

13 April 2017

Essential Services Commission

Dear Sirs

RE: DRAFT DECISION

I am at loss to understand the decision of the ESC to place the health of our public waterways in the hands of the residents adjoining the Quiet Lakes on the basis of recreation and amenity only when the Independent Review acknowledges the public benefits of the Quiet Lakes.

Further the ESC states The Waterways Charge is collected by water businesses on behalf of Melbourne Water. These funds provide services to manage the health of waterways, streamside vegetation, flood protection, and drainage services across the **whole** of the Port Phillip Bay Catchment.

<http://www.esc.vic.gov.au/water/consumer-information/our-role-in-water-pricing/>,
except it seems in Patterson Lakes.

According to PAGE 16 of Draft Decision 'The Review acknowledges that the Quiet Lakes have a recreational function and amenity value. However the Review considers that the recreational and amenity features of the Quiet Lakes are a private benefit that is exclusive to the dwellings that adjoin those lakes. This is largely because of their lack of accessibility.

The majority of Quiet Lakes residents would only enjoy the visual amenity. If the ESC is to approve AMENITY value charges, then there are easily identifiable in any property throughout Melbourne that adjoins a public reserve, waterway, beach or park.

However your decision completely ignores the benefits that a healthy waterway provides to the wider community, the ecology and the wildlife, the bay, the wetlands, yet by Melbourne Waters own submissions this is what the waterways charge is supposed to be used for.

So your decision completely ignores the public benefit of a healthy waterway and the Melbourne Water own pricing submission 2016 where it justifies its waterways and drainage charge on the basis of amongst others “

- Our man-made and natural assets are maintained and renewed so that we continue to meet the 'standards of service' expectations of our customers
- The health of the 8,400km of rivers and creeks in our region is protected and their contribution to the liveability of our city is improved

Further the ESC approves charging to properties where there is NO Direct benefit (See previous submissions to Price Reviews by Alison Joseph), so it appears if you have NO direct benefit you can be charged and if you have Direct Benefit you can be charged extra, but only at Patterson Lakes.

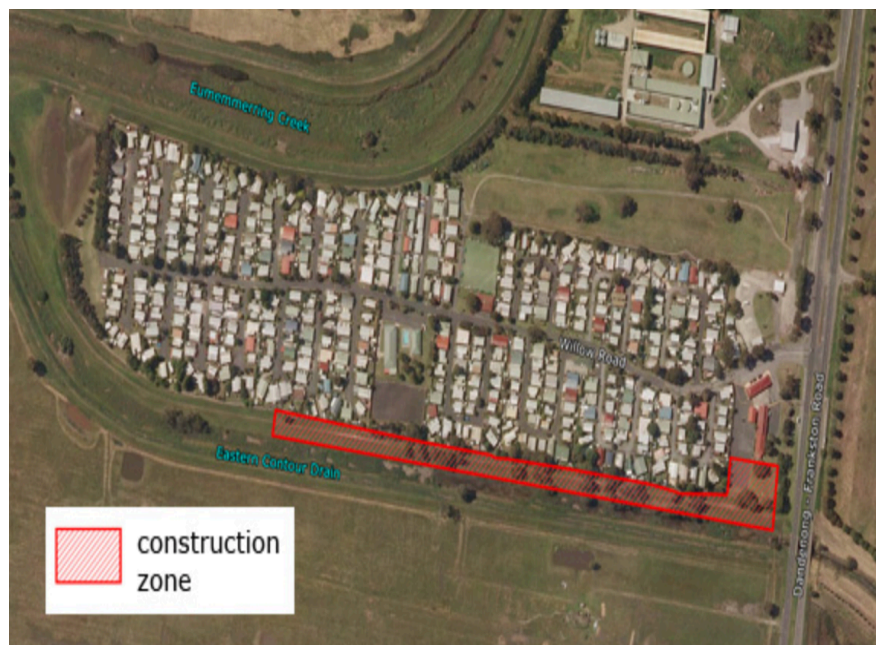
If the ESC Finds that direct benefit should pay then it would also imply that no benefit should not pay but MW states everyone benefits from healthy waterways.

See MELBOURNE WATER PRICING SUBMISSION 2016 - 1

<http://www.esc.vic.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/esc/21/21a3cee7-e90a-4ccc-960d-43287aa1a88d.pdf>

Here are Melbourne Water Projects where the works were performed for Private Benefit, yet costs paid for by the Waterways and Drainage Charge

Eastern Contour Drain Levee bank renewal



[https://www.melbournewater.com.au/whatwedo/projectsaroundmelbourne/Pages/Plenty-River-weed-control-and-revegetation-\(Plenty-Gorge-Reserve-to-Viewbank\)-.aspx](https://www.melbournewater.com.au/whatwedo/projectsaroundmelbourne/Pages/Plenty-River-weed-control-and-revegetation-(Plenty-Gorge-Reserve-to-Viewbank)-.aspx)

MELBOURNE WATER POLLUTION OBLIGATIONS

(Pollution response Page 26 of Pricing Submission)

In the past Melbourne Water's obligations regarding significant pollution events were unclear. However, recent advice from EPA Victoria provides clear direction to Melbourne Water that it must respond to pollution or environmental hazards and

conduct appropriate clean-up to protect public health and the environment. This is consistent with the obligations outlined in the Environment Protection Act 1970 (Vic). This totals \$5.3M over the period.

<http://esc.vic.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/esc/1c/1c4d8e49-6dc4-43a8-81b5-e2ce3b85f636.pdf>

[https://www.melbournewater.com.au/whatwedo/projectsaroundmelbourne/Pages/Kellets-Road-Drain-wetland-construction-\(Rowville\).aspx](https://www.melbournewater.com.au/whatwedo/projectsaroundmelbourne/Pages/Kellets-Road-Drain-wetland-construction-(Rowville).aspx)

[https://www.melbournewater.com.au/whatwedo/projectsaroundmelbourne/Pages/Melba-Creek-erosion-control-\(Sunbury\)---Rivers-and-creeks.aspx](https://www.melbournewater.com.au/whatwedo/projectsaroundmelbourne/Pages/Melba-Creek-erosion-control-(Sunbury)---Rivers-and-creeks.aspx)

MELBOURNE WATERS EXPLANATION OF THE WATERWAYS AND DRAINAGE CHARGE

1. What does the Waterways and Drainage Charge pay for?

Melbourne Water is the caretaker of river health throughout the Port Phillip and Westernport region. We are responsible for managing over 8,400 kilometres of rivers and creeks, floodplains and the regional drainage system. A key source of funds for this work is the Waterways and Drainage Charge, which is collected by the retail water businesses on Melbourne Water's behalf, from around 2 million property owners across the region.

Everyone benefits either directly or indirectly from healthy waterways and a safe, reliable drainage system.

4. I don't receive any benefit to my property. Why should I pay?

The works that we do provide broad benefits to waterways across the catchment. Approximately 2 million property owners are levied the Waterways and Drainage Charge, which has existed since 1927. Spreading the costs across the whole region is the fairest possible approach as everyone benefits from healthy waterways and a safe and reliable drainage system.

Works are prioritised on a whole-of-region approach for the greater good of the region. Works delivered up stream will deliver positive outcomes to river health in other places.

REF: www.melbournewater.com.au/aboutus/.../Waterways-and-drainage-charge-FAQ.docx

SUMMARY

We object to the findings of the ESC primarily on the basis that the decision seems to have been made on the basis that the decision only effects the Quiet Lakes residents when there is wider community benefit on the following basis.

1. The decision of the ESC affects the wider community yet the ESC is placing the decision in the hands of the Residents of the Quiet Lakes. The beneficiaries of the QL are :
 - QL Residents
 - Down Stream – Kananook Creek , Port Phillip Bay Eel Race Drain and Seaford Wetlands
 - Flora and Fauna of the above
 - KKC Ratepayers based on property values of the wider Patterson Lakes
2. The drainage function of the wider community approx. 3600 households flood mitigation contributes to the sediment yet a select group are being asked to pay for the clean up, yet MW pays for sediment removal to prevent Blue Green algae elsewhere under the WDC.. Contamination is caused by the Local drainage network yet a select group are being asked to prevent Blue Green Algae from occurring
3. Concerned that in the next pricing regime that if 26% of Quiet lakes residents decided that they did not want to pay the charge, then the Lakes turn into a toxic pond that affects all of those identified in 1 above. This again is not a decision that should ever be raised again or public health placed in the hands of a few.
4. This is about healthily waterways not about primary contact as primary is addressed in Recommendation 9 of the IR but if the residents want water quality above secondary then they should pay a decision we support.
5. There are a number of factual errors in the Draft decision, but these I believe will be addressed by the PLQLOR submission.

With thanks

Andrew Meehan
PRESIDENT
Residents Association of Patterson Lakes Inc.

Wannarkladdin Wetlands weed control and revegetation (Patterson Lakes)

We have completed weed control works at Wannarkladdin Wetlands to increase biodiversity and improve habitat for birds in the area.

The revegetation of the area has also been completed.



[View larger map](#)

What happened and when

Weed control works to control *Phragmites* (Common Reeds) and will help prevent infestation of noxious and dominant weeds including blackberry and Spiny Rush which have a negative impact on the bird and frog habitats have been completed.

A comprehensive revegetation program using native plants such as River Red Gum, wattles and sheoaks has been completed increasing fauna habitat and diversity in the wetlands.

Revegetation was completed in June 2015 and ongoing maintenance will occur until June 2017.