From: do-not-reply@mail.parliament.vic.gov.au
To: floodinquiry
Subject: PUBLIC - Submission to the Inquiry into the 2022 flood event in Victoria
Date: Wednesday, 3 May 2023 11:09:04 PM

Organisation:

Name: Lance King

Status: Make my submission public

Submission: Inquiry into the 2022 Flood Event in Victoria Submission by: Mr Lance King [redacted] Introduction. I am a recently retired Manager Emergency Management at Latrobe City Council where I performed various roles of preparation, planning, response, and recovery in relation to floods and other emergency events across our municipality supporting the community, as well as assisting other neighbouring and impacted councils across the state. Latrobe City has several major rivers, associated water storages and tributaries (Latrobe River, Morwell River, Tyers River, Tanjil River and associated creeks. Blue Rock Dam, Moondarra Reservoir Lake Narracan) that flood impacts our communities on a regular basis. Of these waterways the Traralgon Creek catchment is the highest risk to community due to its size and location relating to the City of Traralgon The urban areas of Traralgon have experienced major flooding from Traralgon Creek in 1978, 1993, 1995, 2011, 2012, 2021 and 2022. Many properties experienced over-floor flooding, and many roads were inundated. Under existing conditions, the 1% flood damage was calculated at $$6.8 million dollars, with around 100 properties (including residential and business) experiencing over-floor flooding. KEY ISSUES • Community Flood Warning • Flood Information and Dissemination • Incident control, (Intelligence and awareness) • Agency Interoperability & Training • Orphaned Assets • Recovery COMMUNITY FLOOD WARNING The Vic Emergency App and generalised warnings circulated through various media outlets has not proven sufficient to meet communities needs and requirements. This can be clearly identified in the other submissions associated with this inquiry. I will attempt to raise the awareness of the available tools to assist community flood warning but the critical components re - warnings are catchment intelligence, timeliness of direct warnings and real-time catchment monitoring. Providing the critical notification of flood warnings the Bureau of Meteorology in conjunction with Regional Water Monitoring Partnerships facilitates a system called Enviromon which measures rainfall and river heights which can be accessed through the following link http://www.bom.gov.au/australia/flood/?ref=ftr. It is also accessed at partnership level by local councils and SES, where SES are enabled to do so. Realtime river heights and local rainfall levels can be accessed through this aging system and allowing informed incident controllers to make timely community warning re predicted flood impacts through the Incident Control Centre Intelligence Cell. As the Manager of Emergency Management at Latrobe City I had direct access into this system and often liaised with SES on the possible community impacts re flooding timeframes. The issue with Enviromon is the time delay to BOM to allow timely direct community warning from the system to BOM Melbourne, thus the Incident controller will not plan re community warning without BOM flood level confirmation. (Delays often over 2 hours) Community expectation is also a key factor in enhancing community resilience. In 2010 Latrobe City implemented an opt in warning system whereby Latrobe City Council (LCC) contacted all the property owners, businesses, and residents within the one in one-hundred-year flood overlay (provided by West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority and used by VicSES in flood planning) to request phone contact details so they could be warned by council in the event of a possible flood. We had over 600 private numbers logged into the system both mobile and home based and proved to be a successful

resolution to meet community needs. With the implementation of the State Government Emergency alert system this LCC warning system became redundant as the incident controller had the ability to contact all phones within an impact or possible impact area. This brings me to the issue of Agency empowerment – delegated authority, with the technology available to Incident Controllers, why is direct authority not given to Incident controllers to use this in a timely manner to warn the community? As the incident controller is closest to the impacted area and liaising directly with community local knowledge. Recommendation – that flood mapping layers (1 in 100 year flood event) be used to develop pre prepared polygons identifying flood impact areas enabling Emergency Alert to be activated for all phone communications within that flood footprint in a timely manner. These polygons to be included in flood guidelines for each known flood impact area. FLOOD INFORMATION & DISSEMINATION With the aging Enviromon system needing regular maintenance and funded by councils through the Regional Water Monitoring Partnerships LCC has seen the need to futureproof the flood information tools to keep the community informed and as such has obtained funding to implement a redundancy system across our waterway by enhancing the Latrobe Valley Information Network to include flood levels. This is currently under construction and can be viewed at this site https://lvin.org/#/ Attentis is the company assisting LCC to implement this free information to our community at this stage. Redundancy planning re flood information and flood management through catchment management authorities, VicSES and councils requires a unified and confirmed funding model unlike the current flood study approach where funding needs to be applied for. Informing communities needs to be direct and to the point as is already identified in VicSES flood guides. A copy of the flood Guide can be found at this link https://www.ses.vic.gov.au/plan-and-stay-safe/flood-guides/latrobe-city-council Timely messaging using local knowledge and trained Incident Controllers re local flood impacts is crucial for community safety and in developing community trust. INCIDENT CONTROL Capability and capacity are crucial factors in the safe and expedient management of a flood event thereby allowing Incident controllers the knowledge and training to efficiently deploy staff and volunteers to lessen the impact of a flood event where possible. Incident controllers need to have a local knowledge training component/availability at their call to heed the advice given. Where an Incident Controller (IC) has no experience in a new flood environment because they have been deployed from a different area or are new to the role, it becomes critical to take stock of local advice given. This is where training of Incident Controllers becomes critical to local conditions and learned experiences with the advice from local trusted persons. Recommendation – that a trusted network of locals be included in local flood guides across the state and that Incident controllers be made aware of local flood guides before being put in the position of managing a flood in a new area, as not all flood catchments are the same. Incident control and awareness cannot be left to technology alone and in my vast experience going out and looking at the key flood locations as the impact builds is vital in confirming predicted flood levels and timelines. This should be part of the Incident Control Centres Intelligence Cells Role in monitoring the flood progress. Recommendation – that the IC delegate the Intelligence Cell to deploy teams to monitor time critical locations for flooding. (In my experience it was council officers who undertook this on the ground monitoring in the Latrobe City area as requested by me on many occasions) INTEROPERABILITY Working together across multiple agencies can be vastly improved and needs to become proactive not reactive! The inclusion of all agencies pre flood events will enhance flood response and community safety in leaps and bounds. Agencies need to train together to enable an informed awareness in assisting communities to maintain safe response awareness. The state is pitting too many non-trained response agency personnel at risk by expecting them to respond to flood impacts without the proper training. This is where staff, officers, managers, and volunteers from an all-agency approach need training awareness on a regular basis and this should be managed through the Regional Emergency Management Committee process. Recommendation – that multi agency training be

improved at all levels to provide staff awareness when responding to flood impacts. ORPHANED ASSETS This is not a term commonly known in the community but to those who have experienced the frustration of having to deal with the unfortunate circumstances surrounding orphaned assets it can become a very sobering experience. These assets are as the term suggests not owned by any state agency or public person and in the main are such things as bridges or roads. The experience of some private property owners who have been unfortunate enough to purchase a property where access is via a bridge not owned by them but was in situ as the major or only property access at the time of the property acquisition is something that needs to be investigated and documented. These assets tend to cross multiple land tenures associated with rivers and creeks and as such Catchment Management Authorities, Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action and councils who claim no asset ownership. So, who is responsible for these assets? Recommendation – a state wide register of orphaned assets be produced to inform unaware property owners of the implications of ownership!! RECOVERY Community recovery is a minefield littered with burnout staff who get frustrated with the squeaky wheel syndrome where the noisiest person generally gets what they want. This is where the bulk of community funding is deployed and whilst some great community outcomes can be generated, being proactive in providing community awareness and training on how to stay informed and what to do in the likelihood of a flood impact could be better managed with the appropriate funding provided. Recommendation – to provide a greater focus on flood preparedness and prevention into the future. Recommendations: 1. Recommendation – that flood mapping layers (1 in 100 year flood event) be used to develop pre prepared polygons identifying flood impact areas enabling Emergency Alert to be activated for all phone communications within that flood footprint in a timely manner. These polygons to be included in flood guidelines for each known flood impact area. 2. Recommendation – that a trusted network of locals be included in local flood guides across the state and that Incident controllers be made aware of local flood guides before being put in the position of managing a flood in a new area, as not all flood catchments are the same. 3. Recommendation – that the Incident Controller delegate the Intelligence Cell to deploy teams to monitor time critical locations for flooding. 4. Recommendation – that multi agency training be improved at all levels to provide staff awareness when responding to flood impacts. 5. Recommendation – a state wide register of orphaned assets be produced to inform unaware property owners of the implications of ownership!! 6. Recommendation – to provide a greater focus on flood preparedness and prevention into the future.