

12 June 2008



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Mr.K.S.Spencer,
P.O. Box 200,
Gordon, Vic.3345.

The Managing Director,
Essential Services Commission,
Level 2, 35 Spring Street,
Melbourne, Victoria, 3000.

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Submission objecting to the recent notice from Melbourne Water Corporation re a proposed levy on the Residents of Moorabool Shire.

We residents in the vicinity of Gordon, Mt.Egerton and Ballan in the Shire of Moorabool, recently received a letter with an enclosed wasteful and comparatively large commonly called "fridge magnet" from the Melbourne Water Corporation, along with a statement that Melbourne water was taking over the management of our creeks and streams. For this "service" we will be charged an annual levy. The letter did not say how much the levy would be, except to say that our local water authority would be collecting the charge along with the normal billing.

What riles our community is the fact that no community consultation was undertaken. We were told that consultation has been ongoing with our council, however this is the first we have heard about it. A phone call to Moorabool Shire council requesting to speak to the CEO or a senior manager was conveniently forestalled by switch operator. We were just told that council did know anything about it. (the proposed levy by Melbourne Water)

A phone call to Melbourne Water and we were sent further information including some fourteen (14) pages which indicated that Moorabool council was well aware of what was going on, in particular the new extended boundary into Moorabool Shire. released in June 2004.

Melbourne Water expects us to believe that the proposed levy will be used to improve our creeks and streams, resulting in better flood protection, regional drainage, improved stream health, water quality and flows. What a nonsense! Most of our creeks and streams have and continue to be maintained by local voluntary groups, under the backing of the relevant water authority. Be it Barwon Water, Central Highlands Water or Corangamite Catchment Management. Bearing in mind most of the streams have been almost dry for years due to the prolonged drought . To improve the flows Melbourne Water must have some sort of abracadabra formula that will bring the creeks back to normality.

Should this levy impost get the go-ahead, and we expect there will be significant annual increases, this will place an extra burden on our already stressed finances, particularly the affordability of low income families and senior citizens.

Yes we are well aware of Hardship Policies. Most are too proud to go down that path, particularly when it is insufficient to provide real relief when considering the cost of living generally.

Bearing in mind we in the rural areas have been on stage 4 water restrictions for some years now, while Melbourne enjoys the farcical so called stage 3A. It is so unfair to expect us to pay this proposed levy on top of all the good water savings that has been achieved here and the voluntary work carried out on our streams in recent years.

Premier John Brumby statement four days after his election, described water as an area of importance to the government. It was a "good fit" to give the job (water Management) to the Finance Minister. The premier went on to say "*In many ways water is more of an economic issue than an environmental issue*"

Is it any wonder there is a grab for our money after such a statement. We believe that this proposed levy impost is a conspiracy in the making, forcing the rural communities to subsidize the financing of the Melbourne \$3.1 Billion desalination plant. In a cynical attempt to substantiate this injustice, Melbourne Water as a government body, wants us to believe that in return for our levy payments we will receive better flood protection, regional drainage, improved stream flows, health and water quality.

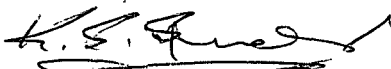
We believe that we are being unfairly treated with this levy proposal, in particular the disgraceful lack of any prior community consultation. We therefore request that this preposterous water levy be withdrawn and a return to the status quo.

We await your advice in response to our objection to the proposed levy.

For and on behalf of our local community members,

Yours sincerely,

Mr. Kevin S. Spencer.



CC: Simone Corby,
Customer Relationship Co-ordinator,
Melbourne Water Corporation.