

# No silver bullet for avoiding floods, says water expert

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Clearing waterways of vegetation will have a negative effect on the environment without solving flooding problems, warns Professor Andrew Western, University of Melbourne water expert.

Professor Western said that there is no silver bullet for avoiding floods.

“Clearing of vegetation from [waterways](#) would create drain-like rivers and increase problems down-stream,” he said.

“In general, reducing flooding at one place comes at the cost of increasing it at others. This is true of clearing stream vegetation as well as [flood](#) protection measures such as levee banks.”

In a comprehensive report submitted to the Department of Sustainability and Environment Victoria at the end of 2011, Professor Western examined the effects of vegetation and debris removal and a reversal of that policy to reinstate vegetation along water ways.

He found there are ecological benefits to retaining vegetation in and around rivers.

“The issue of the impact of vegetation management on flooding is much more complex than our intuition might suggest when standing on the bank of a river,” he said.

Provided by University of Melbourne

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