

# Submission Cover Sheet

North East Link Project EES IAC

# 642

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Request to be heard?: yes

**Full Name:** Paul Johnson  
**Organisation:** Watsonia Primary School  
**Affected property:** 240 Nell Street West  
**Attachment 1:** Planning\_Panels\_  
**Attachment 2:**  
**Attachment 3:**  
**Comments:** submission attached

2nd June 2109

Attention: Planning Panels Victoria  
Submission in relation to the North East Link Project Environmental Effects Statement.

Watsonia Primary School: 240 Nell St West Watsonia 3087

**Background:**

Watsonia Primary School (WPS) has served the local community in Watsonia and surrounding suburbs for 60 years. WPS is located in a quiet residential area but directly adjacent to Greensborough Highway.

The WPS School Council makes this submission in response to the Environmental Effects Statement (EES) to highlight:

1. the broader impacts that of the widening of Greensborough Road will have on families and potential future enrolments attending their nearest school with reduced connectivity, particularly for walkers, to our school and our immediate neighboring special school – Concord PS (CPS).
2. the impact of slow trucks on the proposed gradient adjacent to the school after completion of the reference design
3. the need for uninterrupted access to the school, particularly drop-off and pick-up times during the construction period.
4. the need for construction period truck curfews during school peak periods (ie. 8.15 – 9.15am and 3.15 4.00pm) to allow access to the school and safety of families dropping off and picking up.

Our school has considered the three designs that are currently being discussed in the community: 1. North East Link Authority reference design, 2. Babeng Option A2, and 3. The Community Design as proposed by Fred Buono. Our school endorses the Community Design as a preferred design for the North East Link between Lower Plenty Road & the M80.

WPS recognises that the NELP has the potential to relieve traffic pressure on Greensborough and Grimshaw Street but has concerns with the air quality and noise pollution in the short term and longer term given that diesel trucks will 'slow down' to ascend the hump created by going over the train line adjacent to our schools. We also believe the 'extended tunnel' option would have less impact on our school during the construction period. Extending the TBM tunnel so that the northern portal is north of Watsonia Village and south of Grimshaw streets allows for the existing urban character and connectivity to be retained and even enhanced.

**Response to Reference Design:**

WPS and CPS are directly adjacent to Greensborough Road which already creates a division between East and West homes in the area. School 'Zones' in effect are a surrounding circle around a school and we currently have the 30m wide Greensborough Rd as a major division through the middle of our zone creating barriers both physically and psychologically. By widening the road to the proposed 60 metres we would be increasing those barriers significantly. Predictably this would have a dramatic effect on our future enrolments due to the lengthy construction time period and open cut process. Some families currently choose to attend other schools in the Greensborough area due to access across this division. The Reference Design current proposal will further disconnect communities, creating a much wider obstacle between east and west that fails to improve open space connectivity. The wider road can only be crossed by 'green' bridges which will not improve access to our schools from homes east of Greensborough Road. The planned pedestrian and shared bicycle overpass would need to traverse twice the current distance (Map Book, Sheets 8 - 13). Furthermore the 'green bridges' do not function to connect existing open spaces adjacent the NEL corridor such as Watsonia Station Car Park, the current Greensborough Hwy Reserve, Service Road and West Mayling Reserves, Windsor Reserve, Simpson Barracks or Borlase Reserve because they remain separated by the widened Greensborough Road. This amounts to a reduction of Open Space provision, that is supported by the findings presented in Table 12.1 of the EES Technical Report J into Human Health effects. The Community Design offers more space created directly adjacent to our schools and creates the opportunity to reduce the division between east & west by potentially narrowing the remaining surviving surface road, Greensborough Hwy, once NELP is completed, capturing the through traffic.

The existing large open spaces currently support over 7,000 trees (proposed to be removed - Technical report G: Arboriculture, Tables 8-1 and 8-2). They also provide the community with the framework for

much needed high-quality open spaces that enable the community to enjoy the environment surrounding the Watsonia village (Technical report J, 10.6). The proposed tree replacement trees whilst positive, will not compensate for the loss of the existing trees because:

- a) the length of time required before the replacement trees grow to be equivalent to the removed trees, directly impacting the air quality and aesthetic appeal within the area; and
- b) due to many of the replacement trees being planted on the “green bridges” and the resultant shallow depth of soil in which they will be planted, the replacement tree will struggle to ever reach comparability to the removed trees.

In the Executive Summary of the BabEng report the independent international engineering firm propose that delivering the project with Option A2 fulfils all NELA alignment constraints, aligns with the proposal by community stakeholders and would be comparable, cost-wise with the Reference Design. WPS endorses the common premises of the BabEng proposal and the Community Design, being the extension of the TBM tunnel to north of Watsonia train station and south of Grimshaw St. WPS however does not support the BabEng proposals, acquisition of WPS land for the western exit road to Grimshaw Street. The Community Design’s redirection of Greensborough Highway over the existing train line (to the east of the existing line of Greensborough Highway) is the preferred design as this would maximise community space and minimise disruption to the community. WPS request that NELA investigate the feasibility of extending the length of the northernmost part of the proposed tunnel and the location of the northern portal, considering these proposals and avoiding any land acquisition of WPS land.

WPS requests that the panel reconsider the Reference Design and investigates the feasibility of the Community Design (or similar solution) that limits open cut excavation and the construction of a wide trench that will further separate families from their nearest school, avoided by extending the tunnel as proposed in the Community Design.

#### **School Reputation:**

##### **Construction and Post Construction impacts on our current and future families:**

Current perceptions are that the construction period will be significantly difficult to endure both because of the time and process. Current families have been heard to say: “might as well move out of the area” The schools are currently unable to measure which families are choosing not to enrol at our schools because of the NELP, as many of families will simply not inquire due to the perception. Those that speak to of us of their concerns have expressed that the construction period is extended and significant. The likely reduction in enrolments has a spiralling negative effect. Fewer enrolments will result in an excess staff situation, the likely first staff to leave the school’s workforce would be Specialist teachers which brings about reduced educational experience, decline in performance results and therefore less attractive option, further reducing potential enrolments. Families that have the capacity to change their home location or consider travelling further are usually more socially advantaged so the NELP could well create a social inequity situation.

Once families have decided to go to another school they become settled and unlikely to return to their nearest school option, these families of course often have younger children with the pattern being to follow their siblings, therefore this effect will be over many years.

The NELA development will cause massive disruption to families and future enrolments of WPS.

##### **Construction Period Concerns and requested assurances:**

###### High Risk of significant and prolonged impact due to construction noise.

WPS and CPS have concerns over ability of WPS students to engage in outdoor play without risk to dust and noise pollution.

WPS and CPS has concerns over impact of construction noise to classrooms nearest the NELA site.

WPS and CPS requests the following plans specific to our schools:

- a specific noise management plan that would include Noise Barriers erected prior to start of construction and only removed once permanent final noise solutions have been implemented;
- limit works to holiday periods, or if within school times, schedule breaks for recess / lunch periods;
- full noise plan / program including timings within & without holiday periods to be supplied by NELP; and
- noise level testing / recording ongoing throughout project with the school having power to “cease.”

###### High Risk of increased foot traffic near/around WPS during construction period.

WPS and CPS has ongoing concerns regarding the access of construction staff and general public to WPS from likely removal of rear fence to ensure site access for staff and machinery. Concerns over cost to increase supervision and staffing levels at drop off / pick up as a result of increased traffic due to NELA (pedestrian/vehicular).

WPS and CPS request the following plans specific to our schools:

- Construction entry point well away from WPS / Concord OR requirement for Working With Children checks;
- NELA construction staff T&C's regarding interaction with children at WPS / Concord;
- Concerns over risk of additional funds needed to maintain WPS grounds as a result of dust / debris from NELA construction;

High Risk of increased vehicular traffic near/around WPS during construction period.

WPS and CPS has ongoing concerns regarding the access to the school for staff parents and during the construction period.

WPS and CPS have concerns re the high risk of lost School parking for drop off and pick up based on NELA construction site. Current front of school parking highly congested at drop off and pick up times with existing rear of school parking.

High risk of increased congestion in streets surrounding school due to NELA staff parking leading to high risk of increased traffic incidents due to increased traffic flow at peak times in narrow residential streets.

WPS and CPS have concerns of impact to Bus traffic due to increased street parking from NELA staff.

WPS and CPS request the following plans specific to our schools:

- a Staged Traffic Management plan supplied by NELA with a NELA designated staff parking outside of school area;
- access to NELA site and proposed lay down area (AK Lines reserve) via Grimshaw Street and or Greensborough Highway; and
- no NELA traffic, specifically construction vehicles to use surround residential streets, specifically Knight St, Peters Street, Weatherlake Street, Rushworth Street, Nell Street West, and Meagher St.

Risk of construction vibrations impacting existing foundations of WPS leading to building / plumbing damage with concerns about the impact of ongoing vibrations to WPS Staff & Students during construction.

WPS and CPS requests the following plans specific to our schools:

- A Waste Management plan supplied by NELA with weekly waste checks around school perimeter to minimise risk of commercial / domestic waste dumping;
- WPS specific air quality management plan; and
- WPS specific ground vibration management plan.

WPS and CPS has concerns over timing of removal of pedestrian overpass used by WPS and CPS, current and potential, families living on the opposite side of the freeway and utilise this overpass.

WPS and CPS requests the following plans specific to our schools:

- a Timing and Pedestrian Traffic Management Plan supplied by NELA; and
- Works on overpass to be completed outside of school terms.

### WPS and CPS has concerns over the reputational risk to the schools

Due to the expected impact on our school reputation we request a yearly financial Marketing allowance to support and promote WPS and CPS within the local community and assure the community that WPS is here for the long term.

NELA to provide specific marketing materials with WPS plan “Why NELA is good for WPS” for prospective families.

### **Post Project Completion**

Risk of increased Air Pollution from ‘slow lane’ diesel trucks of above 4% post project completion.

WPS and CPS has ongoing concerns regarding high Risk of increased air born Particulates impacting outdoor environment at WPS

WPS and CPS requests the following plans specific to our schools:

- Environmental Safety / OH&S Management Plan for the site supplied by NELA;
- Ongoing review / checks of WPS building and facilities from commencement to appropriate period post project completion

WPS and CPS has ongoing concerns increased congestion on an exposed road adjacent to our school over years as Melbourne’s growth rapidly continues.

WPS and CPS has ongoing concerns the Lighting plan for expected bike path adjacent to the schools, post project completion.

### **CONCLUSION**

WPS formally request that NELA:

1. Investigate the possibility of changing the Reference Design to incorporate an extended tunnel (eg hybrid of Community Design and BabEng A2 Design). WPS propose that NELA should fully investigate the feasibility of extending the length of the northernmost part of the tunnel and the location of the northern portal.
2. Address the specific concerns and requests mention above that impact the school's ability to function during the construction period and the school's reputation in general

We would like to address the panel at the proposed hearing regarding our concerns.

Yours faithfully,

Nigel Catt – WPS School Council President

Hosein Gharavi - WPS Treasurer/Vice President

Andrew Bluck - WPS Parents and Friends

References – NEL Community Design by Fred Buono (2018, 2019)  
- BabEng report as released by Banyule Council (2019)