



Legislative Council Environment and Planning Committee

Hearing Date: 11 October 2023

Questions taken on notice

Directed to: Victoria Racing Club Limited

Received Date: 6 November 2023

1. The CHAIR, page 68

Question Asked to Steve Rosich:

The CHAIR: Okay. In preparation for this hearing, did you have an opportunity to review it, just so you could give us a bit more detail about the sorts of groups or people who might have responded? Like, do you know how many people actually responded to it?

Steve ROSICH: We made sure there was detailed information provided in the submission. If there are any further details required on the number of meetings or the attendees, we can certainly go back to records and try and secure that. There is a difficulty of getting that, with records so long ago.

Response:¹

The VRC refers the Committee to paragraph 3.14 of its submission to the Legislative Council Environment and Planning Committee (**Committee**) which describes the community consultation process which took place during the six-month period from June 2003.

The community consultation process included two public information sessions concerning five planning permit applications relevant to the Masterplan, including Application 2003/86. The VRC understands that representatives of local councils and community organisations were invited and attended the public information sessions.

On 15 July 2003, the VRC held its first public information meeting at Maribyrnong Community Centre. The VRC did not keep detailed records of the attendees. We understand that the following government organisations and resident groups were invited to attend:

- Melbourne Water;
- City of Maribyrnong;
- City of Melbourne;
- City of Moonee Valley;
- Department of Sustainability and Environment;
- Kensington Association;
- Ascot Vale Association; and
- Flemington Association.

¹ Capitalised terms in this response have the same meaning as in the submission on behalf of the VRC and Mr Dale Monteith to the Committee, dated 5 June 2023.

On 28 August 2003, the VRC held a second consultation meeting focused on issues raised by resident groups. We understand community representatives were also present at this meeting but cannot provide further information about the attendees.

2. **David Ettershank, page 71**

Question Asked to Steve Rosich:

... Apart from some of the plantings, and of course your bridlepath, none of the rest of those works have been done in the last 20 years. I am wondering: are you proposing to ever actually meet that undertaking you gave to the community?

Response:

The public access strip between the Maribyrnong River and the Floodwall (the **Strip**), is maintained by the VRC. The VRC regularly maintains the grass and trees along the Strip and empties the council supplied bins along the riverbank.

The VRC refers the Committee to paragraph 3.23 and Annexure 1 of its submission to the Committee which confirms that conditions 1(d) and 44 were approved and complied with by around 17 March 2008.

3. **Ryan Batchelor, page 73**

Question Asked to James Reid:

...based on your understanding about how the site works, how long would an inundation like that take to clear and subside such that the facility was usable again?

Response:

At the time of writing this response, the VRC has not engaged an expert to undertake analysis of how long it would have taken for the flood water to subside and the Racecourse to be usable again had it become completely inundated in October 2022. The VRC is not able to answer this question without expert input but has provided a response to the best of its knowledge below.

In or around mid-May 1974 the Maribyrnong River burst its banks and the Racecourse was submerged under four feet of water and mud. The Racecourse was then not operational until October 1974 – approximately four and a half months after the flood. Based on publicly available information, the VRC understands that the 1974 flood levels were lower than levels of the October 2022 floods.

An archived report from The Age dated 17 May 1974 states (a copy of the report is at **Annexure 1** to this response):²

'Flemington Racecourse is under four feet of water and black mud.'

² Also available here: <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/from-the-age-archives-1974-record-rains-flood-melbourne-swamp-victoria-20221014-p5bptz.html>

The Victoria Racing Club's clubrooms are flooded and the carpet covered in mud. About 200 horses at the course have been re-stabled at the Showgrounds. Course manager Ron King fears salt in floodwaters could kill off the turf.'

The report included the following picture of the Racecourse during the 1974 flood:



4. Ryan Batchelor, page 74

Question Asked to Steve Rosich:

So it would be useful for us to know a bit more detail about what your best assessment is about the effects of widespread inundation of the course with water and how long you would expect that would take to both recede and then recover so that we can understand what the sort of counterfactual might be.

Response:

The VRC is not able to answer this question without expert knowledge. The VRC has outlined its knowledge of the impacts of the 1974 floods above.

5. Samantha Ratman, page 75

Question Asked to Steve Rosich:

Regarding the approval of the permit for the flood wall, the original application and approval... did the VRC make direct representations via your staff, board members, lobbyists or associates to the then planning minister, her staff or department seeking support for your application, and what was the nature of those representations if they were made?...Are there any more details about direct representations with the minister herself at the time?

Response:

In responding to this question, the VRC has reviewed available records dated between 2000 and 2008. These records document a direct representation from the VRC to Minister Delahunty.

On 27 November 2003, Mr Rod Fitzroy (Chairman of the VRC from 2003 to 2011) sent a letter to Minister Delahunty regarding the VRC Masterplan (a copy of this letter is at **Annexure 2** to this response).

6. Samantha Ratman, page 75

Question Asked to Steve Rosich:

Do you know the composition of that working committee – who comprised it?

Response:

There were three VRC working committees formed to oversee the construction of the Masterplan, including the Floodwall. The relevant committees were:

- a. the Bund Wall and Mitigations Works Committee;
- b. the Flemington Master Plan Committee; and
- c. the Consultants' Committee.

The VRC has not located records confirming the composition of each working committee but understands each committee included consultants engaged by the VRC in connection with the Floodwall and the Masterplan, and VRC personnel.

7. Samantha Ratman, page 76

Question Asked to Steve Rosich:

I understand that VRC has donated to the Labor Party via Progressive Business, which is the Labor Party's nominated entity, as well as donating to the Liberal Party directly. I understand that from public records available. Are you happy to furnish us with any other details that you might have?

Response:

Consistent with its requirements, the VRC usually retains records for only seven years, and it has also changed financial systems since the time of the Floodwall application. Records of any donations made prior to 2016 are limited, save for information that is publicly available.

Former VRC CEO, Mr Monteith, maintained a membership with the Progressive Business Association throughout various years from 2004 to 2013.

In 2004 the VRC purchased ten places to the Progressive Business Association's 'Premier Sports Star Dinner', with a face value of \$3,750.

Since 2016, the VRC has no records of making any donation to the Labor Party, the Liberal Party, or the Progressive Business Association.

8. **Samantha Ratman, page 77**

Question Asked to Steve Rosich:

Samantha RATNAM: Do you have any account of how much the VRC directly donated beyond what was –

Steve ROSICH: We do. I cannot recall it offhand, but it was a material amount. We can certainly get that for you if you like.

Response:

Following the October 2022 Floods, the VRC pledged to ensure a minimum of \$500,000 would be donated to GIVIT to support flood-impacted communities across Victoria and Australia.

The VRC directly donated \$100,000 of this amount. The remaining funds were raised by racegoers, corporate partners, and the community. The VRC has been informed by GIVIT that all funds have been distributed, and around \$38,000 was distributed to the Kensington region.

9. **Samantha Ratman, page 77**

Question Asked to Steve Rosich:

...just one follow-up question on a previous question about donations, I also wanted to ask whether you have made political donations to individual council candidates in the past.

Response:

Further to question 7 above, the VRC has no records of any donations or loans made to local council candidates.

10. **Rikkie-Lee Tyrrell, page 78**

Question Asked to Steve Rosich:

Rikkie-Lee TYRRELL: Okay, thank you. When the construction of the wall happened, was it solely the VRC who paid for that or were there are other contributions? Did you receive money from anywhere else, like in grants?

Steve ROSICH: In terms of the cost, it was around about \$7 million to \$8 million. In my understanding it was club funded, and if there is a different answer to that question, I will come back to you.

Response:

The cost of constructing the Floodwall was \$7.43 million. The works were funded by the VRC.