

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT AND FLOOD MITIGATION

1. Background

Stormwater Management and Flood Mitigation was the first referral to the Forum in August 2002 and it is pleasing to note that ground-breaking joint work between State and Local Government is now under way. Progress on this important but difficult topic is a demonstration of the benefits of State agencies and Local Government working together with persistence, cooperation and commitment to a shared objective.

The last meeting of the Forum:

- Noted the increased funding allocation in the State Budget;
- Endorsed the LGA *Stormwater Management Strategy*, and in particular, the establishment of a joint Steering Committee to manage a comprehensive study of priorities and methodologies in the metropolitan area;
- Supported the continuation of the *Chief Executives' Group* (DWLBC, DTUP and LGA) to progress the development of Statewide policy objectives and strategies including possible institutional and funding arrangements; and
- Endorsed the proposed audit of outstanding work and priorities in regional areas.

2. Developments since last meeting

2.1 Metropolitan Project

A Steering Committee chaired by Peter Lockett (CEO, City of Charles Sturt) and comprised of Local and State Government representatives was established to develop and manage a major project brief to undertake the important first stage of the work required in the metropolitan area.

The Steering Committee has met on three occasions and has now developed a detailed project brief which will be advertised for tender through *SA Tenders* and published in *The Australian* in mid October 2003. While the development of the project brief has been slower than originally anticipated, it has been vital to go through the sometimes painstaking process of ensuring that the interests and objectives of all stakeholders are adequately reflected in the project brief.

It is anticipated that the successful consulting team(s) will be commissioned in December 2003 so that intensive work can begin in early 2004.

Major highlights of the metropolitan project thus far have been:

- The very strong and enduring commitment to jointly undertake the necessary work between State Government agencies, metropolitan councils and the LGA;
- Agreement that the work undertaken in stage 1 must examine the multiple objectives previously endorsed by the Forum including innovative approaches to flood mitigation, sustainable use of water, water harvesting and the feasibility of output based contracting;
- The strong leadership provided by the Metropolitan CEOs' Association, through the LGA, to provide unanimous support for the joint project, even though the respective costs and benefits for individual councils will be different.

The funding arrangements for the project also reflect the collaborative approach with the predominant contributions equally shared by metropolitan councils and the State Government through the Catchment Management Subsidy Scheme. Subject to the views of the Forum, it is proposed that these funds be supplemented by contributions from OLG and LGA (see recommendation 2).

2.2 Chief Executives' Group

The Chief Executives' Group has met on two occasions since the last Forum meeting to pursue the Statewide policy issues, and to provide advice and support to the Steering Committee for the metropolitan project outlined in 2.1 above.

In recognition of the importance and complexity of the policy issues and interests impacting on stormwater management and flood mitigation, the Chief Executives' Group has agreed that a senior officer with extensive experience should be appointed to support the work of the group. Mr Nicholas Newland, a senior public servant with experience in environmental policy and a strong record in working on complex issues with multiple stakeholders, has agreed to take on this challenging task. This will give the Chief Executives' Group the resource capacity to research some of the critical issues and to forge the links which cross agencies and governments (Local, State and Commonwealth).

As Mr Newland has only recently taken up this role, detailed terms of reference are still being finalised with the Group, but he will be responsible for the high level policy issues that are not being explicitly addressed through the metropolitan project. In particular, he will be looking at linkages between the various "water related" Government strategies (including the impact of water pricing) and the integration of objectives and activities between State and Local Government (including the exploration of funding, governance and institutional arrangements).

The Chief Executives' Group has also requested background work to be done on dealing with "remnant legislation" dealing with various old drainage schemes with a view to rationalising the legislative framework. Mr Newland will also be providing advice on this issue.

The Group has also assumed responsibility for managing the preparation of appropriate provisions in relation to stormwater that need to be included in the Natural Resources Management Bill 2003, given the State and Local Government consensus that the consultation draft Bill was inadequate in this respect. This is being progressed as a priority.

It is expected that a detailed report on progress will be provided to the next meeting.

2.3 Audit of Country Works Priorities

The LGA has appointed Mr Richard Gayler, to work with Mr Bill Lipp from Transport SA to update the needs and priorities for stormwater management and flood mitigation projects in regional areas of the State.

Mr Gayler has been appointed to undertake this work and a report is expected to be provided to the next meeting.

2.4 Parliamentary Committee Report

The *Environment, Resources and Development (ERD) Committee* of the State Parliament tabled the report of its investigation in to *Stormwater Management* on 22 September 2003.

The findings of the Committee are highly supportive of the directions of the Forum and related activities, making specific positive reference to the LGA *Stormwater Management Strategy* endorsed by the Forum at the July meeting. In particular the Committee supported the LGA strategy proposition that responsibility for stormwater management in metropolitan Adelaide needs to be assigned to a single body. Preliminary work on institutional arrangements has been undertaken.

The ERD Committee report will be referred to the Chief Executives' Group for advice and has been included in the project brief as recommended reading for the consulting team(s) appointed to undertake the metropolitan project.

3. Summary

The significant progress thus far on stormwater management and flood mitigation has been a major achievement of the Forum and associated stakeholders. However, the complexity and scale of the problems to be solved is such that there will be many obstacles and new issues emerging as the collaborative work continues and it is considered imperative that the Forum retain this topic on the agenda for each meeting in 2004.

4. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Forum:

- 1 Note the attached project brief for the *Metropolitan Adelaide Stormwater Management Study*;**
- 2 Support a contribution to the project of \$25,000 from the Forum Projects Fund (jointly contributed by the Office of Local Government and the Local Government Association). This funding is in addition to the major contributions from metropolitan councils and the Catchment Management Subsidy Scheme (totalling \$145,000);**
- 3 Note the recent appointment of Mr Nicholas Newland to assist the *Chief Executives' Group on Stormwater* and request a detailed report on progress on items on the agenda from the Chief Executives' Group at the next Forum meeting;**
- 4 Note that work needs to be progressed urgently on additional provisions on stormwater for inclusion in the NRM Bill. This needs to be advanced before the next meeting of the Forum;**
- 5 Note that a report will be provided to the next meeting of the Forum on the status of the needs and priorities in rural areas;**
- 6 Note the findings and recommendations of the Environment, Resources and Development Committee Report on Stormwater Management and request advice from the *Chief Executives' Group on Stormwater* on this matter.**
- 7 Recognise that the progress to date whilst very positive represents only a beginning to adequately addressing *Stormwater Management and Flood Mitigation* and given that this is of such strategic significance to State and Local Government, determine that it should remain as an active item on the agenda of the Forum, until further notice, to ensure that successful collaborative work proceeds on schedule.**