

**At any one time the Belmont Council is working on a range of projects designed to improve the health & well-being of its residents. Part of this process involves community consultation. It needs an informed and responsive citizenry to do this effectively. Part of our role is to monitor this process and provide feedback.**

**Once upon a time ...** not that long ago, on a hot summers evening you could meander down to the Ascot Inn or the Sandringham Hotel by the river, enjoy some liquid refreshment, cooling breezes wafting through, watching the setting sun. They were public venues providing an inclusive, gathering place for all comers to engage in social activity. An opportunity to meet strangers and listen to alternative views – be surprised, even challenged! Sadly these sites are no longer readily available to the general public. Partly a result of the growing ‘privatisation of public space’ phenomenon.

Another example; where once stood a ‘public hospital’ overlooking the river, is now a private fenced carpark and a lovely new linear park ‘Bilya Kard Boodja’ with a viewing platform and kids playground. But no public toilet! This effectively privatises this space for the use of nearby high-rise tower residents only – discouraging the wider community from using this part of the river.

Changing technologies have certainly played a part in this. We no longer need to go to the cinema to watch the latest blockbuster; or go to the post office to pay a bill; we can do most of our shopping in one place or even on-

line. Ah yes, you might say we are now ‘connected to the world’ via the internet but this rings hollow if you don’t know your immediate neighbours. The surveillance camera might make you feel safe but it won’t come to your assistance if you are accosted on your front verge.

Of course the car is the ultimate private space in the public domain. Driving is a transformative experience often encouraging anti-social, aggressive, behaviour. When did you last see a motorist stop voluntarily to allow an elderly citizen cross the road? And the adverse effect vehicular traffic and road infrastructure has on the actual & social space of those who can’t afford a car. Good public transport encourages social interaction and a feeling of connectedness.

The local street is a space that seems to be overlooked by planners as an opportunity for social engagement. It is where the less fortunate wait at the unsheltered bus stop; walk along tree-less streets carrying their shopping; compete with pushbikes for space; and risk being run over by impatient motorists exiting side streets.

Local governments are now aware of the decline in community and are endeavouring to remedy the situation. Talk of liveability & social engagement; reactivation of public space; civic squares and street festivals. Much of this will be driven by passionate, well connected & resourced residents. One problematic outcome of this improvement can be gentrification of some local areas, further marginalising the disadvantaged in others.



If you’re quite content to drive in your air-conditioned car to the latest air-conditioned mega-store and have a predictable lunch afterwards in an air-conditioned, franchised eatery, then you won’t be interested in a wonderful, outdoor bolt-hole of a café, surrounded by trees on the banks of the Helena River.

### **Hurry it’s nearly closing**

**time!** The Local Government Act 1995 Review, Phase 2. has invited the public to fill out on-line surveys and make submissions regarding the future operation of our councils.

The focus is on Community based themes of which **Inclusive** (Community engagement, Complaints management, Elections) is particularly relevant to all residents as stakeholders.

Public participation occurs at many levels, at different stages and with different stakeholders.

The International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) has provided a guide explaining these levels.

<https://www.epa.gov/international-cooperation/public-participation-guide-selecting-right-level-public-participation>

The spectrum range is INFORM / CONSULT / INVOLVE / COLLABORATE / EMPOWER.

At the INFORM level there is little opportunity for public influence, whereas at the other end of the spectrum EMPOWER, the public is given the opportunity to make decisions for themselves. It is usually in the middle levels where most public participation happens.

How much would you like to be involved in decisions that will affect your future?

This process will end on 31 March 2019. Below is the on-line survey; <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/97V33NC>

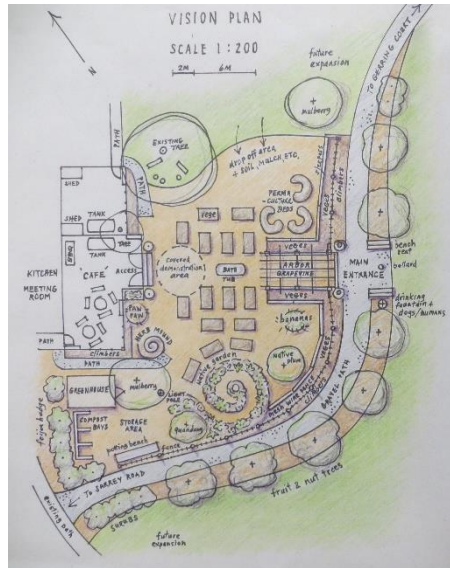
**Growing community.** If you would like to meet your neighbours, form friendships, work and grow together with a group of people who take action to make our suburbs a better place to live; then contact the Belmont Community Growers Group on the following link. <http://www.communitygrowers.org/> or visit them on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/communitygrowers.org/>

Some of their goals are to;

- Grow affordable, fresh, organic food locally
- Convert vacant land into productive gardens
- Get connected to the community
- Promote nutrition and sustainability

At present the garden consists of 9 raised corrugated iron planter boxes, and is located in Wilson Park,

Rivervale. Their plan eventually is to have something more like this.



### What's your preference?

The Golden Gateway Structure Plan will soon be available for public comment and feedback. Some of the proposals include shifting the roundabout closer to the Ascot Racecourse and the nomination of Land mark development sites, where 15 storey tower blocks will be permitted. One of these is located between the new roundabout site and the proposed Linear Park (refer 1 on map).



It would result in the loss of a significant grouping of mature trees.



It is accepted that some areas of this precinct are unsightly, neglected and under-utilised, but turning it into a high rise residential tower, traffic interchange is surely not the best outcome for residents? If this particular landmark site was excised from the structure plan the proposed park (demarcated by red dashed line) could be expanded northwards through to the proposed roundabout, providing a 'green heart' to the precinct, enhancing rather than dominating the existing landmarks (Ascot Racecourse & Kilns). And creating uninterrupted views from all the other proposed residential sites.

### Recommended reading:

GAME OF MATES, How Favours Bleed the Nation., C. K. Murray & P. Frijters, Queensland, 2017.

**Your feedback.** If you would like to submit an article that is relevant to the residents of Belmont, or you would like to join our group, refer contact details below.