

Comment on the Port Phillip and Westernport Region Flood Management and Drainage Strategy

The strategy comprehensively identifies the main issues and challenges facing flood management in metropolitan Melbourne. The solutions are not simple but Melbourne Water is to be congratulated for taking the initiative. I believe that Local Government will be a willing partner in attempting to address the many challenges highlighted in the strategy.

The strategy is supported generally but specifically Port Phillip would like a greater understanding of potential flood risks associated with the existing drainage infrastructure and built environment. Without a clear understanding of the current environment then any future impacts are speculative. As the resources within Local Government are limited to undertake this kind of work Council is looking to Melbourne Water as the lead agency in a collaborative response. However, as the municipality is located on the edge of Port Phillip Bay, the impact of climate change and changing sea levels is also a significant, if secondary, issue.

Issue 1 An Agreed Response to Managing Existing Regional Flood Problems

1. By definition, most if not all resources should be focused on ways to mitigate the intolerable flood risks.
2. Tolerable risks need to be clearly communicated to all parties who may be affected. Low or minimal cost ways to mitigate tolerable risks need to be considered.
3. The classification of tolerable risks must be a consensus view reached by a wide cross section of the stakeholders and parties subject to potential risk. Stakeholders include property owners, drainage authorities, emergency services and local government.
4. Acquisition of private properties that are at extreme risk should be considered or at least the evidence should be strongly promoted so that risks are known and accepted. This is particularly important in areas established before 1975 where overland flow paths are lacking.

Issue 2 Completing the knowledge base

1. There is a need for ongoing flood impact research, the Melbourne Water Special Building Overlay provides a sound starting point coupled with planning scheme and ABS data. Currently, within local government at least, there is no understanding of the relative risk across the metropolitan areas beyond (and within) the SBO..
2. Areas of high risk in the SBO need to be identified as well as identifying areas in non-Melbourne Water areas. Climate change and rising sea levels need to be factored into predictions.
3. Melbourne Water is the agencies best place to coordinate the works based on its role as the metropolitan regional drainage authority.
4. Flood mapping should be funded primarily as a State Government project as it is a regional problem as highlighted in the Auditor General's report on flood management in Melbourne. However it is not unreasonable that local government provide some contribution towards the project providing some tangible spin offs

are provided eg digital terrain models, more accurate contours and detailed runoff coefficient maps.

5. Drainage issues generally have low public interest unless the parties are directly impacted. Targeted direct mail, public forums and media releases need to be used.

Issue 3 Potential long term future pressures

1. It is acknowledged that it will be difficult to assess the impact of infill development. Some degree of error must be accommodated into the analysis.
2. Climate change needs to be factored into any analysis. Possible responses could be a change in 1% AEP threshold for flooding

Issue 4 Enhanced Community Education

1. Ongoing community education is best coordinated by Melbourne Water, however local government can and should play a significant role in delivering the message.
2. The key objectives are for an informed understanding of the risks associated with flood management, the capacity limitations of drainage infrastructure and the responsibilities and risks for the property owner.
3. Impediments to inclusion of flood information in planning schemes are the time and cost to introduce amendments and the difficulties in updating information. The limitation of floods to a 1%AEP hampers understanding of the relative flood risks.
4. The impediments could be overcome by direct action by the State Planning Minister but this may be politically unpalatable.
5. While local government is responsible for controlling area outside the existing SBO the resources required to assess the impacts of development are probably beyond them. It may be appropriate for Melbourne Water to have the metropolitan role for this role.

Issue 5 Agreed Responsibilities

1. There is most definitely a need for greater collaboration between Melbourne Water and local government.
2. Consistent methodologies, common strategies, joint projects are needed as the division between the drainage networks is both arbitrary and meaningless, floods do not acknowledge political boundaries.
3. No, Municipal Emergency plans are response plans. The issues in the strategy relate to planning, analysis, standards and potential works not responses to flood events.

Regards

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