

Brooklands presentation

Slide 1 – Title

Slide 2 – *Our property on Brooklands Drive*

Hi, I'm Sue. My family lives on Brooklands Drive in Henley Brook with a couple of horses. We bought our block in 2014 as we wanted a quiet semi-rural lifestyle with a reasonable commute to our jobs. We built everything from scratch – shed, water tank, fencing and house, and moved in at the end of 2016.

Slide 3 – *favourite trees in the front paddock*

We did our homework before we bought and were told there was no development happening. We only found out about it after we bought, so there is whole other story about countless meetings with the local council, rallies at Parliament House, meetings at a Ministers Office and Department of Planning because we were never consulted about whether we would stay and why a road and Public Open Space (POS) were drawn right on top of our new house.

Slide 4 – *Part of the development map – POS and a road through our new house*

Fast forward to 2022 and more intense impact from the development began. The east end of Brooklands drive was closed and development near Brooklands commenced. We had a limestone track as an exit for fire safety.

Slide 5 – *Rubbish along our fenceline*

Right across from us more works were happening and once the houses started being built a constant stream of rubbish would blow over onto our fence and into the paddocks. I picked up wheelbarrow loads at least twice a week for many months.

Slide 6 - *Map of closures – we are in the middle of this mess. Dates clearly show June to Oct*

In mid-2024 Brooklands was closed again, and when we asked the council for information about what was happening, we received a map

which showed all the road closures in our immediate area, not only for development, but also installation of a deep sewer, which would follow Brooklands Drive around our entire front boundary. The works directly in front of us were marked to be completed between June and October 2024.

Slide 7 – *deep pits with dewatering machines near our eastern boundary*

Works didn't start until September. The road was closed and a series of pits deep enough for huge digging machines to disappear into were dug, to the east of us then progressively right along our front boundary. They went way over time, right through summer.

Slide 8 – *deep pit near the front of our property*

These pits had dewatering machines running in them 24/7. The average dewatering machine each pumps out 750,000 litres of water a day, and they had 4 or more in each pit. This contractor did not use filtration ponds but instead was pumping the water into the stormwater system. Millions upon millions of litres of water, every day, for 6 months.

I was concerned at this practice and didn't think it could be right so I contacted the council – and was told it was ok. I contacted the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) and got the same. I wanted them to come and inspect but nobody did.

The air constantly stank of diesel and the noise was constant and irritating, we could hear it all night.

Slide 9 – *dirt track – green marks show where the roots of trees had been cut.*

The civil works company made a dirt track for their vehicles, us and our neighbour. This involved cutting the roots of several large trees along our fenceline (green lines in photo). The rubbish truck and mail constantly missed us and we were forever ringing the council about the bins not being emptied.

Slide 10 – *water being pumped into the stormwater drain*

By the time we got to December the pumps had been running for months. The groundwater that would normally slowly seep through on its way downstream was being pulled through unnaturally, then being dumped somewhere else. There was flooding nearby on Park Street properties, in summer.

Side 11 - *first trees to be affected on the eastern end*

I started to notice the trees looking odd, changing colour, losing leaves and then by the time we got into late December they started going downhill very rapidly. The pumps were off over Christmas for a couple of weeks and that's when we believe the salt seeped up as the groundwater tried to equalise.

Slides 12 & 13 – *trees started dying*

The first tree to start dying looked completely dead within a couple of weeks and it progressed along our boundary, down Diane Place and up the western end of Brooklands Drive.

We took samples of the water from a couple of the pits and had them analysed by ChemCentre. Results showed too salty in one, and contaminated by diesel in another. We had the trees checked for several diseases, including shothole borer and it was all negative.

Slide 14 – *diesel spill in groundwater*

We wrote to the council, we contacted the civil works company and they did start to water the trees with a truck, but it was inconsistent and intermittent. The civil works company must have felt some sense of responsibility to provide the truck, and they got an arborist to do a report. He recommended 500 litres of potable water per tree every second day, seasol and soil wetter fortnightly.

Slide 15 – *Aerial shot of our boundary showing dead trees*

They were watered maybe twice a week, sometimes once, as the water contractor had other commitments, and we ended up putting one dose of soil wetter on ourselves. Seasol was only done once that we know of. They did not even follow their own arborists instructions. When they finished the works at the end of March we had more than 20 dead or

dying trees and they abruptly stopped watering the trees despite the council trying to get them to continue. It was out of sight, out of mind.

During this time we had multiple phone calls and meetings with the council and with the developers and always felt our concerns were brushed aside.

Slide 16 – *before and after – full canopy cover around boundary, and after, huge gaps*

We were left with a sewer going past us that we weren't even connected to, and several trees, most more than 15 metres tall, devoid of leaves, dead or dying. We got an arborist to do a thorough analysis. Trees have value. Their height and canopy increases their value. Using the Helliwell System, which is also used by government, our trees were valued at up to \$90,000 per tree.

Slide 17 – *the trees died within a week of first showing stress*

The arborist conclusion was the same as ours – dewatering was the likely culprit, but cutting the roots and putting heavy objects on the root zone contributed to damage to our property and the amenity of the entire eastern end of Brooklands Drive.

So we decided we didn't want them to get away with it and contacted a lawyer. We started a Freedom of Information (FOI) process to get documents from the council and DWER. The documents from the council contained no paperwork for anything near our property, or in the same timeframe. It was like there was a black hole of information. We had nothing that said the contractor had approval to close the road or dispose of water into the stormwater system. So we essentially drew a blank there. We noted that during that time two different people left the FOI job at City of Swan.

Slide 18 – *Pit showing our internet cable, and the natural level of the groundwater*

DWER took many months of delays and when we finally got the information there was no evidence of a licence to remove that much water by the contractor who was working in front of us. According to DWER regulations, you can only pump water without a licence for up to

30 days. So for the volume and time these pumps were running, they should have had one. There is a document that sets out acceptable practices for this situation, called 'Water Quality Protection Note 13, Dewatering of soils at construction sites', or WQPN-13. The civil works company failed to follow several of those.

Slide 19 – *flooding near Park Street at the same time as water was being pumped into the stormwater system*

They did not use a filtration pond, and we believe the flooding that occurred near Park Street could be attributed to the millions upon millions of litres of water that was pumped into the stormwater system, and without proper treatment.

While waiting for the FOI from DWER we did a lot of research ourselves and found many planning documents for the development, including the 'Henley Brook Local Structure Plan' and the 'Local Water Management Strategy'. These have guidelines for managing groundwater, trees and private property. Essentially, all works should be monitored, private property protected, and if anything goes wrong work should stop until a solution is found.

I believe the contractors do not follow these documents. One of the biggest problems we have seen is the complete lack of responsibility and oversight – from the worker on the ground, to the supervisor, the council and State Government departments – nothing is checked or monitored.

We still have almost 20 either dead or severely damaged trees. A couple have started sprouting from the base but it will take 20 years for them to get back to what they once were, and in the meantime we have tonnes of dead trunks and branches on our property, many are too large to remove and dispose of ourselves. Some of the smaller ones, like the one in the next photo, we have had to manage ourselves.

Slide 20 – *dead branches on fence after winter storm*

We were quoted \$65,000 by a contractor to fix something that somebody else did. The dead trees are also a risk to the fences, powerline and horses that live in the paddocks. We have asked the council for help with this and have been ignored.

Slide 21 - *Pic of the horses standing under dead trees*

During these works, a wild kangaroo jumped into our property, disoriented by all the temporary fencing and machinery everywhere. She has lived in our horses' paddock for more than a year now. She had a boyfriend who would come and visit, jump in and jump out of our property every now and then. We found him dead on the road last week.

Brooklands Drive on our end is now ugly. What was once pleasant, green, shady and welcoming is now starkly lined with dead trees – and with every tree that is cleared, there is less evidence of what has been done to the groundwater. Where is the tree canopy protection? Where is the care for our environment?