

The management framework for flood mitigation infrastructure in Victoria

Introduction

Chapter 17 of the *Victorian Floodplain Management Strategy 2016* sets out a series of policies, accountabilities, and actions for flood mitigation infrastructure in Victoria. Collectively, they define the management framework for flood mitigation infrastructure in Victoria.

Flood mitigation infrastructure applies to all structures specifically designed to mitigate flooding, not just levees. For levee systems this includes things like flood walls, flood gates and penstocks.

The framework covers four different categories of infrastructure on both public and private land. These are:

- individual property flood mitigation infrastructure
- large-scale rural flood mitigation infrastructure
- non-metropolitan urban flood mitigation infrastructure
- Melbourne-metropolitan urban flood mitigation infrastructure.

Each of these four categories is subject to different management arrangements.

The government's investment criteria are important when considering cost sharing arrangements. They are outlined in Section 17.2 of the *Victorian Floodplain Management Strategy*. Key principles include adequate community engagement, evidence-based decision-making, favourable benefit cost analysis and accountability for ongoing maintenance and management of the infrastructure.

Individual property protection

For example, a ring levee enclosing a house and outbuildings

Small scale infrastructure usually only provides private benefits and it will be up to the landholder to build and maintain the infrastructure.

The infrastructure will be ineligible for government funding unless it is part of a larger scheme that protects a community.

Constructing a levee to provide individual property protection is subject to planning approval. It should not be a substitute for setting floor levels of new buildings above the 1% annual exceedance probability flood level.

Large scale rural flood mitigation infrastructure

For example, levees protecting large areas of farmland

Large scale rural levees are no longer considered best practice:

- New large-scale rural flood mitigation infrastructure will only attract government funding if it satisfies the government investment criteria.
- Unless an accountable agency has a documented management plan in place, existing rural levees will be treated as features of the landscape that will be allowed to weather away.

Existing rural levees can be managed by affected landowners:

- Landholders benefitting from levees on Crown land are able to repair and maintain them (but not move or enlarge them), at their own expense, under a levee maintenance permit (Guidance Note 17.4).

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If the levee is on private land, it is up to the benefitting landholders to negotiate with the other landholders about management arrangements. Landholders opting to jointly manage their own scheme may request local government assistance.

Urban flood mitigation infrastructure outside Melbourne

For example, levees protecting a town

Unless an accountable agency has a documented management plan for existing infrastructure it will be deemed to be unmanaged (Guidance Note 17.1). In which case:

- The planning scheme must not assume that the infrastructure will provide flood protection.
- The Municipal Flood Emergency Plan must provide for the potential for sudden and complete failure of the infrastructure.

If a decision is made to formally manage existing infrastructure, the requirements are the same as for new infrastructure.

New infrastructure will require a commitment to formal management (for example a documented management plan). (Guidance Notes 17.2, 17.3 and 17.5):

- Cost sharing between local, State and Australian governments is possible subject to satisfying government investment criteria.
- Beneficiaries pay for ongoing management and maintenance through local government rates.

Ongoing management and maintenance processes must be documented and subject to third-party auditing.

Melbourne metropolitan urban flood mitigation infrastructure

For example, levees and retarding basins in an urban setting

(Subject to review)

- Local government is accountable for catchments of less than 60 hectares.
- Melbourne Water is accountable for managing urban stormwater flooding in catchments greater than 60 hectares.