A history of
KEWDALE

Named in 1895 after Kew in England, Kew Street was one of the first roads in this district. In 1949, the Postal Department suggested the area be named Kewdale, an adaptation of Kew Street. Originally part of South Belmont, Kewdale officially became a suburb in its own right in 1950.

Whilst Kewdale is an established residential suburb it is also considered one of Perth's largest industrial centres with industry and a freight terminal in the eastern portion.

Aerial image taken in 1953
Cover image: Boys riding around the swamps in Kewdale (1930s)

For tens of thousands of years, the area now known as Belmont was inhabited by the Noongar Whadjuk People. They knew the Swan River as the Derbal Yerrigan, and the strong connection with Noongar Boodja (Noongar land) remains significant to Aboriginal people today.

1829 Marks the beginning of the Swan River Colony with the arrival of the *Parmelia*, carrying Governor James Stirling and the first settlers

1899 First elections for the new Belmont Road Board (an early form of Council)

1910 Stephen Craig starts using the site of Tomato Lake, then a swamp, to grow maize and tomatoes

1915 South Belmont State School opens. Now called Kewdale Primary School

1949 Land cleared for the development of Peachey Park

1950 Kewdale officially becomes a suburb, along with Cloverdale and Newburn, which was located on the eastern side of the airport

1952 South Belmont State School changes name to Kewdale Primary School

1953 Kewdale Industrial Area starts to be developed, which is seen as evidence that Belmont has a healthy future for its residents

1960 Belmont Road Board becomes the Shire of Belmont

1965 Opening of Kewdale Senior High School

1970 Commonwealth Government resumes Newburn suburb for growth of the airport

1971 After a campaign to save Tomato Lake, work begins on improving the area

1975 Traffic Park added to Peachey Park to help local children learn the rules of the road

1979 Belmont becomes a City and the Council moved offices from Great Eastern Highway to Wright Street, Cloverdale

1982 Size of Tomato Lake doubled by expanding it towards President Street

1984 Discussions began about a potential change in name to the suburb Kewdale

1999 Kewdale SHS closes, and merges with Belmont Senior High School to become Belmont City College in 2000

2000 Australian Islamic College acquires Kewdale Senior High School campus

2001 Kewdale residents were given the option by survey to change the name of their suburb to separate the residential area from Kewdale's industrial area. Alternative suburb names included Bickford, Kewdale Gardens, Paterson, Peet Park and Wrightson. Despite an interest by residents to change the name, Council decided in December 2001 to retain the name of Kewdale

1829 – 1965   1970 – 2001

Loading Platform A, Kewdale Freight Depot (1970, SLWA 344413PD)

The centre of the network

In 1969, facilities at Kewdale Freight Terminal were upgraded in response to work beginning on standard gauge railway in Western Australia. When completed, the terminal would become the principal metropolitan centre for receipt and delivery of almost all goods coming to the State by rail.

Existing freight facilities at Perth, Fremantle and other metropolitan centres were progressively transferred to Kewdale. Limited standard gauge operations began in November 1968 with the running of two freight trains from Port Pirie in South Australia on a twice-daily schedule.

There were also standard and narrow gauge tracks to the Overseas Container berth at North Fremantle and these enabled containers to and from any port

in the world to be railed to and from any point on Australia's railway network.

For road transport operators there was ample road access to the Kewdale freight terminal and at each entrance gate 50-tonne capacity weighbridges were installed.

In 1969, an express freight train covered the 2,450 km journey between Port Pirie and Kewdale in just under two days. When the standard gauge service between Sydney and Perth, via Broken Hill, became operational, freight trains made the coast-to-coast journey in four days.

By mid-1970 all freight operations in the metropolitan area were going through Kewdale.

An unusual delivery service

Norlin family (nd, M0149-01)
Shopkeeper and councillor, Andy Norlin, recalls life in the 1920s in South Belmont, as Kewdale and Cloverdale were once known:

"I can remember that at one time a gentleman named Jackson, his father was Chinese and his mother English, lived on the corner of Belmont Avenue and Wright Street, where the Shell service station now is. Eventually the property was bought by people by the name of Thompson, who kept turkeys.

To prove that the press is not always right with their news items, the Thompsons had imported a pair of turkeys from the Eastern States and received them by rail at Perth Railway Station. It was reported in the daily newspaper that the birds were valued at £160. Actually they were very wrong, as that was the weight of the birds.

I can remember the time whilst I ran my shop on the corner of Belmont Avenue and Wright Street, I served groceries during the day and at night delivered my orders. One evening whilst arriving at a customer's house, that was arriving after ploughing through sand tracks, as there were no roads in those days, one of the sons of the customer had gashed his foot on a broken bottle. So I promptly drove him to the St. John of God Hospital in Belmont and had it stitched for him. Then drove him back home and went on with my deliveries.

Many a time, there not being many vehicles around, I was called upon to take pregnant women, in a hurry, to King Edward Memorial Hospital."

Kewdale Primary School October 1969

Kewdale Primary School building

Kewdale Primary School opened on 26 January 1915 as South Belmont State School, with 26 pupils and Edward Flanagan as the first headmaster. The original school was a single room built from brick, and this building is still used on the site.

The first building was surrounded by bush and enclosed by a simple wooden post fence. A rainwater tank provided water, although it seems to have failed during summers meaning that water had to be carted in.

Initially there was no teacher's accommodation, so the headmaster had to walk more than two miles to school each day. Luckily for him, living quarters were built by the end of 1915 at the corner of Kew Street and Knutsford Avenue.

The single room building was thought to be adequate during the following years, as the number of pupils varied between nineteen in 1917 and 38 by the end of the following year. It was only in 1926, as the number of children reached more than 40, that a second teacher, Lilly Parker, was appointed.

But by 1927 there were 58 children crammed into the single room. An inspector noted that this did not allow children to learn, and was not good for their health. There was no money for a brand new classroom, so a temporary building was relocated from Claremont school which housed the junior grades for a number of years.

However, this 'temporary' building had poor light, was unbearably hot in summer and the chimney poured smoke during the winter. In spite of this no new classroom was forthcoming until the late 1940s.

Boys riding around the swamps in Kewdale (1930s)

Did you know…

If you live in Kewdale, you'll probably know many of the road names and those of the parks. But do you know the history behind those names?

Connaughton Street: J. J. Connaughton, an ex-jockey, was Belmont Council's secretary from 1922, and lived in Moreing Street.

**Kew Street:** Named in 1895 after the London suburb.

Oats Street: Captain William Oats purchased a great deal of land from Great Eastern Highway southward, which he named Flemington Estate.

Peet Park: When developers Peet & Co (still going today) started developing Bickford Park Estate in 1914, Belmont Council persuaded them to give Peet Park as a reserve for the use of local residents.

Peachey Park: Work began on developing the park in 1949. The park was named after Bert Peachey, a local butcher and shop-owner who served on the Belmont Road Board from 1946 to 1955.

*"Many a time, there not being many vehicles around,
I was called upon to take pregnant women, in a hurry,
to King Edward Memorial Hospital."*

Andy Norlin, Shopkeeper and councillor
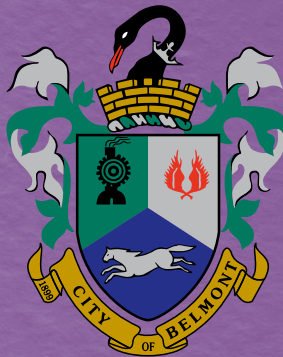
*Each part of the coat of arms symbolises an aspect of the City of Belmont.
The kiln and stack represent brick making and the cog is a symbol for
industry. The wings symbolise flight and the airport, while the horse is the
racing industry. The green stands for public space; silver, the sky; and blue is
the Swan River. The black swan is the State emblem, and the ducal coronet
around its neck symbolises Belmont's relationship to WA.*