

Mr Chris Padovani
Regional Manager - Land , Planning and Approvals
Department of Environment, Land, Water & Environment
Port Philip Region
609 Burwood Highway, Knoxfield
Locked bag 15
Ferntree Gully Delivery Centre
Victoria 3156

Re : Yellingbo Conservation Area / State Emblems Reserve.

Dear Chris,

I write on behalf of the Yarra Waterways Group Committee as we need to clarify some of the issues raised by members of our group and others in the community. I am sorry that we have not been able to put these matters to you earlier, but as you are well aware our community has only recently been made aware of the outcomes of the Yellingbo VEAC investigation and its implications .

The issues of Bushfire, weed and feral pest invasion, fencing, surveying are all of great concern, and we will outline those in detail as we research each issue.

This letter seeks some answers to immediate issues;

1. Fire Management.

We have read your letters referring to your departments fire management plans current to the Region, most of which we know about. Our question relates to the future, once all the planned vegetated crown reserves are in place;

What is the funding requirement for all the extra fire prevention work which will be required to protect our communities, bearing in mind your duty of care obligations.

2016 - 2017 \$

2017 - 2018 \$

2. Weed and Feral Pest Control.

Federal Government publications highlight that new riparian corridors along streams require substantial works to control the outbreak of weeds and Feral pests.

What is the specific funding put aside for weed and feral pest management.

2016 - 2017 \$

2017 - 2018 \$

3. Fencing.

Your letters to landowners with Crown Reserve Water frontages encourage them to apply to Melbourne Water for grants to assist with fencing. These letters usually suggest that this funding is not unlimited and that affected residents should apply urgently or possibly miss out. Whilst we appreciate the assistance with funding, we also see an implied threat that if we do not apply soon, we will miss out.

Could you please advise how much funding is put aside for fencing.

2016 - 2017 \$

2017 - 2018 \$

4. Existing management arrangements between Melbourne Water and Landowners.

Officers from Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria and DELWP have been visiting properties with existing management arrangements with Melbourne Water under the healthy rivers scheme and telling land them that additional land is going to be fenced off as the current fencing does not include all of the crown river reserve. We believe this is contrary to the directions of the Government Response page 10 dot point 3.

Could you please explain why your department is not complying with this directive?.

5. Surveying.

Evidence now exists to justify the need to survey many of the crown frontages to ensure that the fences comply with freehold titles.

Could you please provide us with written assurance that your department will be complying with the Governments commitment on page 5 of the Government Recommendations Response, together with how much funding has been put aside for surveying.

2016 - 2017 \$

2017 - 2018 \$

6. Crown River Reserve calculations.

Could you please advise your departments ruling on the point at which a crown frontage is measured.

**Centre of the River or
High water mark on bank**

7. Access points to Yarra River/ Firebreaks/ Maintenance Tracks etc.

As you are aware the Yarra River has many functions. Could you please advise when your department is proposing providing our communities with a detailed map showing the location of the following;

- Fill points for CFA tankers;
- Fill points for Helicopters involved with fire fighting;
- Location of Fire breaks along the Yarra;
- Access points for canoes and kayaks;
- Access points for children to swim in the river;
- Maintenance Tracks.
- proposed walking paths.

8. Detail on the Transition Plans for the changeover of crown reserves from landowners to the government.

Ample evidence now exists to illustrate that Melbourne Water do not maintain the frontages they fence off. Weeds of every imaginable variety thrive on Yarra River Banks due to the rich alluvial soil, abundant rainfall and sunshine. Licence holders devote considerable time and expense to weed and feral pest control. Foxes and Deer are now a major problem, which will only dramatically increase once the reserves are fenced and planted out with vegetation.

Could you please outline the transitional arrangements for these reserves once they are under Government direct control.

9. Confusion.

Could you please explain why landowners in the Yarra tributaries as listed in your departments letters of 15 May 2015 telling people that their frontages were to be taken back in 2018, are now receiving letters advising them that they have 3 months notice to remove all their livestock and assets from the frontages, or face compliance action.

10. Water Pumps.

Could you please explain how people are to pump water up to 150 metres from the stream if they have to relocate their pumps.?

We will need this information for our next public meeting which is planned for the last week in August. It is also our intention to ask you to address the meeting.

Your faithfully,

Jenny Barber
Secretary.