1. My name is Katie George. I live in a 3 bedroom townhouse in Borlase St Yallambie with my husband Danniel and our 3 children. Dan sends his apologies, he couldn't be here today because he's not able to take time off from work. I speak on behalf of myself, my family and neighbours who found out far too late about how they will be impacted and missed lodging a submission themselves, along with those who elected not to speak at these hearings and missed the opportunity to respond to the information revealed during the hearings. These individuals would have liked to have been heard if they were aware of the adverse impacts in adequate time. (IMAGE of Dan and kids on Borlase Reserve)

2. I was of the understanding that a North East Link would deliver significantly beneficial outcomes for my local area by removing traffic off our roads, while respecting the open space, and the beautiful amenity of Banyule because we were going to have a tunnel going underneath everything. I have lived in Banyule my entire life and have enjoyed the leafy green aspect and natural environment so close to the Melbourne CBD where I worked for 11 years up until two weeks ago when I got a new job in Macleod close to our home. Like many living in the north-east of Melbourne, we highly value the parks and green spaces, the look and feel of the area and our local services. (IMAGE Results from North East Link Authority Community Survey 1 May – July 2017)

3. I have many more things to cover than the topics in my original written submission and thank the Chair and Committee for your patience with me. This is because of the additional information that I have discovered since the time I wrote the submission and reflection on points I now feel are pertinent to raise. I am a member of Friends Of Banyule and support their submission in full along with their revisions to the EPRs and their critique of the Risk Assessment. I also support the submissions of Michelle Giovas, Fred Buono and Rod Barton MLC. I need to tell you a story of how we got here, so you can appreciate how extremely concerned and distressed we are over the situation.

4. My husband and I searched for ages to find our perfect first home. We were looking for something in our price range, close to the children's school, Viewbank Primary and plan to send them to Viewbank College. We hadn't really considered a townhouse as the small yards weren't really appealing but we found our current home with its little backyard, freestanding dwelling and Borlase Reserve as a beautiful green space at the bottom of our driveway, in a no through road.
5. We fell in love with the idea of joining an established close knit community within a beautiful treed setting with ready access to an established parkland with a creek, in our price range, brand new in the coveted Viewbank College zone. We bought our home while it was a frame in February 2017. We were going to enjoy the open space and natural environment of Borlase Reserve as a buffer from the busy main roads.

6. We looked forward to enjoying overlooking the woodlands at the Simpson Barracks with our kids, and the wildlife we encounter such as frogs, birds, echidna, owls and the like that wander over to visit from the Barracks forest. We were really looking forward to bringing up our children in this area because of the picturesque setting and all it offers. (Picture of Borlase Reserve)

7. My concerns about North East Link were alerted in November 2017 when the Option A alignment was announced.

8. In my original written submission, I provided a summary of the interactions and timeline of contact and information I had sought and received from the proponent, known as North East Link Authority at the time.

9. I called NELA prior to settlement on our home in December 2017 to confirm whether the property or the Borlase Reserve would be impacted by the North East Link Project. I was provided the assurances as detailed in my original written submission.

"No, your home will not be acquired. The two types of notices issued were on the opposite side of Borlase St over Drysdale St and any property that didn't receive one will not be required."

"Your side of the reserve won't be needed during construction. If some of the Reserve is used, you'll lose use of it during construction but it must be fully restored to how it was or better. We can't just pipe the creek and build over it like the old days."

"Construction will be further away from you, I am looking at your house on the maps. Everything will be contained in an acoustic shed so you won't need to deal with noise or dust. And people can come and assess your home to make sure that there's no noise, or dust or structural issues, so if anything does happen..."
“you can be assured everything will be taken care of.”

“Lots of people are contacting us at the moment, there’s some naughty people in Bulleen running around providing misleading information. They are frightening everyone including the elderly and we’re trying to let people know the impacts aren’t that bad.”

10. This information was provided to me by what I now recognise as a non-technical PR officer, rather than a technical engineer and her advice has subsequently proved to be very wrong.

11. It has become very clear that my young family will be very badly impacted by the NELP if it goes ahead in anything like the reference design form. I refer you to MAPbook NELP-EES-Map-book-Key-Map-and-Horizontal-Alignment-Plans-Part-1. Page 15. The Project Area includes Borlase St and our nature strip. And we are located less than 15m from a likely 24/7 construction zone! We also understand the cut and cover tunnelling and trenching is planned for the NELP north of Lower Plenty Road – this is the most impactful and the most damaging. How is this acceptable in our suburb? Next to our homes? And in our street? And Borlase Reserve is almost likely to now be the TBM launch site. 24 hours. How are we expected to sleep?

12. We lived through the short term Level Crossing Removal Authority Works when we first moved and they were bad enough. We know this is infinitely larger and will be going for years. Consequently, we are simply dreading the NELP impacts. I’m concerned about my children’s physical and psychological safety, construction impacts dust, noise, light, smoke, fumes, diesel fumes from the machines and trucks. Will we get sick?

13. I’m concerned about the loss of our families’ liberty to play and roam in the reserve, the loss of the trees. It will be heartbreaking to lose the beauty that is our buffer from Greensborough Road, and the Army Barracks, our patch of nature at our doorstep will be devastated. We won’t be able to enjoy our own house and yard, windows and doors must be shut and sealed. We will feel like prisoners, trapped in our own homes. We think it will be unliveable. We are now in a terrible nightmare limbo.

14. Based on the advice provided from the PR officer on behalf of NELA, we believed we would not be impacted by the North East Link Project.
And more than that, the statements that she made, including her remarks about community members in Bulleen, appeared to be designed to completely downplay the actual situation and minimise any real causes for our concern. I should have been provided all of the information for me to make up my own mind instead of an arbitrary interpretation.

15. I am tabling the VicRoads property report regarding our home as Appendix A to illustrate the lack of written information available and the absolute dependency on verbal information I was given. The VicRoads report references the NELA FAQs tabled as Appendix B. These documents were obtained by our conveyancer on 7 December 2017.

16. Because we believed our prospective home was not going to be impacted either physically OR psychologically, we proceeded with settlement on our family home. We have enjoyed security and stability, being able to put pictures on the walls, paint, garden and decorate it without the hassles of renting that we had experienced over 14 years. Our family and neighbours have enjoyed Borlase Reserve and Simpson Barracks, its setting and wildlife. Borlase Reserve and Simpson Barracks and the amenity surrounding us is the main common factor in our choice to live here. It really is a dream come true.

17. Had we known before settlement of the actual degree of uncertainty over the project and impacts on our prospective home, we would never have proceeded with settlement, and we would have continued our search for a stable family home to realise our dream. Nevertheless, here we are.

18. In between December 2017 and March this year, my records show that NELP sent me 11 generic information emails about the North East Link. I table these emails as Appendix C. These emails were sent to us in the context of me having already been given information that we would not be impacted. Based on this understanding and with no information alerting me to the contrary I did not get involved in the project as I thought it was not relevant to us.

19. My expectation of this consultation process was that people who stood to be impacted both physically and psychologically would be accurately informed, and our concerns listened to and seriously considered to influence the final design and construction of the North East Link. This is not even close to what has occurred.
20. As soon as I was aware that Borlase Reserve was going to be lost after a chance conversation with my neighbour in mid-March this year, I contacted NELP to find out what was going on, since this was the first I had heard about anything to the contrary of the information I was previously given. I was offered a meeting and arranged to make it a neighbourhood meeting.

21. Because of NELPs inadequate and distressing consultation, while I waited on the meeting, I went looking in the community for support. I found Friends Of Banyule and I was advised that an alternative community driven design was being developed from direct community consultation for the north end of the North East Link, and was provided a copy. It was for a long bored tunnel option and seemed to have some better outcomes for us than the Reference Design. This was the beginning of my consultation with Mr. Fred Buono in the development of the SMART (Save My Area’s Residences and Trees) Taxpayer Design around Borlase reserve.

22. We had a small neighbourhood meeting in April with NELP representatives. At this meeting I challenged the advice that I was given by NELP that our property wouldn’t be impacted and the Borlase Reserve wouldn’t be lost. A NELP representative acknowledged that they had provided that information. Further to this, my neighbours had also been informed similarly that they wouldn’t be impacted either. I raised Mr. Buono’s community design and NELP representatives said that they were well aware of it but Mr. Buono didn’t have all of the information about the project and his design and long tunnel wasn’t feasible.

23. In response to this, we asked for NELP as the projects experts to develop better alternatives to the reference design in consultation with us to remove and reduce the impacts of construction, and for the end design to avoid of the loss of the Borlase Reserve. NELP said about 20 alternative designs for the Lower Plenty Road interchange existed and they would see about working with us but made no commitments. I am tabling the record of this meeting as Appendix D.

24. I don’t believe we were even listened to. All they did was talk AT us, with no alteration to their original design concept, despite the severe psychological and physical impacts we expressed to them and our requests for alternative designs to be developed and presented. NELP explained they were not discussing relocation or acquisition with us as
we live outside the project area which has its boundary falling at the bottom of our driveway.

25. "Make a submission to the EES and tell them what you want. It can be anything. That is the place to seek a resolution and design changes."

26. CEO Duncan Elliot can claim all he likes that this is the biggest project in the history of the state and that there are “significant” numbers of the community who have been contacted but I am here declaring that his impression of the effectiveness of this “communication” is entirely fanciful. I would love to know how Mr. Elliott and Minister Allen have formed the view that everything is under control. Neither party have actually spoken with me, with the exception of me challenging Mr. Elliott on ABC radio. Twice. And at no stage has anything I have said been able to be construed as me describing resolutions being worked through. Quite the opposite.

27. I made a formal complaint about this in May. That is the content of my written submission.

28. I was requesting NELP to engage in two way consultation, seek community feedback, to give us an opportunity to influence the project impacts, and give us access to technical experts to work in the interests of both us and the project for a resolution, along with legal advice for residents.

29. In response to my formal complaints about the abject failure that is called NELPs consultation with me, NELP provided a response in writing offering psychological support, as though I am the problem to be managed. I table this as Appendix E. I found this response to be totally demeaning, disappointing, disrespectful of my actual needs and dismissive.

30. I asked for an internal review of NELPs decision not to provide meaningful two way consultation, and I was offered a face to face meeting by NELP. I was unconvinced that it was going to be of much use as it appeared there was an impasse but I met with NELP representatives in the hope of achieving some resolution.

31. At this meeting, I said that it appeared we were at an impasse. I had clearly put my position and was not prepared to shift from my request for NELP technical experts to work directly with residents affected, as
had supposedly been done leading to the development of the Watsonia alternate design.

At this meeting NELP representatives said:
"There will be no consultation outside of the EES process, to do that would open Pandora's Box." (FOR WHOM??)

"Make a submission. You can speak if you like."

"You can tell them all of the impacts, you are articulate and will be fine. You don’t need legal advice or representation or technical expertise."

"You can use everything you've sent us (formal complaints) but you should add in what you want. That might be that you want to be acquired."

This meeting really upset me. And when I was visibly distressed, angry, crying and wanting to explode, barely holding myself together...

"You’re a reasonable person and we’re sorry that you’re upset. We need to get you into some reasonable state." With a reiteration of psychological support from a third party and an offer to pay for it.

At that point, I was so furious that I retorted “Reasonable state?! I was in a perfectly reasonable state in early March. As far as what I want, I want my life back. I want what I was told would happen in December 2017”.

"We can’t give you that." So they can’t give me what they promised!

32. To date, nobody representing NELP has been able to give me an actual reason why. I have had a bunch of rubbish responses but no REAL reason. Nor has NELP ever provided any real justification for pursuing such a disruptive and impactful design that clearly makes our community the BIG loser. They seem to be more concerned with hastily building this big road project rather than solving the community’s issues the Government promised this project would solve. To me, NELP’s consultation has involved merely ‘selling’ the Reference Design, rather that to fully inform the Community about its physical and
psychological impact. You only need to see their artist impressions to confirm this.

33. Just prior to this meeting with NELP, my neighbours and I met with Fred Buono who was voluntarily developing the SMART Taxpayer Design for the north end of the project and, for the first time in the process, our concerns were being listened to and we had confidence that our feedback was going to shape the community driven design.

34. After several weeks of consultation, including well attended public meetings, an alternative design for the Borlase Reserve area was presented by Mr. Buono. This was subsequently refined after several presentations and feedback. This design is now called the SMART Taxpayer Design. To us it addresses all of our concerns while maintaining the functionality of the NEL with all the benefits we expected. Reduced traffic, preserving open space and amenity and maintaining our local connections to Macleod and Watsonia. What's more, the design was fully explained and justified to ensure we understood and agreed with the final design.

35. I wrote to the Ministers for Planning and Transport Infrastructure personally in early June, amongst other Ministers, as well as the Premier about my concerns and the existence of the SMART Taxpayer Design and have received no meaningful response. “Participate in the EES process”, they said.

36. Also in June I found out that an advice regarding the Planning Scheme Amendment was issued, personally addressed and posted by mail to the owner of one townhouse in our block. No other units received any such advice, including us. When I queried this with NELP they stated that their contractors confirmed that they hand delivered a notice to all of us. This made no sense as the only notice received was a mailed notice personally addressed and mailed to the unit owner who does not live in the complex. This is not issuance in accordance with the Act.

37. Further to this, when I asked how our property is affected, NELP obfuscated by saying that our property was not affected.

38. I demanded clarification because the common property is included in the Planning Scheme Amendment. This is the kind of poor communication and difficult to understand information that NELP engages in with people asking simple questions.
39. I did receive a copy of a response from Minister for Transport Infrastructure, The Hon. Jacinta Allen to the Member for Ivanhoe, Anthony Carbines after Mr. Carbines raised concerns about the North East Link Project on my behalf. Minister Allen's response was that she had sought NELP to make contact with me. You can see how that went.

40. NELP have stated that the SMART Taxpayer design will cost billions more than the Reference Design, require more property acquisitions and take years longer to complete. This has been echoed verbatim in some responses from MPs to community members and neighbours. I table such a response as Appendix F.

41. This illustrates the misinformation from NELP is being spread to the Government despite their having more recent information dealing with their objections by way of response from Mr. Buono prior to and as part of these hearings.

42. We have looked at the SMART Taxpayer Design and had significant input into it. We don’t see any additional property acquisitions. In fact, we see no property acquisitions, and minimal loss of open space and established vegetation.

43. As far as costing billions more, we’ve never been shown the costs of the Reference Design with the inclusion of demolition and restoration works, complementary projects nor any accounting for the unnecessary economic disruption, nor for the human and social impacts on our health and loss of liveability of our homes.

44. We don’t know what design they are looking at but it’s not the one we’ve seen. Despite the lack of financial support, Mr. Buono has presented all details, including transparently developed cost estimates & timelines, as well as potential compromises to ensure we have all the information we need to form an informed opinion.

45. Starting the bored tunnel north of the Hurstbridge rail line would reduce the construction impact to almost nil for many of the residents and deliver a better project outcome. You have heard from Mr. Buono about it. This concept is well supported by the community as it was borne out of active listening and his expertise.

46. So far NELP has offered two other main reasons to rebut the SMART Taxpayer Design. One is that it will take longer to complete the project
as a bored tunnel from north of the Hurstbridge rail line. NELP says extending the bored tunnel could add 18 months to the construction time. (Mr. Buono estimates around 9-12 months) I am sitting here as a layperson and even I can see no basis to NELP’s claim.

47. There is a truck curfew on Greensborough Rd now between 10pm and 6am. This road is expected carry an average 600 spoil trucks per hour with 1500 per hour during peak months. As residents abutting the project, NELP confirmed with us that observing the curfew means their 3.2km of bored tunnel in the Reference Design would prolong construction by 6 – 9 months, comparable with the timeframe for an extended bored tunnel! The Reference Design would also mean stockpiling of spoil for removal by truck during non-curfew times in addition to the spoil trucks from trenching excavations.

48. NELP have confirmed that the site of the TBM launch is most likely to be Borlase Reserve, surrounded by residences. This, by the way, is the actual impetus for the alternate Lower Plenty Road interchange design put forward by NELP in August. I feel is it totally disingenuous for NELP to say this is as a result of community feedback given the communication and responses we have had to date from NELP where they outright refused to work with us.

49. I should mention here that the TBM site visit at the Westgate Tunnel project was in between the construction and assembly of the TBM trench being completed and before boring actually started with drilling and spoil removal happening. This is the very, very best and cleanest this site will ever be and we want to know how are you going to allow for the impact to our homes, rendering them unliveable and the environmental destruction? There are no residences close to the TBM launch site in Yarraville and even if residents are experiencing some impacts, the industrial environment that people are accustomed to there is nothing like we have in the north-east, at Borlase Reserve and the Simpson Barracks.

50. As residents abutting the project, we expect that the truck curfew on Greensborough Road would at least be observed, if not have an extended curfew starting from early evening. This in turn means the anticipated timeline for the Reference Design bored tunnel is well and truly understated. Unless I am supposed to be expecting 24 hours per day of construction for NELP’s tunnel at the bottom of our driveway, in which case, how can anyone be expected to live next to that for years on end?!
51. I have sought advice from Mr. Buono and regarding the SMART Taxpayer Design he has told us that:

The SMART Taxpayer Design would not be affected by this curfew as the launch site North of the Hurstbridge rail line sees direct access to the M80 for the spoil haulage and means the TBMs can run all day and night without impacting on anyone the way NELPs tunnel will. Which means the timeframe of completion for the SMART Taxpayer Design would be comparable to the timeframe of the reference design, if not faster when factoring in the removal of the need for restorative works, etc. Also, as much of the construction work for the SMART Taxpayer design will occur underground and clear of the area’s residences, shops, schools, open spaces and established vegetation, it would minimise any construction impact to the community and the lifestyle we came here for.

52. And the second main reason NELP are opposing the SMART Taxpayer Design is about Lower Plenty Road interchange. NELP’s Technical Note states this could be constructed as a mined interchange with stub tunnels. This is in the manner that Mr. Buono suggests in the SMART Taxpayer Design. BUT!!

53. I know people in Preston and in Eltham, West and East of this project. Not one of them would come to the interchange at Lower Plenty Road. They would continue travel the long established patterns they have always used and don’t come this way other than to visit locally.

54. I have repeatedly asked NELP to explain to me who is going to use the Lower Plenty Road Interchange. First I was told that there was 30000 vehicles expected to use the interchange as per the Reference Design. This was again stated by NELP at one of our Community Information Meetings where I was advised that this interchange was to service local traffic and that to move it further north than the reference design as far as Blamey Road would reduce the traffic using it from 30000 to 10000 vehicles per day.

55. NELP now say that it’s 65000 vehicles that are going to use that interchange and that is MORE traffic on the existing surface roads than is currently causing congestion today. NELP say they are going to change the traffic patterns to get people to use it and expect 800 vehicles per hour from Lower Plenty Road to head north up
Greensborough Road to use it and head either north or south, with the remainder coming from Rosanna Road, Erskine Rd and north of Yallambie Road.

56. We are now told that either the reference design interchange or the NELP alternative design will result in the same amount of 65000. If this is true, the surface network will be gridlocked which could encourage rat running through the back streets of Viewbank, Watsonia and Macleod and will absolutely exacerbate the well known issues on Rosanna Road. NELPs own SMEDTech report refutes the claim of 65000 and shows an anticipated 9500 vehicles per day.

57. I cannot see how the Government’s promise of reducing traffic volumes on local roads in Banyule is being achieved by the Reference Design, if NELP’s forecasts are realistic. Moreover, I can only see that having this unnecessary interchange at Lower Plenty Road would be costly and counterproductive to the project’s feasibility, if SMEDtech figures are accurate. Either way, I can see no justification for including this interchange in this project.

58. This is not the only place that NELPs traffic modelling doesn’t seem to add up. I also wonder about the NEL Expressway; the NEL “Expressway” as opposed to the NEL Freeway will be ripe for tolling. And if this is the case what happens to all the traffic modelling then? Has a tolled expressway been modelled? Do they know what the impacts of tolling the Expressway will be when queues at the Chandler Highway and Hoddle Street are already problems?

59. By the way, the two Community Information Meetings were organised by myself and a couple of other community members, along with consultation organised by Mr. Buono, we estimate we reached approximately 800 people in Banyule, including some Banyule Councillors. Many of these people had no idea of the Reference Design proposal and were of the impression we were getting a tunnel. All are in support of the SMART Taxpayer Design concept.

60. A random survey of attendees shows that there was complete dissatisfaction with NELPs community consultation and that the priority of people who responded is:

1. Remove and re-direct through traffic from local roads
2. Re-establish and re-integrate social links between local communities
3 Re-establish and re-integrate economic links within the community
4 Preserve and enhance your local amenity
5 Preserve and enhance the community’s established open spaces and natural environment
6 Realise future potential to plan and grow as a fully cohesive community
7 Provide improved traffic flow between the M3 and M80

61. I also have a copy of the wording of a petition to the State Government expressing support for the SMART Taxpayer Design and the removal of the questionable Lower Plenty Road interchange from the project. This petition has ___ signatures. I table a copy of this wording as Appendix G.

62. We are completely dependent on the Independent Advisory Committee to capture, understand and interpret my submission and advocate on behalf of myself, my husband, our children and our neighbours. We are relying on you to act not just in the best interests of the project, as the proponent has done, but to act in our best interests as part of the Environment and ecology and as the taxpayers funding this $15.8 B project and making an enormous social and psychological sacrifice which I don’t believe is being recognised by NELP. How you going to compensate us for that?!

63. Under the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006, the best interests of families and children are supposed to be taken into account when making decisions and the Government, Agencies and Authorities should not unreasonably limit any Victorian’s rights through its policies, actions or decisions. Protection of families and children is a fundamental human right. Children have a right to all protections they require by virtue of their status as children. Children require access to spaces where they can play, exercise, socialise, participate in community life and get exposure to bright sunlight for their physical and psychological health. The reference design and construction method impacts severely limit the rights of our children who use these open spaces and live in our homes.

64. The loss of Borlase Reserve is unacceptably justified by NELP in the social impact report by a remark that there is another green space 400 metres away. I do not understand how this can be said to be the same as being able to go down to the bottom of our driveway when to use this alternative greenspace we would need to negotiate safely travelling
Submission to the Environmental Effects Statement (EES) Inquiry & Advisory Committee on the North East Link Project (NELP)

through the construction area each time we wished to use it, and my children cannot do that with any independence. And I am absolutely unconvinced that the alternative greenspace would be the peaceful, beautiful space it currently is when it would be so close to construction anyway.

65. Our rights to our property and freedom of movement is going to be unreasonably limited if this project goes ahead anything like the Reference Design. Especially when the NELP and the State Government already know that there is a much better way and their rationale for dismissing the SMART Taxpayer Design are completely misleading.

66. How are you going to compensate us for taking our children’s future that we have dreamed for them away? My children will be young adults and their opportunities for memory making in our current home and on the Borlase Reserve enjoying the parkland and borrowed environment of Simpson Barracks will be totally wiped out.

67. How are we supposed to live next to 5-7 years of construction, getting a rooftop garden with shrubs and possibly a retarding basin at the end of this when my kids are all grown up? The biggest rooftop garden is the Arts Centre, not a tree on it. There is no way Borlase Reserve will be restored to how it is now.

68. How can I get to work from my home in Yallambie, east side of construction to Macleod on the west side? How can my kids get to and from school safely? How are we going to live with the traffic congestion NELP has forecast will result from having a Lower Plenty Road interchange?

69. How can we and our Community be compensated for the loss of the quality of life we had the right to expect when we moved into our home?

70. How can I as a Taxpayer be compensated by the Government and NELP for the poor value this Reference Design represents for the Victorian community?

71. How does the Government and NELP improve their consultation to ensure we are listened to and the taxpayer gets best design possible?

70. I cannot speak in explicit terms of what the EPRs need to be, but I can
describe to you what I think we need to resolve my issues and our neighbours issues and I am hoping that you can adjust the EPRs to:

- rule the Reference Design out and
- the alternative SMART Taxpayer Design in, as the baseline for the tender bidders to improve on.

71. We lived through the Rosanna Level Crossing Removal and for weeks we had dust so bad we couldn’t open our windows or spend time outside. There were periods of night work that left us unable to sleep due to the noise and when I called to complain I was offered temporary accommodation in Bundoora but not locally near my home and children’s school. It was a terrible experience. There are things we need you to do to save us from; years of sleepless nights and loss of liveability.

72. During the soil sampling works on Borlase Reserve over the half of the school holidays in May, we lost use of the Reserve and I had to keep our children on our property or take them out elsewhere for them to run around. The Reserve was damaged, health and safety of residents was compromised. When operation of the drilling was so loud that one of my neighbours suffered ear pain as she was trying to leave her home to go to work. She reported to me that she was thankful it wasn’t her children.

73. I had my access from my property impeded during these works and had to wait for contractors to move bollards to let me through. We were not adequately advised of any site plans or instructions for our actual health and safety. I table a copy of the advice we received as Appendix H. You can see on it there are three bullet points under a heading saying our property and access will not be impacted. This is the same notice we all received. My neighbour reported that the noise and vibrations were indeed impactful inside her home. The only safety instruction in the notice is to obey signs and follow instructions. I made a complaint to NELP about this too, as did my neighbours. This is a clear indication of some of the lower level impacts we can expect to be dealing with over more than 5 years. Early Works are due to start in January 2020 and none of us are looking forward to it.

74. We do not have the means to arrange expert witnesses and suits and silks on thousands a day to represent us, as NELP does. I really wish I did! In fact, all of our involvement in this process, including Mr. Buono’s has been voluntary and at great personal effort and sacrifice.
75. The State Government should have provided fully funded legal advice and support so we, as laypeople, could understand the possibilities, limitations, impacts and options for our families instead of driving ahead a million miles an hour and putting us through such an enormous burden when everything we are working for through this EES process seems to be for very limited influence. Much of our community STILL don't know of the reference design and the proposed impacts to date.

76. It feels like what we actually need is sabotaged by the way the project contracts packages have been split up and timings of the contract for Early Works being awarded by the Minister for Transport Infrastructure before the community has been heard and the IAC report and recommendations compiled, submitted and considered by the Minister for Planning.

77. The structure of the contracts separating the project into three parts of Early Works, mandated tunnel length of 3.2km and surface works which appear to prescribe the Reference Design locks in the most disastrous impacts for the northern section of the project. This must be remedied immediately to enable the bidders to genuinely innovate and come up with the best design for the community and State of Victoria. The absence of requirements for the bidders to genuinely consult with the impacted community and demonstrate the feedback in their designs leaves us at their mercy.

78. This project is steamrolling ahead and we feel completely disregarded. Why don't we matter?! People south of Lower Plenty Road are getting a bored tunnel, with residents in the northern section copping the worst of the impacts due to the avoidance of extending the bored tunnel, proposed construction method of cut and cover, likely site of the TBM launch and a massive open cut trench and an interchange at Lower Plenty Road that is nonsensical but for an opportunity to have additional tolling and even then it makes little sense. We deserve so much better than this. So does everybody else.

79. The Early Works planned which are based on the Reference Design concept and assumptions in its current form, are due to commence as soon as this process is concluded How can this happen when NELP have assured the Community that the project’s design will only be finalised after the bidding process is completed? Surely, the scope of any Early Works cannot be determined until a final design is
determined.

80. And understand my cynicism is a direct result of lived experience. After being made to feel I was apparently to blame for failing to know that our property would be impacted, I have been painstakingly dissecting the supposed consultation process that NELP claims it has undertaken so well with me. Along this journey of discovery, guess what I found? I found that up to the release of the EES that I, along with swathes of my neighbourhood, have been taken for a wild ride filled with empty promises of:

"you won't be impacted."

"Borlase Reserve will be fine, oh you might lose a bit of the use of it during construction but it must be restored fully. We can't pipe the creek, environmental requirements are much more stringent now."

"All of the works will be contained in an acoustic shed and this will be up in the Simpson Barracks away from you."

"It will be a tunnel."

"You can get involved if you want to, but only if you think it's necessary. You don't have to. We could come to you if you're interested." (And why would anyone feel the need if they've been provided assurances that they won't be impacted and will be keep up to date with RELEVANT information?!)  

"We have a new hub in Watsonia, check us out."

81. Today is RU OK Day and despite not yet being asked, I am publically declaring to all and sundry that I am very much NOT OK. Neither is my husband, kids or neighbours. We are not ok because of NELP's outrageously unreasonable expectation for us to live with such a high degree of uncertainty for an extended period of time regarding a massive project with a likely catastrophic impact for us and the lack of regard for genuine consultation by NELP. This is the enormity of the emotional and psychological harm inflicted on me and my family and neighbours as a result of NELPs completely deceptive and outright
false information, and rubbish communication and marketing strategy in the place of bona fide and relevant information and consultation.

82. And this is all completely unnecessary burden, stress and devastation when the SMART Taxpayer Design clearly demonstrates that there is a much better way for the northern section of the project.

83. 13 kids including ours live in these units on Borlase St and the neighbourhood kids all regularly play together, running around in and out of the homes, riding bikes and kicking a footy or soccer ball. We have a great time picnicking on the reserve and all help each other out however we can. It's such a warm and welcoming environment and the kind of life my husband and I dreamed we would work so hard to provide for our family.

84. I cannot put into actual words the extreme despair many of us are suffering already. It must stop now. You can do this for us and recommend better outcomes by using your expertise to support our aspirations to remain in our homes, with our lives and dreams intact. Today feels like our very last chance and like I am reading the eulogy of my children's futures.

85. Please don't shatter the hopes of our families. We can have a much better North East Link Project than the Reference Design, and the way to deliver it is to allow full innovation for the builders while genuinely consulting with the community on our aspirations in line with the EPRs and protecting those impacted as much as possible.

86. We are pleading with you to save us from this unnecessary catastrophe and recognise the environmental impacts of a cut and cover tunnel construction as unacceptable, and please introduce EPRs that support:
   - the SMART Taxpayer Design or better;
   - Genuine community consultation during the design phase by the bidders with some mandated requirement for their designs to demonstrate the community feedback, and
   - please do whatever is possible to revise contracts to encourage bidders to consider an extended bored tunnel from North of the Hurstbridge rail line.

87. Can the Panel guarantee that any recommendations you make will be able to be incorporated into the contract & can you guarantee that any EPRS will be uplifted into the contracts?
88. Please inform the Minister for Planning of all of these points that I raise in your report. Or if you decide not to include them, please let us all know why.

Katie George & Family,
12 September 2019