

4.3 Buckland Park

4.3.1 *The problem—Buckland Park*

In 2003, South Australian-based property developer Vosporos proposed a 100ha residential development at Buckland Park and sought Major Development Status. This initial proposal was rejected by the Governor who made an “Early No” decision under the Development Act 1993 (Government of South Australia 1993) for several reasons. The area was low-lying and flood prone from the Gawler River; there was also a lack of available potable water and infrastructure to service the development.

Following this planning refusal Vosporos sold their Buckland Park land holding to a partnership: Sydney based Walker Corporation (one of the largest residential property developers in Australia with international branches), and local developer Day Corp. This partnership then acquired more land in the Buckland Park area. In late 2006 the Walker/Day Corporation partnership launched a new proposal for a 1300ha township which included a medical centre, schools, and community recreation facilities. On 4 January 2007 the then Planning Minister, Paul Holloway, granted Major Development Status. Critics of the Buckland Park proposal, such as Greens MLC Mark Parnell, alluded to the corruption of government decision making processes and cronyism. Both partners had made donations to the Labor Party (the party in government at the time) and Lang Walker attended a Labor Party fundraising dinner in 2011 (Martin 2011).

4.3.2 *The proposal—Buckland Park*

Buckland Park is a 1,308ha residential property development 32 kilometres north of the Adelaide CBD. The development is planned to comprise 12,000 residential homes each with an average allotment size of 500m². Currently this site is used for low intensity agricultural grazing and horticultural production (see Figure 12).

To adapt to the risks associated with sea level rise the Buckland Park development will be staged over 25 years. This temporal aspect of the development sees the South-Western corner of the land parcel as the last to be developed; it is the lowest lying parcel and most at risk from SLR. These spatial and temporal components of the Buckland Park development recognise that ‘the long term actual effect of sea level rise will require monitoring to determine whether any additional protective works are required’ (Government of South

Australia 2010a, p. 75); and whether or not the South-Western section development goes ahead at all.

4.3.3 The place—Buckland Park

The Buckland Park development is located on the Western boundary of the City of Playford. It is bounded by the arterial Port Wakefield Road to the east, Cheetham Ltd Salt Pans to the South-West and the Gawler River to the North (Figure 11).

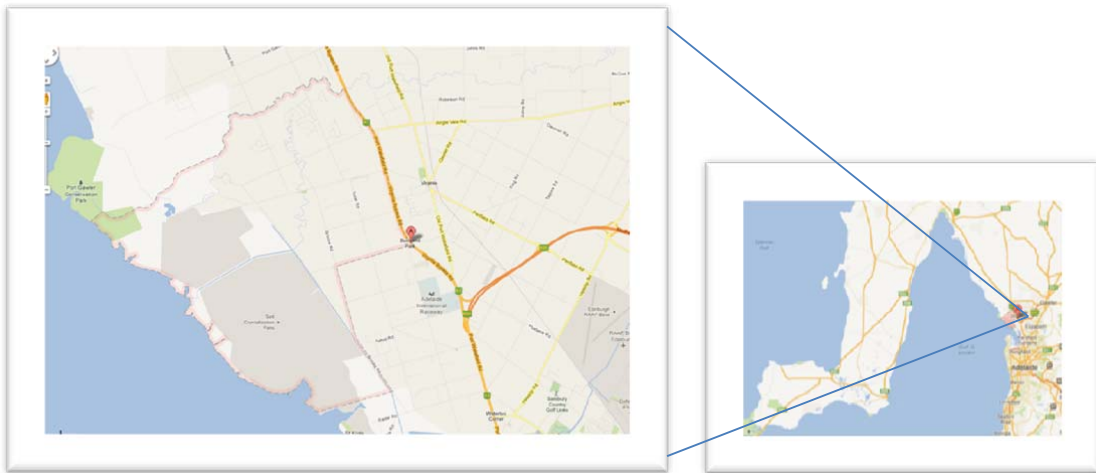


Figure 11: Location map Buckland Park Township (Source Google Maps 2013)

The site of the development proposal is generally flat but gently slopes towards the coastal zone from East to West. The coastal boundary of the Buckland Park proposal lies between Port Gawler and St Kilda. Residential development is proposed to commence at a distance of approximately 2.5 to 4km from Gulf St Vincent.

This region is part of an important coastal wetland that features tidal samphire flats, mangrove forests, mudflats, and sea grass meadows. This coastal eco-system supports dolphins, commercial fish species, crustaceans, leafy sea dragons, and resident and migratory waterbirds (Figure 12) (COOE 2008, p. 4).



*Figure 12: Buckland Park site with Gulf of St Vincent in the distance
(Source: University of Adelaide: School of Chemistry and Physics, n.d.)*

4.3.4 The decision making process—Buckland Park

As explained in the introduction to this case study, Buckland Park took a circuitous route through the planning system. The second Buckland Park proposal was co-terminus with an era in State level planning that was seeking to facilitate Adelaide’s urban expansion. The Labor State government identified the need to strategically plan for future demographic growth. South Australia’s 30 Year Strategic Plan for Greater Adelaide (Government of South Australia, 2010b) identified peri-urban zones of McLaren Vale in the South, Mount Barker in the East and the triangle between Buckland Park, Gawler and Edinburgh Airport in the North for housing expansion. Hence the Buckland Park proposal met a number of interrelated government objectives: since 1992 Northern Adelaide had been identified as an area of planned urban expansion (Lennon 2000, p. 193); it met the goal of increasing housing supply to maintain Adelaide’s affordability and interstate competitiveness (Government of South Australia, 2010b, p. 75); and brought a large inter-state developer with expertise in large-scale housing development into the Adelaide housing market, enhancing competition between developers (Interview ID27, 2012).

The scale of the Buckland Park development triggered the highest level of environmental scrutiny under the Major Development process. Accordingly, Walker Corporation (who had

bought out the Day Corporation stake), were required to produce an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). As part of the development assessment process, the South Australian Development Assessment Commission (DAC) consulted with relevant government departments including the Environmental Protection Agency and Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). The EIS listed a range of environmental issues that need to be addressed by the proponent. Two major environmental threats to the Buckland Park development were identified. First, as the site is located on the edge of the Gawler River Flood Plain extensive engineering works will have to be built into the site to manage the flood risk. Second, Buckland Park's South-Western corner is linked to Gulf St Vincent via the Thompson Outflow Channel which runs through Cheethams Salt Pans (City of Playford, 2009, p. 245). This channel presents an inundation risk to dwellings from the increased frequency and intensity of tidal surges under projected SLR scenarios. The Marine and Coastal assessment component of the Buckland Park EIS conducted by environmental consultants COOE (2008, p. 30) for Walker Corporation also identified the coastal risks of:

- Increased intensity and frequency of storm surges and coastal flooding
- Increased salinity of rivers and coastal aquifers
- Increased coastal erosion
- Loss of mangroves and samphire flats
- Increased sedimentation and impact on marine eco-systems.

4.3.5 The SNA—Buckland Park

Data collection took place between February and May 2012. Using secondary data sources and names generated from interviews, 12 people were identified and contacted. Eleven interviews were conducted. Interviewees included the former Planning Minister, a DAC employee, the coastal environmental consultant, a consulting engineer, CPB staff, City of Playford planners and councillors, and Walker Corporation's urban design planner. The interview process identified 48 actors in the Buckland Park Development. Notably, a former senior state manager, who was identified as responsible for co-ordinating the EIS process, was unable to be contacted as he had recently retired.

4.3.6 The key players—Buckland Park

As Buckland Park was brought into the formal planning systems through its Major Development status, the key players in the decision making process included: the Planning Minister, Cabinet, the Development Assessment Commission, Walker Corporation,

CPB/DENR, environmental consultants, engineering consultants, and the local council City of Playford. The decision-making process required Walker Corporation to address how the development proposal would address the issues raised in the EIS. To do so, Walker Corporation employed specialist consultants to prepare reports replying to Government Department concerns, which were then submitted to the DAC. The final EIS document was then assessed by the State Cabinet, with the final decision approved by the Governor of South Australia.

4.3.7 Network Form—Buckland Park

The individual network map (Figure 13) illustrates there a number of wheel-star forms on the periphery connecting to a core group of more densely connected nodes. This feature reflects the role of consultants and state departments feeding information into core decision-makers. The institutional map (figure 11) identifies a clique-like form at the centre of the network. This aspect of the network includes a state bureaucrat charged with managing the EIA process, the DAC, and Walker Corporation.

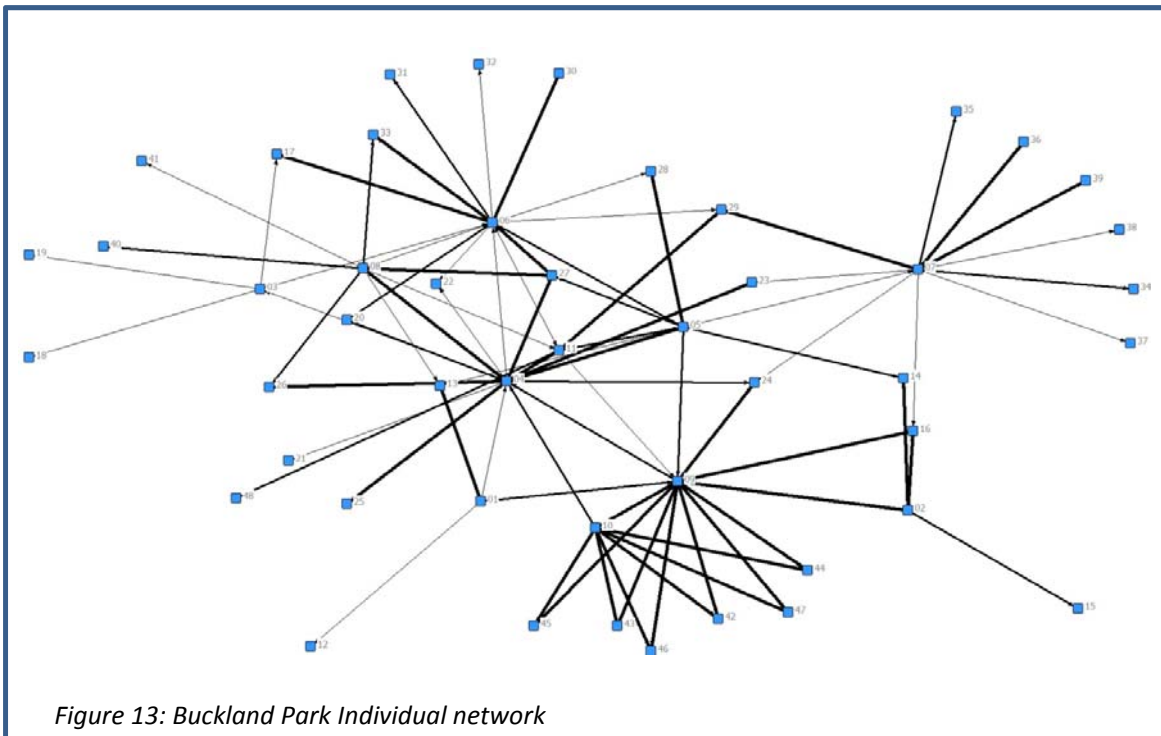
4.3.7.1 Density—Buckland Park

The Buckland Park case study reveals a relatively low density measure of 0.6 reflecting a large network. Due to the requirement for an EIS there were many government departments and private consultants on the periphery of the network feeding information into the more densely connected core group of actors at the centre of the map. Considering this low measure there must be some key actors who played key co-ordinating roles in bringing information from the low density periphery to the decision-making centre.

4.3.7.2 Centrality—Buckland Park

In navigating the Buckland Park development through the EIA process, Walker Corporation's Planner held the highest betweenness centrality score (235.67), followed by: DAC planner (121.33); City of Playford Planner (108.5); state government bureaucrat co-ordinating the EIS (98.66); a CPB officer (83) and the Minister of Planning (67.84). At the centre of the individual network map (figure 13) is a triangular shaped clique including the Walker Corporation planner, the DAC planner and the state government bureaucrat co-ordinating the EIS. The role of these central actors was to govern the network by aligning the government's environmental protection demands with developer expectations in a

negotiated manner. Such formal processes produced a hierarchical relation between components of the network. The actors with high betweenness centrality scores acted as brokers of information by co-ordinating information inputs from consultants and state departments. From a connectionist view point, the actors with the highest betweenness centrality scores were key nodes who drew on information and resources from the periphery of the network, and then worked together to produce the EIS addressing Buckland Park's exposure to coastal risks.



4.3.8 Conclusion—Buckland Park

The Buckland park case study suggests the actors with high betweenness centrality scores were efficient conduits of information between state assessors and the developer. These central positions also reflected their institutional positions in the EIA process. However, there were a number of caveats placed upon development approval. The Minister of Planning's Assessment Report (Government of South Australia 2010a: 32) recommended a minimum site level of 4.0m and a building level of 4.25m AHD (a policy in accordance with the CPB policies for coastal flooding protection to 2050 and 2100). The Assessment Report contains adaptation measures through the 'recognition that there is plenty of land to build low level levees (below 1m in height) along the Western boundary of the lower level land at

