

BOARD OF INQUIRY INTO THE McCRAE LANDSLIDE

Mathew Hopwood-Glover

Witness Statement

Prepared for the purpose of a Board of Inquiry

27 June 2025

WITNESS STATEMENT OF MATHEW HOPWOOD-GLOVER

Name:	Mathew Hopwood-Glover
Address:	2 Queen Street, Mornington, VIC, 3931
Occupation:	Municipal Building Surveyor
Date:	27 June 2025

1. I make this witness statement in response to the Request to Produce a Witness Statement dated 27 May 2025 (**Notice**). This statement has been prepared with the assistance of lawyers and Shire officers.
2. Except where I otherwise indicate, I make this statement from my own knowledge. Where statements are not made from my own knowledge, I believe them to be true to the best of my information and belief, and I have set out the sources of my belief.
3. I am currently employed as the team leader, municipal building surveyor within the Office of the Municipal Building Surveyor (**MBS**) within the Shire. I have been employed in the Office of the MBS since approximately 13 February 2023. I am currently on Workcover and have been on Workcover since 14 January 2025. I have obtained consent from my treating Psychologist to give evidence within strict guidelines.

Question 2

Did the Shire take any steps to remove, divert or otherwise address the water that surfaced in the vicinity of 10-12 View Point Road, McCrae following the 5 January 2025 Landslide?

- (a) If the answer to question 2 is yes, what steps were taken?**
- (b) If the answer to question 2 is no, did the Shire consider taking any steps? In particular, identify whether the Shire considered inserting spear pumps or any other mechanism to remove excess water from the escarpment.**
- (c) If the answer to question 2(b) is yes, what steps were considered and why were those steps not ultimately taken?**
- (d) If the answer to question 2(b) is no, why did the Shire not consider taking any steps?**

4. Yes. The Shire did take steps to divert or otherwise address the water that surfaced in the vicinity of 10-12 View Point Road, McCrae following the 5 January 2025 Landslide.
5. Following the 5 January 2025 Landslide, a major concern of mine was protecting the Morans' property at 3 Penny Lane. I knew that water was running under the house and recognised that it was important to try to divert that water.

6. On the night of 5 January 2025, I attended the 5 January 2025 Landslide site with James (Jimmy) Jones (Building Inspector). Mark Daw of SES informed me that the SES had checked meters in the area and found no sign of water loss. Mr Daw verbally informed me that South East Water (**SEW**) had informed the SES that there were no water leaks from the water main and water tests have been taken, which I used as part of my ongoing assessments as reliable information.
7. On 6 January 2025, I inspected the property at 3 Penny Lane with James Jones (Building Inspector). Mr Jones and I inspected different sides of the property, including under the house. Mr Jones inspected via the north-eastern side under the deck and from the east-south-west side underneath the ensuite area and I inspected the southwest side via a storeroom leading to the subfloor area. Following his inspection, Mr Jones said to me that he could see a large scour line with the presence of water under the house, running through the middle of underneath the dwelling. A scour line is a line created in the soil through the erosion and removal of soil caused by the movement of water. I recall that Mr Jones verbally stated there is scouring under the house. I did not see scouring or water on my side of the house. However, the presence and depth of the scouring indicated to me that water had been flowing under the Moran's property for an extensive time prior to 6 January 2025.
8. I was concerned to control the water that was flowing under the Moran's property and raised this issue with Mr Pope (Geotechnical Engineer). At around 8:55am on 6 January 2025, I called Mr Pope and requested that he assist in this landslip, knowing Mr Pope was familiar with the previous landslip from 2022. Mr Pope accepted the need for assistance and said he would catch the next ferry from Queenscliff to Sorrento. At around 1:27pm, Mr Pope advised he was departing the Sorrento ferry terminal, travelling to the premise. During Mr Pope's inspection he viewed both the premise at 3 Penny Lane and 10-12 View Point Road. At this point I asked Mr Pope to prepare a Preliminary Assessment and actions for me to consider.
9. At around 2pm on 6 January 2025, the site was handed over from SES (Mr Daw and his Supervisor) to the Shire.
10. On the 7 January 2025, I reviewed the Shire's live MERITS system, being the previous customer complaint system of the Shire, for all reports for Prospect Hill Road and View Point Road. I ran this search to understand at a high level what (if any) reports had been made concerning water in the area because of the presence of water in the head scarp, as at that time South East Water had told me that there were no identified leaks.
11. From these searches, I identified several reports concerning the Shire's stormwater drainage network in the area(s) of Prospect Hill and View Point Roads between 1997 and 2023.
12. On 7 January 2025, in late afternoon (at 5:30pm), I received an email from Mr Pope providing a preliminary risk assessment of 10-12 View Point Road, 3 Penny Land and 607-609 Point Nepean Road [\[MSC.5003.0001.7180\]](#) [\[MSC.5003.0001.7182\]](#) [\[MSC.5003.0001.7183\]](#)

[\[MSC.5003.0001.7184\]](#) (**PSM 2025 Preliminary Risk Assessment**). In the PSM 2025 Preliminary Risk Assessment, Mr Pope outlined a number of actions the owners of each 10-12 View Point Road and 3 Penny Lane should take to redirect surface water. These actions were:

- (a) in respect 10-12 View Point Road, install a surficial cutoff bund with coir logs or sandbags behind the retaining wall to direct surface water away from the head scarp; and
- (b) in respect of 3 Penny Lane:
 - (i) divert surface water around the dwelling (using hand cutoff drains, coir logs/sandbags);
 - (ii) install a secondary cut off drain under the deck (being the front deck). This drain was to be hand dug and to divert the water (west towards the driveway/pedestrian access); and
 - (iii) install weep holes in the north western most retaining wall as required following the installation and assessment of the hand dug cutoff drains/coir logs).

13. Later on 7 January 2025 at 8:06pm, I forwarded Mr Pope's recommendations to Renae Littlejohn and Rory McDonald. Ms Littlejohn later responded saying that she had put it on the Mayor's radar [\[MSC.5005.0042.1513\]](#).
14. On 8 January 2025, I emailed Ms Littlejohn, Mr McDonald, Mr Flores, Davey Smith, Samantha Dalla-Santa, Claims and Insurance, Jack Alford (Planning Compliance) and Dale Gilliatte, of the actions which I considered reasonable to protect the life and safety of surrounding properties.
15. I also prepared an 'Actions List' based on the PSM 2025 Preliminary Risk Assessment. The actions identified by Mr Pope were the basis of the actions in the Actions List [\[MSC.5016.0001.0056\]](#).
16. On or about 9 January 2025, I met with the owners of each 10-12 View Point Road and 3 Penny Lane, and Sue Scoble of RACV Insurance, and provided the Actions List to them. Ms Scoble took an image of the Actions required for their file. The owners of 10-12 View Point Road and the owners of 3 Penny Lane are insured with RACV Insurance. During each meeting, I told the owners, and Sue Scoble of RACV Insurance (3 Penny Lane only), that they needed to address the recommended actions to mitigate the risk of a further landslide. It was, however, the responsibility of the owners to take the relevant action(s) because the works concerned their properties. This was not a direction, but a strong suggestion by me. As both parties were working towards a solution and to Mr Pope's recommendations, I considered that, should they not cooperate, I would issue a formal Building Notice directing them to undertake the recommended works. I advised both parties of my intent should cooperation not occur, including Ms Scoble.

17. The owners of 3 Penny Lane (and their insurer) implemented a number of steps having regard to these actions to divert water from the lower retaining wall on 3 Penny Lane to reduce the hydrostatic load.
18. I recall that contractors (builders/carpenters and plumbers) were on site at 3 Penny Lane the day after I provided the Actions List to the Moran's. The contractors installed a pipe under the house to divert the water. The pipe experienced silting overtime, which meant water could not properly pass through the pipe. Photo 1 below, which I took on 10 January 2025, shows the initial drainage diversion using the pipe. The contractors later installed upgraded hand cutoff drains, plastic traps and sandbags under the house at 3 Penny Lane to divert the water. Photo 2, which I took during my inspection on 14 January 2025, shows the upgraded diversion with some silting (discussed further below). That photograph shows the tarps and sandbags diverting the water. In the background of the photograph, a scour line can be seen as indicated at red arrow.



Photo 1: Initial Drainage diversion



Photo 2: Upgraded Drainage Diversion System

19. Photo 3 below, which I took of 14 January 2025, shows the discharge from the pipe, which was present for both the initial and upgraded diversion works.

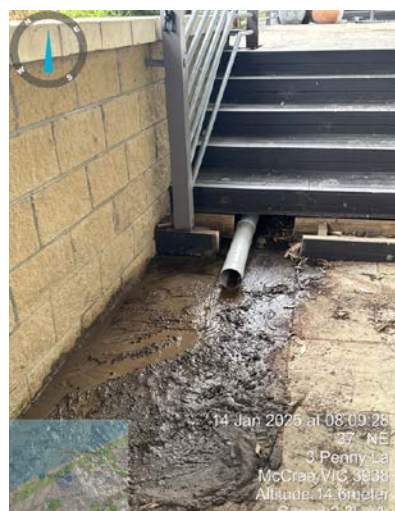


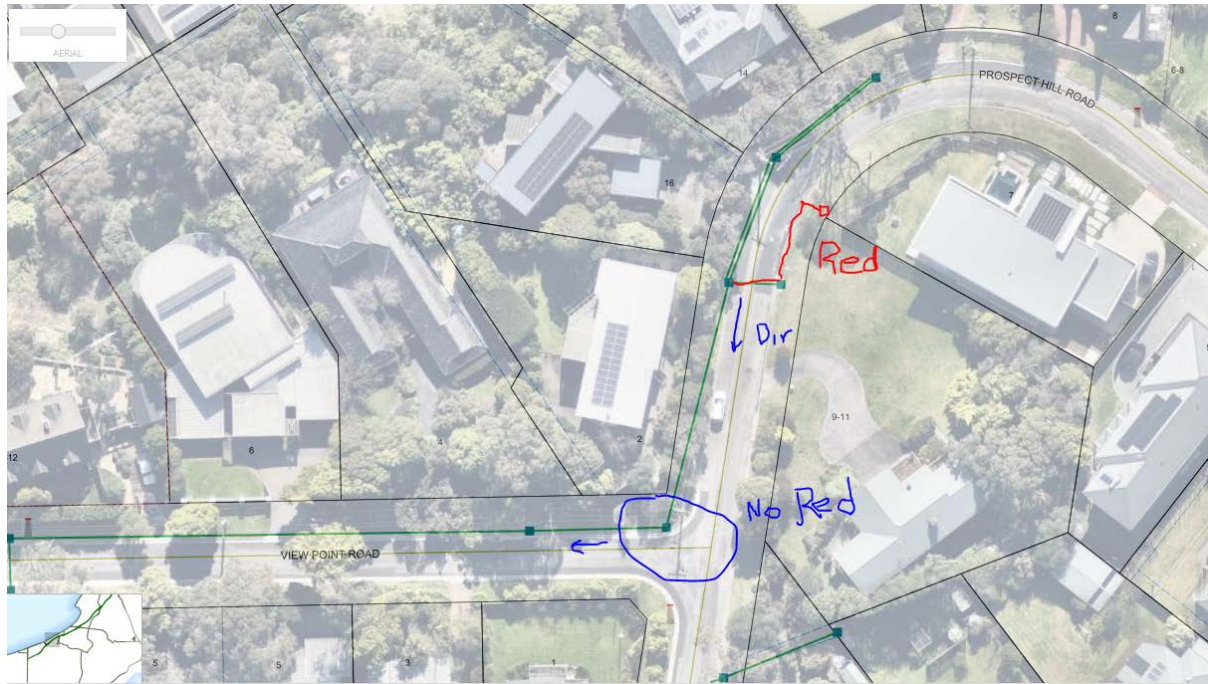
Photo 3: Discharge PVC pipe for both initial and upgrade

20. The water was being directed out to the pedestrian access to the dwelling to the concrete driveway and down Penny Lane via a PVC stormwater pipe along the pedestrian entrance to the dwelling. This is shown in Photo 3.
21. After providing the Actions List to the owners of 10-12 View Point Road (the Borgehsis), the Borgehsis's sought advice from their geotechnical engineer. On 10 January, Mr Borgehsis proposed to me a work scope that involved the installation rock baskets to stabilise the soil near the concrete retaining wall. On 13 January 2025, I requested that Mr Borgehsis's geotechnical engineer, Daniel Tolan, liaise directly with Mr Pope regarding any possible solution. I sought advice from Mr Pope on Mr Borgehsis's proposal to install rock baskets and was told by Mr Pope that no rock baskets should be installed because it would only add to the load on the head scarp and increase the risk of failure. On 13 January 2025, I was copied to an email from Mr Pope to Mr Tolan where he explained why rock bags should not be used [\[MSC.5003.0001.7277\]](#). I was also copied to Mr Tolan's response [\[MSC.5003.0001.7282\]](#).
22. To my knowledge, prior to 14 January 2025, the Borgehsis's did not install surficial cutoff bunds behind the retaining wall to direct surface water away from the head scarp. Put another way, to my knowledge the owners had not undertaken the actions I had recommended (on the recommendation of Mr Pope) to them to undertake on 9 January 2025.
23. Additionally, between 5 January and 14 January 2025, I took a number of steps to identify the source of the water surfacing at 10-12 View Point Road on the escarpment. I considered at the time that if we were able to identify the source of the water, we might be able to stop the water from its source. The steps I took, or were taken by officers of the Office of the MBS under my delegation, to identify the source of the water included:
 - (a) inspecting water meters of properties in the area of 10-12 View Point Road to identify any excessive flows. No properties with excessive flows were identified;
 - (b) inspecting hydrant groundballs for leaks. No leaks were identified;
 - (c) inspecting of road curb collectors and stormwater pits and conducting trace dye testing of stormwater lines from Prospect Hill Road and View Point Road (Red trace-dye and Lime-Green trace dye) to ascertain whether the Shire's stormwater drainage had been compromised. I took photographs of this testing, which are Photos 4 and 5, and Photos 6 to 10 of Attachment 1 to this statement. This included:
 - (i) Trace-dye testing was conducted by Mr Jones and Mr Flores (Principal Building Surveyor) of the Shire's stormwater drainage and road curb collectors on 8 January 2025. Mr Jones and Mr Flores advised me that they did not see any trace-dye flowing from 2 View Point Road curb collector (facing Prospect Hill Road) to the stormwater pit on the corner of View Point Road and Prospect Hill Road as per the Shire's drainage system plans; and

- (ii) Trace-dye testing was conducted by me and Mr Thomas McMahon (student building surveyor and Administration Officer) on 10 January 2025. I observed that the road curb collector at Prospect Hill Road was silted with debris (photo 10 Jan 2025) and the red dye did not flow via the stormwater drain to the corner pit of Prospect Hill and View Point Road. This made me consider there was a potential damaged pipe allowing water to flow subterraneously or within the trench void; and
 - (d) water sampling and testing of the surface waters on the 9 January (Jimmy, Sam, Tom and myself) for chemical analyses from the landslide area (on the slope), the road curb collector pit (4 View Point Road), and Charlesworth Street (centre of road – red bollard) (in front of 3 Charlesworth Street). I recall speaking to Ms Scoble (RACV Representative) about undertaking the Action Items while Mr Jones took the first water sample from the slope face. Ms Scoble pulled me to one side away from Mr Moran and others, to advise both Mr Borghersi and Mr Moran are insured through RACV.
- 24. In respect of the water leak at Charlesworth Street, on 8 January 2025, I received a notification from Mr Moran via sms of a screenshot from “McCrae Village Community Group” Facebook Group of a water leak in Charlesworth Street. I shared this information with Mr Pope that same day and on 9 January 2025, I conducted water sampling at Charlesworth Street as set out above.
- 25. On 9 January before the water testing in Charlesworth Street, I spoke to the resident at 1 Waller Place (corner of Charlesworth Waller). The resident outlined that their yard was continually wet and the residents in the area have reported the water leak in the back in September 2024 to South East Water and continually up to December to Council and South East Water. At this point, I spoke to Jimmy and said, “this could be the cause, to 10-12 View Point”. We both continued to walk the streets down Coburn Avenue and lost the water when it intersected with Prospect Hill Road. After seeing the water leak in Charlesworth Street, I thought this may be causing the extent of water in the slope. However, the trace-dye was not showing in the stormwater drainage from 2 View Point Road (facing Prospect Hill Road) to the corner drainage pit (photographs above). Mr Flores emailed the Environmental Health team to assist and arrange sample bottles to be tested as set out above.
- 26. On 9 January 2025, I provided an update by email to Ms Littlejohn and others, for the Shire's Executive Leadership, Mayor and Mr Rotter, of the actions being undertaken from the Office of the MBS [[MSC.5005.0042.2301](#)]. In this email I said, subject to the water lab results, the water could be a natural spring. I was not certain it was a natural spring, however. I suggested that if it was spring water, the Shire should contact the State Government. I relied on my direct report and Director to communicate my update to necessary initial parties.
- 27. On 13 January 2025, I sent the Shire's Asset and Infrastructure Directorate employees and other internal parties of the Shire the Preliminary Assessments that the Office of the MBS had

undertaken for leaks and flows. This included providing a map of the dye testing and areas where dye was absent in the stormwater system based on GIS drainage maps and photographs. On 13 January 2025, I requested the Shire's Manager Infrastructure Services, Mr Haines-Sutherland and Director Assets and Infrastructure, Mr Smith to investigate further the flows of water in the area, as I felt I had exhausted the investigations I could do and it appeared to me a potential cause could be council's drainage system failure.

28. I provided a copy of Map 1 (below) to Mr Smith on 13 January 2025 showing where red trace-dye commenced and finished.



Map 1: Shire GIS Drainage mapping (Prospect Hill Road and View Point Road) with markings showing the trace-dye start and end points.

29. Photo 4 below, which I took 10 January 2025, shows a silted and debris drain where the trace-dye stopped.



Photo 4: road curb collector drain (2 Viewpoint Road
along Prospect Hill Road (Trace-dye stopping))



Photo 5: Inspection Pit Corner Prospect Hill Road and
View Point Road waiting for red trace dye to appear.

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Signed by Mathew Hopwood Glover

on 27 June 2025

Attachment 1



Photo 6: Stormwater curb collector: 9-11 Prospect Hill Road.

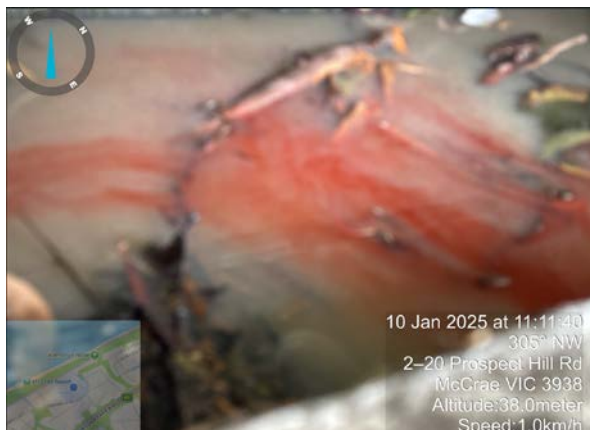


Photo 7: 2 View Point Road Stormwater curb collector facing Prospect Hill Road across from 9-11 Prospect Hill Road.



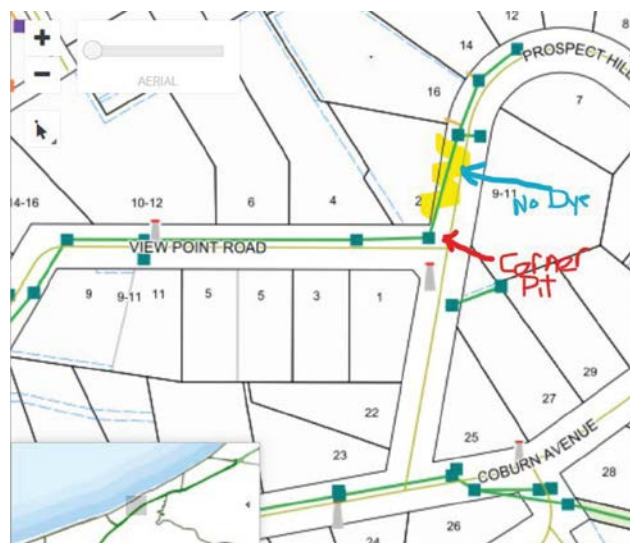
Photo 8: 2 View Point Road Stormwater curb collector



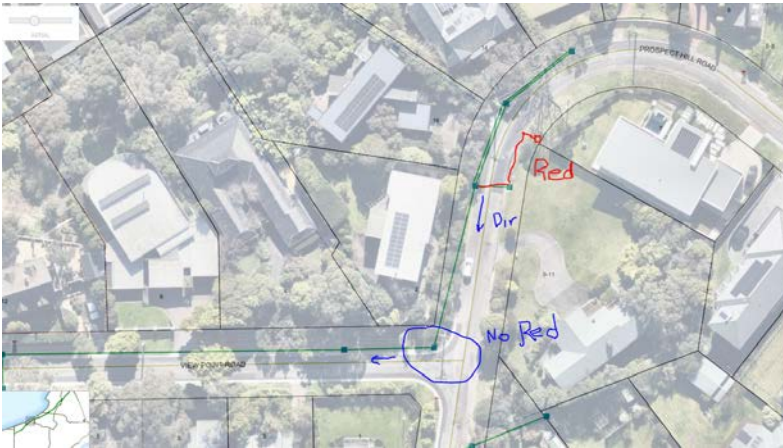
Photo 9: Corner of View Point road and Prospect Hill Road stormwater pit no red dye.



Photo 10: Lime-green dye from Corner of Prospect Hill and View Point roads



Map 2: The location in yellow highlights where the red dye was lost and did not enter the corner pit.



Map 3: Start location of the red dye