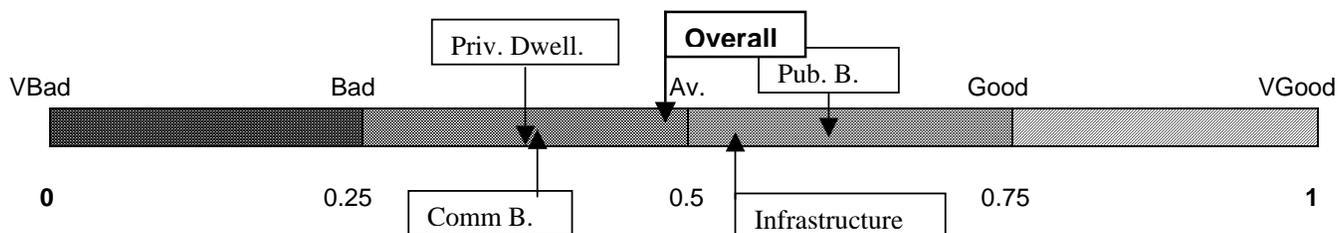


## Executive Summary: Universal Mobility Index (UMI) Pilot Report, Kensington Melbourne 2011

The Universal Mobility Index (UMI), a new tool to measure the overall accessibility of neighbourhoods, was piloted in Kensington in inner city Melbourne. A focus group was conducted prior to the pilot. This forum revealed that people with disabilities encountered barriers to mobility frequently in their everyday lives. Secondly that current methods of detecting, reporting and treating barriers are haphazard, lacking any systemic, logical approach. There was no consensus on which parts of the built environment were likely to present the most barriers – Commercial, Public Buildings or Infrastructure. It was thought that Private Dwellings were likely to be more inaccessible than the other three categories.

The UMI pilot area included the strip shopping area of Kensington centred on Macaulay Road (see Map appendix 1 in Full Report) and a surrounding area comprising commercial and public buildings, private dwellings and infrastructure such as footpaths, road crossings, street furniture, railway stations and bus stops etc (see Tables 1 & 2 in Full Report). Groups of people with differing disabilities affecting their mobility in the built environment inspected a statistically significant random sample (90% confidence  $\pm 10$  error) of buildings and infrastructure elements. The groups rated the selected elements on a five point *Likert* scale from 'very bad' to 'very good'. This provided the raw data for scoring elements as well as categorical cumulative ratings on a scale from 0 to 1, where 0 represents 'very bad' accessibility and 1 represents 'very good' accessibility.

Commercial Buildings (0.38) and Private Dwellings (0.40) showed 'bad' to 'average' accessibility. Public buildings (0.62) accessibility was found to be 'average' to 'good' and statistically significantly better compared to the other two building categories (independent T test  $p < 0.05$ ). Infrastructure (0.56) overall showed only 'average' accessibility. Infrastructure sub-components accessibility performed variably with disabled parking spaces (0.48) worse than 'average' while public spaces (0.58) and road crossings (0.58) were marginally better than 'average'.



The overall UMI Score for the Built Environment as a whole was a disappointing 0.48. This low result confirms claims by disabled persons' organisations that urban environments discriminately constrain the mobility of those with mobility impairments, limiting educational, employment, recreational opportunities and causing social exclusion.

A second part of the UMI, the Policy Environment Component used a questionnaire to assess the human rights agreements and disability discrimination act operating in the country of the pilot area. Additionally if/how people with disabilities have a voice in policy formulation affecting the accessibility of the built environment via a disability advisory committee. Scoring on the human rights and disability discrimination section (0.73) was 'good'. Representation of people with disabilities in built environment policy making (0.52) was only 'average'. The combined overall UMI Policy Environment Score was an 'average to good' 0.64.

Combining the Built Environment Score (0.48) and the Policy Environment Score (0.64) gave an overall UMI Pilot Score for the Kensington Activity Centre neighbourhood of an 'average' 0.56 (see Figure 3 in Full Report). While the Policy Environment (0.64) rated slightly higher this is yet to translate into an accessible built environment (0.48). In particular the rights of people with disabilities to access goods and services (Commercial Buildings 0.38) and to visit neighbours friends and relatives (Private Dwellings 0.40) are being denied. A partial explanation is that the voices of people with disabilities are not currently being well represented via a Disability Advisory Committee (0.52) in policy making forums affecting the form (accessibility) of the built environment.

The Pilot demonstrated the UMI to be the first tool able to assess the overall accessibility of a neighbourhood, identifying and prioritising barriers for removal. The UMI is inclusive and participatory, placing people with disabilities at the centre of decision making on how their local environment can be made more accessible. Adoption of the UMI by government, responsible authorities and disabled persons' organisations can address the current fragmented and exclusionary nature of access considerations across the built environment.

**Authors: Ralph Green and Mary Ann Jackson**

(Full report available – contact Visionary Design Development Pty Ltd)