

Silverwater Creek : A Sanctuary of Life, or a Cemetery of Forgotten Souls

53-year-old Adam Smith, founder of Smith Toxicology, pensively holds a photograph of himself as a child, wading in these very waters that once embraced him with warmth, the waves caressing him with jubilation. As he stands now on the bank of this grim wasteland, a torrent of nostalgic anguish inundated him, as he uttered the words, “This river is not what it once was. It is a distorted nightmare, a blinded monstrosity now – this is death now.” Withered skeletons of once flourishing species now lie as fossils, eternally trapped in the relentless river current. An unsettling silence of betrayal replaces the vibrant symphony of life that once flourished here. Our children deserve better.

Laboratory analysis conducted by the Bureau of Environmental Services show that a staggering 93.64% of the 500 samples cause skin rash on contact, the rest causing severe swelling. Long exposure to the multiple cyanotoxins that abode in the waters, such as Microcystins, emerging from the algae, promotes tumour growth which increases the risk of cancer. These toxins can also cause gastrointestinal discomfort and food poisoning. Other natural toxins in the waters such as arsenic and lead are extremely detrimental to one’s health and can cause acute poisoning leading to symptoms of vomiting and diarrhoea. Children around the area even report strange unseen skin conditions, unknown to dermatological experts, as if nuclear radiation swarms them. 2nd degree skin burns occur in this minor town of Silverwater Heights, all residents urged to leave the area.

Dr. Felix Kane proclaims that “Over the course of the past three years, 53% of youth poisoning is caused by extended exposure to contaminated waters, this number insidiously growing higher through time. This number correlates with the pollution levels in Australia, indicating a link between these variables.” Disturbingly, children living 300 metres away from this river can experience skin rash and acute poisoning, and children living two kilometres away from this river experience itching and severe swelling. Not just our children, but generations to come will face the impact that we created.

The creek’s deterioration is etching a laceration through the community’s collective heart, contaminating our lives as well as itself. The intoxicating miasma of the metallic mephitic stream of blood running down the river sends intrusive toxins that invisibly infiltrate the air. “In place of the soothing heartbeat that our once vibrant creek provided, I now hear elegies of a funeral”, ten year old child, Allan Thomper says, his voice cracking in miserability.

Just 3 years ago, this stream became a battlefield, its waves tantalising the dead bodies instead of caressing them. The vigilant heartbeat of the river is now being artificially mimicked by the tyrannic pulsation of industrialisation. “These are the very waters where I, my parents, and my grandparents once played. To steal our descendants’ right to this playground, to corrupt the river with immoral factories—blinded by profit—that is inhumane,” a concerned parent expresses, his voice heavy with anguish at the sight of the creek’s pollution.

Opponents of rehabilitating this river may argue that installing filters will threaten to imbalance economic stability, claiming that continued industrial activity ensures a steady flow of income, compared to the potential economic crisis that may happen. I respect this argument as it acknowledges real-world problems such as money and it considers the benefits and negatives of both. However, I believe that we should filter the stream, as the diseases and symptoms that could happen are unknown to the medical world, an enigma to what money can solve. Additionally, the pain of these skin conditions outweighs any possible profit that could be gained.

As Emily Brown, a caring mother tearfully recounts, “After curiously touching the water, my poor four-year-old daughter developed rashes that tormented her throughout the night – furiously itching at three seemingly innocent red spots etched into her skin. She makes her rash swell, and then cries herself to sleep. What kind of mother could experience this suffering, knowing that there is an easy solution?” Furthermore, by polluting the river, investment properties and property value that is within the neighbourhood has been plummeting at an average of 41% per year. This value is interconnected with the general lack of interest towards this area as the river causes severe symptoms. The economic argument, though based on a strong premise, is outweighed by the consequences of failing to filter Silverwater Creek, also flawed by the decrease of property value.

Silverwater Creek is not beyond saving. Now, with the use of cleaning technologies and environmental restoration methods laying on our palms, we can reverse the harm. But technology alone is not the answer. It takes united commitment, united action, a united community. We can rejuvenate the souls that had once called this perished paradise home. Our children must not hear of a rumoured now forsaken paradise. Our children must not inherit a corrupted realm that fell because of humanity’s ignorance. Our children must not touch a shadowed hope given to Death because of sheer indifference. Our future generations must not see this.