
Agenda Item:	8.1a LATE REPORT
Committee:	Board
Meeting Date:	15/04/2021
Title:	Gawler River Floodplain Mitigation.

This late report provides additional information in relation to consideration of Agenda item 8.1.

The 2020-21 State Government Budget has allocated \$9 Million for Gawler River flood mitigation works.

Key projects and partnerships

1. Removal of trees following Hillier bushfire, \$350k - \$370k (Town of Gawler/Light Regional Council)
2. Construction of a drainage system for Virginia, Carmelo and Park Road drain, \$3.8 M (City of Playford).
3. New control structures (Gawler West, North Para, Nuriootpa), flood warning infrastructure, flood warning levels, \$1 Mil (GRFMA).
4. Northern Floodway early works, existing levee banks, river survey and works. \$3.8 M (GRFMA, DEW, DIT, Landscape Boards).

Following a recent Steering Committee meeting, discussion, between Mr I Baldwin (GRFMA Chair), Mr S Green (Playford CEO), Mr H Inat (Gawler CEO) and Mr J Miller (Adelaide Plains CEO), noted need for all local Government/GRFMA representatives to have the same understanding and collective response regarding the funding initiative, continuing participation, project delivery and expectations for co-contribution.

A meeting to facilitate suitable discussion was held 7 April 2021.

Issues included for discussion :

- DEW/State Treasury advice that the four projects be commenced by end of the 21/22 financial year with co-contribution by councils being finalised. (Councils have not included consideration for 21/22 budgets)
 - Steering Committees "assumption" that council co-contributions to projects may be re-purposed/re-allocated for further flood mitigation purposes e.g., NFP further investigation and implementation/SMP associated works/BENPFMD options. (Previous indication that co-contributions would be re-allocated.)
 - DEW expectations that the GRFMA and constituent councils were further advanced in determining co-contribution for Projects 3&4. (Difficult to do without project scoping being prepared and agreement by councils for proportional co-contribution.)
 - SA Govt. process to be applied to facilitate project funding. (Flow Chart to be prepared by DEW/Treasury.)
 - DEW requirement for GRFMA and respective constituent councils to sign off on Project 1 & 2 prior to next Steering Committee Meeting – 13 May 2021.
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- Councils will soon complete their budget preparation cycle for the 2021/22 financial year with risk of no provision being made for projects identified.
- Before making any decisions Councils and GRFMA will require reasonable and sufficient information in support of any project proposals. i.e., justification, description, design and costing.
- It will also be important to determine the varying amounts that might be payable by GRFMA and each of the constituent councils. This is a discussion that will need to occur at GRFMA and ultimately be supported by the constituent councils.

Comments noted from the 7 April 2021 meeting were:

- The State Government has provided funding as part of the COVID19 stimulus and economic recovery package and is looking to have projects initiated ASAP.
- There still remains a lot of project scoping to be undertaken before projects can commence
- Projects 1& 2 are to stand alone, from GRFMA, as separate council projects.
- City of Playford has identified a funding contribution of \$1.3 Mill for Project 2
- Town of Gawler has included a funding contribution of \$90,000 to Project 1 in its 2021/2022 Budget estimates.
- Light Regional Council has indicated it will not be contributing to Project 1 on the basis fallen trees within its District are on private land.
- Light and Gawler to further discuss project 1 with DEW project group.
- DEW will recognise in kind contributions from GRFMA and Councils.
- Requirement to consider political risks with not contributing funding.
- Is there opportunity to re-badge project 4.
- Project 3, new control structures and flood warning infrastructure, has application to all GRFMA constituent councils.

The GRFMA Chair, Mr Ian Baldwin and GRFMA Executive Officer, Mr David Hitchcock, separately met Ms. Cate Hart, Executive Director, Environment, Heritage and Sustainability, Department for Environment and Water (DEW) on the 14/04/2021 to discuss matters relating to projects 3 & 4.

Discussions noted at the meeting with Ms Hart were:

- Reaffirmation that the State Government has provided funding as part of the COVID19 stimulus and economic recovery package and is looking to have projects initiated ASAP.
- The GRFMA should now clearly articulate its position on funding contributions to Projects 3 & 4 so that projects can be initiated and State Government Budget allocations can be drawn down.
- The GRFMA Chair noted concerns at recent advice that council co-contributions to projects may not be re-purposed/re-allocated for further flood mitigation purposes (ie not added to the \$9 million funding but netted off against the \$9 million and savings redirected to other state Government budget costs). Ms Hart suggested that may not be the case and will check the wording of the Steering Committee minutes. In any event the GRFMA should write to the Minister for Environment and Water to seek clarification in how council funding contributions will be treated.
- The GRFMA is welcome to identify suitable part funding options for GRFMA contributions that might be considered by DEW; some examples being
 - Cash and inkind contributions

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- Utilising council contributions from Projects 1 and 2 as part contributions for example Project 4 (early works river environs) or to develop the business case to bring the best identified flood mitigation initiative to shovel ready status.
 - It was noted the development of the Gawler River Stormwater Management Plan was now in progress and there being complimentary work processes with Project 4.
 - With Project 3 (flood monitoring) other than GRFMA /Councils cash funding contributions a consideration might be for the capital works and asset costs to be funded by the allocated funds (\$1 Mil) with GRFMA/Councils and or other bodies assuming responsibility for the completed assets and future ongoing costs.
 - The GRFMA Chair noted the GRFMA is currently reviewing (and which is subject to final agreement by GRFMA and constituent councils) the funding model for contribution of costs for projects above \$ 1 Million.
 - The GRFMA Chair noted Councils are well advanced in drafting their 2021/2022 financial year Budgets and it being very unlikely that they would now be able to accommodate any feasible contribution costs in their deliberations.
 - Ms Hart noted GRFMA/Council indication of in principle support for considered part funding allocations and subsequent inclusion in forward Budget estimates might be sufficient determination to then initiate the relevant projects in the 2020/2021 financial year.

Considerations for next steps at the 15/4/2021 GRFMA meeting will be summarised as:

GRFMA :

1. Confirm with City of Playford and Town of Gawler, and any other councils subsequently contributing, their level of support for council contributions from Projects 1 and 2 to be utilised to develop the business case to bring the best identified Gawler River flood mitigation initiative to shovel ready status.
2. Determine quantum of any GRFMA funding contributions to be made to Project 3 or Project 4 with specific view on current 2020/2021 budget allocations or appetite for in principle support and inclusion of forward GRFMA budget estimates funding and or assumption of ownership of assets following completion of works.
3. In consideration of 2 above also seek the views of constituent councils for their in principle support and inclusion of forward budget estimates funding in relation to part funding contributions and or assumption of ownership of assets following completion of works.
4. Correspond with the Minister for Environment and Water seeking clarification in how council contributions to projects will be treated ; and
5. Subsequent to advice and determinations received in relation to item 1, 2, 3 and 4 above advise the Gawler River Flood Project Delivery Group (Department for Environment and Water) of GRFMA and constituent council deliberations.