

Submission Cover Sheet

North East Link Project EES IAC

406

Request to be heard?: yes

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Organisation: Kororit Institute

Affected property:

Attachment 1: NELAsubmission.p

Attachment 2:

Attachment 3:

Comments: See attached.

Kororoit Institute

This submission is a postscript to the submissions researched and developed by Kororoit Institute (KI) and presented to the East West Link (EWL) and West Gate Tunnel (WGT) EES processes. We do not have comparably detailed prior knowledge of the local impacts of the North East Link (NEL) proposal, so will only address procedural and wider metropolitan considerations.

Before the end of the WGT hearings, I indicated an intent to coördinate a reflection on the process to Planning Panels but the final report was so deflating to the community representatives who had given the process considerable volunteer effort, that we never got back to that. Clearly lead counsel for the proponents at both processes, Stuart Morris QC, had succeeded in his second time around tactic of sidelining community input. There is an inescapable gulf between the resources available to proponents and to community organisations, but at the EWL hearings we at least had the benefit of the late secretary of Protectors of Public Lands, Julianne Bell, using her own money to support Tom Pikusa of Counsel who powerfully made the most of the last of the closing submissions before the proponent's. While the WGT hearings had appeared friendly to community participants, Mr Morris's singular focus on cross-examined expert witnesses undermined any notion of fairness.

There was also great inequality between the two processes in the affected municipalities' efforts to represent local issues. All four EWL councils conducted public meetings to both inform and listen to interested persons and provided strong counterarguments. While the City of Melbourne was more unambiguously opposed to WGT, no similar preparation was undertaken by any of the three involved and the other two's representations were underwhelming, especially to those community survivors of EWL who had taken on board the many lessons of that process. There is no doubt given the fullness of time that WGT was and is a significantly worse project than the more than bad enough EWL. Unfortunately the panel report completely missed the mark.

The fundamental lesson from EWL, that was ignored in dealing with WGT, was that the inner city is already beyond capacity for vehicular traffic, so there is ongoing need, and has been policy support at all levels, to reduce the single occupant passenger vehicle traffic into central areas to free up road space for more efficient/essential uses, including active transport. A lot of mischief was done with respect to definitions of "inner city" which is better understood as a moving target sensitive to wider population growth. There is also a lot of backsliding between "transport" and "traffic" which are not interchangeable terms and need clear differentiation. The Transport Integration Act requirement for a Melbourne Transport Plan has still not been delivered and no amount of traffic shuffling will help in its absence.

The other broad lesson from EWL was that engineer-led proponents avoid adding up the cumulative toll of all their "little" destructions, many of which KI has emphasised were No Way Go Back decision points where backtracking to and reassessing earlier decisions is essential. Refusal to do so is symptomatic of a rushed process, the EWL proponent being pushed into a break through or break approach which eventually infuriated the ever cautious City of Moonee Valley who saw all the last minute adjustments being dumped onto Flemington. While it may not have been top of mind with EWL, the WGT panel really

should have called the government to task for contempt of process as even more design changes were added on the fly via political announcement, without even the common respect of introducing them first within the hearing process. Yet these left the environmental assaults on the Maribyrnong and Moonee Ponds Creek, plus the opportunity costs to Footscray Road and West Melbourne unmitigated.

From a metropolitan perspective two problems stand out with NEL-A. To meet the proclaimed need to complete the Ring Road, there is nothing to be gained by providing connections between the new road and the cityward end of the Eastern Freeway. Any increase in cityward capacity can only induce more traffic into areas it cannot fit. Secondly, abandoning the ancient and once under construction rail reservation in the Eastern Freeway median is not just an unjustifiable preclusion but at serious odds with growing global demand for heavy rail to do the heavy lifting on radial routes.