My name is Greta Gillies. I am a mother, scientist, climate justice advocate and member of climate advocacy groups Healthy Futures and Friends of Banyule. This is my son Florin who is here to witness valuable role modelling.

We are here on behalf of the people around the world most affected by climate change - those in poverty; predominately females, people of colour and disabled people, who struggle to have their basic needs met. Today I will expand upon my submission statement “As a climate Justice issue we should not be building more freeways”. I am not here to argue for a different freeway route. I am here to argue that as a human right’s issue we should not be expanding or building more freeways. I am here to remind you of the big picture.

It is well documented that the burning of fossil fuels causes air pollution and climate change. The North East Link will cause more pollution both in its implementation and eventual use. Pollution and climate change increase both morbidity and human displacement on a global and local scale. I will now address each of these points.

**It is well documented that the burning of fossil fuels causes air pollution and climate change.**

The burning of fossil fuels, like oil used in motor vehicles, increases the concentration of air pollutants including particulate matter and carbon dioxide (CO2). Inhalation of particulate matter can lead to health issues and an excessive accumulation of certain gases, including CO2, blocks heat escaping from the atmosphere warming the planet and oceans. This results in partial melting of glaciers, rising sea levels, increased extreme weather events and catastrophic damage to ecosystems due to fundamental changes in the earth's climate.

**The North East Link will cause more pollution both in its implementation and eventual use.**

There is no doubt that the activities around building this new freeway with be both energy and resource demanding and will contribute to climate change. Additionally, as has been reported numerous times before, building more roads encourages induced demand - predominately single occupancy car trips that would otherwise not be taken, locking us further into car dependency. More roads equals more cars, equals more burning of fossil fuels, equals more air pollutants and CO2 and more climate change. In a recent report issued by the Victorian Government, a fifth of all our states net emissions were from transport. If Victoria is serious about net zero emissions by 2050, building a new freeway is a step in the wrong direction. Its disappointing to note that the climate change impacts of the project appear to be very understated in the EES, particularly in regards to vegetation removal, encouraging car use and locking people in the outer suburbs into car use with no reliable public transport option.

**Pollution and climate change increase morbidity on a global scale.**

In 2016, according to the World Health Organisation, 4.2 million premature deaths around the world were linked to ambient air pollution, mainly from heart disease, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, lung cancer, and acute respiratory infections in children. Changing climatic conditions are a key determinant for the spread and impact of many infectious diseases. Vectorial capacity is a measure of the capacity for vectors to transmit a
pathogen to a host. A 2018 report in The Lancet found that in 2016, the highlands of sub-Saharan Africa saw a 28% rise in the vectorial capacity for the transmission of malaria from the 1950 baseline state. This is one case of many.

**Pollution and climate change increase morbidity on a local scale.**
While Australia’s air quality is better than in many comparable countries, a study published in the Environment International journal earlier this year found that even low-level air pollution exposure was associated with increased risk of mortality in a cohort of adults aged 45 years and over, even at the relatively low concentrations seen in Sydney. In total around 3000 deaths a year are caused by local air pollution according to The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

In Australia, heatwaves cost more lives than all other natural hazards combined. While heatwaves have always been a part of the Australian landscape, their frequency is increasing and they are becoming more extreme due to climate change. We are seeing increased hospital admissions and death rates, particularly amongst those in poverty.

**Pollution and climate change increase human displacement on a global scale.**
Climate change threatens to increase global displacement levels, already the highest on record. While projections vary widely, the World Bank predicts that more than 140 million people could be internally displaced by the effects of climate change by 2050.

In the last 10 years, several inhabited islands in our own asia-pacific region have become overwhelmed by rising sea levels. A recent Caritas report found that in 2017 alone, 2000 households across 30-35 coastal communities in PNG were displaced by rising sea levels, flooding, and erosion. In the Philippines, nearly 15 million people have been displaced by deadly typhoons and storms since 2013.

**Pollution and climate change increase human displacement on a local scale.**
The Victorian Council of Social Service states that “Climate change is likely to lead to an increase in extreme weather events, disruption to industries, loss of livelihoods and displacement of people. These changes will affect all Victorians, but the greatest impacts will be borne by people with the least capacity to respond, who face poverty and disadvantage” People living in rural or remote communities or along the coast are at particular risk from extreme events such as bushfires, droughts, storms and sea level rises. These events will drive many people away from affected areas.

For the affluent and progressive state government of Victoria with its highly skilled and expert workforce, to be choosing increased traffic and pollution, to be prioritising single occupancy vehicles over public transport infrastructure like Doncaster rail, Melbourne Metro 2, the Suburban Rail Link or high speed rail in the face of climate change is negligent and it is poor leadership. Knowingly contributing to climate change when environmentally sound alternatives are available is scandalous.