrusive Manningham Road Interchange and Eastern Freeway expansion. Inclusive of an assessment of impacts devoid of rose coloured glasses.

2. Detailed designs for the finished product, detailed designs for construction compounds and specified performance requirements including accessibility and site specific durations for the construction period.

3. These need to be subject to a genuine consultation process, with provision for changes to improve community outcomes.

4. Accessible materials that can be used to truly inform communities of the impacts - many Manningham residents remain unaware of the scope of freeway works, for example.