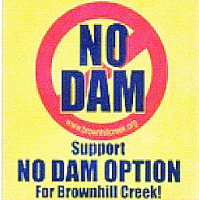

**No Dam
for
Mitcham**



**News
Page**

By
Ron Bellchambers

It's Time To Be Counted!

The No Dam campaign has been running for three years and will continue into 2015. A possible public consultation this year, however, could significantly influence the final decision on a No Dam solution.

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 No Dam community preference.
- If the feasible Creek Capacity Upgrade option is more cost effective, then councils should consult on the Creek Capacity Upgrade option only, make a final decision and get on with 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 as such our No Dam Petition, with over 10,000 signatories, applies to Ellison's Gully.*** 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.

Julie Hogan, as chairperson of the Mitcham Historical Society, wrote the following statement in the MHS, No Dam Letter of Support: "we as custodians of our current environment have a duty to make intelligent decisions for the benefit of future generations to come. The history that we have all around us exists only from the protection and preservation by others before us".

The Project Technical Report should be released by mid-August. Please access it on your council website, read it thoroughly and make an informed decision about the Creek Capacity Upgrade option. If you support this No Dam option then please make your voice heard in the upcoming community consultation. ***Your vote will be crucial in ensuring the custodianship of our community's environment and heritage, whilst supporting responsible flood mitigation.***

It's time to be counted!

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