

Unlocking Tomorrow's Housing

Melbourne Water's contribution to Victoria's Housing Statement



Roadmap to deliver today and tomorrow

Melbourne Water has played a strong role in supporting the ongoing development of our city as it grows and changes. The Victorian Government's Housing Statement calls on all authorities to meet the important challenge of delivering 800,000 new homes over ten years.

Water is central to the ongoing success of our city; it underpins public and environmental health and enables ongoing housing and economic development.

Melbourne Water ensures all aspects of the water cycle are planned and managed to support the City's ongoing development. We work with Government Agencies, Councils and the development sector to facilitate housing development in new greenfield areas and in existing urban areas identified for significant renewal.

We are committed to achieving good water planning and strengthening our city's resilience to flood events while meeting the challenge of increased housing supply. This challenges us to rethink how we take up our role together with State agencies, Local Government and the development sector.

This document is a roadmap of key Melbourne Water actions in response to the Housing Statement to help unlock tomorrow's housing.

Our Five Pillars

1. Good decisions, made faster to support

growth: Streamlining processes and fast tracking approvals in low hazard areas, to get people in homes faster.

2. Better information to identify risk and target

growth: Providing information to enable faster processing in low risk areas while inputting earlier in the development of higher flood risk areas.

3. Greenfield Areas: Enabling the 30% growth target in greenfield areas by addressing systemic barriers that slow down approvals.

4. Established Areas: Enabling the 70% growth target for urban infill by providing faster engineering advice to promote more development in low flood hazard areas and to more quickly identify issues in high flood hazard areas.

5. Innovative and well considered risk management:

Work with Government to set strategic directions and find innovative ways to promote growth and development while minimising risk and navigating climate change challenges.

Unlocking Tomorrow's Housing: Melbourne Water's contribution to Victoria's Housing Statement

I am pleased to release Melbourne Water's contribution to Victoria's Housing Statement, our roadmap to support the delivery of sustainable housing growth.

As the floodplain manager for Greater Melbourne, Melbourne Water is committed to supporting the delivery of housing that meets the needs of our growing city and ensures flood risk is appropriately managed. Water underpins all aspects of a healthy, prosperous and liveable City, and Melbourne Water plays a key role in ensuring all aspects of the water cycle are appropriately planned for.

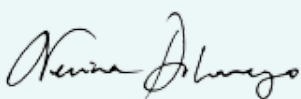
The roadmap contains range of priority actions under five pillars, which focus our efforts on the challenges and activities that have the most positive impact on supply whilst ensuring flood risk is appropriately addressed. In addition to the activities outlined in the roadmap, we have also taken a range of immediate steps to address legacy challenges associated with planning applications, which are already having positive impacts.

Some of the actions in our roadmap will require collaboration between multiple agencies and the sector. Melbourne Water is committed to working closely with all parties to deliver overall system improvements.

This roadmap sets out pragmatic initiatives that support both housing supply and flood resilience, such as providing risk information earlier in the planning process to inform land use, faster engineering advice on low-hazard areas where development can be fast-tracked, self-certification on simple applications to reduce wait times and addressing systemic multi-party barriers impacting timely approvals in greenfield areas.

These important improvements have been guided by industry feedback and engagement on our draft roadmap over recent months and I thank the industry and agency partners for your valuable engagement and feedback. Your contributions have sharpened our focus on the priorities that will make the greatest impact and we now move into delivering.

I look forward to continuing to work together towards our shared goals of sustainable housing for our growing city.



Dr Nerina Di Lorenzo
Managing Director
Melbourne Water



Dr Nerina Di Lorenzo

Melbourne Water's contribution to Victoria's Housing Statement

1. Good decisions, made faster to support growth

To meet the Housing Statement targets, we will need to change the way we process and respond to permits referred to us.

What we will do:

Support good decision making, early:

- Standardise and publish application information requirements to support a fast-track approvals process.
- Deliver a documented, standardised pre-application service to identify flood and drainage requirements and provide estimated decision timeframes.

Explore self certification and compliance standards:

- Work with local and state government to develop deemed to comply standards for low flood risk referrals to significantly reduce the number that need to be directly approved by Melbourne Water.
- Explore self-certification of some drainage infrastructure using a panel of suitably qualified and experienced practitioners and use agreements with registered developers.

Fast tracking permits in no or low hazard areas:

- Prioritise referrals for activity centres, priority precincts and residential areas that have no or are lower hazard areas to get them approved as fast as possible.

2. Better information to identify risk and target growth

Climate change projections show there are two key impacts that increase flood risk:

- rising sea levels and
- more intense rainfall events.

Flood risk already impacts more than 200,000 properties in Melbourne and is set to increase with climate change. Sea level rise will mean many of our coastal areas may be further impacted by flooding and tidal water by the Year, 2100.

What we will do:

Make flood information easily accessible to inform decisions that shape our city:

- Melbourne Water is delivering updated flood models for every catchment in Melbourne for both current and 2100 planning horizons.
- We will use this long term information and work with our partners to facilitate growth in safer locations in priority precincts, activity centres and other areas identified in Plan for Victoria.



3. Greenfield Areas

We are committed to improving Melbourne Water's Drainage Services Scheme (DSS) to better manage variability in greenfield development timing.

In many greenfield developments we face challenges where land cannot be fully developed until downstream developers build the required drainage infrastructure.

What we will do:

Restructure the DSS process:

- We have reviewed how we manage the DSS program from design through to construction. Implementing this review will restructure and streamline the processes to improve certainty on housing decisions and reduce holding time and costs.

Consider options to intervene and facilitate development:

- There are no current instruments available to Melbourne Water to address hold-ups associated with out of sequence development. We will work with our partners and Government to assess future options for intervention.

Consider where and when Melbourne Water builds first:

- We will explore the opportunity for Melbourne Water to build drainage infrastructure for complex, landlocked or fragmented areas. This has the potential to enable more innovative and sustainable precinct-scale solutions such as integrated water management (IWM) and stormwater harvesting solutions.

Out of sequence development impacts drainage infrastructure delivery

The Drainage Services Schemes (DSS) are designed around providing for the outfall of storm water under gravity. As the greenfield areas are developed and transition to urban areas, hard surfaces increase. This increases the volume of stormwater that the drainage system needs to accommodate.

Landowners have different land development timeframes and consequently it is rare that development occurs sequentially from downstream to upstream.

Often upstream development occurs in advance of the provision of the downstream drainage infrastructure, which is needed to safely deal with stormwater. This occurs when the downstream landowner is not ready to develop.

This is called out-of-sequence development and can delay the development of the land unless an alternative outfall can be found. On occasion the alternative solution may involve the construction of sacrificial infrastructure to provide a temporary outfall.

An example of this situation is in one DSS where the downstream landowners sought a cash payment and changes to the approved DSS as conditions for allowing the construction of the approved drainage infrastructure, a retarding basin, on their land.

This approach caused a significant delay to the approval of development of the upstream land and resulted in significant cost impost for the upstream landowners on temporary works to provide an approved drainage outfall that allowed development and subdivision of the land.

In cases where significant housing value is identified and barriers to alternative solutions exist, Melbourne Water will consider options to build drainage infrastructure first in order to avoid these out-of-sequence development issues where possible.

4. Established Areas

It is important to enable development while protecting our waterways and our bay from pollutants and sediment which can affect the liveability of our city.

In built up urban areas, there is often limited room to build infrastructure mitigation works for riverine flooding. This means that drainage solutions may be more complex than in greenfields areas.

What we will do:

Water orientated precincts:

- Together with our partners we will immediately begin investigation of both engineering and urban planning water solutions to support the initial 10 activity centres designated in the Housing Statement.

Activate Priority Precincts:

- We will support priority precincts in the delivery of key infrastructure in Arden, Macaulay and Fishermans Bend to manage flood impacts.

Quicker decisions:

- We will lift our processing targets for urban housing planning permit referrals in established areas to 95% on-time decisions by late 2024.

5. Innovative and well considered risk management

Melbourne Water seeks to take a balanced approach to achieving housing outcomes while managing risks.

There is an opportunity to better consider how more discretion in decision making, using a well considered risk-based approach, may facilitate increased housing development while managing flood risks.

What we will do:

Support directing new housing to low hazards areas:

- Encourage new higher density housing and infrastructure to activity centres where hazards are lower or can be mitigated.

Review managing off-site impacts:

- The current flood risk management policy requires new development to achieve zero afflux. We will work with Government and industry to consider how risk based approaches can contribute to effective flood risk management.