



Mt Barker & District Residents' Association Inc.

PO Box 19 Mount Barker, South Australia 5251

For the Community

27 March 2020

Mr Phil Burton
General Manager Infrastructure
Mt Barker District Council
Dutton Road, Mt Barker 5251

Dear Phil

RE: Watercourse Management Policy

The Mount Barker and District Residents' Association (MBDRA) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Watercourse Management Plan for Mount Barker distributed by Mount Barker District Council for public consultation.

As an overview of watercourse management in Mt Barker, this draft Management Plan is an excellent, detailed document. It is well written and comprehensive. Council staff, along with the author should be commended for the work undertaken. We note the scope of the plan focuses on waterways in Mount Barker and some surrounding areas. The division into various sections identifying various issues, needing to be addressed, is to be applauded. We also support the objectives listed on page nine.

The on-ground investigation has been clearly very thorough, and the concentration on the core Mt Barker creek lines is understandable. The stated aims and methodology are logical and appropriate. The recommendation for revegetation in anticipation of exotic tree removal is thoroughly endorsed.

The comments in 'Tributary Creeks' section, to 'engage local residents', should be expanded upon. In the heady days of 'Landcare' there were many local groups involved with on-the-ground works. Although these have continued under Goolwa-Wellington LAP, the development of similar, township-based groups, taking care of/responsibility for particular sections of the watercourse network within the expanded town boundaries, should be considered by Council. We would be happy to discuss this further with you.

Furthermore, as hinted at in the draft, the integration of flora with wider wildlife care would give a broader canvas for these resident groups. Integration with school communities may also be possible. Not only bird species, but other wildlife, from reptiles to marsupials, bats and insects, could be part of a practical education and protection programme. The watercourses, as wildlife corridors, could be the central focus of such groups, across the community.

Of particular concern are the new residential areas, where developer economic constraints may not be capable of managing the detailed planning necessary for an ecologically successful environment. These areas do not appear in this report, and although good guidelines are no doubt in place, an integrated approach to the upper reaches of the watercourses/wildlife corridors would seem appropriate.

A few minor issues need addressing. There could be some confusion over the references to 'Silver Wattle'. While 'Acacia retinodes' is referred to as 'Silver Wattle' in the tables, it is also called 'Wirilda' in the text. 'Silver Wattle' is also commonly applied to *Acacia dealbata*, which is not indigenous to South Australia and not recommended here. In Table 5.1, planting density would seem to be '1000/ha' and '10000/ha'.

Watercourse management in Mount Barker has been a topical issue, for some, in the local community over many years. We urge Council to consider continuation of broad engagement with the public in relation to the plan and with any implementation of works. For example, the removal of larger exotic trees along linear parks and waterways - previous removals have seen some areas left open and quite barren with residents voicing concerns.

We support moves taken to remove exotic weeds and smaller exotic trees along local waterways and to address matters relating to other plants for example Bulrushes and Reeds mentioned on page 54. Any revegetation work is to be applauded, encouraged and funded. We believe such works need to be backed up by good levels of Council finance and resourcing enabling ongoing regular maintenance and survival in the longer term. The plan highlights, via photographs, some areas along waterways where plants have simply not survived. These will need replacing in the future.

Many development applications, approved by the Council, have seen buildings built very close to waterways in Mount Barker. This has potential for negative impacts on the waterways. MBDRAs welcomes any action in planning changes, taken by the Council, to benefit local waterways and the environment to protect both from urban development.

We have some concerns in relation to native trees that are either dying, in poor condition or falling over. We encourage communication from Council in terms of large native trees in these circumstances given the low percentage of such trees remaining in the Mount Barker District Council area. It is essential these are protected and nurtured to continue beyond our generation.

We applaud the new interpretive signage and requests MBDC consider the development of policy in relation to signage in environmentally sensitive areas bringing uniformity across the area. The National Parks and Wildlife Service in Australia can provide excellent examples.

One very large River Red Gum, with an historical plaque, is referred to in the plan. The need to promote the tree regarding its biodiversity values and its pre- and post-European heritage is discussed. The MBDRAs endorses this and encourages further discussion with Council. As the plaque on the tree is also of heritage value, the MBDRAs would like to see the plaque retained and restored. We understand the National Trust may be addressing this, but if not, we would be willing to contribute to its cleaning and possible relocation lower on posts (not on the tree) so that people can actually read the text. It is such a significant historical site it warrants some attention.

Fauna Monitoring, on page 72, highlights some excellent examples of fauna monitoring programs involving the wider community. The MBDRA supports similar environmental programs being available locally perhaps financed through grants.

Thank you again for this opportunity of raising this plan to Council and the community.

Yours sincerely

DE van Eck

Dianne van Eck
Chairperson