

## 1.4 IMPROVED STREETS FOR PUBLIC LIFE

### Active edges policy

Melbourne's campaign to keep the city vibrant and engaging includes an active edges policy. The policy regulates the design of new buildings to ensure a lively street and urban environment with a mix of functions and activities.

The most important objective of introducing active edges along the city streets is to ensure that ground-floor facades appeal to pedestrians and contribute good lighting and levels of interest and activity. The policy sets the following framework:

- Shops and food service outlets must have a display window or entrance measuring at least 5 metres or 80 per cent of the ground-floor facade (whichever is the larger).
- The rhythm, scale, architectural detail, windows and colours of new facades must be in keeping with existing street space.
- Buildings must provide details of interest to pedestrians and use high quality, durable materials.
- Facades must not be devoid of detail; large facades in particular must be divided into smaller sections for articulation.
- Signs must be adapted to building designs.
- Windows must be glazed with clear glass; facade design must provide good lighting at night for additional security.
- Roller shutter doors are to be removed and replaced with visually permeable or transparent shopfront security screens mounted internally.

Additional regulations apply to bans on skywalks and height limits for buildings along the facade line to minimise overshadowing and wind turbulence along the street. The types of business permitted at ground-floor in the city centre are also carefully controlled to ensure that they are diverse and complementary to the high levels of adjacent pedestrian activity.

The maps opposite show the results of street level surveys of building frontages conducted in 1993 and 2004.

- 'A' grade facades offer two-way visual permeability at street level. The activities occurring within these buildings add a sense of life and diversity to the streetscape.
- 'B' grade facades provide some visual access to the interior, but it is obscured by displays, signage or the scale and type of glazing.
- 'C' grade facades have a poor street interface due to poor or no visibility, such as tinted one-way glazing, windows raised above pedestrian level, solid walls or absence of ground floor occupation.

This survey shows that since 1993 there has been a significant increase of 'A' and 'B' grade facades in the west end of the Hoddle Grid. This has been aided by the emergence of cafes and convenience stores on the ground floor of apartments and offices, providing these buildings with an active street frontage. The most active frontages are still within the retail precinct centred along Swanston Street. The area of poorest quality facades are found throughout Southbank, and along the perimeter of the grid, particularly Spencer Street.



*Large-scale developments designed in the 1980s such as Collins Place (right) and Melbourne Central (below) greatly damaged the street environment, but today the facades have been successfully redesigned and opened up to the streets. New developments such as QV (above) have provided active retail frontages that meet all the criteria of the facade policy.*

