

Dear Councillors, my fellow residents and all:

Obviously I am not here to debate how we should not to go politicking on community good will around water conservation. I am talking about a critical council planning recommendation requiring the application of qualified and relevant expertises, bounded by ethical & professional codes of conduct. When we discharge responsibility in this context, facts are no longer optional, nor selective.

This council report “proposed to support the application” of a planning permit for a sewerage plant, on the balance, brings no benefits but negativities to our community. We must challenge and ask why. The origin of work that led to this planning application is the Memorandum of Understanding signed almost 4 years ago (21 Oct. 2008). The objective is to **(quote)** “*produce an integrated urban water management strategy for Doncaster Hill area..*”, supported with 20 Guiding Principles include **(quote)** “*recognising existing natural systems*”, “*choosing options that have minimal greenhouse gas emissions*”, “*considering total community cost*”, “*select options that will have a high level of community acceptance*” and “*improve community amenity*”. This YVW scheme failed on each of these.

There are many errors and issues in this report I want to talk about but giving limited time, tonight I can only focus on aspects of water saving and community benefits.

Back in 2008, we were in the middle of a server drought. In the wider world, better use of nature resource like rainwater was also becoming integral of sustainable living & building design. We recognise & support Council’s desire to make Manningham a sustainable community. To embrace “Beyond Compliance” and the leadership, Council have been strongly advocating & implementing the use of rainwater and stormwater. Examples are:

- (30 June 2009) 185 apartments on 1 Grosvenor St with 70,000L rainwater tank for toilet flushing & garden irrigation;
- (11 August 2009) 84 apartments on 91-93 Tram Road (Madison), initially a 5000L rainwater tank, the planning dept stated **(quote)** “*when increase to 10,000L will result in a water reduction of 70% for toilet flushing alone*”. Actually 50,000L tank was specified to also meet **(quote)** “(9.6.2) *Water Sensitive Urbane Design, including increased capacity for capture and re-use of water.*”;
- (29 Oct. 2009) 9 story hotel & 16 serviced apartments on 682-684 Doncaster Road required rainwater for toilet flushing;
- Even after YVW mandated Third Pipe supply in July 2010, on 31 Oct. 2010, 16 apartments on 97 Whitterns Lane with 25,000L rainwater for garden and **(quote)** “(3.5) *Connection of Water Tank to toilet services was seen appropriate*” and “*re-use of stormwater using rainwater tanks*” as a good practice for stormwater detection and re-use.

YVW Third Pipe refers only to the main supply pipes on the streets leading to the buildings. Contrary to the planning report (1.25), the purple pipes (not the Third Pipe to avoid confusion) inside these existing buildings are intended to use rainwater for toilet flushing, not the recycled water from YVW. Also contrary to the report, there are millions of on-site

rainwater and wastewater treatment systems in homes, tall buildings, recreational, commercial and industrial premises. Examples are Sydney City Westfield (300,000L/day), Curlewis Golf Club Water Reclamation Plant near Geelong (250,000L/day), ANZ (120,000L/day) in Docklands. Recent award winning Dandenong Government Services Offices boasts integrated “rainwater and grey water retention and re-use, solar hot water and waterless urinals.” Glad to see (Council Minutes 07 July 2009) that our own MC² incorporates “(7.3 WSUD) 60,000L Rainwater Tanks for roof rainwater, re-use in building & flushing, 250,000L for stormwater harvesting, for landscape/oval irrigation)” and, yes “waterless urinals” as well which use 32% less water compare to 4-star ones. These are leading practices acknowledged by the planning dept that Rainwater collection and the re-use system (**quote**) “is a reasonable planning requirement.”; all without a need for a sewerage plant.

To make an argument NOW in the report that YVW supply recycled water to private homes (8.24 to 8.27) is because people could not be trusted to maintain their own wastewater treatment systems is like insisting MFB & the CFA to install and maintain smoke alarms in buildings just because a few of them not working right or some of us forget to replace batteries. If so, shouldn't tradesmen be also **mandated** to deliver water at a cost with well balanced PH level to all swimming pools and spas? Consider we often filter the tap water before drink it, rainwater quality are considered in the industry as “reasonable” when benchmark against tap water for the intent of its re-use, hence easy and low cost processes compare to treating sewer with all industrial & commercial wastes. When better use of resource like rainwater & grey water (account for 75%+ of household wastewater), the real savings from less tap water use and less drainage outflow from each property outweighs the maintenance cost, a true net benefit to the community.

Contradictory to the planning report (8.21 to 8.29) on economical terms, I refer to YVW's own business analysis comparing Rainwater Tanks and Third Pipe Only options. For *Environmental Outcomes*, on the basis of saving the same 176ML/year tap water, the Rainwater Tanks consume less electricity and emit less carbon. Comes to *Financial Outcomes* and in YVW's term, “Low Growth scenario assuming 2670 dwellings”, both options deliver almost identical (Whole of) community Net Present Value (NPV). However when applying the same to the proposed sewerage plant for servicing a population of only 1950 (a whopping 65% less dwellings on an average household of 2-person), the perceived community value using a sewerage plant can be halved compared to the rainwater tank option. This is yet to take into account additional, negative value to the community associated with the sewerage plant, like connection fee/service charges, true cost of land acquisition, loss of affected property value, community amenities and our liveability. Contrary to this report 8.31, the sewerage plant proposed for Tram Road is never intended, nor will ever deliver the required quantity to service the objectives of council's own 2030 Doncaster Hill Residential Strategy Plan (also 5.21), and certainly is irrelevant to the Purpose of MOU (also council report 1.8) being (**quote**) “a program designed to consider and implement long term and sustainable planning for water management within the Doncaster Hill.”. This sewerage plant scheme defers all the well intended uses of alternative water sources as per the report (21.10-3 Water Sensitive Design).

YVW is entitled, and is prudent to develop financial viable work programs. This was exact the case when per Council Minutes (27 July 2010), YVW insisted Third Pipe Only as its preferred option, not the option of Third Pipe used as a backup for rainwater tanks. **(quote)** *“There are a number of issues to be addressed to ensure there would be sufficient demand to make the scheme financially viable”*. The proposed sewerage plant site was next to the EGC with a calculated capacity of 550 to 650kL/day, a 2.6km Third Pipe route across the Doncaster Hill precinct. Now the same scheme but proposed for Tram Road Reserve with only 350kL/day maximum output, an ongoing annual maintenance and labour cost of over half million dollars or thereabout a year, you would ask just based on a 50% drop in supply (a mere \$621.46/day from the sales of each drop of water vs. cost of well over \$1000/day running it), is this scheme no longer financially viable? If so, who pays for the shortfalls, and in what community expenses?

In the backdrop of sky-high utility bills in recent years, our water bill is from \$560 in 2006 to estimated \$1440 in 2014 per average household, not to mention almost \$500mn a year we are collectively paying for the Desal plant before a single drop of water is drawn.

High cost of living aside, this scheme in its current form is also a big backward step from true sustainability for our Manningham. YVW use 3-star toilets to benchmark its water saving of 30% compare to “conventional Do Nothing” as though we are all stuck in a timewrap. In reality, we as a society have been moving on since 2008. We use almost 25% less water today compared to in the 1990’s. Many changes also encourage and reward for good use behaviour and conservation practices. From 1st May 2011, all new developments and extensions must be 6-star homes to aim for 24% less energy (compare to 5-Star effective in 2004) and installing rainwater tank for toilet flushing uses **(quote)** “20% less portable water”. That is why leading developers like Mirvac equips homes in its developments such as these in Waverly Park and Wantirna with a 2,000L rainwater tank for toilet flushing. Mirvac will provide the same, if not better to the Eastern Golf Course development. Community would have lost well over 2 million liters of rainwater storage capacity in this development alone if YVW’s scheme were implemented.

Even in the recent State Government Implementation Plan for Living Melbourne, Living Victoria (Feb 2012), “Business As Usual” scenario encompasses water efficient gardens to cut 50% water use, 4/4.5-star toilets with over 30% of these rainwater tanks connected to toilets and laundry. A higher star rating toilet saves 12 to 15% more water (recycled or not) to start with. We all agree and are inspired to achieve high level of sustainability. But a 3-star toilet will never fit in with 7.5-star energy rated apartments like the Botanic on Doncaster Road.

We as a community will lose a significant amount of rainwater capture, storage and re-use capacity when such a scheme excludes these low cost & environmental friendly uses of nature water resource in our built environment. Residents in these buildings will not benefit from technology available today and tomorrow to contribute to an ever evolving sustainable society. From one recent building permit (Council Minutes 25 Oct 2011), there is no longer a specific rainwater tank capacity specified for 20-24 Hepburn Rd with 188 apartments; replaced it with YVW Third Pipe scheme. When you need only 230sqm, 3m deep to store 700,000L of rainwater (10 times of these for the 185 apartments on 1

Grosvenor St) from a 2000 to 3000sqm development lot, space is never an issue. For every 2000sqm of roof and paved area, we could collect over 10 ML per annum (based on a mean rainfall of 724mm per Doncaster Metrological Station). The entire collection from Doncaster Hill and EGC combine will be overwhelmingly more than the amount of recycled water produced from this sewerage plant. Additional storage on site can also improve stormwater detention to extend the current design of 1 in 10-year storm in order to handle more severe weather conditions like we experienced in recent time. It also helps to keep good road conditions and nature environment, reduced maintenance cost to these.

While rainwater is indeed falling off the sky, free; we must reject a false notion of water saving when nature or recycled water is not being treated with the same respect as tap water. Recycling water through sewerage treatment in this case needs significant amount of water each day just to produce the limited 350kL, generates almost 1600 tons of CO₂ a year in the process. There is absolutely no justification to build a sewerage plant only 22m from residents' homes, in a park land. If this were the example to be followed, we will see hundreds of these next to everyone's backyards, use up significant amount of already scarce open space, to duplicate a scheme financially viable only for commercial reasons without due and exhaustive community consultation.

There are a lot of confusions in this report when checked against the available facts. Lack of evidences to support the well-intended planning practices led to these fundamentally flawed conclusions, hence the notion of officers' "proposed to support the application" must be challenged on the qualification of facts and professional judgements. On a personal note, our consciousness in regards to one's own standards of what constitutes an acceptable and reasonable duty of care to each other in the society. I trust planning officers will attend the EPA Conference this Thursday when all technical and community issues will be raised in great details.

Without hesitation, our fair-minded councillors must reject this report recommendation. Otherwise Manningham community will suffer from the consequences, these new residents who must pay more with no access to better water saving and sustainable technologies, these who are living a nightmare forever in the close proximity of the site (including these from Whitehorse Council); and for the rest of us, living in a suburb under the shadow of this sewerage plant, coming home and greeting our visitors and investors from this strategically important city gateway with a 15m tall stack emitting over 36 million cubic metres of gases each year, for us and all our future generations to come.

We thank you for your considerations and support.