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Bellbird creek threat feared

RUMORS about the future of Board of Works land between Pakenham and Main Sts. in Blackburn have confused and angered people living nearby.

Residents say they have been trying for months without success to get a firm commitment from the MMBW about what it plans to do with the land.

The two-hectare piece of land includes the head waters of Gardiner's Creek.

Parts of it are zoned "proposed public open space" and the rest has a stream and floodway zoning.

Residents suspect the MMBW could be planning to rezone the land from open space to residential 'C' and then sub-divide it for building blocks.

Others are worried that plans could be under way to barrel drain the creek, which runs the length of the area.

They say nearby streets could then be extended through the area and cluster housing developments introduced.

One resident, who refused to be named, told The Standard: "Once the whole area is cut up the birds would all disappear and so would three-quarters of the trees, and the whole area would turn into another Richmond."

"It certainly wouldn't be the bellbird area any more."

About 60 people who attended a public meeting last week were annoyed by a lack of straight information available from the Board of Works.

Several speakers complained about being "duckshoved" and "shuffled from department to department" when they contacted the board.

People attending the meeting have formed the Blackburn Creek action group, which has a steering committee with Malcolm St. resident Mr Graham Burgess as its spokesman.

The action group intends to obtain the facts from the Board of Works and will then call a further meeting to inform other residents.

Nunawading Cr David McKittrick has objected strongly to the way residents have been treated by the board.

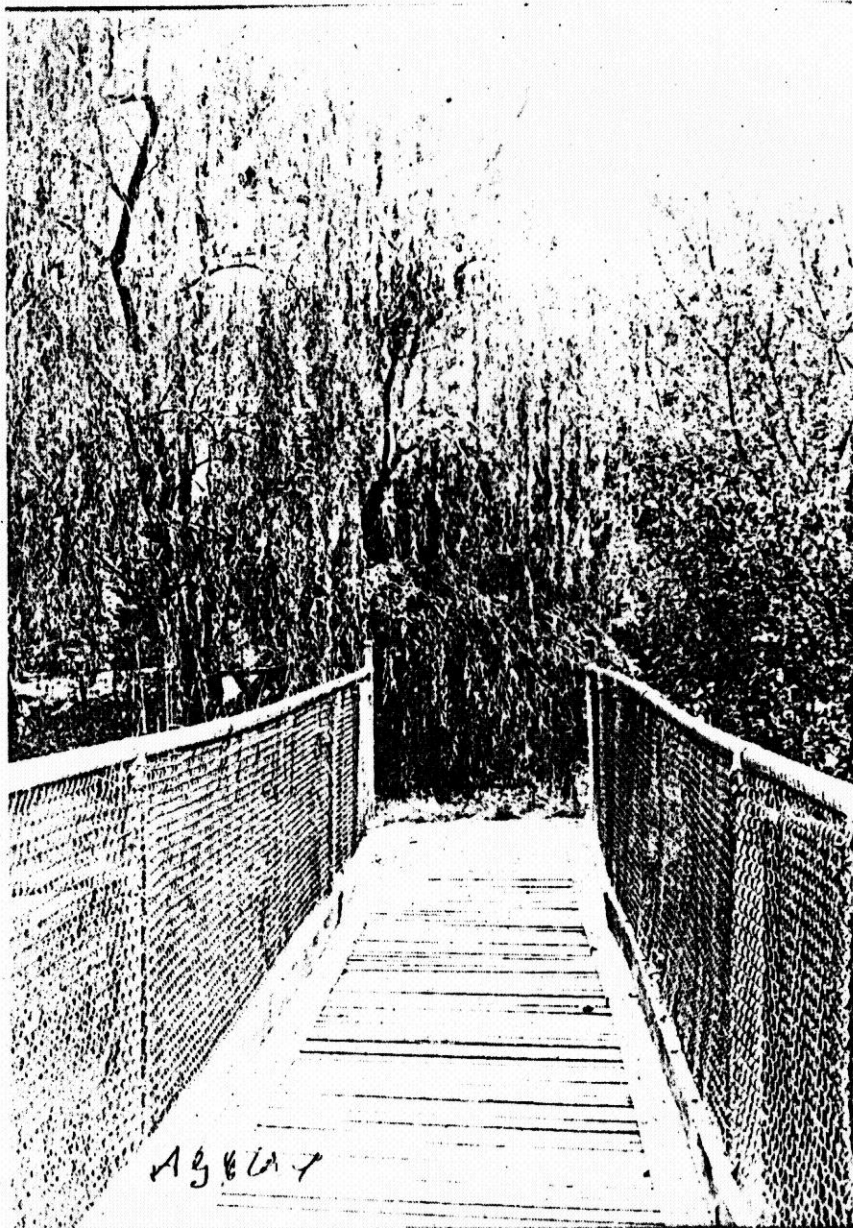
"The Board of Works doesn't have effective local representation so the average Joe Blow hasn't got an effective point of contact," he said.

"All he can do is talk to bureaucrats."

Cr McKittrick said Nunawading's area commissioner for the Board of Works, Cr Will Renfrey, was not even told of developments in the area.

"The Board of Works is both the owner of the land and the planning authority and this enables it to make decisions without public consultations," he said.

Cr McKittrick said the council would ask the Planning Minister, Mr Lou Lieberman, to make sure there was proper public participation in any decision to change the zoning of the area.



PART of the tranquil open land in Blackburn that could be threatened by MMBW moves.