

Environment
Effects Statement

Chapter 5

Communications and engagement



Chapter 5

Communications and engagement

5.1 Introduction

Community and stakeholder engagement has played an important role in shaping North East Link. Engagement and consultation with key stakeholders and the broader community has been critical to ensuring the design and development of the project considers the views of the community and meets the needs of commuters, businesses and other users of Melbourne's transport network.

The North East Link Project (NELP) has undertaken a comprehensive communication and engagement program to keep the community and stakeholders informed about the project's progress, to seek their input on project design and development, and identify and respond to stakeholder and community concerns.

This chapter describes NELP's approach to communication and engagement during preparation of the Environment Effects Statement (EES), identifies the relevant project stakeholders, summarises engagement activities and feedback received and outlines the approach to future engagement. Further details of community and stakeholder engagement are provided in EES Attachment IV – Stakeholder consultation report.

5.2 EES scoping requirements

The Minister for Planning's Public Works Order under the *Environment Effects Act 1978* requires NELP to 'prepare and implement an EES consultation plan for informing the public and consulting with stakeholders during the preparation of the EES'.

The *Ministerial guidelines for assessment of environmental effects under the Environment Effects Act 1978* (Department of Sustainability and Environment, 2006) state that a specific objective of the EES assessment process is 'to provide public access to information regarding potential environmental effects as well as fair opportunities for participation in assessment processes by stakeholders and the public'.

In line with this objective, the EES scoping requirements state that NELP is responsible for preparing a stakeholder consultation plan to familiarise the public and stakeholders with the project and EES investigations, as well as provide opportunities for input and engagement on specific issues.

The plan must:

- Identify stakeholder groups
- Characterise the stakeholder groups in terms of their interests, concerns and consultation needs and potential to provide local knowledge
- Describe the consultation methods to be used and outline a schedule of consultation activities
- Outline how inputs from stakeholders will be recorded, considered and/or addressed in the preparation of the EES.

In response, NELP developed and implemented the North East Link Environment Effects Statement Engagement Plan. This plan was available on the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) website from June 2018 [<https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/environment-assessment/browse-projects/projects/north-east-link>].

5.3 Communication and engagement framework

NELP recognises that public participation is essential for achieving high quality outcomes for the community and stakeholders. The aim of the *North East Link Environment Effects Statement Engagement Plan* is to provide communities and stakeholders with opportunities to participate in North East Link's development and delivery.

Development of the plan was guided by the following Victorian Government legislation and policies:

- *Transport Integration Act 2010* (Vic) – most notably the principles of stakeholder engagement and community participation in decision-making
- *Environment Effects Act 1978* (Vic) – provides formal opportunities for public engagement during the EES exhibition period and inquiry and formal hearing process, as well as opportunities for public and stakeholder engagement as facilitated by NELP
- *Victorian Government Accessible Communications Guidelines 2014* (Victorian Government, 2014a) – a set of guidelines to ensure that communication materials are presented in ways so the information reaches all Victorians
- *Victorian Government Communications Guidelines 2014* (Victorian Government, 2014b) – frameworks to ensure communication activities by Victorian Government entities are effective, well managed and responsive to the diverse needs of the Victorian community

- *Public Participation in Government decision-making* (Victorian Auditor-General’s Office, 2015) – provides a high-level framework for the public sector to use when deciding how best to involve the public in government decision-making and implementation.

In keeping with the *Victorian Auditor-General’s Office Public Participation in Government decision-making*, engagement for North East Link is based on the principles set out in Figure 5-1.



Figure 5-1 North East Link communication and engagement principles

During the EES phase, NELP’s engagement objectives were to:

- Achieve a high level of awareness with stakeholders and community members about the EES process and opportunities to influence outcomes
- Encourage participation and provide opportunities for stakeholders and community members to be involved in the EES process and project development, particularly regarding any potential environmental impacts and mitigation measures
- Provide communications materials that were timely, clear, accessible and easily understandable, supporting stakeholders and community members to take part in the EES process
- Encourage stakeholders and community members to provide comment on the draft scoping requirements and the EES
- Demonstrate how community and stakeholder concerns have been considered as the project and EES develop, including identifying which concerns have been addressed and how, and which were not and why not.

5.4 Stakeholders

5.4.1 Overview of stakeholder groups

North East Link is a large infrastructure project and so has multiple stakeholders. Table 5-1 below provides an overview of North East Link stakeholder groups. Extensive targeted engagement has also been undertaken with a number of key groups.

Table 5-1 North East Link stakeholders

North East Link stakeholder groups		
Australian Government	Victorian Government	Local governments
Private road operators	Utilities providers	Road and public transport users
Sporting groups	Statutory authorities and agencies	Local and regional business owners
Cyclists and walkers	Vulnerable groups and individuals	Industry associations and peak bodies
Residents, land owners and land managers	Community and environment interest groups	Community and education providers and user groups (including young people)
Social service and health care providers	Freight industry and transport operators	Culturally and linguistically diverse communities
Traditional owner and Indigenous groups		

Further information on key government stakeholders is provided in Section 5.4.2 below.

5.4.2 Government stakeholders

Australian and Victorian governments

A number of government stakeholders have roles to play in the planning, assessment and approval process and the operation of North East Link.

Table 5-2 and Table 5-3 identify the Australian and Victorian government stakeholders and their roles in the process.

Table 5-2 Australian and Victorian government stakeholders

Stakeholder type	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> .
	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 the project under the <i>Major Transport Projects Facilitation Act 2009</i> .
	Minister for Roads	Department of Transport	Project Minister for North East Link under the <i>Major Transport Projects Facilitation Act 2009</i> .
	Minister for Transport Infrastructure	Department of Transport	Relevant Minister for the project under the <i>Environment Effects Act 1978</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 5-3 Victorian government agency and statutory authority stakeholders

Agency	Role
Heritage Victoria	Administers the <i>Heritage Act 2017</i> . Manages the Victorian Heritage Register and the Victorian Heritage Inventory.
Infrastructure Victoria	Provides advice to the Victorian Government on the state's infrastructure needs and priorities.
Melbourne Water	Manages Melbourne's water supply catchments, sewage treatment and rivers, creeks and major drainage systems. Responsible for leading development of the Yarra Strategic Plan.
Office of the Victorian Government Architect	The Office of the Victorian Government Architect is an administrative office of the Department of Premier and Cabinet. It provides leadership and strategic advice to government about architecture and urban design.
Parks Victoria	Manages Victoria's parks, reserves, waterways and other public land under the <i>Parks Victoria Act 2018</i> . Waterway Manager for the Yarra River.
Public Transport Victoria	Manages the public transport system.
Transport for Victoria	Connects the following agencies to coordinate planning of Victoria's transport system: <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.
VicRoads	Administers the <i>Road Management Act 2004</i> . Manages arterial roads.
VicTrack	Owns the rail network.

Local government

North East Link would intersect with seven local government areas:

- City of Banyule
- City of Boroondara
- City of Manningham
- Shire of Nillumbik
- City of Whitehorse
- City of Whittlesea
- City of Yarra.

The Council of each of these local government areas represents the residents, businesses and communities of their municipality. Councils have a range of municipal functions and responsibilities, including management of local roads and some public land. Among other things, Councils administer the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, *Road Management Act 2004* and *Local Government Act 1989*.

NELP has worked with all seven councils, primarily through briefings with Chief Executives and councillors, and council officer representation on the project's Technical Reference Group (refer to Section 5.5.7), Council Communications Working Group (outlined below) and Community Liaison Groups (discussed in this chapter).

The North East Link Council Communications Working Group was established in 2017 to allow NELP to effectively share information with the 13 councils around the four project corridors that were being considered at that time. Meetings took place leading up to key milestones in 2017, including the release of the four corridors and when the preferred corridor was announced in November 2017. In 2018, NELP continued to convene meetings every two to three months with communication managers from the following councils: Banyule, Boroondara, Darebin, Hume, Knox, Manningham, Maroondah, Moreland, Nillumbik, Whitehorse, Whittlesea, Yarra and Yarra Ranges.

5.5 Key engagement activities and tools

A wide range of engagement activities and communication tools has been used to support engagement on North East Link and to provide opportunities for stakeholders and the community to be involved in the consultation process. These are instrumental to building awareness about the project and for ensuring that information is disseminated regularly and feedback from the community and stakeholders is received and addressed promptly.

An overview of key engagement activities and communication tools used for North East Link is provided in this section. These include:

- Print and digital communication
- Community information sessions
- Community pop-up sessions
- Community Liaison Groups
- Community Technical Discussion Groups
- Community workshops
- Technical Reference Group
- Urban Design Advisory Panel
- Traditional Owners collaboration.

In addition, NELP's dedicated case managers have conducted one-on-one meetings with many directly affected residents, businesses and other land owners and stakeholders. These include tenants and owners of properties potentially required to construct North East Link and residents and businesses directly along, or close to, the project. Where properties would likely need to be acquired for the project, case managers have provided regular updates on the project design including potential changes to impacts to the property, as well as information about the EES process and project timelines. In addition to one-on-one meetings with case managers, the business and land owners in the Bulleen Industrial Precinct have received formal briefing sessions, funding for administrative support and mentoring through the Small Business Mentoring Service (SBM). Businesses were encouraged to participate in the Business Impact Assessment and are represented on the Community Liaison Group.

NELP engaged the CALD Group, which specialises in engagement with culturally and linguistically diverse communities, to provide a list of contacts for key community leaders in each municipality. This included contacts for languages other than English for migrant resource centres, religious groups, women's associations, elderly citizens clubs, community health services, youth groups and outreach/social support services. Materials about the project and how to be involved were translated into the top five languages other than English (Chinese, Greek, Italian, Arabic and Farsi) plus other languages on request (Burmese, Hindi and Macedonian).

Interpreters were available at all community sessions on request. On all materials, NELP offered a telephone translation service available to community members.

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 hard to reach communities and communities with targeted needs.

Following on from engagement with Expression Australia in 2017, NELP promoted EES community sessions through Expression Australia's publications and provided Auslan interpreters at these sessions.

NELP promoted its community engagement activities through Blind Citizens Australia's mailing list and offered teleconferences on the project to interested community members. NELP also invited Guide Dogs Australia and Blind Citizens Australia to nominate participants for the Community Technical Discussion Group on walking and cycling.



5.5.1 Print and digital communication

NELP has used a variety of print and digital communication tools to engage as many people as possible in the planning stages for North East Link. An overview of these tools is provided in Table 5-4.

Table 5-4 Print and digital communication and engagement tools

Project newsletters	Newsletters delivered direct to households and businesses; and available for libraries, council offices, offices of members of parliament and other community outlets.
Fact sheets and brochures	A suite of material: from initial project overview, history, field investigations, design progress through to statutory planning and construction. Available online and in hard copy for face-to-face events and distribution to community outlets. Accessible versions were available on request.
Posters and signage	Posters, banners and signage to help increase awareness of North East Link. These were used at NELP public events and provided to councils for display at community notice boards on request.
Media and advertising	Radio, local print and digital advertising helped inform people about North East Link and feedback opportunities. Includes sponsored posts on NELP's digital channels and advertising on popular news sites.
Maps and other visual aids	Clear maps displaying project options and other aspects online and at information sessions.
Engagement reports	Reports outlining the comments, ideas, suggestions and issues raised by stakeholders and communities, which have been incorporated into the project and EES studies and how, which have not and why.
Website (including interactive maps)	Updated promptly as new information becomes available. Content prepared in line with Victorian Government accessibility guidelines.
Email updates	Sent at regular intervals (milestone triggers) to keep people informed and highlight opportunities to get involved.
Social media	Communicating project updates and promoting discussion. NELP is active on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn. Includes use of other government accounts such as the Victorian Premier's Facebook page, and coordination with local government to re-post social media posts to reach a larger audience.
Videos	Videos helped communicate project messages and distil complex information into an easy to understand format.
3D modelling	3D modelling and other visualisation techniques helped to provide an understanding of the look and feel of the road.

5.5.2 Community information sessions

Information sessions were a primary engagement method to present information and collect feedback from the community and stakeholders. Information sessions were held at three key project milestones as described below. For each key milestone, information was also provided online and communities were encouraged to use online tools to ask questions and provide feedback.

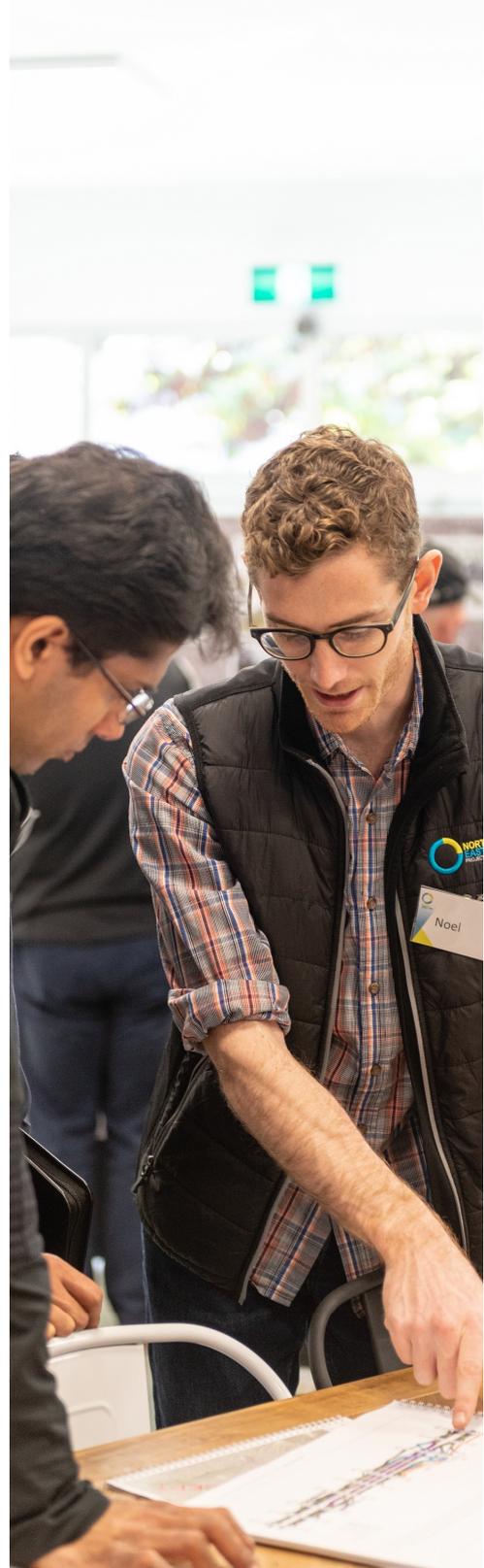
Design update and EES process #1

NELP provided an update on early design work in April – May 2018 at eight community drop-in sessions across the project area (refer to Table 5-6 for dates and locations). Community members were invited to come and see project maps, learn more about the EES investigations and design work undertaken so far, talk to technical specialists and provide feedback. The design information was also posted on the North East Link website and communities were encouraged to post questions and provide feedback using online tools.

During and following these sessions, suggestions were sought on how the design could be refined, and how management measures could be implemented to mitigate aspects of construction or operation of North East Link which may affect the community and stakeholders.

Design update and preliminary EES findings #2

A second design update was provided at 12 community information displays in September – October 2018 (refer to Table 5-6 for dates and locations). The focus of these sessions was to present a progressed project design, and to show how community and stakeholder feedback had informed design changes and impact assessments. Feedback was also collected for consideration by the design team and technical specialists in finalising the reference project and impact assessments.



The design information was also posted online and communities were encouraged to post questions and provide feedback using online tools.

EES conclusions and EES statutory process #3

During exhibition of the EES, information displays will be set up to provide the community and stakeholders the opportunity to view the impact assessments completed for the EES and understand how to provide feedback and make submissions on the EES. The EES and information about how to provide feedback will also be available online.

5.5.3 Community pop-up sessions

Community pop-up sessions have provided opportunities to reach a large audience by having a presence at local events, markets and festivals, which attract wide and varied crowds, and different cultural groups.

Pop-up sessions were held in March 2018 included those at Banyule Kids ArtyFarty Fest and Watsonia Family Fun Day. A project map showing key opportunities, challenges, constraints and artist impressions of early design concepts was displayed together with the latest project newsletter.

5.5.4 Community Liaison Groups

Two Community Liaison Groups (CLGs) were established by NELP in April 2018 to facilitate community representation during the planning of North East Link and to work with NELP on a range of local issues and opportunities.

The CLGs represent the northern and southern parts of North East Link geographically and provide an opportunity for community members to participate in regular forums about topics important to them. These topics included the EES planning process and community engagement, public transport, walking and cycling, urban design, traffic and transport, and construction and constructability.

Applications to be on the CLGs were open to all members of the community. Community and business representative positions were publicly advertised through North East Link's social media channels, on the project website, broadcast to NELP's email subscriber base and in local newspapers. Local councils were also asked to promote the opportunity through their communication channels. CLG members were appointed through a formal selection process including interviews conducted by NELP Director of Communications and Stakeholder Engagement. Appointment was based on the strength of the applicant's community networks and the perceived ability of the applicant to represent the needs of their community. The breakdown of CLG representatives is shown in Table 5-5.

The CLGs are chaired by a facilitator independent of NELP.

Table 5-5 Community Liaison Group members

Northern (M80 Ring Road – Bulleen Road/Manningham Road) CLG	Southern (Bulleen Road) and Eastern Freeway CLG
Four community representatives	Four community representatives
Representative for Macleod businesses	Two Bulleen business representatives
Representative for Watsonia businesses	Two representatives from the WWCHAC
Friends of Banyule representative	Representative from Boroondara City Council
Resolve Rosanna Road representative	Representative from Yarra City Council
Warringal Conservation Society representative	Representative from Manningham City Council
Representative from Nillumbik Shire Council	Representative from Whitehorse City Council
Representative from Banyule City Council	Yarra Riverkeeper
VicRoads representative	VicRoads representative
Youth representative	Youth representative

5.5.5 Community Technical Discussion Groups

NELP invited members of the community with a deeper interest and level of technical understanding to form two Community Technical Discussion Groups – one on engineering and design and one on walking and cycling. The groups aimed to:

- Provide another level of engagement for North East Link, allowing more opportunities for NELP to understand ideas, for innovation or refining design
- Provide interested community members with access to project staff to discuss relevant information available
- Provide insight into issues for consideration in the EES as well as for potential bidders
- Help NELP to gain a better understanding of motivations and answer questions appropriately.

NELP invited people from the community who had already shown a strong interest in these topics to form part of a core planning group, to decide on suggested topics for each meeting and an initial framework.

The groups were chaired and supported by NELP staff, including senior technical staff and communications and engagement staff. Other North East Link team attendance was determined by the topics selected by the core planning group.

Following the initial planning session, the core planning teams invited additional community members who had a keen interest in the topics chosen via their networks and NELP's channels.

Council representatives attended some of the group meetings. NELP also invited blind and vision impaired representatives to join the walking and cycling group. Meetings held in 2018 focused on a specific topic at each session including traffic modelling, lessons learnt, design considerations, planning considerations, construction and operation.

5.5.6 Community workshops

Two series of community workshops were convened by NELP to provide small group forums for community participation during the North East Link planning phase. The aim was to build understanding and capacity for people to be involved in various aspects of the EES and project development.

The first community workshop series consisted of six workshops held in Bulleen. The workshops were promoted through the project's social media channels, website and in local newspapers. An email was also sent to email subscribers and councils were asked to promote the events through their communication channels.

Over 140 people attended the six workshops to discuss planning strategy, opportunities and constraints, and to help NELP better understand existing conditions within the project area, specifically related to urban design, walking and cycling and the environment. Technical specialists presented on their areas of investigation, and community members were involved in small group discussions and activities.

Materials were developed to reaffirm the purpose of the workshops, to support high-level conversations about community values and inform participants about the project timelines, the EES process and when design information would be available. Materials included:

- A statement of purpose for each workshop
- A project timeline showing key milestones and where the workshops fit
- A fact sheet explaining future engagement activities and opportunities to be involved
- Urban design principles and example images (Urban Design workshop)
- An outline of the EES process and study areas (Your Environment)
- A map of the project area showing the existing road and walking and cycling network (Walking and Cycling).

After the workshops, the conversation was continued online. Visitors to NELP's website could see what was contributed by the participants in the room, and add any extra comments they wanted NELP to consider. More than 110 comments were posted in the online forums.

Feedback received at the workshops and online helped to inform early work on the urban design strategy for the project, early plans for walking and cycling links and identify areas of community concern related to upcoming EES impact assessments.

A report on what NELP heard, and the actions they took is available online at http://northeastlink.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/305282/CommunityWorkshopsFeb2018Report.pdf.

The second community workshop series started in June 2018. Workshops were held in Greensborough, Watsonia/Macleod, Balwyn North, Bulleen and Rosanna as part of the social impact assessment for the EES. These workshops extended from previous engagement with communities and stakeholders with a focus on seeking feedback to understand the direct effects to day-to-day living such as changes in access, connectivity or community cohesion.

Similar to the first workshop series, materials included:

- Maps showing the North East Link reference project
- Maps of relevant neighbourhood areas
- A take-home pack with project factsheets.

The findings from the small group workshops are provided in Chapter 17 – Social.

5.5.7 Technical Reference Group

In accordance with the 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 North East Link TRG for the project in February 2018. The TRG comprised representatives from:

- DELWP
- Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)
- Aboriginal Victoria
- City of Banyule
- City of Boroondara
- City of Manningham
- City of Whitehorse
- City of Yarra
- EPA Victoria

- Heritage Victoria
- Melbourne Water
- Parks Victoria
- Public Transport Victoria
- Shire of Nillumbik
- Transport for Victoria
- VicRoads
- Victorian Planning Authority
- VicTrack
- Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation.

Matters specified in the TRG's Terms of Reference include:

- Applicable policies, strategies and statutory provisions
- The proponent's public information and stakeholder consultation program for the EES
- The scoping requirements for the EES
- The design and adequacy of technical studies for the EES
- Responses to issues arising from the EES investigations
- The technical adequacy of draft EES documentation
- Coordination of statutory processes.

These matters have been covered in regular meetings with the TRG (held around monthly throughout 2018) as well as through one-on-one discussion with TRG members. The TRG reviewed and provided feedback on this EES and the supporting technical reports.

5.5.8 Urban Design Advisory Panel

To facilitate a consultative and integrated approach to develop the Urban Design Strategy, the Urban Design Advisory Panel (UDAP) was formed with the Office of the Victorian Government Architect (OVGA). The purpose of UDAP was to provide ongoing design guidance and advice, and advocate for high quality design outcomes for North East Link.

The UDAP is chaired by NELP with members representing the OVGA, VicRoads, Transport for Victoria and NELP. Other key stakeholders such as councils and public authorities were represented at location based workshops and meetings on specific issues to provide input and feedback.

The North East Link Urban Design Strategy was developed in conjunction with a range of community and stakeholder groups. Further detail explaining the extensive consultation undertaken to explore different aspects of the project is found in EES Attachment II – Urban Design Strategy.

5.5.9 Traditional Owners collaboration

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).

As part of the EES process, NELP has been working in collaboration with WWCHAC on multiple levels. This has included involvement in the development of the EES such as the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage assessment (Chapter 18 – Aboriginal cultural heritage), Urban Design Strategy (Attachment II – Urban Design Strategy), cultural values mapping, attendance at TRG and related meetings, workshops and walks on Country.

5.6 Overview of engagement

A staged approach to communicate and engage with communities and stakeholders about North East Link is well underway. This approach has allowed feedback and input to be considered at key stages in the project's development. These stages are:

- Stage 1 engagement – Corridor selection and business case
- Stage 2 engagement – EES preparation and exhibition
- Stage 3 engagement – Procurement, early works, construction.

5.6.1 Stage 1 – Corridor selection and business case

Early engagement on North East Link was initiated at the beginning of 2017 to raise public awareness of the project, to understand key areas of interest and to seek community participation in strategic planning.

Engagement included face-to-face activities such as drop-in displays, a feedback website with surveys, Question and Answer tools, discussion forums, and social media channels. A 1800 community telephone hotline and email address were also established.

Community travel and values survey, May–July 2017

NELP conducted an online and postal community survey to ask people how they travel around and through the north east of Melbourne, what they value about their neighbourhoods and their views on improving transport infrastructure. More than 7,400 people from over 350 postcodes responded.

The results of the survey assisted in identifying the transport problems that North East Link needs to help solve, and what NELP should help to protect in Melbourne's north-east. Survey responses also informed the draft project objectives and principles and the criteria to investigate how different corridor options performed.

The results of the survey are documented in the *North East Link Project Community Survey Report May–July 2017*, available on the NELP website.

Project planning and corridor options engagement, August – October 2017

In early August, NELP shared the findings about the four corridor options to date, categorising them under areas of interest identified as important to communities. At the same time, the community was asked about the project objectives and principles, as well as for information that could help better understand and balance different opportunities and challenges as part of the options assessment to determine a preferred corridor. Feedback received from the community and stakeholders on the project objectives and principles helped make sure the right problems that North East Link needs to solve were identified, and to focus on where impacts would need to be minimised. Feedback received on the four corridor options was considered alongside evidence from technical investigations as part of the options assessment process.

A summary of the community feedback received during this phase of engagement is provided in the *North East Link Project Community Engagement Report August–October 2017*, available on the NELP website.

5.6.2 Stage 2 – EES preparation and exhibition

Phase 1: Existing conditions investigations and scoping requirements

During this phase of engagement, NELP focused on providing people with the information they needed to understand the project. This included introducing the EES process and explaining the role that communities play, and providing an update on the project design so far. Materials were developed to explain design functionality, considerations and constraints, and proposed construction techniques. Engagement activities and tools were designed to obtain information from communities and stakeholders on local issues and considerations to help inform impact assessments and refine the project design.

Engagement activities undertaken during this phase are summarised in Table 5-6.

Phase 2: Impact assessments

During this phase of engagement, NELP built on the engagement already undertaken for the project. Information was provided to demonstrate how community and stakeholder feedback and concerns raised to date had helped inform refinements to the project design and were being considered in impact assessments. Further feedback was sought to help further refine the project design, to inform measures to avoid, mitigate and manage impacts and to further inform EPRs.

Engagement activities undertaken during phases 1 and 2 are summarised in Table 5-6.

Table 5-6 Summary of engagement activities during Stage 2 phases 1 and 2 (as at 12 December 2018)

Activities	Statistics	Overview
Project website	111,985+ visits to the project website	Visits to the main project website containing information about the project, including the design update.
Engagement website	4,800+ visits to the engagement website	Online engagement portal for community members who wish to review project information and provide comment. Includes project information, details of upcoming site investigations, fact sheets and interactive components designed to encourage feedback on key project elements. 300+ enquiries received using the online Question and Answer tool. 370+ responses to surveys and pins posted on interactive maps.
Newsletters	3 newsletters posted to 236,000+ homes and businesses	Newsletters providing overview of North East Link and current and upcoming activities distributed to properties along entire project alignment. Included contact details for the project.
eNews	7 emails to 9,440+ email newsletter subscribers	Project updates distributed to subscribers via email.
Social media	797,000+ people reached through 400+ content posts	NELP established a number of social media channels including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube to encourage stakeholder and community connection with the project and to provide updates on progress. This included use of other government accounts such as the Victorian Premier’s Facebook page, and coordination with local government to re-post social media posts to reach a larger audience.

Activities	Statistics	Statistics	Overview
<p>Community information sessions</p>	<p>Design update #1: 21 April, Watsonia (700 attendees) 22 April, Rosanna (500 attendees) 29 April, Doncaster (250 attendees) 1 May, Kew (180 attendees) 28 April, Greensborough (300 attendees) 24 April, Melbourne City (78 attendees) 24 April, Blackburn North (178 attendees) 26 April, Bulleen (400 attendees) 580+ pieces of feedback received</p>	<p>Design update #2: 16 and 17 September, Watsonia (560 attendees) 20 September, Doncaster (300 attendees) 22 and 23 September, Bulleen (205 attendees) 2 October, Melbourne City (40 attendees) 6 October, Greensborough (385 attendees) 13 October, Richmond (105 attendees) 14 October, Ringwood (140 attendees) 18 October, Box Hill (295 attendees) 20 October, Preston (650 attendees) 21 October, Epping (295 attendees) 25 October, Bulleen (615 attendees) 27 October, Dandenong (125 attendees) 355+ pieces of feedback received</p>	<p>Project staff and technical specialists were available at information sessions to discuss the project and answer questions from the public.</p> <p>Visitors to the information sessions were able to view project timelines, maps and concept drawings and give feedback on the design work so far.</p>
<p>Information hub and pop-up sessions</p>	<p>Pop-up stalls at 2 local markets and community events</p>		<p>Project staff were available at events to distribute information and answer questions from the public.</p>

Activities	Statistics	Overview
Presentations and briefings with key stakeholders	250+ meetings and briefings	Presentations, meetings and briefings with key stakeholders, peak bodies, business and community groups and at industry events to provide information about North East Link, encourage feedback to be used during project development and raise project awareness.
Council Communications Working Group	Meetings held quarterly	<p>The North East Link Council Communications Working Group allowed NELP to share information with communications managers from the following councils:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Banyule • Boroondara • Darebin • Hume • Knox • Manningham • Maroondah • Moreland • Nillumbik • Whitehorse • Whittlesea • Yarra • Yarra Ranges.
Community Liaison Groups	<p>Northern North East Link (M80 Ring Road-Bulleen Road/Manningham Road) CLG – 14 members</p> <p>Southern North East Link (Bulleen Road and Eastern Freeway) CLG – 16 members</p> <p>20+ meetings held</p>	CLGs provided an opportunity for information sharing between community representatives, NELP and other stakeholders.
Community Technical Discussion Groups	<p>Two groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engineering and design – 20+ members • Cycling and walking – 20+ members <p>7+ meetings held for each group</p>	CTDGs provided a forum for interested community members to share ideas for innovation or refining design and insight into issues for consideration in the EES with NELP staff.

Activities	Statistics	Overview
Community workshops	<p>Series 1 – February 2018: Urban design, walking and cycling and the environment 6 workshops – 140+ participants 3 online forums – 110+ pieces of feedback</p> <p>Series 2 – June 2018: Social impact assessment 5 workshops – 40+ participants</p>	Participants were asked to help NELP better understand community values and existing conditions within the project area.
Project telephone line and community email address	545+ enquiries received	Enquiries received from the public on the 1800 project information line and via the community email address.
Communication with property owners and tenants	2,175+ conversations	Phone and face-to-face conversations facilitated by dedicated NELP case managers, and follow-up meetings with property owners and tenants potentially impacted by land acquisition or living close to the project.
Advertising and promotion	Talked to the media and attracted TV, radio and newspaper coverage 215+ adverts in local newspapers, on radio stations and on roadside signs	Radio, local print and digital advertising to help inform people about North East Link and feedback opportunities. This included sponsored posts on NELP’s digital channels and advertising on popular news sites and search engines.
TRG meetings	14 meetings	Meetings consisting of briefings and discussions of all aspects of the project including design, impact assessments, approval process and approach (see Section 5.5.7 for a list of TRG members).
Community surveys	585+ responses to 6 intercept, telephone and doorknock surveys	Targeted community research activities such as intercept surveys of public transport commuters and household surveys to support social impact assessments.

Phase 3: EES exhibition

This phase of engagement focusses on EES exhibition. It consists of activities to support public exhibition of the EES and the anticipated inquiry and formal public hearings. The EES is on exhibition for 40 business days, over which period members of the public can make written submissions about any matters described in the EES.

This phase involves a variety of communication and engagement activities, with the specific objectives of:

- Presenting and explaining the North East Link reference project to stakeholders, along with impact assessments completed as part of the EES process
- Providing information about formal avenues through which to provide feedback and make submissions on the EES
- Reporting back to key stakeholders and the community on engagement and planning outcomes and how their feedback was used.

The key outcomes of this phase are anticipated to be:

- Community and stakeholders provided with opportunity to have their say on the project's potential benefits and impacts
- Community and stakeholder feedback considered in the assessment and approvals process
- Community and stakeholders understand how their feedback has shaped the project.

5.6.3 Stage 3 – Early works, procurement, construction

NELP recognises that a range of issues may emerge during the delivery phase of North East Link. Identification of these issues and risks along with appropriate strategies and plans to manage them to achieve acceptable outcomes in accordance with the EPRs is a critical part of ensuring the effective delivery of the project. Systems and processes would be established to respond to new and emerging issues in accordance with the environmental management framework and EPRs for the project.

Engagement with the community and stakeholders, together with regular updates and information about the project, would continue through the project's delivery. Feedback mechanisms would enable stakeholders and local communities to ask questions and provide feedback on the delivery of North East Link.

The approach to consultation during construction and operation is set out in the project EPRs, which are detailed in Chapter 27 – Environmental management framework. The contractor would be required to:

- Design and construct the project to reduce disruption to businesses and residences from direct acquisition or temporary occupation of land as far as practicable
- Prepare and implement a Communications and Community Engagement Plan for construction and operation to engage and consult the community, businesses and potentially affected stakeholders, and to discuss progress of construction activities and operation
- Participate in the Community Reference Group and the Business Liaison Groups to facilitate community, business and stakeholder involvement during the construction phase
- Minimise impacts on sporting, recreation and other facilities.

5.7 Response to feedback

The feedback received from the community and stakeholders throughout the engagement process directly informed the selection of a preferred corridor, helped identify areas of community concern or interest so these could be considered in technical assessments, and informed the design development for the reference project.

In relation to the technical specialist assessments, feedback was addressed through further investigations into particular issues of community concern and by influencing the EPRs (for example, additional mitigation measures have been incorporated in line with stakeholder or community recommendations). Feedback was also addressed through the development of the reference project, with aspects of the design optimised following input from the community and stakeholders.

The feedback gathered from the community and other stakeholders during Stage 2 took many forms. Some related to the entire project, while other feedback was more specific about an individual project component, or local area within that component.

Based on analysis of all feedback received – and taking account of the broad range of information, comments, issues and ideas raised by hundreds of locals and diverse stakeholder organisations – the high level themes that capture the sentiment and key feedback received so far are:

- Project planning
- Project design
- Traffic and transport
- Amenity, community and business
- Noise
- Air quality
- Construction
- Environment.

Refer to Attachment IV – Stakeholder consultation report for a summary of the key issues raised for each theme and the responses to this feedback.

Feedback received from communities and stakeholders during the preparation of the EES led to design changes in the reference project. These changes included:

- Significantly lowering the ramps at the M80 Ring Road interchange
- Moving the tunnel portal north to Blamey Road to address concerns raised about visual impact of the northern tunnel ventilation structure and has also led to increasing the amount of green space next to Greensborough Road
- Developing an alternative design for the Manningham Road interchange for consideration in the EES impact assessments
- Expanding the scope of shared use paths to include new paths to improve commuter routes and road crossings to make moving around local areas safer and easier
- Introducing a project-wide noise standard to protect residents and noise sensitive buildings along the project corridor
- Assisting the development of an Urban Design Strategy from sharing of local values, issues and opportunities.