



Tree planting at Watsonia Primary School

Tree planting program Community survey report

In late 2020, we asked people living in suburbs near North East Link to help us plan our tree planting program.

For every tree removed to build North East Link, at least two will be planted - delivering one of the largest tree planting programs for a major transport project in Victoria.

More than 30,000 trees will be planted as part of the project design and in suburbs nearby.

We started planting trees last year well before major construction starts. From 16 November to 31 December 2020 we asked people how they wanted more trees planted in suburbs near North East Link to improve where they live, and ideas where they could be planted.

This report includes a summary of what we heard, and how it's helping to shape the next stages of the project's tree planting program.

How we let people know about the survey



Email

Two emails to 10,200+ project update subscribers



Social media

Five social media posts seen by 17,000+ people



Newsletter

Print newsletter sent to 500,000+ homes



Community engagement

Asked six local councils, and our two community liaison groups to help spread the word through their local networks.



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northeastlink.vic.gov.au



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Who we heard from

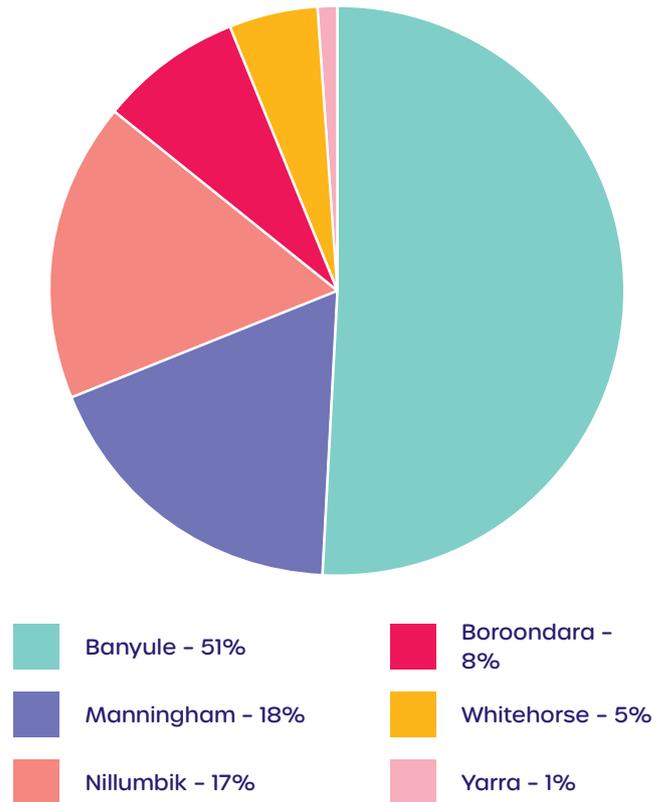
To make it easy to get involved, we collected responses using a short online survey at engage.vic.gov.au/north-east-link. People who wanted to reply by post or email used a printed form.

793 people from 100 suburbs took the survey.

Top 10 suburbs

Greensborough - 10%
Eltham - 7%
Macleod - 5%
Watsonia - 5%
Rosanna - 4%
Viewbank - 4%
Bulleen - 4%
Montmorency - 4%
Balwyn North - 4%
Yallambie - 4%

Responses by local area



We're not just counting how many trees we plant for North East Link, we're counting what they do.

Trees planted for North East Link will work together to grow more cover from tree canopy than is removed.

Tree canopy is what you see when you look up, the cover from leaves and branches and where trees do their most important work - providing shade, wildlife habitat, filtering air and water and cooling our suburbs.



Tree planting at Belle Vue Primary School, Balwyn North

What we heard

Top places to plant trees



Wildlife corridors



Nature reserves



Public parks

Top reasons to plant trees



Clean air



Wildlife habitat



Shade and cooling

What else you want us to consider



Planting indigenous and native species



Working with local landowners



Having the right kind of maintenance plans



Continuing to involve the community

Locations you suggested we consider planting trees

140+

Parks, reserves, waterways and walking and cycling trails

100+

Roads and local streets

40+

Community places including schools, shops and train stations

What we're doing

Prioritising planting trees in places...

- ✓ that are most important to local people
- ✓ that are under heat stress
- ✓ where there is space to plant large groups of trees - getting planting off to a solid, early start.

We're also...

- ✓ looking to plant indigenous or native species where we can
- ✓ working closely with local councils and other land owners and managers
- ✓ maintaining new trees in the critical first two years after planting
- ✓ planning more ways for the community to be involved.



Studley Park Gum trees planted in Yarra River parklands in May this year were grown at the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria nursery using seeds collected locally.

Where we're planting next

As well as working to keep as many trees as we can while we build North East Link, we're getting a head start now on getting more trees in the ground before major construction.

Early tree planting for this year has already started in parklands along the Yarra River.

New populations of Studley Park Gum trees have been established in Westerfolds Park, Templestowe and Montpelier Reserve, Lower Plenty - increasing the number of these significant trees in Melbourne's north-east.

We're also working closely with Banyule, Boroondara, Manningham, Nillumbik and Whitehorse councils on places to plant more trees early in local parks, reserves and streets.

We're looking at planting trees in places that match what we heard is important to people and consider council priorities. We'll keep the local community updated as details are confirmed soon.

Tree planting for this year also includes Belle Vue Primary School in Balwyn North, Watsonia Primary School in Watsonia and completing sports upgrades for North East Link at Ford Park in Bellfield, Binnak Park in Watsonia North and Greensborough College in Greensborough.

Tree planting priorities

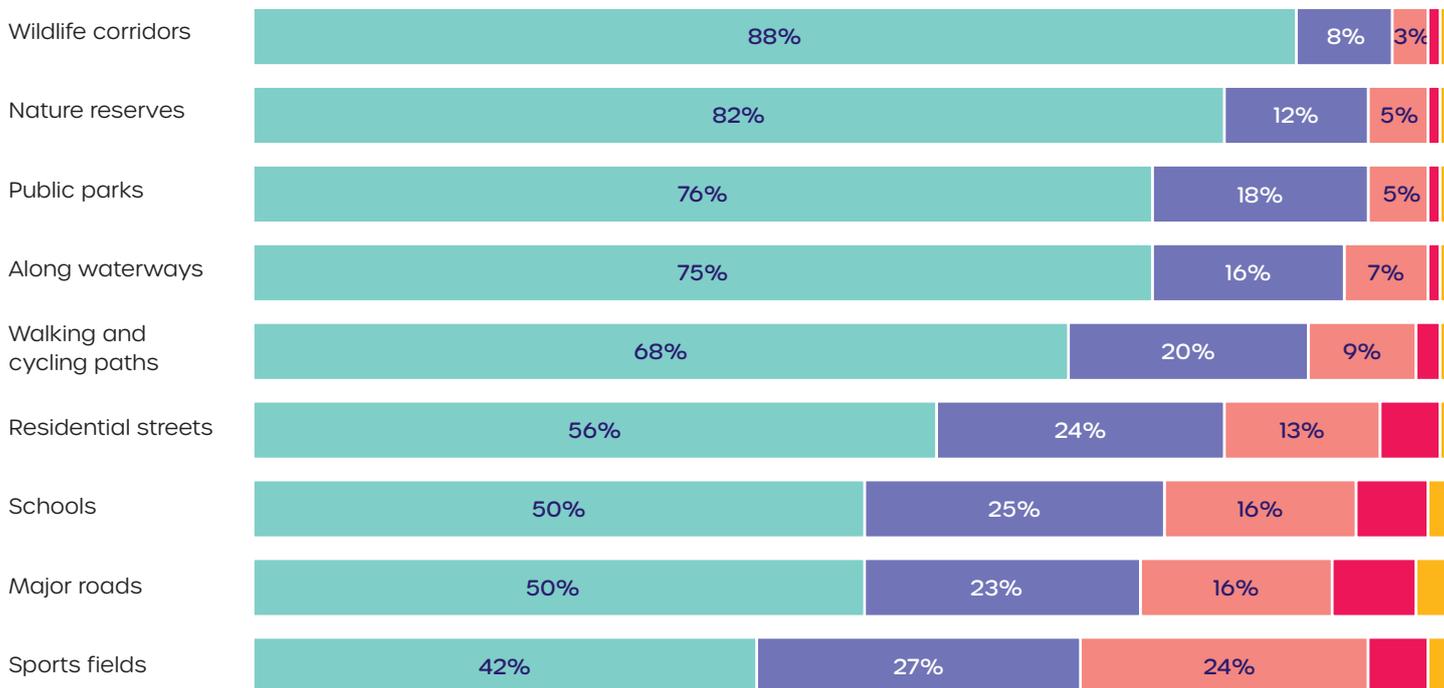
Priority	Where we're planting	When we're planting
1	Along North East Link as part of the project design, keeping them as close as possible to where existing trees need to be removed.	After construction is finished, or earlier if possible. You can comment on urban design and landscape plans after the design is released.
2	Near North East Link, ideally within 400 metres.	We're using the results from this survey to get a head start in some locations now, and will continue the rest from 2022 onwards.
3	In the six council areas the project passes through.	

Keep reading for a more detailed summary of survey responses, and how they're being used to shape the North East Link tree planting program.

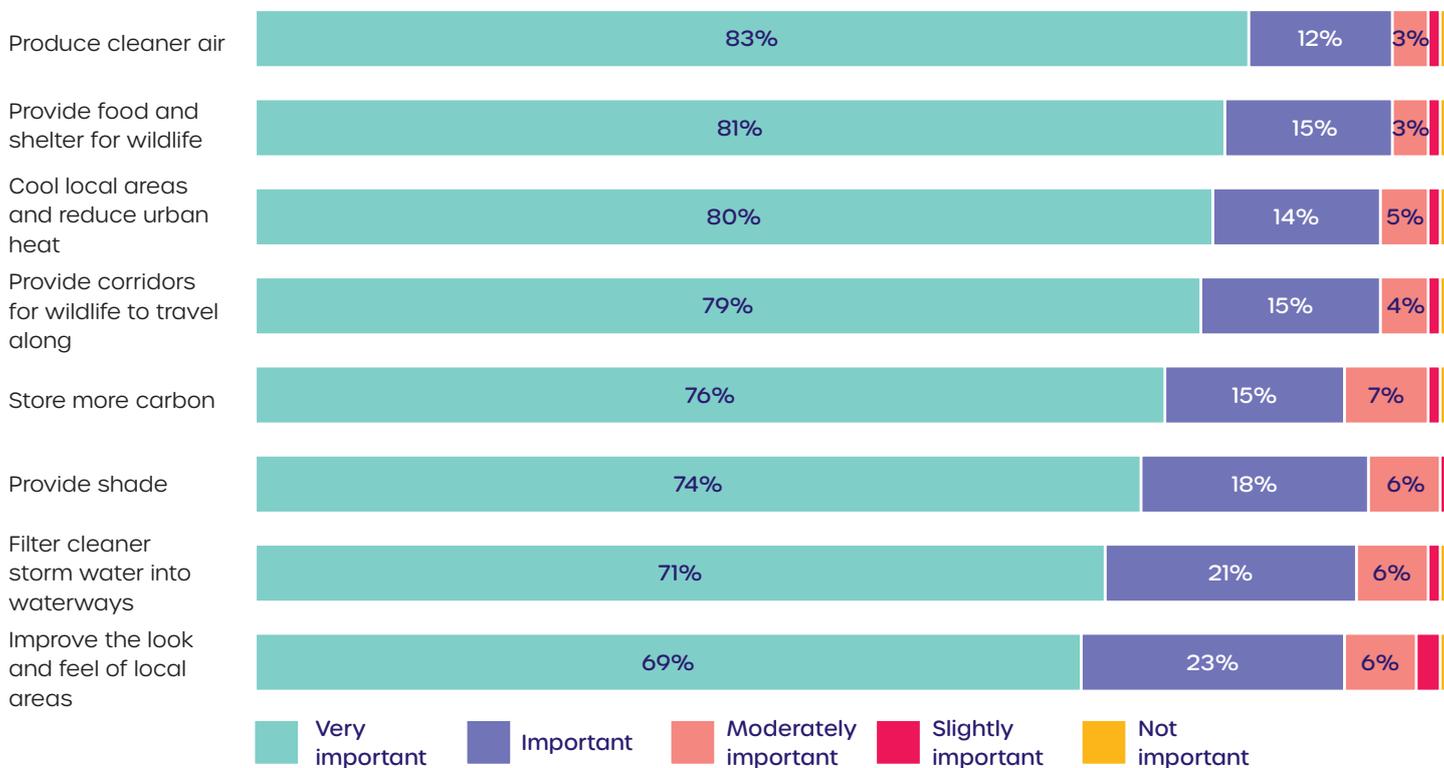
Your responses in detail

We asked people how important it is to plant trees in different places and for different reasons. Overall, people told us these were mostly either 'very important' or 'important'.

Places to plant trees



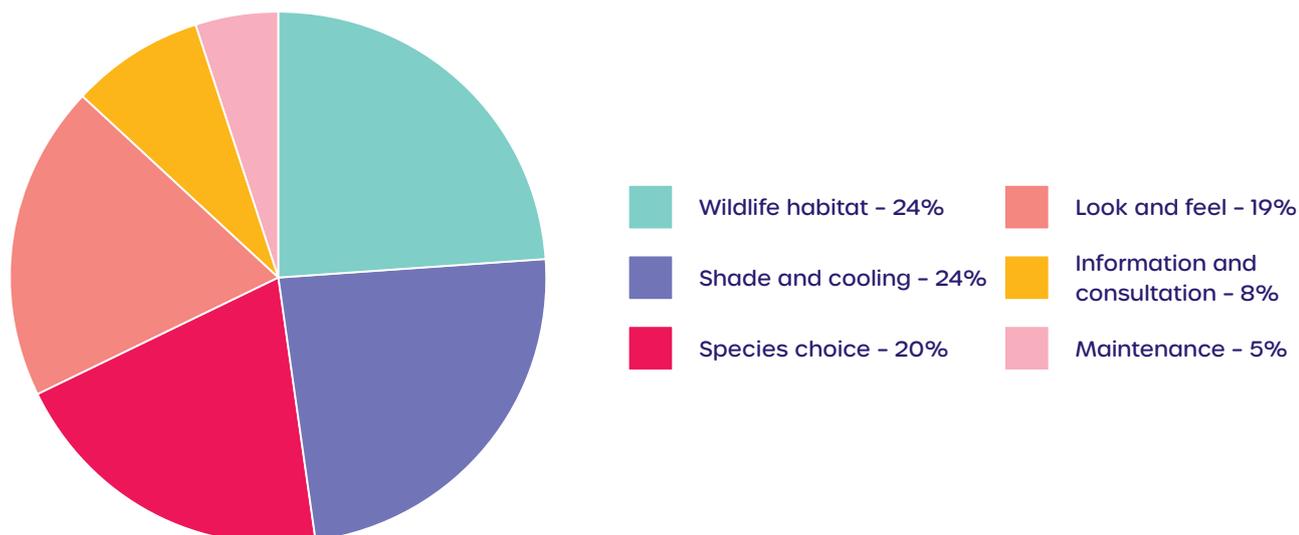
Reasons to plant trees



What we're doing

Prioritising planting trees in all these places and for all these reasons. We've also given each council we're working with a summary of responses for their local area so some small differences based on where people live can be considered.

Key feedback topics



Topic	What we're doing
<p>Wildlife</p> <p>Many of you commented on the need to plant trees to replace or provide more, or better, habitat for wildlife.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “As more development goes on in our area we are losing wildlife and the micro climate has changed. We need as many more native trees to help combat the change especially eucalyptus trees.” - Greensborough resident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritising planting trees in places and ways that will support wildlife.
<p>Shade and cooling</p> <p>Many of you told us that as Melbourne’s suburbs are becoming warmer, shade and cooling from trees is increasingly important. Many of you also commented on enjoying shady places to walk, cycle or spend time outdoors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “This is a great opportunity to ensure urban heat density is considered (think cool communities) for now and into the future.” - Watsonia resident “Trees are nature’s air conditioners and coolers especially during summer months. With such extensive development of hardscape surfaces we should be maximising the density of tree planting to even the ledger.” - Balwyn North resident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritising planting trees in areas under heat stress, and where people spend time outdoors.
<p>Species choice</p> <p>Nearly all of the comments on this topic were about the need to plant native or indigenous species. Maintaining and improving wildlife habitat, biodiversity and local identity and character were common reasons.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “I am hugely in favour of this proposal PROVIDING you are planning to plant indigenous trees endemic to these areas.” - Blackburn resident “We love the kookaburras, rosellas, the native wildlife so need to enhance them by planting more natives.” - Watsonia resident <p>Some of you expressed concerns about planting trees that could drop branches, seeds, nuts and fruit or aggravate allergies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working closely with local councils and other land owners and managers to select the right kinds of trees for each place we plant. Planting indigenous or native species, including using locally sourced seeds and plants where we can.
<p>Look and feel</p> <p>People who wrote about this topic told us living in a suburb that looks and feels green is important to them. Many people commented on the importance of being able to connect with nature, and the positive impact this has on their wellbeing. Some also commented on the need to plant trees to screen and filter views of urban development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “I love looking out any window in my house and seeing trees and tree canopies. The variety of colours are magnificent and just make you feel good and that’s vital when living in a city.” - Rosanna resident “In a residential street I like how trees produce shade, look pretty, put me back in touch with nature and attract birds.” - Watsonia North resident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Considering the look and feel of trees planted as part of species selection, particularly the type of trees and plants already in the local area. Using planting to help screen and filter views of North East Link.

Information and consultation

People let us know it's important we talk with organisations, particularly councils, who know the local area well. Some people also let us know they're keen to get involved where they can too, either through more opportunities to have a say in decisions about tree planting or hands-on activities. You also asked us to keep people informed about where and why we're planting trees, and to look for broader education opportunities, including through schools.

- **"This is an excellent initiative, just keep the residents informed and give them a say."**
– Macleod resident
- **"Use placards and information to teach us more about nature. Recently I learnt there is a huge amount of acacia wattle varieties. I would love to see an acacia wattle park and little info placards to tell me more about it!"** – Greensborough resident

Maintenance

You asked us to make sure we have the right maintenance plans in place to help trees survive.

- **"Nothing more wasteful and sad than planting a whole lot of trees and watching them slowly die due to neglect... It's not enough to plant them, they must be supported to thrive in its first few years."** – Watsonia North resident

You also asked us to get the simple things right like planting trees during the cooler months and not planting trees in places where they'll need regular pruning or cause issues later on (like under powerlines).

- Working closely with local councils and other land owners and managers to prepare planting plans – listening to their local knowledge and expertise.
- Planning for more ways for the community to stay informed and get involved, including through education programs and activities.

- Considering local conditions before planting.
- Preparing maintenance programs to support new trees in the critical first two years after planting.
- Doing the bulk of planting in Autumn and Winter. If planting needs to be done outside these times, more maintenance will be done.

Other comments on the tree planting program

While a small number of people asked for no trees to be removed to build North East Link, many more asked us to leave areas in either the same condition, or better than they are now.

- **"This is our suburb our home, where we are willing to put up with years of disruption... so please leave it better than you found it!"** – Bulleen resident
- **"I hope that the planting of trees is used as an opportunity to brighten up the Greensborough and Watsonia area to create greener, more liveable spaces."**
– Greensborough resident

Some of you raised concerns about how long it will take new trees planted to grow and want us to start planting as soon as possible. Some asked us to plant more established trees.

- **"Just do it! The sooner they're in, the sooner they'll grow to be big and beneficial."**
– Eltham resident

- Keeping as many trees as we can while we build North East Link through good design and construction practices.
- Continuing our early tree planting program – getting more trees planted this year, well before major construction starts.
- Planting a mix of young trees, which have better survival rates, as well as some carefully selected more established trees.



Tree planting at Simpson Barracks

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