Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission. My name is Rod Sinclair, I am a resident of the Applewood Retirement Village which is located adjacent to the Eastern Freeway at Doncaster, and am making this submission on behalf of the Applewood Residents Committee, which represents over 480 residents. I am fully retired, but had a long career in engineering and there are many retired professionals with relevant backgrounds within our retirement community who have the ability to broadly assess the sense or otherwise of this project. One of our residents chaired a panel that instigated a National Engineering Excellence Award for the conservation and environmental features of the Eastern Freeway that will be largely destroyed under the present plans.

We do believe that the missing link in the ring road system needs to be installed. However, we are concerned with many aspects of the presently defined project. As outlined in our written submission, the selection process was seriously flawed, the costs are excessive when compared with other similar projects, and based on the impacts on local communities along the proposed route we have essentially concluded that the selected route is unacceptable and should be reconsidered.

To us as residents who have bought into a retirement village adjacent to the Eastern Freeway, we did so not only for the amenities provided within the village, but also for the amenities provided in the surrounding area. The freeway itself was a negative, but the established protection barriers, fringe parklands, walking tracks and treed landscape were an offsetting plus. That positive aspect will be largely destroyed by this development with at least doubling of the freeway with associated noise and pollution, by the removal of trees affecting both air quality and visual impact, by the barrelling of the Koonung Creek, and by the removal of much of the peripheral parklands and pedestrian access across the freeway. Some of this may be replaced in time, but the construction time is up to 7 years which is a large part of the remaining lifetime of many residents of the village. During this extended construction period there will be extra noise, dust and air pollution. Access to local parks and walking tracks will also be further restricted during construction, and to many of the 480 residents all this is an alarming prospect. The construction of massive noise walls on the south side of the freeway opposite the Applewood Village where none exist today is also a significant concern. It will not only destroy the outlook to parkland, but without covering vegetation will probably reflect noise back towards the village.
Without doubt the project will also impact on the valuation of our dwellings, particularly during the construction period, and during that time a significant proportion of residents will be moving on and requiring to sell their leases.

We have covered most of these individual impacts in our written submission so I would like to take this opportunity to highlight some of our concerns with the broader aspects of the project.

As we understand, the original concept of the city ring road was to provide orbital connections for the movement of freight and city by-pass traffic between the North and South East, such as interstate connections, airport traffic and traffic to distribution centres located in the North. Radial traffic using existing freeways such as the Monash and Eastern provide for commuter and personal transport, and an essential part of the concept of the ring road is to separate these two.

The missing link has meant that this separation has not been achieved resulting in heavy freight mixed with radial commuter traffic causing significant congestion problems. This project will not resolve this issue and in fact only appears to exacerbate the problems. There is every indication that heavy truck traffic will increase on local subsidiary roads. Traffic conditions at Tram Road at the entrance to the Applewood Village are already hazardous and are the subject of ongoing discussions with a number of authorities. This situation is forecast to become much worse with completion of the project and will become intolerable unless significant traffic controls are introduced.

The EES suggests that freight traffic from the M80 ring road entering the Eastern Freeway at Bulleen will largely dissipate onto suburban roads before reaching the East Link tunnels for which there are no upgrade plans. This suggests that no solution to the issue of heavy freight traffic using the Monash or Eastern Freeways has been provided. Whereas completion of the ring road to its original plan would achieve this objective and reduce traffic on the present Eastern Freeway, as well as the Monash Freeway and City Link which could divert freight onto East Link and the Ring Road. We note the recent announcement of plans to widen the Monash Freeway and wonder at the lack of any coordinated traffic planning. In our view it is the politicisation of the planning process and its short-term outlook which has changed in recent times, and has led to the issues we see with this project.

Conceptually the idea of doubling the size of the freeway to accommodate extra traffic generated from the North East Link without any work at either Hoddle Street, the East Link tunnels or adjoining
roads seems to make no sense, and if this plan proceeds it seems almost certain that major capital works at both these heavy congestion end points as well as many local connecting roads such as Tram Road will be necessary, greatly expanding the ultimate cost of the project. This can largely be avoided by completing the ring road as originally intended. The traffic modelling by NELA is in our opinion highly dubious, and we consider the position expressed by some other expert witnesses to be much more realistic.

We have made some broad-brush analysis of the costs involved in the construction of this project and believe they are extraordinarily high, even by typical Australian construction cost standards, which themselves are high by world standards. We have been unable to reconcile how or why, but in part it may arise from the need to demolish and rebuild large amounts of existing infrastructure. Huge amounts of public funds are involved and if there are ways to achieve significant reductions they need to be pursued.

I know it is not within the terms of reference of this committee to consider alternative options, but it is clear to us, as we have outlined in our written submission, that the alternative Option C which is close to the original ring road plan, will have much less community impact, and with sensible design using elevated freeway rather than extensive tunnelling, can be completed at much lower cost, and I should add probably within a shorter time frame.

Given that the information provided for the options selection process was incorrect and grossly misleading by failing to account for the need to upgrade the Eastern Freeway at that time, and given the high impact on communities along the path of the project which is now apparent, it is surely responsible to reconsider at least one alternative along the lines of the original ring road concept.

Given that conclusion, it is our view that the present project should not proceed. In making its recommendation it is suggested that the IAC should be cognisant of the fact that practical alternative routes do exist. The original plan closely following Option C was based on sound urban planning principles which have been compromised in this case. In all likelihood a route close to the original plan will also have much lower community impact and potential cost. This should be assessed in similar detail to Option A for comparison purposes before any final decision is made. Any time lost is a small price in comparison with the possible potential savings to the community and should not be a serious consideration.
I again thank the committee for listening and for the opportunity to make this submission.