

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 16 March 2023 6:15 PM
To: Maribyrnong River Flood Review
Subject: Submission to flood review
Attachments: Melbwaterinq.docx

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Dear Sir Madam,
Please find attached our submission to the Melbourne Water Flood Review, in Microsoft Word Format.
We are [REDACTED] of [REDACTED] and like all the residents of [REDACTED] we were flooded on October 14.
Our email address is [REDACTED]
Thank You
[REDACTED]
Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows

The 14 October 2022 flooding of the Maribyrnong river has devastated residents, businesses and infrastructure across several suburbs. The causes of this flooding and the failures of warning and support systems are of real and immediate concern to residents, business owners and local governments. We are trying to make decisions about restoration, future risks and the significant impact on our lives and well being.

The inability of Melbourne Water 'experts' to do the job of flood mitigation that they claimed had already been done as far back as 2004 is frankly shameful.

Initially the first claim by the weather bureau put the height of the flood at 5 centimetres below the 1974 flood. In our house the 1974 flood had left a clear mark on the concrete stumps just below the floor bearers, on the 14th October our house was inundated to the windows (at least 75 cm higher). There seemed to be considerable variations in statements recording the flood levels.

The public was told in 2004 about the flood mitigation done in the Footscray area and downstream stating that both that another serious flood was unlikely, and therefore it was unlikely that another serious flood would occur, hence Melbourne Water (MW) recommended that the Flemington Racecourse wall go ahead. This was against the protests of Maribyrnong residents as well as domestic and international experts at the time.

Many residents in the area believe that although MW is a government instrumentality it is easily swayed by the profit motive of developers and others like the Victoria Racing Club and the developers of the Riverview Retirement facility.

Another significant defect was the failure of sensors for the flood warning system. Is this a matter of poor maintenance, or neglect, or failure to check their operation even though a significant rain event was predicted? What falls in the catchment eventually comes downstream. Is their design fit for purpose in 2023?

It is clear that the Flemington flood wall and Metro Tunnel levee changed and reduced mitigation areas. How could all the areas surrounding the racecourse be inundated well beyond the level of the 1974 flood while Flemington was pristine (aerial photos clearly demonstrate this). The effect of barriers was apparent in our own driveway where a garage door and steel fence caused a significant upswell flooding vehicles to their roof.

Future priorities for the future must be based on the clear principle that flooding needs to be mitigated to the greatest extent possible to protect residents (ie people), local businesses, infrastructure and the costs to the public purse via local government, the State of Victoria and the Commonwealth. Consideration of the basis upon which access to flood prone land has been granted is also relevant.

Investigation of future mitigation measures should include

- Revisiting the Arundel basin
- Scope for creating other mitigation basins in the Maribyrnong Valley such as in the uninhabited defence site
- Tidal monitoring, modelling and translating this and communicating it to at risk communities
- Flemington wall – opening it when medium and high risk events are possible. Creation of emergency plans to relocate important race meetings would be part of this. It must be remembered that the VRC acquired the land in the 19th century because it was part of the floodplain.

It is accepted that important community infrastructure should be protected so the flooding of a transport tunnel should be protected.

MW must take into consideration the possible overall costs to society of decisions like the decision to approve the construction of the Flemington racecourse wall. The devastation caused by the flood on the 14th October last has cost Federal, State and local governments many millions of dollars of public money that may well have been put to better use elsewhere, in terms of emergency flood relief, emergency accommodation, cleaning up and rate relief. Also hundreds of millions of dollars have had to be paid out by insurance companies resulting in higher premiums for millions of Australians and rendering some residents uninsurable due to prohibitive premiums.

While the economic cost has been significant the weight of this disaster on victims should not be ignored. We spent a significant period of time at the National Resilience Centre in Mickleham, where we met families with heart rending stories of adjustments they have had to make.

- The lady who had to travel each weekday to Maribyrnong (round trip 86km) to ensure her children could continue to attend their school, she spent the day in her flooded garage, her house being uninhabitable.
- Others who had to try and live with friends and family and then try to find rental accommodation in a very tight market.

While I appreciate the scope of the MW Maribyrnong River Flood Review is limited, but the Review must take into consideration the effect of MW failures on the mental health of the residents who were the victims of the flood. Not only the unsatisfactory warnings and abrupt order to evacuate but the ongoing disruption including loss of routines, support systems and services, reduced contact with friends, neighbours and family. As has been documented through many disasters (flood, fire etc) these consequences manifest in reduced physical and mental health for considerable time following the disaster.

Finally it is my contention that the impact of the flood on people 70 yrs and older have almost no ability to recover from this disaster as their incomes are fixed, their family photos and items that remind them of significant life events have been destroyed.

The review of the Maribyrnong flood and the other Victorian floods need to integrate the following

Emergency Management including warnings, education, evacuation actions
Flood management immediate warnings, evacuation centres and services, life saving action including civilians actions;

Community services including emergency accommodation, food provision, pet services, health services, communication services (internet, phone etc); waste disposal

Recovery services – insurance, uninsured, rebuilding, health, education (for those who have children in any level of education).

