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REVITALISING URBAN PLACES



# CLAISEBROOK VILLAGE

A Case Study in Urban Revitalisation



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## A Case Study in Urban Revitalisation

To transform a disused and degraded industrial area of inner city Perth into a modern urban community while retaining, protecting and emphasising the rich heritage and natural river setting.





This retrospect on Claisebrook Village is the culmination of many people's time and effort. EPRA wishes to acknowledge the generosity and time of all who participated and to thank them, most sincerely, for their involvement.

In particular independent interviews were held with key government figures, industry experts, project consultants, community groups and key personnel of the Redevelopment Authority (past and present). All were unfailingly expansive in their responses, patient in their explanations and very generous with their time.

Views expressed in this document are those of the key stakeholders who participated in the independent interviews.





Area	137.5 ha
New Homes	1,450
Social / Affordable Homes	140
New Residents	2,500
Commercial and Retail Space (m2)	130,000
New Workers	6,000
Government Investment	\$127 m
Investment Attraction	\$685 m

Source: Claisebrook Village Concept Planning 1992

# PURPOSE

This case study follows the evolution of the built environment in East Perth to create Claisebrook Village. Reflecting back on the redevelopment of East Perth provides a unique opportunity for experience-based learning. It is a vital part to understanding the effectiveness of the East Perth Redevelopment Authority (the Authority) as well as to inform and improve future policies, processes and direction by:

1. Identifying the strengths and weaknesses of project delivery.
2. Measuring outcomes against original project objectives.
3. Addressing lessons learnt.

The study openly compares the original project objectives with what was actually delivered through the redevelopment by evaluating physical provision and reporting on the commentary of key stakeholders. It is a historical record of not only what was delivered but also how and why.



Most importantly the pages that follow identify the overall project learnings from the redevelopment of industrial East Perth into an urban village. Recognising and documenting these lessons is vital to the continued betterment of the Redevelopment Authority model.

This retrospect has been informed by key planning, development and decision-making records from the Authority as well as 2006 census data, annual reports and interviews with key stakeholders. The Authority has made every effort to ensure the integrity of these findings by presenting facts and drawing on stakeholder opinions.

The lessons learnt from Western Australia's first major inner city redevelopment project have been shared here in order to inform and inspire future projects.

# UNDERSTANDING THE PLACE

The eastern banks of the Swan River served as a campsite for the Noongar people hunting and fishing in the area for thousands of years. Post settlement this function was emulated by the European colonists. The Western Australian gold rush of the 1890s led to a large increase in population placing immense pressure on housing. Such was the demand for housing that some colonists and many single men on their way to and from the Goldfields were forced to camp temporarily along the river's eastern edge.

Post World War I this area of the city became the focus of heavy industry. The State-managed East Perth Gasworks opened in 1924 alongside the existing brickworks and railway yards in the area now known as Claisebrook Village. After nearly 50 years of service the East Perth Gasworks was decommissioned in 1971. With it the activity and buzz of industry was silenced and the area fell into disrepair.

*“The inlet was just a creek and it was a dangerous place to go... but that’s where the opportunity lay”*

Project Consultant

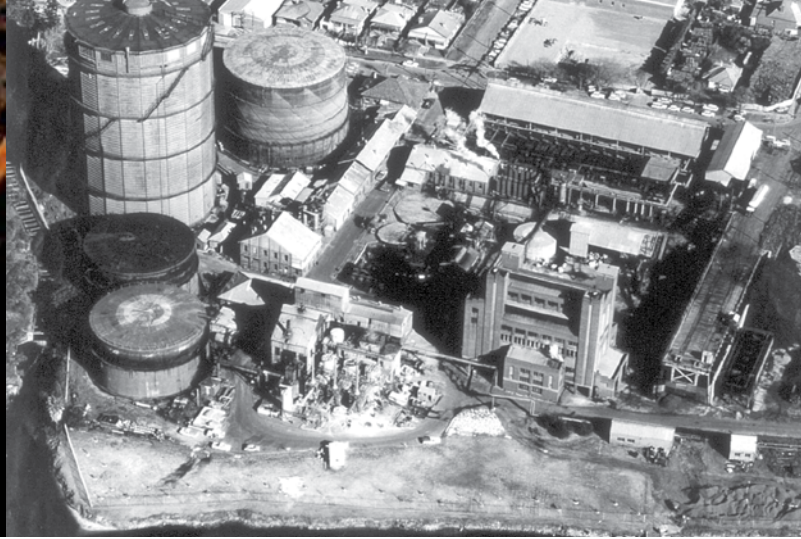
*“The lowest point East Perth got to was when the Lord Mayor of the time... earmarked it to be the red light district of Perth”*

Project Consultant

During this time East Perth was described as a bleak place. On the riverfront and close to the CBD it was a largely forgotten space; its landscape dotted with outdated technologies and the contaminants of industry. What is now Claisebrook Cove was then the city drain from which untreated stormwater poured into the Swan River.

East Perth before redevelopment has been described as housing a collection of the city’s disenfranchised among its derelict industrial spaces. With land earmarked for a freeway extension, many of the old homes had been allowed to fall into disrepair. East Perth had become a no-go zone, certainly no place to be caught in at night. People had abandoned the inner city for a quarter-acre block in the suburbs, leaving it underutilised, dilapidated, and badly in need of regeneration.





The redevelopment was delivered against the backdrop of a city unfamiliar with high-density living. It represented a radical departure from the norms of the day. In the early days developers were unsure how to respond and builders did not know how to build on lots as small as 160m<sup>2</sup>. No one knew how the market would respond – encouraging people back into the city was a task requiring cultural and behavioural change.

Today, Claisebrook Village is near completion and planning control of over 90 per cent of the area has been or is in the process of being handed back to the local government.

There are different views of Claisebrook Village today. At best, there is a sense that what was achieved was world class, a complete revival and transformation. At worst, it was considered quite a good job, probably better than expected. Though without question the redevelopment has completely transformed East Perth, both physically and psychologically.

The redevelopment was ambitious and its achievements are perceived to extend beyond the immediate surrounds. Namely it:

- Caused a shift in suburban attitudes and proved the demand for change.
- Proved the market for higher density living and made small lots an aspirational position.
- Encouraged new styles of architecture and building.

*“East Perth as a redevelopment is an outstanding success, there’s been very good governance”*

Government

# THE DELIVERY MODEL

Claisebrook Village was a major benefactor of the Hawke Government's *Building Better Cities* program (1991-96). The program sought to promote and demonstrate improvements in the efficiency, equity and sustainability of Australian cities and to increase their capacity to meet a range of social, economic and environmental objectives. As State-owned ex-industrial land close to Perth's CBD, East Perth was a prime candidate for the Commonwealth funding.

Although the redevelopment of East Perth was already the topic of much discussion, it was the *Building Better Cities* funding that put talk into action. East Perth was an inner city regeneration project of enormous scope, requiring changes to the planning framework, massive capital investment and a huge amount of environmental remediation. It was a job that the private sector could not do.

There were concerns from then Planning Minister Kay Hallahan over the ability of the existing government framework to successfully deliver Claisebrook Village. Consequently the East Perth Redevelopment Act (1991) was passed by Parliament and on 1 July 1992 the Authority formally came into operation.

*"... the existing machinery of Government in Western Australia is not adequate to deal with redevelopment of this project area in a proactive way"*

Second Reading Speech: East Perth Redevelopment Bill 1990



The Authority was established as a specialised planning and development agency with management powers over land development and sales. It was an entirely new type of Government agency for Western Australia. There was no precedent so it had to find its way, to some extent, in the redevelopment of East Perth. The Redevelopment Authority model was seen as a unique instrument and a brave experiment. At the outset there was significant pressure on EPRA to perform.

The Authority's role was to plan, undertake, promote and coordinate the redevelopment of land within the redevelopment area. The Authority was responsible for all aspects of the redevelopment from concept planning to development, investment attraction and community development.

*"Some of those early decision makers made incredibly brave decisions because they were out of context of where the general market was"*

Industry Expert

*"... people must never forget... how instrumental it is to have an Act to provide a unified management group and a body that has authority within the area"*

Project Consultant



The planning framework was innovative in its aim to deliver a sustainable urban village. The first Redevelopment Scheme (1992) introduced the concept of mixed use planning, a significant departure from the then standard single use zone planning. The Scheme was flexible, favouring objectives to deliver desired outcomes over tick-the-box regulation. The Redevelopment Authority model also pioneered the integration of Design Guidelines into the planning framework. This approach has since been adopted by local governments throughout the State.

Many described the most difficult task of the Redevelopment Authority was to exercise the powers provided by the Act, it was considered to be a balancing act. The passage of time has to some degree minimised the enormity of the challenges the redevelopment faced. Roads needed to be moved and many of the existing uses and buildings were not relevant to the new community. Land assembly was described as difficult as some of the residents were really quite keen to stay. Though without it Claisebrook Village would never have become what it is today.

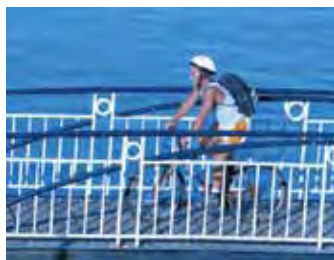
There is broad support for the existence and abilities of Redevelopment Authorities and a strong belief that they get the job done. The model – a dedicated board, a Chief Executive Officer, centralised planning and development powers and a small management team supported by external consultants was viewed as having been very effective in delivering Claisebrook Village.

*“It could go horribly wrong but it has been done very well. They have got to be careful in taking away mine and your powers”*

Government

# PROMOTING REVITALISATION

To put the delivery of the Claisebrook Village redevelopment into perspective, reflection on the outcomes and achievements have been made against the original project objectives.



01

Create a safe and comfortable environment for all people.

02

Encourage protection of place by preserving cultural heritage.

03

Increase public access to the Swan River foreshore.

04

Encourage protection of place by conserving energy.

05

Demonstrate innovative environmental remediation techniques for environmentally degraded areas.



06 Reduce traffic by making better use of public transport and placing residents within walking distance of employment.



07 Deliver housing innovation, choice and affordability.



08 Encourage energy efficient land development.



09 Encourage investment opportunities, growth and revitalisation.



10 Make provisions for disabled access.

Since the original project objectives were specific to Claisebrook Village the discussion that follows has been themed to accord with EPRA's present day redevelopment goals, to ensure project learnings are directly transferable to delivery practices of today.

# SENSE OF PLACE

Build a sense of place by supporting unique and high quality design, heritage protection, public art and cultural activities that respond to Perth's environment, climate and lifestyle.

*"[It is] going to take time. We were ten years ahead of our time in planning, a lot of things were very innovative"*

Project Consultant

Although largely a subjective experience, a sense of place can be described as emanating from the overlay of human engagement on the natural and built environment. It can be fostered but not imposed and it takes time to develop.

While there is general agreement on the transformative impact of Claisebrook Village, there is less certainty that the area has developed a strong identity. It is taking time to settle into itself. Nonetheless as the redevelopment draws from the rich Indigenous and industrial heritage and takes full advantage of the river, there is the sense that it is only a matter of time.

The redevelopment has made a genuine effort to be respectful and inclusive of local histories. Former Indigenous camping and meeting places were recognised and conserved as parks, reinterpreting these historical activities as new places for the community to gather and interact. However, the redevelopment may not have managed to tell all the stories of East Perth and the area may have been richer for retaining more heritage buildings. Perhaps this is a side effect of the need to completely rebrand the old, blighted East Perth.

*"EPRA has done exceptionally well in acknowledging the significance of the area in pre-European times but much less well in embracing the history of Aborigines in the very recent past"*

Community

The redevelopment was innovative in integrating public art into the initial planning. More than 25 pieces of commissioned artwork inspired by the pre-settlement Indigenous and post-settlement industrial heritage to enrich and enliven the Claisebrook community. Artists were encouraged to work with recycled materials from the area adding to the meaning of each piece. In addition developers have integrated art into the built form as part of the *Percent for Art* program pioneered by the Authority. However, there was some concern that the artworks may not be recognised as reflecting local history and that more plaques and explanations may be needed.

*"The amount of urban art means there are lots of things you can discover – a sense of discovery. That adds character"*

Project Consultant

At the time, planning for a community with small residential blocks was brave as it did not match the market standard. Now, with the benefit of twenty years hindsight, it seems Claisebrook Village lacks the density to be described as a vibrant urban village. Yet there are still sites to be redeveloped so densities are slowly growing and the streets are gradually becoming more vibrant.



It is acknowledged that Royal Street did not work very well. A more intimate design was warranted and the initial lack of retail mix limited attraction of people to the area. There are pockets of life and activity like Claisebrook Cove and particularly the Royal Hotel; a place where people meet but with a caveat from the local residents to go home by 10pm.

Elsewhere the redevelopment has been praised for its human scale, in particular for how it fosters a sense of comfort and safety. The redevelopment moved away from cul-de-sacs and isolated pathways between streets and made sure that residential areas overlooked public spaces. The streets turn and crank to provide focal points and visual lengths that people feel comfortable in.

The landscaping carefully considered Perth's climate - deciduous trees line the streets, providing summer shade and permitting winter sunlight. There are no dark spaces or hidey-holes and the planting offers good lines of sight. All of this is evidence that the designers really thought about how people would use the space. Claisebrook Village pioneered a new perception of public open space. It was no longer just a park but formed physical and social links within the community.

Without doubt the redevelopment significantly improved access to the Swan River foreshore. Previously the East Perth foreshore was hidden behind a wall of industry, degraded and inaccessible. Today it is fully available for people to walk, run and cycle on the pathway that follows the river edge and the Cove brings the Swan River into the heart of the community. Wide boardwalks allow for alfresco dining while maintaining public access. The design works well and a strong desire was expressed for EPRA to carry this practice through to future developments along the river.

*“[Royal Street was] the result of planners losing the battle with engineers over scale”*

Project Consultant

*“I haven't seen the statistics, but I have never heard that Claisebrook has a problem with crime. I have a sense that it is quite a safe community”*

Community

*“Ensuring public access to the waterway is near and dear to [all our hearts] – allowing people to make those connections to the river”*

Government

# ENHANCE ENVIRONMENTAL INTEGRITY

Enhance environmental integrity by supporting ecologically sustainable design, resource efficiency, recycling, renewable energy and protection of the local ecology.

The environmental remediation of East Perth is considered to be one of the principal benefits of the redevelopment. It not only benefited the new community but the Swan River and the metropolitan area as a whole.

East Perth's industrial past left behind a legacy of contaminants. Remediating the area was vital and a task only the government was considered capable of undertaking. Although much of the land was government owned, bureaucratic process risked commencement of the works. To prevent significant delays development began at the north end of the Cove while agreement on the gas works remediation was being finalised.

An environmental rehabilitation plan was implemented and funding was secured through developer contributions and the Federal Government's *Building Better Cities* program. Despite severe budget constraints more than 20 hectares of land had been rehabilitated by 2006. At best, the work is considered exemplary and at worst, it is described as arguably good enough. Certainly the work was considered industry leading for the time and duly rewarded in 1996 with the Urban Development Institute of Australia Environmental Excellence Award and in 2002 with the Case Earth Award.

The rehabilitation has had lasting positive impacts on the health of the river and ground water quality. A water quality management program was put in place to ensure the river, originally degraded and inaccessible, is now centre stage.

The steps taken to remediate East Perth were cutting edge for the time. The transformation from underutilised and contaminated industrial area to clean and scenic urban village is an incredible achievement for the local environment.

Although energy and water conservation were not significant drivers of the time they were taken into consideration by the redevelopment. The benefits of water sensitive urban design were not yet broadly accepted, yet the redevelopment addressed the core principles wherever possible. For example the public open spaces are irrigated using water drawn from the Cove, reducing the reliance on scheme and ground water.

Claisebrook Village was designed to address aspects such as solar access, ventilation and summer shading. Significant investment in the concept was made very early on, with streets being realigned east to west to enable north-facing buildings to capture the sun. In this regard, the redevelopment was at the time, leading edge with architects and designers who were 'early adopters' in terms of passive solar design.

Buildings of significant heritage value were preserved through adaptive reuse, which conserved the energy and resources used in construction. The restoration of the Boans warehouse into New York style loft apartments and terraces was just one example of resource efficiency through heritage conservation.

Creating connections between the river, the community and the city increased travel options in Claisebrook. The cycle, pedestrian and public transport networks offer alternatives to the private vehicle. Although car use remains a dominant mode, the increased travel options have seen some energy savings as the culture shifts and people begin to make more sustainable travel choices.



*“It was the first gas works remediation in Australia”*

Project Consultant

*“Movement builds its own momentum... if we’d had to get every duck lined up before we started, it would never have happened”*

Project Consultant

*“Cabinet gave us \$15 million and that galvanised us – they said you have all the options you want but you have \$15 million”*

Project Consultant

*“East Perth has done an environmental remediation job that was world class in its time”*

Redevelopment Authority

# ENHANCE CONNECTIVITY

Enhance connectivity by providing well designed places that support walking, cycling and public transit so that residents and visitors can easily access services, activities and employment without sole reliance on the private motor vehicle.

Claisebrook Village is perfectly located to reduce car reliance. Within close proximity to the CBD, immediately adjacent to the eastern metropolitan railway lines and accessed by various bus routes there are plenty of options for getting around. The broader vision aimed to reduce reliance on the private vehicle through the provision of urban amenity and employment opportunities close to home, walkable neighbourhoods and good public transport.

*“Another part of the strategic overview was that it had to have a transport connection to make it work”*

Government

Some modal shift was achieved in Claisebrook Village. By 2006 the number of residents walking to work in the Village was double the Perth average and the number of residents catching the train was triple the Perth average. These shifts have resulted in the number of residents driving to work from the redevelopment being 10 per cent less than the Perth average.

The redevelopment was felt to have made a very good effort in exploring different transport options though many factors affected the full embrace of non-car modes. In the early years the lack of amenity gave little incentive to change travel habits, as residents needed to drive out of the area to get to a supermarket.

Claisebrook Village is not particularly well-supported by the broader public transport system. Claisebrook Train Station sits on the periphery of the redevelopment and is viewed as being difficult to access. Despite this around 50 per cent of the Village is within a 10 minute walk (800m) of the train station. In part, continued high levels of car use could be attributed to the dominant car culture in Perth.

*“The train is not a big focus, it doesn’t connect well. There is not a lot of high design connectivity to the train”*

Industry Expert

The Central Area Transit (CAT) bus system on the other hand is considered to be a remarkable and highly successful initiative. Driven principally by former Planning Minister Richard Lewis, Claisebrook Village was the impetus behind introducing the CAT to Perth. Although densities did not justify bringing the route to Claisebrook Village until 2002 the service now provides direct connection to the city. It is highly accessible with around 70 per cent of the redevelopment being within a five minute walk (400m) of the Yellow CAT. Nowadays the CAT concept has strengthened and expanded. There are three routes inner city and even services in Subiaco and Fremantle.

*“East Perth was pioneering in terms of private and public transport... the CAT [is] a free, special-sized and separately branded bus – they did a really world class job in introducing it”*

Redevelopment Authority



*“Perth... it has come out of a culture where the car is dominant and so this is what I mean about their bravery – they were trying to give a different way of living in Perth”*

Industry Expert

Despite efforts to encourage sustainable travel in Claisebrook Village car ownership remains around the Perth norm. It was ambitious to expect a dramatic shift away from car ownership and use in Perth in the 1990s not least because of the dependence on wider travel initiatives. This was exacerbated by the affluence of the community. Still, a shift has occurred and with hindsight a greater focus on controlling parking provision would have helped, such as setting maximum parking standards.

Claisebrook Village did deliver an active recreational walking and cycling environment which encouraged residents to get outdoors, improve their health and reduce their environmental impact. The redevelopment is used heavily by the Perth cycling fraternity, providing both a beautiful environment and the amenities that cycling and other groups enjoy. The continuous public access along the river foreshore provides a safe and scenic route into the city. That said it was felt that while there is ample opportunity to cycle for recreation, there is less opportunity to cycle for transport.

The redevelopment was designed as a walkable neighbourhood. Retaining control over the public realm allowed for provision of a beautiful pedestrian environment and a permeable street network. Homes were established within close proximity to shops and employment to encourage people to walk between everyday activities. Accessible public open spaces and cafes provide great meeting places on the doorstep of people living in Claisebrook Village.

*“Bike lanes are a missed opportunity in Claisebrook – it’s very good for exercising cyclists, but not so good for local transport”*

Industry Expert

# PROMOTE URBAN EFFICIENCY



Promote urban efficiency in the design and construction of infrastructure and buildings and through facilitating a critical mass of population and employment.

Within the bounds of the inner city yet heavily underutilised, East Perth was originally home to only 270 residents and offered few employment options. The redevelopment sought to revitalise the area by using the land more efficiently in ways appropriate to the inner city location. The redevelopment of East Perth presented a unique opportunity to introduce Perth to a new urban form centred on higher densities and diversity of land uses.

Claisebrook Village was designed to give residents the convenience and excitement of inner city living. It was one of the first medium density developments in Western Australia. The redevelopment is seen as being very successful in promoting greater urban efficiency and a flagship project for the efficient reuse of land. It represented a significant ramping up of the density levels that metropolitan Perth had been accustomed to, and pioneered higher inner city densities.

*“Maybe that was a necessary step to enable... Perth... to accept another option in the market place which is higher density living”*

Government

Today Claisebrook Village is home to a healthy 2,712 people and commercial floor space has increased by over 30 per cent. Though there is a lingering sense that the redevelopment could have supported more - more homes, more offices, more shops, even more of the Cove with suggestions it could have been extended beyond Plain Street. Funding, market conditions and constraints on capital expenditure played a huge role in the decisions taken and they were all stretched to the limit.

At the time, there was not the demand to support much more than what was developed. Still, there was a sense that the redevelopment is underpopulated. To some degree this compromised the vision of Claisebrook as an urban village. Decisions around land assembly and lot configuration influenced density levels. Perhaps the land assembly strategy did not go far enough with acquisition or incentives. Twenty years on, and private land holdings along Brown Street still have not embraced the redevelopment potential.

It was also imperative to protect commercial revenue. Single home lots were a safer bet than strata lots as the market was already being challenged by higher density. As a consequence of single home lots the number of people on each lot was limited.

*“The land assembly strategy probably could have been more in-depth... it is a reflection of the time with the financial imperatives and the need to reposition place as a new brand”*

Redevelopment Authority



There is a view from within the Authority and Government that Claisebrook Village could have benefitted from more rigorous market-testing. It may have shown that the redevelopment would have worked better with five storeys, not two. Even so there is a strong sense that the redevelopment absolutely did deliver innovation and diversity in housing stock.

Claisebrook Village represented a significant departure from existing housing habits. It fostered innovation in terms of local architectural styles, building envelopes and building methods, forcing builders to learn to build a range of townhouses and apartments on lots as small as 160m<sup>2</sup>. Claisebrook Village is viewed as the first Perth development to really cater to different types of households, over the standard nuclear family. Consequently household diversity exists with the number of owner-occupiers being around 10 per cent less than the Perth average and the number of renters increasing to be 5 per cent higher than the Perth average.

*“Now, we’re much better at going to two or three other experts – asking, is that market testing right?”*

Redevelopment Authority

*“I see a community, a diversity of housing types... you’re talking single houses, duplexes, apartments, mixed use developments with apartments over shops and offices; a real variety of products”*

Project Consultant

It was envisaged that cornerstone commercial tenants such as the ABC would create sufficient activity. However, with the benefit of hindsight, there is a sense that more commercial space would have been beneficial. Though the land use mix of residential, retail and office is appropriate for the city location, Royal Street may have warranted a different ratio of these uses. Also more of a mix of uses within individual buildings - offering retail on the ground floor, commercial office space on the second floor and residential above may have boosted vitality. There was the predominance for many years of hairdressers and real estate agents. Ensuring a better mix of retail and commercial could have helped achieve the vision of Claisebrook as a vibrant urban village.

*“[Claisebrook] could have done better with a little more office and a restructured main street”*

Redevelopment Authority

# PROMOTE ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

Promote economic well-being by meeting market demand projections, providing opportunities for local business and emerging industries and general employment opportunities.

To sustain the vision of a functioning urban village the redevelopment needed to attract investment and safeguard economic prosperity. At a macro level, the redevelopment stimulated massive private sector investment and land values continue to grow. Initial investment attraction flooded in from the surety offered by the Redevelopment Authority model. Developers were given certainty over what and how much they could build. Design Guidelines clearly set out density, building height and plot ratio requirements and most importantly expected yields.

New employment opportunities were created by encouraging businesses from growing sectors to relocate to Claisebrook Village. The investment strategy worked hard to secure anchor tenants. Commercial targets were nominated within the initial design and by 2002 the floor space target of 130,000m<sup>2</sup> was exceeded by 50,000m<sup>2</sup>. Key tenants formed the cornerstones of the commercial precincts and included the Health and Education Departments, Central Tafe and the ABC. Overall business diversity has improved and the number of businesses located in Claisebrook Village has increased since redevelopment.

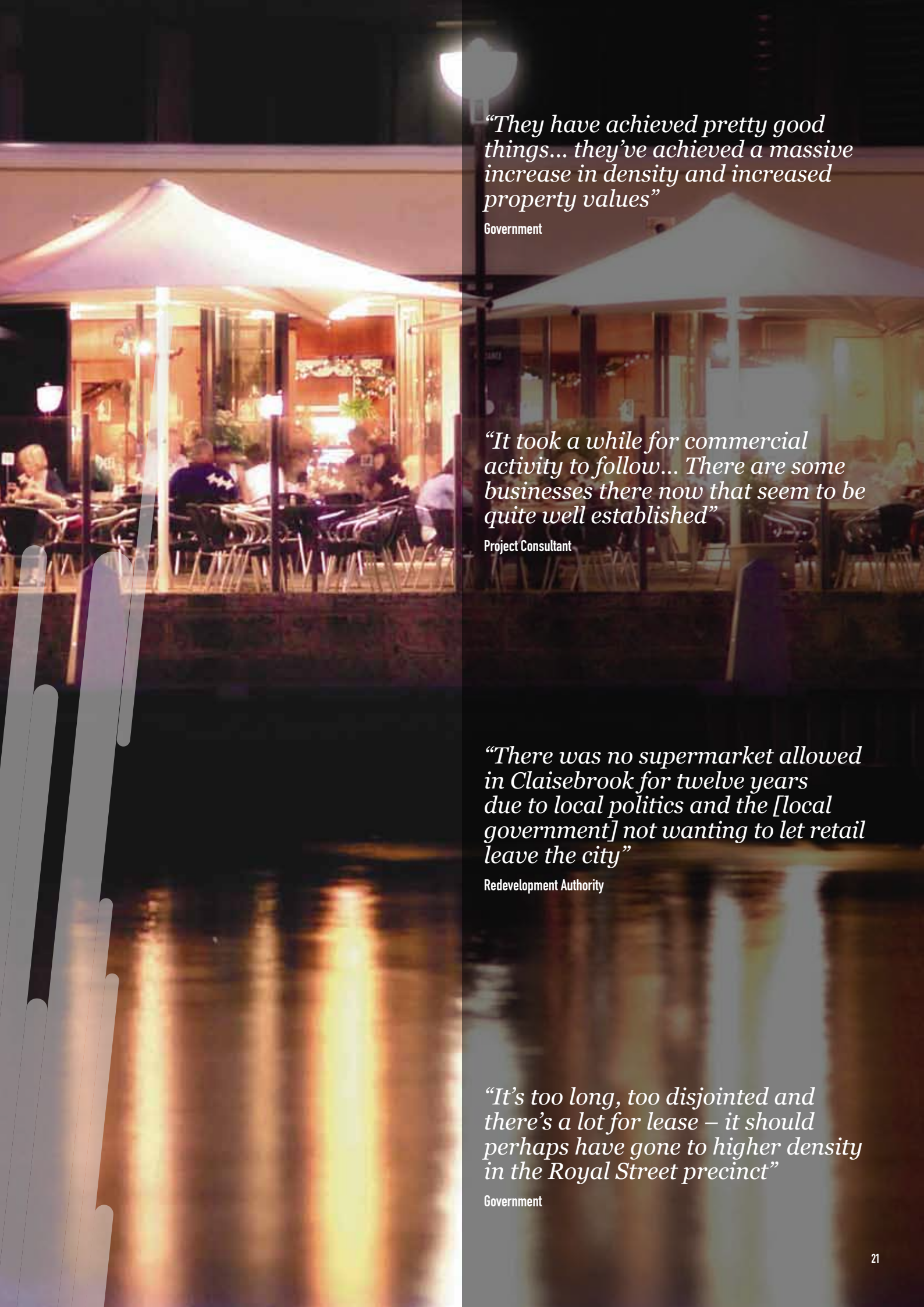
While the early years of the redevelopment enjoyed great success in securing anchor commercial tenants, the same was not true for retail. The local government was cautious about allowing retail outside of the CBD. For over a decade Claisebrook Village was without a neighbourhood supermarket to service the growing residential community and support smaller retail businesses. At the local level small retailers in the area have struggled – the health of the local business environment suffered and there has been a high turnover of businesses along Royal Street.

The layout and management of Royal Street also contributed to the retail woes. It may have warranted a more intimate design to encourage movement between shops. The mix of retail businesses is seen as insufficient to draw people out onto the street. Upon reflection Royal Street may have benefitted from EPRA maintaining leasing rights over some of the retail spaces to diversify the offer. Some restaurants along the Cove have struggled too. In hindsight the Cove needed greater density and commercial activity, at least at ground level, for it to fire properly.

On the other hand, there are signs that local business is improving. A number of mum and dad businesses were described as having become well-established in the area, which suggests that the retail environment is slowly providing more convenience for residents and workers. A small supermarket did establish around 2007, and its presence appears to have acted as a catalyst for other conveniences such as a chemist, bank and liquor store to operate nearby.

The commercial nature of East Perth has significantly changed through the redevelopment, from an industrial precinct to office, retail and smaller businesses. However, some industrial uses remain on private land holdings between Kensington and Brown Streets. Although there is little doubt this land will eventually be redeveloped, it has delayed the growth and prosperity of Claisebrook Village.

The commercial and retail aspect of Claisebrook Village is still establishing yet small businesses continue to be hindered by the cost of commercial floor space. Small and start up businesses, which would have added local diversity and vibrancy, have found it difficult to locate in Claisebrook Village as commercial leases were high.



*“They have achieved pretty good things... they’ve achieved a massive increase in density and increased property values”*

Government

*“It took a while for commercial activity to follow... There are some businesses there now that seem to be quite well established”*

Project Consultant

*“There was no supermarket allowed in Claisebrook for twelve years due to local politics and the [local government] not wanting to let retail leave the city”*

Redevelopment Authority

*“It’s too long, too disjointed and there’s a lot for lease – it should perhaps have gone to higher density in the Royal Street precinct”*

Government

# PROMOTE SOCIAL INCLUSION

Promote social inclusion by requiring diverse and affordable housing and by supporting community infrastructure, activities and opportunities for visitors to socialise.

The redevelopment had very high social ambitions. Launched under a Labor Government the planning for Claisebrook Village had community development in mind. Through delivery, however, there is some concern that the area has become too homogenous, with affluence and Baby Boomers being over-represented. The majority of residents are professionals and there are low numbers of families with children living in the redevelopment.

A definite concern raised was that Indigenous people from the area may feel their access to the foreshore has been reduced, that they may feel less welcome by the gentrification of East Perth. On the other hand physical access throughout the redevelopment was felt to sensitively and sensibly cater to all people of all ages and abilities. Universal access was not a key driver of the day, but nevertheless was considered through the provision of ramps and tactile surface treatments.

*“I don’t think there’s any doubt that many Aborigines would feel less welcome in the area. If you talk to some of the older people particularly, they regarded East Perth as one of ‘their’ suburbs”*

Community

While redevelopment has brought great benefits to wider Perth, it was not without consequence. Higher land values were a side effect of investing in new amenity. The challenge was how to keep the new community open to all. There are mixed views as to whether the redevelopment delivered an appropriate amount of social and affordable housing. Some thought a lot of hard work went in to deliver it, while others perceived that a fairly minimal effort was made.

House prices in Claisebrook Village are above the Perth average, making it difficult for lower income earners to live in the area. Funding for an affordable housing program was sought early on through the Federal Government’s *Social Housing Subsidy* program. However, before the funds were allocated, there was a change in government and the program was ended.

This was a blow to the provision of affordable housing but all was not lost. Subsidised land sales and lease agreements allowed agencies such as the Department of Housing and Foundation Housing to supply key worker, artist in residence and sheltered housing. To date 69 homes and 148 beds in specialised accommodation have been secured in Claisebrook Village. This was achieved in a time before mandatory targets. In 2002 EPRA adopted a statutory planning policy that required 10-15 per cent affordable and social housing to be provided. This bolstered the ability to secure affordable housing, particularly shared equity, in the later stages of the redevelopment.

*“If they truly wanted affordable housing, a mix of cultures etcetera, government should simply have stumped up... having a diverse offer for residents is really important”*

Industry Expert

*“Affordable housing can be done but it doesn’t maximise returns on land value”*

Government



As the Authority was a new State Government model, the responsibilities for providing for communities were not clear. Facilities such as child care centres, community halls and aged care were traditionally operated by local government. Certainly the temporary nature of the Redevelopment Authority model meant that it was not equipped to manage such facilities in perpetuity. The early stages of the redevelopment, provided for public amenity through the quality of the public realm. In its role as developer, the Authority delivered nearly 22 hectares of public open space with connected walking and cycle paths, play grounds and BBQ facilities as well as public moorings in the Cove.

Sites were also set aside for community services and facilities such as the Aboriginal Community Debarl Yerrigan Health Service and City Farm. Though provisions were nominated to be provided through private development, these never eventuated so gaps do exist - it was long before developer contributions became a part of Perth planning. Part of the rebranding of East Perth involved community development through place activation. The Cove has played host to festivals and activities such as the Claisebrook Cove Boating Picnic and the Jazz and Wooden Boat Show.

*“St. Barts is here and City Farm and EPRA have been very open with us... I think they could have made more provisions for and been more consultative with community groups”*

Community

The Redevelopment Authority model was formed to cut through red tape and deliver expedient regeneration. Government, Redevelopment Authority and Project Consultant stakeholders felt that keeping the local government out of it almost inevitably caused tensions through the exclusion of local stakeholders from the decision-making process. Consequently there was some early opposition to the redevelopment from local residents and relationships with the local government were not always smooth. Others commented on the lack of consultation undertaken with the Indigenous community.

On reflection problematic relationships have arisen where interested parties and groups felt disenfranchised. Stakeholder engagement and how to bring stakeholders along with the vision was considered to be an area warranting increased focus in the future. The Authority was considered by many to have shown significant improvement in this area over the past two decades, the result both of internal policy and changing societal expectation.

*“The more in-depth the stakeholder management can be the more buy-in you can get in terms of delivering your vision”*

Redevelopment Authority

# PROJECT LEARNINGS

The redevelopment of East Perth was the first of its kind in Western Australia. It pioneered new approaches and ideas. Claisebrook Village represented such success at a broader level that it could be forgiven its shortcomings as the inevitable errors that come with any new enterprise. Some project objectives were not fully realised but many lessons were learnt and these inform present day projects, policies and processes.

## Sense of Place

*To get places and shopping centres alive, it takes time.*

Despite suggestions that the redevelopment is not quite the urban village initially envisaged, it was felt to have delivered on its promise of inner city regeneration. Claisebrook Village provides a good model of medium-density living, beautiful public spaces, more diversity and choice in the market and a revitalised local economy. There was broad support for the existence and abilities of redevelopment authorities and a strong belief that they get the job done.

Claisebrook Village provides a beautiful and comfortable environment that feels safe. The cultural and natural heritage has been preserved through restored buildings, public artworks and the reinstated river foreshore. Opinions differ over whether enough building stock was retained and if indeed all the stories have been told, in particular the recent Indigenous past.

Claisebrook Village lacks the activation levels to be described as vibrant and is taking time to settle into itself. For this reason the redevelopment has performed reasonably well in fostering a sense of place. With hindsight higher density and more vibrant retail and commercial uses were needed. A key lesson here is the need for ongoing place management, an area EPRA is now showing leadership in.

## Environmental Integrity

*Sometimes you just have to start.*

For the time the redevelopment is seen to have performed exceptionally well in improving the environmental integrity of East Perth. The remediation was a great success, improving the health of the river and the local environment. The area was completely transformed using methods described as innovative and valid for the day.

Claisebrook Village demonstrated credible sustainable design principles for the time. It is an area in which EPRA is constantly evolving. In 2010 EPRA adopted a Green Building Development Policy. Under this policy all developments are required to achieve a four star Green Building rating as a minimum.





## Enhanced Connectivity

### *Be pioneering in terms of private - public transport.*

The redevelopment performed reasonably well in enhancing overall connectivity. There is little doubt that it transformed pedestrian and cycle access to and throughout East Perth, particularly along the river foreshore. While some consider that Claisebrook Village does not integrate well with the train system, the CAT buses are seen to have brought significant convenience to East Perth and the CBD as a whole. Although car ownership remains at the Perth average, there is evidence of residents using alternative modes for some journeys - namely to get to work. The key lessons here are that reducing car reliance requires tighter parking controls and coordination between many agencies to pump prime alternative services.

## Urban Efficiency

### *Whatever you're planning, double it.*

The redevelopment met the conditions of the *Building Better Cities* funding to provide for medium density housing but more than that it challenged the myth of the quarter-acre block as the "Australian Dream". For this Claisebrook Village has performed very well, though hindsight suggests the market could have accepted more - greater density, more diversity and a greater mix of residential, commercial and retail uses. Also privately owned land does not always follow the trends set by redevelopment. The key lessons here are to conduct robust market-testing of the master plan and to better use incentives or purchase powers to deliver the vision.

EPRA is seen to have absolutely delivered choice and innovation in housing stock. Narrow lot townhouses and apartments provided new lifestyle options for the Perth market. The planning framework also introduced land use mix within individual buildings. Although the mix of land uses was highly appropriate to the inner city location there is thought that more could have been done to release the retail monopoly from the CBD sooner.

# PROJECT LEARNINGS

## Social Inclusion

*The more in-depth the stakeholder management, the more buy-in in terms of delivering the vision.*

The redevelopment is seen to have performed adequately with regards to economic wellbeing. While Claisebrook Village generated significant private sector investment, commercial business attraction and land prices continue to grow and, local retailers are described as having struggled. Density levels and the poor mix of retail in Royal Street have hindered activity and the lack of a retail anchor (supermarket) in the first decade forced residents to leave the area to shop.

A key lesson was the importance of providing a supermarket as a community anchor. Also with hindsight, Claisebrook Village could have benefited from EPRA retaining management control over some of the retail space. Asset management is a practice EPRA is now expanding into.

Perhaps the biggest lessons are to be learnt in promoting social inclusion, where the redevelopment performed less-well. While Claisebrook Village is considered first class in promoting good physical access for all ages and abilities to the river foreshore, it has become an expensive place to live. Although no affordable housing targets were set under the conditions of the *Building Better Cities* funding, a wider focus on housing styles and more rental accommodation may have contributed to a more diverse community. In this regard EPRA is already learning by adopting its Affordable and Diverse Housing Policy in 2010.

Although the Redevelopment Authority model was initially driven by expediency, it was prone to alienating key stakeholders in the redevelopment. More effort could have been made to communicate and have stakeholder groups input into the vision particularly the local government and Indigenous population who once resided in East Perth. The vital lesson here relates to sharing the vision and bringing stakeholders on the journey of its delivery.

Above all the redevelopment is considered to have successfully transformed an under-utilised, under-populated brownfield estate into a high-value, mixed-use community. Although Claisebrook Village is taking time to settle into itself EPRA has built the foundations on which the community and destination will continue to grow.



*The views recorded in this document are the personal views of the peoples interviewed and are not the views of EPRA or endorsed by EPRA. At times in this document EPRA has reflected upon these views. By this reflection EPRA is not representing that the views are an accurate statement of the development or issues that arose during the development or that currently exist. EPRA therefore reserves the right to withdraw or modify part or all of this case study.*



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T 1800 639 726  
W [epra.wa.gov.au](http://epra.wa.gov.au)