

## Flood Inquiry

### **Ref: Traralgon Creek Floods**

I have lived in the Traralgon Creek flood zone for 46 years.

Over that time, there have been eight major floods from the Traralgon Creek. The last flood in June 2021 resulted in 33 houses with water over the floor and major damage to infrastructure and businesses.

There has been a variation of warning systems over the 46 years which have included Bom, SES, Vic Emergency and Latrobe City Council to name a few.

The flood warnings have come in the form of Radio, TV, Phone Apps, Social Media, Phone Texts and door knocks.

As an older person who is not connected to Social Media, I rely on the Met Bureau and my own observations. This is because external warnings are unreliable.

Traralgon Creek flooding is very rapid and can be classified as flash flooding. There can be only six hours between rain in the catchment and the creek breaking the banks. To give an indication of the speed that a flood can occur, ICC members did not have time to retrieve their cars from below flood level in the 2021 event.

An effective rapid warning system is critical for the mitigation of damage and for the safety of life.

At present and after many floods there is still not an effective documented procedure for flood warnings.

In 2007 and 2011 the Latrobe City Council had an effective warning system via text messages.

In 2012 the flood warning system failed due to an overseas third party hired to transmit the texts that did not eventuate, and since the subsequent "2012 Gippsland Flood Event Review of Flood Warnings" dated Nov 2021 and the "Victorian Floodplain Management Strategy TFWS" dated 2016, nothing effective has been achieved.

In 2021, the largest flood in recent history from the Traralgon Creek, the flood warning system failed again and to my knowledge there is still no documented effective warning system. Alerts are left to the discretion of the ICC on the day.

Other contributing factors that inhibit an adequate public warning are:

1. Poor reliability of the measurement stations - invariably during a flood there is always either rain gauge or river height gauge failure.
2. Available BOM data is up to one hour delay before it is published. The Council "Environ System" that feeds the BOM data is live, but the public is prohibited from accessing this data.
3. Vic Emergency warnings can be up to one hour after the BOM alert, meaning there can be a two-hour delay in warnings in a 6-hour event.

Improvements need to be made in the reliability of the rain and river height measuring stations. History has shown that during a flood at least one of the data measuring stations fail.

Access to data on a real time basis needs to be available to the public. The "Environ System" run by Latrobe Council is real time, but the public is denied access to it. BOM data only gets published hourly.

The public don't generally access social media out of hours, therefore a phone text message sent to the flood area polygon needs to be in place for imminent flooding and evacuation.

A documented and reliable Alert System needs to be in place that has pre-planned trigger points and procedure. This needs to be implemented to take place of an ICC discretion on the day.

If there is any more information required, I am happy to present myself and give more detail on why an effective warning is so important for the safety of life and property. An effective warning will mitigate damage and reduce clean up after a flood.

Kind regards

Ken Skinner

