

# Meeting Minutes

## Northern Business Liaison Group (NBLG)

Date	8/04/2021	Time	7:30-9:30am
Chair	Jeni Coutts	Meeting no.	1
Location	Watsonia Community Hub	Minute taker	Nadia Hollins

## Attendees

Attendees			
Name	Organisation	Name	Organisation
Jeni Coutts (JC)	Independent Chair	Noella Jacobs (NJ)	Greensborough Chamber of Commerce
Tony Aouad (TA)	Kebab Nation & Anchor Fish & Chips	Matt Guest (MG)	Watsonia RSL
Jeremy Richards (JR)	Watsonia Optical	Toni Clark (TC)	NELP
Hannah Johnson (HJ)	NELP	Jim Needham (JN)	NELP
Grant Smethurst (GS)	NELP	Bill Himonas (BH)	NELP
Nadia Hollins (NH)	NELP	Duncan Elliott (DE)	NELP
Apologies			
Name	Organisation	Name	Organisation
Sarah Maguire (SM)	Watsonia Shopping Centre	Erica Hardie (EH)	Banyule City Council

## Key discussion points/decisions

Owner	Action
Toni Clark (TC) & Jeni Coutts (JC)	<b>Welcome and introduction</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TC welcomed the group and gives Acknowledgement of Country.</li> <li>TC introduced Duncan Elliot, NELP, CEO &amp; Jeni Coutts, Independent Chair.</li> </ul>

Owner	Action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>JC briefed the group on her background in corporate, public affairs and running her own business for 15 years working on major infrastructure projects. JC has also been chair of the Metro Rail Tunnel reference groups for South Yarra and Domain area for almost three years. She has a high level of understanding of project works and what can be achieved when everyone works together to minimise impacts.</li> </ul>
Jeni Coutts (JC)	<p><b>Role of the NBLG</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>JC discussed the role of this business liaison group.</li> <li>JC spoke about NELP providing progress updates on the project and about understanding in advance, what the impacts of the various stages of the project are likely to be on local businesses and industries. Working with local business, relevant authorities, and contractors to mitigate those impacts to the greatest extent possible is a key part of the workings of the Group.</li> <li>JC spoke about how the contractors and NELP can help promote changes around access to local businesses and support those businesses during construction and initiating activities to raise local awareness.</li> <li>JC highlighted that liaison groups are advisory bodies not decision-making bodies. NBLG members are to take the information presented back to the businesses they represent to inform them about activities that will impact them.</li> <li>JC said that the role of an NBLG member is to bring the concerns of those they represent to this committee, and that the role of the NELP and its contractors is to listen and address those concerns. Goodwill on behalf of all parties will be essential to the smooth running of this group and to achieving positive outcomes for all. Respect towards one another even where there are differing opinions, and towards the presenters, who also give up their time to prepare information to present to the group.</li> <li>JC mentioned that each meeting will start with the outstanding actions and issues register and items will stay on this register until they are resolved.</li> <li>JC asked all attendees to introduce themselves and who they were representing.</li> <li>JC introduced Duncan Elliott, Chief Executive Officer, NELP, to give his presentation about the North East Link Project.</li> </ul>
Duncan Elliott (DE), NELP	<p><b>North East Link Project</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DE introduced himself and his role as CEO at NELP.</li> <li>DE provided an overview of the North East Link Project: NELP is currently evaluating two bidders to deliver NELP and a contract to be finalised by mid this year. This year, almost half a billion dollars has been spent on early works across the whole project, e.g. sporting ground upgrades and moving major services.</li> <li>DE spoke about working alongside other projects works in the area, e.g. LXRP to lessen the impact on residents, businesses, and stakeholders. DE suggested inviting an LXRP representative to this forum, to outline how they have conducted their communication activities.</li> </ul>

Owner	Action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● DE spoke about the NELP area - from Eastern Freeway upgrade (Springvale Road to Hoddle Street), M80 upgrade (Plenty Road to Grimshaw Street) and a 6km tunnel from Simpson Barracks, Macleod to Eastern Freeway, Bulleen) being Victoria's biggest tunnel with 5 new interchanges, 10km dedicated busway with park and ride facilities. NEL will carry up to 135,000 vehicles daily and will connect the M80 to an upgraded Eastern Freeway, create new and improved community sports facilities and 25km of new pedestrian and cycling paths. NELP will create more than 10,000 jobs during construction.</li> <li>● DE mentioned that in 2018-2019, NELP completed an intensive study to assess environmental effects which set strict conditions the project must meet, including an Urban Design Strategy set by the Government, to ensure the project is designed and built to high standards. The bidders are tasked to focus on the urban design outcomes, connectivity enhancements, and impacts around the project.</li> <li>● DE spoke about the current early works which include 1,000 people working this year to move key utility services out of the way and sports ground upgrades to AK Lines Reserve, Watsonia, as well an offset at Binnak Park Reserve to accommodate construction sites,.</li> <li>● DE discussed that the State is getting closer to appointing the builder and the release of the final design for major constructions, which are due to start by the end of this year. The project will be delivered via a series of packages – early works, the main tunnel contract, and multiple secondary packages (north and eastern areas).</li> <li>● DE mentioned the various projects underway on the north side of the project, including rail duplication, rail station upgrades and the Grimshaw Street upgrade. NELP will ensure that information relating to upcoming works and impacts will be communicated to business to deliver a move collaborative outcome.</li> <li>● JC thanked DE for his presentation.</li> </ul>
Hannah Johnson (HJ), NELP	<p><b>Business Disruption Mitigation Strategy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● HJ introduced herself and outlined her involvement in NELP. She also provided a brief overview of the newly developed Business Disruption Mitigation Strategy (BDMS).</li> <li>● HJ explained that the BDMS is part of the Environment Performance Requirements (EPR) and are set by the Government to ensure that the contractors appointed are responsible, accountable and understand their impacts. The Strategy sets the overarching principles, guidelines, objectives, and approach to assessing impacts and engaging with traders. It considers the individual needs of the business operations and associated impacts. The aim of this is to establish relationships early, know who they are talking to and tailor their communications and engagement to key stakeholders.</li> <li>● HJ discussed working in collaboration with business owners to determine the path of least impact e.g. coordinate the timing of works to reduce disruption, manage expectations, proximity of works and working closely with other MTIA projects in the area.</li> <li>● HJ spoke about the importance of acknowledging customer behaviour, e.g. understanding how customers move around the precinct to minimise the impacts of works on the operations of businesses and the importance of leaving a legacy for future growth and development.</li> <li>● HJ discussed the importance of the group being a forum to collaborate and discuss any impacts that may affect their businesses.</li> <li>● She would like to see the NBLG grow and encouraged the group to share business contacts and/or encourage other local businesses to join.</li> </ul>

Owner	Action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>JC mentioned the importance of local councils being involved and collaborating with the NBLG. Having guest speakers and experts present to the Group to discuss upcoming projects or works in the northern area.</li> </ul>
Jim Needham (JN), NELP	<p><b>Early works update</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>JN provided a breakdown of the early works update, which involves the moving of almost 100 main services throughout the project: utilities, sewerage, and telecommunication services ahead of major construction starting later this year. Works on the relocation of utility services around Borlase Reserve and on Greensborough Road will continue until July 2021. The relocation of a water pressure reducing station in Yallambie, will continue until July 2021 and the construction of new power supply infrastructure near Simpson Barracks will continue until mid-2022.</li> <li>Q: TA asked if power outages would occur and said he would like to have notice of any supply services that may affect the businesses and the local area, now and into the future. Can the supply services provide other alternatives e.g. power generators to minimise disruptions?</li> <li>JN responded that utility outage notifications are provided by the service provider and can change with minimal or no notice. However, future works information will not be available until the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Contractor is appointed.</li> <li>HJ mentioned that she is currently working on the BDMS and will contact TA and other NLBG members to encourage their input to the Strategy.</li> <li>JN commented that the relocation of the set of high-voltage transmission towers from the Watsonia Station carpark, to Frensham Reserve has been completed. A Time lapse video of the relocation, which included the closure of parking spaces at the Watsonia Station and Watsonia Library, and bus stop relocation was shown.</li> <li>JN also spoke about the upcoming relocation of two telecommunication towers, located in the Watsonia Station carpark and Greensborough, near the M80 Ring Road, which will take place in the second half of 2021. An Urban Design and Landscape Plan is proposed for the new sites. Prior to any relocation, NELP will undertake a 21-day public exhibition for members of the public to provide feedback on the Plans.</li> <li>JN highlighted the importance of managing construction impacts to minimise inconvenience to local communities. He mentioned that residents living near work sites will be provided with a range of supports and that notifications and updates will be distributed to the local area prior to any works commencing. The Project will operate under strict requirements to manage environmental impacts such as noise, light, dust etc, and will be responsible for coordinating with a range of stakeholders including councils, local community groups, VicRoads and others to reduce transport disruption.</li> </ul>
Jim Needham (JN), NELP	<p><b>Trader activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>JN spoke about the close interaction with traders prior to and during the relocation of the high-voltage transmission towers and the necessary changes. These included 513-bus stop move from Watsonia Station carpark to Watsonia Road and the closure of 25 parking spaces in Watsonia Station carpark and 31 parking spaces closed at Watsonia Library.</li> <li>JN spoke about how NELP will communicate with key stakeholders regarding the upcoming works and what support is available to identify impacts and explore options to minimise changes that will impact businesses, the library, parking, and commuters.</li> </ul>

Owner	Action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● JN discussed how NELP used digital assistance to help support Watsonia businesses, adding that in a collaboration with the Watsonia Shopping Centre, a Facebook (FB) post and video was shared on their page to highlight the changes. The FB post was offered to other businesses to share on their own FB pages.</li> <li>● JN shared an example of a post from the NELP FB page which states that Watsonia shops are still open and encourages community support. Tagging was used to highlight the Syrup Café and the Watsonia Shopping Centre, reaching over 2,000 FB followers and customers.</li> <li>● JN highlighted that early works contractors and NELP staff are encouraged to use the Watsonia precinct to support local businesses, for example, the A Team Kitchen provided breakfast for the NBLG meeting.</li> <li>● JN discussed how NELP recently took part in the Watsonia Traders Association gift voucher scheme. A total of 80, \$20 vouchers were handed out to bus commuters to use in the Watsonia Shopping Precinct. Further voucher promotions will be held in the future.</li> <li>● JN spoke about NELP using directional signage around the local area and works site areas to highlight that local businesses remain open during the works.</li> <li>● JN expressed the importance of early communication, working as a group and working alongside trader associations to support and assist businesses. The major works contractor, services providers and project partners will all be part of the NBLG moving forward.</li> <li>● JC thanked JN for his presentations.</li> </ul>
Grant Smethurst (GS), NELP	<p><b>Sport and recreation program</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● GS outlined the sport and recreational program, highlighting the need to relocate 15 community sporting groups before the project starts, affecting thousands of people. A \$68 million investment was provided by Government to NELP to upgrade local sporting facilities, including 13 new ovals and upgraded fields for AFL, cricket, soccer, and other sports. New lighting for 15 sporting fields and 23 tennis courts, seven new pavilions and almost 260,000 square metres of new synthetic and natural turf will also be installed. GS shared a slide detailing the sporting facilities relocations in the northern area, which will occur at various stages of the works. At the completion of the project the sporting clubs will be relocated back to their original sporting grounds.</li> <li>● GS explained the relocations 'goal' was to keep the sporting clubs as close to the original grounds as possible. Banyule City Council will manage the sporting club movements to the various sporting grounds.</li> <li>● GS advised that Banyule City Council will be assisted with additional sporting ground upgrades at Montmorency Park and De Winton Park.</li> <li>● GS discussed the impacts this year for the sporting clubs. As the PPP Contractor has not been appointed there will be no impact Winsor, Gabonia Avenue and A K Lines Reserves. Binnak Park is currently being upgraded although there have been delays due to COVID-19, which will affect Parade College and St Damien's Footballs Clubs this season. NELP is working closely with Banyule City Council to support those clubs to be relocated to AK Lines Reserve.</li> <li>● GS showed artist impressions of the current upgrades to Ford, Binnak Parks and Greensborough College, highlighting a new two-storey pavilion at Binnak Park and significant improvements to flood lighting that will enable clubs to extend their usage of the ground. Ford Park is due for completion in August this year.</li> </ul>

Owner	Action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GS advised that Greensborough College is 4-5 weeks away from completion and has been managed and built by DET School Building Authority with NELP funding.</li> <li>• GS spoke of the completion timelines: Greensborough College, May 2021, Binnak and Ford Parks, August 2021.</li> <li>• GS provided details about the community information sessions, which have been held over the past 18 months. These sessions were an opportunity for the community to get updates and view the masterplans, landscape plans and artist impression drawings. The information and updates are available on the NELP website, <a href="http://northeastlink.vic.gov.au/design/sports">northeastlink.vic.gov.au/design/sports</a>.</li> <li>• JC thanked GS for his presentation.</li> </ul>
New Jeni Coutts (JC)	<p><b>Other business</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• JC mentioned that moving forward, the project contractors and NELP will present up-to-date information to NBLG members. Some of this information will relate to project planning and progress, some of it will be conceptual in nature and at times, and some of it may be confidential and not for immediate sharing. NELP will advise when confidential information can be shared.</li> <li>• JC said that at the end of each meeting 15 to 20 minutes will be allocated to an 'around the table' where each member of the group can raise issues for future clarification or request specific presentations from subject matter experts at future meetings. This will also be an opportunity to raise issues that may have arisen but are not covered in the presentations.</li> <li>• JC mentioned that project information is available on the NELP website including a newsletter subscription.</li> <li>• JC asked NBLG members to read and sign the NBLG Code of Conduct.</li> <li>• Q: NJ asked if she could have local project updates, impacts and information sent to her, in an easily readable branded document, to share to her organisation and personalised to the traders. HJ advised that she will investigate further.</li> <li>• TC mentioned that if members of the NBLG required any information for newsletters, social media or other engagement materials to share with those they represented, these were available from NELP.</li> <li>• JC advised that the group would receive meeting presentations, minutes, agendas and other project updates well in advance of meetings.</li> <li>• TC provided the business email account that can be used to communicate to NELP team. <a href="mailto:business@northeastlink.vic.gov.au">business@northeastlink.vic.gov.au</a></li> <li>• HJ asked the group to voice their concerns about the NELP works or other works (LXRP, VR etc) in the area that may impact them.</li> <li>• TO spoke about his concerns of congestion on Watsonia Road and would like to have input in minimising that issue. He added that he would like to have input to upcoming works and associated impacts so that he and other businesses can prepare for those works.</li> <li>• MG spoke about having approx. 6,500 RSL members, 40-50% of whom are over 75 and use public transport and courtesy buses. His concerns relate to access to the RSL venue and the need to inform members of any impacts early. He would like to access to information (via an online portal) of current impacts that will affect the RSL patrons.</li> </ul>

Owner	Action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TC spoke about the importance of having the BDMS with guidelines for the building contractors to be responsible and accountable so that they understand the impacts to business.</li> <li>HJ mentioned that NELP has upcoming works notifications available via its website and e-newsletters. Personalised letters are also sent to those who will be impacted. Traders should sign up to NELP e-newsletters to receive all updates to ensure they don't miss any notifications or information.</li> <li>TC suggested a campaign could be used to encourage traders to sign up to the e-newsletter.</li> <li>JC mentioned that the next meeting is 20 May and that the member packs contain a proposed meeting calendar for the remainder of the year.</li> <li>HJ added that she would like members to let her know within three days if they have any problems with any of the meeting dates and times.</li> <li>HJ advised the venue will change as numbers increase and COVID-19 restrictions ease. It was, however, important that the first meeting was held at the Watsonia Hub to give everyone an opportunity to refer to any maps if required.</li> <li>JN mentioned that the engagement team will contact businesses today regarding day surface works at Watsonia Station carpark, Watsonia Road, Greensborough Road, Elder Street, Dennett Street and Temby Street and outline any support they can provide to the businesses. These works will take approximately four weeks to complete and will start later this month.</li> <li>Q: MG would like to know who in council should get involved or updated on NELP activities.</li> <li>TC responded that Duncan Elliott (CEO) briefs the local council CEO's.</li> <li>HJ added that there are various specialist liaison groups that cater to different stakeholder requirements. The BLG will focus on businesses in the local area.</li> <li>TC added that the MTIA is forming a high-level group which will include key stakeholders such as PTV, Councils and CEO's etc. who will be updated on the broader project.</li> <li>JC thanked all participants and closed the meeting.</li> </ul>

## Actions – previous

No.	Action	Owner	Due	Status	Update
1	none				

## Actions – new

No.	Action	Owner	Due	Status	Update
1	NJ to share LXP representative contact information to HJ.	NJ	ASAP	Pending	
2	HJ to investigate how to share works notifications and updates to NBLG	HJ	ASAP	Pending	

No.	Action	Owner	Due	Status	Update
3	TC e-newsletter campaign for traders	TC	ASAP	Pending	
4	LXRA representative	TC	20 May	Pending	