



Phase 3 - Community Partnership Panels: Feedback Report

Maribyrnong River catchment flood mitigation study
October 2026

Executive Summary

This report provides a brief overview of the third round of Community Partnership Panels (Panels), which took place in June 2026 as part of community and stakeholder engagement for Phase 3 of the Maribyrnong River catchment flood mitigation study (the study).

Together with the community, Melbourne Water is exploring long-term options to help reduce flood risk across the lower Maribyrnong River catchment. Although the intended flood reduction benefits focus on the lower catchment, some options may involve infrastructure in both the upper and lower catchment.

In Phase 3, the focus was on sharing the methodology used to refine the shortlist of flood mitigation options and introduce three Example Combinations. The Example Combinations were developed with the Decision Framework to demonstrate how different long-term flood mitigation options could work together to help reduce flood risk for the lower Maribyrnong River catchment. We also heard feedback from members about:

- the shortlisted flood mitigation options and assessments used to refine them
- community views on Example Combinations and their cost, infrastructure, amenity, implementation and flood protection outcomes
- the trade-offs associated with different approaches to reducing flood risk.

The Panels provided valuable insights into community priorities and preferences when considering trade-offs between flood mitigation approaches. This feedback will help inform the development of the preferred combination of flood mitigation options and the pathway to implementation during Phase 4 of the study.

Findings presented in this report reflect the views of Community Partnership Panel participants. Panel membership was drawn from the whole of Maribyrnong catchment, with the majority of Panel membership from lower catchment communities and community organisations. Findings should therefore be considered alongside broader community engagement activities and ongoing technical investigations.



Summary of activities

The Panels started with a technical presentation and question-and-answer session delivered by a Principal Hydrologist from Jacobs, supported by the wider study team. Following this, feedback was collected through three primary activities:

- understanding the Example Combinations and how they work together
- trade-off testing and deliberation
- whole-group alignment.

At the end of each Panel session, we asked members to complete a survey to gather their feedback about the Panels and the engagement process.





Key takeaways from Phase 3 Panels

The third and final round of the Panels demonstrated several consistent themes across all three sessions:

- Meaningful flood protection is the community's highest priority.
- Many Panel members were supportive of investing significantly in mitigation options if this results in better flood protection.
- Structural mitigation options that protect the lower catchment remain strongly preferred over non-structural mitigation options alone.
- Non-structural measures, such as flood warnings, preparedness initiatives and flood-resilient homes, were generally viewed as essential baseline measures that should be implemented regardless of the preferred long-term mitigation pathway.
- Support for the Example Combinations generally increased as flood protection outcomes increased, with Example Combinations 2 and 3 attracting stronger support, due to their potential to deliver more meaningful reductions in flood risk.
- There was broad support for larger-scale mitigation options where they provide effective reductions in flood risk.
- Across most trade-offs, Panel members were willing to accept higher costs, larger infrastructure and some localised impacts where this resulted in stronger flood protection outcomes.
- The strongest alignment was around supporting greater flood protection despite higher costs, larger infrastructure and upper catchment impacts, while views were more varied regarding delivery timeframes and amenity impacts.
- Delivery certainty is critical and concerns remain regarding funding, staging and implementation.
- Panel members would like more visualisation of future mitigation options.
- The majority of Panel members preferred to explore the complexity of trade-offs rather than provide simplified responses.



Next steps

The Community Partnership Panel program has now concluded after three rounds of engagement over 18 months. We remain committed to keeping Panel members informed about the progress of the study. Members will continue to receive key updates and information about future outcomes as they become available.

The study will now progress to Phase 4, which will focus on:

- considering community feedback alongside further technical assessments
- identifying a preferred combination of flood mitigation options
- developing an adaptive, long-term pathway for implementation
- sharing the preferred combination and how community feedback informed the study outcomes.
- The preferred combination will provide a long-term pathway for reducing flood risk across the lower Maribyrnong River catchment. It may include actions that can be delivered sooner, while allowing more complex infrastructure to be further investigated and planned over time.
- Identification of a preferred combination will not mean construction can begin immediately. Further technical investigations, business case development, funding decisions and relevant approvals will be required beyond the study. Funding has been allocated to continue to progress these investigations and business case development.

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Acknowledgement of Country

Melbourne Water respectfully acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and water on which all Australians rely.

We pay our respects to Bunurong and Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung peoples as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and water of the Maribyrnong River. We pay our deepest respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

We recognise and respect the continued cultural and spiritual connections that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have with the land and water they have cared for and protected for thousands of generations.

We demonstrate our ongoing commitment to reconciliation through our partnerships with Traditional Owners and the broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, as we work together to manage land and water now and into the future, while maintaining and respecting cultural and spiritual connections.

Introduction

In June 2026, Melbourne Water held a third round of Community Partnership Panels as part of Phase 3 of the Maribyrnong River catchment flood mitigation study. This report provides an overview of the Panels, summarises the engagement activities members participated in and details the key themes, findings and insights that emerged during discussions.

A quick recap

Together with the community, Melbourne Water is exploring long-term flood mitigation options to help reduce flood risk for the lower Maribyrnong River catchment. The study forms part of the work needed to identify, develop and implement flood mitigation options that will help reduce flood risk while also reflecting community values as much as possible.

Phase 1 of the study focused on understanding what community members value most in their local environment and what they wanted to see considered as part of future flood mitigation investigations. This feedback informed the development of the Evaluation Criteria and helped shape the long-list of flood mitigation options.

Phase 2 focused on testing the Evaluation Criteria and exploring the long-list of flood mitigation options. Feedback collected from community members helped inform refinement of the Evaluation Criteria and the progression of options through the screening process and into the shortlist.

To learn more about the study or earlier Phases, please visit the Melbourne Water Let's Talk website:

letstalk.melbournewater.com.au/maribyrnong-mitigation

Focus of Phase 3 and about this report

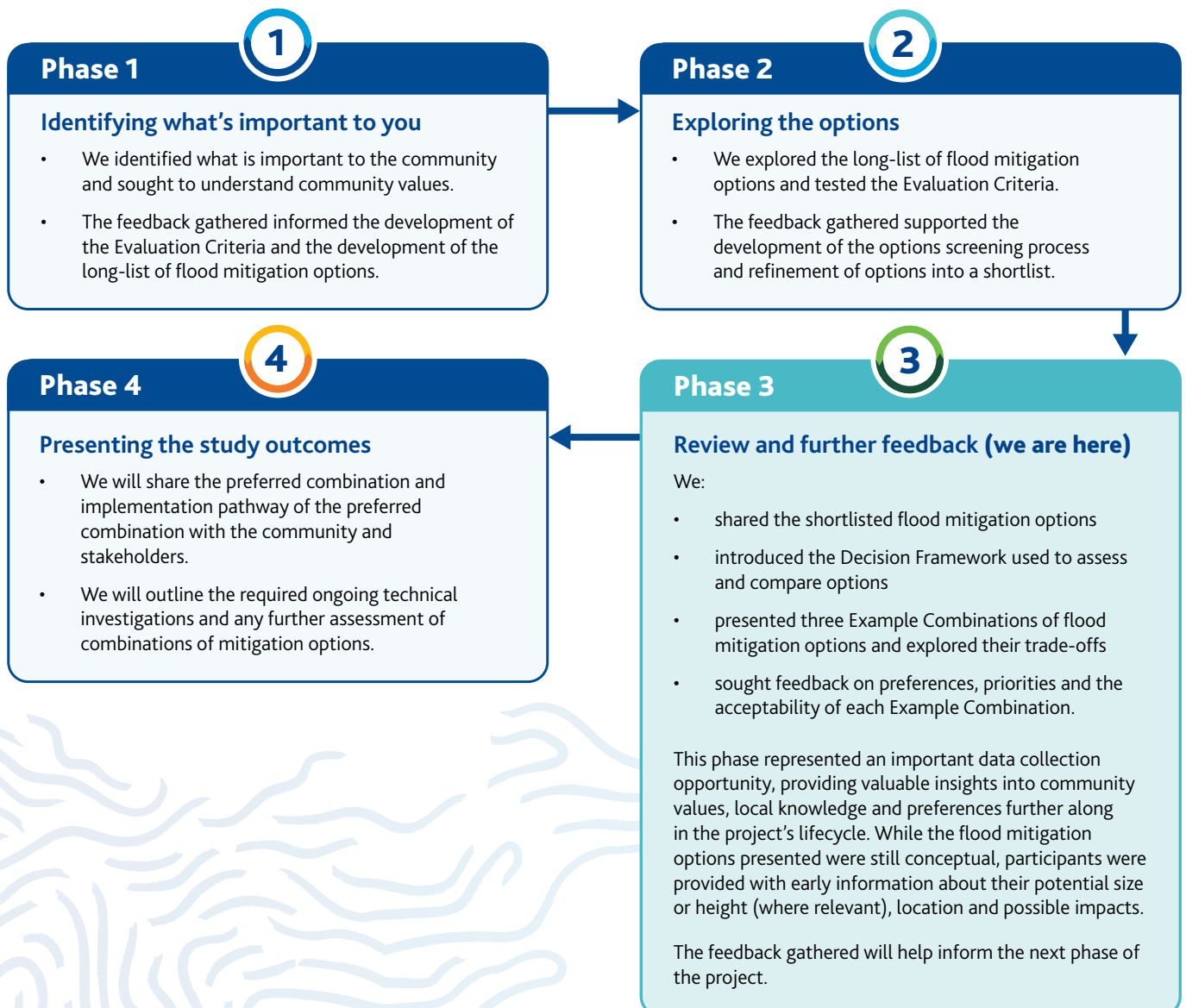
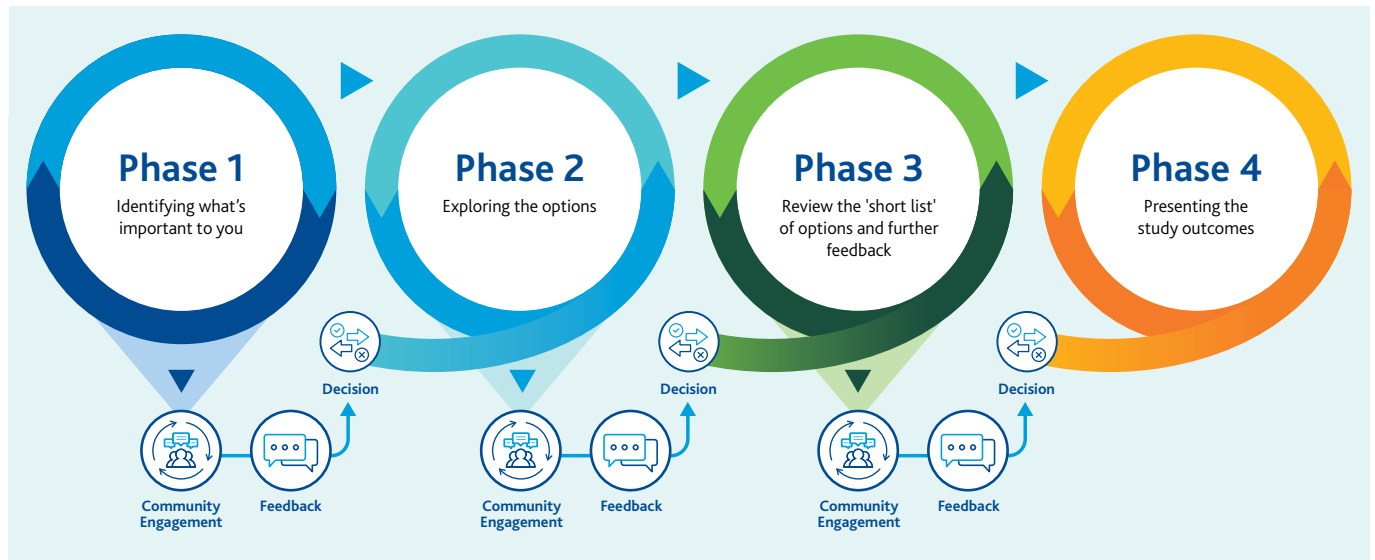
Engagement with the Panel during Phase 3 focused on three key areas:

- closing the loop from Phase 2 by sharing the updated Evaluation Criteria, shortlisted flood mitigation options and the Shortlist Handbook
- considering trade-offs between different approaches to reducing flood risk, including cost, amenity impacts, implementation timeframes and flood protection outcomes
- demonstrating how options can work together to reduce flood risk, by introducing three Example Combinations developed using the Decision Framework.

Phase 3 focused on sharing the shortlisted flood mitigation options and introducing three Example Combinations. This included presenting how the shortlist was developed using technical assessments and evaluation tools such as the updated Evaluation Criteria and the Decision Framework.

Unlike previous phases of engagement, which focused on identifying values and exploring options, Phase 3 centred on testing members' views on trade-offs and exploring what outcomes they considered acceptable when balancing flood reduction with cost, amenity and implementation timeframes.

Project timelines



Engagement with the Community Partnership Panels

The third round of Community Partnership Panels marks the conclusion of the formal panels for the Maribyrnong River catchment flood mitigation study.

We invited the same community members and community group representatives who had participated in earlier Phases to take part in this final round of Community Partnership Panels. The consistent membership of the Panels enabled discussions to build upon the feedback gathered from previous phases of engagement and allowed members to engage with increasingly detailed information as the study progressed.

Melbourne Water and Jacobs would like to extend our sincere appreciation to all Panel members for their ongoing participation throughout the study since early 2025. We particularly acknowledge and thank those members who generously shared their personal experiences of the October 2022 flood and its ongoing impacts on their lives, homes, and communities. These contributions provided valuable context and insight throughout the discussions.

We also greatly appreciated the empathy, kindness and active listening members showed one another when discussing the personal impacts of flooding. The respectful and supportive way members engaged with each other created a strong foundation for meaningful conversations. We are grateful to all members for their time, thoughtful feedback, local knowledge and perspectives shared over the past 18 months.

Throughout the Panel program, members were asked to participate in line with the agreed Terms of Reference. The Terms of reference helped guide respectful, constructive, and open discussion by outlining the purpose of the Panels, the scope of members' influence and the shared expectations for participation. While during this round of panels, there was some differing views across a number of topics, Melbourne Water and Jacobs acknowledge the commitment members made to working within these Terms of reference.

The three Panels were attended by 41 community members and representatives of community organisations from across the lower catchment. This included representatives from:

- Maribyrnong Community Recovery Committee (CRC)
- Maribyrnong Catchment Resilience Association (MCRA)
- Kensington Association
- The Maribyrnong River and Waterways Association (MRWA)
- Essendon Canoe Club

Consistent with earlier phases of the study, the Panels did not include members from the upper catchment. To protect privacy, all feedback has been de-identified throughout this report. Attendance across the three Panel sessions is recorded as follows:

- Saturday 13 June, 2026: 13 Panel members
- Monday 15 June, 2026: 10 Panel members
- Monday 22 June, 2026: 18 Panel members

While attendance reduced slightly across the life of the Community Partnership Panel program, member retention remained strong over the 18-month engagement period. Drops in attendance numbers reflect factors typical of long-running engagement programs, including members moving out of the catchment, personal commitments and periods of unavailability such as travel. Melbourne Water acknowledges the significant commitment made by members who participated across multiple phases and contributed to increasingly detailed discussions as the study progressed.

The primary objectives of the Phase 3 Panel sessions were to:

- increase community understanding of the shortlisted flood mitigation options and the assessment tools
- test Panel members' views on the three Example Combinations
- explore community perspectives on key trade-offs
- understand community priorities relating to flood protection, cost, infrastructure and implementation.

Pre-reading materials

The study team had intended to provide Phase 3 pre-reading materials to Panel members ahead of the sessions to allow time for review and reflection. Unfortunately, these materials were not available in advance as planned. We acknowledge that this was a source of frustration and disappointment for some members, particularly given the volume and complexity of information being presented.

During the sessions, printed copies of the materials were made available for members to use throughout the activities and take home afterwards.

We appreciate members' patience and understanding and acknowledge the importance of providing information in advance to support informed participation in future engagement activities.



Photo: Example combination of options presented on maps for members of the CPP to view.

How past Panel feedback shaped Phase 3

Feedback received throughout earlier phases of the study directly influenced both the technical investigations undertaken during Phase 3 and the design of the Panel sessions themselves. This built on the approach taken in Phase 2, where feedback from Phase 1 was used to improve how the Panels were designed and delivered, including through more regular information sharing, more self-directed activities and use of a familiar and accessible venue.

Feedback received during earlier phases also directly influenced the delivery of the Phase 3 Community Partnership Panel sessions, including:

Additional technical information

Based on feedback received from members during Phases 1 and 2, additional technical information was shared during the presentation to help them to better understand how options were being assessed and why some options progressed while others did not. This reflected feedback from Phase 2 that some members wanted more detail about the options, their likely flood reduction outcomes and how technical assessments were being applied.

In response, the Phase 3 sessions included a longer and more in-depth technical presentation covering the shortlisting process, the Decision Framework, the rationale behind the example combinations and the technical assessments undertaken since Phase 2. This also reflected that the nature of the technical work conducted between Phase 2 and Phase 3 was the most complex to date.

More deliberative activities

Feedback from previous phases indicated members valued opportunities to discuss issues together and hear a range of perspectives. Reflecting on this feedback, Phase 3 activities were designed to have a strong focus on small-group discussions, collaborative problem-solving and whole-group conversations. This approach provided members with opportunities to test ideas, explore alternative viewpoints and discuss the advantages, disadvantages and trade-offs associated with different flood mitigation approaches.

Testing trade-offs directly

Feedback from earlier phases indicated that members wanted to better understand the practical implications of different flood mitigation approaches rather than discuss options in isolation. In response, the Phase 3 program introduced trade-off testing activities and Example Combinations.

These activities were specifically designed to move beyond discussion of individual options and provide members with an opportunity to explore the practical realities of decision-making when it comes to flood mitigation options, including the trade-offs between cost and flood protection, infrastructure scale and local impacts, delivery timeframes and long-term outcomes, amenity impacts and community safety. The whole-group alignment activity was also introduced to test levels of agreement across the Panels and better understand where community priorities aligned and where differences remained.

Summary of activities

This section of the report provides a summary of the engagement activities conducted during the Panels and details some of the key themes and feedback we heard from members during the activities.

Members engaged in the following activities during the third round of Panels, namely:

- Technical presentation and Q&A
- Activity 1: Table discussion – understanding the Example Combinations
- Activity 2: Group prioritisation - Trade-off testing and deliberation
- Activity 3: Whole-of-group alignment activity
- Feedback surveys.

Presentation and Q&A - Technical specialist

The sessions commenced with a presentation and question-and-answer session delivered by a Principal Hydrologist from Jacobs. The presentation explained how the long-list of flood mitigation options had been refined into the shortlist, how the Example Combinations were developed through the Decision Framework, and the technical assessments undertaken since Phase 2 of the study.

The presentation generated a deep level of engagement across all three Panels, with members asking detailed questions, or commenting about climate change assumptions, flood modelling, Average Annual Damages (AAD), property insurance, implementation timeframes, flood warning systems, buy-back programs and flood-resilient homes.

Participants showed a strong interest in understanding the technical detail behind the assessment process, and questions continued beyond the time allocated for the presentation and Q&A. The project team responded to as many questions as possible during the session, while noting that some topics would be explored further through the activities. Detailed materials were also provided during the sessions for members to use throughout the activities and take home.

Several participants sought clarification about the relationship between the 2024 flood model, future climate change projections and the 2100 planning horizon, while others questioned how social and economic impacts are reflected in technical assessments.

Some participants raised concerns around property values, insurance and ongoing flood risk. These questions often prompted strong responses, as they had direct implications for members and their future financial security. The study team acknowledges the personal significance of these concerns.

Some of these questions were focused on how the Average Annual Damages (AAD) was calculated and whether increasing insurance premiums and changes in property value were included in the economic assessments. Participants expressed that community members do not experience flooding as an averaged annual event, and that flood impacts are experienced personally, often across many years.

The project team clarified that the economic assessment does not include impact on insurance premiums and property prices. The rationale for this is that insurance premiums represent a transfer of resources within society, rather than a change in the overall welfare, and property prices are materially impacted by avoided flood damage risk (which is already included in the AAD calculation) and would result in double counting of benefits.

One of the most positively received aspects of the presentation was the use of flood mapping to illustrate the impacts of the example combinations. Project team members observed a noticeable shift in understanding when members were shown visual representations of how flood extents changed under each combination.

“How can we visualise what the results will be?”

- In the first Panel session held in Phase 3, the Q&A component ran beyond its allocated timeframe as many members sought to understand how the Example Combinations may affect their own homes, streets and neighbourhoods. This highlighted how flood mapping helped translate complex technical information into something tangible and meaningful for members.
- Members frequently requested that the project team zoom into specific locations and explain local impacts, demonstrating that people naturally understand the project through the lens of their own lived experiences. This echoes many of the themes we heard in Phase 1, which highlighted the deep connections between members and their homes. Members were moving beyond understanding the concept of the combinations and into evaluating their implications for particular places.
- While the project team responded to as many questions as possible during the session, members were also encouraged to use the [Flood Mitigation Explorer](#), an online mapping tool available as part of the broader engagement program, to further explore flood risks and outcomes in their local area.

Key themes and feedback

- Strong desire for more detailed and localised information, such as detailed assessments of environmental impacts and cultural values in the Upper Catchment, and visual and amenity impact in the Lower Catchment.
- Interest in understanding climate change assumptions and flood modelling.
- Questions about how the average annual damages are calculated.
- Requests for additional visualisation, mapping and location-specific information.
- Questions about implementation pathways, timeframes and deliverability.



Photo: Table discussion from CPP 22 June

Activity 1: Table discussion - Understanding the Example Combinations

Members reviewed and discussed three Example Combinations developed through the study's Decision Framework.

The purpose of the activity was to help members better understand how different flood mitigation options could work together as part of a broader approach to reducing flood risk across the catchment, while capturing their initial views about the three Example Combinations, which each present different options for approaching flood reduction.

- **Example Combination 1**
(Low level of flood risk reduction):
Lower costs and much easier to implement. This combination offers minimal over-floor flooding protection.
- **Example Combination 2**
(Higher level of flood risk reduction):
Higher cost and complexity, delivering up to approximately 75% reduction in over-floor flooding.
- **Example Combination 3**
(Highest level of flood risk reduction):
Highest cost and complexity, with up to approximately 95% reduction in over-floor flooding.

Member tables approached this activity in different ways.

Some members first recorded responses individually on sticky notes before moving into facilitated discussions, while others commenced with whole-table conversations. Across all sessions, members were invited to consider each combination through four prompts:

- strengths
- concerns
- uncertainties
- other observations.

The tables below show how often recurring themes were raised across the three Panels. A mention represents a comment recorded during the activity, not an individual member or a percentage of members. Members could raise more than one comment, and similar comments were grouped into themes. The figures should, therefore, be read alongside the written findings to understand the overall balance of feedback.



Example Combination 1: Low level of flood risk reduction

This Example Combination consists of non-structural options, typically has lower costs and is easier to implement. However, it offers minimal flood risk reduction and over-floor flooding protection.

Strengths

Members across all three panels found it challenging to identify the strengths of Example Combination 1 because it was widely perceived as representing the minimum level of action that should be delivered. It was noted that these mitigation options, such as flood warnings and preparedness activities, should be implemented regardless of the preferred long-term mitigation pathway. The non-structural options in Example Combination 1 were generally viewed as fundamental and complementary actions rather than a standalone solution. Participants consistently emphasised that such measures should accompany, rather than replace, structural interventions, which were seen as offering more substantive and long-term flood risk reduction outcomes.

Table 1: Strengths of Example Combination 1 - Key themes raised across all three panels

Theme	Approx mentions
Improved flood warning system	12
Community preparedness and resilience	10
Lower cost than other combinations	8
Flood resilient homes and adaptive options	8
Should be implemented regardless of preferred option	7

Concerns

The biggest concern members had was that the mitigation options in Example Combination 1 did not meaningfully reduce flooding, although some noted that these options could reduce impacts of flooding through being aware and more prepared.

Table 2: Concerns of Example Combination 1 - Key themes raised across all three panels

Theme	Approx mentions
Does not meaningfully reduce flood risk	17
Places responsibility on homeowners	15
Flood-resilient homes viewed sceptically	13
Does not adequately protect homes	12
No significant structural mitigation included	11

Uncertainties

Much of the uncertainties discussed centred on how Example Combination 1 would be implemented. Members wanted to understand who would pay, how the options would work in practice and whether they would genuinely reduce flood damage.

Table 3: Uncertainties of Example Combination 1 - Key themes raised across all three panels

Theme	Approx mentions
Funding and incentives for homeowners	10
Cost of flood-resilient homes	9
Effectiveness of flood-resilient options	8
Property value impacts	6
What constitutes a flood-resilient home	6

Other observations

Members generally supported the individual options included in Example Combination 1 but rarely viewed the combination as sufficient on its own. This is demonstrated through the higher number of 'mentions' relating to limiting flood risk reduction and homeowner responsibility, together with repeated observations that these measures should be introduced as a baseline package that should be implemented regardless of the preferred flood mitigation pathway. While flood warnings, preparedness activities and flood-resilient homes were seen as valuable, many members felt the combination did not sufficiently reduce flood risk without complementary structural mitigation options.

Table 4: Other observations of Example Combination 1 - Key themes raised across all three panels

Theme	Approx mentions
Should happen regardless of other options	13
Considered a baseline or minimum requirement	12
Preparedness rather than mitigation	10
Better suited as a supporting package	8
Exposure and flood risk remain largely unchanged	7



Example Combination 2: Higher level of flood risk reduction

This example combination has a mix of structural and non-structural options. It requires higher cost and introduces complexity, however this example combination delivers a higher level of flood risk reduction and up to approximately 75% reduction in over-floor flooding up to a 1% AEP flood event in year 2100 (or ~1,682 homes and businesses).

Strengths

Members are prepared to support larger and more complex interventions where they deliver meaningful higher levels of reductions in flood risk. There was strong support for pursuing the most effective solutions rather than focusing solely on options that are easier or quicker to deliver.

Table 5: Strengths of Example Combination 2 - Key themes raised across all three panels

Theme	Approx mentions
Significant reduction in flood risk	15
Protects a large number of homes	14
Strong benefit-cost ratio	12
Balance of structural and non-structural options	11
Inclusion of Arundel retarding basin and major infrastructure	10

Concerns

Members generally accepted the mitigation options contained in Example Combination 2 but expressed concerns about whether it would or could be delivered. Several discussions centred on the risk that large-scale interventions could be delayed, staged over extended periods, or not fully implemented due to funding constraints, approval requirements or changing government priorities. Some members were also concerned that communities experiencing ongoing flood risk may not receive benefits quickly enough.

Table 6: Concerns of Example Combination 2 - Key themes raised across all three panels

Theme	Approx mentions
Long implementation timeframes	11
Delivery and staging risks	10
Continued impacts on Rivervue Retirement Village	8
Cultural, environmental and biodiversity impacts	8
Levee impacts and visual amenity concerns	7

Uncertainties

The Arundel retarding basin, one of the mitigation options in Example Combination 2, generated some of the strongest support, but simultaneously also some of the greatest uncertainty. Many members viewed it as critical to achieving high levels of flood risk reduction across the catchment and an important factor in support for Example Combination 2. At the same time, members recognised that this option has previously encountered significant challenges and questioned its feasibility, given potential constraints relating to funding, environmental approvals, cultural heritage considerations, planning requirements, implementation timeframes and long-term government commitment.

Rather than dismissing the option, many members expressed a desire for additional information to better understand whether these challenges could be addressed and whether the retarding basin is a realistic pathway for reducing flood risk.

Table 7: Uncertainties of Example Combination 2 - Key themes raised across all three panels

Theme	Approx mentions
Funding availability	9
Arundel retarding basin feasibility and delivery	8
Government approvals	7
Political commitment	7
Levee size and appearance	6

Other observations

Example Combination 2 was frequently viewed as the most balanced group of options because it combined significant flood protection outcomes with a more achievable level of cost, infrastructure investment and implementation complexity than Example Combination 3. Many members noted its cost-benefit ratio, viewing it as a strong compromise between effectiveness, value for money and deliverability.

Table 8: Other observations of Example Combination 2 - Key themes raised across all three panels

Theme	Approx mentions
Better than Combination 1	14
Balanced option	12
Good protection relative to cost	11
Levees could be designed positively	7
Timing and sequencing are important	6



Example Combination 3: Highest level of flood risk reduction

This Example Combination has a greater mix of structural and non-structural options compared to Example Combination 2. It requires the highest cost and introduces the most complexity of the three Example Combinations; however, it can deliver the highest level of flood risk reduction and up to approximately 95% reduction in over-floor flooding up to a 1% AEP flood event in year 2100 (or ~2,186 homes and businesses).

Strengths

Example Combination 3 attracted the strongest level of support across all three Panels and was repeatedly associated with achieving the greatest reduction in flood risk.

Table 9: Strengths of Example Combination 3 - Key themes raised across all three panels

Theme	Approx mentions
Highest flood protection	19
Greatest reduction in flood impacts	17
Protects the most homes	15
Best long-term outcome	13
Strong resilience to future climate impacts	11

Concerns

The concerns about Combination 3 were generally not about whether it should proceed, but rather the length of time it may take to deliver some of the infrastructure, and whether the cost, environmental and cultural values and planning constraints would prevent it from being delivered at all.

Table 10: Concerns of Example Combination 3 - Key themes raised across all three panels

Theme	Approx mentions
Long implementation timeframe	12
Funding and affordability	11
Delivery complexity	10
Risk of incomplete staging	9
Environmental and cultural values impacts	7

Uncertainties

The primary uncertainty associated with Combination 3 was whether future governments and agencies would commit to the level of investment and coordination required over the long term.

Table 11: Uncertainties of Example Combination 3 - Key themes raised across all three panels

Theme	Approx mentions
Funding commitment	11
Political will	9
Planning approvals	8
Project staging and sequencing	8
Arundel retarding basin delivery timeframe and complexities	7

Other observations

Example Combination 3 was the most strongly supported across all three Panels which is reflected in the key themes outlined in the table below.

Table 12: Other observations of Example Combination 3 - Key themes raised across all three panels

Theme	Approx mentions
Preferred option overall	15
Viewed as the strongest long-term solution	13
Benefits outweighed costs	11
Strong alignment with "do it properly" sentiment	10
Requires significant government commitment	8

Key insights from Activity 1

Delivery certainty a major consideration

One of the strongest themes emerging across all Panels was that members were often more concerned about whether flood mitigation options would ultimately be delivered than which combination was technically preferred.

Discussions repeatedly returned to concerns around funding, political commitment, planning approvals, environmental and cultural values impacts, project timeframes and implementation certainty. Members frequently referred to the time that has elapsed since the October 2022 flood event and expressed frustration about the perceived pace of progress. Several members indicated that they would prefer a deliverable solution over a “perfect” (technically optimal) solution that may never be built.

Example Combination 3: strong support, doubt around delivery

Across the Panels, Example Combination 3 attracted the strongest level of support because it offered the highest level of flood risk reduction. This reflected members’ broader preference for options that deliver the most meaningful protection for homes and communities. However, support was often paired with concerns about cost, implementation timeframes, staging, feasibility, approvals and whether future governments would commit to delivering the full package over the long term.

Example Combination 2: a balanced package

Example Combination 2 was frequently viewed as a balanced package because it combined significant flood protection outcomes with a more achievable level of cost, infrastructure investment and implementation complexity than Example Combination 3. Many members also noted its positive cost-benefit ratio, viewing it as a strong compromise between effectiveness, value for money and deliverability.

Example Combination 1: important, but ‘should happen anyway’

Many members remarked that Example Combination 1 was perceived as the basic combination. In discussions across all three Panels, it was viewed as an essential baseline measure that should happen anyway.

Arundel retarding basin remains a focus

Arundel retarding basin was viewed by participants as one of the more significant mitigation options available because of its potential to deliver catchment-wide benefits in terms of flood reduction. At the same time, there remained considerable uncertainty regarding planning approvals, environmental and cultural values impact, timing, cost and whether the project would ever proceed.

Many Panel members expressed a desire for further investigations and evidence to better understand its feasibility of Arundel retarding basin and whether it is a viable option for further consideration. Members identified the need for additional assessments, including environmental and cultural values impacts, to provide greater confidence about the potential constraints, opportunities and overall merits of pursuing this option. The project team will factor this request for more information into the overall project deliverables for the next phase.

Flood resilient homes

Discussions relating to flood-resilient properties generated consistent commentary around personal responsibility and fairness. Many members questioned whether governments should support property owners to retrofit and adapt their homes rather than prioritise larger-scale mitigation options. These comments reflected members’ preferences for potential flood risk management approaches and a desire to understand the role that property-level changes could play alongside broader mitigation options. The project team noted that it is too early in the process to determine how such options might be implemented or supported. Concerns also emerged around affordability, equity and the ability of vulnerable households to undertake modifications. Members considered how these measures might affect people with different financial circumstances and questioned whether all households would have equal access to support. Several members were concerned about renters and other residents who have limited control over property improvements but would still be personally and financially impacted by a flood event.

Visuals needed to shape future decisions

Members frequently stated they found it difficult to evaluate combinations without being able to visualise what infrastructure would look like in practice. This theme emerged most strongly regarding levees, where support was often linked to future design outcomes. Many members indicated their views could change depending on appearance, alignment, height, community access and landscaping outcomes. A schematic design of the levees was provided to tables to assist, but people still found it difficult to visualise.

Comment snapshot



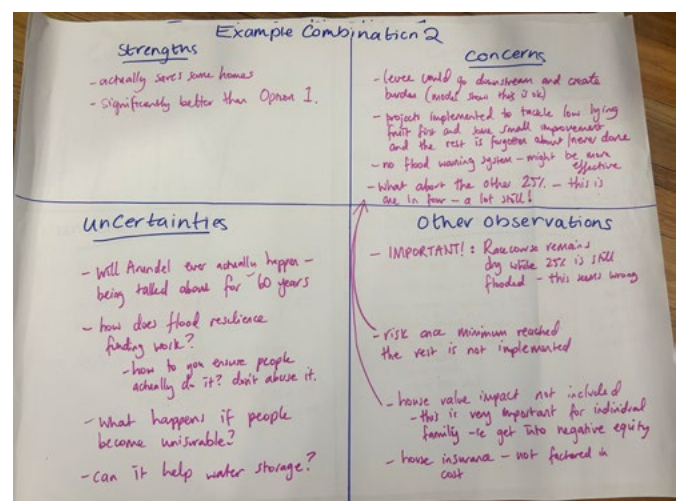
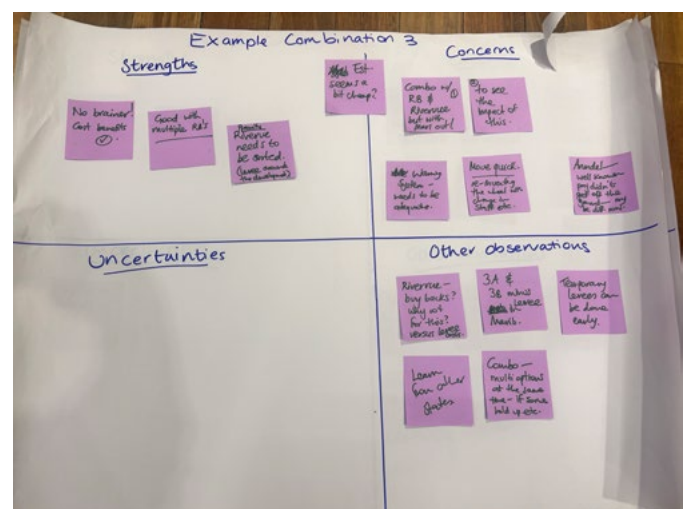
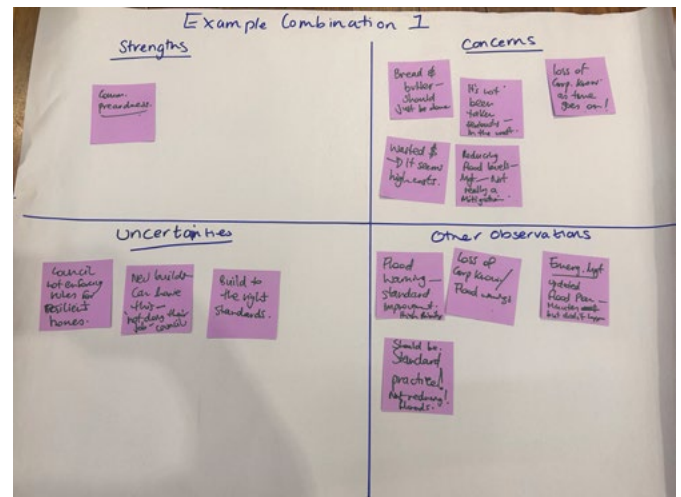
Desire for both early action, and long-term solutions

Several members supported phased delivery but were concerned that projects might begin and never be completed. This was raised particularly in relation to large-scale interventions and Example Combination 3. Several members raised concerns about long-term continuity. They questioned how knowledge, funding support and organisational momentum would be maintained if delivery extends across multiple governments, funding cycles or project teams.

Views differed by location

Members across the Panels often differentiated between locations rather than applying the same principles across the entire catchment:

- **Rivervue Retirement Village** - many members viewed Rivervue as a particularly vulnerable community and believed protection should be prioritised and works should happen there sooner.
- **Kensington Banks** - discussions focused on residual flood risk, whether flood-resilient housing options would be effective, and whether flood protection outcomes will be sufficient.
- **Maribyrnong township** - members discussions focused more heavily on amenity, access and visual impacts associated with future levees.



Photos: Activity 1 June 22 CPP

Activity 2: Group Prioritisation - Trade-off testing and deliberation

Throughout the trade-off testing activity, members explored a series of complex decisions associated with reducing flood risk across the lower Maribyrnong River catchment. Although the intended flood reduction benefits focus on the lower catchment, the infrastructure required to achieve these outcomes may be in both the upper and lower catchments, with local impacts. As a group, each table was asked to agree upon consensus, when faced with difficult trade-off decisions. These discussions demonstrated a strong willingness among members to engage with the realities of flood mitigation, including the need to balance cost, delivery timeframes, amenity, infrastructure scale and localised impacts against the objective of reducing flood risk.

Members explored five trade-offs:

- **Cost versus flood protection**
 - This trade-off considers balancing lower-cost options that are more affordable but leave more flood risk, against higher-cost options that provide greater reductions in flood risk and stronger protection for homes and communities.
- **Infrastructure scale versus level of change**
 - This trade-off considers smaller-scale interventions that result in less visible change but only moderate reductions in flood risk, against larger-scale interventions that achieve greater flood risk reduction but create more significant change.
- **Speed of delivery versus level of protection**
 - This trade-off considers balancing mitigation options that can be implemented more quickly but provide lower levels of flood protection, against options that take longer to deliver but provide greater long-term flood risk reduction.
- **Levee height versus local amenity**
 - This trade-off considers lower levees that have less impact on views, access and local character but provide lower levels of protection, against higher levees that provide greater flood protection but have a greater impact on local amenity.
- **Local impacts versus wider catchment benefits**
 - This trade-off considers balancing options that minimise impacts in the upper catchment but leave greater flood risk in the lower catchment, against options that create greater impacts in parts of the upper catchment but deliver broader flood risk reduction benefits across the catchment and protect more people overall.



Trade-off 1: Cost vs flood protection

Key themes and feedback

Across all three Panels there was a strong preference for achieving greater flood protection for the lower Maribyrnong catchment even where this involved significantly higher costs. Many members viewed flood mitigation as essential infrastructure and expressed the view that cost should not prevent the implementation of solutions that reduce flood risk.

Several members questioned whether cost should be a primary consideration, suggesting that the emotional and social consequences of future flooding are likely to outweigh the costs of delivering mitigation options. With members frequently describing flood mitigation as a long-term investment rather than a project that should be assessed on cost alone.

Quotes:

“ It’s a long-term investment. ”

“ State infrastructure. ”

“ Cost is not a factor. ”

“ If you’re going to spend the money, do it properly. ”

Outcome

Most tables placed their preferences (dots) in favour of higher cost and greater flood protection.

- In the Panel session on 13 June, every group supported higher investment if it resulted in greater flood protection.
- In the Panel session on 15 June, every group placed their dots on the side favouring higher cost and greater protection, although some groups emphasised the need to understand the benefits being delivered in return for the investment.
- In Panel session on 22 June, three of the four groups placed their dots at the furthest end of the spectrum favouring higher cost and greater flood protection, while one group still favoured greater protection but with a more moderate position.



Trade-off 2: Infrastructure scale versus level of change

Key themes and feedback

Most members expressed a willingness to accept larger-scale infrastructure, like retarding basins and levees, if it resulted in greater reductions in flood risk. While some discussions acknowledged potential impacts on visual amenity, cultural values, environmental and biodiversity impacts and community character, these concerns were frequently secondary to the objective of protecting homes and communities.

Many discussions focused on levees and retarding basins. Members frequently stated that they could support substantial infrastructure provided it was designed appropriately and integrated into the surrounding environment. Some members suggested infrastructure such as levees could potentially become a community asset by incorporating walking paths, cycling infrastructure and public open space.

Many members expressed support for large-scale interventions like retarding basins despite recognised planning, environmental and investment challenges.

The discussions also highlighted a perceived lack of visibility regarding the impacts that structural measures, such as retarding basins, may have on communities in the upper catchment. As all Panel members were residents or business owners from the lower catchment, their perspectives were naturally shaped by local experiences and priorities. This was reflected in the way members assessed potential impacts, often focusing on implications for their own communities rather than broader catchment-wide effects.

Quotes:

“ Large scale doesn't have to affect visual amenity. ”

“ Want it to be effective but make it suitable for the context. ”

Outcome

Most groups placed their dots in favour of larger-scale infrastructure with greater flood protection.

- In the Panel session on 13 June, all groups favoured larger-scale infrastructure, with some placing their dots near the highest end of the scale.
- In the Panel session on 15 June, one group declined to place a dot and instead discussed an acceptable range of outcomes. The remaining tables favoured larger-scale infrastructure over smaller interventions.
- In the Panel session on 22 June, all groups placed their dots on the side favouring larger infrastructure, although there was variation in the strength of support.



Trade-off 3: Speed of delivery versus level of protection

Key themes and feedback

This trade-off generated the greatest diversity of opinion.

Many members ultimately prioritised stronger long-term protection outcomes. However, there was also considerable frustration regarding the timeframes associated with major infrastructure delivery. Members frequently referenced the October 2022 flood event and questioned whether communities could wait decades for flood mitigation outcomes.

Project staging emerged as a major topic. Numerous members supported the idea of delivering shorter-term options while larger infrastructure is planned and delivered. With several members specifically referencing levees and flood warning systems as potential early actions.

A recurring theme involved concern about maintaining momentum over long delivery periods. Members questioned whether future changes in political priorities, staffing, funding or institutional knowledge could affect delivery outcomes. Discussions highlighted concerns regarding staff turnover and the potential loss of project knowledge over time.

Some members refused to provide feedback through this activity and raised issues when discussing where flood protection investment occurs and had much scepticism on whether funding commitments would ever be made.

Several members also expressed concern that projects may be staged but never completed, particularly in relation to larger combinations involving Arundel retarding basin, multiple retarding basins and catchment-wide infrastructure works.

Quotes:

“ What happens in the 25-year interim? ”

“ Do what you can do fast and upgrade later. ”

Outcome

Although this was the most contested trade-off discussed, the tables that chose to place a dot on the spectrum generally favoured greater flood protection, even where this would result in longer delivery timeframes.

- In the Panel session on 13 June, only two groups favoured longer delivery periods if they resulted in greater protection, although one table preferred faster delivery and another sought a staged approach.
- In the Panel session on 15 June, one group chose not to place a dot. The other two groups showed a preference for stronger flood protection, at different levels of support.
- In the Panel session on 22 June, all groups ultimately favoured greater protection despite longer delivery, although positions varied considerably across the scale.



Trade-off 4: Levee height versus local amenity

Discussions about levees generated some of the most varied feedback across the Panels. While many members were willing to accept higher levees if they delivered greater flood protection, support was often dependent on location, aesthetics of the design and confidence that floodwaters would not be redirected into other communities. Concerns were commonly raised about visual amenity, river access, neighbourhood character and the importance of avoiding unintended impacts on places such as Kensington Banks, Rivervue Retirement Village and the Maribyrnong township.

Many members challenged the idea that flood protection and amenity are mutually exclusive, suggesting levees could incorporate walking and cycling paths, landscaping, viewing areas and other recreational improvements.

Members frequently requested more visualisations and concept designs before forming definitive views. Discussions also highlighted concerns about project staging, the need to pair levees with complementary options such as retarding basins, and perceptions of fairness if some communities remain exposed to flooding while others are protected. References were also made to the potential impacts of flood mitigation infrastructure on recreational users, anglers, biodiversity and habitat values, including impacts on birds and bats. Members also emphasised the importance of ensuring flood protection benefits are shared across the catchment.

Quotes:

“ As long as it's well designed and sympathetic to the local area, I'm comfortable with a higher levee. ”

“ Want it to be effective but make it suitable for the context. ”

“ Make the levee an amenity. ”

Outcome

Most tables ultimately placed their dots on the side of the spectrum favouring higher levees and greater flood protection.

- In the Panel session on 13 June, all participating groups supported higher levees, with several placing their markers at or near the furthest point on the flood protection side of the scale. Support was often conditional on the levees being well designed and fitting to the local context.
- In the Panel session on 15 June, views were more mixed. One group chose not to place a dot, preferring to discuss conditions and design considerations. The remaining groups placed their dots on the side favouring higher levees and greater flood protection, although generally closer to the midpoint.
- In the Panel session on 22 June, all groups placed their markers on the side favouring higher levees and greater flood protection, although the strength of support varied between tables. Discussions highlighted that support for levees was generally stronger in locations such as Rivervue Retirement Village, while views about a Maribyrnong township levee was more dependent on design, visual amenity, and river access considerations. Cultural values and environmental impacts were also an important consideration.



Photo: Table discussions CPP 13 June 2026



Trade-off 5: Local impacts versus wider catchment benefits

Key themes and feedback

This trade-off produced one of the strongest levels of alignment across all three Panels. Most members indicated they could accept impacts within the upper catchment if they resulted in meaningful reductions in flood risk across more densely populated parts of the lower catchment.

Several members also acknowledged that views expressed through this trade-off should be considered in the context of the geographic make-up of the panel (with panel members all residing/involved in community groups in the lower catchment area, and that members from the upper catchment were not represented). They discussed the importance of considering the perspectives of potentially affected landowners when assessing future options.

These discussions frequently referenced Arundel retarding basin and other retarding basin concepts. Members often spoke about the need to consider the greatest benefit for the greatest number of people while also recognising that impacts on landholders, property owners and local communities should be carefully managed.

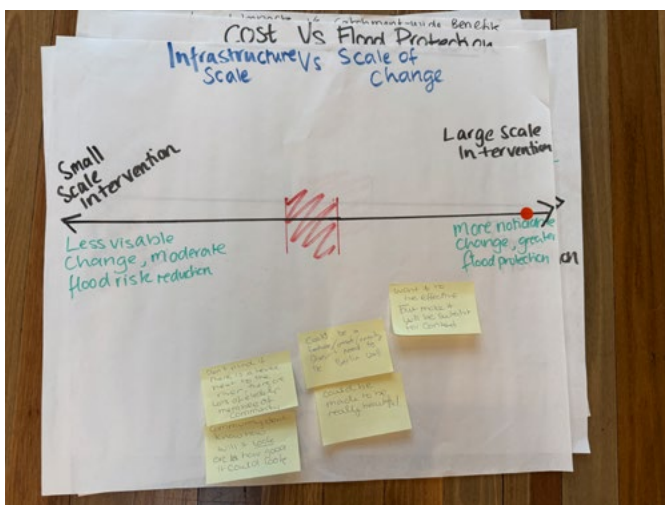


Photo: Activity 2 - Discussion on local impacts vs wider catchment benefits 13 June CPP

Quotes:

“ We are protecting the larger community. ”

“ As long as it's not (impacting upon) people's houses. ”

Outcome

- In the Panel session on 13 June, all participating groups supported accepting upper catchment impacts where these delivered greater protection to the lower catchment, provided impacts did not affect homes or livelihoods.
- In the Panel session on 15 June, the groups that placed dots favoured greater catchment-wide benefits. One group chose not to place a dot and instead discussed the need to balance catchment-wide flood protection benefits with potential impacts on affected landholders and communities.
- In the Panel session on 22 June, all groups supported greater lower catchment protection despite some upper catchment impacts, although several groups discussed the need to carefully manage local impacts and land use changes.

Key insights from Activity 2

Given many members' lived experience of the October 2022 flood event and ongoing concerns about future flooding, a preference for stronger flood protection emerged as a consistent theme across almost all discussions. Members frequently indicated they were willing to accept higher costs, larger infrastructure and some localised impacts where these trade-offs delivered improved flood mitigation outcomes. However, support was often conditional on confidence that projects would be funded, approved and ultimately delivered.

Consistent with findings from the previous activity, members repeatedly raised concerns regarding project delivery, government commitment and implementation timeframes. Many expressed frustrations about the time that has elapsed since the October 2022 flood event and emphasised the importance of delivering visible improvements in the near term while continuing to plan and implement longer-term infrastructure solutions.

Several groups challenged the premise of the trade-offs presented, noting that their views depended on factors such as the availability of additional information, future design decisions and the sequencing of mitigation measures. Some members felt they did not have sufficient detail to make definitive judgements and were concerned their responses could be interpreted as representing a final position on behalf of the entire Panel. Reflecting this uncertainty, some tables

chose not to place markers on particular trade-offs and instead focused on discussing the conditions under which they would support a given outcome. This demonstrated a preference for engaging with the complexity of flood mitigation decisions rather than reducing them to binary choices.

Members also demonstrated a strong preference for considering flood mitigation outcomes across the broader catchment, while recognising the importance of understanding and managing impacts on upper catchment communities that may be affected by proposed interventions.

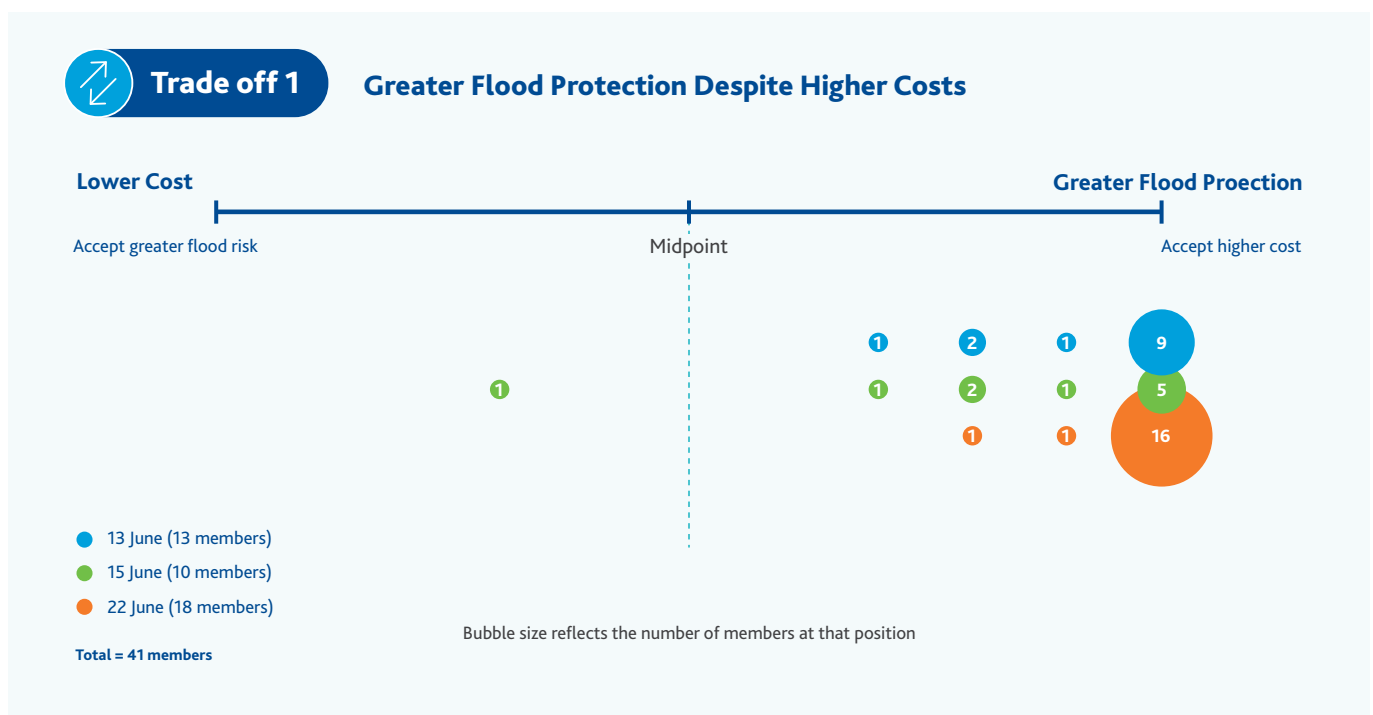
The greatest variation in views related to delivery timeframes and amenity impacts, suggesting these areas may require further communication, design development and testing as the study progresses. More broadly, members frequently sought additional evidence, visualisations and contextual information before forming definitive views.

Activity 3: Whole-of-group alignment

Activity 3 sought to understand where members individually positioned themselves on a series of flood mitigation trade-offs following the earlier trade-off testing and deliberation activity that was completed with a small group. For each trade-off, members were invited to physically position themselves along a spectrum displayed on a wall between two competing outcomes, allowing them to indicate both the direction and strength of their preference. This activity provided an opportunity to identify areas of alignment, and where opinions differed across the Panels. The results demonstrated to a degree a strong alignment across most trade-offs and across the three Community Partnership Panels.

A total of 41 members attended the three Panel sessions. While most members selected a position for each trade-off, a small number of members chose to remain at the midpoint for some questions or did not select a position for every trade-off. In these cases, members generally indicated that their views would depend on additional information, future design outcomes or implementation considerations. Results below are based on recorded positions for each trade-off question.

Results



40 of 41 members (97.6%) supported greater flood protection despite increased costs.

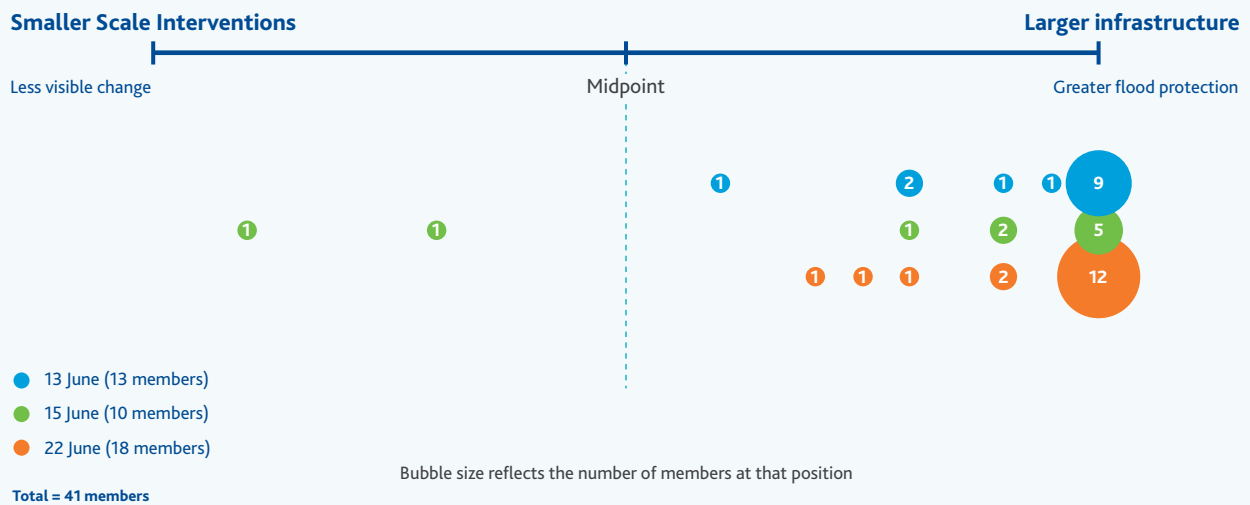
Only one member (2.4%) preferred lower costs, accepting a lower level of flood protection.

Support was particularly strong, with most members positioning themselves toward the flood protection end of the scale. Across all three Panels, support was often expressed as a clear preference rather than a marginal trade-off.



Trade off 2

Larger infrastructure with Greater Flood Protection



39 of 41 members (95.1%) supported greater flood protection despite greater change.

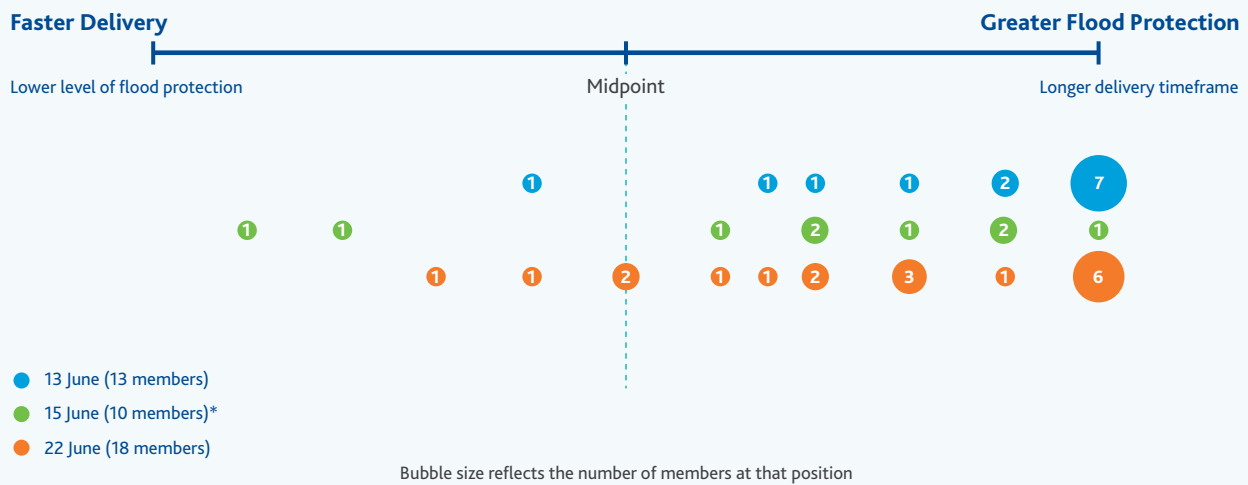
Two members (4.9%) want to see less visible change, accepting greater flood risk.

Support for larger-scale infrastructure was strong. Most members positioned themselves in favour of larger interventions, although some expressed a preference for ensuring infrastructure is well designed and integrated into the surrounding environment.



Trade off 3

Higher Flood Protection Despite Longer Delivery Timeframes



*Note: one member did not participate; 9 of 10 members from 15 June are shown.

33 of 41 members (80.5%) prioritised stronger flood protection outcomes.

5 members (12.2%) prioritised faster delivery.

2 members (4.9%) remained neutral.

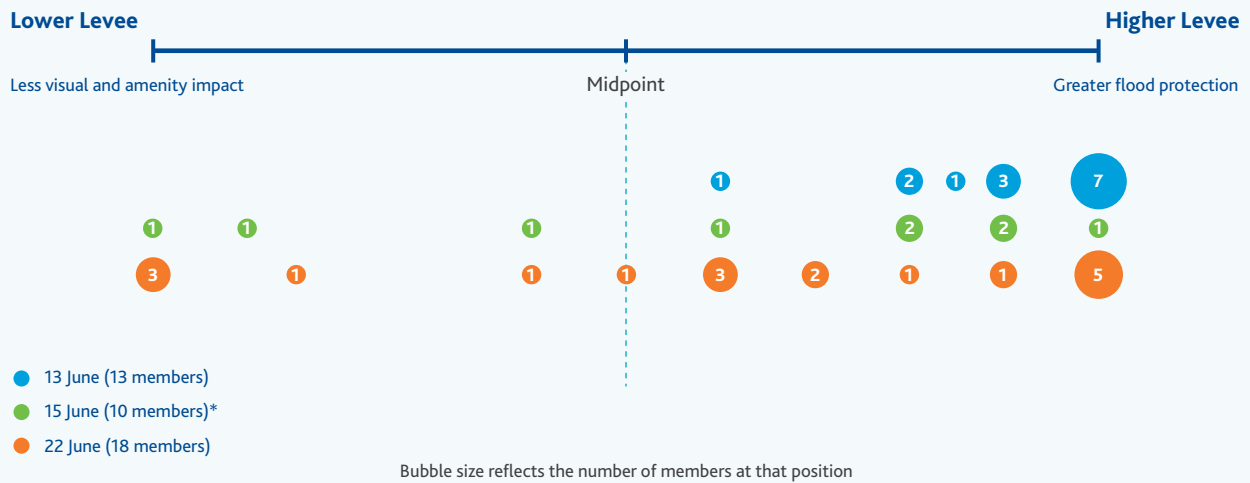
1 member (2.4%) did not participate.

Level of support: This trade-off generated the greatest spread of views. While most members ultimately favoured stronger flood protection, many positioned themselves closer to the midpoint of the scale, reflecting a desire for both meaningful flood protection and visible short-term action.



Trade off 4

Greater Flood Protection Despite Greater Amenity Impacts



*Note: one member did not participate; 9 of 10 members from 15 June are shown.

31 of 41 members (75.6%) preferred greater flood protection despite amenity impacts.

8 members (19.5%) prioritised reduced visual impacts and amenity, over flood protection.

1 member (2.4%) took a neutral position.

1 member (2.4%) chose not to participate in this trade-off.

Level of support: Views were more divided for this trade-off than any other. Support for greater flood protection often depended on factors such as levee design, river access, visual amenity and location-specific impacts, resulting in a broader distribution of views across the scale.



Trade off 5

Larger infrastructure with Greater Flood Protection

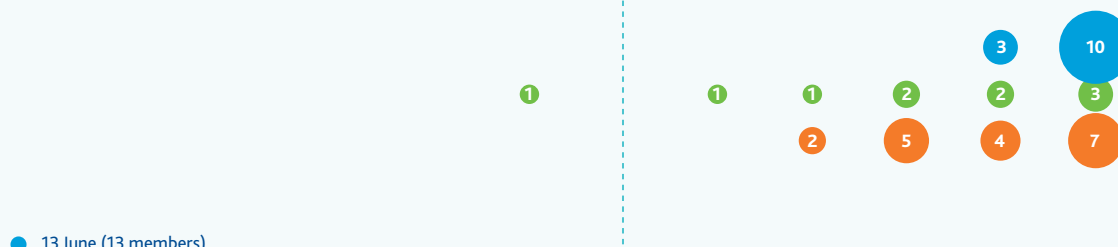
Minimise Upper Catchment Impacts

Lower local impacts

Greater Lower Catchment Benefits

Reduced lower catchment flood risk

Midpoint



● 13 June (13 members)

● 15 June (10 members)

● 22 June (18 members)

Total = 41 members

Bubble size reflects the number of members at that position

40 of 41 members (97.6%) prioritised catchment-wide flood protection.

One member (2.4%) preferred minimising impacts in the upper catchment.

Support for catchment-wide benefits was consistently strong across all three Panels, although members generally noted their support was conditional on impacts not affecting homes, livelihoods or vulnerable communities in the upper catchment.

Feedback surveys

At the end of each Community Partnership Panel session, members were invited to complete a feedback survey about the engagement process, communication materials and activities. The feedback will help Melbourne Water evaluate the Panel program and inform future community engagement practices.

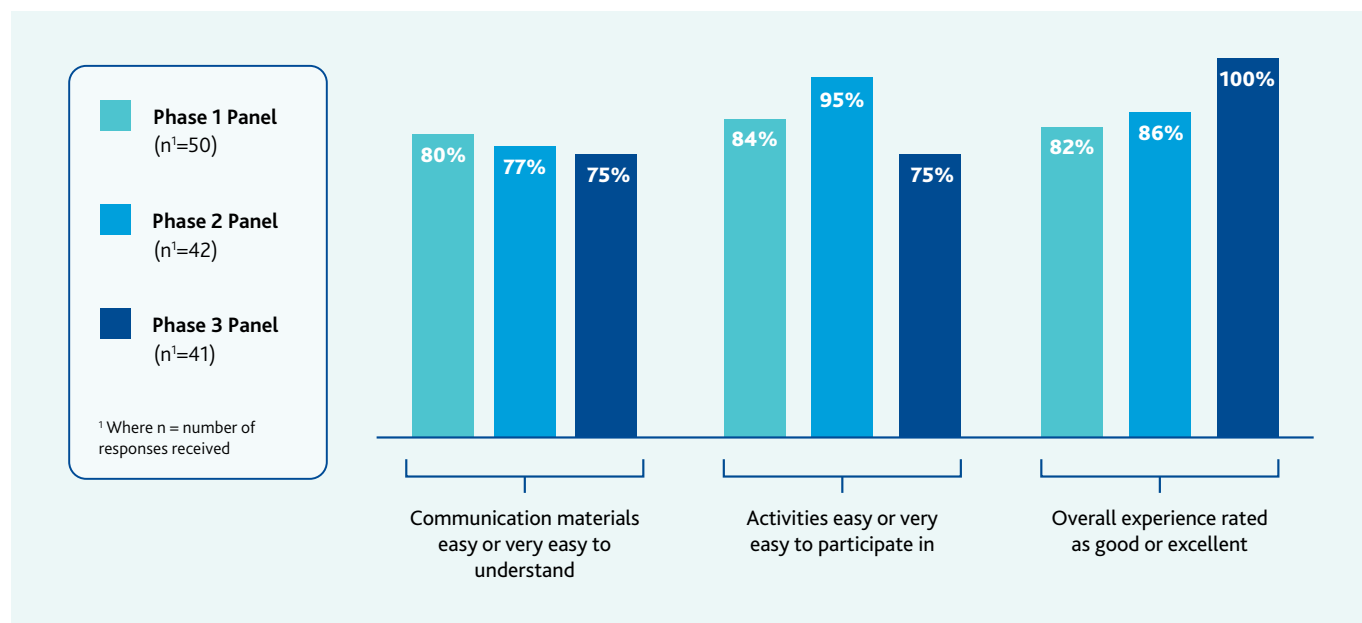


Figure 1: Panel member trends across Phases 1, 2 and 3

Survey feedback remained positive throughout all three phases of the Panels. Phase 3 recorded the highest overall satisfaction result, with all respondents rating their overall experience as good or excellent. Ratings for communication materials and activities were slightly lower than in previous phases, which may reflect the increasingly technical nature of the information discussed during Phase 3, as well as feedback from some members regarding the unavailability of pre-reading materials prior to the first session.

Panel members consistently identified the technical presentation as one of the most valuable aspects of the session. Many respondents appreciated the opportunity to learn more about flood modelling, the Decision Framework and how the example combinations had been developed and assessed. This was reflected in Q & A always going longer than originally allocated in the schedule.

The activities were also positively received, particularly the opportunity to discuss trade-offs and hear a range of perspectives from other community members. Several panel members noted that hearing different viewpoints helped them better understand the complexity of flood mitigation planning and the challenges associated with balancing competing priorities.

Some panel members also highlighted the value of the final alignment activity, which provided an opportunity to compare individual perspectives across the whole group and understand where common priorities emerged. Following

the table discussions and group deliberations, the activity gave members an opportunity to independently reflect on the trade-offs and compare their individual position with the broader Panel.

Suggestions for improvement focused on providing additional information about flood mitigation options, including more detail about how options may operate in practice and the outcomes they may achieve. One member also suggested reducing the amount of time allocated to presentations to allow additional discussion.

Survey feedback indicates that members valued the opportunity to contribute to the study and appreciated the collaborative and respectful nature of the discussions. Feedback also suggests there is ongoing interest in receiving clear technical information and continuing to explore the trade-offs associated with different flood mitigation approaches.

Overall, the majority of members were pleased with how the sessions were run. We have considered the feedback carefully with the aim of improving how we plan and deliver future engagement events, beyond this study. We thank members for their constructive feedback.

Summary from Phase 3 Community Partnership Panels

Protecting people and places was a recurring priority

Across all three Community Partnership Panels, reducing flood risk and protecting people, homes and businesses emerged as a recurring theme. While views differed on how flood mitigation might best be achieved, many participants agreed that a key purpose of the study should be to explore opportunities to reduce the impacts of future flooding.

Participants engaged with a range of perspectives and trade-offs

Discussions reflected participants' consideration of the complex trade-offs involved in flood mitigation planning. Members frequently referenced the perspectives of upper catchment communities, renters, vulnerable residents and future generations. Many participants acknowledged that different options involve benefits and trade-offs and engaged constructively with the challenges associated with long-term flood mitigation planning.

Greater levels of flood protection emerged as a common priority

A common theme across the panels was support for options perceived to provide greater flood protection outcomes. Many participants expressed the view that effectiveness should be an important consideration in decision-making, alongside factors such as cost, delivery complexity and implementation timeframes. Participants often emphasised the importance of considering long-term outcomes when assessing mitigation options.

Preparedness was considered an important part of a broader response

Participants recognised the role of non-structural measures, such as flood warnings, emergency preparedness programs and flood-resilient housing, in helping communities respond to future flood events. Many members viewed these measures as complementary to structural mitigation options and noted the potential value of pursuing a combination of approaches.

Implementation and delivery remained important considerations

Participants generally valued the opportunity to contribute to the process and share their perspectives. At the same time, many raised questions about funding, approvals, delivery pathways and implementation timeframes. These discussions highlighted the importance participants placed on transparency, clear communication and confidence in how future decisions may be progressed.

Visual information supported understanding

Participants frequently highlighted the value of maps, imagery and other visual tools in helping them understand flood risk and the potential implications of different mitigation options. Many indicated that visual materials assisted in understanding how options may affect different communities and landscapes.

Areas of alignment and diversity of views were observed

While participants brought a range of experiences, perspectives and priorities to the discussions, areas of alignment were observed on several issues.

The highest levels of support recorded during panel activities were for:

- greater flood protection despite higher costs (97.6%, 40 of 41 members)
- larger infrastructure where members considered it may contribute to improved flood outcomes (95.1%, 39 of 41 members)
- catchment-wide benefits despite some localised impacts in upper catchment areas (97.6%, 40 of 41 members).

These results reflect the views expressed by participating panel members during the engagement process. They should be considered alongside the broader evidence base, technical assessments, statutory requirements and other stakeholder inputs that inform decision-making. Variation in views was more evident regarding implementation timeframes and the balance between amenity considerations and flood mitigation outcomes.

Other observations

Arundel retarding basin generated considerable discussion and a range of views

The Arundel retarding basin was a recurring topic of discussion across the Panels. Participants expressed a range of views regarding the option and its potential role within broader flood mitigation approaches. Some participants viewed the basin favourably and considered it worthy of further investigation, while others raised concerns or expressed uncertainty regarding its feasibility, impacts and deliverability.

Discussion frequently focused on matters such as planning and approval requirements, environmental and cultural heritage considerations, funding requirements, delivery timeframes and potential community impacts. Participants also raised questions regarding how the option would be assessed alongside other mitigation measures and what evidence would be used to inform future decision-making.

Some participants referred to previous proposals associated with Arundel and questioned whether historical challenges, including matters they understood to relate to environmental considerations, costs or broader project feasibility, may continue to influence future implementation. Others noted uncertainty regarding future funding priorities, government decisions and approval processes.

Overall, discussions reflected both interest in the option and recognition that significant questions remain. Many participants expressed a desire for additional information to better understand the assumptions, opportunities, constraints and assessment criteria associated with the basin. The discussions did not indicate a uniform view among participants, but rather highlighted the importance of transparent assessment and communication regarding a proposal that some participants regarded as potentially significant and others viewed with caution.

Participants discussed staging and long-term delivery challenges

Participants frequently discussed the challenges associated with delivering large-scale infrastructure over extended timeframes. While there was broad recognition of the benefits of staged implementation, participants also highlighted the importance of clarity around how future stages may be prioritised and progressed. These discussions reinforced the value participants place on transparent governance, clear communication and a shared understanding of the factors that may influence future delivery decisions.

Maintaining momentum and organisational knowledge

Several participants highlighted the long-term nature of flood mitigation planning and delivery and discussed how knowledge, continuity and organisational focus might be maintained over extended periods. Participants noted that changes in governments, staffing, institutional arrangements and strategic priorities could influence long-term implementation.

Perspectives on responsibility for managing flood risk

Discussions regarding flood-resilient homes, preparedness measures and warning systems frequently prompted broader conversations about responsibilities for managing flood risk. While outside the scope of the panel process, many participants discussed the respective roles of governments, agencies, property owners and individuals. Some participants expressed a preference for government-led mitigation measures supported by household-level preparedness initiatives.

Views on levees varied depending on location and design

Feedback regarding levees varied considerably depending on location and context. Participants noted that their views were influenced by factors such as local conditions, design outcomes, visual impacts, river access and broader amenity considerations.

Some participants discussed opportunities to integrate recreational, landscaping and active transport features (such as walking paths, cycling routes, landscaping and recreational features) into levee designs and questioned whether flood mitigation and amenity outcomes necessarily need to be considered as competing objectives.

Concerns regarding distribution of impacts and equity

Discussions frequently highlighted the importance of ensuring flood mitigation options do not simply transfer impacts from one location to another. Members raised concerns about the impacts of levees and localised protection options.

These discussions reflected participant interest in fairness, transparency and how the impacts of different options would be assessed.

Continued interest in insurance and financial considerations

Insurance-related issues generated significant discussion throughout the process. Participants raised questions regarding affordability, insurance availability, property values, Section 32 disclosures and the potential financial implications associated with flood risk.

Some participants also sought further information regarding how future mitigation measures may be considered by insurers and whether mitigation outcomes could influence insurance assessments. This information could not be provided during the engagement process as Melbourne Water does not have any input into, or oversight of, insurance matters including availability, considerations and / or assessments.

Climate modelling and future scenarios

Participants raised questions regarding climate change assumptions, future flood modelling scenarios and Average Annual Damages. While many engaged with the technical information presented, some indicated that aspects of the modelling were difficult to interpret and sought additional explanation regarding the relationship between existing conditions, future scenarios and potential mitigation measures.

Equity considerations in future communication

Participants discussed how different mitigation measures may affect renters, homeowners, vulnerable households and people with varying financial circumstances. These discussions highlighted the importance of clearly communicating the potential implications of different options, the basis on which benefits and impacts are assessed, and the support mechanisms that may be available through future processes.



Next steps

■ This section of the report summarises the next steps for the study.

Melbourne Water and Jacobs want to reiterate our thanks to members for maintaining a culture of openness and respect during the Panels, especially considering the challenging personal experiences faced by previous flood events.

While the Community Partnership Panel process has now concluded after 18 months, we remain committed to keeping the members who participated informed about the study's progress and will continue to share updates and future outcomes as they become available.

We will now progress into Phase 4 of the study, this will involve:

- considering community feedback from Phase 3 alongside further technical assessments
- identifying a preferred combination of flood mitigation options
- developing an adaptive, long-term pathway for implementation
- outlining how options could be progressively implemented over time
- sharing the preferred combination, study findings and how community feedback informed the outcomes.

During Phase 4, Melbourne Water will release the study findings, including a summary of what we heard throughout community engagement and how community feedback helped inform decision-making.

Beyond Phase 4, work will continue through future phases of technical and feasibility investigations and assessment, including cultural values, environmental and geotechnical assessments, future government approvals and business case development. While these activities extend beyond the study itself, they form an important part of the broader journey towards identifying, developing and implementing long-term flood mitigation options.

Speak to the team

To speak with the team, please call 131 722 or email enquiry@melbournewater.com.au

