

## **Barriers warning**

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BARRIERS supposed to stop people crossing Merri Creek's flood-prone bridges could put public safety at risk, says the Friends of Merri on Parade.

Group co-ordinator and Ross St resident **Carolyn Lunt** said a temporary barrier at a footbridge near Creek St in Northcote washed away in recent floods.

``A piece of plastic orange mesh and a couple of stakes really aren't going to cut it when it comes to stopping people crossing," Ms Lunt said.

``The council is taking the issue seriously, but not seriously enough."

Community concerns about flooded bridges emerged after the death of 73-year-old Reservoir woman Theresa Hosri last November.

Ms Hosri is believed to have been swept from a bridge over a swollen creek in Reservoir while she was crossing it on her way home from a church service in Fawkner.

This sparked an investigation of Darebin's creek crossings and the introduction of temporary barriers when bridges were likely to flood.

But Darebin asset management general manager Geoff Glynn said the barriers were a warning rather than a prevention measure.

``If someone wants to cross the creek, they'll do it regardless of what kind of barrier we put there," Mr Glynn said.

``Some of this goes back to people taking responsibility for themselves and not taking warnings lightly."

He said the temporary barriers were adequate and the recent floods were an abnormal event.

Darebin's six flood-prone crossings also include bridges near Walker St and The Parade.

A bridge behind Lakeside Secondary College in Reservoir was washed away during the latest floods.

Mr Glynn said the council was talking with its insurers to determine when the bridge would be replaced.

He said this could happen before a major review of Merri Creek safety was completed later this year.

Several councils, including neighbouring Moreland, are undertaking the review.

They are expected to appoint a consultant in the next month and carry out public consultation in the second half of this year.

Merri Creek Management Committee spokeswoman Luisa Macmillan said she could understand the concerns.

Ms Macmillan said the present barrier was the most practical until investigations into bridge safety were complete.

``We need to live safely within our natural environment and not fence ourselves off from it," she said.