Castlemaine Town Centre Inclusive Streets Audit

Community Consultation Summary Report

Introduction

Mount Alexander Shire Council, in partnership with Victoria Walks, undertook community engagement to inform the Castlemaine Town Centre Inclusive Streets Audit. The consultation aimed to better understand how accessible, safe, inclusive and welcoming the town centre is for a broad range of users, particularly people living with disability, older adults, carers, families and people using mobility aids.

The engagement process sought to identify barriers to movement and participation within the town centre, while also highlighting opportunities to improve accessibility, comfort and safety for everyone.

Engagement activities included:

- An online community survey
- A targeted trader survey
- Two facilitated community workshops
- Spatial mapping and prioritisation exercises

The engagement approach was guided by the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum and focused on moving beyond consultation toward active involvement and collaboration with the community.

Participation Overview

Community Survey

The online community survey was open between 23 March and 30 April 2026 and received 89 responses.

Participants represented a broad cross-section of the community, including:

- Local residents
- Older adults
- Parents and carers
- People with disability
- Mobility aid users

- Local workers and business owners

Importantly:

- 19% of respondents identified as a person with disability
- 18% regularly support or care for someone with disability
- 29% identified mobility-related access needs.

Trader Survey

A targeted trader survey was also undertaken, receiving six responses from local businesses.

Trader survey responses indicated broad support for practical accessibility improvements, with businesses recognising that safer crossings, improved streetscapes and accessible movement through the town centre can support customer access and overall vibrancy. While traders generally felt existing parking arrangements function reasonably well, concerns were raised regarding footpath surface quality, loading access, parking time limits and balancing active street trading with safe pedestrian movement. These results have been added in alongside community consultation results in the final reports.

Community Workshops

Two facilitated workshops were held to maximise participation opportunities:

- Day session: 10:00am–12:00pm
- Evening session: 5:15pm – 6.30pm

Eight participants attended across both sessions, representing a range of people including:

- Older residents
- Wheelchair users
- Vision impairment
- Community members interested in walking and cycling
- Residents with strong local knowledge and lived experience of accessibility challenges

Participants undertook collaborative mapping exercises and a prioritisation activity to identify the locations and improvements most important to them.



Key Findings

Footpaths & Accessibility

Footpaths emerged as one of the strongest themes across all engagement activities.

Survey respondents identified:

- Uneven surfaces
- Narrow footpaths
- Missing footpaths
- Lack of kerb ramps
- Poor maintenance
- Obstructions such as signs, café furniture and bins as significant barriers to movement.

Workshop participants reinforced these concerns and identified several locations where accessibility was particularly challenging.

The bluestone and granite paving treatments along Hargraves Street were repeatedly identified as problematic for:

- Wheelchair users
- People using walking aids
- Parents with prams
- People using white canes

Participants described vibrations and uneven movement caused by these surfaces as uncomfortable and difficult to navigate.

Concerns were also raised regarding narrow and overgrown footpaths and inconsistencies in path quality and continuity throughout the CBD.

Crossing Safety & Traffic Speed

Crossing safety was one of the strongest and most consistent concerns raised by participants.

Nearly 79% of community survey respondents reported feeling unsafe while crossing roads within the town centre.

Participants identified a number of key crossing hotspots, including:

- Mostyn Street at multiple locations
- Forest Street and High Street
- Crossing points near Baker Street including mid block
- Duke street at Andrew street

Common concerns included:

- Lack of formal crossings
- Traffic speed
- Poor pedestrian visibility
- Inconsistent kerb ramps
- Driver behaviour between traffic lights

Participants strongly supported lower and more consistent traffic speeds throughout the CBD, with calls for expanded 40 km/h speed environments and additional traffic calming measures.

At the same time, several examples of positive infrastructure were highlighted, including:

- The wombat crossing on Mostyn Street

- Flashing school-zone safety lights

Participants expressed support for extending these types of pedestrian-priority treatments more broadly across the town centre.

Footpath Trading & Street Clutter

Participants across the workshops consistently raised concerns regarding footpath trading and pedestrian obstructions.

Issues identified included:

- Reduced pedestrian movement space
- Trip hazards
- Difficulties navigating around signs, furniture and displays
- Conflicts between pedestrians, dogs and outdoor trading areas

These issues were identified as particularly challenging for:

- Wheelchair users
- People with vision impairment
- Frail older adults
- Parents with prams

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

Comfort, Inclusion & Amenity

Many participants described the importance of comfort, confidence, and inclusion in shaping how people experience the town centre.

Survey respondents identified opportunities for improvement relating to:

- Seating and resting points
- Shade
- Lighting
- Clear signage
- Quiet areas.

Despite identifying a range of barriers and frustrations, participants were overwhelmingly positive and constructive in their approach. There was strong recognition that improving

accessibility benefits the broader community and contributes to a more welcoming, vibrant and economically active town centre.

Community Priorities

As part of the workshops, participants undertook a prioritisation exercise where they allocated “investment funding” toward the improvements they considered most important.

Although participants identified numerous issues across the CBD, funding allocations became highly concentrated around two key priorities:

1. Improvements to the crossing environment at Mostyn Street and Hargraves Street
2. Consistent lower-speed environments, particularly expanded 40 km/h speed treatments across the town centre

Together, these priorities received almost all allocated “investment” from workshop participants, demonstrating strong consensus around the importance of:

- Safer pedestrian crossings
- Lower traffic speeds
- Improved pedestrian confidence and comfort

Conclusion

The engagement process identified strong community support for improving accessibility, safety and inclusion throughout the Castlemaine town centre.

Across surveys and workshops, several clear themes emerged:

- The cumulative impact of small accessibility barriers
- Concerns regarding crossing safety and traffic speed
- The importance of consistent and accessible footpaths
- The need to balance activation and accessibility within public spaces
- Recognition that accessibility improvements benefit both community wellbeing and local economic activity

The findings from this consultation process have been incorporated into the audit report and recommendations, including the identification of priority routes, locations and improvement opportunities for future planning and investment.