



**NORTH  
EAST LINK  
PROGRAM**

# Leaving a positive legacy as we build North East Link

Sustainability Snapshot 2021



---

# Contents

---

The North East Link Program pays our respects and acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land where our project stands, the Wurundjeri people, and offer our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. We recognise and respect their cultural heritage and continuing connection to land, water and community, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

---

Introduction  
**Page 02**

---

Our sustainability  
policy and themes  
**Page 04**

---

CASE STUDY 03  
Public Private  
Partnership  
**Page 10**

---

CASE STUDY 01  
Repurpose it  
**Page 06**

---

CASE STUDY 04  
Studley Park  
Gum planting  
**Page 14**

---

CASE STUDY 02  
Ecodynamics  
Nursery  
**Page 08**

---

CASE STUDY 05  
Sports and  
recreation facilities  
**Page 16**

# Introduction

The sustainability of major infrastructure projects is now more important than ever. We know that we have a key role to play and must consider environmental, social and economic outcomes across the design, delivery and operation of North East Link.

Years of planning and conversations with the community have helped shape North East Link. The community has consistently told us how important the environment and sustainability is to them. We've carried out one of the most extensive Environment Effects Statement (EES) processes and we have strict Environmental Performance Requirements (EPRs) in place as we design, build and operate North East Link.

We want to be leaders in sustainability and leave a lasting legacy for the north east community. To do this we are delivering longer tunnels than initially proposed to protect sensitive environmental areas, planting more than 30,000 trees and identifying opportunities to re-use material in construction.

This snapshot outlines some of the sustainability initiatives we have already started as we build North East Link.

## About North East Link Program

This is the first sustainability snapshot for North East Link and covers key sustainability initiatives over 2020–2021.

We are committed to driving environmental, social and economic sustainability through the design and delivery of North East Link. One of the ways we demonstrate accountability for meeting our commitments is by publicly documenting our sustainability performance.

North East Link is focused on being accountable and compliant with all objectives and targets. We have a comprehensive Environmental Management Framework (EMF) in place to ensure environmental performance requirements are implemented across the project.

By 2028, we will have delivered the missing link in Melbourne's freeway network between the M80 Ring Road and the Eastern Freeway.

### 6.5km tunnels

With parklands, wetlands and new-look Greensborough Road above

### 35 minutes

Slashed between Melbourne's north and east

### 50 MCGs

Of new, revitalised and reconnected parklands and wetlands

### 15,000

Trucks off local roads every day

### 11km

Dedicated bus lanes on the Eastern Freeway

### 135,000

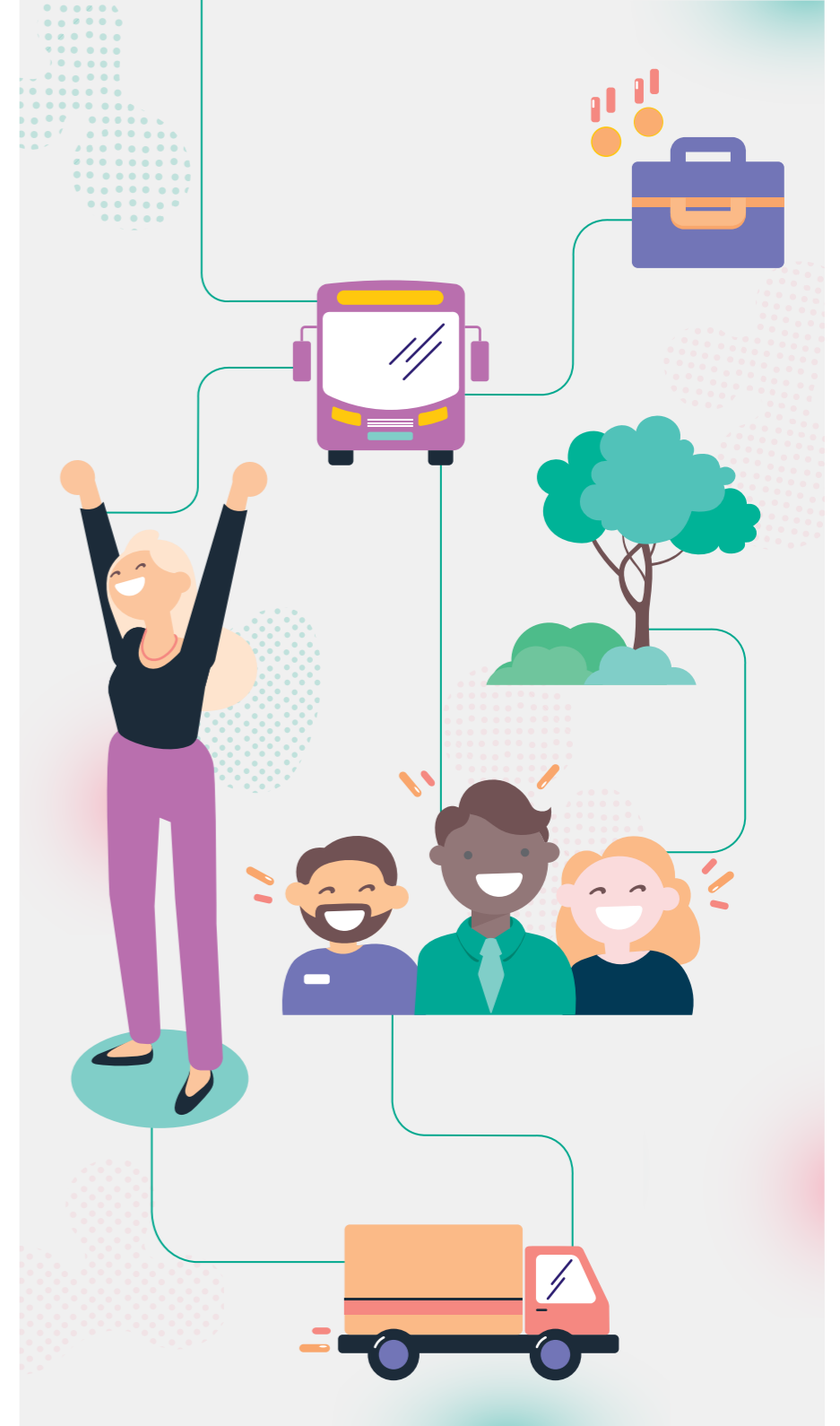
Trips a day

### 10,000

New jobs for Victorians

### 34km

Walking and cycling paths



## Environmental Vision

Our vision is to lead by example through setting, maintaining and delivering high standards of environmental performance and management across all phases of delivery of NEL. To achieve this NELP has established and is implementing an environmental management system to meet or exceed our environmental policy commitments and compliance obligations, including the EMF and EPRs, environmental legislation, regulations, objectives and targets through a continual improvement process. A six-monthly Independent Environmental Auditor (IEA) report is published publicly on the NELP website to demonstrate how we meet our environmental requirements, compliance obligations and to minimise the risks and impacts of our activities.

# Our sustainability policy and themes

North East Link understands that sustainability means moving beyond just a business-as-usual approach to one that seeks to maximise long term benefits for the environment, communities and economic prosperity.

To be leaders in this space, we are integrating sustainability principles into planning, design and project decision-making.

Our sustainability policy is broken down into six key themes, which commits us to environmental, social and economic themes across all phases of the project.

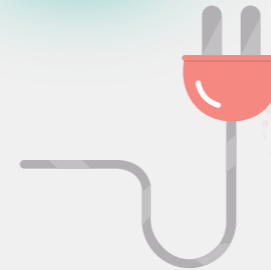
Sustainability is also addressed in North East Link's Urban Design Strategy (UDS). This outlines that our infrastructure must be sustainable, enduring and resilient to support current and future generations.

► For more detailed information on our sustainability policy, objectives and targets visit [bigbuild.vic.gov.au/projects/north-east-link-project/about/environment/sustainability](https://bigbuild.vic.gov.au/projects/north-east-link-project/about/environment/sustainability)



## 01 Leadership

We will achieve excellent environmental, social and economic outcomes across all phases of North East Link



## 02 Resource efficiency

We will embed energy, water, materials and waste reduction initiatives into the design, construction and operation of North East Link



## 03 Urban ecosystems

We will protect and seek opportunities to enhance natural environments



## 04 Communities

We will make a positive contribution to social, cultural and community health and wellbeing



## 05 Economic opportunities

We will facilitate opportunities for economic development, provide a skilled local workforce and promote diversity and inclusion



## 06 Climate change

We will play a part in Victoria achieving its emission reductions targets while preparing for the challenges presented by climate change



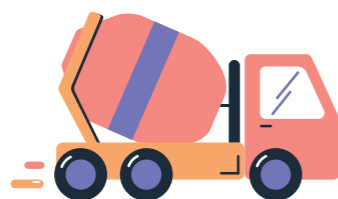
# Diverting construction material from landfill

One of our commitments is to take a proactive approach to identify innovative sustainability solutions during the design and construction of North East Link.

Throughout early construction for the project, we have sought to maximise our use of recycled materials. This resulted in the development of an alternative stabilised sand product made from 100 per cent recycled materials that we used during some of our early work along Greensborough Road in Macleod.

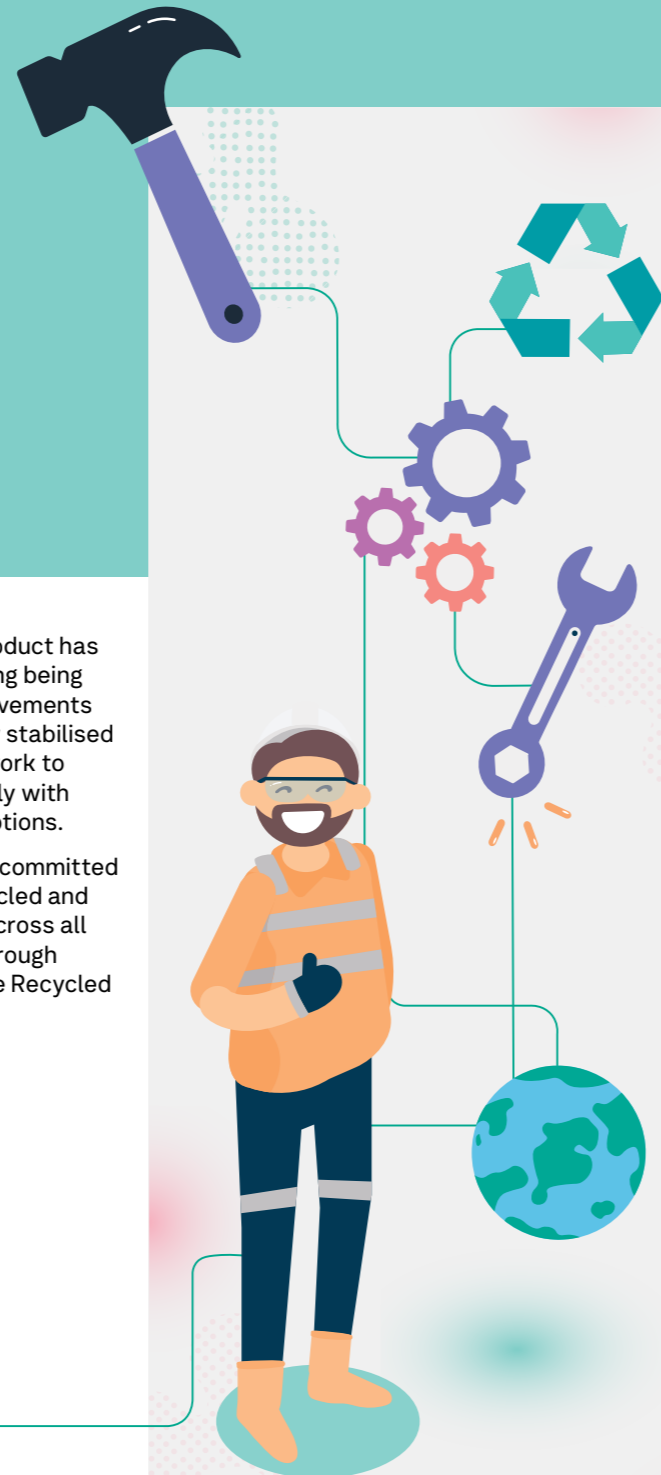
North East Link has already used more than 3478+m<sup>3</sup> of the new recycled backfill material – almost two and a half Olympic swimming pools worth – reusing waste that would otherwise have ended up in Victorian landfills.

In addition to making use of recycled construction materials, the new sustainable backfill product has advanced moisture control abilities, delivering consistent results, even in wet weather.



## 3,478+m<sup>3</sup>

Of the new recycled backfill material used



The reliability of this new product has resulted in less on-site testing being required and fewer truck movements needed to transport the new stabilised sand product, allowing the work to be completed more efficiently with reduced levels of road disruptions.

The Victorian Government is committed to optimising the use of recycled and reused Victorian materials across all rail and road construction through the Ecologiq program and the Recycled First policy.

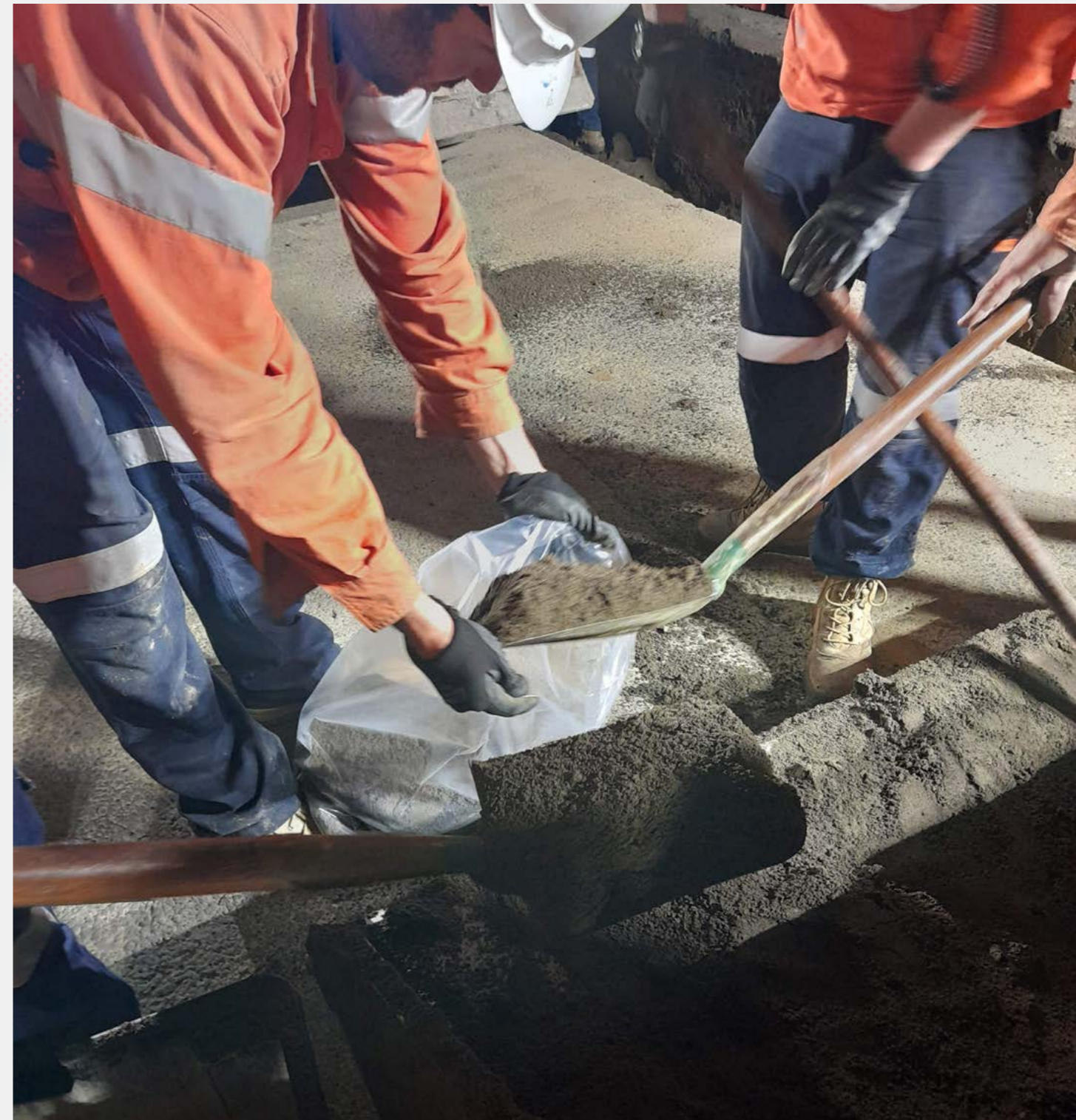
► Sample taken of the OSTABSAND product for verification during installation

### 01

Identify and implement innovative sustainability solutions in design and construction of North East Link

### 02

Maximise use of recycled materials across the project





# A considered approach to tree planting

1,500+

Trees planted to date

30,000

Trees to be planted in total

## Sustainability Commitments

01

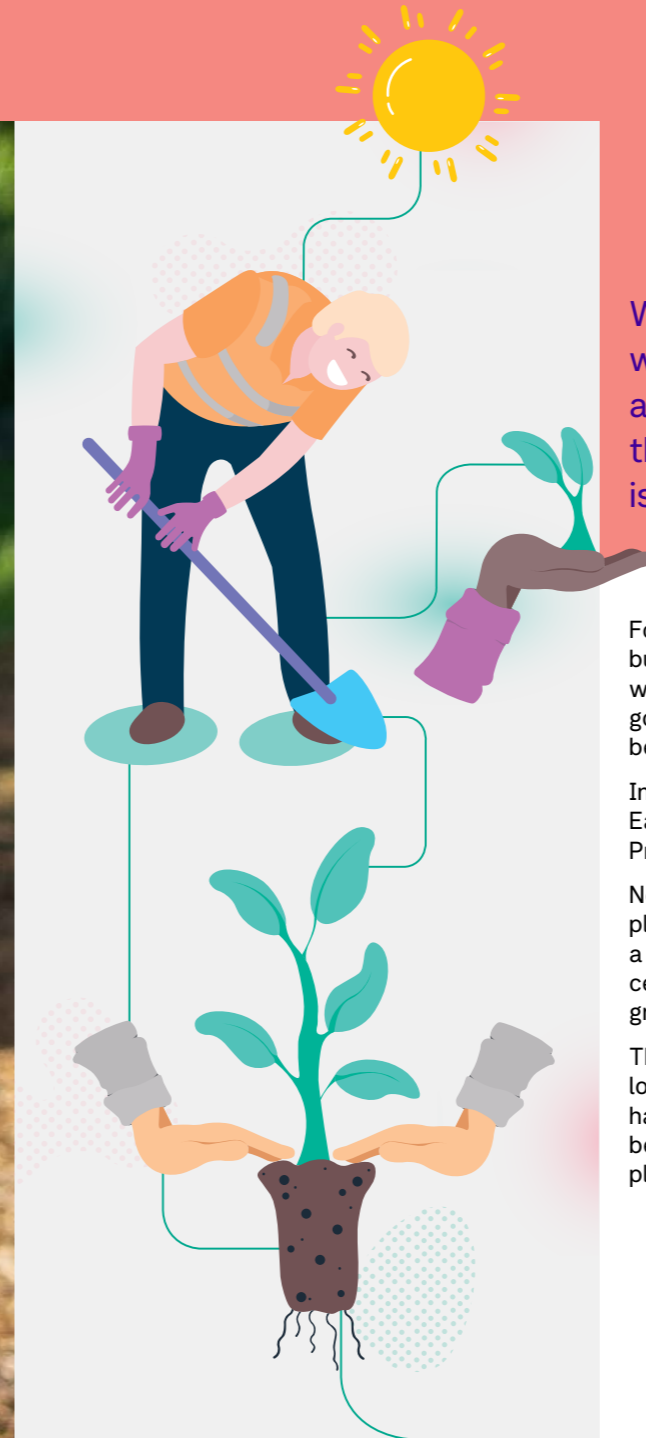
Undertake new plantings early to optimise growth

02

Re-planting to occur within the project boundary wherever possible

03

Implement a social and sustainable procurement strategy that delivers on relevant legislative and policy frameworks



We know how important trees are to the community, and we are committed to keeping as many trees as possible as we build North East Link. However, for any project of this size, and no matter the level of detailed planning that is put in place, some tree removal is unavoidable.

For every amenity tree removed to build North East Link, at least two will be planted – with the first trees going in the ground well ahead of any being removed.

In May 2020, the first trees for North East Link were planted at Belle Vue Primary School in Balwyn North.

North East Link sourced trees and plants from Ecodynamics Nursery, a social enterprise that invests 50 per cent of profits back into community greening initiatives.

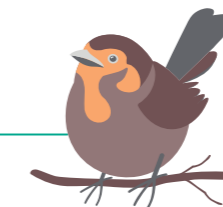
The nursery is one of dozens of local and social enterprises that have registered their interest in being part of North East Link's tree planting program.

Our tree planting program is not just about planting two trees for every one tree removed, we're focused on planting trees along and near North East Link wherever possible – keeping them as close as possible to where trees need to be removed.

We're also working closely with the local community and councils to get feedback and input into where new trees should be planted in local suburbs nearby.

To date, we have planted more than 1500+ trees across Melbourne's north and east, helping us work towards leaving a positive legacy that connects the community with nature in their own backyard.

◀ A student at Belle Vue Primary School, Balwyn North, plants a tree supplied by Ecodynamics Nursery





# Responding to climate change

As part of our work on the central tunnelling package of works, we are tackling greenhouse gas emissions at every stage – from procurement and design to delivery and operations.

There have been some big sustainability wins out of the procurement process for the central tunnelling package. Our tunnels will use 100 per cent renewable electricity during construction – which is double our initial, program-wide NELP target.

As part of the tender process for the central tunnelling package, bidders were required to adopt an emissions reduction approach that prioritised avoiding greenhouse gas emissions over carbon offsetting. This resulted in some key innovations in the successful bid, including:

- Adoption of an innovative dimmable lighting solution to improve the energy efficiency of the 6.5-kilometre twin tunnels

- Commitments to use electric vehicles for maintenance and operations, supported by dedicated electric vehicle charging stations at the Motorway Control Centre
- Installation of PV solar panels on structures such as the ventilation stacks and the roof of the Motorway Control Centre to generate renewable energy on-site

During the construction phase, State Toll Co, which will collect tolls for North East Link, will explore and evaluate procurement options for renewable electricity for the Spark consortium to operate and maintain the North East Link Tunnels.

We're working closely with our design and construction partners to embed solutions across all stages of North East Link.

1 Against an Infrastructure Sustainability Council (ISC) verified baseline calculated in accordance with their independent standards

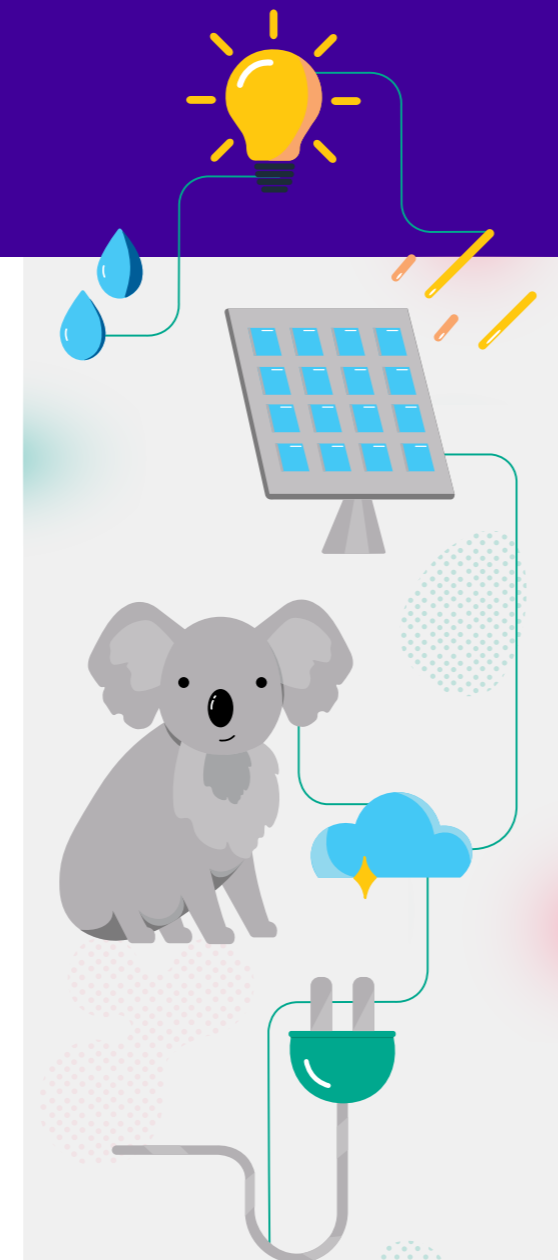
2 Note this does not include emissions from traffic using the North East Link. Residual emissions would be offset by renewable energy in favour of other offsets.

## 100%

Renewable electricity to be used in central tunnelling package construction

## 30%

Reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from the construction of the central tunnelling package<sup>1</sup>



## Sustainability Commitments

### 01

Analyse and implement all feasible opportunities to reduce energy use and greenhouse gas emissions from construction and operation of North East Link

### 02

Achieve at least a 30% reduction<sup>1</sup> in greenhouse gas emissions from the construction of North East Link

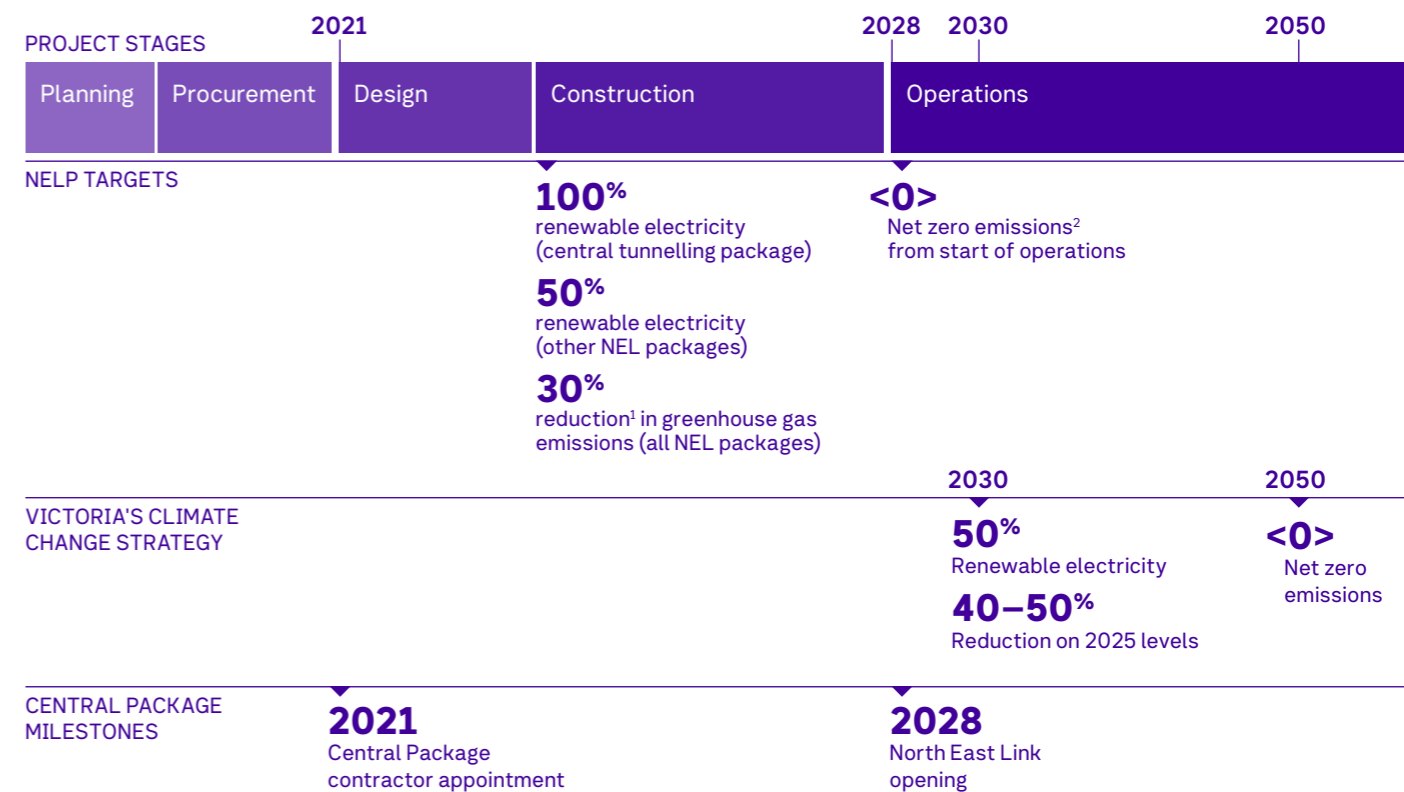
### 03

Use at least 50% of renewable energy for electricity used to construct North East Link

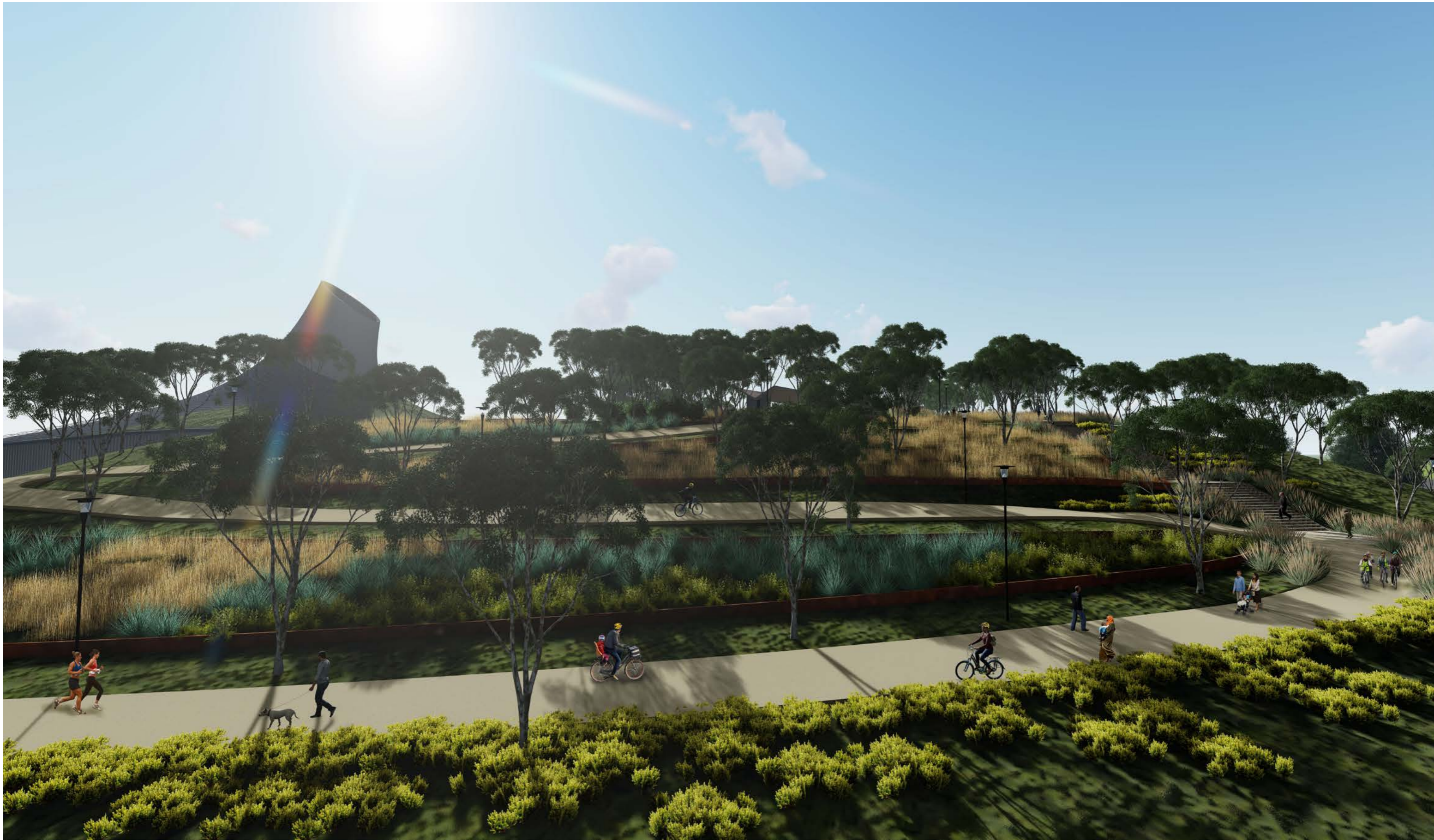
### 04

Achieve net zero emissions<sup>2</sup> in the operation and maintenance of North East Link

### How do our sustainability plans align with Victoria's Climate Change Strategy?







Artist's impression  
**Yarra Link green bridge, Bulleen**

The bridge will provide a link between the Koonung Creek and the riparian Bulleen flats parkland, creating a connection to Country, weaving the natural threads together.



# Protecting biodiversity for future generations

During our initial ecological assessments for North East Link, we identified a group of Studley Park Gum trees, which are listed as a Critically Endangered species.

We committed to increase the number of these significant trees and create new habitat links to help protect critical biodiversity in Melbourne's north-east.

Our Studley Park Gum Management Framework is the first of its kind for the species and outlines a detailed approach to establish a new population of Studley Park Gums and to ensure their ongoing conservation.

More than 300 juvenile Studley Park Gum trees have been planted in Yarra River parklands in Templestowe and Lower Plenty. This is three times the number of trees being impacted by North East Link.

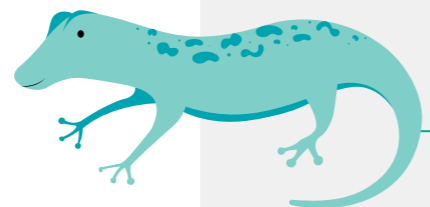
Work started in 2019 with the collection of seeds from local Studley Park Gum trees, which were then propagated at the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria Nursery.

The Yarra River parkland planting sites were chosen in partnership with Parks Victoria and in consultation with local councils.

New populations of Studley Park Gums are in the ground and we are committed to ensuring they survive and thrive.

For the first three years, a qualified ecologist or botanist will visit every three months to assess the health of the trees. The trees will be checked every year for up to ten years – helping us to learn more about this unique species than ever before.

By establishing a new population of Studley Park Gums in the Yarra River parklands, the community will also be able to see these unique Victorian trees up close along the Main Yarra Trail.



► Studley Park Gums maturing at the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria Nursery

## Sustainability Commitments

### 01

Seek opportunities to create new habitats and habitat links in consultation with local environmental and community groups

### 02

Contribute to urban forest outcomes by replacing lost canopy and achieving a net gain in canopy cover by 2045





# Supporting healthier and happier communities

To deliver North East Link we need to use some existing sporting grounds during major construction. Knowing the significant effect this would have for many sports clubs, players and communities, we committed an initial \$68 million to upgrade sports and recreation facilities where those affected can relocate to during construction.

As part of our commitments, we set out to deliver key improvements to these facilities that would generate positive social and environmental outcomes and enhance community wellbeing.

NELP worked closely with local councils, sports clubs, state sporting associations and schools to deliver game-changing sports facilities and keep local sports thriving while we build North East Link. By working closely with these organisations, we have delivered sporting facilities to benefit clubs and local councils and provide communities with better facilities that can be enjoyed for many years to come.



## Extensive consultation leading to positive social outcomes

Throughout the planning and design stages for major upgrades to Greensborough College facilities, we undertook extensive consultation with Local Clubs, Banyule Council, and Greensborough College to ensure the design met the needs of the entire community.

We worked closely with the Victorian Schools Building Authority (VSBA) to deliver these facilities and kept stakeholders informed throughout construction.

19

Sportsgrounds to be upgraded across nine suburbs

20,000+

Players will benefit from the upgrades

## Sustainability Commitments

01

Generate positive social and environmental outcomes and enhance community

02

Achieve a high level of improvement in recreational facility standards



◀ Players from St Marys Greensborough Junior Football Club enjoying the new oval at Greensborough College (inset) New sporting facilities at Greensborough College for the school, local clubs and the community to enjoy (top) Climbing equipment surrounded by new landscaping at Ford Park (left)





# NORTH EAST LINK PROGRAM



## Contact us

[community@northeastlink.vic.gov.au](mailto:community@northeastlink.vic.gov.au)  
1800 105 105

North East Link Program  
GPO Box 4509, Melbourne, VIC 3001  
[northeastlink.vic.gov.au](http://northeastlink.vic.gov.au)



Interpreter service  
For languages other than English,  
please call 03 9209 0147

Please contact us if you would like this  
information in an accessible format.

If you need assistance because of a hearing or  
speech impairment, please visit [relayservice.gov.au](http://relayservice.gov.au)

## The Northern Ventilation Structure

The design references the shape of a traditional eel trap (a long woven basket), with the pattern of tiles and photovoltaic panels emulating the appearance of eel scales. Eels being a traditional food and trading medium of the Wurundjeri.



Printed on 100% recycled paper.  
When you're finished, please recycle.

