



4<sup>th</sup> August, 2014

Dear Elected Members and Staff of the City of Mitcham,

The No Dam in Brownhill Creek Community Action Group represents residents, the broader community and over 40,000 annual visitors to Brownhill Creek Valley and Ellison's Gully. We are currently being contacted by many frustrated community members, incredulous that a dam is still being considered in the upper reaches of Brownhill Creek. Their message is "*Enough is Enough*" and the following key points summarize their argument:

- A public consultation in 2011 demonstrated that **an overwhelming majority of the community opposed a dam.**
- The five councils responded with a **preference to pursue a feasible No Dam solution in the upper reaches of Brownhill Creek** (May, 2012).
- With the availability of updated Bureau of Meteorology rainfall figures, channel capacity data, hydrology, and flood mapping, the five councils agreed to **prioritize investigations into a Creek Upgrade solution.**
- A feasible Creek Capacity Upgrade solution has now emerged as the most likely option, out of eight possible options, to finally complete the Stormwater Management Plan.
- **Given that all eight available options provide comparable levels of flood protection, the final decision should be based on cost, environment and heritage considerations and community preference.** The question of relative costs should be settled when the Project Technical Report is released. Obviously a dam would be the most destructive option with regard to environment and heritage and three years of community opposition to a dam, including over 10,000 signatories to the No Dam petition, have clearly established a community preference for a No Dam solution in the upper reaches of Brownhill Creek.
- **If a feasible Creek Capacity Upgrade option is more cost effective, then it would seem logical that councils should consult on the Creek Capacity Upgrade option only, make a final decision and progress the project. The community should not be forced to 'jump through any more hoops' to stop an unnecessary dam.**

The proposed dam at 'Seven Pines' (Site 1), in the heart of Brownhill Creek Recreation Park (1841), is now widely condemned. All sides oppose a dam here thanks in large part to the educational role played by the Mitcham Historical Society, the National Trust of South Australia, the Friends of Brownhill Creek, the Kaurna Nation Cultural Heritage Association, Conservation Council SA and the work of dedicated individual professionals (historians, archaeologists, arborists and engineers). Knowledge and reason have provided the cornerstone of a campaign to protect and preserve the environment and heritage of this much loved Park.

A minority pro dam lobby are now calling for a dam in Ellison's Gully (Site 2), arguing that the No Dam petition does not apply there. It would be prudent for the pro dam lobby to use knowledge and reason when assessing Ellison's Gully, rather than making another rash and uninformed decision. **The creek in Ellison's Gully is in fact a major tributary of Brownhill Creek and therefore our No Dam Petition, with over 10,000 signatories, applies equally to Ellison's Gully. It is *one* creek**

**environment.** The original wording of our petition is “we the undersigned, hereby Petition Council to protect the environment and heritage of Brownhill Creek by opposing the damming of the creek”. **The clear intention of our petition has always been to stop a dam anywhere in the upper reaches of Brownhill Creek,** in line with the geographical reference provided in the five council agreement of May 2012.

We should remember that Site 2 was previously rejected, as part of a flawed 2006 ‘Master Plan’. A dam at this site has always proven to be more expensive, with access problems and the same two years of disruption to residents and local business during construction. State heritage listed Aboriginal rock art, along with documented mining and market gardening heritage, are worthy of preservation. Up to ten years of dedicated research has been carried out in Ellison’s Gully, with the involvement of the Flinders University Department of Archaeology, Mitcham Council Heritage Committee and the Mitcham Historical Society. Mitcham Waterworks, which supplied reticulated water to Mitcham and Unley from 1879 to the 1930’s, is currently being restored and there are possible plans to establish a public heritage trail, linking Brownhill Creek Recreation Park to the Mitcham Water Works site at the head of Ellison’s Gully. Such a trail would be a boon for recreation, education and tourism.

**A fear campaign, based on misinformation, is being waged by a minority of creek owners. We urge you to critically assess their claims and to carefully consider the Project Technical Report when it is released.** 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. We realize that the issue of present and future access agreements is critical to any acceptance by creek owners. 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 *Urban Creeks: A Property Owner’s Guide To Managing Healthy Urban Creeks*, endorsed by Mitcham and Unley Councils. Doing nothing is not an option for affected creek owners. **A Creek Capacity Upgrade in critical sections of urban Brownhill Creek, along with general maintenance and rehabilitation, has to happen anyway.** An expensive and destructive dam is no panacea for these essential flood mitigation works.

**We have been told by an Unley Council elected member that “this is about politics not facts”. Our Steering Committee remains confident that Mitcham Councillors will base their decisions on factual information, fiscal responsibility and the greater good, not on minority ‘self-interest’ or political posturing.**

**Your vote will be crucial in ensuring the custodianship of our community’s environment and heritage, whilst supporting responsible flood mitigation.**

Regards,

Ron Bellchambers on behalf of the Steering Committee:

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

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