

Greater Melbourne Flood Information Program Council briefing pack 2026

Project overview

Background

Melbourne Water, in collaboration with councils, is updating flood information to guide planning, infrastructure priorities and community flood awareness.

The updated flood models will support the Victorian Government's Housing Statement to deliver 800,000 new homes over 10 years and help ensure they are built in safer locations.

Melbourne Water will now review flood models every 5 years and update them every 10 years. Any major flood or significant changes in the catchment will also trigger a review of flood models so we can ensure flood information is up to date as frequently as possible.

Flood map release

Over 60 updated flood maps covering stormwater drainage and riverine flooding across 38 council areas will be updated and released for consultation across Greater Melbourne over the coming years.

Updated stormwater flood maps for Darebin, Glen Eira, Merri-bek and Darebin have already been consulted on and will be finalised in 2026.

Draft flood maps for Banyule, Brimbank, Hobsons Bay and Moonee Valley are being released in 2026 for community consultation.

Urban Flood Impact Assessments

Melbourne Water is developing Urban Flood Impact Assessments (UFIAs) to facilitate early understanding of implications of the updated flood information across council areas prior to public release. Melbourne Water will share the UFIA report directly with Councils when they are available.

Consultation

Objectives

Increase understanding of updated flood information

Ensure the community and stakeholders understand what the updated draft flood maps mean for their area and why changes have occurred.

Enable informed feedback

Provide accessible, accurate information and opportunities for the community to share evidence-based feedback on local flood experiences or new flood protection measures that aren't reflected in the updated draft flood maps.

Promote expertise, transparency and trust

Communicate proactively and with empathy, especially where flood risk has changed, to build confidence and reduce concerns.

Ensure accessibility and inclusion

Deliver clear, timely, and inclusive information and engagement opportunities to meet the diverse community needs.

Scope

Melbourne Water will work with councils to tailor communication and engagement activities to meet diverse community needs and ensure accessibility.

The primary focus is to communicate and build awareness of local flood risk. The scope of consultation is narrow and there are limited opportunities for the public to provide input into the draft flood models.

Community and stakeholders will be involved primarily at the Inform level and to some extent at the Consult level of the International Association of Public Participation IAP2 Spectrum.

- Inform: updated draft flood maps have been released
- Consult: personal experiences of flooding that are not reflected on the maps, or identifying newly constructed flood mitigation structures that meet engineering design standards.

Changes can only be made where there is evidence to support an adjustment to the flood map shape.

Requests to remove a property from flood mapping without supporting information cannot be accommodated.

Flood map release journey

Local targeted awareness and communications campaign

Raise awareness of flooding and why updated information is important. Inform the community that updated draft flood maps for their area are coming soon.

Release and review of updated draft flood information consultation

Invite the community to review the updated flood information, identifying missing instances of flooding or engineering designed features. Only evidence-based feedback may lead to adjustments before maps are finalised.

Final release of updated flood model

Release the final flood information for use in decision-making, flood level certificates, and property statements. This is a temporary process, pending the Victorian government's decision on the preferred Public Scheme Amendment process. The final updated flood information will be uploaded onto Melbourne Water's website, providing the community easy access and visibility of flood information in their area. The final flood information will also be used to update emergency management plans and VICSES local flood guides.

Planning Scheme Amendment process

We support the government's commitment to developing a streamlined Planning Scheme Amendment process to implement new flood information into planning schemes, as foreshadowed in the government's new planning strategy - Plan for Victoria, and the government's response to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the 2022 floods.

Until the planning schemes are updated, Melbourne Water and councils will use an interim approach to use the new flood information in planning and building decisions.

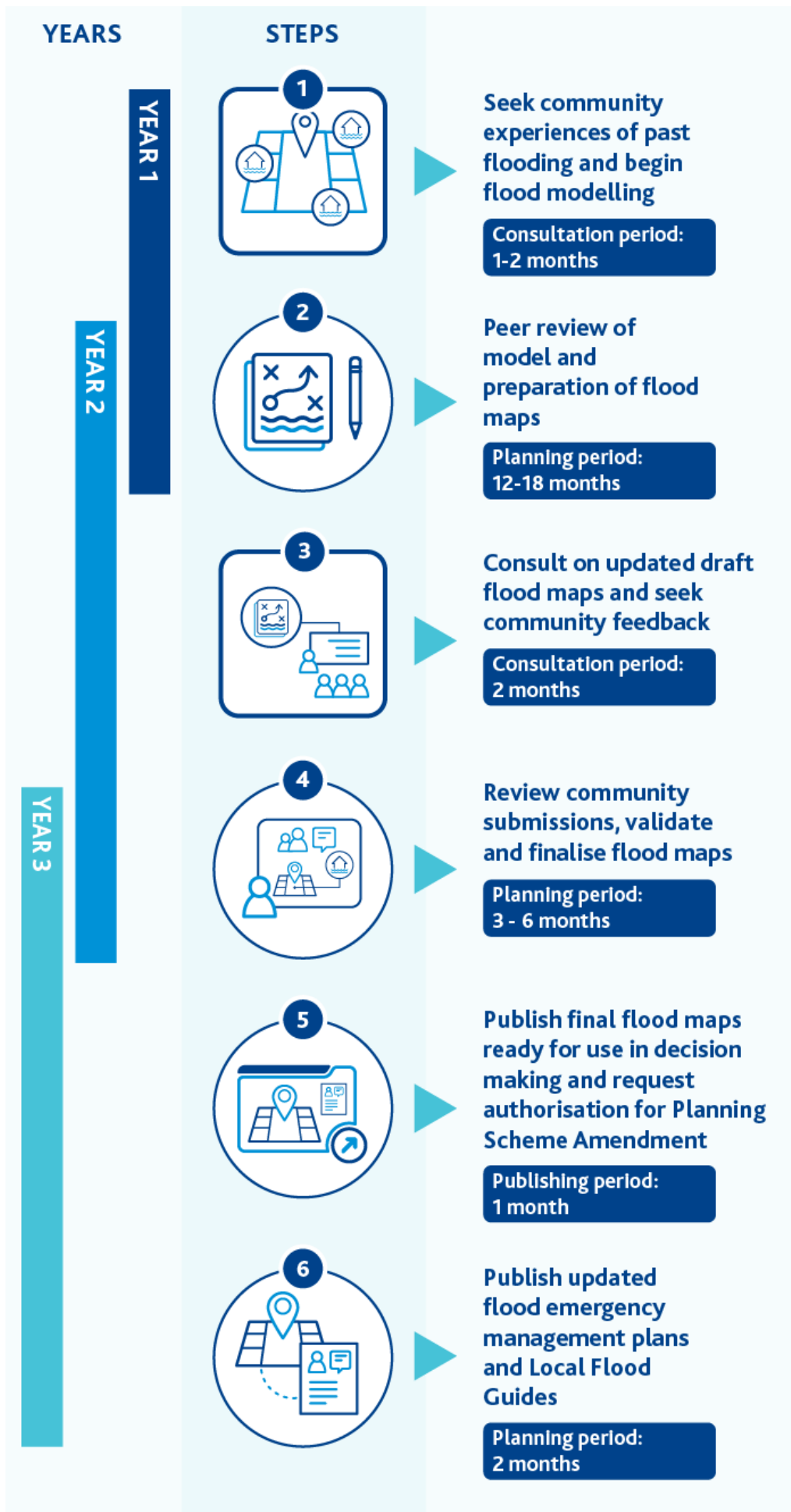
If the planning schemes are updated while the draft flood maps are open for consultation, Melbourne Water will work with councils to deliver an approach that helps the community understand the implications of these changes.

Flood risk reduction

Following updates to flood models and flood information, various mitigation measures may be considered and communicated through a separate, tailored plan. This will include the agreed approach to public exhibition and consultation for the Planning Scheme Amendment, a critical mitigation component.

Steps involved in releasing a flood map

The steps involved in releasing a flood map are outlined in the diagram below.



Roles and responsibilities

Preparing for and managing floods is a shared responsibility. Together we have responsibilities for protecting people, infrastructure, assets, economic activity and the environment.

Melbourne Water is the floodplain manager for the Port Phillip and Westernport catchments and works with organisations and the community to understand and manage flood risks and to minimise impacts to people, businesses, infrastructure and the environment. These responsibilities are outlined in the Flood Management Strategy for Port Phillip and Westernport 2021-2031.

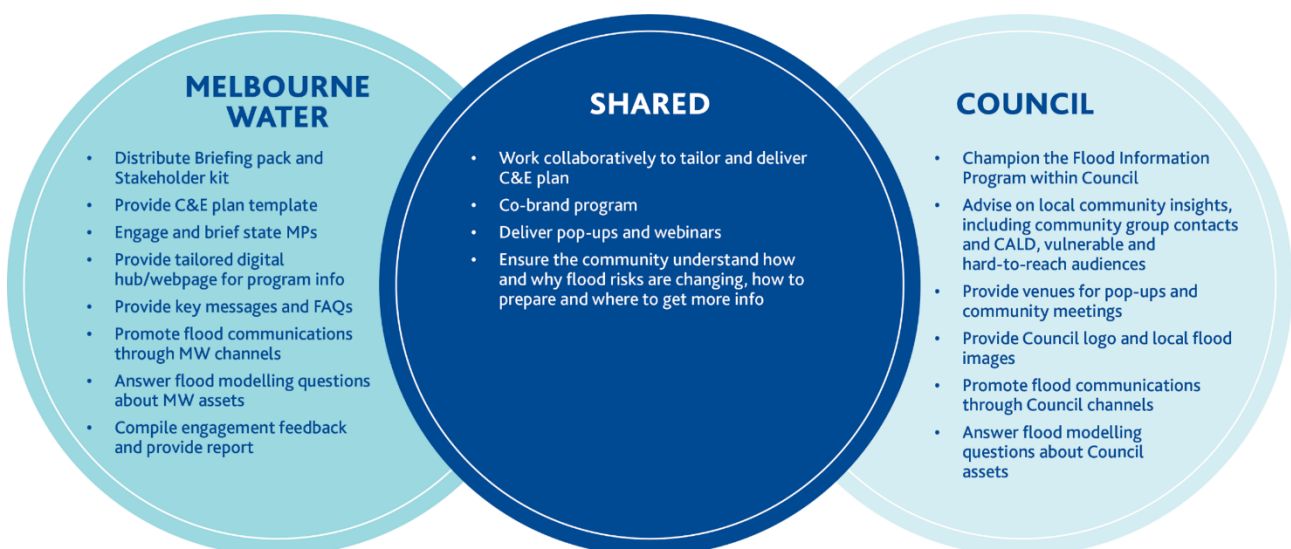
Local councils manage the local drainage network, including street gutters and drains as well as support Melbourne Water with the flood information program delivery.

Victoria State Emergency Service (VICSES) is the designated control agency for floods in Victoria and leads emergency preparation and response.

Bureau of Meteorology is responsible for issuing flood warnings.

Emergency Management Victoria provides flood warning and alerts to the community via their website Incidents and Warnings - VicEmergency and the Emergency Management Victoria app.

Community members and businesses are responsible for understanding personal and local risks and being prepared for floods.



Stormwater drainage system

Melbourne's drainage system directs stormwater away from urban areas to reduce the risk of flooding. While it can handle most storms, extreme rainfall can still cause floods.

Who manages the drainage system?

Melbourne's drainage system is a shared responsibility:

- Melbourne Water manages over 1,400 kilometres of major drains and thousands of kilometres of natural waterways.
- Local councils manage 25,000 kilometres of smaller street drains.
- Property owners are responsible for roof gutters, downpipes and pipelines on their land.
- Other agencies like VicRoads and VicTrack manage drainage along major roads and rail lines.

How the drainage system works

When it rains, some water naturally seeps into the ground. The drainage system directs the rest into rivers and creeks, eventually flowing into the bay.

1. Stormwater enters house gutters and downpipes, flowing into residential drains.
2. Residential drains connect to council drains along streets and roads.
3. Council drains connect to Melbourne Water's regional drains.
4. Regional drains direct stormwater into the nearest river or creek, or directly to the bay via piped beach outlets.
5. Rivers and creeks flow into Port Phillip or Western Port Bay.

Minimising flood risk

From building new infrastructure to cleaning drains, we operate and maintain our drainage system and make improvements to reduce the impacts of flooding now and in the future. We determine where upgrades to the drainage system and other flood mitigation infrastructure might be needed to reduce flood risk and impact.

New drainage infrastructure isn't always the best or most cost-effective way to reduce flood risk. It can be disruptive to build, and isn't possible in some areas due to limited space. We carefully consider any new flood mitigation infrastructure to balance economic, environmental and social factors. Effective flood mitigation combines multiple strategies and balances economic, environmental and social factors. Updating flood information, through sophisticated flood modelling, is crucial to plan for the future to understand where flooding might occur so agencies and communities can be better prepared.

Flood Management Strategy

The Flood Management Strategy for Port Phillip and Western Port 2021-2031 addresses these challenges. It focuses on resilience by raising awareness and preparing for floods and their impacts. While we cannot completely eliminate flood risks, we can reduce their impact through innovative approaches and collaborative efforts.

Community attitudes and sentiment

Melbourne Water commissioned research in late 2024 to test elements of our flood messages and communications to ensure our target audience, the community, are optimally informed and understand our flood communications.

Over 800 people from across Melbourne were involved in the user testing.

The research revealed that baseline community sentiment is as follows:

- People are generally glad to be hearing from Melbourne Water and appreciate their proactive approach to flood modelling and communications.
- While a minority are apprehensive – a feeling stemming largely from a general mistrust of state and local government as well as concerns around the 2022 floods – a majority of Melburnians trust Melbourne Water's flood management and communication capabilities.
- Communications need to be in simple, direct language and should not overestimate the general public's prior knowledge of flooding.
- Participants expressed a desire to seek out further information. They primarily want to know whether they are in a flood affected area, and how they can prepare, but they are also curious about the specifics of flood modelling.

User testing and campaign improvements

Following the 2025 Greater Melbourne Flood Information Program, Melbourne Water undertook targeted user research, including interviews, usability testing and surveys.

The research showed strong community support, with residents responding well to clear, locally relevant information about personal flood risk.

It also identified opportunities to better support users to move from awareness to understanding and action.

Importantly, councils were confirmed as a trusted and influential channel, with council communications and networks driving strong engagement and reinforcing credibility.

Insights from this research directly informed improvements to the 2026 campaign, including:

- Simplified content and clearer navigation to reduce cognitive load
- More prominent property search and flood maps for quick access to risk information
- Plain language summaries of flood risk, with technical detail layered underneath
- Clearer next steps and practical actions tailored to risk level
- Better explanation of roles and responsibilities, including councils and Melbourne Water
- More flexible and targeted engagement approaches across digital and in-person channels

By applying these insights, Melbourne Water has refined the program to better meet community needs and support councils to deliver clearer, more effective flood information in 2026.

For a detailed summary of the campaign improvements for 2026 download our [Lessons Learnt summary](#).

Key messages

Melbourne Water key messages are dynamic and updated as needed. Below are some examples of key messages from the updated maps consulted on in 2025.

- Melbourne Water is working with local councils to update flood information across Greater Melbourne. This helps us better understand the risk of current and future flooding, so we can build a safe and resilient city for today, tomorrow and for generations to come.
- Improving flood information, through sophisticated flood modelling, is a significant program for Melbourne Water being rolled out over the next few years.
- Flood information helps us understand how best to prepare for flooding and minimise its impacts. It is used by the state government, local councils, developers and businesses, as well as the community.

- It ensures new houses and developments are built in safer locations and designed to withstand floods. It also helps us prioritise flood infrastructure upgrades in areas of highest risk to the community.
- Flood models don't create flood risk – they help us to better understand the emerging risks that Melbourne now faces.
- The Greater Melbourne Flood Information Program is being rolled out across the city, with support from local councils.
- Melbourne Water will review flood models every 5 years and update them every 10 years, using sophisticated technology that allows us to do modelling more regularly. Any major flood or significant changes in the catchment will also trigger a review of our flood models.