

Public Environment Report

Chapter 14

Consultation

September 2019



Chapter 14

Consultation

The PER Guidelines require discussion of the consultation undertaken for the action, including consultation about relevant impacts of the action. North East Link Project (NELP) recognises that consultation with stakeholders and affected parties is essential for achieving high quality outcomes for the community and stakeholders.

This chapter discusses:

- The consultation which has been undertaken and which has been proposed in relation to relevant impacts of North East Link
- Feedback received and NELP's response
- Identified affected parties and communities and a description of their views based on the consultation which has been carried out.

NELP has carried out a comprehensive program of communications and engagement to keep the community informed about project progress, provide communities and stakeholders with opportunities to participate in North East Link's development and delivery, and identify and respond to stakeholder and community concerns.

The draft PER was exhibited together with an invitation for anyone to give NELP comments on the draft PER within a period of more than 30 business days. The PER was finalised following exhibition of the draft PER and the receipt of public and stakeholder comments. A summary of such comments and how those comments have been addressed is provided in Attachment VIII – Submissions report.

A more comprehensive description of the wider North East Link community and stakeholder consultation program including responses to feedback received is provided in the North East Link Stakeholder Consultation Report. This is publicly available as part of the EES.

14.1 Stakeholders

North East Link is a large infrastructure project and so has many stakeholders and communities included in the consultation program. The following sections outline key stakeholders and affected parties. Details of persons and agencies specifically consulted during the PER are available in Attachment V – List of persons and agencies consulted during the PER.

14.1.1 Commonwealth and state government

Government stakeholders have roles to play in the planning, assessment and approval process, and ultimately the construction and operation of North East Link.

Table 14-1 and Table 14-2 identify the Australian and Victorian government stakeholders and their roles in the process.

Table 14-1 North East Link Australian and Victorian government stakeholders

Minister	Agency	Role
Australian Government		
Minister for the Environment	Department of the Environment and Energy	Administers the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> ('EPBC Act').
Minister for Defence	Department of Defence	Land owner of Simpson Barracks. Oversees Simpson Barracks operations, administration and management.
Minister for Urban Infrastructure and Cities	Infrastructure Australia	Provides advice to the Australian Government on infrastructure projects.
Victorian Government		
Premier of Victoria	Department of Premier and Cabinet	Makes key project decisions. Has declared North East Link under the <i>Major Transport Projects Facilitation Act 2009</i> .

Minister	Agency	Role
Minister for Transport Infrastructure	Department of Transport	<p>Relevant Minister for North East Link under the <i>Environment Effects Act 1978</i>.</p> <p>Connects the following agencies to coordinate planning of Victoria's transport system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Transport Victoria • VicRoads • V/Line • Commercial Passenger Vehicles Victoria • Victorian Ports Corporation (Melbourne) • Victorian Regional Channels Authority • Port of Hastings Development Authority.
Minister for Roads	Department of Transport	The minister administers the <i>Road Management Act 2004</i> .
Minister for Planning	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning	Administers the <i>Environment Effects Act 1978</i> and the <i>Planning and Environment Act 1987</i> .
Minister for Health	Department of Health and Human Services	Administers the <i>Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008</i> .
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs	Aboriginal Victoria	Administers the <i>Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006</i> .
Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change	Environment Protection Authority (EPA) Victoria	Administers the <i>Environment Protection Act 1970</i> .

Table 14-2 North East Link Victorian Government agency and statutory authority stakeholders

Agency	Role
Heritage Victoria	<p>Administers the <i>Heritage Act 2017</i>.</p> <p>Manages the Victorian Heritage Register and the Victorian Heritage Inventory.</p>
Infrastructure Victoria	Provides advice to the Victorian Government on the state's infrastructure needs and priorities.
Melbourne Water	<p>Manages Melbourne's water supply catchments, sewage treatment and rivers, creeks and major drainage systems.</p> <p>Responsible for leading development of the Yarra Strategic Plan.</p>
Office of the Victorian Government Architect	Provides leadership and strategic advice to the Victorian Government about architecture and urban design.

Agency	Role
Parks Victoria	Manages Victoria's parks, reserves, waterways and other public land under the Parks Victoria Act 2018. Waterway Manager for the Yarra River.
Public Transport Victoria	Manages the public transport system.
Victorian Planning Authority	Facilitates integrated land use and infrastructure planning.
VicRoads	Administers the Road Management Act 2004. Manages arterial roads.
VicTrack	Owns the rail network.

14.1.2 Local government

North East Link would pass through six local government areas: the municipalities of Banyule, Boroondara, Manningham, Nillumbik, Whitehorse and Yarra. The Commonwealth land of Simpson Barracks is surrounded by the City of Banyule. In addition, North East Link would border the City of Whittlesea.

NELP has worked with these local councils extensively through the environmental assessment and development of North East Link.

14.1.3 The community

The communities in the north, east and south-east of Melbourne are most likely to use or be affected by North East Link. The parts of the community potentially affected by the action on Commonwealth land would be those in residential areas surrounding Simpson Barracks. This community has been consulted as part of the wider North East Link public consultation program.

14.1.4 Simpson Barracks Defence community

The Defence personnel of Simpson Barracks form a distinct community who are specifically affected by the action on Commonwealth land. Simpson Barracks is primarily a training facility and many of the residents are stationed there temporarily (from two weeks to 18 months). There is a permanent workforce on the site, many of whom live in the surrounding area. The Defence community has been engaged through targeted consultation at Simpson Barracks as well as through the wider North East Link community communications and engagement program.

14.1.5 Traditional Owners

The Traditional Owners of the land are the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation who are represented by the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (WWCHAC). NELP has been working in collaboration with WWCHAC on multiple levels as described in Section 14.2.3.

14.1.6 Communities with targeted needs

NELP has made contact with support agencies such as Expression Australia (formerly known as VicDeaf) and Blind Citizens Australia to offer opportunities to engage with communities with targeted needs and hard to reach communities.

NELP also engaged the CALD Group, which specialises in engagement with culturally and linguistically diverse communities, to provide a list of contacts for key community leaders for NELP to contact seeking assistance to engage and develop materials about the project and how to get involved.

NELP has promoted its community engagement activities through a number of methods including providing translator and interpreter services and the use of different communication methods to reach different age groups.

14.2 Consultation that has already taken place

14.2.1 Consultation with the community

As a major urban infrastructure project, NELP has implemented an extensive consultation program that has included a broad range of activities and engagement tools. The approach to consultation with communities and stakeholders is staged to allow for feedback and input to be considered at key stages of the environmental assessments and development of North East Link.

Early contact commenced in 2017 to raise awareness of the project and to understand travel preferences around and through the north-east of Melbourne and community views on improving transport infrastructure. Activities included drop in events, the use of social media, setting up a 1800 community telephone hotline and email address, and an online and postal community travel and values survey. Responses to this survey were received from more than 7,400 people. The results of the survey were used to help identify the transport problems North East Link needs to help solve, and what NELP should help to protect in Melbourne's north-east.

In August 2017, NELP shared the findings about the four corridor options. The community was asked to provide feedback on the project objectives and principles to help select a preferred corridor. Feedback received on the four corridor options was considered alongside evidence from technical investigations as part of the options assessment process.

Consultation activities and use of engagement tools in 2018 focused on:

- Providing updates on the development of North East Link
- Introducing the planning and approvals process and the community's role in this process
- Seeking feedback to help inform the impact assessments and refine design
- Demonstrating how feedback contributed to the project.

The following is a summary of the consultation program undertaken in 2018:

- **Website** – over 111,985 visits have been recorded to the North East Link website.
- **Newsletters** – three newsletters have been posted to over 236,000 homes and businesses. The newsletter provided updates on North East Link including details of upcoming site investigations and interactive components designed to encourage feedback.
- **eNews** –regular updates were emailed to over 9,440 subscribers.
- **Social media** – NELP reached over 797,000 people using social media channels including: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn.
- **Information sessions** – eight information sessions held in April and May with project staff and technical specialists. These were attended by over 2,500 people who provided over 580 pieces of feedback. In September and October, a further 14 information sessions were held with over 3,700 people providing over 355 pieces of feedback. Visitors to the information sessions were able to view project timelines, maps and concept drawings and provide feedback on the design work to date and information collected from the environment studies.
- **Presentations and briefing with key stakeholders** – NELP has presented to over 250 meetings, briefings and presentations to schools, businesses, sports clubs, community groups, peak bodies and at industry events.
- **Community group meetings and workshops** – NELP facilitated over 20 Community Liaison Group meetings to share information between community representatives, NELP and stakeholders. Community technical discussion groups were held to provide a forum to discuss in more detail innovations and issues to refine design. Community workshops with also held to support urban design and social impact studies.
- **Advertising and promotion** – radio, local print and digital advertising has been used to help inform people about North East Link and notify of feedback opportunities.
- **Communication with property owners and tenants** – phone and face-to-face conversations were facilitated by NELP case managers with property owners and tenants potentially impacted by land acquisition or living within the project boundary.

In addition, to understand the views and concerns of those living and working at Simpson Barracks, an information drop-in session was held at the barracks in September 2018. Information on the action was provided and members of the North East Link team were available to answer questions.

14.2.2 Consultation with government stakeholders

Australian Government

Consultation has been carried out with Australian Government stakeholders to inform the technical studies carried out for this PER. Table 14-3 presents an overview of this consultation.

Table 14-3 PER specific consultation activities

Stakeholder	Interest	Consultation regarding the PER
Department of the Environment and Energy	Administers the process of assessment under the EPBC Act	Consultation regarding the PER and the scope of assessment including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussions about North East Link EPBC referral Discussions about the PER Guidelines for the action A visit to site accompanied by NELP on 20 June 2018 Regular telephone conferences to clarify aspects of the PER Guidelines.
Department of Defence	Owner of Simpson Barracks and oversees operation, administration and management	Confirmation of the accuracy of draft history, description, use and historical heritage values of Commonwealth land at Simpson Barracks. A draft of the Historic Heritage EES technical report was provided for comment.
Department of Defence – Management of Simpson Barracks	Responsible for activities at Simpson Barracks	Regular contact throughout the assessment phase with the Simpson Barracks management to discuss ongoing issues in relation to the action. An information 'drop-in' session on 19 September 2018 with a presentation to the management team and Q&A session.
Department of Defence – Defence estate Environment team	Responsible for environmental management and conservation of natural resources on Defence estates	Regular contact throughout the assessment phase with the Environment team to discuss ongoing issues in relation to the action. A draft of the Historic Heritage EES technical report was provided for comment. Meetings to discuss aspects such as translocation and offsetting.

Victorian Government

In accordance with the Victorian Minister for Planning's public works order, DELWP has convened an agency-based Technical Reference Group (TRG) to advise it and NELP on a range of matters associated with the EES and statutory approval processes.

DELWP established the TRG for North East Link in February 2018. It comprises representatives from government agencies, regional authorities, municipal councils and a representative body for the Traditional Owners of the land that have a statutory or policy interest in North East Link. Representatives included DELWP, the Department of Health and Human Services, Aboriginal Victoria, EPA Victoria, Heritage Victoria, Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria, Public Transport Victoria, Transport for Victoria, VicRoads, Victorian Planning Authority, VicTrack, the WWCHAC, Banyule, Boroondara, Manningham, Whitehorse and Yarra City Councils and the Nillumbik Shire Council.

Throughout 2018, regular meetings with the TRG (around monthly), as well as one-on-one discussions with TRG members, were held.

The TRG has provided advice to the North East Link team on the design and adequacy of technical studies, as well as facilitated interaction between the action and key stakeholders.

14.2.3 Consultation with WWCHAC

As part of project development, NELP has been working in collaboration with WWCHAC on multiple levels. This has included involvement in the development of the North East Link reference project and technical studies, Urban Design Strategy, Cultural Values Mapping, attendance at TRG and related meetings, workshops and walks on Country.

North East Link requires approval of a Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) from WWCHAC and Aboriginal Victoria. Investigations have been ongoing throughout 2018 on both standard and complex assessments and will be completed in 2019.

A range of activities including workshops and field visits with Elders and specialists from disciplines including cultural heritage, historical heritage and anthropology have been carried out to record both tangible and intangible cultural values of Wurundjeri in the project boundary.

14.3 Consultation on the draft PER

14.3.1 Public display

The draft PER was exhibited in mid-2019 together with an invitation for anyone to give NELP comments on the draft PER within a period of more than 30 business days (between 16 April 2019 and 30 May 2019).

Written notice of the public exhibition of the draft PER was provided as described in Table 14-4 below:

Table 14-4 Written notice of public display of the draft PER

Type of advertising	Details
Statutory advertising as required and approved by DoEE	<p>State and national newspapers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tuesday 16 April – Herald Sun and The Australian Wednesday 17 April – The Age <p>Local newspapers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tuesday 16 April – Whittlesea Leader, Heidelberg Leader, Lilydale Yarra Valley Leader, Progress Leader Wednesday 17 April – Manningham Leader, Whitehorse Leader, Diamond Valley Leader <p>North East Link website:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tuesday 16 April (474 visits to the statutory notice page during exhibition period)
North East Link Project newsletter	Distributed week commencing 15 April 2019 to 240,000+ homes and businesses in the Project area
Email broadcasts to North East Link Project eNews subscribers	<p>Three emails sent to 9,475+ recipients:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tuesday 16 April – advice draft PER on exhibition for public comment Friday 10 May – reminder EES and draft PER on exhibition for public comment Saturday 25 May – reminder submissions closing soon for EES and draft PER
North East Link social media channels	<p>Three Facebook posts that reached 4,400+ people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tuesday 16 April – advice draft PER on exhibition for public comment Thursday 16 May – reminder draft PER submissions closing Monday 27 May – reminder draft PER submissions closing <p>Three Twitter posts that reached 1,400+ people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tuesday 16 April – advice draft PER on exhibition for public comment Wednesday 15 May – reminder draft PER submissions closing Sunday 26 May – reminder draft PER submissions closing
North East Link website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tuesday 16 April – Statutory advert posted (as described above) Thursday 23 May – reminder draft PER submissions closing

The draft PER including all Attachments and Technical Appendices was made available without charge online at <https://northeastlink.vic.gov.au/environment/Environment-Protection-Biodiversity-Conservation-Act/view-the-draft-per>. In addition, hard copies of the draft PER were displayed at the following locations:

- Banyule City Council, 1 Flintoff Street, Greensborough
- Eltham Library, Panther Place, Eltham
- Ivanhoe Council Library, 255 Upper Heidelberg Road, Ivanhoe
- Rosanna Library, 72 Turnham Avenue, Rosanna
- The State Library of Victoria, Corner of Little Lonsdale Street and Russell Street, Melbourne
- Watsonia Community Information Hub, 17 Watsonia Road, Watsonia
- Department of Environment and Energy, Canberra; by email request to the department at <mailto:EPBC.Referrals@environment.gov.au>.

The draft PER was also made available electronically on a USB drive upon request. Community members and stakeholders could request a copy of a USB containing a full copy of the draft PER.

14.3.2 Consultation with the community

Consultation activities for North East Link undertaken during exhibition of the draft PER include:

- **Website** – Over 38,965 visits were recorded to the North East Link website. The site provided information about the PER process, dates for public comment, links to the full documents, links to supporting fact sheets, information about how to make submissions and contact details for enquiries.
- **Newsletters** – One newsletter was posted to over 240,000 homes and businesses. The newsletter provided general information about draft PER, exhibition dates, where to view the documents and get information about how to make a submission. Dates and locations for six information sessions were also provided.
- **eNews** – Five email broadcasts were emailed to over 9,475 subscribers.
- **Social media** – NELP has published more than 15 posts related to the draft PER and reached over 595,000 people using social media channels including: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn.
- **Information sessions** – Six information sessions were held during exhibition of the draft PER with project staff and technical specialists. These were attended by more than 640 people. While these sessions also provided information on the EES, the draft PER was also available for viewing and members of the community could (and did) ask questions of the project team about issues relating to the draft PER.

- **Community group meetings and workshops** – Each of the two Community Liaison Groups (CLGs) formed by the North East Link Project met during the draft PER exhibition period.
- **Advertising and promotion** – Radio, local print and digital advertising was used to inform people about the PER, exhibition dates, where to view the documents and get more information about how to make a submission.

14.3.3 Consultation with government stakeholders

Consultation has been carried out with Australian Government stakeholders following exhibition of the draft PER. This has included:

- Discussions with the Department of the Environment and Energy following the exhibition of the draft PER regarding next steps in the process
- Meetings with the Department of Defence – Defence estate Environment team, following the exhibition of the draft PER.

14.3.4 Consultation with WWCHAC

Following exhibition of the draft PER, NELP has continued to consult with the WWCHAC to discuss the Cultural Values Mapping work. This consultation has included ongoing meetings, workshops and walks on Country to record both tangible and intangible cultural values of the Wurundjeri in the project boundary.

North East Link requires approval of a Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) from the WWCHAC and Aboriginal Victoria. Investigations for the CHMP were ongoing during exhibition of the draft PER on both standard and complex assessments and will be completed in mid-2019. There have been monthly meetings and regular phone calls and email with the WWCHAC and cultural heritage consultants on the CHMP assessment.

NELP intends to continue this collaborative process with the WWCHAC through the procurement and detailed design phases for the action.

14.3.5 Comments received on the draft PER

During the exhibition period, NELP invited the public to make written submissions on the draft PER via:

- Online submission at jointheconversation.northeastlink.vic.gov.au/epbc
- Hard copies to:
Environment Manager North East Link
GPO Box 4509
Melbourne Vic 3001

A total of 84 submissions on the draft PER were received within the exhibition period, from individuals, businesses, groups and organisations. One submission was withdrawn at the submitter's request during the exhibition period, and the final number of submissions is considered to be 83.

The 83 submissions were made by a range of businesses, community groups, local councils, government departments, Members of Parliament and other individuals. Table 14-5 identifies the number of submissions from each submitter type.

Table 14-5 Submission origin

Submission origin	Number of submissions
Business	7
Community group	7
Council	3
Government departments	1
Member of Parliament	1
Other individual	64

Further detail about the submissions and how they were defined, reviewed, summarised and categorised is provided in Attachment VIII – Submissions report.

14.4 Ongoing community and stakeholder consultation

Post approval, community and stakeholder engagement would continue. Central to this would be Communications and Community Engagement Plans prepared by NELP's contractors for construction and operation. These would outline the approach to communicate and engage with the community and stakeholders during construction and operation.

14.5 Response to feedback

14.5.1 Draft PER

Feedback from the community and stakeholders has informed the selection of the preferred corridor, helped identify areas of interest and concern to be considered in the technical assessments and informed development of North East Link. The feedback gathered during 2018 took many forms. Top feedback themes across North East Link related to traffic and transport, noise, landscape, visual, social and community impacts and air quality. Concerns and interests relevant to the preparation of the draft PER are summarised below:

- **Traffic and transport** – Temporary transport disruptions during construction near Simpson Barracks and the impacts from permanent changes to local traffic movements near Simpson Barracks along Greensborough Road
- **Landscape and visual impacts** – Permanent landscape changes from removing mature trees and vegetation on Simpson Barracks and permanent visual impacts from new road infrastructure including tunnel ventilation structures and noise walls
- **Noise** – Impacts from construction for residents living on Simpson Barracks south of the interchange and the permanent noise from increased traffic using Greensborough Road
- **Air quality** – Construction dust impacts for residents living on and near Simpson Barracks and impacts from emissions from the tunnel ventilation structures during operation
- **Flora and Fauna** – Loss of trees (Red Gum, Yellow Box and Scribbly) fauna and their habitats including Swift Parrot and the Kangaroos on and near Simpson Barracks
- **Water** – Groundwater from tunnelling and the impact this would have on the Yarra River, Bolin Bolin Billabong, Banyule Swamp, Warringal Parklands and Banksia Park
- **Vibration** – Impacts on sensitive environmental areas including Bolin Bolin Billabong, Banyule Swamp, Warringal Parklands and Banksia Park.

These issues have been considered by technical specialists when completing their studies and developing North East Link. For further detail on feedback received and how this has been responded to see the publicly available North East Link Community engagement reports (NELP, 2018) available on the North East Link website (northeastlink.vic.gov.au) and the Stakeholder Consultation Report publicly available as part of the EES.

14.5.2 Final PER

Key issues and comments from the 83 submissions received on the draft PER were assigned categories and themes for consideration which are summarised in Table 14-6. Most submissions raised multiple comments or concerns.

Table 14-6 Number of instances a category was raised in submissions

Category	Number of instances
Flora and fauna	144
Groundwater	16
Surface water	13
Commonwealth land	119
Legal and procedural	35
Community and stakeholder consultation	32
General comments about the project	12
Design alternatives	58
Out of scope	66

Amendments were made to the draft PER where a submission:

- Provided additional information that corrected inaccuracies or clarified unclear information in the draft PER
- Proposed strategies that are feasible and which improve environmental outcomes
- Identified further information or research that was required to adequately determine the impacts of North East Link.

Amendments to the draft PER were not made where a submission:

- Clearly supported North East Link
- Offered a neutral statement or no change was sought
- Addressed issues beyond the scope of the PER, or that were within the scope of the North East Link EES only
- Included statements that were considered to be factually incorrect
- Raised issues or made comments on information that had already been considered and addressed in the draft PER
- Suggested project alternatives beyond the scope of the PER or North East Link.

A summary of the comments received on the draft PER and how those comments have been addressed is provided in Attachment VIII – Submissions report.