

WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE?

**George Morgan. Great great grandson of Peter Waite
(Based on a public address given on the Waite Campus on 31st January 2021)**

My name is George Morgan, and I speak on behalf of the 53 living relatives of pastoralist and State benefactor, Peter Waite. I wish to pose a question on behalf of these descendants.

Who are these people who wish to annex this land and raze the State heritage listed Gatehouse Lodge, an integral part of my great great grandfather Peter Waite's legacy to South Australia?

Throughout my life I have driven past the Waite Institute. As children we were reminded that our ancestor's bequest had created this agricultural Research Station. We have all visited the Urrbrae House museum many times, and are proud of the achievements and legacy of Peter and Matilda Waite.

Who are these people that would ransack this legacy? Did they, too, not wonder what is this place, as they were driven past the tilled fields and swaying crops, here deep in suburbia? In addition to the bequest of land and money for the Research Institute, there was the establishment of the Arboretum, a marvellous library of trees, aimed at assessing their viability in South Australian conditions, and as an ongoing botanical resource.

Who are these people who fail to recognise the intrinsic value of public gardens, parks and trees? For us, a plant is a source of constant satisfaction and a public park a site where imagination can take flight and soar.

Who are these people and how did they learn to see a park as nothing at all, if not something to be sold, privatised and covered in bitumen and cement?

Peter Waite believed in future prosperity being driven by science, and the technologies that spun out of research. He recognised that feeding the world was a worthy ambition, and he wanted to be instrumental in an improved and abundant food production utilising the experimental crop facility in the Research Institute.

He loved new adaptive technologies. In the early 1900s he installed the first refrigeration unit in the State, and his daughters drove an electric car powered by batteries made of iron.

Who are these people whose vision for the future goes only so far as to lay down bitumen so that traffic may wait ten seconds less? Are there not more imaginative solutions at hand in this modern world?

The Waite Research Institute clearly had an educational role, just as has the Urrbrae High School which was created on land and with funding from the Waite bequest.

For Peter Waite, the education of women was important, and, with others, he was instrumental in creating Seymour College, so that girls from city and country could enjoy and value opportunities for a good education.

Peter Waite had a vision spawned by post-reformation European enlightenment and contributing to the future of the State, its people and the nation. A vision of education as a priority, of scientific endeavor for the betterment of humanity, and of parks and open space for public amenity, curiosity and pleasure.

This is a vision, not based on last week's election speech, not on yesterday's press release spun by media dissemblers, but on action, generosity and a gift to the State over 100 years ago.

This vision is what created the South Australia where people aspire to live and thrive. A hopeful and creative vision that created the economic, political and cultural world we enjoy today. The citizens of South Australia are all the descendants of Peter Waite's legacy.

But, again, who are these people who would despoil this legacy? They are our elected representatives and their bureaucratic machines. Have they forgotten, or did not realise, that they too are the custodians and beneficiaries of Peter Waite's vision?

To demolish the Waite Gatehouse, to annex land from the park and the school, is an act of vandalism that defiles the very best and most admirable of South Australia's history.

Who are these people who seek to do this?