

MEDIA RELEASE: Rare opportunity for activists to say 'Thanks'

From the coalition of community groups against the East West Link

What: East West Link campaigners say 'Thanks' to Ministers

When: 12pm Thursday 16 April

Where: Steps of Victorian Parliament House

In a rare move for activists, representatives from the extensive community campaign against the East West Link will meet at parliament to say 'thanks' to the Andrews Government now a deal has been struck with the consortium to cancel the project.

Thousands of community members across metropolitan Melbourne campaigned for more than 18 months against the \$10.7b project that would have carved up large swathes of Royal Park and swallowed up homes and businesses in Collingwood, Clifton Hill and Parkville without solving Melbourne's traffic problems.

Home owners, business owners, sporting and other interest groups, residents from Kensington to Collingwood, local councils and political parties fought hard against the project that would not fix congestion and would have a permanently disastrous impact on inner-city communities.

The campaign against one of the biggest infrastructure projects in Australia involved more resident and community groups than any other state-based campaign. The East West Link became a key policy marker in the 2014 state election with the ALP promising to cancel the project and release previously secret documents.

Key campaigner Harriet Mantell said "It's not often that campaigners get an opportunity to say thanks to Ministers. Campaigning rarely ends with smiles - while we're all exhausted, we're smiling, not just for local residents, but for all Victorians who are spared the enormous cost of the project."

"The community campaigners are immensely relieved the East West Link has now been categorically canned. The campaign was fought on multiple fronts - in the courts, through inquiries, at rallies and picket lines, in the media and through dedicated door-knocking and persuasion. The final outcome is a great relief."

Public Transport Users Association President Tony Morton said "We found that people throughout Melbourne and Victoria were concerned not just about the direct impact on the inner north and the flawed planning process, but also about the project's financial impact and its crowding out of alternative spending priorities."

"The East West Link's \$18 billion price tag was threatening to derail public transport, health and education budgets for a generation."

Campaigner Petra Stock said "We always knew the project was void of economic merit and was a dog's breakfast in terms of planning. It would have led to a 60% increase in traffic on the Eastern Freeway, destroyed parks and community gardens, and swallowed the homes of hundreds of residents whose lives have been irrevocably disrupted. Now that the Andrews Government has released the documents, the Victorian people can clearly see what an outrageous mess the previous government was perpetrating on us."

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