

## 1.4 IMPROVED STREETS FOR PUBLIC LIFE



The City has significantly improved its walking environment through a coordinated program of streetscape improvement works. The physical improvement of the city's streets and lanes provide for the safety, comfort and engagement of the pedestrian, inviting popular use within a wide choice of through-city routes.

The level of pedestrian priority public space has increased substantially in Melbourne during the past 20 years. Most significant is the redevelopment of Swanston Street in the early 1990s, which strengthened its status and character as the 'main street' of Melbourne. Since 1994, the upgrading of Swanston Street has extended to include the northern section from LaTrobe to Franklin Streets, including footpath widening, bluestone paving and tree planting. The construction of QV and redevelopment of Melbourne Central to create active street frontages supports a livelier northern sector of Swanston Street. Construction of Federation Square and City Square have reinvigorated the southern end of Swanston Street.

Many special initiatives have been introduced in the last ten years to create livelier streets for Melbourne's public life. Foremost amongst these is the rejuvenation of priority laneways to form attractive and fully accessible routes through dense city blocks, enlarging the pedestrian network and offering better connections within the central city. Footpaths have been widened and paved with bluestone throughout the central city, including sections of each of the 'little streets', Swanston Street as identified above, Therry and Franklin Streets.

The proliferation of kerbside cafes on widened footpaths in the 30m streets and along the little streets and lanes has resulted in an increase of seating in outdoor environments by 177% since 1993. Overall, the number of cafes, restaurants and bars increased from 95 in 1993 to 356 in 2004 (refer further 1.7 below).

Active frontages have been introduced throughout the city via the laneways improvement program (refer further 1.6). Other examples include the rear of Collins Place/Flinders Lane frontage, Melbourne Central redevelopment, QV redevelopment and the Westin Hotel frontage to City Square.

Bourke Street Mall, at the heart of the retail core precinct, will see a wholesale redevelopment during 2005-06. Bourke Street has been upgraded from Swanston to Russell Streets with kerb extensions, bluestone paving and tree planting. Additional active zones adjoining or in close proximity to Bourke Street will soon be offered by the Southern Cross and RACV redevelopments, and will help to reinforce its role as the city's premier east-west pedestrian spine.

*Today Swanston Street (above and page opposite) is a leafy, lively retail precinct with broad bluestone pavements and convenient street furniture.*

A wide range of other components brings added dimensions to the city's street life. These include:

- Expanded 'micro-scale' retail, such as flower and fruit stalls, newsstands, information pillars, etc, that attract greater activity to city streets;
- Consolidation of the city-wide streetscape greening program to protect the character, amenity and enclosure of streets and public spaces, and contribute to a healthy urban environment;
- Lunchtime street closures in Lt Collins Street and Flinders Lane and permanent or temporary (eg. during business hours) laneway closures. These assist in reducing motor vehicle impact and present opportunities for informal social interaction and reinforce a sense of place for people;
- Second floor building facades that provide interest through windows, displays, pedestrian overview of the street and visible indoor activity;
- Verandahs providing a generous quality of scale and enclosure to the footpath that greatly contributes to the walking amenity of the streetscape;
- The city's tram system being incrementally upgraded with new technology tram services that produce less ambient noise;
- Introduction of partial bicycle lanes / refuges along Collins Street – interrupted at only intersections where tram stops create congestion;
- Improved climatic conditions at ground floor level by encouraging setbacks above podiums where tower structures are required, to reduce wind downdrafts at street level.
- Public toilets relocated from footpaths where possible into central road medians.