

Lid the Link

Feedback analysis



Banyule City Council is proud to acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people as traditional custodians of the land and we pay respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Elders, past, present and emerging, who have resided in the area and have been an integral part of the region's history.

Our community is made up of diverse cultures, beliefs, abilities, bodies, sexualities, ages and genders. We are committed to access, equity, participation and rights for everyone: Principles which empower, foster harmony and increase the wellbeing of an inclusive community.

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Background

In response to The North East Link Authority's trench design for the northern section of the North East Link (between Watsonia Road and the M80 Ring Road – see figure 1), in August 2022 Banyule Council (Council) commenced a “Lid the Link” campaign. This campaign puts forth a proposed alternative design with a lid over the trench (see figure 2).

Figure 1 State Government Plan



Figure 2 Council proposed lid design



The *Lid the Link* campaign was primarily communicated through a website at <https://lidthelink.com>. This website showed the original and alternative designs (see figures 1 and 2), as well as a community engagement module providing visitors with the opportunity to show their support.

This document presents a summary of the feedback provided through this engagement module.

Participation

Participation in this consultation was prompted by:

1. Postcard (see appendix 1) and posters distributed in and around Watsonia shops in August, September, October and November 2022
2. ABC radio interview with the Mayor in August 2022
3. A 4-page wrap in the September edition of Council's newsletter, the Banyule Banner
4. Social media promotions through the Banyule Facebook page on:
 - a. August 10 2022 (37 interactions, 6 comments and 11 shares)
 - b. August 19 2022 (18 interactions, 15 comments and 7 shares)
 - c. September 9 2022 (9 interactions, 14 comments and 5 shares)

Promotions directed people towards the <https://lidthelink.com> website, which contained the following information.

The website commenced with a call to action to encourage people to show their support for Council's advocacy plan, followed by a brief description of the issue:

“ A massive 10-lane, 65-metre wide trench cutting through the middle of Watsonia is proposed as part of the northern section of North East Link (NEL). It will be so big it will separate people from shops, services, schools and the station. A grey concrete trench will impact our leafy green community forever. ”

And some further details about Council's plan:

“ We've worked with tunnelling, analytics and modelling experts and identified a better option. That is to put a lid over the trench that will: ”

- create a green bridge over a grey trench
- help keep businesses open and our community thriving
- create more than three hectares of land that in years to come can be used to create the places and spaces our community needs and deserves
- boost accessibility and access between Watsonia Village, the train station and car park

On a separate tab, the website outlines the Governments plan as follows:

“ ”

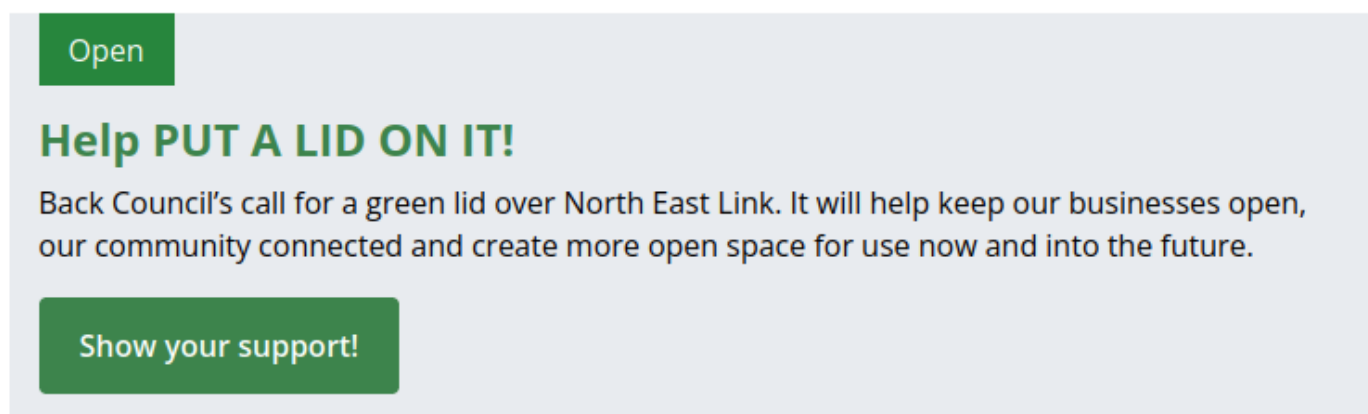
- The current plans for the northern section of North East Link put a massive 10-lane trench through Watsonia.
- Wall to wall, the trench will be 65 metres wide, equivalent to an 18-storey building lying on its side.
- At some points it will be 100 metres wide, with 18 lanes of asphalt (driving, service and on/off lanes).
- It will divide our community, threaten the viability of businesses, increase noise and visual clutter.
- It will split Watsonia in two and separate people from shops, services, the train station and each other.

The problems put forth on the website were:

- More than 100 metres wide in places
- Delays and disruptions likely to effect local traders
- Separates station / carpark from Watsonia Village
- Does not improve existing accessibility issues
- Noisy and visually unappealing
- Community places and open spaces will never be able to be developed above the trench – a significant opportunity missed
- Splits Banyule down the middle

Participation in this consultation was prompted by the text **“Back Council’s call for a green lid over North East Link. It will help keep our businesses open, our community connected and create more open space for use now and into the future”**, with a **“Show your support!”** button leading to the consultation form (powered by The HiVE consultation platform).

Figure 3 Engagement module screenshot



Postcard responses were data entered into the online form by Council staff. At the time of data download (30 January 2022), and after cleaning (removal of duplicates), there were 206 submissions via postcard and 1,667 submissions through the website.

Of the 1,873 valid responses, 371 people had clicked on the ‘Show your support’ button or returned the postcard without providing further information as to why the issue matters to them; and 1,502 people wrote in an answer for “Tell us why this issue matters to you!”.

Also included in the submission were questions asking for email (compulsory online) followed by suburb online (compulsory) and postcode on the postcard. The postcard also asked for the individual’s name.

A break down of responses by geographic area shows most responses were received from residents around the proposed *Lid the Link* site. Suburbs have been grouped to align with postcodes for consistency in data analysis.

Table 1 Count of respondents by locality

Suburb / locality	Total count (n=)	Number who wrote in a comment
Watsonia, Watsonia North	439	361
Briar Hill , Greensborough , St Helena	373	304
Eaglemont, Heidelberg, Rosanna, Viewbank	304	258
Macleod , Macleod West , Yallambie	291	223
Bundoora , Kinsbury , La Trobe Uni	116	88
Ivanhoe, Ivanhoe East, Ivanhoe North	85	73
Bellfield, Heidelberg Heights, Heidelberg West	58	48
Montmorency	55	46
Lower Plenty	31	26
Eltham, Eltham North, Research	28	20
Other Banyule	4	4
Outside Banyule	88	51

Analysis notes

Given the email component on the online form was compulsory, it should be noted that some may not have submitted the form due to wishing to maintain anonymity.

The postcard prompted for postcode as the geographic indicator, whereas the online form asked for suburb. Furthermore, some people typed in their postcode in the suburb field online. Given many postcodes span over multiple suburbs, and in some cases also LGAs, grouping of some suburbs was necessary for the analysis.

There were 83 duplicate records (identified by exact same comment and/or email address). In the instances where different comments were made across different records by the same person, comments were merged into a single record for that person.

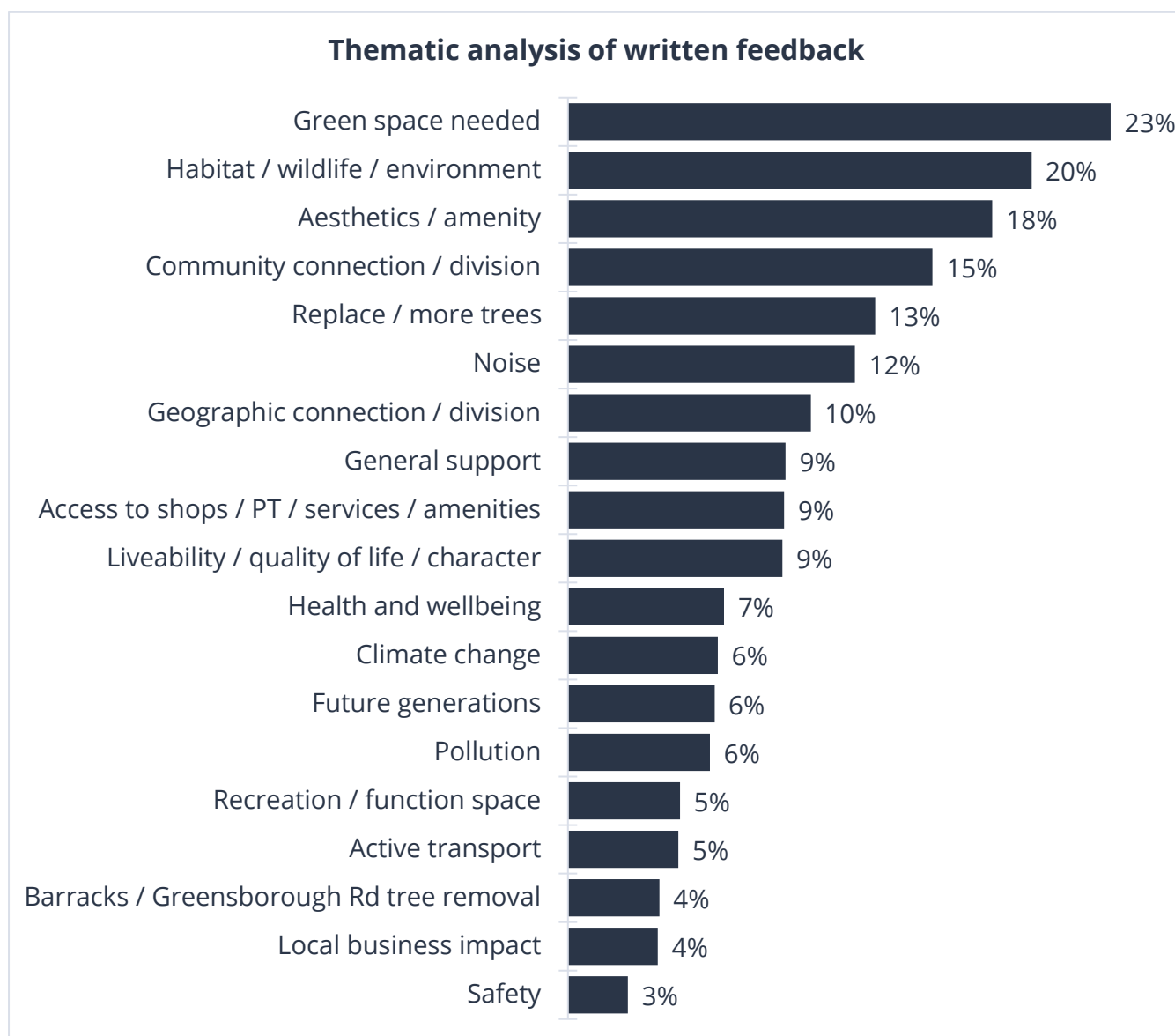
The content included in people's comments could be influenced by the content on the website and other promotional copy.

We all understand that with an ever increasing population, development needs to happen. Our current infrastructure does not meet our needs, we know this. We did argue this. But we need to be smarter about the way we develop. Leaders need to stop putting their head in the sand and need to ask themselves how can we do this better? How can we increase services for our communities while increasing accessibility and inclusivity for all. And the way to do that is by protecting our people and our environment, not one or the other. We can do this by creating places for community to convene. To have a sense of place and belonging. All development should be designed through the lens of key principals such as sustainability, biodiversity, inclusivity, social equity and community development. This is an opportunity to be better at development. Be ground breaking. Do something that you can be proud of, when in decades to come, this opportunity to deliver an innovative community and environmental centric approach, leaves a legacy to be proud of. We are losing our natural environment at rapid speed. It has to stop. A healthy community and a healthy environment are inextricably linked. It is a symbiotic relationship. And we need to stop deepening the scars that are being made to both the environment and communities through poor development. Be better. Do better. Your people and planet need you to step up.

Why this issue matters to the community

Of the 1,500 valid written comments, almost one in 10 put forth a general statement of support for Council's plan, without any further insights as to specific reasons why. The remaining comments covered a range of topics and were grouped into the themes covered in this report. It is clear that those who support the *Lid the Link* proposal mostly do so for the green space, environmental, aesthetic, and community connection benefits. Most of those who provided a written answer covered more than one of these topics in their answer (average 1.9 themes per comment), suggesting that a wide variety of issues and benefits were recognized.

Figure 4 Proportion of comments assigned to each theme



Cross analysis by location shows that those living closest to the site (Watsonia / Watsonia North) more often mention noise as a concern, but less often mention topics relating to climate change mitigation. Those in Lower Plenty often mention the need for more trees; habitat / wildlife / environment was a particularly common topic amongst residents in the south of Banyule; and Ivanhoe/ Ivanhoe East / Ivanhoe North residents more often mention the need for more green space.

The following pages explore these themes in further detail, including geographic differences where statistically significant variations have been identified (using SPSS custom tables module).

Green space

Green space was the most frequently mentioned reason for why the freeway redesign issue matters, with 23% of comments mentioning green space. Further to comments simply mentioning the need for more green space (without additional clarification), some of the insights into this 'green space' request were as follows:

- Banyule / Greensborough is perceived to be a 'green area', but this is declining. There is a need for more green space to maintain neighborhood character and reputation.
- Green space is closely associated with liveability.
- More green space is needed to mitigate climate change.
- Green space improves the amenity of the roadway.
- Green space can improve human health.

Over a third (36%) of residents in Ivanhoe / Ivanhoe East / Ivanhoe North mentioned the need for green space in their comment, compared to just 15% of Macleod / Macleod West / Yallambie residents.

Banyule has always been a fairly green council area and even during construction the lack of trees is stark and desolate, so cannot image upon completion!
[Greensborough]

I would much rather live near beautiful greenery than a large grey trench. It has been proven that green spaces improve mental health and it would also increase the space available for wildlife. What a fantastic cause!
[Greensborough]

Because more green spaces for a growing community is important. *[Watsonia]*

A green corridor versus a divisive, noisy, polluting freeway. It's an easy choice - a lid on the link means more trees, a green space, less noise, better air quality, greater access and visual amenity. Yes please!! *[Rosanna]*

A green corridor is important for so many reasons - community connection in public spaces, health and wellbeing, wildlife links for urban biodiversity, environmental offsets for large scale road projects (sound, air quality, water management, etc) and opportunities for iconic public art. *[Watsonia]*

As a local resident, I support the opportunity for more green space and less road surface, which will create a more positive and liveable outcome for our community. *[Watsonia]*

Green Bridges will help lessen the negative impacts of the northeast link that we didn't want going through watsonia at all. *[3087]*

Have lived locally all my life and value the green spaces we have access to. Increasing green space whilst disguising a multi lane highway is a win win for all and will aid in keeping the communities on either side connected. *[Lower Plenty]*

Environment, habitat and wildlife

One in five (20%) comments put forth the benefits of Council's plan for the environment and wildlife through:

- Creating wildlife corridors;
- Maintaining the environment to combat climate change and reduce pollution;
- Helping to achieve emissions reduction targets;
- Increasing amenity and liveability of the area;
- Improving safety for local wildlife, and in turn vehicle drivers (through not hitting wildlife);
- Reducing environmental impact;
- Offsetting the environmental impact of tree removal at Simpsons Barracks and other developments in the region;
- Improving the health of the people who live nearby, both through mental health (connection to nature) and physical health (reduction in air and noise pollution); and
- Creating habitats for local wildlife.

This theme was mentioned by a higher proportion of respondents in Bellfield / Heidelberg Heights / Heidelberg West (31%) and Eaglemont / Heidelberg / Rosanna / Viewbank (27%), compared to just 12% of those living in Macleod / Macleod West / Yallambie.

Any new development should automatically encompass the wellbeing of our environment and the local community- which ultimately effects the broader community. I cannot believe it could be any other way with the knowledge and science we are continuously presented with.
[Ivanhoe]

The environment is being destroyed more every day and wildlife is constantly suffering at the hands of humanity. The least we can do is help keep animals safe and minimise our impact to their habitats as much as we can. connectivity is everything in nature when it comes to biodiversity and stable ecosystems. *[Reservoir]*

A lot of trees have already been removed to prepare for the North East Link. Why can't new, green open spaces for people to enjoy and provide habitat for birds be provided once the road is completed? *[Briar Hill]*

'Put a lid on it' absolutely needs serious consideration from an environmental and climate change perspective. The 'lid' will be green, encourage and house local wildlife and native birds, create open healthy space and trees!! We need to keep working toward healing our planet and managing the balance between much needed improved infrastructure and environmental concerns. This proposal by council is integral for our community to stay healthy! *[Greensborough]*

Aesthetics

The appearance and amenity of the original proposal was a concern raised in 18% of comments. Watsonia and Greensborough are seen as leafy suburbs, whilst the proposed roadway is seen as an ugly trench. Some of the key words put forth relating to negative aesthetics were concrete, trench, eyesore, ugly, and grey. The positive aesthetics people were seeking related to green, trees, shrubs and environment. The green lid would help maintain the aesthetics of the neighboring areas.

I would consider moving somewhere else if they don't make the north east link nicer with more greenery. That's why we choose to live on this side of town, because it's hilly and green. I don't want that destroyed. *[Watsonia North]*

Because I don't want to see a massive tarmac scar across our community when we could take this opportunity to beautify the area with green spaces and trees to please the eye and improve our mental health and wellbeing. *[Watsonia North]*

One of the best parts of the north east is its green spaces. With all the native plants and animals it's home too. Don't deject on what makes the north east so great and turn it into a concrete jungle. It may save money in the short time, but the long term effects will be seen for generation's. If they stick to the current plan it will become a graffitied eyesore, starved of life. Change it to be green and with will give and bring life season on season, year on year, decade on decade!
[Montmorency]

We need to keep our suburbs free of concrete monstrosities. The ambience of peaceful living is quickly deteriorating and we need to keep our streetscape alive with beauty and greenery.
[Greensborough]

As a local to the area it's important to keep a nice aesthetic. No one wants a giant trench running through their suburb. Just because you don't have to tunnel under things doesn't mean that the trench shouldn't be covered.
[Greensborough]

A Trench is noisy, unappealing, environmentally polluting and splits our great community with no thought to the train station access! Why would we not use the opportunity to invest in better infrastructure and green areas. Watsonia is being treated like a thoroughfare instead of the thriving local community it is. It's a massive oversight and we'll have to live with the impact forever. *[Macleod]*

Connect the community

Under this theme (included in 15% of comments) are the comments relating to the need for the lid to keep the community connected in terms of people getting together in a social setting, as well as reference to community connections and community divisions with no further clarification as to the type of connection (people or geographic). Any comments that were specific to geographic connections / divide (e.g. not splitting up the suburb of Watsonia, maintaining access to shops and services) were included under the access and geographic connection themes.

When referring to the need for community connections / avoiding community divide, most of the comments didn't elaborate any further. Those who did elaborate mentioned:

- Mental health benefits of community connections, and improved wellbeing;
- Friendly space for people to meet and interact;
- Improved safety; and
- Social isolation if divided.

The least that can be done is to create a usable space that can unite and not divide the community by reinstating the green spaces that are being destroyed for it's construction. *[Heidelberg Heights]*

The Watsonia residents will need this modification to help keep them connected within the community. *[Macleod]*

Accessible and pleasant community space is beneficial to both the mental and physical health of a local community. A space that allows for sport and fitness as well as space for parklands would bring a sense of community to a suburb that is already splintered by a train line, highway and high tension power lines. Covering the NEL would reduce the divide and allow for a more environmental local community with more walking, bike riding and outdoor activity due to the additional usable space. *[Watsonia]*

Watsonia already suffers by being divided by the Greensborough Bypass. Residents on the Eastern side must feel themselves to be more members of the Greensborough community, and this is a pity. The new freeway will exacerbate this disunion. Council's plan for a 'green lid' will have the opposite effect though. Helping to reunite an already divided community. *[Watsonia North]*

We need green spaces and to stay connected as a community. *[Macleod]*

Replace / more trees

Over one in ten (13%) comments mentioned the need for replacing or adding more trees. A reoccurring theme was the large number of trees being removed to build the roadway (with particular mention of the Army Barracks, 4%), with suggestions that the proposed green lid would be a good opportunity to replace these trees.

Furthermore, it is widely perceived that more trees would be beneficial for:

- Offsetting the pollution from the additional traffic;
- Cleaning the air of the traffic pollution;
- Climate change mitigation;
- Improving liveability;
- Reducing noise;
- Providing an ecosystem for local wildlife;
- Reducing the heat island effect; and
- Improving amenity.

This theme was covered in a notably high proportion of comments from residents in Lower Plenty (27%), particularly when compared to Bundoora / Kinsbury / La Trobe Uni residents (5%).

Hundreds of trees have been removed along Greensborough Road and I think that they need to be replaced. A green bridge over the trench would create an area that would join the community, reduce noise and stop the clutter of service lanes and on/off ramps.

[Viewbank]

So many lovely trees have been cut down to build North East Link which has changed the way our beautiful suburb looks. It is very appropriate for these trees to be replaced by a green bridge.

[3087]

A green and leafy community is part of the reason we purchased on this side of town. Let's give back to our environment by regrowing some of the many trees cut down during this build.

[Watsonia]

Greensborough is called GREENSborough for a reason. Green space is integral to our environment and community. I fully support the 'put a lid on it' plan to regrow what has been lost and cultivate more green open spaces whilst providing and ensuring access to neighbouring suburbs and local businesses. *[Greensborough]*

I am 81 years old, upset that so many trees will be cut down opposite my unit. Parrots, magpies and currawongs won't visit us anymore. *[3087]*

A treed link will create much needed green space with the opportunity for planting hundreds more trees.

[Ivanhoe]

Noise

There were widespread concerns about the potential noise from the proposed freeway (12% of comments), and it was felt that the proposed green lid would reduce traffic noise for surrounding residents.

This theme was mentioned in 18% of comments made by those in Watsonia / Watsonia North, which was notably higher than residents in other areas, particularly Eaglemont / Heidelberg / Rosanna / Viewbank (8%).

A loud uncovered freeway running straight through the heart of a suburban area will impact on the people living in a suburb that is otherwise quiet and green. It will be loud with noise and pollution. The retail precinct will not be safely accessible for the elderly, the young, and those accessing public transport. This freeway is going to run through the middle of a suburb.... Make Melbourne a beautiful place to live, not a place of ugly roads and concrete. *[Watsonia]*

A lid on the link road would seriously reduce noise levels. At present these are unacceptable at my house where we have no noise protection. The new road promises >63 decibels (loud). *[Watsonia]*

Clearly having a parkland link to the shopping precinct will benefit the businesses in Watsonia and will aid with minimizing noise pollution for that area. *[Watsonia North]*

For so many reasons. I love where I live and don't want to have to give up my home in the future due to traffic noise, pollution and the concern of kids safely accessing Watsonia station across 65m of traffic. *[Greensborough]*

The noise, air pollution and visual impact to the suburb is disturbing. The lid will hide the eyesore and the noise and add to the sense of place rather than just being a transport corridor. *[Greensborough]*

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It is important to have a lid over the trench through Watsonia to reduce traffic noise and pollution. Trees could be planted on the lid to help compensate for those removed. *[Viewbank]*

Geographic connection / division

Some of those who mentioned 'connections' were specifically referring to the geographic connection across the proposed freeway (10% of all comments), rather than connections between people (community). Having a geographic connection across the freeway was perceived to have a range of benefits:

- Easier access to services and shops;
- Ability to visit friends and family;
- Reducing pollution (from longer drives to go around);
- Pedestrian and active transport connections; and
- Connections for wildlife / wildlife corridors.

You will be separating families and community. Isolate people from services and these changes effect peoples health and well-being.
[Watsonia]

We need more trees and connecting passages (for people and animals) for a better environment and our community.
[Rosanna]

We need access to our family who live on the eastern side of the trench. We reside on the western side of the trench. We are elderly and wish to keep living independently. *[Macleod]*

Unless the link is lidded our community will be split in 2. This splinters the community connections which matter more than ever now. *[Bundoora]*

This is a great opportunity to connect Watsonia across the Greensborough highway 🏡 Makes perfect sense to do it and provide a better outcome for the local community affected by the car centred transport users outside the area.
[Greensborough]

This is a chance to increase open green spaces and to prevent Watsonia becoming a suburb of two halves, divided by a 10 lane (impenetrable) highway. *[Watsonia]*

Access to shops, public transport, services and amenities

Almost one in ten comments (9%) expressed concerns that access to services would be cut off in the original roadway plan, emphasizing the importance of maintaining the connection across the new freeway. This was raised as a particular issue for young people accessing public transport, schools and the library, and older adults accessing health services. There was also mention that navigating around the area on foot might be difficult without the green lid, particularly for those with a disability.

The library and train station are central to Watsonia community life. This green space will go towards building a beautiful and social space rather than split it in two. *[3085]*

We're a young family and frequent the library and town square at Watsonia several times per week and having more usable community space reflects the growing needs of the local population. *[Watsonia North]*

I chose to live on this area for it's great proximity to local shops, transport & it's green outlook. The current north east link design will destroy neighbourhoods & communities, create isolation. *[Greensborough]*

I shop and go to the cafe and libraries in Macleod and Watsonia every day. The new link will be great for traffic movement but the impact on local villages needs to be minimised. *[Macleod]*

It is going to put a figurative and literal barrier right down the middle of my community and make it that much harder to walk to the shops or catch up with friends 'on the other side'. *[Greensborough]*

As a resident of North Watsonia, frequent shopper @ Watsonia Strip Shop & Public Transport User via Watsonia Rail Station, the current plan is a disaster for Watsonia & the residents. *[Watsonia North]*

It is important to maintain the link between one side of the road to the other for easy access for shopping, walking and working within Banyule. *[St Helena]*

It will interfere with family accessing shops and other essential services. *[Watsonia]*

I have lived in Watsonia for 20+ years. It is an amazing place to live with it's easily accessible trains, buses and shops. Let's not ruin it by creating a great divide. *[Watsonia]*

Liveability, quality of life, and neighbourhood character

Almost one in ten (9%) mentioned something relating to livability, quality of life or neighbourhood character as a reason why this issue matters. Neighbourhood character is often portrayed as 'leafy green' and residents are not wanting to lose that. There is a perception that the green open space, trees and connections across the roadway are critical to making the area liveable and hence improving quality of life.

We are at a point in history where we know the importance of green space, both as habitat and for human wellbeing. We also know the importance of connectivity in communities. It is imperative then that all new developments include these factors in their planning to ensure healthy sustainable communities. *[Bundoora]*

Banyule and surrounds is known for its native beauty and leafy outlooks. Continued efforts need to be made to maintain this reputation and invest in new planting to regenerate some of what will be lost in this major development. *[Lower Plenty]*

The more green space the better.
It's what makes this area appealing in the first place.
[Ivanhoe]

It would be the difference between a suburb that is a joy to live in and move around, rather than just a place to exist.
[Watsonia]

Biodiversity and public wellbeing will be seriously compromised by the NEL. Covering the trench will go some way to restoring a liveable environment for residents and wildlife. *[Macleod]*

Having more green space is so important for liveability. It provides fresh air, improved wellbeing, increased property prices, a home for all the displaced animals in the project, and provides area to enjoy the great outdoors, where there is a lot of concrete and steel due to the North East Link project. *[Heidelberg West]*

The trench needs a lid to maintain the quality of life of the people living near the trench - also more trees and plants help with avoiding climate change - every little bit helps! *[Rosanna]*

The natural beauty of my community matters greatly to me. The city of Banyule has a strong natural flora and fauna character that should be enhanced, not detracted to by cost cutting and short sighted solutions.
[Rosanna]

Health and wellbeing

Both physical and mental health were mentioned as potentially being positively impacted by Council's plan (7% of comments) through reduced pollution, connection to nature, and better community connections. There were widespread concerns about the original plan's potential negative impacts on physical health through air and noise pollution, and impacts on mental health and wellbeing through loss of community connection and green space.

Being around trees is proven to improve mental health and is better for our environment. Not putting a lid on the north east link is massively out of step with where we need to head as a society. Preferring cars, noise, pollution and a desolate isolating landscape are the wayward actions of the past, not our future.
[Heidelberg]

It is also been documented that living closer to busier roads increases the health risks of rheumatoid arthritis among other issues. The green lid may help to reduce long term health issues thereby saving money on future health costs. *[Macleod]*

Urban development (for houses, roads and building facilities) is important considering our population is growing, but we also need to balance it out with nature for our physical, mental and emotional health. Being able to connect with nature is an essential part of balance and happiness in life.
[Mill Park]

This issue matters to be because I am an advocate for the environment and community well being. This solution solves both of these issues. It would be a step in the right direction for the government to realise that there is a dire need for more green space, accessibility and community driven consultation. *[Ivanhoe]*

Nature helps keep people happy *[3081]*

Mental Health - when people live in a more beautiful and serene environment their general well being is greatly enhanced. *[Egglemont]*

'Putting a lid on it' is a way to enable delivery of the NEL whilst and retaining community connection, preserving and extending the green spaces that are vital for our future mental, social and environmental health. *[Egglemont]*

We need to maximise spaces that promote community engagement while minimising environmental impact. It's an opportunity to promote healthy living with area for walking, bike riding, and socialising while also increasing vegetation. I don't want local businesses affected negatively by the Link cutting the community in two. *[Macleod]*

Climate change

Climate change was raised in 6% of comments. Particular climate change related issues raised were:

- Increased heat due to road surface, with many recognizing this as the urban heat island effect;
- In order to combat climate change, every opportunity for more green space and tree planting must be taken; and
- The removal of trees in the construction of the roadway needs to be mitigated to reduce impact on climate change.

Comments relating to climate change were more often provided by residents in Bellfield / Heidelberg Heights / Heidelberg West (15%), outside of Banyule (14%), and Ivanhoe / Ivanhoe East / Ivanhoe North (12%), compared to just 2% of those living in Watsonia / Watsonia North.

Climate change! Vast areas of asphalt attracts and concentrates heat. This reduces liveability in an already hot suburb in summer. We must be planning/building differently knowing the trajectory of climate change and its impact. *[Greensborough]*

Watsonia and much of the surrounding area have some of the highest scores of Heat Vulnerability as per the HV Index. The North East Link project will only seek to worsen this, by further lowering living conditions for residents and wildlife alike. *[Heidelberg]*

This project will contribute even more heavily to spiralling CO2 levels & our Climate Emergency with a large hard surface exposed roadway. *[Greensborough]*

These days of climate change as much green area is required as possible! This road project has removed many established trees, so this green bridge is a way to bring them back. It is easier to put this green bridge in now rather than later and can contribute a bit of carbon offset. *[Macleod]*

Creating more green spaces encourages a more diverse landscape for our native flora and fauna to thrive, instead of barren and heat inducing areas which only contributes to climate change. *[Briar Hill]*

The state government plan divides the community too much and will greatly contribute to the urban heat island affect, contributing to the lack of amenity and liveability of the surrounding suburbs. *[Clifton Hill]*

We NEED this to help mitigate climate change, improve local biodiversity, provide habitat corridors for our native wildlife and to make concrete suburbia beautiful!. *[Heidelberg]*

Future generations

Almost 100 comments (6%) mentioned future generations and/or planning for the future. Many of these suggested that the Council plan was needed to create a liveable environment for future generations and children. There is a call for thinking about the long term implications and needs, rather than short term costs.

Future generations will appreciate the greening of the environment instead of a smelly concrete pit.
[Greensborough]

Because my children are growing up a stones throw from this chaos and I'd like there to be a better outcome for them and the whole community.
[Watsonia]

If we don't all come together now and create the environment we want for future generations, the project will go ahead and the government wont spend the money to fix the issues it originally created. *[Briar Hill]*

Lidding the link is a gift to the future, rather than a devastating scar. Please make it happen.
[Montmorency]

We must remember that we did not inherit this land from our ancestors but we are borrowing it from children and their future generations. What will their future look like - green or concrete, noise and pollution? *[Bundoora]*

Green spaces are important to me as a young mum. I don't want my kids growing up with roads. I want them to grow up with trees and parks. So I support Banyule's a bid to put a lid on it. *[Macleod]*

I have lived in Watsonia for over 50 years and the suburb has taken a real battering as a result of the unfinished ring road landing in the centre of the suburb. I feel the residents/shop owners and the suburb itself deserves to be treated with a bit more respect. By spending a more time and money in the short term will be of benefit to all in the long term.. *[Greensborough]*

Not only so that my children and other Children of the younger generations have hope for a cleaner future, but so that I am setting a good example to them as to good stewardship of the environment within our community and by extension our earth. *[Watsonia]*

Pollution

This theme was covered by 6% of comments and encompasses all types of pollution other than noise pollution (which has a separate code), the most common being air pollution. It was felt that including green space would help offset / mitigate this increased pollution and filter the air. This would in turn reduce the health impacts on the local community, with particular mention of families, children and those with underlying health issues (e.g. asthma). Pollution is often mentioned in conjunction with noise concerns.

Although they are planting trees we need grass and parkland to absorb the pollution from exhaust fumes. *[Greensborough]*

Enabling pedestrian access and establishing a green corridor would improve local amenity and encourage physical activity, as well as reduce noise pollution and exhaust pollution. If this isn't implemented it will divide communities and make it difficult for a person like myself with a disability to navigate the local area by foot. *[Bundoora]*

Concern over noise and fumes from new road. *[Watsonia]*

Increasing community connectivity, reducing noise and air pollution and increasing green space with what would be a nature corridor over the freeway will all contribute towards Banyule being a more liveable and healthy community. *[St Helena]*

I drove past the road today. The houses at the side of this road will be significantly impacted by the road noise, smell and pollution. Putting a lid on it will at least minimise the visual eyesore. *[Heidelberg]*

Why leave a open hole allowing dangerous fumes into our airspace and is dangerous to all in the area.

We need clean fresh air with lots of trees and spaces for people to get together for picnics, cricket, swings and kiddy playgrounds. *[Watsonia]*

Looking at the plans from the Vic government it does look like it will divide the community with no thought of providing a link between the two communities. Also there is no thought about trying to reduce the impact of exhaust fumes, the green solution from the BC Council looks great but also serves an important service! *[Ivanhoe]*

Functional recreation space

One in twenty comments (5%) mentioned that Council's plan would provide open space that can be used for recreation (to improve wellbeing and health) and gatherings (to improve community connections).

I support the proposal to put a green lid over the new link as it will create an area tha can be enjoyed by the community and not just another noisy and visually unappealing area in our city. The world needs more trees so let's do this! *[Greensborough]*

A lid over north east link would provide shared open spaces for communities to get together. If anything the covid pandemic has shown us how important shared outdoor spaces are & it has reaffirmed the health benefits of connecting with nature. *[Montmorency]*

It'll create park spaces for family's and friends to play and enjoy. It will also keeping Watsonia green, environmentally friendly and aesthetically pleasing. *[Watsonia]*

Important for people to exercise and for recreation. *[3087]*

Enables provisions for safe recreation - cycle/walking paths. *[3088]*

Local community is more important than ever so initiatives to connect the community and have people outdoors meeting friends and neighbours has my 100% support. *[Bundoora]*

So that families can walk their pets in the park and so they can have a nice time. also because it will give animals a home to live in, and fun times for families. Maybe you could add a playground to the lid?! *[3084]*

With a young family looking for opportunities to stay fit and enjoy the great outdoors we need more green space, not more tarmac with noisy cars and trucks. Please put a lid on it!!! *[Heidelberg]*

Watsonia needs a 'lid' over the freeway to keep the community feel of the suburb as well as providing recreational areas for the residents. Without the 'lid' the area will look like some of the other uglier suburbs around Melbourne and detract people from moving to the area and shopping in the local businesses *[Watsonia North]*

Active transport

The Council proposal was recognised by 5% as providing enhanced opportunities for active transport, by providing pathways that can be used to walk and cycle from one side of the freeway to the other in a safe manner. Ability to link through to the train station was also deemed important for some.

We are active retired people who frequently walk from our home near "East Watsonia" across Greensborough Highway to Watsonia railway station and Watsonia library and shops. Cutting off easy access from our side of the highway would be a very big deal for us!
[Greensborough]

We, the people of Watsonia have a shared vision of a greener, climate suitable, pedestrian focused, accessible railway station with a vibrant town centre. The NELP plan does not deliver that and we deserve more! *[Watsonia]*

This is an important issue as while the city needs transport systems, the transport system needs to have amenity visually, provide pedestrian access across easily and also to offset the concrete heat sink issues.
[Montmorency]

We, the people of Watsonia have a shared vision of a greener, climate suitable, pedestrian focused, accessible railway station with a vibrant town centre. The NELP plan does not deliver that and we deserve more! *[Watsonia]*

Social connectivity, better options for safe access on bike or foot.
[Greensborough]

The Northern suburbs need green spaces for people to remain active and to enable them to improve their lifestyles. When pedestrian areas are attractive to use, safe and appealing, it is appealing for locals and those from further afield will come to make use of these areas.
[Macleod]

Put a lid on it and create beautiful Green spaces for the residents to enjoy. Walking, biking and playing with families in green spaces would be beneficial for good mental health rather than a smelly, noisy highway
[Greensborough]

Impact on local businesses

Four percent (4%) of comments mentioned that the proposed roadway could have detrimental impacts on local businesses, some of which may have faced challenges throughout COVID. It was felt that businesses in the Watsonia Road shops would suffer from reduced customers should the uncovered roadway plans go ahead, due to it being more difficult to access the shopping strip from the other side of the freeway, via either active transport or motor vehicle.

People need to easily and safely access both sides of the trench. Cutting off access will result in greater traffic congestion on outlying and service roads and will impact retail strips - we've already seen evidence of this at yan yan road and other major road developments. Don't make the same mistakes. *[Eltham]*

Access from elder street to the train station will be cut off, it will no longer be easy for us to access Watsonia shops and then Watsonia shops will suffer greatly. *[Greensborough]*

Better for environment, better for the humans who have to live near it, better for visitors, better for local economy, better for the children who will grow up here. *[Watsonia]*

The Watsonia shops are such a fantastic community space. They bring people together! I want to see these businesses continue to thrive. I want easy access to both sides of Watsonia. I definitely want more green spaces. This is a wonderful alternative to the proposed plans. The current plans for Watsonia could be devastating for the local community! *[Bundoora]*

It would be more beneficial for small local businesses to have people being able to walk around the area. Cyclists would have a method to cross easily. There are many long term benefits to a lid. *[Bellfield]*

Past experience here and internationally has shown the social, economic and long term effects of splitting communities with transport corridors are detrimental to people and businesses. Pedestrian bridges over traffic sewers are the worst outcome and alternative options must be designed and constructed. People avoid using these bridges and find alternative shops, traffic, schools etc. Once these massive road infrastructures are built, they are there for perpetuity. They do not meet any sustainable or best practice outcomes. *[Macleod]*

The traders and the residents of Watsonia do not deserve a massive tunnel dividing us and de-greening our suburb. *[Watsonia North]*

Safety

In statements of support, safety was raised within 3% of comments in relation to:

- Safer for children to get to and from school;
- Safer for people to visit friends and family;
- Safer place for recreating; and
- Safer for animals as it provides them with a wildlife corridor.

We need to counter the pollution created by the vehicles and give people the opportunity to exercise in a safe and pleasant environment. *[Watsonia]*

We need to better plan our road system so that we reduce the impact of car vs animal collisions. Safer for the animals and safer for road users! *[Bundoora]*

Lessen crime - the more it looks and feels like an industrial or semi industrial area the more it feels like a go to place for groups to tag, graffiti, rev cars, wheelies etc. *[Eaglemont]*

Lessen crime - the more it looks and feels like an industrial or semi industrial area the more it feels like a go to place for groups to tag, graffiti, rev cars, wheelies etc. *[Eaglemont]*

A green lid is a safer option for pedestrians who need access to Watsonia train station, shops and schools. *[St Helena]*

I want to be able to walk my son from Greensborough south to Watsonia primary school. If there's no focus on pedestrians and safety by putting a lid on the tunnel, walking to school won't be a viable option. Keep the character of the area clean and healthy. *[Greensborough]*

I would like to walk from my home on Delta Road to the train station and library without crossing an intimidating and scary road, especially as people get older it is hard to navigate. Banyule council's plan is much more connected and safe for walking. *[Greensborough]*

Need to easily access Library, Medical Centre & Hairdresser etc - and green bridges could be safer and not blow the budget! *[3088]*

Other comments

Other comments each made by less than 10 respondents were:

- Wanting a tunnel – there was a perception that the original plan was for a tunnel;
- Concern about the potential reduction in house values;
- Concern that the population will leave if it is built as an open pit;
- Get it right initially as it will be too difficult to fix it later;
- More car parking needed;
- Criticism about limited community engagement and availability of plans for the original design; and
- Cynicism that governments go for the cheapest option rather than what is right for the local community.

There were 12 comments that specified an opposition to any roadway being built, and 4 comments that didn't provide enough information to answer the research question.

Appendix 1 – Promotional postcard



A massive 10-lane, 65-metre wide trench cutting through the middle of Watsonia is proposed as part of North East Link. It will be so big it will separate people from shops, services, schools and the station.

Our leafy green surrounds will be replaced by a grey concrete trench.

That's why I back Banyule and support Council's call to put a lid on it and build green bridges over North East Link.


It will help keep our businesses open, community connected and create open space for use now and into the future.

Name: _____

Postcode: _____

If you'd like to get involved, please provide your email: (optional) _____

Reason you back Banyule: (optional) _____



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