NEL EES Submission by Banyule Ratepayers Action Group Inc (BRAG) A0103920Z

By David Mulholland BRAG Inc Chairperson
About Banyule Ratepayers Action Group

Banyule Ratepayers Action Group is a registered association of concerned residents in Banyule.

Our aims are:

- Work for the community to achieve its expectations
- Integrity and honesty
- Encourage genuine, open and frank communications
- Renew and/or refresh urban assets through discouraging inappropriate development but encouraging high quality, appropriate development
- Subject Council staff, Councillors, Local Members and major projects performance to public audit and ensure there is accountability for decisions and recommendations
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Introduction
Introduction

- BRAG, the leading local Banyule ratepayers advocacy group, is calling on NELP to consider alternatives to the reference design and additional complementary projects.
- Our roads are congested, unsafe and our suburban streets are being used as a de facto link between the M80 and the Eastern Freeway.
- Of the nearly 8,000 survey responses 68% of residents do not support Corridor Option A with the strongest preference being for Corridor Option C.
- Given the State Government has chosen Option A, the State Government should minimise the environmental effects and community impact by extending the NEL tunnel north to the M80.
- The purpose of NEL is to improve the liveability of our area. Less noise, less traffic, more safety.
Issues

- Increased congestion at the Lower Plenty intersection.
- Damage to the natural environment around the Simpson’s Barracks.
- Reduction in amenity and liveability due to a reduction in urban wilderness and green space such as Borlase Reserve.
- Reduction in house prices and inability to lease properties adjacent to the construction area.
- Rosanna Road is a nightmare. As part of this project we need to take a serious look at ways to improve the safety of travelling to and from the NEL. Increasing safety on and around this road is essential.
- The effects on the Warringal Parklands and the Banyule Flats. Any works needs to be undertaken with great sensitivity and consideration to the delicate and unique environment in this area.
Solutions

1. Remove the Lower Plenty Road Interchange from the reference design and continue the NEL tunnel as per ‘SMART Taxpayers Design’ option.
2. Provide additional funds for the planning and construction of the NEL long tunnel option with a low impact ‘exit only’ Lower Plenty Road Interchange.
3. Fund rate relief for Banyule ratepayers affected by the construction of the NEL.
Complementary projects requested by BRAG

- $20 million to implement a trial peak period reversible lane system for Rosanna Road (modelled off reversible lane system in Johnston St, Collingwood).
- $5 million for planning to fix the Lower Plenty Road and Rosanna Road intersection as part of the North-East Link.
- Implement a permanent truck ban on Rosanna Road and Erskine Road.
Reference Design Options
SMART Taxpayers Design

BRAG recommends removing the Lower Plenty Interchange altogether from the NEL reference design and wants changes as per the SMART Taxpayers Design.

What kind of North East Link do you want? What legacy will this project leave?

We don't want a messy, impactful and long construction due to cut and cover and the questionable Lower Plenty Interchange.
Borlase Reserve

If the Lower Plenty Interchange is removed and further tunnelling done, the environmental impact to the Simpsons Barracks land and Borlase Reserve will be avoided and the negative economic impact to local housing prices due to the construction of the interchange and trenching will be gone.
I'm speaking today on behalf of the parents of St Martin of Tours Primary School who have raised the following concerns if the LPR interchange continues as designed, then we risk....

- Access issues
- Noise pollution
- Dust pollution
- Vibration, which all may cause....
  - Enrolments to fall
  - Teachers may leave the school
  - A compromise to the viability of the School
OD Truck Route

The traffic report shows that the Lower Plenty Road interchange will become the key OD truck route exit before the OD trucks start to travel along Rosanna Road.

Rosanna Road should have a permanent truck ban.
BabEng Long Tunnel Option

BRAG supports the BabEng long tunnel option with modifications to ensure Lower Plenty Interchange impact on Simpsons Barracks is minimised by ensuring this only includes an exit, not an entrance. The so-called long tunnel variant of the Government’s Option A is justified based on the initial findings in Banyule Council’s Consultant Engineer Report (BabEng Report).

Figure 10: North East Link Project alignment for the reference design and extension Options A2 and A3
Economic Impact

There has already been a large economic impact to locals due to the NEL reference design.

- House prices have dropped significantly in the area.
- Businesses within the Watsonia area will likely suffer financially due to a significant reduction in patronage during the construction phase.
Complementary Projects
Rosanna Road: our current situation

The need for the ‘missing link’ is terribly clear for the residents of Banyule.

- The safety issues along Rosanna Road are such that parents no longer feel their kids are safe to walk to school.
- Accidents are happening on a fortnightly basis.
- Locals are too afraid to turn right at almost every intersection of Rosanna Road.
- The NEL will go some way to resolving the issues on Rosanna Road.
For immediate action BRAG proposes the installation of a ‘reversible lane’, modelled on that found on Johnston Street, Collingwood.

This is a great congestion buster and can be implemented quickly on Rosanna Road while longer term solutions are put in place.
Lower Plenty Road x Rosanna Road Intersection

- One of Banyule’s most dangerous blackspots now has a tollway entrance designed to be 50m from the intersection.
- This intersection is long overdue for redesign due to safety risks of trucks merging and turning into narrow Rosanna Road.
- The NELP provides the perfect opportunity to redesign this intersection to improve the safety of residents and commuters and to ensure the intersection is fit for purpose.
Rosanna Road Truck Ban

- BRAG are pursuing a permanent (24/7) truck ban on Rosanna Road for non local deliveries as part of the project.
- We believe a truck ban on Rosanna Road is justified
- There should only be one interstate freight route through Banyule. This is the NEL.
Erskine Road Truck Ban

- NELP suggests that “A small increase in trucks is predicted along Erskine Road (+300) which may be caused by trucks travelling between North East Link and the La Trobe precinct.” (Section 9.5.1 Technical report A Traffic and transport).
- Trucks should be travelling north to the Greensborough Hwy or south to Bell St. It should not be a recommended option for trucks to cut through local streets.
Summary
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- BRAG recommends the following solution as our first preference to improve the NEL reference design:
  Remove the Lower Plenty Interchange and continue the tunnelling underground instead of utilising the trench design as per the SMART Taxpayers Design.
- As our second preference if NELP is not amenable to removing the Lower Plenty Interchange: Construct the BabEng long tunnel variant of the State Government’s Option A with a minimised ‘exit only’ Lower Plenty Interchange
- If no changes are fulfilled ensure rate relief is provided to affected property owners and businesses.
Summary

In order to achieve the goals of the NEL of improved safety, reduced trucks and less congestion, BRAG recommends complementary projects:

1. Implement a trial peak period reversible lane system for Rosanna Road.
2. Start detailed planning to fix the Lower Plenty Road and Rosanna Road intersection as part of the NEL.
3. Implement a permanent truck ban on Rosanna Road and Erskine Road.