

**Submission
No 36**

INQUIRY INTO WATER AUGMENTATION

Organisation: Yenda Flood Victims Association Inc.

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YENDA FLOOD VICTIMS ASSOCIATION INC.

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President: Paul Rossetto

9th August 2016

Inquiry into the augmentation of water supply for rural and regional New South Wales

Thank you for allowing me to contribute to this Inquiry on behalf of Yenda Flood Victims Association Inc. This submission will address terms of reference clauses d) & e) in my capacity as stated below. It contains

- i) cover letter to Robert Brown MLC Water Augmentation Inquiry in NSW
- ii) Yenda Progress Association submission to GCC FPMC
- iii) Yenda Flood Victims Association Inc. submission to GCC FPMC
- iv) Griffith Main Drain J and Mirrool Creek Floodplain Risk Management Study & Plan 2015
- v) FMA submission into Natural Disaster Funding arrangements June 13 2014.

Profile:

I was elected to Griffith City Council in September 2012 following the March 2012 floods devastating the town of Yenda.

In that capacity I have been an active member of the Griffith City Council Flood Plain Management Committee and a delegate to Flood Management Australia (FMA) previously Flood Management Association. Attending quarterly meetings in Sydney and FMA Conferences when possible.

I still maintain an active connection with Yenda Progress Association as secretary and Yenda Flood Victims Association Incorporated as President.

Background:

It is in my present role as President of YFVA Inc. I present this updated information referring to previous flood study and management plan submissions. The 2015 GFPMC Flood Plain Study and Risk Management Plan Report and 2014 FMA submission is attached.

To understand the frustrations with NSW Floodplain Management Committee process it may be easiest to case study the March 2012 Yenda Flood experience as follows:-

Following the 1931 Yenda floods opposing cross flow flood gates were built at a junction point where Mirrool Creek crosses the Main Canal at 8 kms east of Yenda. Page 8.

1. 2015 Griffith Main Drain J and Mirrool Creek Flood Study and Management Plan
2. Water Management Act 2000
3. Crown Land Reserve Managers Handbook

These cross flow flood gates added capacity to an undercanal siphon and successfully mitigated flood events in 1939, 1956, 1974 & 1989.

During the late 1990's and as part of the privatisation of Murrumbidgee Irrigation flood mitigation policy did not form a part of the newly formed private Irrigation Corporation, known as Murrumbidgee Irrigation Ltd. Although it was still a part of the 2000 Water Management Act sect. 28,29 & 30. Also the Crown Land Reserve Managers Handbook.

NSW agencies :- Department of Water Resources, Minister Hon. Ian Causerly and Department of Land and Water Resources, Minister Hon. John Aquilina also played a part in de-commissioning the cross flow Flood Gates in the late nineteen nineties essential for mitigation of Mirrool Creek flood events greater than 1:50 ARI.

Consequently in 2012 a large Mirrool Creek flood event was unsuccessfully mitigated by the reduced capacity at the EMR under canal siphon (1:20 ARI) and subsequently saw the over topping of the Northern Branch Canal and the worst flood event in Yenda residents living memory devastating 450 homes, 100 farms and crops, 12 businesses and 4 Government buildings amassing almost \$100 million dollars in damage.

GFPMC (Griffith FloodPlain Management Committee) processes.

- To put the frustration into perspective let's look at outcomes.

It's been 4 years 4 months and 1 week since the March 2012 Yenda Flood and the GFPMC doesn't yet have funding approval from NSW Office of Environment and Heritage (OE & H) for Option 1 Early Warning and Emergency Canal Breaching Protocol design stage let alone construction. Approximately \$200k.

By way of explanation Option 1 is a clever short term flood mitigation option incorporating new technology – BOM rain forecasting, metering gauges and an emergency canal breaching protocol design to breach the Main Canal at strategic timing and location to prevent Yenda flooding again.

It needs to be emphasised Option 1 is only a short term option while the longer term Option 2 Yoogali Levee (\$500k) & Option 3 Yenda Lawson Siphon (\$600k) design funding are approved. Murrumbidgee Irrigation Ltd would prefer a temporary renovation of the decommissioned flood gates site incorporating automation.

Flood Management Australia (FMA)

Quarterly meetings in Sydney are immensely informative with many organisations attending, providing hundreds of Council participants like myself & Griffith City Council staff a chance to meet Government agency staff we are dealing with on the telephone or email. The main ones being BOM & NSW OE & H. SES & ICA usually frequent the meetings as well.

Office of Environment and Heritage

Lack of funding is an impediment to effective flood mitigation planning and mitigation works. Floods still cause the biggest loss of property, more than fire yet only \$1 out of every \$10 spent on flood recovery is spent on flood mitigation works.

When I first attended FMA in 2013 OE & H had 3 lists of Councils waiting for Flood capital works funding. The A list for active Council applications had app 22 Councils approved for capital works. The B list containing 80 Councils not yet approved but waiting to join the A list. The C list was made up of Councils undergoing floodplain management plans not yet eligible for entry to the B list a precursor to the A list. In 2013 Griffith City Council was not yet on the C list.

On completion of financial year 2013-2014 O E & H had \$9M surplus unallocated to the A list.

2014-2015 saw the closing date move forward to early April from June 30 catching a lot of Councils out including Griffith City Council planning to submit a grant application for flood mitigation design work. Effectively stalling Griffith's flood grant application for 12 months.

The Government also took back the unallocated \$9M from the previous financial year.

Since 2013 there have been many floods in coastal areas causing significant damage and requiring flood plain planning and design work competing with pre-existing rural and regional grant applications for limited funds.

Yenda Mirrool Creek status.

A flashrain storm event of approximately 80mm of rain late last year at Barellan and Arlethan caused 3 houses to be flooded at Ardlethan and a lot of angst in the Yenda community waiting for the flood to travel down the creek not knowing how the reduced capacity under canal siphon would handle the flood waters. It was later calculated by hydrologists to be a 1:5 ARI event.

Council staff and Murrumbidgee Irrigation staff were occupied for several days monitoring and reassuring the community they were safe.

Last month, after record June rains of 137mm (1.20 ARI) the Yenda community were again very concerned when Mirrool Creek began running. Council staff, Murrumbidgee Irrigation and SES were again occupied for several days monitoring and reassuring the community they were safe. Several houses in Ardlethan were again sand bagged by SES and Murrumbidgee Irrigation took evasive action shutting down the irrigation canal flows in anticipation of a Mirrool Creek flood event.

The Mirrool Creek flood waters entered the Main Canal at Daltons breach and ran for approximately three days. Without knowing exactly how much flood water was coming down Mirrool Creek Council and MI agreed it was a proactive move to remove the top 3 boards across 8 gates in the decommissioned flood gate structure to allow extra water to exit the Main Canal to the South instead of competing for space in the under canal siphon with Mirrool Creek flood waters.

This decision took 2 days by the time SES Command arrived to view the situation, inform their higher authority officials and notify down stream landholders.

Presently the Mirrool Creek catchment is very saturated and any significant rain runs off the soil and creates a running creek.

In conclusion , all three authorities ; Council, MI and SES have been working well together monitoring and taking mitigating action when there is a significant rain event threatening to form a significant running Mirrol Creek. Albeit in the short term.

Luckily last month being June the irrigation system was not in demand being Winter but if the same rain event occurred in the middle of Summer MI would have competing conflicts to deal with from concerned down stream irrigators not receiving daily irrigation water supplies while Yenda residents are wanting Council to insist MI keep the canal free for flood mitigation.

The longer term solution of a Lawson Siphon structure where the Main Canal is piped under Mirrool Creek would provide adequate creek cross flow without interfering with irrigation water supplies.



Picture of Mulwala Canal entering a Lawson Siphon under Aljo's Creek, Deniliquin NSW

THE END