

## **Australia Day 2016 Citizen of the Year Mitcham Council**

His Excellency, the Honorable Hieu Van Le, Mayor Glenn Spear, Lady Mayoress, Mitcham Councillors and Staff, Dignitaries, Invited Guests and fellow Australians:

*I am both honoured and grateful to accept the Citizen of the Year Award on behalf of the many community members involved in the campaign and as a representative of Brownhill Creek Association.*

We are fortunate to live in a harmonious multi-cultural society, surrounded by a beautiful environment and rich cultural heritage.

Our quality of life is dependent on these community values and assets.

Over the past 4 years it has been a privilege to work with so many committed volunteers and community groups in documenting and protecting our local environment and heritage, while advocating a feasible, cost effective and environmental solution for flood mitigation.

Conservation Council SA, the National Trust of South Australia and Wilderness Society SA all played an important role at State level, but much of the work involved a close collaboration with local groups such as the Friends of Brownhill Creek, Mitcham Historical Society, Brownhill Creek Association and the Blackwood/Belair and District Community Association.

One of the most rewarding collaborations is with the Kurna Nation Cultural Heritage Association, which actively seeks the documentation and protection of Aboriginal Heritage along Willa Willa or Brownhill Creek and the restoration of the waterway.

On Australia Day it is important to acknowledge the First Australians and value local, living Kurna Cultural Heritage. With us today is Jeffrey Newchurch, chair of the KNCHA and Lynette Crocker, vice-chair. Please join me in applauding their dedicated work in helping indigenous communities and forging bonds with the wider Australian community.

We are also fortunate to live in a democracy where the community is free to express its views and have factual opinions considered and acted upon by government authorities.

Our current and past Mitcham Council Elected Members, including Mayor Glenn Spear and former Mayor Michael Picton, diligently represented their community and worked constructively with the other four catchment councils and the Stormwater Project, to achieve a historic five council agreement. As a result a no dam option for upper Brownhill Creek has been approved and the finalisation of a complete Brown Hill Keswick Creek Stormwater Management Plan is underway. Our State Member for Waite, Martin Hamilton-Smith MP and the Federal Member for Boothby Dr. Andrew Southcott MP also played a supportive role in this outcome.

Brownhill Creek Association (BCA), guided by Chairperson Professor Wayne Meyer and a skilled Steering Committee, intends to continue working in partnership with key stakeholders to develop extended recreational and heritage walking trails, educational programs, local tourism initiatives and re-vegetation projects in Brownhill Creek Valley, Ellison's Gully and adjoining areas. BCA will lobby for State and Federal funding needed to ensure the implementation of the BHKC Stormwater Management Plan and will keep its word to make sure the no dam option for upper Brownhill Creek benefits the environment and community, including creek owners.

Now that the Brownhill Creek valleys have been saved, the enhancement of our environment and heritage will be ongoing, benefiting not only locals, but also the tens of thousands of annual visitors and tourists.

Finally I would like to thank my friends and family, especially my wife Diane, daughter Alina and mother Audrey, for their patience and support over the last four years. I also wish to acknowledge Peter Collins and Maggie Ragless who gave so much and died during the campaign.

I dedicate this award to my late father who served Australia with distinction in World War 2, was a solid Australian citizen and died tragically on this day in 1974.

Thank You