

**Australian Research Centre  
for Water in Society**

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN  
“IDENTITY” FOR THE  
BROOKDALE REDEVELOPMENT**

**- SCOPING STUDY -**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1.0</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>METHODOLOGY</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>HISTORICAL MEMORIES</b> .....	<b>3</b>
3.1	Regional .....	3
3.2	Brookdale-Wongong .....	6
3.3	Indigenous Memories .....	9
<b>4.0</b>	<b>THE REGION</b> .....	<b>10</b>
4.1	Special Characteristics .....	10
4.2	Special Places .....	12
4.3	The Local Area .....	14
4.4	The Community .....	15
<b>5.0</b>	<b>HOPES AND CONCERNS FOR THE FUTURE</b> .....	<b>17</b>
5.1	Concerns .....	17
5.2	Hopes .....	20
<b>6.0</b>	<b>REQUIREMENTS FOR DEVELOPMENT AND BROOKDALE</b> .....	<b>23</b>
6.1	Development .....	23
6.2	Brookdale .....	26
<b>7.0</b>	<b>Key Messages and Recommendations</b> .....	<b>28</b>
7.1	Attachments.....	28
7.2	Aspirations.....	28
7.2.1	Regional.....	28
7.2.2	Brookdale .....	29
7.3	Concerns.....	30
7.3.1	Regional .....	30
7.3.2	Brookdale .....	30
	<b>APPENDIX A</b> .....	<b>1</b>
	<b>APPENDIX B</b> .....	<b>2</b>

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Armadale Redevelopment Authority (ARA) was established under the Armadale Redevelopment Act in 2001 to plan and co-ordinate development of various strategic locations in Perth's south-eastern corridor. The vision that was established for the Armadale region was to develop a vibrant, multi-dimensional place which could draw from and build on existing assets. The ARA has identified the key redevelopment areas located throughout the region (Figure 1, see Appendix A). One of these strategic locations set for a redevelopment scheme is Brookdale, where sustainable and water wise housing is proposed to give the redevelopment an environmental focus.

As part of the redevelopment a 'Catchment to Consumer' water symposium and various related workshops were held, resulting in the Armadale region being recognized as a priority research area in terms of identifying its historical, cultural and environmental aspects. To meet this research priority, a study has been commissioned by the Armadale Redevelopment Authority (ARA), which aims to:

*"Establish the past and future social and cultural aspirations associated with the Armadale Region and their relationship to alternative futures and water management to develop an "identity" and theme for the redevelopment of Brookdale and a foundation for community development."*

This report encapsulates the first phase of the 'identity' research, the scoping study. The aim of the scoping study was to gain broad information from key community representatives covering a range of issues. These include views on various topics in relation to the Armadale region as a whole and Brookdale specifically, such as:

- the history of the area;
- current perceptions;
- concerns, both current and future; and
- future aspirations for the area.

The views from long term residents, indigenous occupants and a range of key regional representatives were sought.

The City of Armadale includes the suburbs Armadale, Bedforddale, Brookdale, Forrestdale, Kelmscott, Karragullen, Mt Nasura, Roleystone, Westfield and Wungong and covers 545 square kilometres (Figure 2, see Appendix B). Throughout the report Armadale has been referred to as a 'region' and as an 'area'. These terms are used interchangeably but both refer to the district that is the City of Armadale, comprising the above listed suburbs. Locations of interview participants, presently and in the past, were scattered throughout these suburbs allowing information from a wide cross section of the area to be explored.

All accounts throughout this report are participants' perspectives and memories and no attempt has been made to verify the factual accuracy. Some information provided only sketchy details due to gaps in participants' recollections. However all the information has assisted in providing a rich basis on which to build the development of an identity for Brookdale.

Indigenous perspectives have been discussed as a separate section in the historical component of the report. This reflects the important unique memories and stories of indigenous peoples in the area at that time. In the discussion of the region today, indigenous perspectives were often the same as those of non-indigenous peoples. For this reason they have typically been incorporated into the main body of the discussion. However, distinct differences were also noted and these have been reported separately where appropriate.

## **2.0 METHODOLOGY**

Data acquisition was principally achieved through personal, semi-structured interviews. This allowed for comprehensive insight into the range of issues associated with the Armadale area which was required during the scoping stage. Telephone interviews were conducted on a few occasions where personal interviews were not possible. Overall 35 interviews were conducted throughout the Armadale area which included: 3 indigenous people; 12 long term residents; and 20 regional representatives.

Indigenous interviews followed a protocol that was culturally sensitive. The details of possible indigenous interviewees were obtained via anthropologists and archaeologists that had either worked in the area before or were also involved with the ARA for redevelopment projects. Many indigenous people were contacted to participate in the scoping interviews but most were either too busy, difficult to contact, or recommended an Elder to speak with instead.

In some cases the community representatives were also long term residents or had a close connection with the area's past. Included in the sample of regional representatives were:

- decision makers;
- service providers;
- community groups and volunteers;
- youth;
- environmental groups; and
- businesses.

Those interviewed were selected using a wide range of means. Local government representatives gave recommendations on key people within the community to speak with, as did the History House. Most of the key participants had a number of people they thought should be, or would like to be, involved and consequently the number of interviews increased. Repetition

of stories told, opinions expressed and people recommended was a sound indication that enough people had participated in the scoping exercise and the range of perspectives, issues and memories had been covered.

Prior to commencement of interviews participants were briefed on the study and its purpose and were advised how they had been selected. Participant confidentiality was also assured, despite most participants being willing to have their thoughts widely shared.

Personal interviews, particularly those with long term residents, were conducted informally. This allowed the participants to retell stories and express their opinions whilst feeling relaxed. The interview questions were semi-structured to allow for the required information to be gathered but in an unobtrusive manner. Questions differed slightly for long term residents, youth, and indigenous participants, to ensure that the information obtained would meet the specific objectives of the study. Topics discussed during each interview covered the participant's past experiences, places of special value and current/future hopes and concerns both for the region overall and Brookdale specifically.

### **3.0 HISTORICAL MEMORIES**

#### **3.1 Regional**

*“The new theatre is where the old wine shop used to be. This was where all the kids used to hang out because they sold Armadale’s first Coca Cola there. It was lukewarm, you had to queue up to buy it and it was 5p a bottle.”*

The first thing that becomes evident from long term residents interviewed is the strong role that history plays in their personal lives and throughout the whole Armadale region. Many participants explained that European settlement occurred in Kelmscott first, but it was Armadale that later took off due to the railway and the Roads Board. There is then a gap in the historical memoirs as interview participants could only remember back to the 1930s. Therefore the time period represented from the following accounts is mainly covering that from the 1930s up until the 1960s and 1970s.

This strong distinction between Armadale and Kelmscott townsites is a defining feature of the regional area that still continues today. The recollections of Kelmscott and Armadale demonstrated differences in the old townsites, but generally activities and special places to the people at the time were the same throughout the whole region. Therefore the historical memories of the two townsites will be retold separately and the other similar memories will be grouped together.

Most facilities were available to residents of the region, though many recall travelling into Armadale or even to Perth for certain facilities such as banks. According to residents, Kelmscott did not have many shops in the early

1930s. The main location of these shops was near the Kelmscott Railway Station. There was a hotel, confectionary shop, baker, two grocers, hospital, a small post office, butcher, blacksmith and a small transport business. This was the start of a divide between the two towns as Armadale developed at a faster rate and even had the first high school. The highway was the only bitumen road and it was called Albany Road. There were about 300 people in Kelmscott at the time. The special things about Kelmscott included the Agricultural Show that began in 1897, the pool that was built in 1956 and the strong sporting associations that would compete against rival Armadale teams.

From the historical memories it seems that the Armadale townsite, comprising of the main group of original shops, was an icon for the area, an important meeting place. People living in the surrounding areas would come in for shopping and the men on a Saturday would visit the hotel for “a beer and a game of darts”. All interview participants mentioned that a trip into town meant seeing familiar faces, “everyone knew everyone”. The Armadale townsite in the 1940s consisted of a post office, butcher, baker, drapery, green grocer, tea rooms, boot-maker, newsagency, Minnowarra House, general store, bank, garage, dentist, the Railway Hotel and the Narrogin Inn. One long term resident also mentioned the illegal bookmakers that operated out the back of the Hotel. There was also a wine shop that sold the first *Coca Cola* to come to the Armadale region.

Some long term residents mentioned other interesting memories of the Armadale townsite. The Narrogin Inn was said to have horse stables, kangaroos and lots of birds out the back so it was almost like a zoo for the children. There was a stock yard where the fire station is currently located and stock roaming on the land where the Council offices are today. There were also two significant trees in the town, one a Moreton Bay Fig and the other an old gum, which still stands today.

The schools and the churches were central to community life. All long term residents interviewed had particular ties to their primary school (Westfield or Armadale), their church or both. There was no high school early on so older children had to travel by train to go to school in Perth. There were three congregational church halls that long term residents felt were significant to the history of the area. These were located in Armadale, Westfield and Wungong. Some interviewees remember the local community getting together to build both the Westfield and the Wungong Church Halls, thus emphasising the community spirit that revolved around going to church. Interviewees expressed that the rare times the community was divided was in regard to what church they went to. It was mentioned by a long term resident that the introduction of television as well as a decrease in faith after the World Wars led to a reduction in the number of people attending church and so the tight community lost some of its earlier flavour.

Other activities were also of importance to the community and perhaps were not dissimilar from other townsites at the time. As retold by interviewees, the main activities were:

- dances in the Armadale and other halls on Wednesday and Saturday nights;
- visiting friends or family for supper;
- card nights at the halls;
- swimming in the Wungong and Canning Rivers and in Forrestdale Lake;
- going to Gymkhana events and the trots;
- going to see movies at the town hall and the "Drive-Inn";
- hunting animals such as wallabies and rabbits;
- Guy Fawkes night; and
- sports such as football, tennis and cricket.

All of the sporting associations were and still are a big part of the regional community and competition was always guaranteed between Armadale and archrivals, Kelmscott.

Many of the long term residents identified the Armadale and regional community at the time by the same two stories. The first story retold is of the iconic Dr Streich who was the doctor for the area at the time. He was central to the close community that existed, being well known and well liked. He was the "best doctor" most of the residents at that time had ever experienced and he brought many babies from Armadale, and the surrounding areas, into the world.

The second story that is well known and had been experienced by many long term residents was how a driver's licence was obtained by having a friendly relationship with the local policemen. The policeman at the time would come outside and watch you drive to the end of the street and then turn around. This would guarantee receiving your licence for motorbike, car, tractor and even truck. These two stories, both retold by almost all long term residents interviewed, illustrates the close community that was present in Armadale at the time.

The self-sufficient lifestyle was essential to many. Long term residents remember the Armadale area as one where times were tough when they were growing up in the 1930s and 1940s. During and after The Depression many families were hit hard and residents remember the rations tickets. Many of the interviewees recall not only building their own houses but also making the bricks for the house, "every night I would make 30 bricks". Lots of the small farm lots surrounding the town were self sufficient or made money from dairy farming, piggeries, poultry farms, selling stock, orchards and nurseries.

Those residents that were not so self-sufficient recall working in town at the chemist or bakery, on the railways, in the vineyards, or travelling to Perth for apprenticeships. One of the most important livelihoods for residents and their families was the Brickworks. One long term resident recalled hundreds of people working there at one stage and that it was a place for immigrants to obtain work and learn how to speak English from their colleagues.

Immigrants contributed significantly to the community of the Armadale region. It seemed that the arrival of many immigrants to the area in the 1950s was a significant event for many long term residents. Mainly English, Dutch and Italian communities settled into the area. Many immigrants were contracted to work for the Metropolitan Water Supply and were living in Nissan Huts in Kelmscott. The Dutch came to Wungong initially but soon extended out to other parts of the Armadale area and formed a strong community that still exists today.

Transport played a particularly important role in the lives of residents. Many long term residents called to mind what they used for transport around Armadale and beyond. Perhaps the main conduit of life and transport in the 1930s, and in some respects still today, was the railway and the trains. There were stations at Armadale, Kelmscott, Wungong and Westfield that not only provided a link to the outside world but were also a source of employment for many residents. The Westfield Train was a free lift to South Beach for the children that used to hop aboard but “you sometimes had to wait an hour for them to unload the milk and cream”. All of those interviewed had a story to tell of some sort about the trains. One in particular that stood out was the Westfield goods train only being able to get half way up the Jandakot Hill where it had to stop, unload some freight and then come back later for the remainder.

Transport was not just via the trains. Other transportation included the common horse and cart, mainly used for delivery of meat, vegies, bread and milk to people’s houses. The children used to walk to school, often with no shoes on. Many long term residents have fond memories of their push bikes. Everyone had a pushbike or access to one, even if it had to be shared with five siblings or it meant having to ride it into the strong Summer Easterlies. With time, pushbikes turned into motorbikes, which were very popular amongst young men in the 1950s. There was also the school bus, and catching it meant knowing exactly where everyone lived.

Certain landmarks were important historically and are linked to people’s memories of the region. Many of the vineyards were visible for long distances due to the distinct terracing and fig trees. Wungong Gorge was an identified landmark, being a place of “raw beauty” and where children would ride their bikes. There was also a piece of land commonly referred to as McCarthy’s Patch (named after a bald man known around town at the time) which had no vegetation and it was said could be seen from Kings Park.

### **3.2 Brookdale-Wongong**

*“It was a Mecca in Summertime, the Wungong River.”*

Many long term residents interviewed were from the Brookdale-Wongong area. These anecdotes produced an identity particular to the area, although still a fundamental part of the region as a whole. The accounts are also particularly significant to the redevelopment area.

The name of the area was of extreme importance to those who lived there. All long term residents from the area refused to use the name “Brookdale” or “Wungong”, as to them it is “Wongong”. It was reported that the original name was “Woongong”, an indigenous name that means embracing the land. This was in reference to the original fork in the now named Wungong River, where it split into two. In the 1895 Government Gazette the river is referred to as the “Woongong”, demonstrating that this was the common name. The front of the name then was shortened to “Wongong” and in the 1960s it was again changed to “Wungong” as “Wongong” was too similar to “Wongong Hills”. Now the area has changed again to Brookdale, although those interviewed refused to identify with that name or with “Wungong”. Therefore this section will be referring to the area as “Wongong”.

The attachment to the original name indicates a distinct and close community, which reportedly began post-1895. Reasons given for the early development of the community include:

- closeness to the railway;
- proximity to Armadale;
- near Wongong Farm (which provided employment);
- the ‘thick, chocolate soils’; and
- an abundance of water.

Despite the early community development, a town never eventuated. It was noted that a townsite was proposed in 1907 but the locals did not accept the proposal as they felt it was a deliberate attempt to forge a separate community.

Long term residents of the area identified the landscape as one that was mainly small farms mixed with the natural landscape. Pre-war the farming was mainly citrus, vineyards, dairy, grain crops, and hay. Gravel was also quarried. Early post-war the focus was mainly on poultry, citrus and dairy and from the 1960s until the 1990s it was trotting horses, cattle and cheese production. These changes in the agricultural landscape were due to changes in rural block sizes as properties were sub-divided.

These agricultural landscape memories are intertwined with striking reminiscences of natural features such as a particular patch of banksias located along the Wungong or picking wildflowers. One long term resident told of a particular rare patch of *Eucalyptus decipiens* growing near the Armadale golf course. It was recalled that when the Westfield siding was operating the tracks caused large lime pits to form. From these lime pits the species *E. decipiens* established where they might not normally have done, making them a special place for many residents.

For some the most fondly remembered natural asset of the Wongong area, both historically and still today is the Wungong River. It played a central role for locals and in particular for children. Every long term resident had many

stories to tell about growing up with the Wungong. For children, it presented an endless playground. As one interviewee explained “a good day out when we were kids would be to go gilgying with some string and some meat”. Many remember catching “red and black perch” or eating “breadcrumbsed fish eggs”, caught from the river. Snakes were commonly sighted around the Wungong River, and were seen as a source of fun for many of the mischievous young boys. One resident also recalled having fun collecting eggs from nesting birds as “there were so many birds that it didn’t matter if you took an egg or two each”.

The Wungong River was remembered as a great place for swimming. Many remember the exact locations of their favourite swimming holes. One in particular was located near the bridge. Forrestdale Lake was another popular swimming place that apparently had sandy banks like a beach.

Whilst the Wungong River was remembered for the fun, it was also remembered for its flows. The common understanding amongst residents was that the Wungong River would “flood every year”. One resident remembers it flooding in 1987, after it was dammed in 1979. All interviewees recalled that there was “heavier rainfall back then”. Many remembered these floods stretching out to Lake and Forrest Roads. One long term resident remembers having to walk to school with no shoes on because crossing the floods in shoes would have damaged them. Many also recalled the floods as being a nuisance to the stock on the farms. 1914 was the one year that was remembered as a significant event for the Wungong River as it did not flow at all, due to it being a particularly dry year.

Many individual land owners with property backing onto the Wungong built their own dams. These in the past were a significant source of social discontent. Many interviewees retold the stories of one land owner building a dam on his property which affected the flow to downstream properties. This then prompted the downstream land owners to destroy the dam causing many disputes. Long term residents explained that today there are still some of these privately built dams remaining along the Wungong River. Many see them as an important part of the social history that should be preserved.

The Wungong River was not the only thing binding the community historically. As previously mentioned the halls throughout the region were particularly significant, especially so for the people of Wungong. The community erected the hall themselves in 1913 where it was a local hub until the 1950s. The hall was then occupied by the Dutch when they arrived in 1951 as it was no longer being used and they needed somewhere to hold their church ceremonies. Due to the influx of Dutch families they soon outgrew the hall. The concrete pad and steps of the old hall is all that remains today and many feel that it should be recognised, perhaps become a site of recreation or reflection.

Other interesting identifying features referred to by long term residents include the railway and Wungong farm. The railway was moved from its original site in 1910 as it was on a slope and would emit millions of sparks whilst trying to start, setting off bushfires. Once moved north, the station existed from 1915-

1945 and was described as being “fundamental to Wongong at the time” as it provided glimpses of the world beyond the tight community. The Wongong Farm was a well known dairy farm and its milking sheds in the 1890s have been remembered as “very modern for it’s time”. These were the landmarks that the community identified with.

There are many stories that have been told by the residents of the old Wongong community. This one in particular was told by a few interviewees:

*“One of my favourite memories was walking to the old Westfield Primary School along the Wungong River. The orchards upstream dropped oranges that ended up in the Wungong. So on our way to school they would float past and we would pluck them out and eat fresh, cool oranges.”*

This story captures many of the themes that characterized the area such as the orchards, walking to school and the Wungong River.

### **3.3 Indigenous Memories**

*“It is believed the sound of water going over the rocks in the river was the women singing for their men to come home from hunting and gathering.”*

The Armadale Region has been recalled in all interviews as a “passing through” place and in particular by the indigenous participants. The indigenous people were living a migratory lifestyle in the early 1900s, following work opportunities and avoiding or seeking (depending on the family) the Department of Native Welfare. Some had family in the region, for example sisters who were married to “white fellas”.

Indigenous historical memories are not as accessible as other memories related to the Armadale area. The reasons given for this is the fragmentation of the indigenous people’s past and the belief that no indigenous families or tribes occupied Armadale until the 1960s and the 1970s. However one participant did note that just because no one saw indigenous people regularly, it did not mean that they did not occupy the land for extended periods of time.

This migratory lifestyle was the common view arising from all the scoping interviews. A common scenario of the early 1900s was indigenous families travelling on horse and cart through bush tracks, as properties were not yet fenced, and stopping at one of the camps. The duration of the visit depended on either the availability of food; the season; or later, once the area had been established, the amount of work present.

Many of the camps are well known, not only to the indigenous people but also to the remainder of the population. Perhaps the most well known camp was on the hill behind the Narrogin Inn. Other important camping sites include places at Forrestdale Lake, the old Brookdale rubbish dump, the “brick factories in Armadale” and the site of the old ammunition dump in Byford.

The camp sites were usually situated where good hunting and gathering opportunities prevailed. These were still an important part of life at the time. Hunting grounds were mainly on the sand bars, as wetlands dominated the area at the time. Of particular importance were the traditional medicinal herbs that grew on this drier ground. These were once abundant and the few left are regarded as dangerous, as told by one indigenous participant, due to contaminants in the soils today.

Interviews demonstrated that the lack of work for indigenous people was due to the small size of the farms in the area. This led to the search for work in larger farming areas such as Mundijong. Early indigenous memories recall clearing land or working machinery as the main work available to them in the Armadale area.

One indigenous interviewee did live in the old Armadale town for a short period of time. The main recollection was that Armadale was a close community where people looked after one another. This interviewee remembered being a part of the community, attending the Armadale Primary School and being a member of the local football team. These memories were recalled with the same fondness as other long term residents.

Special indigenous stories linked to the Armadale region are about the hills and the rivers. The hills were significant for spiritual reasons and it was reported they were home to several important gravesites. They were also held special as a fundamental part of childhood memories. An indigenous interviewee reported he had hunted rabbits with a sling-shot and trapped possums to earn money from the sale of the skins. All water sources were held sacred for physical and spiritual reasons. They were seen as a means for spirits to travel along, including the “feather foots”, spirits from the desert who imposed punishment on Nyoongar people not following Law. Neerigen Brook was reported to be important in terms of being known as “a bad luck place” for Aboriginal people.

The Armadale region is historically rich in the archaeologically significant camp sites and memories. Along with the other special stories related to places and names, the indigenous history contributes to the strong and diverse historical picture that makes up a large proportion of how the Armadale area is today.

## **4.0 THE REGION**

### **4.1 Special Characteristics**

*“It’s a comforting and cosy place: like curling up with a good book and a bowl of soup.”*

The strong and consistent message from interviewees was that the special characteristic of the Armadale region was captured by the City of Armadale’s

slogan: *City Living, Country Style*. It was felt that the area offered a unique opportunity to experience all the benefits of a country lifestyle *within* the Perth metropolitan area. This was seen as a special balance and was highly valued. “City living” referred to both the benefits of urban amenities and facilities in the region as well as proximity and easy accessibility to other urban areas, including Perth CBD.

The region was thought to have special qualities in terms of a “unique environment”. This was mostly summed up as ‘semi-rural’, a good mix of residential areas interspersed with paddocks, cows and horses. Several interviewees commented that they had paddocks on their residential street, and could wake up to the sound of cows. The semi-rural feel of the area was also associated with open space and large block sizes. “It is not suburbia” was a common sentiment.

The natural environment, in particular, was seen to characterise the area. The hills were given high prominence, for both those that lived in them and those that lived in the flat areas and valued the presence of the hills in their visual landscape. For residents within the hills area, and in Roleystone in particular, it was special to live in an undulating landscape, within the bush and close to rivers and dams. For those in the low lying areas of the region, the view of the hills was an integral and important part of their daily life. They were also valued as places to visit, “to go to the bush”, or for picnics and to visit the orchards.

Being close to or in “the bush” was considered a special attribute of the region. Close proximity to the bush was highly valued for leisure and recreation, appreciation of nature and wildlife and for spiritual qualities. Wildflowers in Spring were of special significance. Dams, picnic areas and recreational spaces in bush areas were also thought to give the area something special not found in other places. For those living in the Kelmscott area, proximity to the Canning River gave a unique quality.

Nature and a country lifestyle were seen to give people in the area unique qualities not offered in more densely suburban places. These included clean and/ or fresh air, peace and quiet, tranquillity, freedom and beauty, all within a “laid-back lifestyle”. These attributes were highly valued as being special to the region, and again were often compared with the difference to living in “suburbia”.

The location of the region was believed to be a fundamental distinguishing characteristic. The general area was seen to be a special “crossroads” or a “gateway” for access to and from other areas through the Albany, South Western and Brookton Highways, and Armadale Road. This was conceived in a geographical sense, in terms of access to southern, western, eastern and northern areas. However, it was also thought of in terms of specific places, namely Perth city, the coast, the domestic and international airports and “the country”. The extension of the Tonkin Highway was considered to add to this, giving better access to Midland and the Swan Valley. The unique location of the region was seen to confer special benefits upon residents, expressed as,

“We are close enough to everything to be in touch, but far enough away to be out of it.”

Heritage was thought to play an important part in setting the Armadale region apart from other areas. A sense of character and of pride was derived from the long and unique history. The built environment was an important part of this, however people’s oral stories and histories were also highly valued. Nature, too, played a role. Armadale CBD was thought of as “Arbour City” and as having a “sugar gum heritage”, particularly in the area near the railway station. The importance of heritage was evident in the controversy over removing the old jarrah tree in the Armadale shopping centre car park. For some it equated to desecration of one of the unique characteristics of Armadale’s history.

History and heritage were commonly viewed as simply an integral *part of* the uniqueness of the region. Many thought that the area had a distinctive diversity, a special variety of landscapes and forms. This incorporated the historical and the modern, as well the rural and the urban, and hills and flat areas. This blend of contrasts was of particular value as it was considered rare and uncontrived. A mix of higher and lower income areas in the region was seen to add to the diversity. It was said that the area “offered something for everyone”.

This rare and special mix was seen to be reflected in the regional community. Many thought that the community was comprised of a diverse range of people of different ages, cultures and backgrounds. This was seen to give those living and growing up in the area a good grounding for life that could not be gained from living in a “mono-culture”.

The Armadale region was perceived to have a strong, “comfortable” atmosphere where anyone could fit in and be welcomed. One interviewee described it as “like curling up with a good book and a bowl of soup”. It had a strong, close and friendly community and was a wonderful place for families and for raising children. Affordability was an important part of this special ambience. There were many parks and green spaces and excellent schools, with strong social networks. There was always something to be involved in through groups, clubs and school activities. Strong sporting activities and organisations were a distinct characteristic of the area, particularly football, T-ball and softball.

## **4.2 Special Places**

*“The dams were really special to us when I was growing up. We used to pack a picnic and head up early for breakfast, before the heat.”*

It was stressed by many of those interviewed that the area in its *entirety*, was “special” and “places of special meaning” were secondary. However, once having made this point, places that were especially meaningful were reported.

Dams and picnic areas were often important, particularly as places for family or social gatherings. The Wungong Dam, completed in 1979, and Churchman Brook, were common favourites. For this reason these areas had special childhood memories for some. "The bush" in general was of strong importance for bushwalks, nature, wildlife and visual beauty, and as a place to play in childhood. Armadale Settlers Common was seen to be of special beauty and encouraged an awareness of and affinity with the environment.

Places of unique beauty had special meaning for many. Wungong Gorge was highly valued, as was the valley area between Albany Highway and Wungong Dam. Roleystone was believed to be set in a particularly beautiful natural environment and the scenic walk between Thompson and Croydon Roads, in the valley along the river, was appreciated for both its aesthetics and as a place to take the dogs. The Araluen Botanic Park in Roleystone was also given popular mention.

Places that offered family recreation were held in good regard. As previously mentioned, this included picnic places located at dams and in the bush. More central places were also popular, particularly Minnowarra Park. This was held in special regard as a place for family picnics, to take children to feed the ducks and as an attractive retreat place for young people to 'hang out', away from adults. For those in Kelmscott, Rushton Park was a popular family picnicking area and the Canning River, as a place to play and swim, held fond memories for those who grew up in the area. The Wungong River was held special by many for similar reasons.

A number of places were accorded special value because of their environmental significance. The Forrestdale Lake, being a Ramsar wetland<sup>1</sup> and having special orchids and bird-life, had particular environmental importance. The wetland at Hilbert Road was also considered special for its banksias and island ecosystem. Roley Pool, an old and valued swimming hole in Roleystone, was held dear and was reported to need protection and careful environmental attention.

Indigenous peoples held a number of other places special for different reasons. Many of these are previously mentioned in the historical discussion. Special places for current residents primarily related to important childhood memories. The rubbish tips at Roleystone and where the Kelmscott football ground is now located were important for one resident who had memories of going there with his grandfather to "crack snakes". The swimming hole in the upper Canning River was also held important as a special childhood place.

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<sup>1</sup> A Wetland of International Importance listed under the auspices of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (established in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971).

### 4.3 The Local Area

*“We really benefit from having passionate Councillors ... this helps as it is not just a job to them.”*

The unique and special characteristics of the region, as outlined previously, evidently captured what was most valued about the area among those interviewed. However, a number of other features of the local area that were held in importance were reported.

For a number of residents, a special benefit from the area was having all they needed nearby. The range and quality of services offered, particularly medical/health and social support, was considered impressive. The Department of Community Development was given special mention several times as providing particular support to the community. It was also considered of note that there was strong support and networking amongst the various social support agencies, particularly in an environment of scarce funding. The services and amenities available for the elderly were seen as particularly excellent. Moreover, the positioning of Dale Cottages near the Armadale city centre was valued in placing the elderly close to all they needed, including public transport and shops.

Whilst it was felt by some that there was no real need for residents to go outside the area, the public transport system, and train in particular, was of high importance as an easy, quick and convenient way to travel to other areas. The extension of the Tonkin Highway was also welcomed as improving access to other areas. Moreover, one resident commented that they did “not feel as isolated” because of this development.

The number and variety of schools in the region was highly valued and it was thought there was a good mix of government and private schools at both primary and secondary levels. Cecil Andrews Senior High School was given special mention for its Breakfast Program for students, and a marked difference in children’s behaviour and performance was reported. It was also believed to have recently been accredited as a school for Performing Arts, which was seen as an important asset to the region.

The local government was held in good esteem by most. It was considered to have a strong commitment to the area and it was widely applauded for its public participation initiatives in planning. Development was welcomed and it was believed that the region benefited enormously from the passion of the local Councillors, including the Mayor, and from the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. This was thought to be because “it is not just a job to them”.

Local cultural events organised by the City of Armadale, namely the Minnowarra Festival and Highland Gathering, were highly valued. It was also reported that the local government “worked well with local Aboriginal people and tried to do the right thing”. This included a commitment to improving school retention rates and providing opportunities for employment in the area.

#### 4.4 The Community

*“We are mainly characterised by all of the different groups working together and getting along.”*

All residents interviewed for the scoping phase of the study felt passionately about their area. Many were brought up in the area and had no desire or plans to leave. Others had come into the area several decades previously, for work, lifestyle and affordability and had raised their families there. One resident said that the area offered the best value for him and his family in terms of property price, size of block, attractiveness of the natural environment and special lifestyle. It was reported that most people who sold their homes in the area moved to another part of the region.

There was a strong sense of identity among all sections of the community, and all felt that the region was “a great place to live”. The regional community was valued as being “country-style”. This referred to a sense of being close, supportive, strongly involved in the community and generally “laid back”. The community was described as being “non-pretentious”, “salt of the earth” and “would give you the shirt off their backs”.

A major characteristic of the special quality of the regional community, so valued by residents, was seen to stem from shared adversity. It was reported that as many people in the area were in the lower income bracket, they had to fight hard to earn what they had. Moreover, there was the added difficulty of “living in a fringe area with few state resources to support it”. These conditions were seen to create an appreciation of struggle and achievement, and a subsequent feeling of solidarity and support among the community.

From an indigenous point of view, this was important for creating an “even playing field” where colour was less important than being a valued and respected member of the community. It was commented that “You get out of the community what you put into it”. Schools, and sporting clubs in particular, were also seen as an important way for people of all cultures and backgrounds to form ties and common ground. However, it was also reported that racial differences filtered into these realms and that little interaction occurred outside of them. Interviewees did not go into details about the specific reasons for the divide in Armadale. However, it was noted that it was not helped by segregating the Aboriginal population into separate residential areas by State housing authorities.

Diversity was considered to be a special quality of the regional community. It was said that the community was a “melting pot of all ages, cultures and backgrounds”. This diversity was embraced as an asset of the area. One interviewee believed he had been socially advantaged through growing up in such an environment by gaining life-skills not available in a “mono-culture”. The special blend of difference, coupled with the sense of solidarity, created a community which was “mainly characterised by all of the different people and groups working together and getting along.”

The long history of the area was perceived to play an important role in having created a strong and supportive regional community. Many residents were of a “community-minded era”, when community support and contribution was “just how it was”. Family support was also strong in these times. These were referred to as “the days when neighbours helped each other out, we went to dances and church and we didn’t have to lock our doors”. This inheritance was seen to stand the more contemporary community in good stead, with strong networks through schools, groups, clubs and activities. The business community was also reported to be supportive, meeting monthly to “share and mix with people”. It was commented, however, that there was little community ownership outside of these formal realms.

Interviewees noted a change within the regional community associated with new people moving into the area. On the one hand, this was seen as a positive development, with many new residents being home-owners who took pride in their home and the general appearance of the neighbourhood. However, it was also reported that it created two groups within the community: the long term residents who have a strong attachment and commitment to the area, contribute to the community and give the area a “home-town feel”; and more recent residents who have no affinity for the area, do not get involved with the community and tend to keep to themselves. One long-term resident noted that whereas he had previously noted the *stranger* in the street, it was now unusual to see people that he knew.

Whilst there were many shared themes amongst interviewees, differences existed according to the resident’s local district. Each local district had its own community that valued and protected its unique sense of identity. There was shared concern among non-Armadale residents about a generic Armadale-identity for the region. Each community wanted to be recognised for their special characteristics and were wary about being subsumed into an overall Armadale umbrella. There was particular emphasis on ensuring that resources be shared among all within the region, and not just be focused on Armadale itself. Indeed, many felt that their local districts were being neglected to the advantage of development within Armadale.

The Kelmscott community, in particular, evidenced a strong, even fierce, sense of local identity. This was for the most part created through contrast with Armadale. This situation was reported to be long-standing, arising from rivalry based on Kelmscott being “the original town”. With this comes resentment from a perception that Armadale has “taken over” and the region is now Armadale-centric to the detriment of other areas, and to Kelmscott in particular.

A distinct community was also evident in Roleystone. In many ways it was defined as a “hills community”, and of overall higher socio-economic status. The community was considered to have a special village-style feel, where everyone is known and feels important. It was also seen as the gateway to Araluen and the orchards, somewhat to the chagrin of local residents who particularly value the privacy afforded by the hills lifestyle. As one resident

commented, “I am close enough to neighbours not to feel isolated, but have the privacy I need too”.

The Armadale community similarly emerged as having a unique identity from other communities in the region. The community principally tended to pride itself on a sense of confidence and pride that stemmed from a predominantly lower socio-economic culture. As mentioned previously, this was believed to create a unique and strong sense of social solidarity and support. Some parts of Armadale, principally known as “state housing areas”, had a poor reputation stemming from “undesirables and trouble-makers” and a general neglect of homes. However, many commented it was just a small percentage of residents that branded the entire area.

## **5.0 HOPES AND CONCERNS FOR THE FUTURE**

### **5.1 Concerns**

*“I have no concerns really ... most things are great.”*

Many of those interviewed reported they had no real concerns about the region, that on the whole they were satisfied with things as they were. However, they raised a number of issues that they believed would benefit the region if addressed. It is of note that social problems were, on the whole, viewed with compassion, and without judgement. Further, it was often reiterated that only a minority of people “caused any trouble”, which was unfortunate for all. Moreover, it was stressed that whilst it was reported that Aboriginal people in the area could have a poor reputation, only one or two families were responsible for any perceived “anti-social behaviour”.

A common concern was that the region had an unjustifiably poor reputation. This was attributed to the predominant lower socio-economic history of the area, the location of the courthouse in Armadale and any trouble on the *Armadale* train line being attributed to the town itself. It was believed that not enough was being done to redress outside perceptions of the area. Residents strongly felt that there were many positive attributes of the area that were not being promoted. Moreover, there was no defining feature or distinctive attraction to bring people into the area. It was also thought that entry points into the area were without character and run-down, which did nothing to help negative perceptions about the region.

The situation for youth in the region was uppermost in most interviewees’ minds. It was thought that the area was excellent for children under twelve, and most young children tended to be involved in sporting and school-related activities. This was commonly seen to be a strength of the area, however one family member thought that the availability of children’s sporting clubs outside of football, T-ball and softball was limited. However, older youth were said to suffer from a lack of things to do outside organised clubs and activities. The nearest skate-park was in Forrestdale, which was too far to access easily, and

BMX tracks were reported to be lacking. Further, the area offered little in the form of entertainment and cultural life.

These conditions were seen to be a major cause of anti-social behaviour and “mischief-making” by young people. It was stressed, however, that it was a minority of youth who were responsible for “undesirable behaviour” and gave a poor reputation to young people in general. A young person interviewed reported that there was nowhere for youth to just “hang out” as they were constantly moved on, by police, Council Rangers or security guards, from parks, shopping centres and the street as representing some kind of threat or nuisance.

Lack of further educational facilities for young people, and a regional university in particular, was of great concern. All of the universities were located far from the Armadale area and required time, effort and money to attend. This was seen to deter many young people from attending university. Further, it was thought that the absence of a local university led to a “TAFE mentality” among youth as they had no exposure to university culture.

From an alternate perspective, it was believed that whilst the needs of seniors and youth in the region were well catered for, others such as those with mental illness were still suffering from lack of support. It was reported there were many in the area that suffered from a mental disability and felt isolated, afraid for their safety, and did not have a place to go where they could gain both social and work confidence and skills.

For some, a perceived decline in sense of community was of concern. It was reported that increasingly fewer people were community-minded and willing to contribute to community and participate in community activities and social networks. This was of particular concern given the strong history of social support in the region. It was intimated that a more individualistic lifestyle and lack of attachment to the area of new residents were largely responsible for this change. However, it was believed that the sense of community and identity in the area continued to be strong and would be robust well into the future.

Anti-social behaviour in the area was of concern to some. This included vandalism, graffiti, burglary and bag-snatching. There were reports of fears about personal safety, particularly at night and on public transport. Concerns were held about inadequate policing in the area. Most fears related to youth, and young Aboriginal people in particular. However, it was also believed that Aboriginal people were often scape-goated for any anti-social behaviour in the area. Racism was reported to be an issue in the region.

There was split opinion among those interviewed as to the adequacy of facilities in the area. Some were satisfied with things as they were, however there was strong opinion among others that there was vast room for improvement. The range and quality of shops offered was seen to be sorely lacking, particularly for larger department stores. Moreover, it was believed, by residents of all areas, that the Armadale CBD was “ugly”, the shopping

centre inconvenient, past town-planning of streets, shops and the mall was terrible, and parking was “a nightmare”. Many reported travelling to Carousel or Rockingham for their shopping needs, which was inconvenient and costly.

The Armadale region was also thought to be lacking in places for people to go and enjoy informal leisure and cultural activities. The area, and Armadale city in particular, was said to be “dead” particularly in the evening. Most shops were reported to be closed by eight o’clock and there were few restaurants to enjoy. The area was said to be dominated by take-away venues, which while positive for employment, were limiting and frustrating for residents.

Public transport was seen to exacerbate this problem. While public transport was seen to be good on the whole, it was reported that it was inadequate on weekends and in the evenings. This was when it was most needed to go to other areas for leisure and cultural enjoyment. This was compounded by the difficulty of getting a taxi back to the area unless a return fare was guaranteed. Bus transport around the Armadale region was also reported to be lacking, in terms of route and frequency.

There was some concern about the prosperity of the regional business community. Most business owners chose to work in the region due to their attachment to the area, however it was reported they would likely be more affluent if they operated in other areas. The predominant low-income population in the area was somewhat constraining. One resident reported that he currently had to service an enormous area, including Jarrahdale, Serpentine, Rockingham and Mandurah to make his business viable.

There was concern among some at a lack of uniformity in the overall look of the area. It was reported that some areas were quite run-down and residents’ lack of pride in their homes was an issue in some neighbourhoods. The greater concern, however, was that residential areas were being neglected by local Council at the expense of putting resources into the Armadale CBD. It was reported that many parks were not maintained, and were unsafe for children’s play. Local district shopping centres were said to be neglected and roads needed attention, particularly in Roleystone. The decision not to proceed with the expansion of the Kelmscott shopping centre in favour of development in the Armadale centre particularly disgruntled Kelmscott residents, who thought they were being treated unfairly.

Regional development was widely welcomed. Nevertheless, a number of concerns and reservations were held. There was fear that the outside investment required to make the development a reality would not be forthcoming. There was also concern that there were insufficient resources for dealing with changes that would be brought on by future development. Fears were expressed that school numbers would swell to the detriment of the current students, and that there would be inadequate police numbers to cover the increased population. Other concerns included the impact of semi-industrial areas on both residents and the environment, and the possible isolation of the golf club due to the extension of the Tonkin Highway.

Community response to participation in decision making about regional development was seen to be an issue. It was reported that while the local government had “done the right thing” in informing and involving the community in proposals, it had inadvertently caused “fear-mongering” in some parts of the population. It was reported that some members of the community tended to interpret information incorrectly and fuelled negative rumours and “conspiracy theories”. “Chinese whispers” was said to be a downside of country-style community.

From an environmental perspective, concerns were held about degradation and mismanagement of the natural environment. The state of rivers and creeks were of concern and it was reported that damming of the rivers had led to a problem with silt. The Wungong River was said to be neglected as there was no real ownership by either private land-owners or government. As a result it was being “used as a drain”, cattle access and bores were doing damage and there was mismanagement of flows. Other environmental issues such as poor water quality, “run-off” and bridal creeper were also cited as environmental concerns.

The issue of health concerns related to the Brookdale Waste Treatment Facility was mentioned by several interviewees. The general consensus was that it was of concern mostly as an ongoing issue for the area. None of the residents interviewed purported to know if concerns were justified. However, it was asserted that one way or another the issue needed to be “put to bed once and for all”. If there was a problem, then it needed to be recognised and dealt with.

A number of specific concerns were expressed by indigenous peoples. A primary concern was that many of the traditional stories have been lost or forgotten as a result of dispossession of land and removal of children from families. It was reported that loss of stories made it harder for Aboriginal people to make claim to significant sites, and that this is how development at Wright Lake, now referred to as Champion Lakes, went ahead.

Concern was expressed about the poor facilities and amenities in areas where Aboriginal people lived. Indeed, World Vision had recently been established in the region to redress this situation. The issues faced by Aboriginal people were widely noted within the regional community, and seen as largely responsible for associated ‘anti-social’ behaviour. There was some disquiet about division between Aboriginal peoples, at regional and political levels.

## **5.2 Hopes**

*“I hope that we retain the same special feel and environment ... it’s not something you can really put into words, it’s the special spirit and character of the place.”*

The strongly felt and shared hope among residents was that the area retain its “City Living, Country Style” identity. This referred as much to the “special character and feel of the place” and sense of community support and solidarity as it did to the external environment. It was hoped that the area could be “kept a secret” to protect this special quality. Other related aspirations included retaining the open spaces, parks and green areas, the paddocks and even the farm animals. This was expressed by one resident as “I still want to hear the birds and cows when I wake up in the morning.”

It was hoped that in the future Armadale may serve as a type of “satellite city” for the region. An important aspiration was giving young people the opportunity to live, study, work and buy their own home in the area. Indeed, it was hoped that most people had opportunity to both live *and* work in the region. It was hoped that more services would be available, for example good representation of all state government agencies and a high quality reference library. Four to five-storey commercial properties were envisaged in the city centre, along with two-storey residential premises. Town-centre residential premises for the elderly and disabled were also desired for best accessibility to all facilities, amenities and public transport.

Development was unanimously welcomed by interviewees, and a key aspiration was that the southern suburbs receive the same amenities and facilities as the northern areas. However, residents did not want development to compromise the special characteristics of the area. This was expressed as “We must not risk turning Armadale into a great hotel, but a lousy home”. It was hoped that the area would not “grow too fast” and that affordability of property in the area would be retained. Retaining the smaller local shopping centres was also thought important.

A major aspiration of interviewees was the beautification and injection of life into the Armadale city centre. It was hoped the city centre would be clean and well-kept, and would offer a vibrant meeting place for people. Visions included a café strip shopping precinct, outdoor eating areas, and street-scapes, including trees in the middle of the main streets. Many people quoted Fremantle as an example. Better shopping facilities, parking and street lay-out were seen as important. It was hoped that with these changes the CBD would be bigger and prosperous. An overpass between the proposed shopping centre and the new cinema complex was also hoped for.

Whilst retaining the country feel and lifestyle of the region was a key desire, an associated and somewhat conflicting aspiration was an improvement in outside perceptions of the region and an influx of visitors to the area. Fremantle was again cited in terms of a ‘café-strip model’, however it was also thought important that special assets of the region be well-promoted. It was hoped that the area could be linked in with existing tourist routes in areas such as Serpentine, Kalamunda, the Swan Valley and along the Brookton Highway.

Making the region a place of destination, rather than of passing through to other areas was an important aspiration. With this, a better range of

accommodation for all people, including budget travellers was hoped for. Improved local government support for the Armadale Tourist Bureau, particularly a partnership relationship, signage and a shuttle-bus, was desired. It was also thought that it would be good to have a special attraction to bring people into the area. Outside interest in the area was seen as vital for attracting the outside investment needed for making regional aspirations a reality.

The creation of a vibrant arts and cultural environment in the area was highly important. Ongoing arts and cultural activities, including outdoor summer activities (rather than just a few annual events) were seen as imperative. A cultural precinct that was relevant for the region and easily accessible for all was also hoped for. A facility similar to the Fremantle Arts Centre was a common aspiration and it was also suggested that the Town District Hall could be better utilised for cultural activities. It was thought that Cecil Andrews High School would be a logical place to put a “proper community centre for performing arts”.

It was widely hoped there would be good facilities for youth in the region. The principal aspiration was a local skate-park, as the most immediate and realistic improvement. A long-term aspiration of youth was a special Youth Services Centre, housing all the facilities needed by youth and offering a safe place for them to meet and stay. Services included health and educational facilities, entertainment venues such as a movie-house and internet café, and a special study area.

A local, satellite University was an important shared hope of residents. This would make university access easier and more convenient for local young people. An express wish was that it would improve the poor educational retention rate of youth in the region, particularly young Aboriginal students. One interviewee saw a local university as essential for creating a “university mindset of youth”, and her grandchildren in particular. It was thought that if a university was integrated into regional lifestyle, then a university education would be considered a natural thing for young people to pursue.

A special hope was that the social support needs of all people within the region would be catered for. It was hoped that the State housing situation would be addressed and a better standard of housing would be available for all. The establishment of short and long term accommodation for those in need, such as people suffering with mental disabilities, was desired. A supportive community which collectively helped the disadvantaged as a part of their everyday lifestyle was an important aspiration. This included the business community, not just in terms of financial support but in offering people work experience opportunities also.

Most believed that achieving regional hopes was a collective responsibility. It was hoped that the regional community would make a collaborative effort to improve the area and the poor reputation it had attracted. Increased local pride in homes and better management of rental properties were desired to improve the overall appearance of area. A common aspiration was for local

government to “act for the good of the whole” and help tidy up and develop the entire area, not just the centre of Armadale.

A number of general hopes were held for the area. Walking and cycling paths and better lighting were desired, and it was suggested a cycle path into Perth city would be good. Improved public transport, including an express train, and more services on weekends and late at nights was thought important. Improved recreational facilities, such as a year-round leisure centre, an indoor, heated, “all-facilities” swimming pool and a Golf and Country Club were wanted. It was also hoped that there would be a better public golf course and that the one at Forrestdale Lake would be closed and the area returned to its natural state. A regional cemetery was also thought important by several interviewees.

A good awareness and appreciation of the natural environment was an important aspiration. It was hoped there would be community connectedness and ownership of the environment. Well-managed walking and heritage trails were seen as a good way to promote community care for the natural environment. Improving and/ or retaining water courses and the bush in good condition was also desired, particularly in light of development and increased population.

A passionate aspiration was for the local Council to “keep up the good work”. This principally referred to maintaining close relations with the community and public involvement in proposals and planning.

From an indigenous perspective, “a better life for Aboriginal people” was a strongly held aspiration. This included better zoning of Aboriginal families through the State housing authority so that feuding families were not placed near each other. It was also hoped that Aboriginal people would be dispersed throughout the region, rather than placed in particular areas and segregated from the rest of the community.

Better work opportunities and traineeships were hoped for, and particularly through development of the region. However, this was reported to be very difficult to achieve with current employment processes. It was hoped to establish an autonomous, self-sufficient Aboriginal co-operative through a World Vision initiative.

## **6.0 REQUIREMENTS FOR DEVELOPMENT AND BROOKDALE**

### **6.1 Development**

*“The development must love what is ‘Armadale’. We must not be another Joondalup, which completely lacks character... we must not risk turning Armadale into a great hotel, but a lovely home.”*

The strong and shared feeling among interviewees was that regional development was a wonderful thing. Many commented that plans for development and associated investors' interest and rising property values had a major and positive impact on the community. It was reported that there was a feeling of great excitement in the community and a marked improvement in community spirit, pride and confidence in the area. It was also fostering greater community solidarity, helping to dissolve old rivalries and encouraging a regional rather than local parochial identity.

Development was further welcomed for the special benefits it would confer upon the regional community. Employment, opportunity to live and work in the area, increased prosperity, a good range of facilities and a vibrant city centre in Armadale were some of the potential main benefits embraced. Development was approved as being "good for business" and was strongly supported by local business owners. Champion Lakes was seen as a great asset to the area, in terms of both a rowing facility of international standard and for the opportunities it provided for recreation and enjoyment of the natural environment. The proposed Forrestdale Industrial Precinct was also welcomed for improved facilities, employment opportunities and helping to balance the unusually high proportion of residential rates in the region.

It was strongly stressed that the community must be involved in decision making about planned development. A "Big Brother" approach was not seen as appropriate and poor planning decisions in the past had also left their mark within the community. Regular and ongoing public participation was seen as essential to ensuring that development would be appropriate for all, and would meet regional needs and aspirations. Moreover, that it would be *endorsed* by the community, thereby ensuring funds were not wasted. The inclusion of input from youth was seen to be an essential, and from an indigenous perspective it was important that participation be comprehensive and inclusive and not "just consultation with a few leaders".

Community input was also seen as essential for ensuring that planned changes "fitted with" the special identity of the region. It was emphasised that "glossy brochures were not enough" and local knowledge, history and passion for the area were essential for informing decision making. It was said that town planners without an affinity for the region, making decisions in some far away office, would not know what was right or appropriate for the area in terms of local heritage, culture and identity.

Similar emphasis was given to ensuring that development occurred "at the right pace and in the right way". This referred to sufficient time and care being taken in making decisions to avoid costly mistakes or negative impacts, including environmental impacts. There was a high level of mistrust about decision making based on negative experiences with town planning in the past. The current Armadale city centre and 'white elephant' Harvey Norman outlet were often mentioned, and indeed building the town centre on the hill, rather than "on the flats" was considered to be poor planning. Foresight and consideration of all possible effects was therefore stressed as essential.

Synergy and integration in development planning were given a high priority. The need to ensure complementarity and linkages at all levels was emphasised. Synergy was reported to be vital for the success of each planned development. For example, residents of proposed new residential areas had to be drawn to a vibrant city centre in Armadale, which in turn was heavily reliant upon their business for success.

Finding a good balance in development was seen as crucial. It was thought important to have a sustainability strategy, however money should not be spread too thinly in too many places. It was strongly felt that “there must not be development at any cost”. The benefits of development were welcomed, but these needed to be balanced with protection of community and environmental assets. Conversely, situations such as the controversy over the jarrah tree in the Armadale shopping car-park was seen by some as an indication of an unhealthy bias on the side of conservation.

Design was an important issue for all. Indeed, it was commented that “the key to the area and the success [of development] is that it be gauged by design.” Retaining the local historical feel was highly valued and preserving and restoring original architecture and historical sites was paramount. The new railway station, built of bricks and with arches, was cited as a good example of historically appropriate design. More recent architecture, such as the Armadale shopping centre, was viewed as “ugly and dingy”. It was considered that design should be about lifestyle and should be friendly for both people and the environment.

For many it was equally important to move beyond “heritage thinking”. It was believed that history could be complemented by *not* copying it. Innovation, creativity and risk-taking were viewed as critical. New, dynamic, positive and energetic thinking was welcomed and recent developments at Gosnells<sup>2</sup> were cited as an excellent example of optimistic planning. However, this approach had to involve the community and take into account the special identity and character of the region. It was said that “The developers need to represent what the people want and they need to do this with positive innovation in mind”.

Ensuring that development occurred throughout the region and not just in the Armadale city centre was highly valued. Resources were seen to be equally needed for local family parks and community centres. It was suggested that small shopping centres around the region could be revived, rather than focusing everything on one large and impersonal regional centre. This was seen to offer people a choice. The Kalamunda model of village-feel, quaint shops and browsing was favoured by some.

While most thoughts about development tended to focus on proposed plans for the Armadale centre, concerns were raised about proposed new residential areas. A key aim of development is to attract second and third homebuyers into the area. The strong message from existing residents was

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<sup>2</sup> For example, planning for optimal crime prevention.

that new residential areas must be integrated with existing areas to avoid creating segregation and division. Walled sub-divisions were strongly opposed. It was essential not to marginalise any part of the community, including the Aboriginal population. There was particular concern about the creation of “New and Beautiful” and “Old and Run-down” areas. One interviewee said that the community had only just overcome an historical “we are better than you divide” and needed to move forwards, not go backwards.

It was thought that development needed to be professionally promoted if it were to be successful. A comprehensive strategy was needed, “not just a few ads in the paper, but something special and different”. Display homes were also seen as vital for attracting outside interest of those considering moving into the region.

## **6.2 Brookdale**

*“It can’t be the type of place where mansions take up the whole block. You can have a good sized house, but keep a yard and have a veggie garden out the back ... keep the feel of the area.”*

Interviewees had specific views about the proposed redevelopment of Brookdale. It was thought a sustainability strategy was needed, and indeed that the proposed residential area “be identified through a sustainability badge”. Protecting the environment was paramount and it was believed that developers and residents alike needed to have an awareness of important ecological sites. Repairing the damage done to the area through agriculture and protecting wildlife and native bush reserves was essential. Preservation of the Wungong River was imperative and a hydrological study to assist in this was needed. It was thought that the top-soil should be removed when development started and then replaced when it was completed. From an indigenous perspective, there were a striking number of significant sites in the area that needed special attention and care.

Many believed that the natural environment should be incorporated into the development. It was thought that there needed to be a mixture of woodland, sandy and swampy patches, as per the current native state. Access to the Wungong River and reserves for foreshore development were favoured, however riparian zones were needed. It was thought that the water, rather than used as a drain as in the past, should be made a feature of redevelopment through ‘total water management’. It was also suggested that water could be used to help create a feeling of coolness in summer. Emphasis was given to maintaining a natural look to the area, “nothing too beautified and manicured”.

The natural environment was viewed as an important way to create and consolidate a sense of community among Brookdale residents. The revival of natural ponds and lakes and use of paths, guided walkways, and communal walking areas could bring people together and provide opportunity for neighbours to get to know one another. It was also thought that gaining an

understanding of the natural environment, and how and why “it works”, would bring people together through a similar focus and common theme.

Retaining and reflecting the history and identity of the area was considered essential. It was pointed out that even the plants used could say much about history and what the community holds dear. Entry and exit statements were also seen as important ways to do this, through design and words. One interviewee favoured the use of orchards as both aesthetically pleasing and a homage to the history of Brookdale. It was thought that “snap-shots of the past’ could be integrated into the natural setting and along paths and bridges. Plaques and mosaics were suggested as a possible way to do this. Identification and ‘flagging’ of historical Aboriginal, swaggie and migrant camps along the river was believed to be important.

It was strongly emphasised that the development “must have character, just like the region”. There was shared aversion to “the northern suburbs” and “a sea of roof-tops” and “not another Joondalup!” and “no limestone walls!” were common refrains. With this came rejection of uniformity, large, two-storey mansions which occupied most of the block area, metal and glass type-design and a “yuppie look”. It was suggested that Australiana architecture should be adopted and a ban placed on houses without verandahs.

Feelings were strong about the need “for soul” and a semi-rural character was favoured, with large block sizes and an abundance of open spaces, green areas and trees. It was asserted it needed to be “refreshing”. Special location and connectivity to other areas were seen as important assets of the area, however it was believed it needed to have “solitude and secret beauty”. It was strongly felt the area should be about lifestyle rather than just houses. Vibrancy was favoured and one vision included two-storey residences in the midst of a thriving village, with some residents living above cafes. However, it was believed a large main street should be avoided. It was thought that this could be accessed at Armadale and it was hoped a shuttle bus would be operational for residents for this purpose.

A friendly, family and village type of area was commonly envisaged. It was felt that the area should be a good place to raise children and “where you can have a veggie patch in the backyard. Good facilities for youth were needed and recreational facilities, including a golf course were suggested. Paths and good lighting were desired for “walkability”, as was a well-planned road layout, underground power and deep sewerage. It was thought that Brookdale should be a good investment for families and retirees, however it was strongly felt that affordability was essential. It was strongly felt that local residents should not be excluded from opportunity to buy and/ or live in the development. An indigenous interviewee reported that aiming at second and third homebuyers would exclude many Aboriginal people.

## 7.0 Key Messages and Recommendations

The information obtained from this scoping stage identified the following key outcomes that should be investigated in Stage 2 of the research. This stage will gain wider regional and Perth community input to the identity development through two similar and targeted telephone surveys.

### 7.1 Attachments

The following were identified as the major attachments to place and community in the region:

- The “City Living, Country Style” lifestyle, which was perceived as having all of the benefits of a country lifestyle within the Perth metropolitan region, and all the benefits of this.
- The “country character” of the area. This referred to the “country-style” community as well as the rural landscape and green spaces of the natural environment. Together they were seen to create a special quality usually found in country areas.
- The unique heritage, including architecture and buildings, history and stories and heritage places. It also pertained to the perceived strong community character and solidarity bestowed by the historical legacy.
- The natural environment, particularly the hills, dams, “the bush” and trees. Rivers, water courses and other water bodies such as the Forrestdale Lake were also highly valued.
- Contrasts, or “the edge effect”. This refers to the contrasts of rural and urban, old and new, hills and flat areas, elite and affordable areas, as well as the diversity of the community and cultures.

***Recommendation 1:***

***It is recommended that Stage 2 of the study investigate the strength of the above attachments in the wider regional community and the degree of appeal that a “Country Sea Change” would hold for metropolitan Perth residents.***

### 7.2 Aspirations

#### 7.2.1 Regional

The following summarises the key community aspirations for the future of the region as a whole:

- The retention and promotion of all aspects of attachment, as described above.

- Overcoming the external poor image of the region and attracting people to the region. It was hoped that regional assets would be widely known and appreciated outside of the area. With this, it was desired that people would come to the region as a destination, and not pass through on their way to other places as has traditionally occurred.
- Armadale city having all the benefits of a satellite city. This included all required facilities and services, an active culture and arts environment and a “café strip” lifestyle. A major related aspiration was the availability of further education opportunities.
- Well-planned development. This principally referred to foresight and considered decision making. Community participation was also seen as essential to ensure that development would be endorsed and for integration of the unique identity and character of the region.
- Innovation and optimistic planning and new, dynamic and positive thinking.
- The retention and integration into the future of all of the contrasts, as described in Section 7.1.

### **7.2.2 Brookdale**

The following summarises the key community aspirations for the future of Brookdale:

- The integration of the residential area with the natural environment for the benefit of both the environment and the local community.
- A sustainability strategy, and in particular, using water positively as a feature of the redevelopment.
- “Soul”, character and diversity. It was also hoped that Brookdale would “fit with” the region. These sentiments were principally qualified by “not another Joondalup”.
- The retention and reflection of the unique history of the area.
- A village and family lifestyle, affordable for all.

***Recommendation 2:***  
***It is recommended that Stage 2 of the study further explore people’s perceptions of the relationship between development, history, uniqueness and modernity as a future for the region and Brookdale. It is also recommended that the ability to achieve this mix and the key indicators of achievement be explored.***

## **7.3 Concerns**

### **7.3.1 Regional**

The following summarises the key community concerns for the region as a whole:

- Losing the special character and identity of the place and becoming “like the northern suburbs”.
- Possible gentrification of the area to the detriment of the special “salty” characteristics at present.
- Possible marginalisation of some areas and exclusion of some community groups.
- The need for integrated State housing. This referred to integration of design and quality of buildings as well as the integration of people throughout the community.
- The need for adequate facilities, activities and support for youth for reaching their aspirations and potential.
- The possible impact of the new population on the existing community spirit, social services and facilities.
- Losing the unique character and identity of local districts within a generic “Armadale” badge, and subsequent neglect of these areas by local government.

### **7.3.2 Brookdale**

The following summarises the key community concerns for Brookdale:

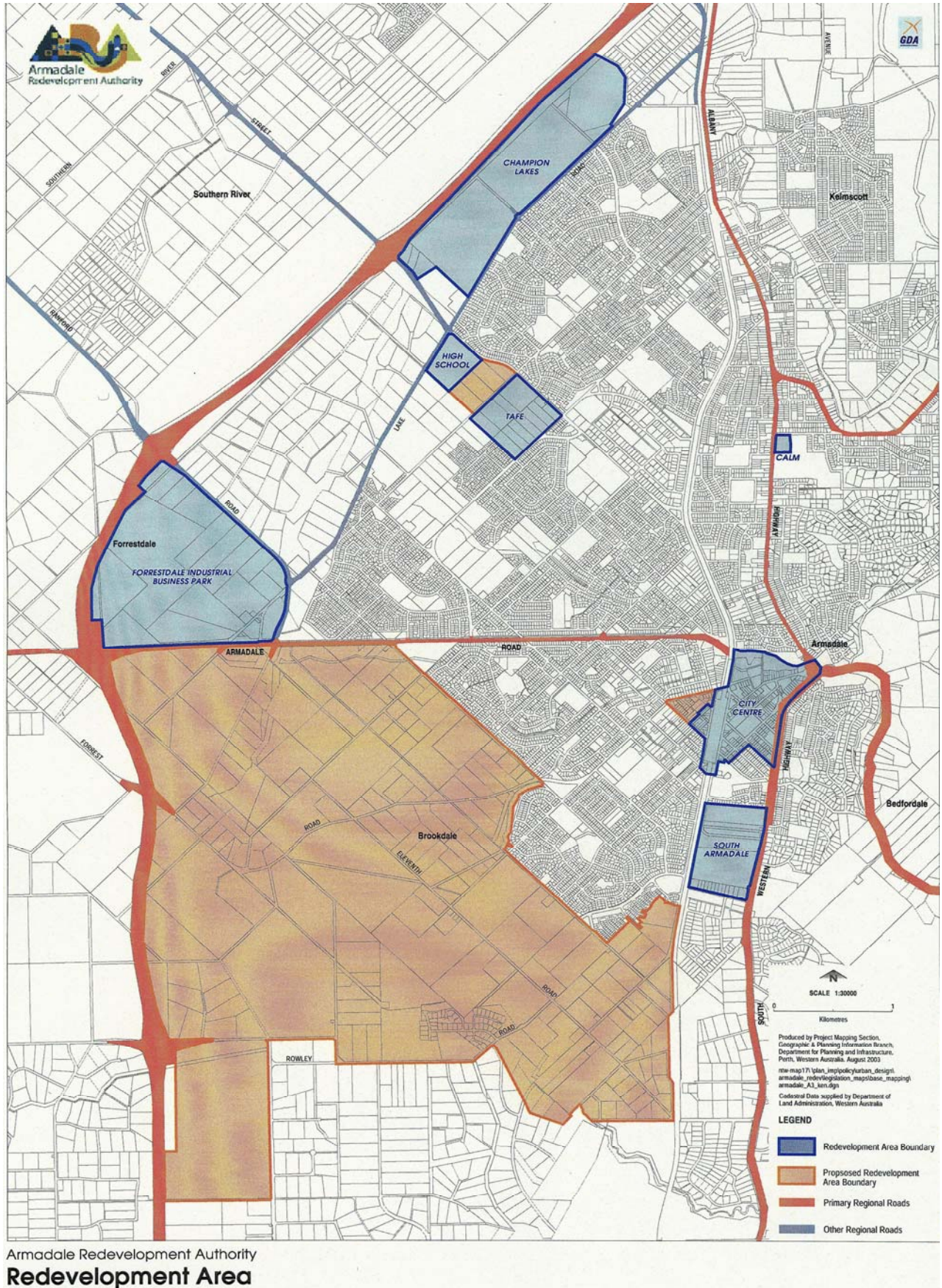
- The new development should not recreate an “us and them” divide and mindset that has so recently been overcome by the community.
- The ongoing issue of stigma associated with the Brookdale Waste Treatment Facility. Truth and closure need to be brought to bear to this ongoing controversy.

***Recommendation 3:***

***It is recommended that Stage 3 of the study, which will develop several concepts for testing, investigate the extent and importance of these concerns in both the regional and wider metropolitan area, and possible means to overcome them.***

# APPENDIX A

## Figure 1: The Redevelopment Area



Armadale Redevelopment Authority  
**Redevelopment Area**

# APPENDIX B

Figure 2: Map of the Region

