

Submission Cover Sheet

North East Link Project EES IAC

262

Request to be heard?: yes

Full Name: Gwenda Johnsotne

Organisation: Not applicable

Affected property:

Attachment 1: EES_submission_

Attachment 2:

Attachment 3:

Comments: Refer to attachment below.

A Citizen's Response to the Environment Effects Statement:

I am the community representative of the City of Whitehorse on the North East Link Community Liaison Group South-side. I live in Blackburn North, within 30 metres of the Eastern Freeway; as like many other Victorian citizens, residents and families who live close to the North East Link Project and Eastern Freeway upgrade.

Before the Victorian Government signs off on the North East Link Project I urge the Planning Panel to consider the plight many Victorian residents and families who live close to the NELP, during and after the construction of North East Link and Eastern Freeway upgrade face.

As a resident of Blackburn North who lives within 30 metres from the Eastern Freeway and the impact it has had on the way I life now:

- I rarely open my windows due to the freeway traffic noise, even on hot summer days.
- On most week days I play music or put the television on to drown out the road traffic noise from the Eastern Freeway during the day.
- In summer, on windless mornings when I open my kitchen door the air pollution can be very noticeable, I go straight back inside, as the air smells. It is like standing behind a bus as it departs a bus stop. At times I believe the air quality must be poor.
- I rarely go outside in my courtyard to relax due to the current road traffic noise from the Eastern Freeway.
- I had double glazed windows installed in my bedroom, but the noise of passing trucks at night still wake me up/keep my awake.
- At night while trying to sleep I wear ear plugs to try to help reduce the road traffic noise from trucks travelling along the Eastern Freeway.
- I daily walk my dog along the Koonung Creek Trail along the Southside of the Eastern Freeway from Surrey Road to Eastern Freeway Linear Reserve. The trail is well used by local residents and valued by walkers, joggers and bikers.
- When I first moved to the area I once and only once, walked across the freeway foot bridge, near Busana Way, Blackburn North. On that day the air pollution was extremely noticeable.

Recent Comments from Blackburn North Residents:

This is a brief insight of how my neighbours are impacted by road traffic noise and poor air quality from the Eastern Freeway:

- A neighbour, who lives within 15 metres from the freeway told me she has a hearing impairment and the noise doesn't bother her, but she gets up every morning at 6am to close her bedroom window due to the air pollution. She is in her 80s. Her daughter, who lives with her told me it took her four years to get use to the traffic noise at night before she could get a good night's sleep.
- Another neighbour, new to the street recently told me she is struggling to live with the freeway road traffic noise at night.
- Another neighbour told me she lived in New York and the road traffic doesn't bother her but her partner's sleep is disturbed by the current level of road traffic noise from the Eastern Freeway and they plan to move.

My EES submission, as an impacted resident, concerning the construction and completion of the North East Link and Eastern Freeway Upgrade:

The NELP and Eastern Freeway Upgrade will have a detrimental effect on the residents living close to the freeway, in terms of their loss of social capital and exposure to higher levels of road traffic noise and air pollution. Further, property owners close to the NEL and upgraded Eastern Freeway

will be economically disadvantaged as a direct result of the proposed increased volume of road traffic.

I have addressed separately below the concerns regarding both road traffic noise and air quality, as well as the loss of trees and public green space as it affects local residents. However perhaps most significantly, I would submit each contractor and the North East Link Authority should set out whether or not the construction phase and completion of the project meet world best practice, and how they are going to achieve this.

1. Road Traffic Noise Levels and Air Pollution:

Road traffic noise levels and air pollution during the construction and on the completion of the NEL and the Eastern Freeway upgrade are a concern to residents.

1.1 How will the North East Link Authority act to ensure noise levels meet EES and WHO noise standards?

- Based on noise monitoring conducted from my property, the average number of dBA is well above what was reported in the EES. It must be a similar case for residents in Blackburn North who live within a 50 metres from the Eastern Freeway. This increase in road traffic noise is most noticeable at the freeway end of Rialton Ave, Kent Close, Slater Avenue, Bridgeford Avenue, Belvedere Court, Jessie Street and Kett Street (the section running along the freeway to Busana Way). As stated in the EES residents that live close to the freeway *“tend to experience high levels of road traffic noise above the project noise objectives.”* This is unacceptable and goes against the underlining principle’s of the NELP. How will NELA reduce the road traffic noise level close to the project to meet their objectives? As you walk from 5 houses away from the freeway end of the street where I live there is a noticeable increase in road traffic noise as you head towards the freeway. At the end of my street, houses may only be 5 houses apart but residents are exposed to very different levels of road traffic noise.
- The EES ignored the World Health Organisation Europe 2009 (WHO 2009) night time noise impact study, despite The NEL Scoping Requirements requesting this to be included. The WHO guidelines for night noise recommend less than 40 dB(A) of annual average (L_{night}) outside of bedrooms to prevent adverse health effects from night noise. Why has the WHO guidelines for night noise have not been taken into account for residents who live close by the Eastern Freeway?
- NELP state that 15,000 trucks will be removed from local roads onto NEL, but there is no proposed treatment of the noise from trucks in the AM hours. There are no day or night trucks or vehicles volumes published in the EES. Currently the trucks that travel along the freeway between 10pm and 6am already affect local residents sleep patterns, it will only be worse once the construction phase commences, given that night work is permissible up to 5dDA above current noise levels/ambient before residents might be offered respite. A 5dBA increase, will be very noticeable. After the completion of the NEL, road traffic noise levels will be expected to increase by 2 to 3 dBA. Again how will residents/families be able to expected to live when WHO 2009 documents the adverse health impacts caused by sleep disturbance. Why is there no night time road traffic noise limit policy? WHO guidelines are less than 40dBA. Where sections of the project and freeway are densely populated surely there will be night time restrictions imposed; including limiting the speed of trucks to 80 kph as applies in tunnels and sections of other Freeways in Melbourne, restricting trucks from travelling between 10pm to 6am, and banning the use of Jacob brakes by trucks and ban B Triple trucks.
- In terms of air quality what happens when PM₁₀ 24 hr level exceeds the State Environmental Protection Policy Intervention Level of 60 $\mu\text{m}/\text{m}^3$; which I believe will occur on high air pollution days. Will residents whom live close to NEL and Eastern Freeway residents be informed when the air pollution is high, as it could have serious health issue for people with a respiratory condition? Another concern is the EPA and NELP are still

monitoring air quality at Eastern Freeway & Middleborough Rd. Until this data is released to the community, it is hard to get facts about the air quality residents in the City of Whitehorse who live close to the freeway are exposed to.

1.2 Why won't the North East Link Authority include upgraded noise barriers between Surrey Road to the corner of Kett Street and Busana Way, Blackburn North?

- It is estimated over a 100 homes/families are situated within 100 metres from the current noise walls from Surrey Road to the corner of Kett Street and Busana Way, Blackburn North. Some families live within 10 metres of the noise barriers. They have to live with trucks going pass their homes 24 hours a day. My concern is why are the noise walls, especially near Bridgeford Ave, Slater Reserve and sections of Kett Street not being upgraded particularly where the walls are much lower? The noise walls were built over 30 years ago to a standard of 68dBA. I question whether the sound walls all meet current world standards along that section of the freeway (EES precinct 4) and are sufficient to ensure the health and well-being of the local residents.

1.3 How will the contractors / North East Link Authority use the planned construction site along the south-side of the Eastern Freeway, along the Koonung Creek Trail from Surrey Road to Springvale Road?

- Local residents in Blackburn North living close to the freeway will more than likely be exposed to higher noise levels and the safety of local residents could be in jeopardy due to the planned construction site along the south-side of Eastern Freeway, along the Koonung Creek Trail from Surrey Road to Springvale Road. Any tenderer should detail how is the site going to be used, what is going to be stored there and will vehicles travel along the path. I am concerned not only about increased noise levels but loss of green space, loss of social capital and the safety of local residents. There is not detail in the EES of how the construction site will be used.

1.4 What entry and exit points will construction vehicles use?

- Construction vehicles especially trucks using residential streets to gain access to the planned construction site could again be a noise and safety issue for our local community. I believe entry and exit points to a construction site should be restricted to day time only and are not permitted to travel in residential streets.
- What road closures are planned and how will this minimise any potential impact on local residential streets?
- Will there be an increased number of vehicles using residential streets to avoid road work delays during the Eastern Freeway upgrade, which could be again a noise, air and safety issue for local residents?

All of the above concerns I have raised will be of significant impact to the health and well-being of residents who live close to the Eastern Freeway and NEL.

2. Loss of Trees and Public Green Space:

2.1 - Will the North East Link Authority offset the loss of social capital along the Koonung Creek Trail, from Surrey Rd to Springvale Rd, by providing any upgrades to other existing public space?

- The EES it reported that the Koonung Creek Trail, south-side of the Eastern Freeway from Surrey Rd to Springvale Road will be a construction site from the middle of 2022 to early 2026. The trail is well used by my local community. It is a popular public green space, for walkers, joggers, runners, bikers and commuters. It includes a gnome garden established by local residents. A group of local residents have spent many hours/years donating their time to maintain and care for a section of the trail near Slater Ave. Another example of how popular the trail is, on ANZAC Day I took my dog for a 20 minute walk and passed 31 people, 13 dogs and 2 people riding their bikes between

Slater Reserve to the corner of Kett Street and Busana Way. The trail is a place where local residents can meet, talk, socialise, exercise and relax. Being denied access to the trail will have a significant negative effect on our local community. The loss of social capital will be immeasurable. As would I imagine for other sections of the trail along the freeway. Will North East Link Authority upgrade Slater Reserve such as building a community bbq area, a fitness track, up-grade the current play equipment, build a dog off leash area, increase the size of the community garden to help compensate for the loss of access to our much valued Koonung Creek Trail?

2.2 How will the North East Link Authority detail and address the loss of native trees and fauna along the Koonung Creek Trail?

- As stated before the EES did not define how the construction site will be used. The native trees and fauna along the trail should not be removed or destroyed. The trail is beautiful, picturesque, lined with 30 year old native trees. There are many native bird species who live along the trail, cockatoos, rosellas, magpies and kookaburras. Each bird species is precious. I believe the loss of one bird is one too many, the loss of one tree is one tree too many. The NELP and Eastern Freeway upgrade will have a negative impact on the social capital of the local community turning the Koonung Creek Trail into a construction site detrimentally changing the very fabric of our local community.

2.3 Will the North East Link Authority include the cost to maintain trees and fauna planted until well established?

- If any trees and fauna are removed it is important to add a cost factored into the project to maintain the trees and fauna until they are well established. There is no point planting trees to replace the 16,000 plus trees destroyed due to the construction of the NEL if they are only going to be maintained for 2 years as required in the EES. It is questionable that construction companies will be fined in 2045 if green coverage along the NEL has not doubled, as stated in the EES. How will green coverage be monitored?

3. Future Community Engagement:

3.1 How will the North East Link Authority and the contractors inform local residents of construction work being conducted in their area?

- During the construction of the NEL and Eastern Freeway communication is vital, residents must be informed and have input into the process.

4. Social and Human Health:

4.1 How will the North East Link Authority minimise the impact the project will have on families living close to the NELP if the EPR to meet world best practice?

Chapters 17 and 18 of the EES highlighted the benefits the NEL will generate in Victorian and our society and how the EPR in place will minimise the effect on the surrounding community lifestyle, health, wellbeing and social cohesion but not one resident represented the City of Whitehorse at a series of 5 workshops where residents could express their concerns (EES 17.1.2 page 4.) Residents of the City of Whitehorse were not represented: of particular concern is that where pockets of the most disadvantage citizens live, those living close the Eastern Freeway in the City of Whitehorse as defined by the ABS Index of Relative Socio - Economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD), their voices were not heard.

In principle I give my full support to the Warringal Conservation Society's CLG response which I believe is in general applicable across all the cities affected by the NELP and Eastern Freeway Upgrade:

- to minimise the impact the project will have on all the families and communities who live close by;
- to minimise the loss of social capital on the local communities;
- to minimise the destruction of the environment and wildlife.

In my submission I have not included my concerns for the loss of sporting grounds and facilities, the overall loss of green space, the destruction of 16,000 plus trees, loss of habitat for wildlife, the loss of a significant tree in Bulleen, the effect it will have on schools and kindergartens and the loss of businesses in Bulleen and Watsonia due to the construction of the NEL; as I believe it will be covered by other community and business groups.

Families who live close by the proposed NEL and Eastern Freeway Upgrade across the four cities, lives, health, well-being and social cohesion will all be affected by the project. I don't pretend to be an engineer or a sound expert. However after building an understanding of the implications of the EES I believe hundreds of families living close, within 100 metres of the Eastern Freeway and the NELP that they will be detrimentally, impacted by the new infrastructure. They will become unintentional collateral damage.

I hope that the Victorian Government will act on community groups and residents' concerns and I look forward to presenting my case to the Planning Panel later on in the year.

Regards,

Gwenda Johnstone