

Development in flood-prone areas – review of guidelines

In May and June 2009, we are revising our *Guidelines for Development in Flood-prone Areas* (2007). Through a preliminary review, we have identified a number of matters for consideration. We are now seeking comment from stakeholders before finalising revised Guidelines, to be released before the end of 2009.

Our current guidelines

As the waterway, regional drainage and floodplain management authority for the Port Phillip and Westernport Region, we work with local councils to incorporate appropriate flood overlays into municipal planning schemes.

Under the provisions of these overlays, Melbourne Water is a referral authority for planning permit applications for many types of development. Currently we assess applications to develop flood-prone land in our region against established floodplain management principles contained in Melbourne Water's *Guidelines for Development in Flood-prone Areas* (2007). The 2007 Guidelines were prepared in consultation with an external expert reference committee. The Guidelines are intended to:

1. ensure that new development and redevelopment is compatible with identified flood risk
2. assist property owners, developers, designers and builders to:
 - understand the broad principles and specific Guidelines for managing property development in flood-prone areas

- identify the specific requirements that apply in areas affected by flooding
- minimise the time and effort involved in achieving an acceptable development proposal and gaining the necessary approvals.

Matters for consideration and comment

We are seeking comment or guidance by 12 June 2009 on:

- six matters listed below which we have identified to date through a preliminary review
- any other matters relating to development in flood-prone areas you suggest we consider.

Contact details, and information about submitting comment, are on the next page.

1. Adoption of a more risk-based approach

Under the 2007 guidelines, all developments in flood-prone areas are assessed using the same prescriptive criteria relating to flood flow, flow storage, freeboard, site safety and access safety (see Guidelines, p 14, Table 1).

> Should all development applications be assessed using the same prescriptive criteria? Alternatively, should Melbourne Water adopt a more creative approach towards assessing development proposals in flood-prone areas; giving more consideration to proposed land uses, life expectancy of structure and net improvement or community benefit?

2. Appropriateness of technical standards

'Freeboard' is the difference between the floor level of a building and the 100-year flood level. Melbourne Water currently applies freeboard requirements to developments in flood-prone areas.

> Should consideration be given to methods of flood protection other than freeboard (e.g. mechanical methods)?

3. Impacts of urban consolidation

Redevelopment of existing built up areas creates more impervious surfaces and subsequently runoff during storm events. This puts pressure on the capability of existing drainage systems.

> What might be the most effective way of managing increases in impervious surfaces that increase runoff?

4. Climate change and sea level rise

Based on available climate change predictions, the interpreted trend for Victoria is for sea level rise and reduced annual rainfall but more extreme rainfall events. Unless managed, this change in rainfall patterns could result in increased flooding because the short sharp nature of these intense storms is likely to result in sudden, large volumes of water that will exceed the capacity of drainage systems.

> What might be some appropriate ways of dealing with impacts of sea level rise and more frequent, intense rainfall events?

5. Integrated water sensitive cities

A water sensitive city is one that integrates water supply, sewerage, stormwater and the built environment to move towards more sustainable urban water conditions and management.

> To what extent should applications for development in floodplains and overland flow paths take into consideration water sensitive city targets?

6. River health

Development can impact on river health values including environmental flows, waterway channels (i.e. bed and banks), aquatic habitat, streamside vegetation, aquatic life and water quality.

> How could greater emphasis be given to the protection of environmental values of waterways?

How to make comment

The [current 2007 Guidelines](#) and details about submitting comment are on the Melbourne Water website: melbournewater.com.au (>Online Services > Land Development)

We would appreciate your comment by **Friday 12 June 2009**.

Enquiries

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