

ALL THE RIVERS RUN

But why do they run through my street, my backyard and through my house?

Why is it that whenever we have some rain a bit heavier than normal this happens. Why is it that we know during the rainy season in the North of our State we can have this problem and do nothing about it?

The answer is simple – pure and unmitigated neglect!!!

We have forgotten that rivers are the natural way to drain excess water from the land. Creeks and small water courses contribute to this drainage as well.

The problem is that in our obsession to develop the areas around the rivers we fail to see the obvious. We build and alter the landscape in various ways.

As a result rivers, creeks and other watercourses are deliberately blocked or are silting far more than nature ever intended.

When rivers silt up they are less deep and cannot handle the large volume of water.

So the river levels rise. They rise far above their normal levels. Or so it seems to us.

The reason they rise up so far is that they try to drain the land from the burden of water that must find a way out.

Close to home we can observe the silting that is going on.

The Caboolture River is silted so badly that at low tide the mouth of the river is above sea level. A disaster waiting to happen. South East Queensland has been receiving rain far below normal or average rainfall for some time now. A period of a return to normal rainfall will certainly result in flooding around to higher reaches of the river.

Unless something is done now!!!!.

The same goes for the Noosa River. Sometimes only a foot or 30cm is all the flow that this river has. Here again rain in the hinterland will cause widespread flooding.

With wide areas of land under water mosquitoes and other insects breed faster than normal.

This leads to diseases such as dengue fever or even malaria.

So what is the answer?

When 67% of our land area in Queensland is under water and it looks that this can go on for some considerable time yet, it is obvious we have not looked after our rivers and waterways well.

They must be dredged to a depth that will allow access water to flow through to the sea without causing the floods we have come to take as natural.

To do this properly we need an independent Government body that oversees this gigantic task. Let's call it the "State Drainage Board".

Not only should they be responsible for the dredging, but also for the policing of suitable building and development on and near river land.

They should be able to direct local councils as well as owners of large properties to undertake work that ensures the free flow of clean water through the rivers and other waterways.

Businesses, both large and small also have a large roll to play in the effective use of our waterways and rivers. Uncontrolled discharge of materials that can result in further silting of our rivers must be forbidden and policed.

All this will cost a lot of money. But if done correctly and efficiently the benefits when flooding becomes a thing of the past far outweigh the initial costs.

Jack Backer

26th February 2009

ALL THE RIVERS RUN (Continued)

When I first wrote last February 2009 about the terrible state in which our waterways are looked after, I also predicted that among other areas, the Noosa River was one of those that would flood when heavier than normal rain was experienced.

Coming originally from a country where more than 60% of the landmass is below sea level, drainage is something we learn about with our intake of mother's milk.

To ensure that water flows are controlled and managed the Ministry of Transportation and Water management is delegated the task of the practical execution of the water flows. It is known as the agency that provides for dry feet, clean and sufficient water and a quick and safe flow of the water.

It is said that God created the world but the Dutch created Holland. While doing this they also created a unique landscape. The Polder landscape.

A polder is a low-lying tract of land enclosed by embankments, known as dikes that form an artificial hydrological entity. Meaning it has no connection with outside water other than through manually operated devices. Eg wind mills and other forms of pumps.

There are three types of polders:

- Land reclaimed from a body of water, such as a lake or the sea bed.

- Flood plains separated from the sea by a dike.

- Marshes separated from the surrounding water by a dike and consequently drained.

Rivers such as the Rhyn, Meuse and Scheld rivers, create a problem in such an environment. Where they flow though such low lying land dikes contain their flow and the normal as well as the heavier water flows coming down from the mountains like the Swiss Alps in spring time are catered for with "inner" and "outer" dikes.

In Queensland there are no Government agencies that look after waterways and prevent floods. There are no agencies that specifically deal with rivers and creeks and the like.

Yet every year, billions of dollars are spend to deal with the aftermath of flooding.

Lives are affected and even ruined seriously time and time again.

Coastal flooding and inland river flooding needs to be treated as serious and not as something that cannot be helped and call it a "**Natural Disaster**".

It is not. It is a matter of "**Unmitigated Neglect**"

Jack Backer

9th April 2009



Correspondence removed



That the Queensland Government introduces a Waterways and Water Management Department.

Since 1841 Queensland has had regular yearly floods. Some minor, but most were major floods. In most cases severe damage resulted. Not to mention the misery inflicted on the people who had to endure this.

The question arises why is it so? (With apologies to Prof. Miller)

The reason for such floods is UNMITIGATED NEGLECT.

We neglect our rivers, our creeks and other minor waterways. They all contribute to the drainage of water that we get from rain.

But what do we do? Just about all things that contribute to flooding.

Most of our rivers cannot cope with large amounts of water that we get with the heavy rain we get in summer and in the North during the monsoon season. Most are silted so their depth is insufficient to cope with the large amounts of water they have to deal with.

To add to this we allow development on the river frontage that further inhabits the ability to deal with flooding rains. Some of the development of the river frontage in Brisbane is asking for trouble in the future.

The large amounts of rubbish that we have seen floating down river indicates that not only are the immediate environments of the rivers totally neglected but also the creeks and minor waterways are full of rubbish and stops a free flow of the water.

Often we can observe where development has taken place in the vicinity of a creek culverts are introduced in the development that are inadequate to handle larger volumes of water through them. The result often is that the culvert becomes blocked with rubbish.

The Government has the mistaken idea that Local Government can handle the management of these waterways. They are convinced that Local Government does handle flood mitigation well.

Mitigation is one thing but what we need is flood prevention.

What we need is something like the Main Roads Department. If we would rely on Local Government for roads and traffic management we would have a crisis n our hand right now.

The department I have in mind would have distinct powers. It would be charged with maintaining proper water flows in our rivers and creeks. They would have the power to dredge where this is necessary to maintain a sufficient water flow. They would have power to prohibit development where in their view it would be detrimental in maintaining clear water flows. They would be able to instruct Local Government to clear and remove any obstructions to free and clear water flows in creeks in their areas. If the creek flows through a private property they can instruct the owner to clear and remove obstructions. Failure to do so would result in prosecutions and/or fines.

Rivers that flow into the ocean on our East coast would be the easier ones to deal with. Inland rivers require more thought and cooperation from other States. But the principles are still the same. Dredge where necessary, clear obstructions and ensure a clear and unobstructed water flow.

In other words this new department must ensure we can keep our feet dry and have clear and clean water in our rivers and creeks.

Motion for SSC regional meeting on Saturday 26th February 2011

Jack Backer
25th January 2011

Wikipedia entries removed