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Drainage Q&As

What is Melbourne Water's role in urban development?

Melbourne Water is the drainage authority for the greater Melbourne area and the Flood Plain Management Authority by delegation from the Minister responsible for the *Water Act*. Melbourne Water is a referral authority in the planning system and receives applications for urban subdivisions and other developments from local councils. This allows Melbourne Water to comment on applications and, if necessary, place conditions on town planning permits. These ensure that the drainage system and the new developments are adequately designed to protect occupants and to ensure that the drainage system functions appropriately.

Who else is involved in drainage issues in urban development?

The Department of Sustainability and Environment, local councils and the development industry, to identify and address needs with respect to drainage and floodplain management.

What is Melbourne Water's role in planning schemes?

Melbourne Water is a town planning referral authority under the *Planning and Environment Act* and its associated planning schemes. Melbourne Water is also a referral authority under the *Subdivisions Act*.

Melbourne Water works with local councils to provide drainage survey and floodplain data in the most suitable form for inclusion in their council planning schemes. Planning schemes are presented as maps and the drainage survey information will be shown as an overlay on a map.

What is an overlay?

An overlay is a map in a planning scheme that shows the location and extent of a particular development control such as natural vegetation, heritage precincts or an overland flow path.

Melbourne Water is owned by the Victorian Government. We manage Melbourne's water supply catchments, remove and treat most of Melbourne's sewage, and manage rivers and creeks and major drainage systems throughout the Port Phillip and Westernport catchment.

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What information has Melbourne Water provided to local councils?

Melbourne Water has provided all available flooding information to local councils and this information has been incorporated into council planning schemes. This has been a substantial undertaking involving 31 planning scheme amendments, requiring the individual notification of about 105,000 affected landowners and occupiers.

What is the Special Building Overlay?

This overlay shows the extent of the overland flow paths associated with the main drainage system when run-off from heavy rainfall exceeds the capacity of the underground piped drain.

What is an overland flow path?

An overland flow path is an above ground component of the drainage system. Overland flows occur when underground drainage pipes reach their capacity and cannot cope with more run-off from heavy rainfall. The excess run-off then travels overland, following low-lying, natural drainage paths.

Why has a 1-in-100 year drainage standard been adopted?

This is a commonly used international drainage standard. It is used to define the extent of the overland flow along the drainage system or flooding from river banks that would occur on average once in every 100 years. In other words, it means there is a 1% chance in any one year of such an event occurring. The standard has been applied in Melbourne since 1975. Melbourne Water uses the 1-in-100 year standard to assess development applications.

Will placing this information in the planning scheme affect property values?

Property values are determined by the market, taking into account a whole range of factors. The information obtained by Melbourne Water through the drainage survey is

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only used in relation to any development proposed for that property. The information will enable responsible development to occur.

It is important to note that the drainage survey information has not changed the likelihood of a severe storm occurring or the potential of the drainage system to cope with a severe storm.

Will this information stop redevelopment of my property?

Generally not. It will only be used to ensure that any redevelopment is planned in a way that recognises the location of the overland flow path and any public health and safety risks.

Why is this information being provided? What are the benefits?

The information from the drainage survey will be used to provide a better planning framework. This will lead to greater awareness of the impact of severe storms upon people and property and, therefore, to better planning and development decisions to minimise these impacts.

Why does this information have to be included in the planning scheme?

By including the information in the planning scheme, a developer has immediate access to necessary information about the drainage of a property very early in the development process. Information will also appear on planning certificates.

Why do we need information on the drainage system?

Information on the drainage system is required to enable Melbourne Water to provide local councils with technical advice to ensure responsible decisions are made regarding urban development.

Is Melbourne's drainage system adequate?

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Melbourne Water has a program in place to regularly monitor the condition of the drainage system to ensure it remains in good condition. We invest \$19 million a year on inspections, maintenance and drainage upgrade projects, which are prioritised following surveys and inspections.

However, from time to time, storms occur of such intensity or duration that the resulting stormwater run-off exceeds the capacity of the drainage system, causing overland flows. It would not be economical and would cause major inconvenience to the community to upgrade drains to cater for these very large but infrequent storms.

Can Melbourne Water upgrade the drainage system to meet the needs of new development?

New subdivisions – Melbourne Water works with developers to design an appropriate drainage system for the new subdivision. This involves an integral approach to drainage to protect housing from flooding during intense rainfall and can include works to improve the quality of stormwater run-off.

Often the design includes open space areas, wetlands and recreational facilities such as bicycle paths. Developers make a contribution towards the cost of the system based on the area being developed.

Redevelopment in existing urban areas – It would cost the community billions of dollars to upgrade the existing drainage system. The most practical and equitable solution is to adapt development to suit the existing drainage system. However, when there are recurring local problems with the system, Melbourne Water has a capital works program in place to address these local issues.

Further information

If you would like further information on any other aspect of Melbourne Water's role in managing our water resources, please call 131 722 or visit melbournewater.com.au