



**Maribyrnong**

CITY COUNCIL  
ABN 86 517 839 961

29 May 2003

The Hon Steve Bracks MP  
Premier

PO Box 4912 VV  
Melbourne 3001

The Hon Mary Delahunty  
Minister for Planning  
Level 17, 8 Nicholson Street  
E.Melbourne 3002

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Dear Mr Bracks/ Ms Delahunty

**Re: Lower Maribyrnong River Flood Plain & Proposed Flood Protection Works for Flemington Racecourse.**

As Mayor of the City of Maribyrnong, I have recently been contacted by residents concerned about the current application for Planning Permit 2003/086 on behalf of the Victoria Racing Club, to the Department of Sustainability and Environment (the responsible planning authority in this instance) for the Flemington Racetrack drainage upgrades and flood protection works.

In particular, the specific cause of community and Council concerns relate to the provision of levee banks at Flemington Racecourse as a flood mitigation measure that could negatively impact our community upstream during floods.

I wish to draw your attention to the threat posed by river flooding for our own community living, working and recreating within the Maribyrnong floodplain, referred to as the Lower Maribyrnong Township (postcode 3032).

While river flooding is not an unusual occurrence, the metropolitan urban environment this flood risk relates to is.

In the case of the Lower Maribyrnong Township, up to 400 predominantly residential properties with over 800 people of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds are threatened by a 1 in 100 year river flood event (as a worst credible case scenario).

This flood-threatened area is only 7km from the Melbourne GPO. The last flood that devastated and displaced our local community occurred in May 1974.

**History of flooding**

Historically, the Maribyrnong River overflows its banks along some reaches relatively frequently. Since 1871 there have been 25 recorded occasions. The highest recorded flood occasion affecting the Maribyrnong Flood Plain was on 8-9 September 1906, with the next highest-recorded flood on 15-16 May 1974.

On 15-16 September 1993, the river flooded again and 50 homes in the floodplain were inundated with water reaching above floor level.

The latest flood threat occurred on 23-24 October 2000, with the original forecast for low level flooding reduced to a bank full situation.



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### **Flood – 1974**

The 1974 flood resulted in the greatest degree of damage to residential, industrial and public utilities, including Flemington Racecourse. It is estimated this flood caused damage in the order of \$3-5 million (based on 1974 values), of which \$600,000 was damage to residential property. The current equivalent valuations for this level of damage would be many times this amount.

No warning or alert systems were in place at the time and the possibility of serious flooding was not known until late into the night of 15 May. The river started to fall shortly after daybreak on 16 May.

The Police, Army, Navy, Coastguard and residents quickly provided a wide variety of craft to evacuate the people living in the Maribyrnong flood plain, where most of the streets were inundated with fast flowing water 900 to 1200mm in depth. Traffic was grid locked for 18 hours as the flood cut most of the major access roads across the river.

### **Cost of flooding**

The various categories of damage caused by flooding in this region that can be assessed in monetary terms, are:

- Property damage suffered by individual residents (repair, replacement and time taken to clean up damage)
- Property damage to industrial properties
- Indirect damage, including loss of business
- Cost to public authorities of repairing service utilities
- Environmental damage through siltation

In addition, there are numerous intangible impacts on the community including:

- Reduction of property values
- Insecurity of residents
- Trauma, stress and safety fears (short and long term) suffered by victims

### **Consideration for proposed works**

Any proposed flood mitigation works at Flemington Racecourse need to consider the overall impact of reducing the available land for rising flood waters to disperse.

Council's Infrastructure Planning Unit have raised concerns about the proposed works after evaluating a draft report by the VRC's Consulting Engineers. The report forecasts that the construction of the proposed flood protection measures will impact on flood levels in the river and attenuation measures will be required to balance the impacts so existing flood conditions are not worsened.

The concerns raised will be included in Council's objection to the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

*Hydrological modelling for floods is by no means an exact science that would guarantee the outcome and impact of a 1 in 100 year flood of the lower Maribyrnong River for every variable posed by a real storm and not just a design storm, post the introduction of levee banks to Flemington Racecourse and downstream remediation works.*

I would like to refer your attention to the attached copy of correspondence from the previous VRC Chief Executive, Mr Rod Johnson, to the then-Federal Member

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