



Local Government Briefing Summary

2021 Waterways and Drainage Investment Plan | Local Government Engagement

October 2019, FINAL



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Introduction

On Thursday 19 September the Waterways and Drainage Investment Plan (WDIP) briefing was provided to representatives from local governments across the Port Phillip and Westernport region. This document provides a summary of the briefing, including project context, briefing purpose, format and attendees, and attendee questions and answers.

Project background

Melbourne Water is the designated manager of all waterways in the Port Phillip and Westernport region and manages the major drainage systems and flood plains. That means Melbourne Water is responsible for the health and vitality of greater Melbourne's waterways for future generations, and are also responsible for regional drainage, floodplain management and a range of stormwater services across our region.

Councils within the region own and maintain assets that connect to Melbourne Water's infrastructure. They also own and operate their local infrastructure which is a key component of Melbourne's integrated water management practices. Councils partner with Melbourne Water in work such as incentives funding, development approval processes, the provision of information such as flood warnings, education programs, and maintenance programs.

The 2021 WDIP outlines the services that will contribute to Melbourne Water's vision of Enhancing Life and Liveability. More specifically the services in the WDIP contribute to a more sustainable, prosperous, liveable and healthy community by protecting waterways within the broader landscape, connecting diverse and thriving ecosystems, providing access to waterways and open green spaces, and preparing and protecting the community from flooding.

The services and key outcomes in the 2021 WDIP will be provided by Melbourne Water in partnership with local councils. To this end Melbourne Water and local councils share responsibilities for waterway health, improving flood protection, stormwater management and land development.

Melbourne Water are engaging with councils within the Port Phillip and Westernport region to understand their expectations of the range of services, service levels, and delivery approaches to include in the 2021 WDIP. The service levels must demonstrate benefits to the community over and above the costs to deliver them. Melbourne Water have invited councils to provide a submission to inform the development of the 2021 WDIP. The submission process commenced on Thursday 5 September and will close on Friday 11 October.

Local government briefing

On Thursday 19 September a two-hour briefing was facilitated with local government delegates. A total of 10 local government representatives attended the briefing, from 8 local government agencies.

Purpose

The purpose of the briefing was to provide local government representatives with detailed information about the WDIP and the submission process.

Objectives

The objectives of the briefing were to:

- build councils knowledge of the WDIP

- inform councils of how they can participate in the WDIP engagement through the submissions process
- build councils knowledge of the importance of their feedback and how their input will assist the development of the WDIP
- respond to questions about the engagement process and the WDIP
- understand the challenges councils are facing in the context of service delivery
- understand how councils would like to be engaged in the WDIP, and similar projects, in the future.

Briefing format

Rob Considine, Manager, Water Services Planning – Melbourne Water, welcomed attendees and provided an overview of the briefing purpose. Rosemary Hancock, Manager, Water and Public Health – Municipal Association of Victoria, thanked the attendees for coming and set the context for the session from a Local Government perspective.

Rob Considine delivered a presentation that outlined:

- the context for the WDIP
- the engagement program, which will be delivered across three stages
- the WDIP, including key components of the current WDIP, an overview of services and the process for investment planning.

Following the presentation attendees were invited to ask Melbourne Water questions. Rob Considine and several Melbourne Water subject matter experts (SME's) responded to the questions.

The briefing was independently facilitated by Capire Consulting Group (Capire). See Appendix A for the full agenda.

Attendees

In total, 10 people attended the briefing. The following councils were represented:

- Bayside City Council
- Greater Dandenong City Council
- Macedon Ranges Shire Council
- Maroondah City Council
- Melbourne City Council
- Mornington Peninsula Shire Council
- Nillumbik Shire Council
- Casey City Council

A representative of MAV also attended and participated in the briefing.

Questions and answers

The following section provides a summary of the questions asked by attendees and Melbourne Water's responses. The discussions have been summarised into the following headings:

- The scope of the WDIP and the submission process
- Exploring strategic opportunities
- The engagement program and other engagement.

The scope of the WDIP and the submission process

Several attendees had specific questions regarding the scope of the 2021 WDIP and what they can include within their submission. The questions and Melbourne Water responses are outlined below.

Question: A big issue for councils is development and getting to developers, particularly 'mum and dad' developers, to ensure they are doing the right thing with drainage. Planning schemes and policy need to be reformed to get some good outcomes. Are these sets of regulations and codes being looked at through this process to ensure a more holistic approach?

Response: The main strategic pieces are the Healthy Waterway Strategy and the Flood Strategy which are 10 to 50-year strategies. The price submission is not the right place for major policy reform. However, through the price submission engagement process we will seek to understand the views of the community and our customers, which can help inform initiatives and actions beyond the price submission process.

Question: Bayside City Council is at the end of the catchment, and therefore we have a lot of pollution in our waterways that come from other catchments upstream. We receive negative feedback from our community about the pollution in our waterways, as they think it is our responsibility to manage. Does this fit within the scope of the WDIP and the submission process?

Response: Yes, this is something that you can comment on in your submission. In previous engagement the issue of litter has come through as a priority for the community, but it does come down to a willingness to pay. Through the willingness to pay survey we will test this with the community for clarification and to better understand what the community think we should do and where we should invest.

Question: A huge part of Nillumbik is not on sewerage. What can Melbourne Water do to bring forward improvements?

Response: This is not a service that the WDIP delivers. However, you can have input via the Price Submission engagement process. For more information visit the [Price Submission YourSay page](#), as there will be opportunity within the consultation process where you can have input.

Question: What does the investment plan look like?

Response: The current WDIP is available on the Melbourne Water website. To view please visit <https://www.melbournewater.com.au/about-us/our-customers/waterways-and-drainage-annual-assessment>

Question: What is negotiable and non-negotiable? Are the outcomes already set?

Response: Whilst the customer preference and willingness to pay survey questions are being finalised, the outcomes for the WDIP have not been set and they are negotiable. There are options being put to Melbourne Water customers and the community, the local government submissions will be one input to inform the outcomes. The other inputs include the WDIP Customer Council, customer preference and willingness to pay survey, as well as community focus groups, a community assembly, local government submissions and developer engagement. There is also flexibility in partnering and how we partner; this can be worked out during the price period and does not need to be discussed in this plan.

Question: Does MW offset program sit within the stormwater program?

Response: Yes, it does, and this is something that you can comment on in the submission.

Question: One of the targets in the current WDIP is flood mapping, will there be more effort put into flood mapping?

Response: We are currently thinking this through. Our initial thought is that we keep the same. It is important to note that flood modelling should be done on an as needed basis, for example, if councils are making amendments to their planning schemes. This is something Melbourne Water can discuss with individual councils. We have taken on board discussions post-briefing session on this topic, and we have modified the willingness to pay survey to now include flood mapping.

Exploring strategic opportunities

The attendees were keen to explore and ask questions about potential strategic opportunities, including partnership approaches and regulations. The discussion, including questions and Melbourne Water responses are outlined below.

Question: Septic tanks are a big issue in the outer regions of Melbourne and dealing with the issue requires partnerships with other water agencies. There is opportunity for improved catchment approaches, however this brings into question scope and scale. What is your assessment of the current state of play and how do we tackle this issue and give life to the partnerships?

Response: The setting of the waterways and drainage charge is not for sewerage services. However, we are very welcoming of any feedback and don't want councils to restrain their responses in the submission. While we cannot commit to responding to all of this, we will ensure the feedback collected is shared across the business. We can also communicate feedback to other agencies, such as Yarra Valley Water, who chair the Water and Sewerage Customer Council. You can have input via the Price Submission engagement process, which includes water and sewerage services. For more information visit the [Price Submission YourSay page](#), as there will be opportunity within the consultation process where you can have input.

Question: A lot of the pollution in the Mornington Peninsula catchment comes from industrial areas, it's not coming from one person and therefore hard to pin-point the source. This kind of pollution also overlaps with the Environment Protection Authority (EPA). When do we decide if Melbourne Water or the EPA should be leading, and how local government is involved?

Response: Diffuse pollution is a lot more challenging. It's important we work with partners, such as the EPA, on this so that we get some really sound solutions. There needs to be an evidenced based approach to build the capacity of businesses. We also need to deal with these issues case by case and with a collaborative response.

Question: There are regulations councils need to comply with for stormwater management and integrated water management. We need to deliver on obligations according to Acts such as the Planning Act and the revised Environment Protection Act. If we take this approach, if Melbourne Water support councils to live up to their obligations then in turn Melbourne Water is also fulfilling their commitments. Therefore, can we be more systematic about how we approach this and how Melbourne Water can provide councils with support to fulfil mutual obligations.

Response: This is a good point and it's important that we gain a better understanding about what councils are currently doing in this space. It would be helpful if the submissions provided information about what they are currently doing. Councils can write into their submission what they would like Melbourne Water to be doing, but we are not committing to partnering or how we partner in this Plan. There is flexibility to work on this during the Price Period.

Comment: There is an opportunity for us to work upstream to address strategic barriers. We should be putting resources into collaborative thinking, and problem solving. It would be fantastic to see resources from this program targeted at overcoming fundamental barriers to deal with litter, pollution issues.

The engagement program and other engagement

Several questions were raised regarding the engagement program, below outlines these questions and responses.

Question: Who are the other key stakeholders?

Response: The other key stakeholders include:

- water retailers
- broader community
- engaged community, including those who are vocal about their local environment or impacted by flooding
- development sector, including Development Victoria, Urban Development Institute of Australia, large-scale and small-scale developers themselves
- other agencies that include Emergency Services, particularly the State Emergency Service
- DELWP.

Question: Is there any consideration of the integrated water management workshops that DELWP is leading?

Response: Yes, Melbourne Water is actively participating in all five forums and we are committed to the strategic statements. We are also supporting up to 70 projects and investigations across the regions. We think about waterway management as one of the outcomes we want to achieve through the WDIP.

Next steps

At the conclusion of the local government briefing, Melbourne Water provided the following next steps:

- The local government submission process will close on Friday 11 October, 5pm.
- A report will be prepared in October and November outlining the findings of the submissions.
- The report will be sent to council CEO's in mid to late November.
- A link to the community survey is available at <https://yoursay.melbournewater.com.au/price-submission/local-government-submissions>, we encourage councils to share the link with their community.
- If there are any questions about the WDIP and engagement program please email the team, wdip21@melbournewater.com.au

Appendix A: briefing agenda

Agenda

Title:	Local Government Briefing – 2021 Waterways and Drainage Investment Plan (WDIP) submissions
Meeting date:	Thursday, 19 September 2019
Meeting time:	11:00AM
Location:	990 Latrobe St, Melbourne VIC 3000 Meeting room 1.4 and 1.5
Facilitator:	Denise Francisco, Capire
Note taker:	Siobhan Butler, Capire
Presenter:	Rob Considine, Melbourne Water

Time	Item	Who
11:00 AM	Welcome and introductions	All
11:15 AM	WDIP Presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none">ContextWDIP objectivesStrategies and servicesSubmission process	Rob Considine, Melbourne Water
11:45 AM	Q and A	Denise Francisco, Capire Melbourne Water SME's
12:15 PM	Next steps and thank you <ul style="list-style-type: none">Outline of key dates	Denise Francisco, Capire Sri Patnaikuni, Melbourne Water
12:30 PM	Lunch	All
1:00 PM	Close	