

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 10 March 2023 9:58 AM
To: Maribyrnong River Flood Review
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: SUBMISSION TO FLOOD REVIEW: October 14, 2022, Maribyrnong Flood submission [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]
Attachments: PXL_20221013_192125426.jpg; PXL_20221014_040811536.jpg; PXL_20221013_203106128.jpg; PXL_20221014_081627083.jpg; PXL_20221013_193430934.jpg; PXL_20221013_210229949.jpg; 20221014_123718.jpg; October 14 flood submission.docx

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To whom it may concern,

Here is our submission to you re: our experience and post flood comments pertaining to the Maribyrnong river flood of October 14, 2022.

Our names are [REDACTED] and we reside at [REDACTED]
We request that our names and address be removed from any public sharing of this information.

Many thanks,

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

October 13, 2022

Late afternoon, October 13th, I noticed news stories about the Anglers Tavern preparing for flood with sandbags on my mobile phone news feed. Left work at 4pm just in case I needed to prepare the lower level of the house for flooding. A neighbour let us know that Bunnings were making sandbags available. Discussed this at home with my husband as to whether we should collect some, decision made not to, as we had not had an official warning. Spent time shifting things to the upper floor of our home just in case although we thought then we were causing ourselves unnecessary work. Went to bed.

(Question post flood- why did commercial business seem to have been better informed about the potential event than residents? And sandbags?)

October 14, 2022

Woke up at 5am. Phone had an evacuate now message on it time- 4.26am.

Dressed, headed out front to view the river. It was half over Chifley Dve. Other neighbours were outside assessing what they were going to do, it was pitch black.

Alerted my husband to get up. Water was covering Chifley Drive at 5.54am. Second evacuate now message sent at 6am and registered on my phone. Given the text message spoke of Randall St emergency service/relief centre, decided to drive there to see if any sandbags. Arrived there, it was chaotic, various staff were arriving and congregating in the foyer, greeting each other. One person acknowledged me, and then said excuse me and she moved on to liaise with police arriving to site, they were in the early set up stages. Asked about sandbags and a woman advised that they had none. Raced to Bunnings- no sign of sandbags/staff, felt quite anxious. Drove home and left car on the hill past the oval high up on [REDACTED]. Raced back home.

6.21am – 7am water encroaching from end of our block to the front of our neighbour's driveway. Husband moved second vehicle to higher ground near first vehicle. Raced to friend in Chifley Drive to collect a sandbag she generously offered for our downstairs toilet (she did the Bunnings collection the day prior). Placed sandbag in downstairs toilet in the hope it would prevent sewerage coming up. 7.06am daughter recorded video footage of water filling the road in front of our neighbours and our home, fast moving water, but not yet in our driveway. (Footage taken from our upstairs balcony). 7.31am water running past our house on road/footpath/nature strip (not yet in our front yard) as per picture taken with my husband and daughter. Decision made not to send kids to school, as we didn't know how/when we might be able to bring them home. Houses near to us appeared to have evacuated. As we were inside moving things to the first story we didn't have much time to check on neighbours. We made the decision not to evacuate and to remain in the first story of our home, we kept shifting items from rear shed/downstairs to upstairs. Sofa bed couch raised to outdoor bench furniture as was a TV unit (quite backbreaking), fridge freezer placed on bricks, but we realised quickly it wasn't high enough. Washing machine moved upstairs. We filled up our kettle, bath with water. 8.02am water had taken up half of our driveway as per picture. Approximately 9am, water slid under garage and front door, but was also seeping in back doors from rear yard. We turned off our power at the power board. As we had a generator we were able to bring it upstairs, power our upstairs fridge/freezer, and enable TV news/phones to be charged during the flood which was an absolute blessing.

Phone calls to and fro with friend on Chifley Drive. She made the decision to evacuate with an SES boat around this time following watching her fridge/freezer float past her while plugged in to the

wall. She headed to a city accommodation option. Our children were upstairs at this point, and we were trying to keep them out of the way/eating breakfast etc. Transferred to gum boots and gathered up towels/mops etc. 11.42am, starting to feel physically wrecked, from all of the lifting and effort made. Brought our bicycles up to our wrap around upstairs balcony. Water was continuing to increase in height, shifted couch to higher trestle tables downstairs. 12.37pm outside footage indicates water nearly at the top of our outside table setting. Started to feel concerned about being in flood water inside house, couldn't see the last few stairs, tripped/fumbled several times, and the water was freezing cold above the top of our gumboots, now at knee height and moving rapidly but we continued to move items to upstairs. Next picture taken at 3.08 pm shows water in backyard reducing approx. 30-40cm (as evidenced by side fence water mark). Photo then at 5.29pm shows water moving from our front yard (had fully left our house by then), but water still on street / nature strips/footpaths outside. My husband and I worked solidly, one with a hose and the other with a broom washing out all silt as the water receded (but while still receding). This was a solid three hours, 3-6pm and then finally I introduced eucalyptus floor cleaner and mopping to the process. Husband tried to hose outside but quickly realised we didn't have the appropriate pressure hoses. We collapsed in a heap upstairs and put some party pies in the oven for dinner. It was at this time we realised that our water was running clear, and decided to use the tap water and shower.

We had some messages with our next door neighbour, and she arrived at approximately 8pm to survey the damage and kindly brought us pizza. She reported that the roads had been blocked off for most of the day and that they could only just come now get in to our street but with some difficulty.

October 15, 2022

Got us early and commenced one of four floor washes with tea tress/eucalyptus downstairs.

Around 7-730am husband was working on the driveway clean, and I decided to see what was happening at the Randall St Evacuation Centre, before leaving, a news presented stopped me for a "live cross" for morning television. I spoke to him at 8am prior to collecting my car and driving to the Evacuation Centre. It was very hectic, but I discovered news of a meeting happening and made plans to return for that. On the way back to my house, I parked near Coulson Gardens due to difficulty accessing my street for the mud. I spoke with [REDACTED] who was walking the streets with two of his staff, he was very concerned and empathetic. I was surprised at how much my spirit lifted from seeing him a local MP in our streets, and taking the time to chat. My parents visited and took the kids with them to enable us to clean up and work further which was a huge help.

Neighbours had a crew of workers who were a huge help with cleaning our street and driveways of several homes. This was the biggest help of all. *(In hindsight street cleaning from council would have been advantageous ASAP on the Saturday)*. Went to Bunnings and stocked up on new cleaning products. I was very frustrated that the police blocked the corner of Rosamond Rd and Raleigh Rd on my return home from Bunnings. It took me 15 minutes to return to my property and for some reason this really irked me. *(I am of the view traffic management should have separated impacted residents better, with capacity to come and go for those who resided there to have been better managed)*. I attended a community meeting Saturday afternoon with council and emergency services. Attendance was low likely limited people could attend due to the clean-up efforts/evacuations. Unclear as to what I gained at this meeting as I was quite shell-shocked. Future meetings were discussed from memory, we were also advised that we could leave rubbish out for council collection. It was helpful to hear that as I was able to pass on that message to neighbours,

although of course rubbish was accumulating in front of all homes anyway due to the extent of lost items.

School parents came to visit us and helped with removal of mud from back room and driveway area which was a big help.

Tried to contact insurance but couldn't get through.

October 16, 2022

Got kids out the door then tried to keep moving items – got the washing machine in order and started the task of further clean-up washing.

School friend came to collect eldest daughter for the day to assist which was brilliant. Extended family helped with the outside sheds/clean-up and began taking pictures of items on front lawn damaged. The area started to get smelly as the weather picked up. Cars and traffic everywhere due to people returning home and surveying damage. Had difficulty accessing our street at times, and there were also "sightseeing" passer-by's mainly on foot and bicycles/motorbikes surveying our nature strips. This was particularly frustrating as "stickybeaks" were rummaging through nature strips and making a big mess. Police presence earlier might have been of help. Lots of very kind volunteers were also dropping off food and water at this point.

I learned of the "Flood Warriors" at the council meeting the day prior and encouraged that they visit an elderly neighbour needing help via the facebook page, and the flood warriors were brilliant, and began turning up around the streets.

October 17th, 2022 – finally got a hold of insurance and plans were made for the coming days. Then successfully navigated the Service Australia payment option. Had great difficulty with the DHHS Victorian website (eventually had to attend the Community Centre in person to sort), felt quite frustrated to have had these difficulties as a professional person.

Husband then had to travel for work for several days.

October 18, 2023

I had a shocking night with my [REDACTED] son up vomiting through the night. Had to keep him home and turn my focus to him. Made it difficult to follow up things further, family assisted with shopping, and managed to get some bottled water from the Community Centre.

Enquired at school as to any gastro outbreaks, they weren't aware of any. I was very upset following his illness as he had been in the floodwater and I suspected picked up a bug there. Daughter successfully returned to school but had not been in the water. Tough few days.

POST THISTIME:

Children returned to school, as school is very close, on their walking to school, stench and mess from nature strips including glass.

Watched the then Maribyrnong Mayor report on rubbish collection occurring in the Maribyrnong streets on the Q&A program and looked outside at all of the rubbish in our street and felt a real gap and disconnect from my local council.

Insurance came, assessed. Then assessor changed but no work commenced.

After one week of paid leave (which I was fortunate to be able to access) returned to work. Work were very kind and supportive of my leave and circumstance which was terrific. No insurance works/make safe had started and hence I felt quite worried about damage and the next steps post return to my office.

Kept in touch with neighbours, council sent food trucks to Coulson Gardens which was an incredible help, plus a great place to chat to others affected.

Didn't receive any communication from my children's school very local in the area re: the flood, although the school admin staff did offer me a lasagne when I attended the office ad hoc one day. I heard that the children in [REDACTED] were planning to attend the local streets to survey damage as part of their "natural disasters" unit, but I was pleased to hear that this had been re-thought and canned, however it did cause unnecessary anxiety, and fears for children tripping on rubbish and other muck in doing so.

November – my daughter started to struggle with some viral symptoms and a cough, sought out insurance and wrote a letter explaining my concerns about exposure to mould or other contaminants. We were offered accommodation options then, and I took that up from late November. Still no work on our home, although the streets were certainly starting to look better, and other homes had started on the "make-safe" with tradespeople everywhere, however the parks – particularly Coulson Gardens where my family spent considerable time were not yet restored.

Noticed some white spots through sun room of house, insurance sent a "hygienist" who confirmed it wasn't mould.

November 7, wrote a letter to [REDACTED] of a complaining nature around the lack of Melbourne Water attendance to survey the river height at our property during the flood. (We had a spot/mark visible for this near our garage door). Approximately 1-2 weeks later they turned up in my driveway and completed this although I am uncertain how widely this occurred.

December / Christmas limited success re: advice from insurance following emails etc. They had been called to other Victorian locations.

Mid-January insurance met on site with us to discuss the "make safe". Plans made for two weeks' time furniture storage to occur to begin the process. This was delayed- communication issues reported. This finally occurred the first week of February with asbestos discovered. To date the floor has been removed, some architraves and some other make safe works have started but are not yet complete, and we remain out of our home in temporary accommodation, but this is only in place for three more weeks and hasn't been approved to be extended.

SUBMISSION CLOSING COMMENTS:

- ARUNDEL BASIN. Given the impact of several new communities along the river, water runoff from these new estates, El Nino and other factors, Maribyrnong river needs a basin. All of the groundwork for this was apparently done in the 1990's. This needs to be reviewed as a matter of urgency. Why does the Yarra river have one but the Maribyrnong river does not? Our home was built in accordance with being on "a flood plain" in 1970, but the circumstances and building along the river has changed considerably since this time. Why are we lingering on engineering this basin after 40 years, despite continuing to allow development alongside the river over all of these years? The cost benefit analysis, of all of the financial (not withstanding physical and mental health costs) costs of flooding indicate that to design and establish a dam is the only logical path forward. We are so frustrated that

had the basin been built in the 1990's that this could have saved hundreds of people a significant amount of loss.

- We have resided here for 7 years. We received no correspondence from council/SES or with the purchase of the home re: warnings / contact details / tips and tricks for what to do when and if flood risk occurs. This would be helpful. We did ok, but we could have done better.
- Warning system: it goes without saying that our losses would have been considerably reduced with several more hours warning. I won't say anymore, other than from my discussions with fellow impacted residents, several have lost a lifetime of memories, items and these are irreplaceable, as you the reader fully well understand. We ourselves had only resided in our home for a very short time, or our losses could have been considerably higher.
- Post flood support: Several extremely altruistic individuals including the Flood Warrior group, and those assisting set up Maribyrnong residents groups continue to provide residents with support on a multitude of levels, but potentially it may have been helpful to bring in insurance experts, mental health practitioners, and other agents back to the Randall St Community Centre on a fortnightly/weekly basis for the first 6 months post flood. Thank goodness for these groups and neighbourly support. It is actually quite "triggering" to reflect on events at this time, but I am super grateful to have such wonderful and caring neighbours and community forums to access. Maribyrnong is a wonderful community.
- Inappropriate development: How has development been enabled so close to the Maribyrnong River, i.e. Riverview? How? Other commercial businesses and residents very close to the river also have applications for planning. This needs serious review.











