T R A N S C R I P T

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

Inquiry into the 2022 Flood Event in Victoria

Seymour – Thursday 14 September 2023

MEMBERS

Sonja Terpstra – Chair
David Ettershank – Deputy Chair
Ryan Batchelor
Melina Bath
Gaelle Broad
Wendy Lovell
Samantha Ratnam
Rikkie-Lee Tyrrell
Sheena Watt

PARTICIPATING MEMBERS

John Berger
Ann-Marie Hermans
Joe McCracken
Evan Mulholland
Rachel Payne

WITNESSES

Jan Beer, Upper Goulburn River Catchment Association; and

Derrick Meggitt, Managing Director, Goulburn River Trout Pty Ltd.

The CHAIR: I declare open the committee's public hearing for the Inquiry into the 2022 Flood Event in Victoria. This public hearing is for the Environment and Planning Committee, an all-party committee of the Parliament looking into the October flood event. We will be providing a report to Parliament which will include recommendations to the government. Please ensure that mobile phones have been switched to silent and that background noise is minimised.

I would like to begin this hearing by respectfully acknowledging the Aboriginal peoples, the traditional custodians of the various lands we are gathered on today, and paying my respects to their ancestors, elders and families. I particularly welcome any elders or community members who are here today to impart their knowledge of this issue to the committee. I welcome any members of the public in the gallery and remind those in the room to please be respectful of proceedings and to remain silent at all times.

For those of you who are giving evidence to us today, all evidence taken is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the *Constitution Act 1975* and provisions of the Legislative Council standing orders. Therefore the information you provide during the hearing is protected by law. You are protected against any action for what you say during this hearing, but if you go elsewhere and repeat the same things, those comments may not be protected by this privilege. Any deliberately false evidence or misleading of the committee may be considered a contempt of Parliament.

All evidence is being recorded, and you will be provided with a proof version of the transcript following the hearing. Transcripts will ultimately be made public and posted on the committee's website.

I now take the opportunity to introduce myself; committee members will also introduce themselves to you. I am Sonja Terpstra. I am the Chair of the Environment and Planning Committee, and I am also a Member for North-Eastern Metropolitan Region.

Gaelle BROAD: Hi, I am Gaelle Broad, Member for Northern Victoria.

Wendy LOVELL: Wendy Lovell, Member for Northern Victoria.

Rikkie-Lee TYRRELL: Rikkie-Lee Tyrrell, Member for Northern Victoria.

Samantha RATNAM: Morning, all. Samantha Ratnam, Member for Northern Metropolitan.

Melina BATH: Hello. Melina Bath, Member for Eastern Victoria Region.

The CHAIR: Thank you. With that we will hand over now to you to make your opening remarks. If you could please keep your remarks to 10 minutes. I will give you a 2-minute warning at the end as we approach the time. If you could also state for the Hansard record your name and the organisation you are representing. Over to you.

Jan BEER: Thank you. I am Jan Beer, and I am a landowner and farmer on the Yea River in the Upper Goulburn catchment. On many of these points I speak for the people, the landowners, of the Upper Goulburn catchment around Molesworth and Whanregarwen Road and down as far as Trawool.

This inquiry asks about the implementation and effectiveness of the 2016 *Victorian Floodplain Management Strategy*. The implementation of that, in light of the 2022 floods, you would have to say has been a total failure. I also bring to your attention the Comrie review of the 2011 flood. It states:

> The ultimate test of the efficacy of emergency management arrangements should always be the extent to which these arrangements deliver an acceptable measure of safety and security to the community.

Total failure as far as I am concerned – in the last 12 years nothing has changed. Both those reports state the need to develop early warning systems for vulnerable communities and ensure an upgrade to existing stream and rain gauges – total failure, both of those.

It seems to me that recommendations have been ignored and, in the early stages of this flood event in 2022, the left hand did not seem to know what the right hand was doing in the very critical early stages of the emergency. People in the Upper Goulburn were flooded before daylight with absolutely no warning whatsoever and were awake at daylight finding cattle and stock swimming around in floodwaters which were already above their fences. There was enormous danger to both stock and to human beings. I would like to say that the total lack of emergency flood warning to me was inexplicable and inexcusable. We already have a SEWS, a state emergency warning system, and it was not used. Why – I will leave that to others to try to get down to the bottom of. As for us on the tributaries, there has never been an early warning system – it is a farmer communicates with the next farmer down the system to alert them to what is happening.

What I find unforgivable is the fact that despite flooding happening on 13 October, on the morning of 13 October our river flats were totally inundated, again, to above flood level. We already knew this was a massive flood. There was a massive amount of water still coming down and would come down to communities like here in Seymour and Shepparton. The Devlins Bridge gauge showed that that was the highest flood level ever recorded there. Downstream on the Lower Goulburn flood plain at Loch Garry – this was the morning of the 13th, and on 16 October Goulburn–Murray Water failed to allow sufficient time to remove the boards from Loch Garry. All they had to do was speak to someone in the upper catchment. We could have told them, 'There's a hell of a lot of water coming down. This is a massive flood. Do something,' but instead they were caught, they could not remove the boards in time and people had to leave before they were overcome by the floods while they were on top of the structure. This resulted in the destruction of Loch Garry, which I read not very long ago was over $1 million to reinstate. That is not in our area; I just wanted to make that point.

Also, over 50 years ago, we got evidence from the *Alexandra Standard* newspaper on 14 October 1971 – 51 years ago, almost, to the date of the 2022 flood. I will read it to you: 'Upper Goulburn landowners are hard-hit by extensive flooding of Goulburn River flats for the second successive year.' So that means 1970 and 71 were big floods, and we all know 74 was a massive flood. They were hard-hit by extensive flooding on the Goulburn River, and they wanted a buffer level established in Lake Eildon to mitigate future flooding. '120 farmers from Alexandra, Yea and Seymour met to seek compensation for damage and losses incurred in last week's flood. They heard results of their hearing with the state rivers commission. When they asked for flood relief level in Eildon, they were told it was stipulated the weir must fill by 1 October.' I will come back to that later, but all I am trying to say to you is: why has nothing changed?

Having said that, I want to try to give you some solutions, because how do we avoid this disaster happening again? The first solution, to my mind, is education and information for not just the general public but the landowners. They need to know where they can access flood levels – obviously that means we need more gauges. They need to know where they can find how many megalitres per day are coming down and how quickly it is rising. I can give you more information on that later; I just do not want to run out of time at the moment. I will leave the SEWS warning and that to someone else, because I am not as up to date on that. It has been mentioned before by John Walsh: the upgrade to existing streamflow and rainfall gauges. I have been asking and asking for 25 years, I reckon, for people, governments, catchment management authorities – whoever – to put in extra gauges, because we have a gauge at Eildon and then we do not have anything until Trawool. There is an absolute paucity of real-time telemetry rainfall and streamflow gauges. Currently 45 per cent of the Yea–Murrindindi catchment is not gauged and 57 per cent of the Goulburn catchment from Eildon to Trawool is not gauged, and this denies farmers, businesses and communities any real early warning signs in the system. I believe there is a move to install new telemetry rainfall and streamflow gauges, and I can give you a list of where they are supposed to go.

Other solutions: we have carryover in Eildon Weir, and carryover is used by irrigators and the environment. When the 2022 flood occurred there were 840 gigalitres of carryover in the weir. That is nearly 25 per cent of its capacity.

The CHAIR: You have 2 minutes.

Jan BEER: I have got to get through that. I will go on because I have got little time. The other things that need to change are the Murray–Darling Basin plan and policies and strategies, which are exacerbating flooding and already exacerbated the flood of 2022 – policies such as their piggybacking policy. Environmental water buybacks will exacerbate this even further. What many of you may not know is that the environmental water holders already own 4622 gigalitres of water, but the general public are told, 'No, no, no, we've only got less than 2750.' That is rubbish. What they already own is 4622 gigalitres. One-third of the total capacity of Eildon is taken up with environmental water. That has never been used. Their allocation has never been used in any one year. So we have a weir for which operational usage has changed completely under the basin plan and a weir that does not get taken down 30 per cent each year like it used to with irrigation usage, and it was very clear that for the 2022 flood this exacerbated flooding.

Derrick will talk about the infill curve and what needs to be done about the operational changes for Eildon Weir. That is essential if we are not going to be flooded every second year. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Jan.

Derrick MEGGITT: Good morning. Derrick Meggitt. I am representing Goulburn River Trout, where I am employed as a Managing Director. Thank you for the invitation to speak at the hearing today. I will give a brief description of Goulburn River Trout, the impact the October floods had on the business and the changes in the management of Lake Eildon that we believe would help minimise the flood risk in the future.

Goulburn River Trout is based between Alexandra and Thornton. The family-owned business has two farming sites, a hatchery and a processing plant. The business employs about 25 people. Goulburn River Trout is an integrated business responsible for its own trout breeding, grow out, processing and distribution. It produces approximately a thousand tonnes of rainbow trout per year or about 30,000 fish per week. A wide range of trout products are produced from fresh whole trout through to smoked fillets. The business commenced operations in the 1970s and largely owes its success to the excellent water quality sourced from the Goulburn River. The regulated flows from Lake Eildon normally provide a year-round supply of fresh, cold, clear water – ideal for growing trout.

The floods that occurred in October 2022 came as no surprise. Due to the importance of lake levels and river levels to the trout farm, we monitor both very closely. We phone Goulburn–Murray Water and the Lake Eildon flow advisory service at least twice a day, monitor storage levels on the website daily and speak directly to the operations at Goulburn–Murray Water, Tatura, every couple of weeks. When lake levels reached 95 per cent on 1 September, we started preparing for flooding. It was our view the flooding was almost certain; it was just a question of how bad it would be. As it turned out, it was very bad. In the 48 hours of 13 and 14 October, about 100 millimetres of rain fell on the farm. The catchment was sodden, the tributaries above Lake Eildon were already at high levels and the lake was at 98 per cent. But by late afternoon on 13 October, releases from the lake went up through minor to moderate and finally to major, ending up at the release of 30,000 megalitres per day.

Although the rate of increased release was savage, we worked through the night and by early morning on 14 October everything was relatively settled. We had a controlled flow of water passing through the farms, and our flood infrastructure was sound. Everything held for about 72 hours until one of our control structures failed at our Walnut Island site. At this point, the water surged through one of our intake pipes and essentially drowned the farm. A farm that had 23 ponds neatly in a row fed from an inlet channel was now a lake with 140 tonnes of trout swimming freely. After a month, the river dropped below minor flood levels. Some fish returned to the ponds; most were in our inlet channel and unfortunately many were in the Goulburn River. By Christmas, most of the trout from the inlet channel had been captured and returned to ponds. Weight classes had been graded but sex classes were impossible to sort out. As well as the fish losses, there was significant damage to riverbanks, infrastructure, roads and pumps.

The cost of the October flooding to Goulburn River Trout was more than $2 million. As well as the financial cost, there was a huge personal cost to everyone involved in managing the flood crisis. The stress and trauma caused by 24-hour vigilance, the ongoing threat of structural breakdown and mechanical failure or worsening conditions due to more rain took a toll on mental health.

According to the *Water Act 1989,* storage managers must have regard to developing and implementing strategies to mitigate flooding where possible. The significant floods caused by Eildon spilling had occurred in November 1974, September and October 1993 and October 2022, always in spring with a lake that is full. Goulburn–Murray Water have a filling target that aims to have the lake at 100 per cent on 1 October, or 1 November in a wet year. If the filling targets remain as Goulburn–Murray Water's priority, then flood mitigation strategies will not be achieved. To mitigate the risk of future flooding, Goulburn–Murray Water must adopt a more conservative infill curve. Another contributing factor to the October floods were the policies introduced in 2007 allowing water holders to carry over water entitlements from year to year. Jan spoke about that, but essentially the lake would have started the year at 55 per cent instead of 80 per cent where it did at the start of 2022.

Just in conclusion, we hope that the parliamentary inquiry will recommend that Goulburn–Murray Water pays more attention to the legislation requiring it to implement strategies to mitigate flooding through the adoption of a more conservative infill curve. We also hope that the inquiry will look at the carryover mechanism and its impact on lake volumes. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Dr Ratnam, first question.

Samantha RATNAM: Thanks very much. Thanks very much for being here this morning and for your submissions. I also want to acknowledge what you all have gone through. It sounds quite traumatic, with obviously lots of upheaval and lots of recovery as well, so it is not over yet for you. I was interested, Jan, in what you were talking about in terms of the lack of – it sounds like a complete lack of early warning to your property and to others. Do you know what happened there? Was it the systems that were in place or something that went wrong in the system? Was it a technical thing? Was it that people did not quite get how serious this was and how quick? Do you have any sense of what happened and why?

Jan BEER: Do you mean in regard to the SEWS warning or any other warning?

Samantha RATNAM: You talked personally about your own warnings to your properties, is that right?

Jan BEER: Well, we do not have sufficient gauges in the system to allow us. I mean, I constantly look at the Devlins Bridge gauge, which is up above me, but there is no gauge in the Murrindindi, which is a major tributary to the Yea, and the Yea and Murrindindi is the second largest upstream tributary to the Goulburn. So again, the water that came down to Yea, for example, to the township – you would have no idea what amount of water was coming till it got there. It is absolutely essential to have a gauge on the Murrindindi. There is no gauge, as I said, between Eildon and Trawool, so there is now talk by DEECA, with federal funding, of putting a gauge in at Molesworth. They have told me it is in, but others in Molesworth have been told that it is not in. We do not know when it is going to be installed. Mind you, we still –

The CHAIR: Sorry, could I just clarify: when you say people are being told it is not installed, who is telling them that it is not there?

Jan BEER: State government. People from the water minister's department.

The CHAIR: They are saying it is not installed? Right.

Jan BEER: I think that is where it came from – people from DEECA. I was on a technical advisory committee for constraints from 2013 to 16, and from 2022 to 23 I have been on the constraints consultative committee for the Goulburn River. Through that they have said they are installing these other gauges, which is the one at Molesworth, which I have been told was installed but apparently is not. And the guys up through Molesworth have looked for it in a boat and cannot find it. One is supposed to be installed on the King Parrot, one at Yea below the township and one in the Murrindindi, but I question the placement of some of those gauges. The gauge that they have installed – or are about to install – at Yea is downstream of the township. The one at Murrindindi is so far up in the catchment it is irrelevant, as far as I am concerned; it is up towards the headwaters. There is also a lot of rainfall – these are all telemetry real-time gauges. There are a range of gauges supposed to be installed by DEECA on the Yea River, on the King Parrot, on the Major Creek, Dabyminga Creek, Acheron River, Murrindindi River, Rubicon, Spring Creek and the upper Murrindindi catchment. I do know not whether they are in. I do not know whether it is just another how many years down the track before we get them. When I ask why you have not installed them over the years: 'Oh, the cost is too great.' When I ask

the cost, it is between $20,000 and $30,000, I am told. Well, guys, have a look at what the cost of the flood was. If we had early warning, there would not have been stock swimming around in water. There would not be danger to human life. It is absolutely essential to have that information.

Samantha RATNAM: Thank you very much. It sounds like it is kind of the domino effect: you do not have the equipment, it does not trigger the warnings and then you are left with the aftermath. Just another quick question, just to let my fellow committee members ask questions: regarding the stock losses and the economic loss to your businesses and the surrounding business community, has there been much support for you post the event in terms of business support when people suffered quite significant economic loss and financial loss to their businesses?

Derrick MEGGITT: No. In terms of Goulburn River Trout, no.

Samantha RATNAM: Okay.

Derrick MEGGITT: There has been no financial support at all.

Samantha RATNAM: Okay. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thanks. Ms Bath.

Melina BATH: Thank you, Chair. Thank you very much for being here. There is nothing like country know-how and knowledge to give a reality check, and we appreciate we have heard this over the last four sessions. Two million dollars is a huge loss to any business, if you try and sustain that – that is a comment from me to acknowledge that loss. We are going to interview Goulburn–Murray Water. We are going to have them sitting in front of us. This is not a lynching party, this is an understanding. What questions would you like us to ask Goulburn–Murray Water to probe in and see how their systems can operate better or how they can produce better outcomes for the environment and for community and for farmers as well? What would you like to ask them?

Derrick MEGGITT: Well, the questions – DEECA put out guidelines in April 2022, which is the *Guideline for the Use of Rainfall Forecasts to Make Releases from Dams in Victoria*. Goulburn–Murray Water were involved in preparing that policy, and this policy was then used by the Goulburn–Murray board for their flood ops. In this policy, in the executive summary, it says 'Seasonal target curves', and it clearly says:

> Legal responsibilities for storage managers would place more weight on maintaining structural integrity of the dam and mitigating flooding, over ensuring the dam is full at the end of the potential flood event or specified target date.

That clearly states that they should actually be prioritising mitigation over their infill curve. If their infill curve every year is 100 per cent in October and then they say in a wet year 100 per cent in November, there is no mitigation. It is just playing Russian roulette every spring. When we get our heavy rains the lake is at 100 per cent, so they cannot mitigate if they continue to have that infill curve at 100 per cent. I am not sure anything needs to change legislatively, because it says in that that their priority should be mitigating flooding over the infill curve. So I would ask: if they are prioritising mitigating flooding, why are they always at that 100 per cent infill curve in October and November?

Melina BATH: Thanks, Derrick. Jan, do you want to answer?

Jan BEER: Yes. The question I would really like you to ask them is: why do you not have any flexibility or adaptability with your operation of the weir? Because I think this year we started with the weir before the harvest period at 93 per cent, and in the flood year 83 per cent infill, I think it started at –

Derrick MEGGITT: Yes.

Jan BEER: before they had even started harvesting. Anyone in the catchment knew how wet it was. We knew we had had successive wet years. Where is the flexibility to say, 'Okay, in a wet year we should keep the dam below a certain level'? Maybe we keep it to 90 per cent, because spring – September, October – is where you are going to get your rain events et cetera normally, but that seems to be totally neglected. It is like they have got the blinkers on and we are filling the dam. But what is the economic cost for that extra 5 or 10 per cent of water that you may get to people downstream as to flooding everyone? I mean, as the Comrie report said, Australia's most expensive natural disaster is flood. That is not being thought about at all. It just seems totally

irrational why you have to fill that dam, whether it is wet or dry, to 100 per cent and disregard – I mean, all the forward weather models showed that it was going to be another wet year. Even now, at 97.5 per cent, if we get a 2 to 2½ inch rainfall, we have got another major flood on our hands because those catchments above the dam, and indeed our steep topography et cetera, are terribly quick reacting. As we saw with the 2022 flood, Goulburn–Murray Water lost control of the dam because there was so much inflow coming in that they could not hold it any longer.

Melina BATH: Chair, I have many more, but I know there are many more people, so if there is any extra time –

The CHAIR: There are many questions. I will just ask a very quick, succinct question, because I want my colleagues to also have time to ask. Derrick, it sounds like what you are saying – and Jan, what you are saying – is you are looking for a more responsive approach, or flexibility, in responding to prevailing circumstances. So if you know things are wet, then rather than sticking to the curve, as you say, there needs to be a review of that quickly to be able to respond. Does that sum up what you are saying accurately?

Jan BEER: Yes.

The CHAIR: Okay. Your top three, then, because I have read your submission also, Derrick, and you were saying your concern is how Goulburn–Murray Water manages Lake Eildon, the carryover mechanism and ministerial powers to be used to direct Goulburn–Murray Water to hold Lake Eildon at 95 per cent. Are they your top three? What are your top three?

Derrick MEGGITT: Well, the third one was – we have been trying since – I mean, the lake was at 99 per cent in January, so that threat has not gone away.

The CHAIR: But it is responsive –

Derrick MEGGITT: Since the flooding in October 2022 we asked the minister to take it to 95 per cent this year. That is not going to happen, because it is 97 per cent today. They are making an environmental release, but there is 7000 coming in and there is about 7000 going out, so it is going to stay up there. We have got exactly the same threat hanging over us. The catchment is completely sodden. So our number one would be to say that the infill curve should never be aiming to get above 95 per cent or 90 per cent. But there has got to be some breathing space in there to cope with these rainfall events that are probably going to happen more and more often and are going to be more extreme. We are just thankful that the rainfall event that did happen was 99 mil over two days. That is not a huge event. I mean, if it had been 100 mil and 100 mil, we would not have a business.

The CHAIR: Yes, I get it. Jan, very quickly, your top three – short, sharp.

Jan BEER: Update existing gauges.

The CHAIR: Real time?

Jan BEER: Yes. Well, just update the gauges that are to real time, but increase the number of gauges. As the mayor of Seymour said, they do not have gauges on their tributaries, and all of those fast-flowing tributaries should have gauges. So yes, that. The operational changes need to happen to Eildon. The SEWS warning other people will bring up. But my main one that really concerns me is the Murray–Darling Basin plan policies and strategies, which are just going to have us flooded very, very frequently.

The CHAIR: Great. Thank you so much for that. I will pass over to Ms Tyrrell.

Rikkie-Lee TYRRELL: Thank you. Jan, you have pretty much answered my question that I had for you in regard to whether you agree with the locations of the gauges that are there. So may I ask, on request, for you to provide the committee with a list of the gauges that you feel would best help in future flooding events – the locations of those, please, and the types?

Jan BEER: This will be mainly for the Upper Goulburn, because I am not completely over what is happening downstream.

Rikkie-Lee TYRRELL: Whatever you think would best help. That would be greatly appreciated.

Jan BEER: Yes. I can do that.

Rikkie-Lee TYRRELL: Thank you very much.

The CHAIR: Ms Lovell.

Wendy LOVELL: Jan, no-one is a bigger expert on the Murray–Darling Basin plan and the impacts than you are in this part of the world. We have heard a lot about the level of the weir and how that might help the flood mitigation, but can you just expand a bit on the policies of the Murray–Darling Basin plan and how they contributed towards the flood in this region?

Jan BEER: The amount of water held in Eildon – the usage has changed completely. We all know irrigators now do not irrigate so much at this time of year into January, but they use less water more efficiently in the autumn period. So there is less water being used. We have had wet years, and they probably have not used as much. We have the environment, which has a large amount – about 1130 gigalitres currently sitting in Eildon. The big one, as Derrick said, is the carryover, which irrigators and the environment contribute to, and having that at 25 per cent is insane. It is just making us so vulnerable to flooding. I believe the carryover should be reduced. If it is not abandoned altogether, it needs to be taken down to between 30 and 50 per cent.

The big one as far as constraints relaxation and Murray–Darling Basin plan policies go is the enhanced environmental water delivery, or the piggybacking policy, where it is intended to release environmental water out of Eildon six to seven days in advance of a forecast natural high tributary flow. Now, that is absolutely fraught with danger for us in the upstream catchment. We know the bureau have not been particularly good at forecasting weather of late and they are not particularly good at forecasting that short-term intense rainfall, which we are getting a lot more of – we are getting a lot more of those intense events. So to have a policy like that – and mind you, the constraints relaxation policy is to produce floods in our catchment up here of 12,000 to 14,000 megalitres per day, which is overbank; anything over 10,000 is overbank – and then think you can do it on a forecast from the bureau and think they are going to be right is pretty well pure madness. So those sorts of things need to change.

The environmental water buybacks, where there will be another 450 gigs – that water all has to be stored in Eildon, Hume or Dartmouth. There is nowhere else for it to go. So let us say we get a third of it each; that then means the environment is getting up to around 1400 megalitres or 44 per cent of Eildon Weir. They cannot use it in any one year because it is not deliverable to South Australia in the proposed flow targets that they want to get there, because to do so is the equivalent of the 2016 flood. That is what it comes back to, and that was a massive flood that had huge impacts and cost billions of dollars.

So people need to look realistically at these Murray–Darling Basin policies, because all they are going to do is make people in the upper catchment so vulnerable to flooding – seven years out of every 10. They are the main issues with the basin plan – the amount of water that is now being stored in these weirs that just is not going to be used each year.

Wendy LOVELL: Thank you. I am going to ask you a bit about the SEWS system, because all of the authorities and that have been telling us that the warnings were good. The community have been telling us the warnings were useless. I know the warnings that were coming from the app were totally useless to me. Can you just explain how the SEWS system works and how that could have been better implemented to help people?

Jan BEER: Would you mind if I leave the SEWS system to Neil, my husband –

Wendy LOVELL: Yes, okay, sure.

Jan BEER: because he is in that scenario in that area. I am not over that. I just know that there was not any.

The one other point I would like to make is that somehow information needs to be got out to not just the public but landowners in general – that there are platforms where you can look at what those flows in the river are. There are the BOM, GMW and water data Victoria – you can look up gauges on all of those. And there is another one there called FloodZoom, which I have not looked at. But I feel people do not know where to go to look for these things. The other thing is some of the gauges are in metres and some are in megalitres, and the

metre gauges have to have a rating table. I mean, I cannot interpret the rating table as to the megalitres; that is really a GMW thing. So let us have the gauges all in the one thing, preferably a megalitre flow per day, because we know how quickly that is rising then.

The CHAIR: We are going to have to have one question here from Ms Broad, because we are going to run out of time for this session.

Gaelle BROAD: Thank you both for sharing your experience. Your knowledge is incredible, so I really appreciate that, Jan. You have mentioned I guess some of the sources of information. How do you see that – being able to communicate or train communities and local landowners in that information, like flood wardens? Or do you have any comment on how to educate the public better?

Jan BEER: I really believe we need flood wardens, because when it comes back to it in a flood it seems every time we are left to our own devices – and quite frankly I would rather rely on my own knowledge and experience than what emergency systems are putting out, because I know what happens. We get flooded very often on the Yea River, and I know what level it is going to get to, whether I have got to shift cattle and whatever. And during the 2022 flood I did ring numerous people up and down the system to let them know. On the Murray at certain points they have flood wardens, and they do a similar thing. They know if that river gets to that, you are going to get flooded, and we basically all know that. So would it not be a good idea to introduce flood wardens in each catchment who have pretty good knowledge and experience of the area? Then it is just via a phone system – you ring the next one down and you ring the next one down. That will get out there far quicker than any emergency warning, particularly in the middle of the night. People woke up to find water on their verandah, cattle drowned or swimming around in water above fences and total trauma and chaos.

Melina BATH: Jan Beer for flood warden.

The CHAIR: Yes, number one. All right. Well, look, thank you so much for providing your evidence to us today. We really appreciate you coming along.

Witnesses withdrew.