

Submission Cover Sheet

Friends of Edithvale Seaford Wetlands Incorporated

Victorian Parliament Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

Tuesday 3 December 2019

Response to Question on Notice from Tim Richardson MLA for Mordialloc

Submitted 16 December 2019

Friends of Edithvale Seaford Wetlands Incorporated Members involved:

Robin Clarey Vice President

Rosalie Cooper Treasurer

Scott Seymour Life Member

Sue Telfer Member

Margaret Hunter Secretary

Submitted by Margaret Hunter Secretary

FRIENDS OF EDITHVALE-SEAFORD WETLANDS INCORPORATED



Association Number A0017388A

ABN 95 886 101 621

Question from Tim Richardson:

Are the Friends satisfied with the ongoing support, protection and monitoring of impacts from those state agencies with the Mordialloc Freeway and the Level Crossing Removal Authority?

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16 December 2019

Response from members of FESWI:

FESWI was pleased to have had the opportunity to make submissions to both the Edithvale and Bonbeach LXRA Environmental Effects Statement (EES) and the Mordialloc Freeway EES, and to be represented at both open hearings.

A: The Level Crossings:

1. **Our position:** This has always been that any potential risk this project may pose to the wetlands is unacceptable. Firstly, we were disappointed that the alternative to the trench design, ie rail over road separation, was not able to be considered. FESWI believes that this alternative would have proven less hazardous to this sensitive natural environment. Nevertheless, we believe the Independent Assessment Committee (IAC), made a satisfactory assessment of the Project as it was presented and debated, and set appropriate performance requirements within their constraints.
2. **Unresolved issues:** We noted that there were a number of unresolved issues acknowledged in the IAC Report. Any disruption to groundwater flows on which the Edithvale Wetlands relies, are unacceptable. The key issue was the likelihood that groundwater levels will be changed by the trenching (see GHD report) and that increased or decreased levels in groundwater would hence adversely affect the sensitive balance of habitat elements of the Edithvale-Seaford Wetland chain.
3. **The engineering challenge for the redirection of groundwater** from the east side to the shore on the west has, as far as we know, not been solved. We contend that the EES was based on a theoretical design for the drain and the actual detailed design for the horizontal pipe was only a figment of their imagination that had never been proven to work in any other situation. Will the final design be put under such scrutiny and groundwater model testing? There was inadequate groundwater testing/data at Edithvale to assess long term groundwater and wetland interaction as it relied on data from Seaford which is a different system.

B: Previous conclusions and current proposals:

1. The IAC concluded that the Edithvale Wetlands were at such a distance as not be significantly affected by altered water movement at Edithvale and Bonbeach. However, by positioning a third trench mid-way at Chelsea (more recently announced) we are concerned that the impacts on the groundwater balance will be more extensive thus impacting on a wider area of the wetlands and the groundwater system
2. There needs to be a long-term groundwater monitoring program with transects along the Centre Swamp Drain and also along transects from the coast to inland and around the wetlands to appraise the impacts over time to enable appraisal of the changes in the groundwater levels. FESWI believes effective monitoring and data analysis needs to continue well into the future ie well beyond the ten-year period indicated. The monitoring and reporting regime as recommended by the IAC (Environmental Performance Requirements) will need timely resourcing to rectify any unforeseen detrimental consequences. FESWI has low confidence that the Rail agency will have long term interest or capability to undertake this.
3. Along the way, decisions on the level crossing removals were made prior to proper consideration of the potential consequences. Hopefully the more recent revision of the trench (as yet unpublished) will provide mitigation of the risks that concern us.

We look forward to representation on the Community Liaison Group soon to be established by LXRA.

C: Mordialloc Freeway (to be built on a 1-2 m earth mound plus overpasses at the intersections),

The freeway, proposed as a traffic management solution, was again publicly announced before an EES was put in place in the face of likely detrimental impacts on water bird habitat within the Carrum Lowlands and to the connectivity for the birdlife, notably that of the endangered Australasian Bittern, ranging between lagoons along this corridor. The project was given final approval conditional on mitigation measures.

FESWI will continue to defend the whole of the Carrum Lowlands Wetlands Environmental Area, of which the Ramsar listed Edithvale-Seafood Wetlands is at the heart, against any threats to its viability. In fact, we will advocate for its enhancement as we put great value on it.

D: Additional comments

1. We acknowledge the Friends of Edithvale Seaford Wetlands group involvement in the first Community Reference Group for the LXRA Project at Edithvale and Bonbeach.
2. Margaret Hunter declared a professional conflict of interest with the Friends of Edithvale Seaford Wetlands involvement with the Mordialloc Freeway Project which is ongoing for 2020.

