


Accessing Moreland

Glenroy Major Activity Centre and
Shopping Strip Renewal Program
Access and Mobility Audit

Executive Summary

An Advanced Access Auditing Methodology

Prepared by Visionary Design Development Pty Ltd

for Moreland City Council

Moreland City Council

3 December 2012

This document is a part of a larger report which includes the following:

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Executive Summary

Equity of physical access for people of all physical abilities including dignified Wayfinding for people with cognitive and sensory impairments has become of increasing importance to local government over the last few decades. This emphasis has been driven by legislative requirements; the Disability Discrimination Act of Australia (1992), the Disability Act of Victoria (2006); Australian Standards such as AS 1428, Disability (Access to Premises - Buildings) Standards 2010; (Australian) National Construction Code Series, together with International Human Rights Agreements such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. As a Local Government Authority (LGA) Moreland City Council has committed to achieving equity of access through its *Access and Inclusion Policy 2010-2014*.

A key component of equity is social inclusion at the neighbourhood level. People of all abilities must have the opportunity to visit neighbourhood shops to buy a newspaper, pick up a loaf of bread and have a coffee. An accessible built environment without physical or Wayfinding barriers is an important facilitator of wellbeing and directly related, through core concepts of choice and autonomy, to theoretical concepts of quality of life. Moreland's *Shopping Strip Renewal Policy 2011-2016*, while not disability specific, seeks to enhance walkability to neighbourhood shopping centres. A primary objective of the *Glenroy Major Activity Centre and Shopping Strips Renewal Program Access and Mobility Audit* is to identify what physical and wayfinding barriers people with disabilities encounter within Business 1 Zones and, develop strategies for addressing same.

Brief and Methodology

The original brief for the *Glenroy Major Activity Centre and Shopping Strips Renewal Program Access and Mobility Audit* ('the Project') was a request for a technical response. This was later modified to include stakeholder input, a literature review and the development of an *Advanced Access Auditing Methodology* (AAAM) as proposed by the successful tenderers *Visionary Design Development* (VDD) in agreement with the overseer, Moreland

Strategic Transport Planning. The AAAM was found to be a significant advance over conventional access auditing methods due to:

- Data range extends beyond minimum standards to rate the accessibility performance of strip shopping centre elements thereby capturing the 'lived experience' of barriers.
- Results highlight more than the extent to which an area meets legal requirements.
- A relational database with a 'find' function permitting instant complex queries allowing a wide selection of built environment elements
- Digital photographic records of under-performing elements.
- Linking of locations to Google Maps permitting instantaneous street views.
- An *Accessibility Score* giving a comparative snapshot of the overall accessibility of SSRP locations including subscores for building entry, pedestrian routes, transport, street furniture and Wayfinding.
- Prioritisation Matrix results provide an analytical starting point for planning capital works.

Literature Review

A literature review of peer-reviewed and grey literature failed to identify any discrete stream of inquiry regarding accessible urban renewal of strip shopping centres. A similarly international review of accessibility policies across several countries identified the European Union's Council of Europe '*Achieving full participation through Universal Design*' as the best example to date of a holistic 'whole of government' or 'joined up' approach to equity of access. It seeks to embed universal design across all levels of government, the private sector and educational institutions while monitoring outcomes. At the micro-policy level the United Kingdom's requirement for an Access Plan to be submitted at the primary planning approval stage is an example of such embedding of universal design.

Qualitative Date – Stakeholder Consultation

Stakeholder consultation with local people with disabilities confirmed that, a) they do visit and want to continue accessing neighbourhood strip shopping centres and, b) they continue to experience barriers and wayfinding difficulties. The user group provided feedback on: barriers and their removal, advocacy and consultation, and, traders and shop owners. Moreland City Council accessibility stakeholders are aware of the nature of complaints that people with disabilities report when shopping locally. However they are somewhat hamstrung to address these concerns by a range of factors including: budget restraints, political opposition, difficulties in communication, co-operation and prioritisation with other responsible authorities. A reliance on standards, when combined with limited enthusiasm for knowledge improvement in the area of universal design, may result in a prescriptive approach of minimum requirements neglecting potentially superior solutions.

Disability and accessibility considerations need to be mainstreamed across council with particular targeting of built environment professionals. There are opportunities to both educate and enlist traders in accessibility initiatives. Enforcement officers should be issued with, and authorised to distribute, educational material such as *Good Access is Good Business* brochures and council policy documents relating to traders responsibilities. An accreditation scheme should be instigated identifying traders who have made their premises 'accessible' by providing: level entry, room to manoeuvre wheelchairs, accessible height counters etc. An identification marking on the front of the premises that the business is accessible plus listing of such businesses in council literature would re-inforce good access as a good business practice. Moreland's Disability Advisory Committee (DAC) appears under-utilised as a resource of knowledge and advice. Policy and program development may therefore lack any direct user perspective.

Access & Mobility Audit Results

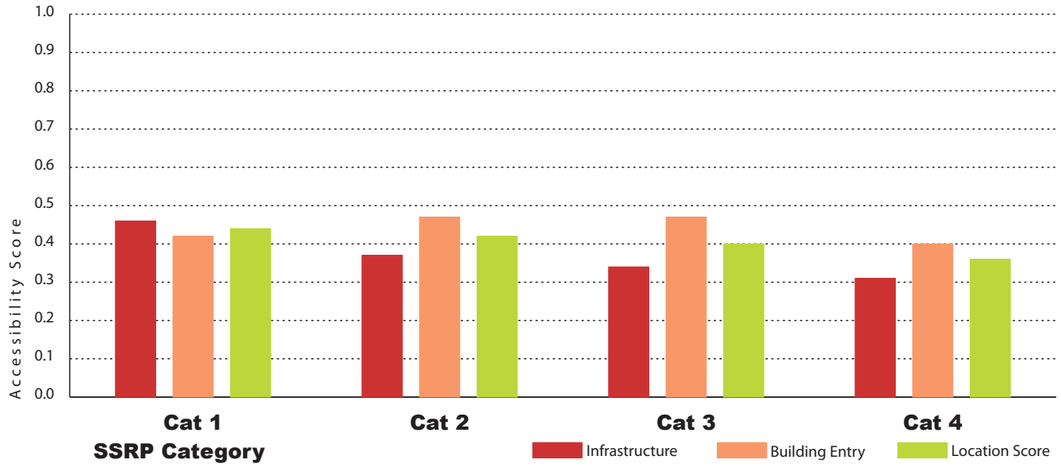
GLENROY MAJOR ACTIVITY CENTRE (GMAC)

Barriers to premises entry are step height (47% with a step height of 35mm or greater) and insufficient latch side clearance (22% of buildings). Door widths are generally adequate. The width of the accessible travel path for footpaths was only 2.0 meters or greater for a minority 26% while 46% were a width less than 1.5 meters at their narrowest point. Within GMAC footpath crossfall and gradient are not significant problems, however over a quarter (27%) of footpath surfaces were uneven. Service pits are a significant trip hazard, 15 % of pits are not level with adjacent footpath. More than one in four (27%) of intersection crossing points do not have kerb cuts. Of the cut kerbs steep ramp angle is an issue for 10% of ramps. Only 10% of practical intersection and pedestrian crossing points had signals.

The number of accessible car parking spaces may well be adequate but poor placement and inadequate sizing are problems. The accessibility of the 6 bus stops is poor overall. The Rail Bus Interchange has modern furniture and tactiles but none of the 6 stops has any auditory, Braille or tactile information available. The other five stops range from marginal to inadequate, some lacking weather protection others with broken or no tactiles, others with no covered wheelchair space. The railway station lacks any accessible, safe path of travel between platforms. The car park is poorly connected to both platforms and bus interchange again by lack of a safe accessible pedestrian routes. There is an almost complete lack of tactile and Braille signage at the station except for the accessible toilet but this was locked while the other men's and women's facilities were open. Not including the station toilets which can only be accessed from a ticketed area, GMAC has three public toilets. While all three feature cubicles that accommodate wheelchair users, the facility in Wheatsheaf Road was poorly signed and rated 'poor' for ease of use. While there are 70 footpaths only 41 of these have bins.

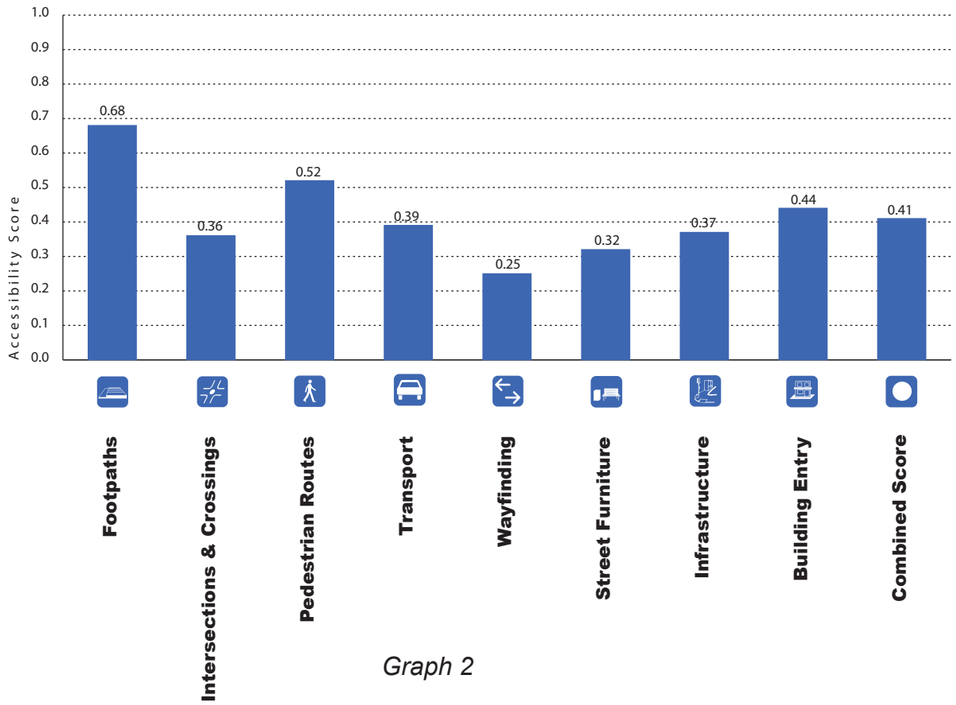
SHOPPING STRIP RENEWAL PROGRAM (SSRP) SITES 1-50

What is remarkable about the 50 SSRPs is not their differences but rather their similarities (see Graph 1). Accessibility was routinely poor to moderate for all built environment elements. For Categories 2, 3 & 4 Building Entry Accessibility was equivalent or slightly better than infrastructure accessibility. However for category one SSRPs the converse was found with Infrastructure outperforming Building Entry accessibility by a small margin. A comparison of Infrastructure, Building Entry and overall Accessibility by category found all locations performing poor to moderate.



Graph 1

Examination of disaggregated Infrastructure (see Graph 2) does show some significant differences in accessibility across the various elements. Footpaths were the best performing infrastructure element. Intersections and Crossings performed much worse. Combining the two gave average Pedestrian Routes accessibility. Transport Accessibility was significantly better for Category 1 SSRPs compared to categories 2, 3 & 4. Wayfinding and Street Furniture Accessibility were the poorest performers, the exception being street furniture in Category 1. Wayfinding was disappointing to dismal. Street Furniture Accessibility was adequate for Category 1, gradually declining to poor for Category 4.

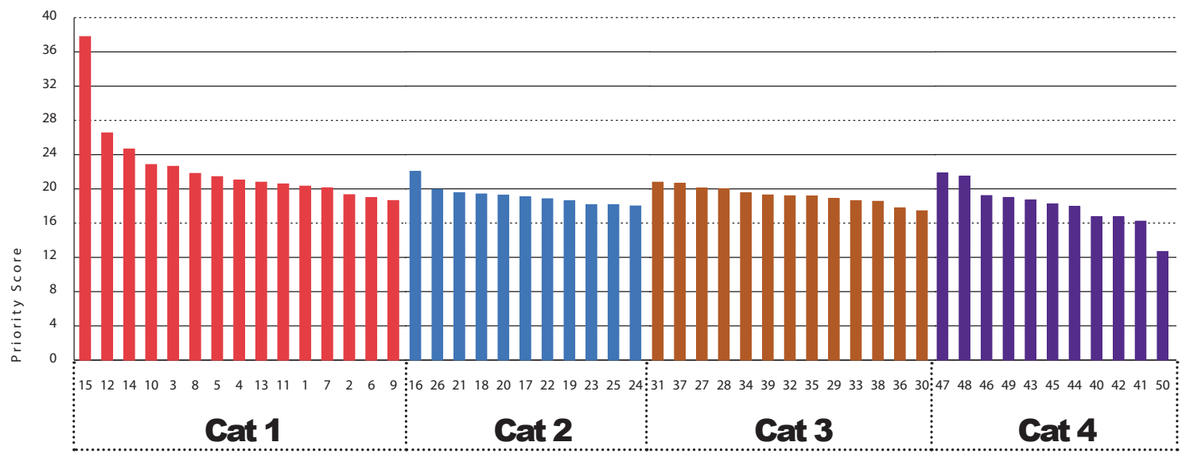


Graph 2

SSRP PRIORITISATION

A Prioritisation Matrix Analysis was the tool selected for prioritisation between SSRPs. Six criteria were chosen. The Benefit (1 minus the Accessibility Score) is the potential maximum improvement in the Accessibility Score by implementing the recommendations and was weighted highest (5). Cost Ratio (Cost per Building) was given the next highest weighting (3) Total Cost (2) and Number of Buildings (2) were considered next most important. Finally Isolation (1) and Transport (1).

SSRP overall prioritisation is shown in Graph 3. Location 15 Moreland Road – Sydney Road emerged as clearly the highest priority both overall and for Category 1 SSRPs. Category 1 Locations 12 & 14 were overall 2nd and 3rd Priority. The remaining Locations did not show great differences in either inter or intra-category scores.



Graph 3: Priority by Categories

Conclusions

Accessibility across the spectrum of built environment elements likely to be traversed when visiting the SSRPs and GMAC was mostly poor (e.g. wayfinding) with only a few elements (e.g. footpaths) being average. This, perhaps not unexpected result, is a legacy of two concurrent historical factors: 1) exclusion of PwDs under the institutional and medical models from most planning and design considerations and 2) poor knowledge of universal design by built environment professionals.

Accessibility considerations have been, at best, peripheral to core concepts of urban renewal. The (lack of) literature confirms this, particularly, the lack of any examples of best practice accessible strip shopping centre renewal. The Council of Europe '*Achieving full participation through Universal Design*' is the best example to date of a holistic 'whole of government' or 'joined up' approach to equity of access. It seeks to embed universal design across all levels of government, the private sector and educational institutions while monitoring outcomes. Universal access will only be achieved when all institutions and

persons affecting the form of the built environment take a Universal Design approach from planning to building certification stages.

Report Recommendations

Moreland should advocate for, and strategically locate itself to play a part within, a similar future 'joined up' framework by:

1. taking a holistic 'travel chain' approach to access and mobility
2. using the findings of this report and other available data to embed access consideration across all capital works programs through merging and linkage of hard asset databases,
3. adopting the Advanced Access Audit Methodology for future audits,
4. up-skilling built environment professionals and other accessibility stakeholders in concepts of universal design,
5. incorporating 'access plans' as a routine initial part of building and planning applications,
6. building relationships between accessibility stakeholders by improving communication, within and without council,
7. educating and advocating for improved equity of access from human rights, social, civic and economic perspectives,
8. engaging with building owners, business operators and responsible authorities outside council's direct influence on accessibility issues,
9. deepening the involvement of and consultation with, the DAC, and
10. improving inclusion of the views of people with disabilities through community wide consultation.