



28th July, 2014

Dear Elected Members and Staff of the City of Unley,

We are writing to you in response to a 'fear campaign' being waged at the moment, which is largely based on misinformation. Many of the angry emails circulating are from creek owners who will have no work carried out on their properties. One email was from an upset creek owner in Unley Park, who believed that his home would be "devalued by \$500,000". Upon checking, it was confirmed by the project that no work would be required on his property. An Unley Council elected member told us that we should realize "this is about politics not facts". We believe that the information below is factual and trust that you will not dismiss it on purely political grounds.

The project has identified that a Creek Upgrade is required whether or not a dam is constructed in the upper reaches of Brownhill Creek. This is because the current urban creek capacity is insufficient to deal with the peak flow from a short duration, 1 in 100 year ARI rain event (urban flash flooding).

The current design of the proposed dam is also inadequate in dealing with long duration events up to a 1 in 100 year ARI rain event. An outlet pipe in the base will allow 20 cubic metres per second of flow to pass downstream, the equivalent of the November 2005 flood (22 cumecs).

One of the most outrageous claims, is that the proposed dam would protect 7,000 homes and 20,000 residents from serious flooding. We hope that you are aware that the total \$150 million project (Parts A&B) is designed to protect approximately 1,500 homes from serious flooding. The dam option is in Part B works. The estimated number of homes subject to serious flooding in Part B works could be lower than 200 homes. We will have to wait for the technical report to provide final numbers.

Creek works have been part of every Stormwater Management Plan, including the 2006 Master Plan. Ironically in the 2006 SMP, with two proposed dams, a concrete channel was to be constructed from Hampton Street to Cross Road. Creek owners in this section of Brownhill Creek are arguably better off under the current Creek Upgrade proposal, rather than under the previous Stormwater Management Plans.

Recent modelling of a Creek Upgrade Option has indicated that, if implemented, bypass culverts or upstream detention dams may not be required.

The project has made it clear that a Creek Upgrade will not involve the wholesale destruction and concreting of the urban Brownhill Creek channel and our community group would not support such an action. We believe in a Catchment to Coast vision for Brownhill Creek that promotes a healthy waterway, while maintaining natural hydrology as far as possible. Please find attached *A Property Owner's Guide To Managing Healthy Urban Creeks*, endorsed by Unley Council.

The project has also confirmed that claims regarding creek owners losing their homes are false. We understand that some creek owners affected by a Creek Upgrade solution in Mitcham and Unley are supportive of the process, while others are naturally concerned and uncertain about the outcome.

Our group does contain a number of creek owners and we are committed to effective flood mitigation that also has a net benefit for creek owners, such as direct flood protection, improved insurance outcomes and greater surety for prospective real estate sales. A project technical report due soon should provide some clarity and we realize that the issue of present and future access agreements is critical to any acceptance by creek owners.

Our large community group supports the greater good and there is widespread community support for a No Dam Solution. In 2011 there was a public consultation, which included a dam option: “Analysis of feedback forms received showed that the flood control dam at Brownhill Creek Recreation Park was the least supported component of the Draft Plan” (Community Consultation Report, URPS, Executive Summary, page vi). There are over 10,000 signatories to the No Dam petition (60% outside Mitcham). Many hundreds of No Dam supporters have filled halls for public meetings and council chambers for deputations since 2011, with support increasing. Our collective work to protect environment and heritage is backed by the Conservation Council SA, National Trust of South Australia, Nature Foundation SA, the Kaurna Nation Cultural Heritage Association, Mitcham Historical Society and The Friends of Brownhill Creek etc. Please visit our website at www.brownhillcreek.org to substantiate our standing in the community.

Our Steering Committee is puzzled by Cr. Boisvert’s comments on her blog (23rd July, 2014). Firstly the No Dam petition is not Mr Ron Bellchamber’s petition, as is mistakenly stated (“his petition”), but a petition prepared and distributed by our community group. Secondly, Cr Boisvert’s assertion that “the problem is that most people who signed the petition will not be affected one way or the other if the creek floods” is quite frankly irrelevant. The final decision on Part B works will be based on feasible flood mitigation options that provide comparable levels of flood protection. Therefore with predicted zero over-floor flooding (1 in 100 year ARI) achieved in Mitcham and Unley with any option, the decision comes down to cost and community preference, not who experiences flooding and who doesn’t. The 10,000 signatories to the No Dam petition are relevant stakeholders in this decision as they use and value areas to be negatively impacted if a dam is constructed.

Time and again we have read claims that there are few residents in the valley to be affected, when tens of thousands visit annually and take their experiences with them. **Brownhill Creek Recreation Park (1841) and Ellison’s Gully nourish and support the physical, mental, cultural and spiritual health of the whole community, not just the residents in the valley. Please view the *Healthy Parks, Healthy People Program: Strategic Plan* on our website (Home Page: Quick Links).**

As a Creek Upgrade does not involve the wholesale destruction of the urban creek environment and it provides the required flood protection in a more cost effective manner, then it seems hypocritical and unacceptable to destroy the last State protected section of natural Brownhill Creek, or its major tributary in Ellison’s Gully, in the mistaken belief that these sections of creek are somehow less worthy.

There is now a universal condemnation of the Site 1 dam (Seven Pines), with the public well informed about the documented Local, State and National heritage / environmental assets that would be permanently lost; not to mention the aesthetic damage to Brownhill Creek Recreation Park (1841). No one would dare proceed with a dam in the heart of this much loved, iconic Park. Yet just three years ago a dam was proposed here!

The same mistake should not be made in Ellison's Gully. Ellison's Gully (Site 2) is once again in the firing line, but we must remember that this site was previously rejected, as part of a flawed 2006 Master Plan. A dam would be significantly more expensive here and the out of sight, out of mind / private property argument will not hold up to scrutiny. **Decisions need to be made for future generations as well and Ellison's Gully is emerging as a valuable community asset.** We urge you to make a proper assessment of Ellison's Gully and not just assume that a dam should be built here. Dedicated research has been carried out in Ellison's Gully for the past decade, with the involvement of Flinders University, Mitcham Historical Society and the Mitcham Council Heritage Committee. The restoration of the Mitcham Waterworks, which supplied reticulated water to Mitcham and Unley from 1879 to the 1930's, is an exciting development. Documented mining, market gardening and Aboriginal heritage are also featured here and there are possible plans to establish a public heritage trail linking this valley to Brownhill Creek Recreation Park. Brownhill Creek Recreation Park is not only the gateway to Yurrebilla, The Greater Mount Lofty Parklands, but is also the natural gateway to Ellison's Gully. We believe this could become one of the most popular walks in the Adelaide Hills, not just for recreation, but also for its educational, heritage and tourism value.

The project plan is close to completion, with 80% of the plan agreed to in Part A works (\$120million). Naturally we hope that a Creek Upgrade solution is adopted in Part B of the SMP, providing a win for the environment, heritage, flood mitigation, creek owners, ratepayers/taxpayers and the wider community. A Creek Upgrade solution is the most likely way to achieve a complete plan and only then can funding be realistically sought for the total \$150million project. Perhaps with a complete plan we can all combine our energies to fight for the required funding.

Our group does support the democratic process and welcomes a community debate based on facts and respectful campaigning. We have urged our group to continue on the path of reason. **Any decision on Part B works should not be made on the basis of self-interest, intimidation or political posturing, but on the overall benefits to the wider community.** Please feel free to contact us for further clarification.

Steering Committee:

Michael Andrewartha, Ron Bellchambers (spokesperson), Marcus Beresford, Reverend Canon Andrew Cheesman, Peter Dillon, Professor Wayne Meyer, Dr. Joseph Smith, Andrew Tilley and John Wood.

No Dam in Brownhill Creek Community Action Group:

Representing concerned residents, the wider community and over 40,000 annual visitors to Brownhill Creek Recreation Park / Ellison's Gully.

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