

Bridge Of Sighs

Chapel Hill Residents call on BCC to replace a pedestrian access Bridge.

Residents of St James Estate in Chapel Hill are calling on Brisbane City Council and the Queensland Government to allow the community to replace the former pedestrian bridge linking the estate to Kenmore Plaza - entirely at the residents' own expense.

The bridge, which connected St James Estate to nearby shops and services for more than 30 years, was closed by Brisbane City Council in October 2023 and later removed in April 2024 following structural concerns. Residents say they have spent years working cooperatively with Council to secure a solution that would preserve access while removing any financial burden from ratepayers.

Since 2019, the St James Estate Body Corporate has repeatedly offered to assume responsibility for the bridge, including maintenance, repair and replacement costs. Legal correspondence from Cooper Grace Ward Lawyers confirmed the residents' willingness to "take on responsibility and cost for its maintenance."

Council records obtained under Right to Information further confirm that Brisbane City Council officers acknowledged the Body Corporate's willingness to maintain and rebuild the bridge. Internal Council documents state that the Body Corporate proposed to "demolish and rebuild the bridge" and offered ongoing financial contributions toward the structure.

In March 2022, Brisbane City Council formally accepted that the bridge was a Council asset and confirmed that it was Council's responsibility to maintain it and keep it "fit for purpose".

However, in more recent correspondence, Council has stated that Boblynne Street Park is "not intended or suitable for public access or recreational use" and that it primarily serves as drainage infrastructure. Residents argue that this change in position strengthens the case for allowing a privately funded replacement bridge rather than leaving the community permanently disconnected.

Residents say the issue is not about seeking public funding, but about being allowed to restore an important community connection that gave disabled residents and young families with prams and walkers continuing access at no cost to taxpayers.

"The residents are simply asking for the opportunity to replace the bridge themselves," a spokesperson for the St James Estate residents said.

"We are willing to fund the design, construction, maintenance and ongoing management of a replacement bridge. What we are seeking is cooperation, not public money," said a representative from the St James Estate.

Residents note that the bridge was originally constructed as part of the estate's development approval and has provided safe pedestrian access to local businesses and services since the early 1990s. Historical records also show that the Deed of Agreement associated with the original development stated that the bridge works would vest in Council upon completion and that Council would thereafter be responsible for maintenance.

The residents of St James Estate community are now seeking intervention from the Department of Resources and State Land Asset Management to allow an alternative tenure arrangement, including the possibility of an easement or other approval mechanism that would permit a replacement bridge to proceed without cost to the public.

Residents say they remain hopeful that a practical solution can still be achieved through cooperation between the community, Council and the State Government.