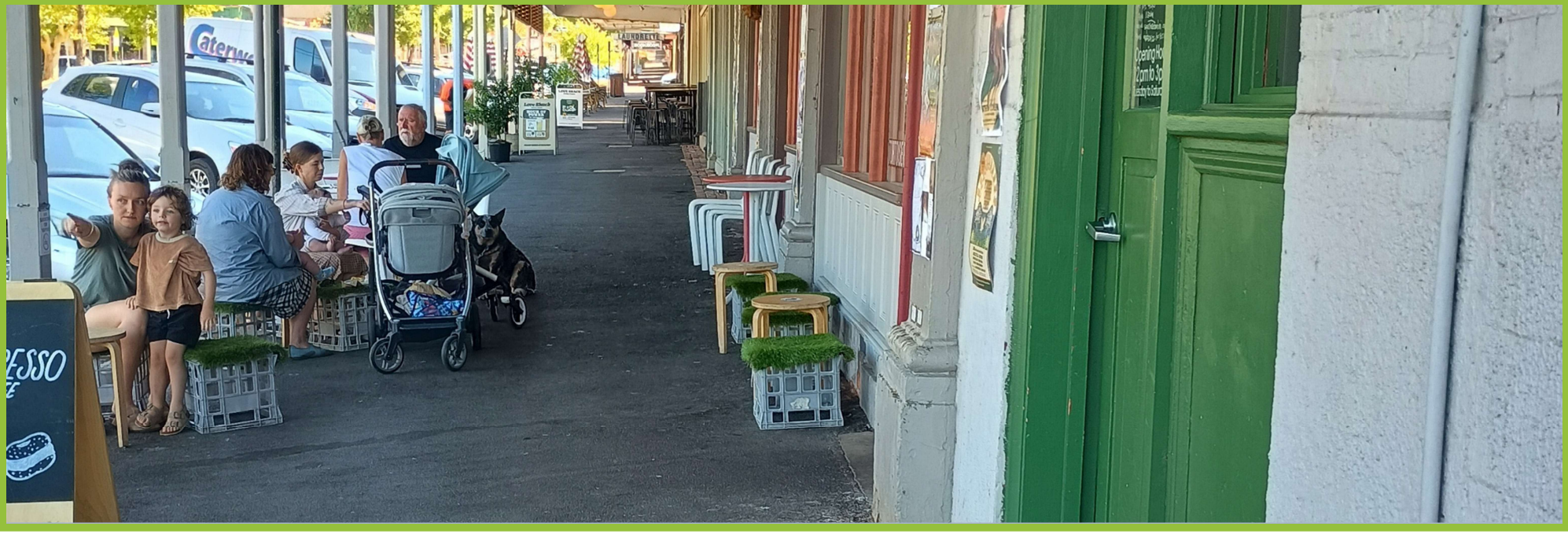
CASTLEMAINE ACCESSIBILITY STUDY

PREPARED FOR MOUNT ALEXANDER SHIRE COUNCIL
JUNE 2026

Victoria walks



Victoria Walks is an evidence-based health promotion organisation, leading the move for walkable communities in Australia since 2009. Our vision is for healthier, connected communities through more people walking more every day. Victoria Walks is supported by VicHealth.

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June 2026

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This report has been prepared for Mount Alexander Shire Council in accordance with the agreed scope of works and is the property of Mount Alexander Shire Council. It is confidential until released by Council. Victoria Walks accepts no responsibility for use of this report by third parties.



Executive Summary

This report, prepared by Victoria Walks for Mount Alexander Shire Council, presents the findings of the accessibility audit of Castlemaine's town centre. An accessible town centre ensures all residents can navigate their community with confidence and encourages visitors to engage with local businesses, strengthening the regional economy.

Reflecting Council's commitment to creating a more inclusive and walkable Castlemaine town centre, Victoria Walks was engaged in early 2026 to undertake this study. The findings are the result of an extensive review of relevant strategies, plans and background documents, detailed on-site auditing and meaningful community engagement – including an online survey, a targeted trader survey, and two facilitated workshops.

What is working well

Castlemaine has several foundational assets that support accessibility within the town centre. They include:

- In areas where they exist, footpaths tend to be wide and maintain a good surface quality.
- Many streets already benefit from single traffic lanes in each direction, simplifying pedestrian crossing.
- At the time of the audit road work sites generally provided accessible walking detours.
- The use of kerb extensions and media refuges in certain spots helps to reduce crossing distances and improve visibility.
- Shade is provided by awnings and trees in many places.

Issues and recommendations

Several areas for improvement have been identified to ensure the town centre is truly accessible for everyone.

Accessible footpaths

- **Install paved footpaths** with a clear, smooth and unobstructed width of at least 2.4m to ensure safe and accessible movement for all pedestrians in areas where footpaths are currently missing.
- **Improve footpath surface quality** by prioritising smooth, even and well-maintained surfaces along key routes to improve accessibility.
- **Sweep footpaths regularly** during periods when plane trees are dropping seed balls and consider the impact of fruit and seed drop when selecting new street trees to minimise impact on walking surfaces.
- **Support businesses to maintain a continuous 1.8 m wide accessible path** to make it easier for people with low vision, mobility aids and prams to pass through and avoid trip hazards.
- **Work with businesses to create step-free access** so that everybody can enter their premises.

Executive Summary

Road safety

- **Narrow traffic lanes** where feasible. This could be achieved with line-marking changes, painted or raised medians, and a 3 m wide traffic lane policy for new and upgraded roads. This will reduce the time and distance it takes for people to walk across roads and encourage slower vehicle speeds.
- **Provide safe, better connected pedestrian crossings** at key locations, such as Mostyn St / Hargraves St intersection, along and across Barker St, and Forest St outside The Salvation Army Castlemaine Thrift Shop. This will make it easier and safer for people to cross roads in the town centre.
- **Provide accessible crossings over bluestone drainage channels** so people can access the footpath and cross the road, particularly those using mobility aids, older people and children.
- **Implement a safe, consistent speed environment** across the town centre to reduce the risk to people crossing the road, especially those who are older and younger, and those who have disability.

Amenity

- **Continue and expand street tree planting** to make it more comfortable for people to walk, as well as to sit, rest and spend time in the town centre.
- **Review seating and resting opportunities,** especially along key walking routes, to make it easier for people to gather and wait.

Train station access

- **Improve access to Castlemaine Railway Station** to provide safer, more accessible and direct walking routes and strengthen walking connections between the station and town centre.

Accessible parking

- **Improve accessible parking provision and design**, with particular attention to the shared area required beside and behind vehicles to enable more people to access destinations.

Conclusion

By addressing these identified gaps, Mount Alexander Shire Council can ensure that Castlemaine's town centre is a place where everyone, regardless of age or ability, can move with independence and dignity.

Implementing these recommendations provides a clear pathway towards a truly accessible regional hub – one that removes the physical barriers to participation and fosters a more connected, equitable community.

Ultimately creating a town centre that is easy to navigate ensures that all residents can access the services they need and that local businesses remain at the heart of a thriving, inclusive shire.

Introduction

This project supports Mount Alexander Shire Council's commitment to creating a more inclusive and walkable Castlemaine town centre by identifying gaps in walking infrastructure and barriers affecting people of all ages and abilities. Through review of previously completed work, on-site auditing and community engagement, this report provides a clear framework for practical upgrades that respond to lived experience and inform future planning and investment in the town centre.



Scope of this study

What we did

The project included:

- Meeting with council to understand the project purpose, background and local context
- Reviewing relevant strategies, plans and background documents
- Undertaking on-site accessibility audits (February – May 2026)
- Community engagement, consisting of:
    - an online community survey (March – April 2026)
    - a targeted trader survey (March – April 2026)
    - two facilitated community workshops (April 2026), including spatial mapping and prioritisation exercises
    - discussions with community members and stakeholders
- Developing recommendations to improve accessibility in the town centre
- Preparing this report.

Documents reviewed

- Accessible car parks and toilets map
- Aspirational Active Transport Network Maps
- Barker and Forest Street Streetscape Plan
- Barker St functional designs
- Disability Inclusion Action Plan and survey
- Early Years Plan 2022-26 and survey
- Frederick St Streetscape
- Middle Years Plan 2023-2026
- Outdoor trading guidelines
- Pedestrian counts
- Primary Schools Traffic Studies and survey
- Railway Precinct Masterplan
- Shared path initial plans
- Universal Access Map

Relevant key themes

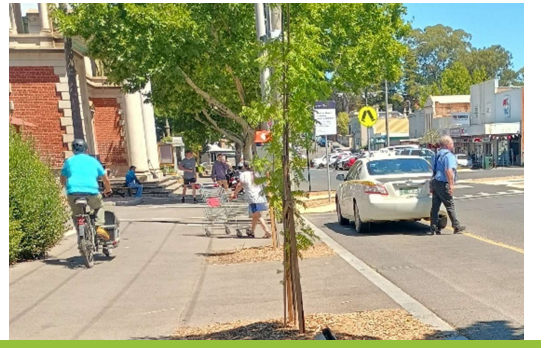
- Access to Castlemaine train station
- Accessibility as part of all public works / assets
- Accessible car parking
- Community engagement
- Driver behaviour
- Footpaths, including business use
- Providing information on accessibility
- Road crossings
- Seating
- Speed limits and traffic speeds
- Tree canopy and vegetation

What is working well

The Castlemaine town centre is clearly valued and well used. Site visits showed:

- lots of people out walking
- a busy and active town centre
- people using mobility aids moving independently.

These indicate an existing level of accessibility that can be built upon.



Lots of people out and about in the Castlemaine CBD



Accessible footpaths

Where footpaths are provided in the Castlemaine CBD, they are typically wide and constructed with good surface quality, supporting comfortable movement for a range of users.



New, high-quality footpath outside Woolworths on Forest St



Wide, smooth footpath on Lyttleton St outside the Town Hall

At the time of the audit, road work sites generally provided accessible pedestrian detours with ramp access.



Walking alternatives provided around works site on Lyttleton St

Council's Outdoor Trading Guidelines require a clear pedestrian zone 1800 mm wide adjoining shopfronts, which—when maintained—provides sufficient space for people using mobility aids and others walking side-by-side.

What is working well

Road safety

Pedestrian road safety is supported by both policy and infrastructure.

Several streets in the CBD have 40 km/h speed limits, with the remainder posted at 50 km/h.

Median refuges are provided at some intersections, assisting people to cross in stages. Most streets also operate with a single traffic lane in each direction, simplifying crossing movements compared to multi-lane roads. Kerb extensions at several locations reduce crossing distances and improve visibility between drivers and people walking.



Landscaped kerb extensions and pedestrian refuges (Hargraves St at Lyttleton St)

Amenity

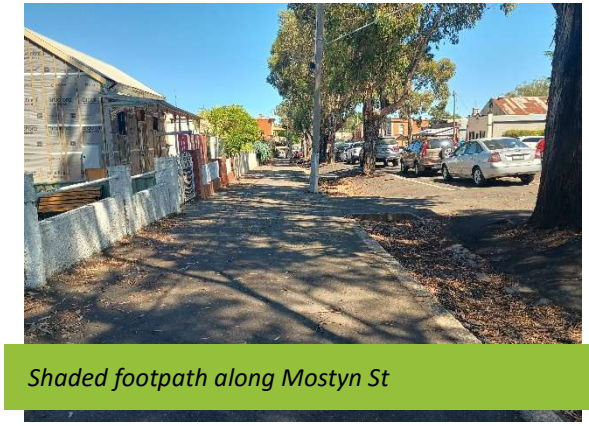
Amenity in the Castlemaine CBD supports walking and encourages people to spend time in the town centre. Shade is provided by a combination of building awnings and street trees, including a number of newly planted trees that will increase shade over time. Drinking taps are available in some public areas.



Public space in Mechanics Lane



Planter boxes on Templeton St provide greenery and a barrier from traffic



Shaded footpath along Mostyn St



Small trees along Kennedy St will provide shade and make it more pleasant to walk there

What is working well

There is a good amount of seating across the CBD, including a range of seats with backrests and armrests as well as informal seating options.



"I like having the seats around. People can sit in the street and chat to one another"

—Community member

Number of accessible car spaces

Many accessible parking spaces are provided across the Castlemaine CBD. Spaces were observed outside many key destinations such as supermarkets, the library and Victory Park. Australian Standard AS 2890.5 (Parking facilities, Part 5: On-street parking) requires a minimum of between 2 and 4 per cent of parking spaces to be accessible. The number of accessible spaces observed across the CBD, particularly around key destinations, appears likely to meet this requirement.



An accessible car park on Lyttleton St

Council provides information showing footpath grades and the location of accessible car parks and toilets. This is an important addition to infrastructure. It helps people travel more confidently by allowing them to make informed decisions about which facilities and routes best suit their needs.



Formal and informal seating along the edge of Victory Park, used for resting, socialising and waiting for the bus



Issues and recommendations

Accessible footpaths

Some roads do not have footpaths

Some roads within and surrounding the CBD do not have footpaths, limiting accessibility for people walking and making movement difficult or unsafe for some people. This was also raised as an issue through consultation.

Castlemaine Railway Precinct Masterplan proposes a shared path along the western side of Kennedy St. While separate walking and riding infrastructure is best practice, the shared path proposed in this location may be reasonable given lower walking and riding volumes and the footpath on the eastern side of the road. Any shared path should meet best practice, including a minimum width of 2.5 m, and should be protected from vehicle parking.



No paved footpath provided along Forest St

RECOMMENDATION: Install paved footpaths. Austroads Guide to Road Design Part 6A suggests a minimum clear width of at least 2.4 m in commercial and shopping areas. A minimum clear width of 1.2 m can be used at squeeze points, but this will not allow two people in wheelchairs to pass (AS1428). Best practice is to provide the path along the building line, with smooth, firm and unobstructed surfaces and minimal crossfall.

Poor quality footpaths

Consultation identified uneven footpath surfaces and poor maintenance as accessibility concerns, with an average rating of 2.5 out of 5. Bluestone in the gutter on Hargraves St was reported as uncomfortable and difficult to navigate due to vibration and uneven movement, especially for people using wheelchairs, mobility aids or prams.



Poor quality footpath along Urquhart St

Engagement also identified that plane trees drop seed balls that can create uneven walking surfaces.



Plane trees in Templeton St

RECOMMENDATION: Improve footpath surface quality. Prioritise smooth, even and well-maintained footpath surfaces along key walking routes, and in future upgrades and maintenance works. Footpaths should be swept regularly during periods when plane trees are dropping seed balls, and the impact of fruit and seed drop should be considered when selecting new street trees in the CBD.

Issues and recommendations

Accessible paths of travel are frequently obstructed

The audits and consultation found outdoor dining furniture, retail displays and bins are often located within the accessible path of travel adjacent to shopfronts, reducing the space available for people to walk and creating trip hazards. In addition to overgrown vegetation, these can make it difficult for people with mobility aids or prams to move along the footpath and creates routes that are less predictable for people who are blind or have low vision. The psychosocial damage to the disabled community suggests this should be addressed as one of the highest priorities.

While participants generally valued active and vibrant streets, there was strong sentiment that accessibility and pedestrian movement should remain the priority within footpath environments.

RECOMMENDATION: Maintain a continuous accessible path of travel along shopfronts. Support businesses to maintain a continuous accessible path of travel along shopfronts through education, guidance and, where appropriate, grants or similar assistance. This could include helping traders address concerns about relocating outdoor dining or displays, such as through shade structures or barriers separating dining areas from parking. Monitoring and enforcement may also be required where obstructions persist.



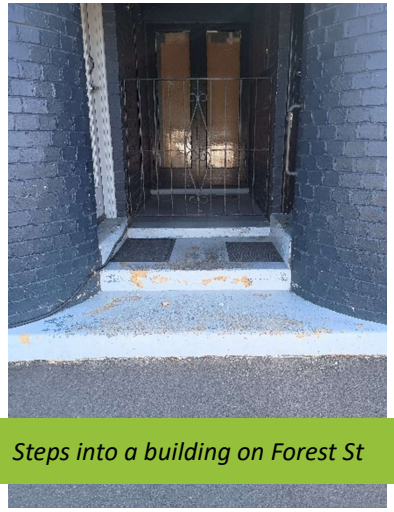
Obstructed path of travel along Mostyn St



Overgrown vegetation reduces path width

Steps at shopfronts limit access to businesses

Steps create barriers for some people such as those who use wheelchairs and others who have difficulty walking up steps. This prevents people from entering these premises and limits equal access to shops and services.



Steps into a building on Forest St

RECOMMENDATION: Create step-free access to shops. Work with businesses where steps are present at entrances to identify opportunities to create step-free access. This could include investigating temporary ramps or incorporating ramps in place of stairs, particularly when shopfronts are refurbished or upgraded.

Issues and recommendations

Road safety

Street design often prioritises vehicle movement over pedestrian safety.

Traffic lanes are unnecessarily wide

Wide roads are common in many regional towns, but they increase crossing distances and exposure time for people walking, more so for people who walk slowly or have to navigate ramps with a mobility aid. They can also encourage higher vehicle speeds, increasing the risk to people walking. In some locations of the CBD, traffic lanes remain relatively wide even where kerb extensions have been installed.



Templeton St is very wide to cross

RECOMMENDATION: Narrow traffic lanes. Professional guidance, including from Austroads and Engineers Australia, recommends traffic lane widths of 3 m in urban environments. Council should narrow traffic lanes where feasible through line-marking changes, painted or raised medians, temporary infrastructure, or permanently as part of future road and streetscape works. Council should also consider adopting a policy of 3 m traffic lane widths for new or upgraded roads.

Crossing the road can be difficult and feel unsafe

Community consultation consistently raised concerns about crossing safety, with 79% of survey respondents reporting that they feel unsafe when crossing roads in the CBD. Concerns included confusing right of way, dangerous intersections and missing kerb ramps.

Only 3 of the 25 intersections within the study area are signalised, and one additional intersection has raised zebra (wombat) crossings on some legs. At all remaining intersections, people must find a gap in traffic without assistance from signals or zebra crossings. This was a common concern raised in consultation. Mostyn St and Hargraves St was identified as a key intersection where people feel unsafe crossing and high priority for improvement.

The midblock wombat crossing of Mostyn St is well used, with consultation participants expressing support for more of these pedestrian-priority treatments across the town centre. However, audits and pedestrian counts observed many people crossing away from the wombat crossing, demonstrating that people prefer to cross where it is most convenient for them. A pedestrian-friendly CBD should support safe crossing opportunities along key desire lines.

A key location identified with no crossing infrastructure is Forest St between Victory Park car park and The Salvation Army Castlemaine Thrift Shop. People must navigate 5 lanes of moving traffic plus 2 parking lanes.



People regularly cross Forest St with no assistance

Issues and recommendations

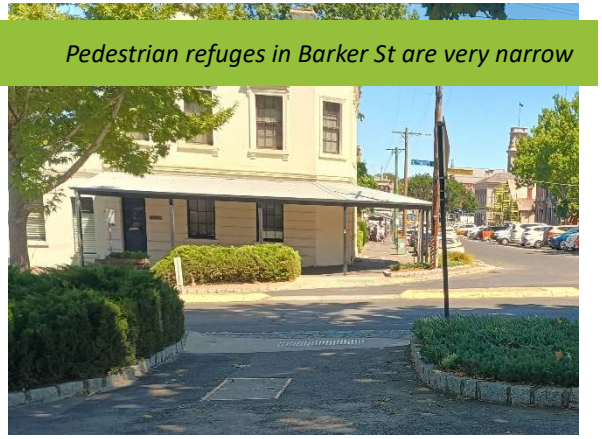
Consultation also identified concerns at:

- Forest St at Duke St, where parked cars reduce visibility, traffic lanes merge, and vehicles can enter Forest St at speed with little deflection.
- crossing points near Barker St.

In addition to the lack of crossing support, several design features make crossing more difficult:

- narrow pedestrian refuges in Barker St and Hargraves St provide insufficient space for people to wait, particularly those using mobility scooters or prams.
- wide corner radii allow vehicles to turn at higher speeds.
- complex and high-volume vehicle movements.

Pedestrian refuges in Barker St are very narrow



RECOMMENDATION: Provide safer, better connected pedestrian crossings at key locations.

Detailed recommendations are provided in Appendix A, including:

- aligned kerb ramps
- wombats
- slip lane closures
- pedestrian refuges at least 1.2 m wide
- tightening corner radii.

These measures will improve safety by reducing crossing complexity, slowing drivers, and providing space for people using prams, wheelchairs or mobility scooters to wait safely when crossing.



Example of mountable pedestrian refuge (Clayton)

Example of low cost, interim traffic management to reduce corner radii (Elwood)





Example of wombat across side road (Oakleigh)

Issues and recommendations

Drainage channels create barriers to crossing

On Templeton St, Moyston St and Hargraves St, large (bluestone) drainage channels next to the footpath prevent people, particularly those using mobility aids and older people, from crossing the road. While small bridges are provided in some locations, they are inconsistent grades and often narrow, and lead into car parks or traffic lanes rather than safe crossing points.

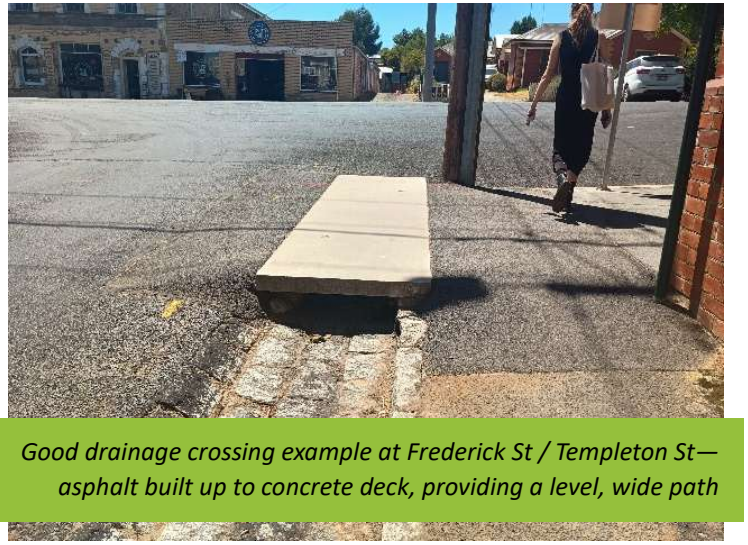


Crossing of drainage channel in Hargraves St is not accessible

RECOMMENDATION: Provide accessible crossings over bluestone drainage channels. Designate accessible mid-block crossing points where demand is high, such as near key destinations and accessible parking. Crossing points should include aligned ramps across the drainage channel on both sides of the road and a pedestrian refuge (painted or raised) in the centre. Ramps should be at least 1.2 m clear width with a constant, maximum grade of 1 in 14 and include handrails. This may require the removal of a small number of car parks.



Good drainage crossing example at Lyttleton St—ramp provides wide, level access, and has handrails



Good drainage crossing example at Frederick St / Templeton St—asphalt built up to concrete deck, providing a level, wide path

Speed limits

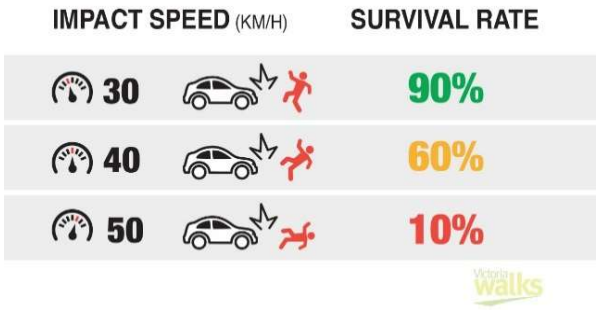
Consultation identified concerns about current traffic speeds and a strong desire for safe, consistent speed limits across the Castlemaine CBD.

People who walk more slowly — including many older people, people with disability and children — are at greater risk because they spend more time crossing the road and are exposed to traffic for longer. Lower speeds help reduce this risk.

Recent changes to introduce 40 km/h limits in parts of the CBD are a positive step toward improving safety.

Issues and recommendations

A person hit by a car travelling at 30km/h has a 90% chance of surviving. If they are hit at 40km/h, they have a 60% chance of surviving. At 50km/h this drops to 10% chance of surviving. International and Australian guidance increasingly supports lower speeds in busy town centres where people and vehicles mix.



Achieving safer outcomes also requires driver compliance. Speeding was identified as an issue in the engagement as well as the School Traffic Studies, highlighting the need for measures that both support drivers to travel at safer speeds and reinforce the intended speed environment.

RECOMMENDATION: Implement a safe, consistent speed environment across the CBD. This will provide safer conditions for people walking and should be complemented by community education and targeted enforcement to improve compliance. Street design changes that encourage lower travel speeds are outlined in other road safety recommendations.

Amenity

Street trees and shade

Amenity in the Castlemaine CBD is generally good, however some areas would benefit from additional street trees and shade. Street trees are important for supporting comfortable walking, as well as providing places to sit, rest and spend time in the town centre. They also help in adapting to hotter conditions associated with climate change.

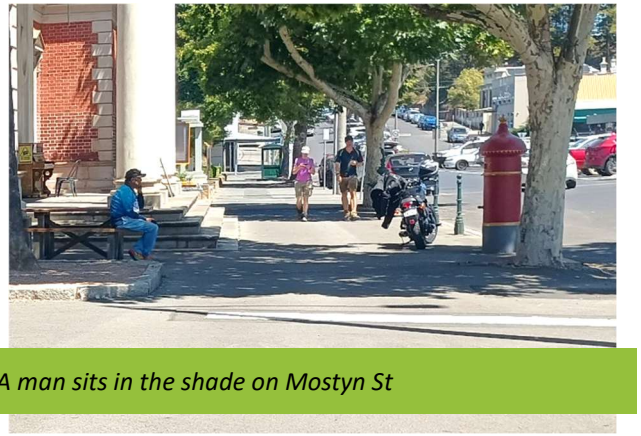
The importance of additional street trees was raised through consultation for this project, as well as in the Early Years and Middle Years Plans and is recognised in the Barker and Forest Street Streetscape Upgrade Plan.

RECOMMENDATION: Continue and expand street tree planting. Prioritise additional street trees along key walking routes such as Lyttleton St and in areas where people gather or spend time. Future streetscape upgrades should prioritise tree canopy and shade to support comfort, amenity and climate adaptation.

Seating and resting points

While the CBD includes a range of seating options, consultation identified demand for additional seating, with about 25% of respondents reporting there were ‘rarely’ or ‘never’ enough seats and resting points in the Castlemaine CBD.

Recommendation: Review seating and resting opportunities. Investigate opportunities for additional seating along key walking routes and in areas where people gather or wait, including seating with backrests and armrests.

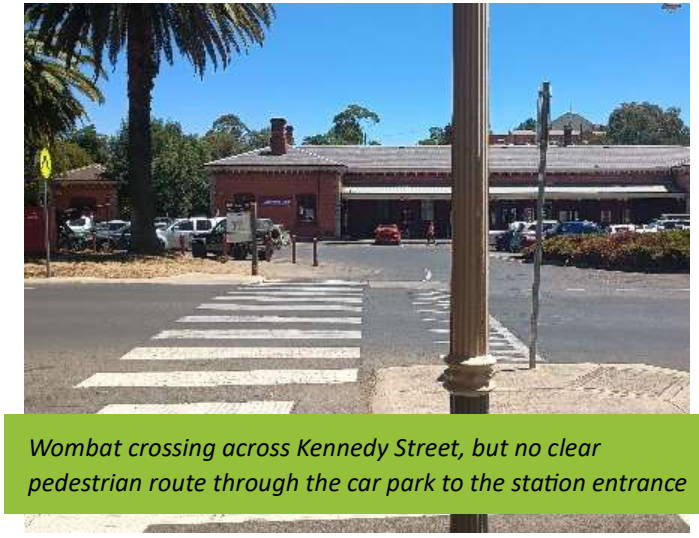


A man sits in the shade on Mostyn St

Issues and recommendations

Train station access

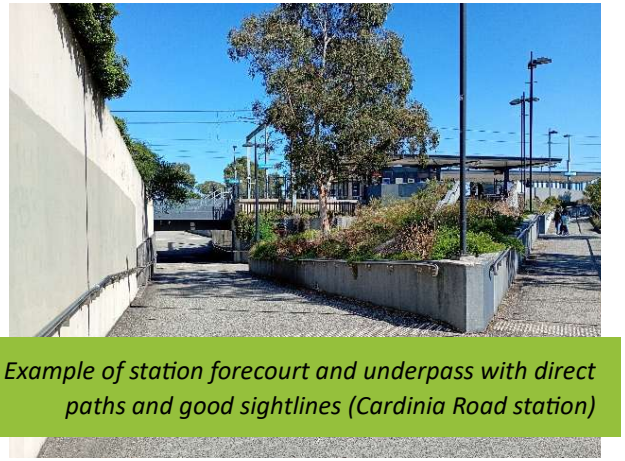
While outside the formal project scope, both the audit and consultation identified concerns about access to Castlemaine Railway Station. Consistent with the findings of the Castlemaine Railway Precinct Masterplan, the station forecourt is dominated by vehicle parking and lacks a clear, direct walking route between the station entrance and town centre. This is particularly difficult to navigate for people with limited mobility and people who are blind or have low vision.



Wombat crossing across Kennedy Street, but no clear pedestrian route through the car park to the station entrance

RECOMMENDATION: Improve access to Castlemaine Railway Station. Support the proposals identified in the Castlemaine Railway Precinct Masterplan to:

- reconfigure the station forecourt to provide safer, more accessible and direct walking routes
- improve the safety and accessibility of the pedestrian underpass
- strengthen walking connections between the station and town centre.



Example of station forecourt and underpass with direct paths and good sightlines (Cardinia Road station)

Accessible parking

Community consultation and Council reported that some people are unable to access destinations because accessible parking is either unavailable or already in use. Concerns about accessible parking availability were raised more frequently than concerns about parking design.



Parking spaces at Victory Park marked as accessible do not have any shared area for boarding and alighting

At the time of auditing, many accessible parking spaces within the CBD appeared to be lightly used. However, several spaces do not meet current Australian Standards requirements and may not be usable for many people with an accessible parking permit. Different users also have different access needs. For example, some people require access to the rear of their vehicle, while others require space beside the driver or passenger side.

Issues and recommendations

Good practice accessible parking should be located close to destinations and connected to surrounding footpaths by accessible walking routes.



This accessible car space on Lyttleton St has been designed to provide level access to the footpath



Mostyn St accessible car spaces provide space to the side and back of vehicles, as well as level access to the footpath

RECOMMENDATION: Improve accessible parking provision and design. Upgrade accessible parking spaces in line with AS 2890.5, with particular attention to the shared area required beside and behind vehicles.

Investigate opportunities for additional accessible parking spaces in locations identified through consultation.

A detailed list of identified issues—including location and extent—with recommended improvements and priority is provided in Appendix A.

Accessibility issues and recommended improvements table

Note: In assigning priority to the issues, both the significance of the issue (including safety risk and frequency of concern raised through consultation and audit findings) and the likely cost and ease of implementation were considered. Short term items include critical safety issues identified through both community consultation and the audit process (for example, obstructed paths of travel), as well as lower-cost actions that can be implemented quickly and deliver immediate accessibility benefits (such as increased sweeping during plane tree season).

Appendix B

What we heard