For nearly 30 years, the Friends of the Yarra Valley Parks have been committed to protecting and enhancing the Yarra Parklands between Burke Rd and Warrandyte. Sir Rupert Hamer, Victoria’s premier in the 1970s, along with committed local champions, had a vision of a continuous park along our Yarra River which would run from the heart of the city all the way to country Victoria.

The FYVP are very concerned of the impacts of NELink on the Yarra River. We also believe that we all have a responsibility to realize opportunities for the Yarra River Parklands that might flow from the NELink project.

When some people more familiar with these processes reviewed our submission, their comment was to the effect that "this has been written with passion…but so what. You need someone credible to provide evidence that major project outcomes are not always ideal and that significantly better outcomes are possible."

Our belief is that better outcomes are to be found in the effectiveness of the management systems and processes, and that these have to be built in from the day the first sod is turned and continued for decades down the track. For this reason we contacted Alan Noy, who has been managing revegetation projects both small and large for over 30 years. In that time, he has been totally committed to the continual improvement of on-ground practices that result in better long term outcomes for the natural world at less cost. We believe Alan has very complementary skills to the technical experts who have presented at these hearings.

Our president, Clive Edington, asked me to mention that the FYVP strongly endorse the recommendations in Dr Graeme Lorimer's report. Clive also mentioned that our group will support NELP local community activities which support the Yarra River Parklands in the future.

We would also note Gary French’s submission. Through his work Gary has had an involvement in the Yarra Valley Parklands over the decades, and has a deep understanding of key issues and opportunities.

The FYVP suggestions for the Little Bolin Billabong complement Gary’s concerns.

Lastly, the Caltex tree. A founding committee member of the FYVP, Eve Fullarton, was one of several people who, at different times, made a stand to save the tree. I have always be very appreciative of these efforts. Often, when I have felt a little beaten by the world I have stopped on the way to work and touched the tree…and it has seemed to help me through the day ahead.

I think it would be a great school exercise for kids to learn about history through the eyes of a 300-year-old tree. Kids could speculate at what this ancient Redgum has observed happening around it, and then come down and touch it to see if they can tap into the inner strength that the world of nature has for us if we only step back from our people centric world.

Rupert Hamer courageously set land aside as a unique asset for future generations. We believe similar courage is needed now to realize the potential of this vision.

Over to you, Alan.