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EASTLINK INTERCHANGE HONOURS ONE OF FOOTBALL'S FOUNDERS

The Minister for Roads and Ports, Tim Pallas, today announced that Victoria's biggest and busiest motorway interchange, would be named in honour of one of the founding fathers of Australian Rules football, Tom Wills.

Mr Pallas said the Monash-EastLink interchange would be officially known as the 'Tom Wills interchange' in recognition of his lasting contribution to Australian Rules football, as well as the historical links of the game to Melbourne's outer east.

"The Tom Wills interchange is located in close proximity to Waverley Park, the current home of the Hawthorn Football Club and the ground formerly known as VLF/AFL Park," Mr Pallas said.

"Many people in the outer eastern suburbs of Melbourne identify this area with Australian Rules football, and the old football ground remains prominent in the community. The ground can be viewed from the Monash Freeway, near Wellington Road.

"In naming this interchange we wanted to recognise one of the key figures in the birth of Australian Rules, and also acknowledge that Australian Rules football has historically been very much at the heart of communities in the outer suburbs of Melbourne."

In 1858, Tom Wills umpired a match which has been widely accepted as the first match of Australian football, and played a key part in the development of the original rules of the game.

Mr Pallas said that Wills is already honoured with a sculpture at the MCG which acknowledges his role.

"In this 150th year of celebrating our truly national game of Australian Rules football, it is fitting that a major project like EastLink acknowledges one of football's founders," he said.

"Many thousands of Victorians will pass through the Tom Wills interchange as part of their daily lives and this name will ensure a lasting reflection on the development of Australian Rules football and its links to the local area.

"A tribute to Tom Wills and signage will be placed at the interchange to ensure clear recognition for the 240,000 motorists who will use this outstanding piece of infrastructure everyday.

"The Tom Wills interchange is a showpiece of EastLink, featuring an impressive series of ramps and bridges made out of both steel and concrete.

"The interchange is nearing completion and it is a remarkable achievement by ConnectEast and Thiess John Holland to move over 850,000m³ of earthworks, build seven bridges and create the largest wetland on the project in less than three years of construction."

EastLink marked another milestone today with the introduction of amendments to the Concession Deed in advance of opening.

"EastLink remains on track to open in the middle of the year and we are focused on ensuring everything is in place to facilitate its smooth opening for the people of Victoria," Mr Pallas said.

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“The amending deed includes provisions which prepare for opening, improve customer provisions and refine the Key Performance Indicator regime - the first of its kind to be introduced by a toll road operator in Australia.

“It’s all about ensuring EastLink is ready for the opening so Victorians can benefit from its massive economic benefits and congestion relief even earlier.”

Wills interchange key facts

- Consists of seven bridges;
- Monash flyover or steel box girder bridge stands more than five storeys (or 10 metres) above EastLink;
- 148 bridge beams have been installed on the Monash Freeway alone,
- Over 1,300 piles have been installed;
- Wills Interchange hosts one of the largest wetland sites on the project with 11 per cent of total project wet landscaping planted in the area;
- Over 850,000m³ of earthworks has been moved within the Wills interchange. If placed in the MCG it would fill the ground 42m deep.