

Submission to 2022 Victorian Flood Inquiry

Alistair and Suzanne Chessells. We are dairy + beef producers at Undera on the Goulburn River. Our families were selectors of the land in the district. We have had many floods in the district I have seen three in my time. We have four properties that is a total of 320ha and 200ha was flooded. We run 500+ head of cattle on the properties which we had to shift 300 head off the farm. We kept our dairy herd on the farm but this was a difficult time as we had more rain and the drainage channels were full so it was difficult to get excess water off the farm. We had flood water for over three weeks on the grass grazing crop and cereal crop. We lost 2000+ rolls of hay. This was a very busy and stressful time for both of us. On Sunday 16th October at 8am the floodwater was at the bottom of the levee bank and by 2pm the water was running over the levee bank. This come so quickly. The magnitude of water over the land kept us from accessing any part of the properties unless it was by boat. The cost to repair and replenish the land back to original prior to the flood is in the thousands. We are due west of Loch Garry and I know the operating rules for the Loch and the rules did not fit this large aggressive river. Because the bars did not come out there was pressure put on the levee banks which caused breaches in the Undera and St Germain's area. There was 18 breaches in the levee with a total of 450 meters lost levee bank. The first breach was on my property. With the magnitude of 180000 megalitres of water coming down the Goulburn River from Shepparton. Past our property to McCoys bridge which will only allow 80000 megalitres per day at the peak through the bridge. 1000000 megalitres of water has to escape the system somehow not by breaking levee banks and destroying homes and prime production farming land. There needs to be a plan to allow water to flow down the floodplain in a more controlled method. In a plan for spillways on both sides of the river so the water can make its way down the floodplain. This would be short term pain and we can save the levee banks. I am happy to have water for a few days but not happy to have water running out of breaches for weeks with no way to stop the flow and continuing washing more of the banks away and destroying our livelihood. On the south side of the Goulburn river there is a problem with water flow as there is a manmade channel called the Bray channel that goes along Weller rd its banks are 2 meters high so this channel would have to have a floodway in it to allow the floodwater to continue down the floodplain and re-enter the river before Echuca. With a plan like this Loch Garry gates must get opened for this to work. This would allow for a more controlled flood. We as a whole need to work together to resolve a plan for the future of our livelihoods and generations to come so they can live and work in a beautiful part of Victoria.