

COUNCIL ZOOM MEETING

MARRA SUBMISSION 10th May 2022

NOTES FOR SUBMISSION

My name is Ron Priestley and I am President of the MAIN ARM Rural Resident's Association MARRÁ. I have been a resident of Upper Main Arm for 50 years and have had extensive experience of floods and recovery

Communications

Problem:- There was a near total failure of communication. Power, landline phones, mobile phone towers, access to Internet via landlines have all failed

As there were no landlines and all mobile phone towers failed it was not possible to dial 000. The 000 network does not seem to have a satellite connection

Solution:-The only communications possible were when a generator was available and the owner had satellite Internet. Residents should be supported in acquiring generators and satellite Internet. Elon Musk's system is available to all whereas the NBN Skymuster system is not

Battery powered radios could receive information from a secure radio station. ABC radio does not cater for small local area problems but Bay FM could be set up with stand-by generators and a flood free site. Bay FM could then act as a clearing house transmitting to the battery powered radios

Also satellite connected emergency public phones could be established in the flood prone communities . These would be similar to the solar powered ones you can find on walking trails in remote National Parks throughout the world.

Kohinur

Problem:- The flood waters raged under the Hall and reached slightly above the lower floor level. The speed of the water was enough to scour the foundations and lead to collapse. The Hall proved its worth during and after the floods as a vital community resource. It is still being used for the emergency

Solution:-As the Owner of the Hall could Council please organize foundation protection for the future. I am a retired Builder and do not expect it would be possible to stop water ingress but a protection design which deflected the fast running water is needed. Still water ingress is far less likely to cause damage

It would be wise if Council were to inspect all its properties and carry out necessary flood mitigation measures

Upper Main Arm School

Problem :-Most of the buildings survived but the old heritage listed original classroom had water run through and there has been minor shifting of foundation piers. No-one has cleaned up the old building and mould is being allowed to grow. The buildings are now fenced off and admittance disallowed There have been previous attempts to close the school but it is a vital resource for the community and closure has been and will be firmly resisted. It is the core of the Main Arm community

Solution:-There was a time when the community would have simply repaired the building already and the school would be up and running again already. But now the "authorities" appear to be doing nothing except encourage deterioration. Please assist in rebuilding and reopening. All the children are now being sent to Durrumbul school whose headmistress is said to be notorious for losing 90% of pupils; reducing enrolments from 40 to 5 due allegedly to mismanagement and poor disciplinary problems.. The Upper Main Arm children should not be subjected to similar treatment

Concrete road paving

Problem:-The most vital need straight after a flood is to open the roads for vehicle access. Then the community can look after itself without the need for helicopters, food deliveries, medical help and medicines being brought in etc and the community can access all other resources.

Solution;- Council did a magnificent (and expensive) job in emergency repair and filling road wash outs but better prior better construction methods would have avoided much of the necessary work. Council had a programme for gradual replacement of bitumen with concrete pavements in areas where the roads flooded. None of the concrete pavements failed and access was possible to Kohinur as soon as water levels dropped. Numerous bitumen paved roads failed however under the flood waters leading to very serious erosion. The scour outside Kohinur Hall could have held a single decker bus, for example. All floodable roads should be concrete and this I think is the most urgent need of all. Council appear to have abandoned the programme for replacing bitumen with concrete.

There is also a very annoying demand from Council that locals due not use their own equipment for temporary road repairs, tree removal etc but demand we stay without access until Council machinery arrives later. There is a great wealth of good machinery in the valley with operators who have probably had more experience than Council excavator operators in repair of flood damage To demand and even fine local operators who are willing to assist in opening access is downright insulting and regressive.

Dangerous Houses

Problem:- Many houses have failed due to slips and others may be under threat. Authorities are likely to demand demolition, extensive alteration , eviction and bans from re-entering as has happened in Lismore.

Solution;- Residents affected need to be treated properly and fairly with grants, assistance, temporary housing and fair resumption payouts if necessary. Compounding their current misery with draconian edicts such as eviction orders must be avoided

Conflict between fire clearing rules and need to avoid slips

Problem:- There is a Council rule that properties should have no trees for a horizontal distance of 50 metres. These enforced cleared areas have been responsible for exacerbating damaging leand slips where the trees have gone.

Solution;-Serious new legislation is required which will preserve and enhance new tree planting. The fire risk in this wet Shire is far less than the danger of slips

Flood mitigation measures unlikely to succeed

Problem: There has been discussion on providing measures to reduce the height of floods by dredging, levees, culverts,ocean outlets etc- As a retired Quantity Surveyor /Builder I know these measures are extremely costly.

Solution;-Many of these measures will only reduce flood levels by a few millimetres and are not worth the cost, and the environmental destruction involved. Therefore they need serious expert input and very careful engineering. It would be a tragedy if all available funds were wasted on such measures. Do not doubt that the recent storm has a massive tsunami like effect which cannot be economically controlled. Measures such as moving and raising houses are far preferable. We cannot hold back these type of flood

Finally

All of the above issue could be further examined and expanded with additional detail

