

March 2011
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

The following submission will address three issues named in the Commission of Inquiry. The first is the preparation and planning by federal, state and local governments, emergency services and the community. Secondly, the response to the 2010/2011 flood events, particularly measures taken to inform the community and protect life, private and public property and finally, land use planning.

Having lived on the Lockyer Creek for over forty years and being the third generation to have farmed the property, I have experienced personally the past major and minor floods. I have seen the Lockyer Creek become faster flowing and more violent with each big flood. I believe the reason for this is the levee banks that have been constructed since the floods in 1996.

These levee banks have been constructed on the Lockyer Creek and most of the smaller creeks that flow into the Lockyer Creek. These banks are increasing the flow, rate and height of the water moving downstream. These banks at present are not regulated or licensed. They are put in without impact studies to people and properties up and down stream. Even more alarming is there has been a dramatic increase in the number of levees since the January 2011 floods and my concern is that the next major flood will be even more devastating to life and property.

For example, in my observations of these levee banks, Property owner A had water coming out of the creek and entering his property in past floods and to protect his crops he/she constructed a metre high levee bank. Therefore in the following flood Property owner B had excessive water being forced onto his land from the levee bank constructed by Property owner A. In response Property owner B felt the only option was to construct his own levee bank. In the recent flood, Property owner C

who is downstream of Property owners A and B, has had the height of the creek lifted by a further metre on his land due to the actions of Property owners A and B.

This scenario has been played out all over the Lockyer Valley. This is why the creek is faster and more destructive. Property owners are trying to keep all water off their land and in the creek. This is not possible without somebody paying the price. The Lockyer Valley is a large flood plain. Water must be allowed to flow out of the creeks onto the flood plain. By flowing out onto the flood plains it decreases the ferocity of the water moving downstream in the creeks. By trying to keep it in the creeks by these levee banks they are increasing velocity and height therefore creating more destruction. No farmer wishes to lose his crops on these flood plains but if it is a choice between crops or lives and dwellings, I believe life and dwellings have to be protected first.

At the moment, property owners are once again trying to protect all of their land from further flooding whilst unknowingly, changing the flows and direction of the creeks. Therefore a property owner that was confident to stay with their home during a flood event, knowing the height of previous floods, in January this year had high, fast flowing, unpredictable, torrents through their property which in fact threatened their life.

I am gravely concerned if there continues to be no control over these levees that the loss of property and possibly life will be even greater in the next flood. It is time for government to take control, to only allow levees to protect buildings and infrastructure and to allow the creek back onto the flood plain. In the current situation many property owners are responding the only way that is left to them without any overall plan or knowledge of the impact of their actions to the creek systems. Government needs to license and regulate, and exercise the power to keep individuals and communities safe.