

## 2. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Community infrastructure means spaces, facilities and services that help people meet their social needs, maximise their potential and enhance community wellbeing. It includes facilities for residents as well as those that work, study or live in the area. It includes:

- Recreation facilities
- Arts, cultural facilities and libraries
- Youth services and aged services
- Primary and secondary education
- Child care
- Health and disability services
- Social assistance services
- Shops, cafes, bars and cinemas

Community infrastructure is provided by the City of Melbourne, other government agencies, non-government not-for-profit organisations, and private enterprise.

Facilities provided in West Melbourne by the City of Melbourne include the tennis and bowling clubs in Flagstaff Gardens, but most services are by non-government providers.

In some instances, residents rely on facilities in nearby neighbourhoods for services with wider catchments. The North Melbourne Library is located on Errol Street and is considered a municipality wide service. Primary schools also fall into this category.

While this reliance on infrastructure in surrounding areas is acceptable for some kinds of services, for others, like maternal and child health, it is considered important to deliver services within the local area.

Improved access within West Melbourne and to and from surrounding areas, via improved bicycle and pedestrian paths and public transport services, can help to better connect the community to services in surrounding areas.

Responding to the increasing demand on community infrastructure is the responsibility all organisations that have an influence on local planning and service delivery.

The City of Melbourne's Community Infrastructure Development Framework (2014) is a tool with which to assess demand, plan for and deliver community facilities. A Community Infrastructure Quantitative Analysis contributed data about infrastructure, gaps in provision, and future requirements. This focused on services provided by council, but made reference to needs that are the responsibility of the state government such as primary and secondary schools.

The framework identifies West Melbourne as a stable area where needs for services of types provided by Council are largely considered to have been met. The exception is a demand for early years services and community health across Kensington and West Melbourne. The analysis found that West Melbourne shows a high future demand for state-provided educational facilities.

When the framework was prepared, population growth in West Melbourne was expected to be limited. The need for new community infrastructure was therefore deemed to be low. However, growth in West Melbourne has exceeded projections, requiring a review of community infrastructure needs.

The preferred way to provide community infrastructure in growth areas is within community hubs, integrating facilities in one location to provide better access to diverse services and more cost effective delivery. Classification of West Melbourne as a stable area meant it is not planned as a location for a new hub. New hubs are planned in neighbouring areas including near Queen Victoria Market and in Arden-Macaulay. This reinforces the need to improve connectivity to surrounding areas.



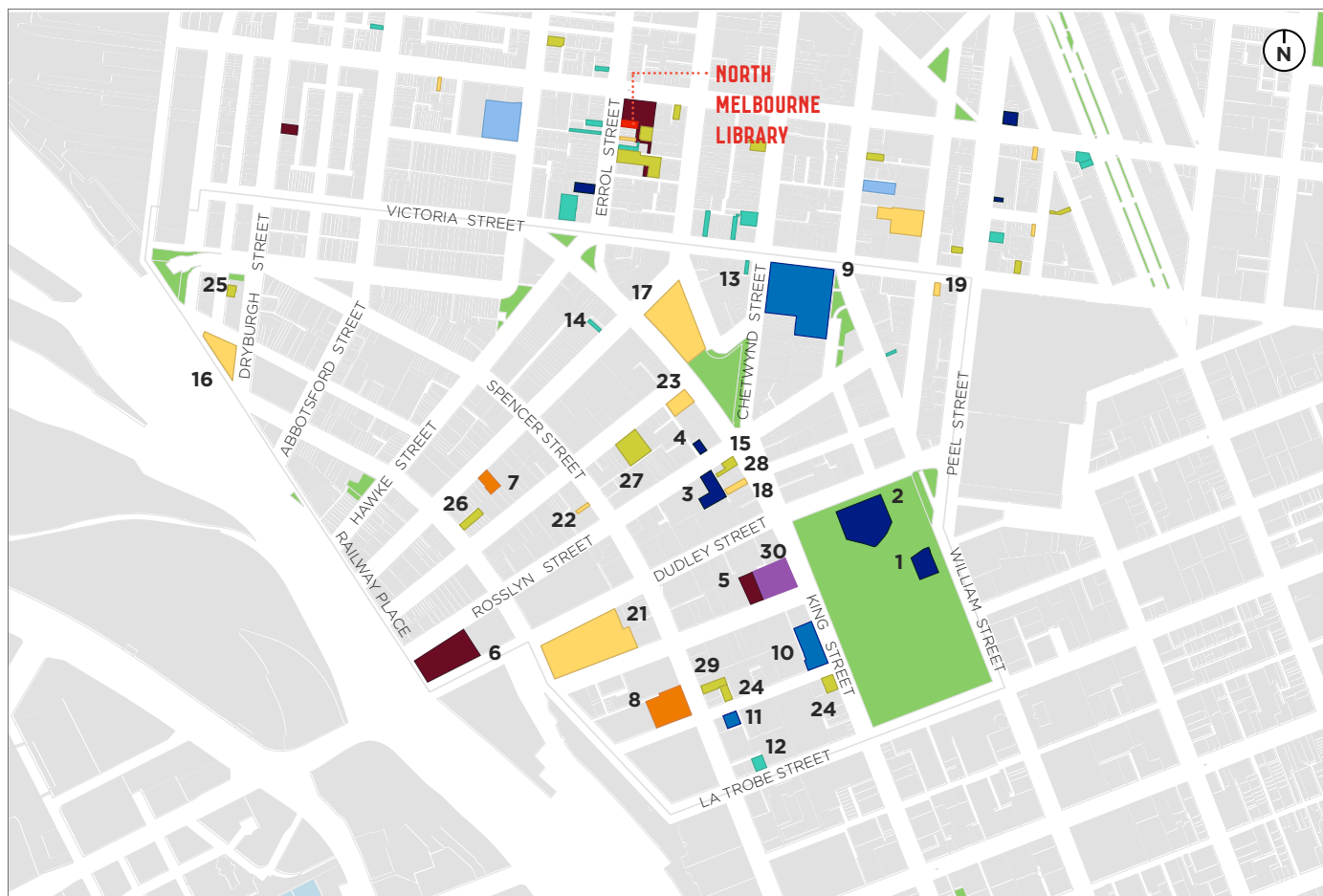


Figure 2.1: Existing community infrastructure in West Melbourne and North Melbourne, CLUE data 2015

#### Recreation facilities

1. Flagstaff Gardens Tennis Club
2. City of Melbourne Bowls Club
3. Melbourne Budokai
4. CrossFit - U

#### Arts and cultural facilities

5. Lucy Guerin Incorporated
6. Festival Hall

#### Youth services

7. Open Family Australia
8. Doxa Youth Foundation

#### Primary / secondary schools

9. Simonds Catholic College
10. Haileybury College
11. Western Senior Secondary School

#### Health services

12. Menzies Dental Clinic
13. Chinese Medicine Centre
14. Fit and Well Physiotherapy
15. Premier Health Partners

#### Social assistance services

16. Asylum Seeker Resource Centre
17. The Salvation Army Adult Services
18. The Asthma Foundation of Victoria
19. Victorian Elderly Chinese Welfare Society
20. Australian Drug Foundation
21. Australian Red Cross Blood Service
22. Camp Quality
23. Challenge Cancer Support Network

#### Religious/Interest groups

24. Islamic Council of Victoria
25. Cephelonian Society of Victoria
26. Conservation Volunteers
27. Our Community
28. Volunteering Victoria
29. WIRE Women's Information
30. St James' Old Cathedral and Community Conference Centre

#### Libraries

- There are no existing libraries in West Melbourne. North Melbourne library is the closest, located in Errol Street.

## Access to early years services

There are no existing early years services in West Melbourne, although there are three in North Melbourne, provided by the City of Melbourne:

- North Melbourne Childrens Centre
- Lady Huntingfield Childrens Centre
- Hotham Hub Childrens Centre

The following investments are being made to these services:

- \$8.6 million redevelopment of Lady Huntingfield Childrens Centre.
- \$1.6 million upgrade to Hotham Hub Childrens Centre.

A new 120 place child and family service centre to be provided near Queen Victoria Market will also improve access to services for the West Melbourne residents.

## Access to education

There are no government primary or secondary schools in West Melbourne. North Melbourne Primary School in Errol Street and University High School are the closest. There are two established independent secondary schools in the study area: Simonds Catholic College and Western Senior Secondary College. Haileybury City College was recently established and will provide private early learning to year 12 programs progressively from January 2017.

The Victorian Government released the first stage of a 'School Provision Review for Docklands' in early 2016, which included West Melbourne in its study area assessing the need for primary and secondary schools. The report found that by 2031 there will be a shortfall of around 4,800 primary and 2,000 secondary places across the study area (mostly within the City of Melbourne, but also including parts of the City of Maribyrnong and City of Port Phillip).

Places Victoria indicates that the Victorian Government has secured a site in Docklands for a future public primary school. The site is understood to be located in the 'Digital Harbour' precinct, adjacent to the southwest boundary of the West Melbourne study area.

## Access to arts

Participation in the arts builds social cohesion and connectedness and helps to reduce social isolation. There is evidence that arts participation improves community wellbeing. VicHealth use arts and cultural participation as an indicator of community wellbeing: 'Most types of arts involvement have a social dimension that is an important basis for building social capital and community identity.'

There are two existing arts and cultural facilities in West Melbourne. Nearby facilities in North Melbourne include Arts House at the North Melbourne Town Hall (a performance space) and the Meat Market (a mixed use creative space).

The Arts Strategy (2014-17) provides a vision for the arts in Melbourne. Several commitments made in the strategy relate to the provision of affordable spaces for artists to work, live and present their work in. There are also commitments to present the work of artists in the public realm.

The City of Melbourne is developing an Arts and Cultural Infrastructure Framework to identify gaps and guide the future development of spaces that support the arts. Some examples of arts and cultural infrastructure include:

- Theatres
- Concert halls
- Galleries
- Group artist studios

While some places do not primarily support the making and presentation of art, they contribute to cultural infrastructure in the municipality.

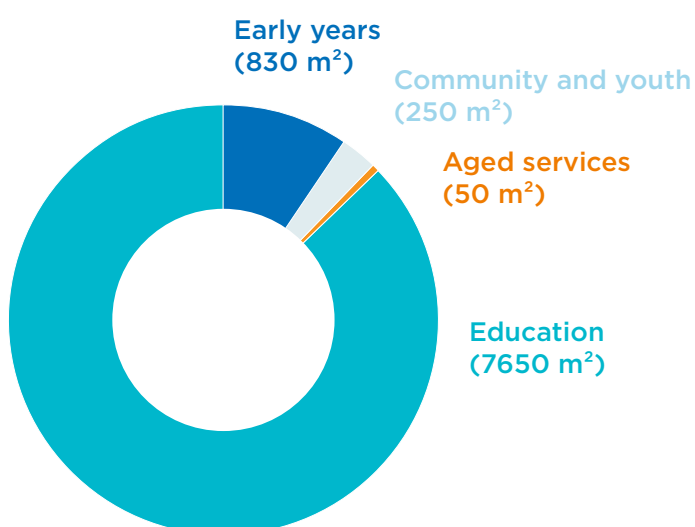


Figure 2.2: Forecast additional community infrastructure floor space required for West Melbourne by 2031 from the Community Infrastructure Quantitative Analysis.

## Access to affordable housing

The City of Melbourne's aspiration through its housing strategy *Homes for People 2015* is for an inner and central city where housing is affordable, well-designed and meets residents' diverse needs. The City's goal is at least 1721 affordable homes (subsidised) for low and moderate income earners by 2024.

Affordable housing refers to housing that is subsidised and provided to specified eligible low and moderate income households whose needs are not met by the free market. This includes people who are not usually so poorly paid that they require housing assistance from the Victorian Government.

In West Melbourne, a new residential development was recently approved at the intersection of Hawke Street and King Street that has a component of affordable housing.

## Access to food

The way we eat is an important part of the way we connect as people and as communities.

There are few food related businesses in the West Melbourne in comparison to Docklands, the central city and North Melbourne. The Queen Victoria Market is an important source of healthy and fresh food. Residents also rely on Errol Street businesses. There are no supermarkets in the study area but one is planned as part of the redevelopment of 185 Rosslyn Street (Australia Post site).

Food services also provide access to affordable meals, food vouchers, community gardens or other resources that help people access fresh and healthy food. There are no food services in West Melbourne but there are several community gardens in North Melbourne.

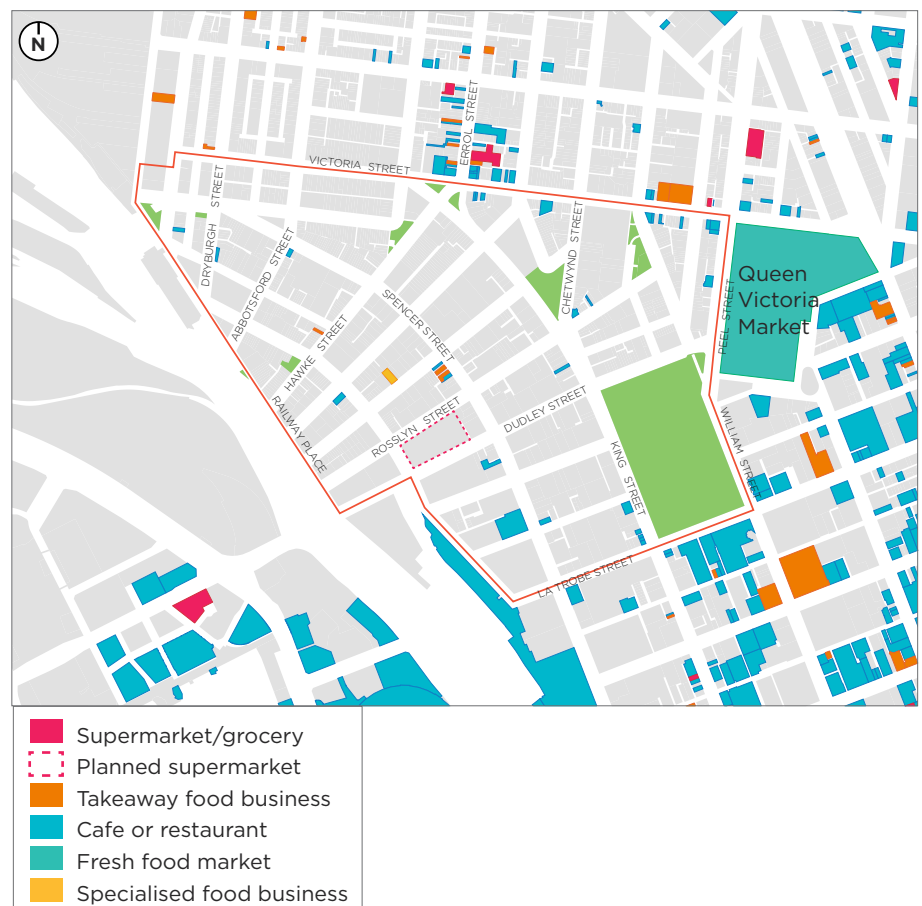


Figure 2.3: Food related businesses in West Melbourne and surrounding areas.



# 3. URBAN STRUCTURE AND PUBLIC REALM

West Melbourne is spatially structured by the streets' arrangement and widths, the relatively pronounced hills, the rail lines which define its western edge, and other elements. It is also shaped by busy arterial roads that form paths for movement along their length and barriers to movement across them.

This chapter analyses the urban structure of West Melbourne and considers the role these elements play in influencing the experience of the public realm, which include the streets, footpaths, laneways, parks and squares that are publicly accessible.



## Topography

West Melbourne is fundamentally shaped by its topography, which generally slopes down from the northeast to the southwest.

Historically, significant buildings were often located on hills so they could be seen from a distance. St Mary's Star of the Sea Church and the former Benevolent Asylum on Victoria Street were built on two of these hills.

Flagstaff Gardens is located on the third of these hills. When King Street was surveyed, this hill was cut back, creating the escarpment at the western edge of the Gardens. This allows for views from the Flagstaff Gardens across West Melbourne.

Construction of the railways west of Railway Place similarly created an escarpment that provides views across the railways to Docklands.

Two of the lowest points in West Melbourne are the Dudley Street underpass and the area below the Dynon Road Bridge. These are subject to flooding during heavy rainfalls.

The street layout also responded to the topography. The north-south streets approximately follow the contours, with almost flat gradients making them attractive routes for walking and cycling.

In contrast, the east-west streets slope more steeply, particularly to the west of Spencer Street. This makes movement more difficult for some people.

Whilst it presents some challenges, this change in gradient also allows for excellent views to the west and adds to the character of West Melbourne.

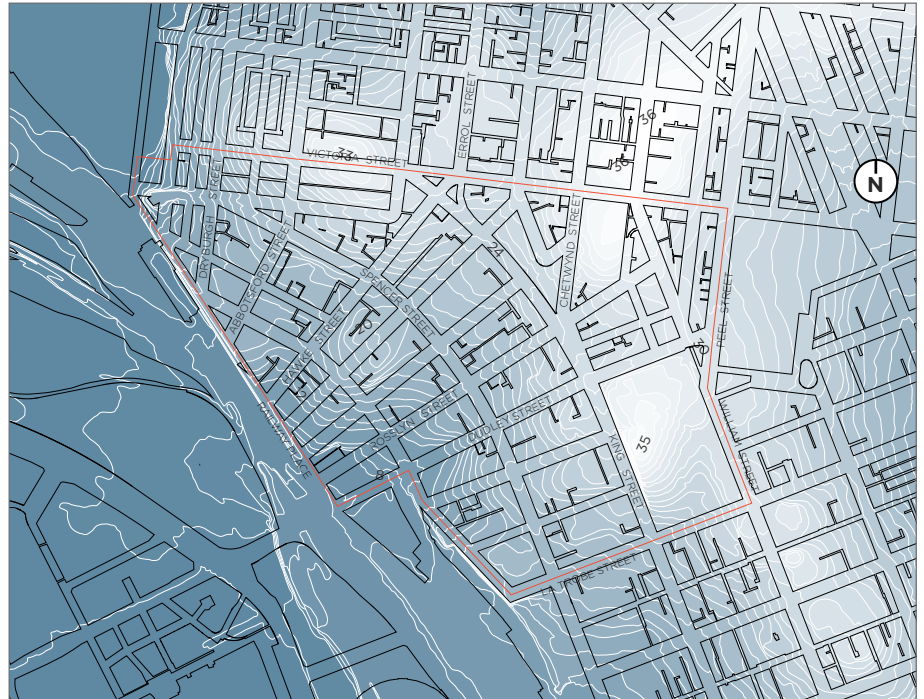


Figure 3.1: Topographical map of West Melbourne showing the three hills sloping down towards the west.

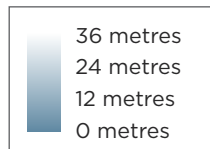


Figure 3.2: View from Flagstaff Gardens looking west along Batman Street.



## Street network

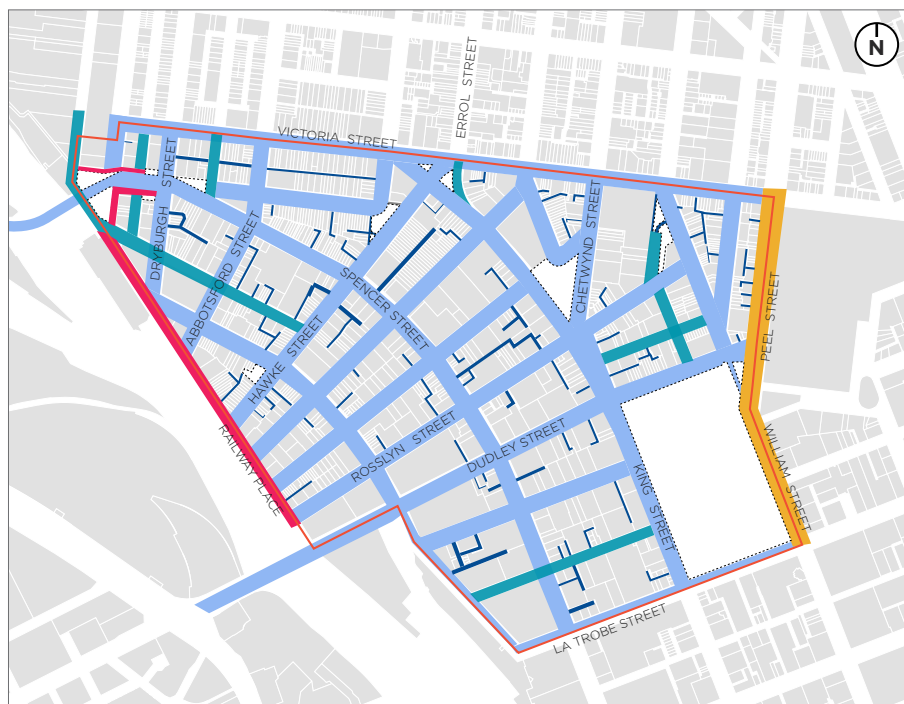
West Melbourne's street network forms a transition between the Hoddle grid and the street pattern of North Melbourne. When the Hoddle grid was extended in the 1800s, the wide streets of the central city were continued northward into West Melbourne.

Most of the streets are 30 metres wide. While some of these carry large volumes of traffic, others have a more local function but continue to be predominantly dedicated to roadway and parking.

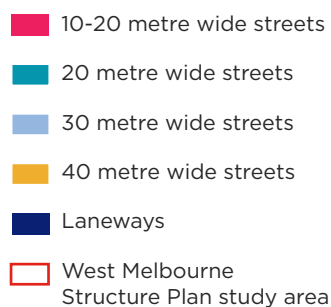
The remainder of West Melbourne's streets are 20 metres wide (e.g. Jeffcott Street) or less (e.g. Railway Place).

West Melbourne's wide streets provide significant opportunities for uses other than vehicle movement and parking. Reallocation of space could be used to improve conditions for walking and cycling, to create new open spaces for the community, expand the urban forest, and integrate sustainable water management infrastructure.

The street network also creates some very large irregular shaped intersections including the junction of King, Hawke, Errol and Victoria Streets that could be redesigned to improve pedestrian and cycling access to create useable public open space.



**Figure 3.3: Widths of streets in West Melbourne**



Traffic volumes

Spencer, King, Dudley and Peel Streets carry high volumes of traffic. Victoria Street, Latrobe Street and a sections Hawke Street carry moderate traffic volumes.

Problems arising from this traffic include:

- Barriers to movement across the line of heavy traffic
- Interference with movement by other transport modes
- Safety
- Reduced amenity of the public realm due to noise and air pollution.
- Social impacts resulting from reduced opportunities for pedestrians to meet in public spaces.

While not a part of the physical fabric of West Melbourne, traffic volumes have a significant impact on how the neighbourhood is used and perceived.

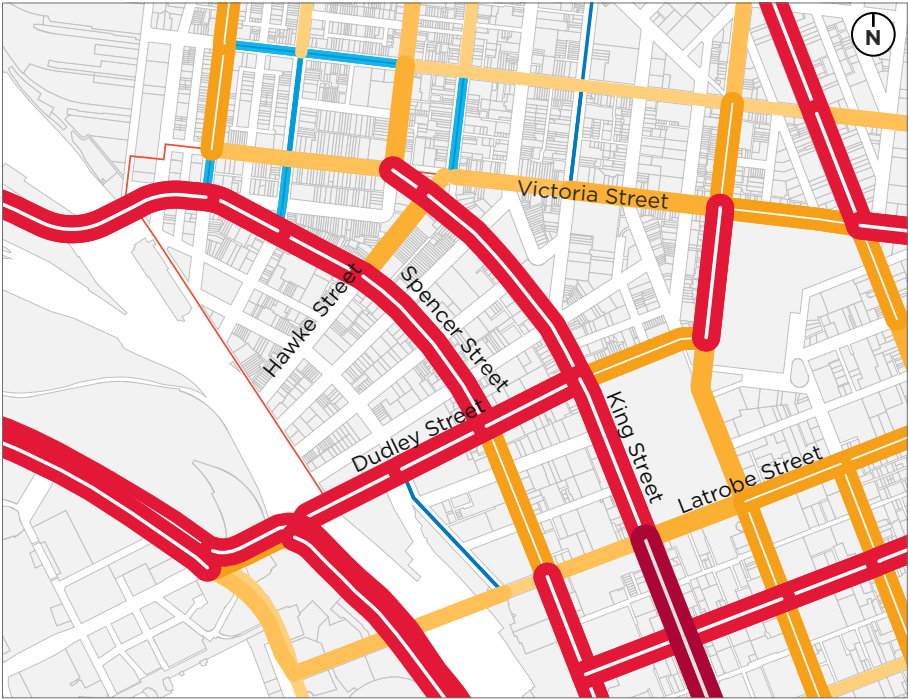


Figure 3.4: Annual average of daily traffic volumes in and around West Melbourne. Source: VicRoads (2016)

Light Traffic	Moderate Traffic	Heavy Traffic
0-500	3501-5000	11001-18000
501-1000	5001-6500	18001-101000
1001-2000	6501-8000	
2001-3500	8001-11000	



Figure 3.5: Looking south-west across King Street.



## Street blocks and laneways

West Melbourne is characterised by long but relatively narrow street blocks (200 x 100 m) with few side streets or through laneways. The scale of the West Melbourne grid is similar to the central city but with 30 metre wide streets every 100 metres (or less) rather than alternating 30 metre and 10 metre 'little' streets.

West Melbourne also has fewer through block links than in the retail core, where lanes and arcades provide options for pedestrian movement. There are about seventy laneways in West Melbourne that provide secondary access to properties, protecting main street frontages from interference by service functions, but few of these serve as links where pedestrians can cut through blocks. A handful are used as primary entries where properties have been subdivided.

The laneways vary in width but most are about four metres wide. Many feature historic bluestone pitch paving, which adds to their charm but limits access for people with disabilities.

The walking network in most of West Melbourne is therefore categorised in the City of Melbourne Walking Plan (2014-17) as 'low accessibility' and a 'coarse grain' urban fabric.

Laneways can provide opportunities to improve this walking network, as well as for an enhanced public realm as demonstrated by the City of Melbourne's 'Greening Your Laneway' program which helps transform the laneways in the central city into leafy, green and useable spaces.

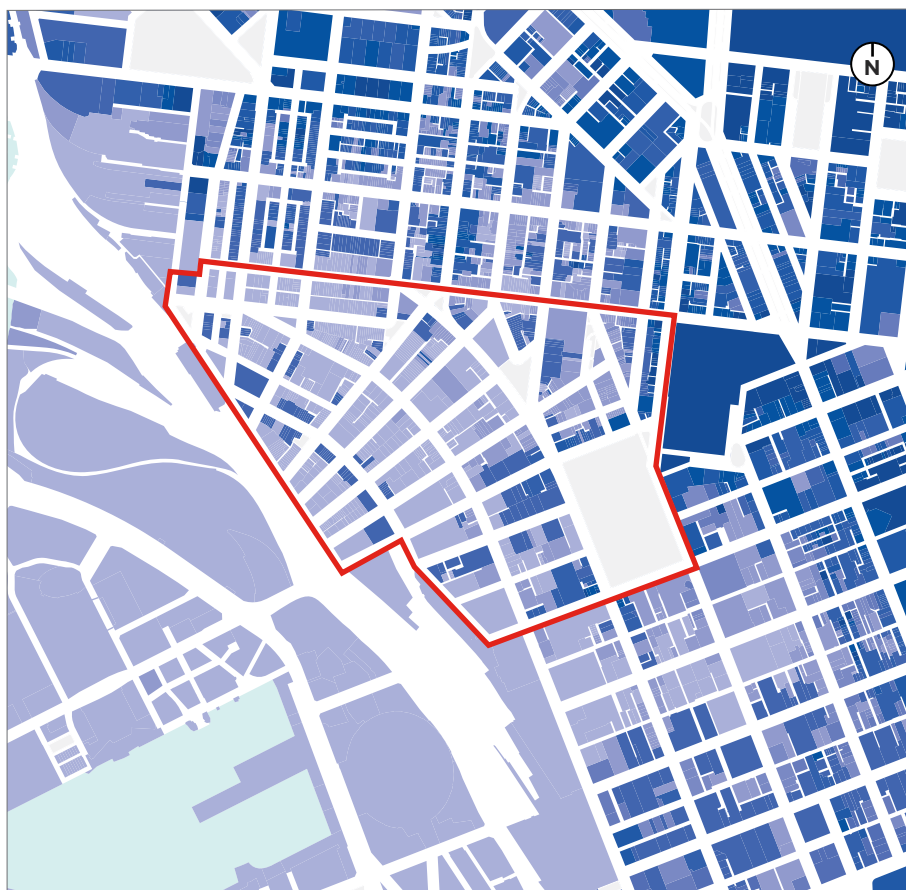


Figure 3.6: Pedestrian accessibility as determined by block size. (Walking Plan 2014-2017)

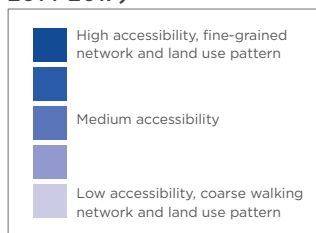


Figure 3.7: Typical West Melbourne laneway.

## Individual property sizes

There is a great variety of property sizes in West Melbourne. This reflects the historic periods of subdivision, land use and development in the area. For example, the block bounded by King, Stanley, Spencer and Roden Streets has larger plots with a coarser grain due to its historic warehouse, light industrial and storage uses. The block to the northwest between Roden and Hawke Street has a finer grain with predominantly residential uses.

This variety of plot sizes offers different development opportunities. Plot size has a significant influence on the type, density and scale of development that can occur on a site.

Larger sites can generally accommodate more intensive development without impacting adjacent properties, as they allow greater space for building setbacks. Setbacks can help to reduce the visual bulk of a building and protect the amenity of the street or adjoining properties by reducing impacts such as overshadowing. Smaller sites often do not offer the same opportunities.

The benefits afforded by larger sites can lead to developers seeking out multiple neighbouring sites that can be combined with the potential of increasing development yields.



Figure 3.8: Individual property sizes

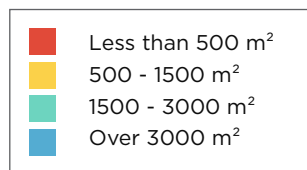


Figure 3.9: A mix of individual property sizes on Hawke Street

## Active property entrances

There are few entertainment, tourism, food and drink and retail uses in West Melbourne when compared with surrounding areas. The entry points to such nonresidential buildings are considered active property entrances as they are used by the public.

Where there are clusters of active property entrances there is typically a clustering of people that have come to use those services, creating activity in the streets. This activity is important for safety, particularly at night around public transport stops, as more people means more 'eyes on the street'.

There are few active property entrances, with the exception of Victoria Street, Peel Street and parts of Spencer Street.

There are few active entrances around North Melbourne Station, which can make this area feel less safe, particularly at night. There is a concentration of active property entrances on Victoria and Peel Streets and a small cluster on Spencer Street between Stanley and Rosslyn Streets. Other streets generally have residential or commercial entrance that are not considered active.

There is also a strong relationship between the extent of active property entrances and public transport access. This is clearly demonstrated along Victoria, Errol and Queensberry Streets.



Figure 3.10: Active property entrances and tram routes in West Melbourne.



Figure 3.11: Active property entrances along Spencer Street



## Character areas

West Melbourne can be divided into a number of different character areas that are defined by common features, including many of the components of urban structure discussed above, as well as heritage, built form, open space and land use. Some feel more like the central city, others are more like North Melbourne, and some have distinctly 'West Melbourne' character.

## Dynon Road Bridge

This area is characterised by wide, busy roads where the industrial and logistics areas to the west meet North and West Melbourne. Some former industrial buildings have been adapted for residential use at the interface of the Arden-Macaulay urban renewal area. To the south, several apartment buildings of five to seven storeys have been recently completed. Mature eucalypts, large advertising billboards and traffic guard rails flank either side of Dynon Road.

## North Melbourne Railway Station

The North Melbourne Station entrance is the focal point of this area at the meeting point of Dryburgh and Adderley Streets. Several large island sites near the station frame the wide, tree-lined streets. There is a mix of contemporary and heritage row housing in Ireland and Dryburgh Streets with some contemporary warehouses and commercial buildings on Spencer and Abbotsford Streets.

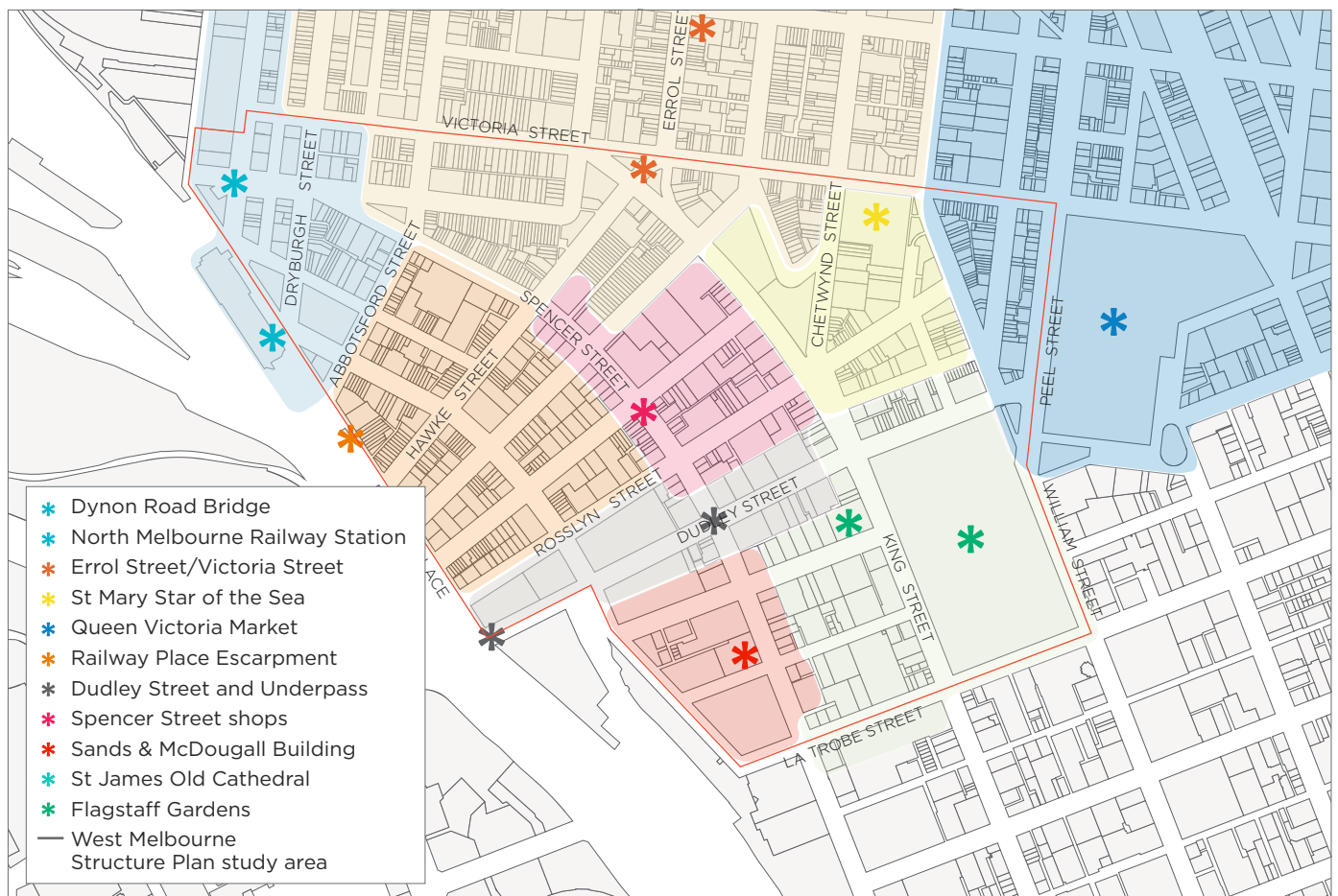


Figure 3.12: Character areas in the West Melbourne study area



### **Errol Street/Victoria Street**

This predominantly residential area is focused around the shopping strip on Victoria and Errol Streets. Terraces, workers' cottages and detached houses are found along Miller Street, Roden Street, Hawke Street and Eades Place. The junction of Victoria, King, Errol and Hawke Streets covers an area of just under one hectare and comprises wide traffic lanes, on-street parking, grassed medians and small parks. It experiences heavy traffic and is difficult for pedestrians and cyclists to navigate.

### **St Mary Star of the Sea**

St Mary Star of the Sea Catholic Church and Simonds Catholic College sit at the highest point in the study area. Other institutional and commercial buildings of around four storeys are common toward Flagstaff Gardens. Flagstaff Crisis Accommodation (formerly the West Melbourne Central School) and Eades Park adjoin King Street. There are small terraces and cottages on William, Chetwynd, Rosslyn and Dudley Streets.

### **Queen Victoria Market**

The Queen Victoria Market adjoins the study area and its influence as a shopping destination can be seen in the surrounding retail, entertainment and commercial uses. The market's broad verandahs over footpaths, the tram line and tree planting give Peel Street a distinctive character. A mix of row housing and small warehouses with metered central median car parking in Capel and William Streets typify the surrounding area.

### **Railway Place Escarpment**

This area is characterised by its wide streets leading to the railway cutting at Railway Place, where there are expansive views across E-gate to Docklands from a viewing platform between Hawke and Abbotsford Streets. The topography is a significant feature as the land slopes from the highest point around Hawke and Spencer Streets to the lowest point near Festival Hall. Existing and converted warehouses, heritage row housing and new apartment buildings of up to six storeys are mixed through the area.



Figure 3.14: Looking south-west along Hawke Street.



Figure 3.13: Howard Street with St Mary Star of the Sea in the background.

### **Dudley Street and underpass**

Dudley Street is a vehicle-dominated environment, despite its broad footpaths and mature trees. It is an important link between the Queen Victoria Market and Docklands. There is change in elevation of 25 metres from the underpass at the rail lines to the market in the east. The street's character is adversely affected by large sites with blank interfaces and long distances of up to 200 metres between cross streets.

### **Spencer Street shops**

The blocks on Roden, Stanley and Rosslyn Streets have generally larger properties of over 1500 m<sup>2</sup> that are either vacant or occupied by light industrial or commercial uses. Rosslyn Street is lined with semi-mature trees, Stanley Street has striking views to the St Mary Church and Roden Street has mature trees and forms an important interface with the heritage precinct. The topography levels off at Spencer Street where a relatively fine grain mix of heritage shop fronts, warehouses, corner pubs and small offices run from Hawke Street to Dudley Street.

### **Sands & McDougall Building**

This area is characterised by several large brick buildings on Spencer and Batman Streets including the Sands & McDougall Building, Melbourne Assessment Prison and Australian Red Cross (formerly Austin Motor Company). Distinctive native tree planting on Spencer Street and elms on Batman and Jeffcott Streets add to the character. Adderley Street has a direct interface with the rail yards and accommodates bus access to Southern Cross Station.

### **St James and Flagstaff Gardens**

This area is characterised by a mix of contemporary offices and residential buildings of two to 15 storeys with reasonable preservation of heritage warehouse facades. The area is adjacent to the Flagstaff Gardens, from which there are views to the west. The gardens are accessible via staircases at Batman and Jeffcott Streets, but heavy traffic on King Street presents a barrier to movement. St James Old Cathedral is a landmark of the area.



Figure 3.15: Queen Victoria Market, Peel Street.



Figure 3.17: Melbourne Assessment Prison.



Figure 3.16: Dudley Street at the railway underpass.