



F

argyle  
street

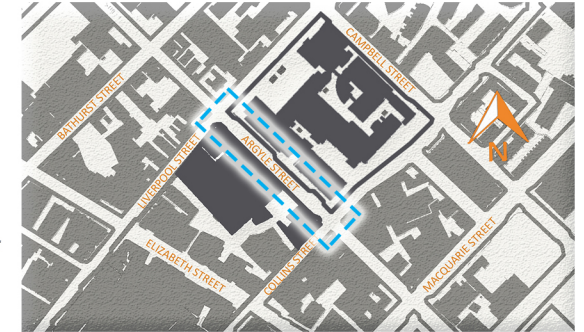
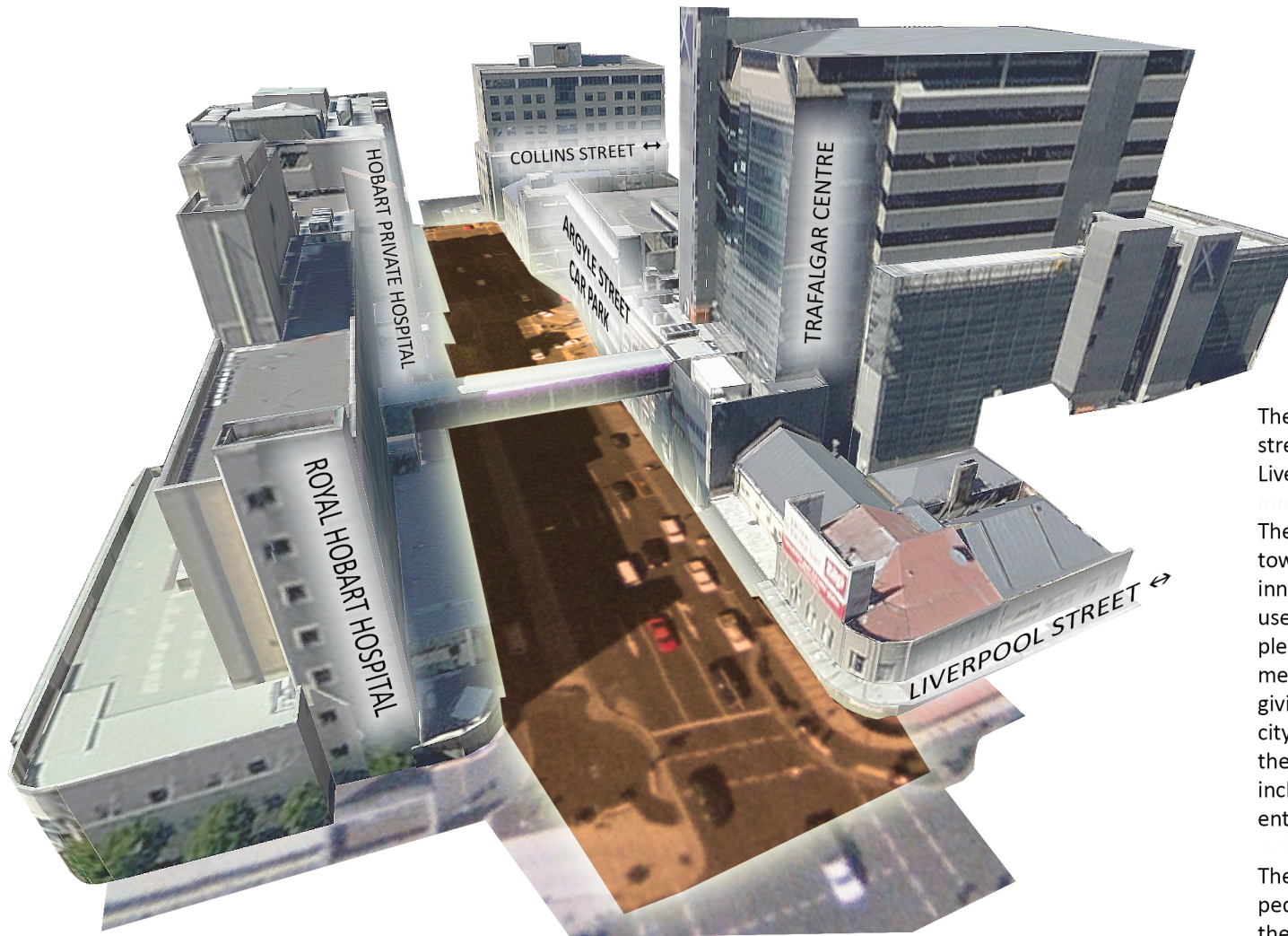
nbd

space

urban design & visualisation



# argyle street

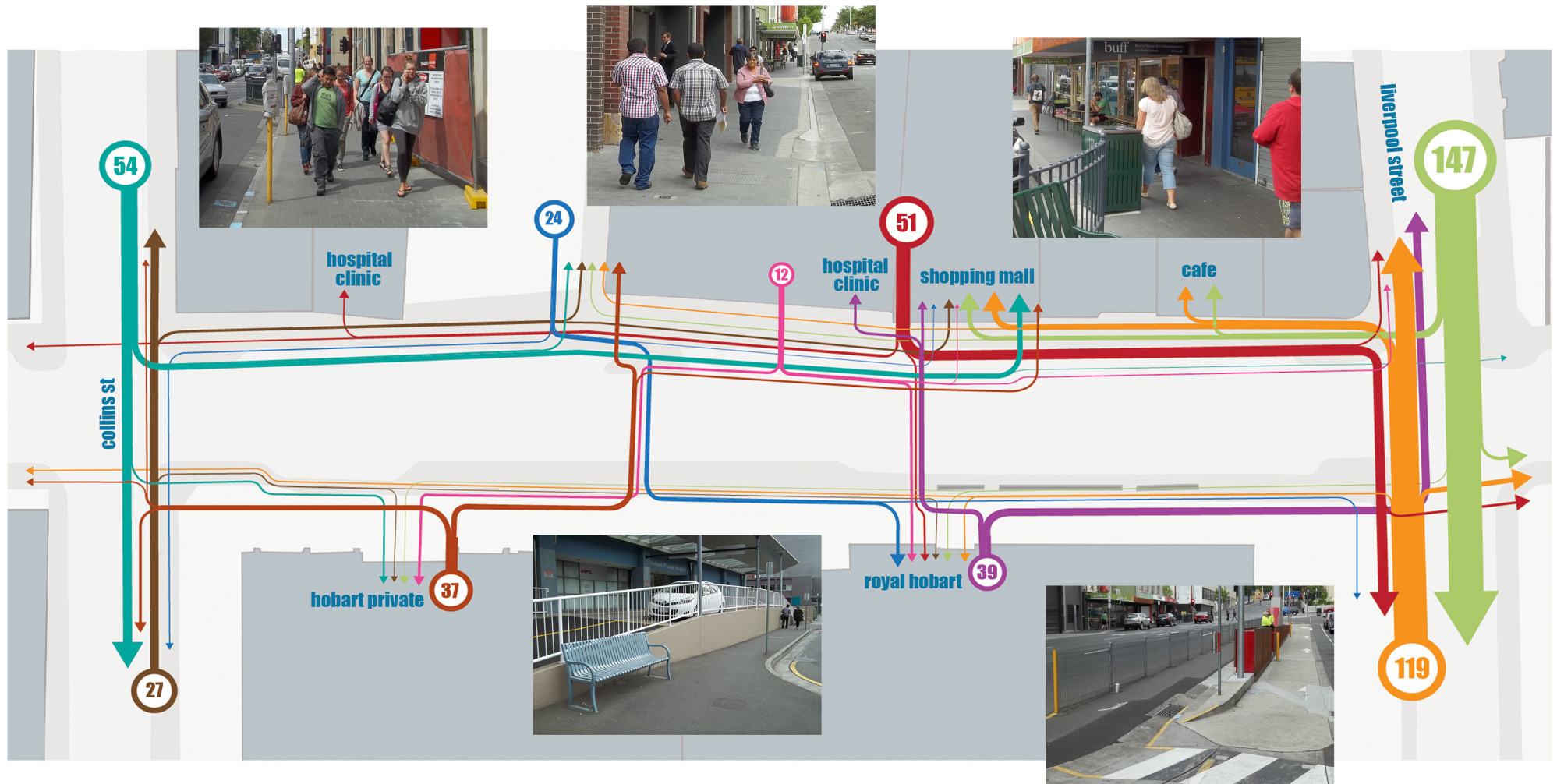


The brief of this study is to analyse the existing town and streetscape qualities of Argyle Street between Collins and Liverpool Streets.

There are two distinctive qualities of this particular area of townscape that set it apart from the majority of the fringe inner CBD blocks. First, it is visually dominated by two major uses within the CBD; The Royal/Hobart Private Hospital complex and the recent Trafalgar Centre retail/office development. These multi-storey developments enclose the street, giving the street section proportions more akin to an inner city block of a far larger urban centre than Hobart. Second, the level of traffic movement is relatively high given the inclusion of the recently extended Argyle Street Car Park entrance/egress.

The resulting townscape would appear to provide a poor pedestrian experience. An examination of the space has therefore been made undertaken in the form of on-site observations and staged improvements suggested.





## movement through the block

*For all observational surveys, the actions of individuals were monitored from 5 separate locations within the street over periods of 20 minutes. Surveys were undertaken over several business days between 12.00 and 2.00pm.*

Based on the survey results, it became apparent that unlike similar blocks within the fringe CBD (and despite the immediate location of large 'magnet' uses), the number of people moving within the block was relatively small. Those using it as throughfare was almost negligible. It is speculated that this is primarily due to the lack of immediate 'destination' locations in Argyle Street in either direction. Similarly, those within

the inner CBD, such as the Elizabeth Mall, are considered more accessible by routes either more direct or which offer a greater visual dynamism. It is noted that in areas of highest pedestrian traffic, the frontage is activated by outdoor cafe space.

Movement within the site appeared to occur most notably either between the Argyle Car Park and the Hospitals; or between the Hospitals and routes to the Trafalgar and Elizabeth Street Shopping Malls. Again it is speculated that a large proportion of this pedestrian movement is undertaken by either visitors to or staff of the two Hospitals. It is concluded therefore that the study area is considered a place solely to move through.





## on-site observations

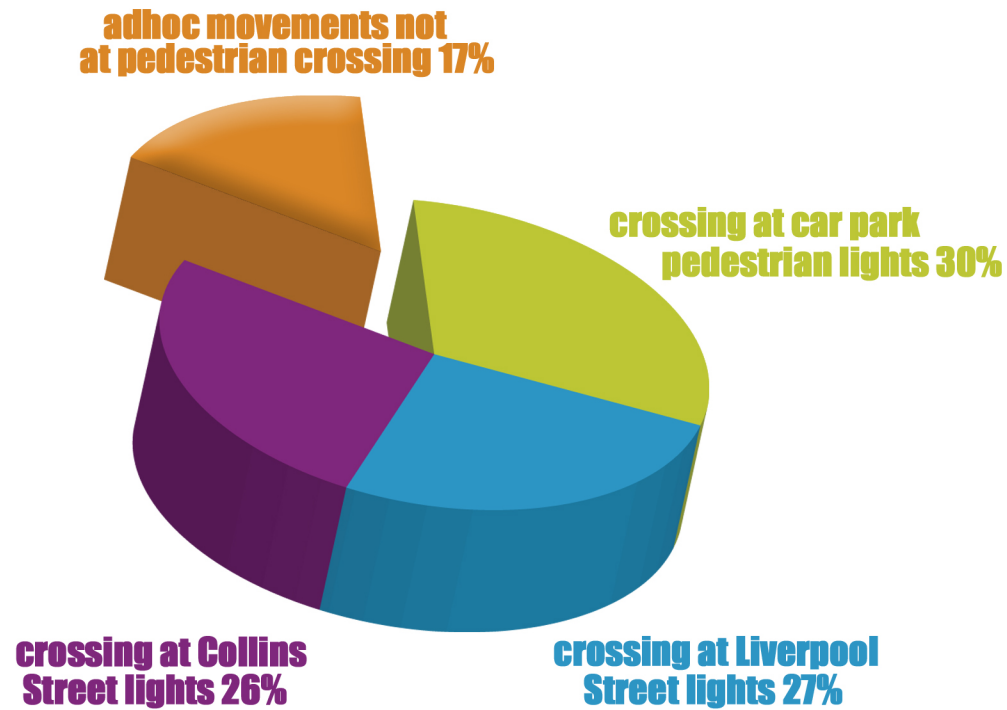
From on site observations, it became apparent that several areas of potential conflict and poor performance of streetscape quality existed. It also became apparent that notwithstanding the above, self-management of space appeared to be occurring. Some issues can be summarised as follows -

- Many users of the space appeared not to be familiar with the immediate townscape. Numerous occasions of people emerging from the Argyle Street Car Park and being unsure of the location of the nearby Hospitals was observed.
- Despite the large number traffic movements into and out of the Argyle Street

Car Park, drivers did appear to be aware and give way to pedestrians. Nonetheless, several occurrences of 'near' misses occurred in the short period of observations and it was apparent that even 'confident' pedestrians (young, healthy etc) appeared wary and cautious when approaching the entrance.

- Due to the substantial degree of overshadowing by the surrounding townscape, only the seating on the corner of Liverpool Street was utilised for anything other than 'cigarette breaks'. However, smokers were particularly good at identifying sunny spots including a blank length of wall outside the Car Park that acted as a successful suntrap.





## pedestrian crossing movements

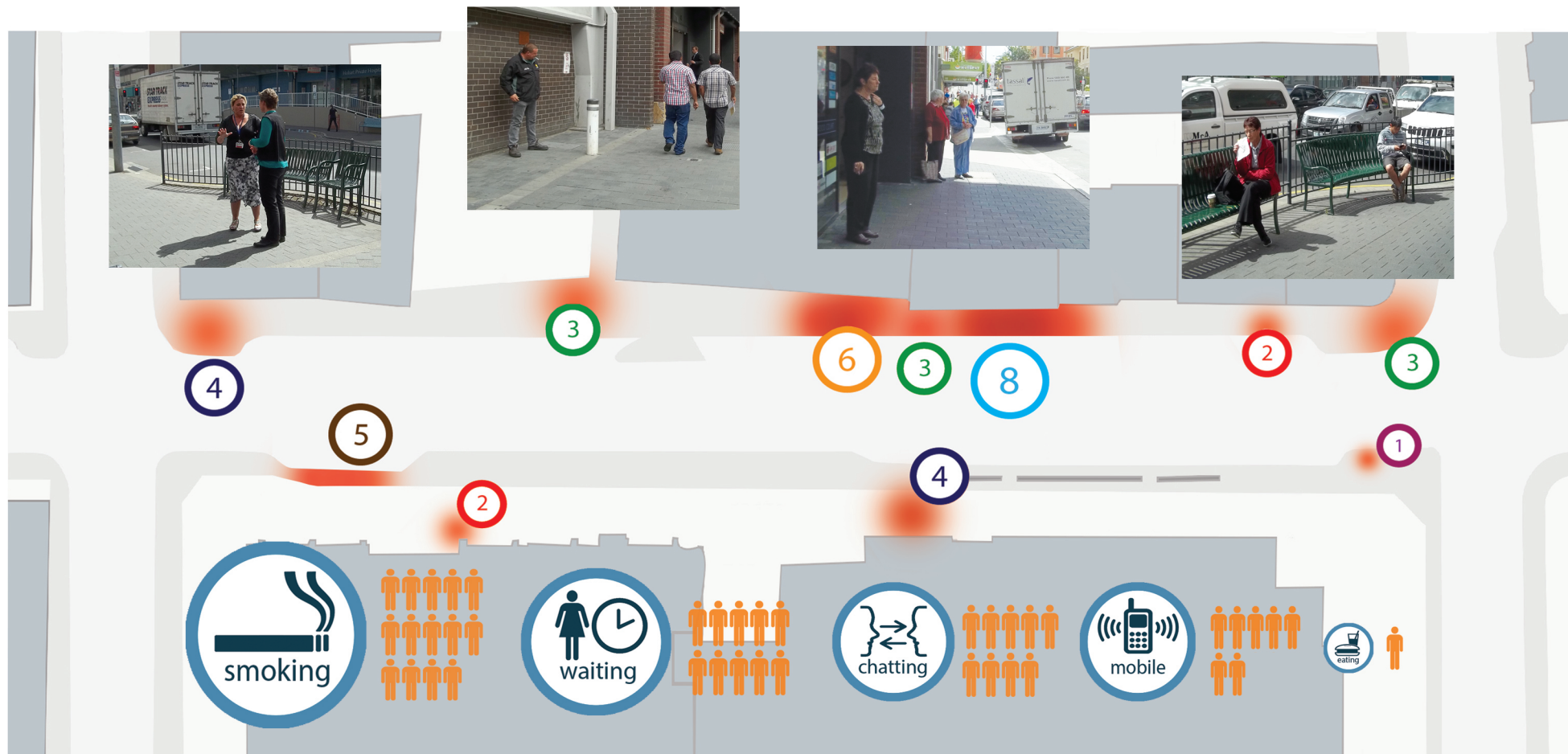
As previously stated, the area in question is subject to relatively high levels of vehicular traffic movements. Indeed, one study has calculated that the number of vehicular movements of both entrance and egress from a single point currently found at the Argyle Street Car Park is the highest in Australia outside of those serving Airports. From on site measurements, the above statistics were produced showing that on average, 17% of pedestrian crossing were undertaken not at the three designated crossing points and during gaps within the traffic. In other words, informal or acts of 'Jaywalking'. Given the above, based on anecdotal evidence, this would appear relatively high within such a busy stretch of highway.

No statistical evidence of recorded traffic accidents involving pedestrians were sought. However, notwithstanding the above observations, it would appear that most of the informal crossings were undertaken in relative safety without cause of the pedestrian to break into a run or for oncoming vehicles being forced to break or slow their approach. As such, the above would appear to suggest that whilst instances of informal crossing contravene Australian Law, they are

taking place with a degree safety and without significant impact upon either public safety or vehicular movement.

On the basis of the above, no improvement, addition or alteration to the current pedestrian crossings are proposed. However, it was noted that most of those engaging in informal crossings were doing so in order to gain access to and from the Hospital in clear desire line actions. There were clear instances where older and infirm people informally crossed and it is speculated that this is a common occurrence where appointment based health activities take place as people rush to make appointments. It is also speculated that instances of informal crossing may have been higher if a significant proportion of the pedestrian space was not currently enclosed by an existing metal fence, limiting access. As such, any future alterations of improvement to this stretch of the pedestrian space should be approached with the understanding that instances of informal crossing by the more vulnerable or less diligent pedestrians may occur as a result.





## lingering points

In total, 41 instances of people remaining in the space for any length of time were recorded. Given the central location of the space and its relative traffic dominated nature, this is considered to be slightly above what might normally occur within a fringe CBD block, even within the 'lunch' hours between 12 and 2pm.

With regard to the above, it is notable however that the activities undertaken can be generally associated with 'forced breaks' - that is, activities undertaken merely because the street space was 'available' as opposed to 'sought out'. Primary amongst these are those taking smoking breaks, those waiting for others and those taking mobile calls.

It was observed that many of those undertaking these activities then made their way to nearby locations, particularly the Hospitals. As such, it is speculated that the street space was merely the most immediately available or handiest location prior to attending a clinic, visiting a patient or taking a break from work within the site. Notably, only one person chose to sit and eat within the street space and despite three areas of seating, only 5 instances of people sitting were recorded.

It is of interest that one of the more popular spaces was a blank area of wall immediately adjacent to the Argyle Car Park. This space received long periods of sun.



## conclusions and recommendations

From the observations made the following conclusions are made -

- This section of Argyle Street offers little in the way of incentive for those pedestrians making their way through the CBD to utilise this section of the townscape. It suffers from poor levels of visual stimulus, wayfinding, quality or consistency of street materials and unattractive public seating. It is dominated by several large uses which produce a regular stream of activity, but very little of which is lasting or contributes to the wider life of the city. Unfortunately, in doing so, this stretch of the townscape has effectively become a largely blank space within the framework of the city centre, with people seemingly preferring to choose other routes through the city as they journey from destination to destination.

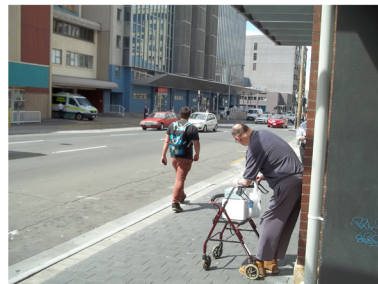
- The street level functions across several substantial parts of the street scene are associated with vehicular entrance and egress requirements for four major uses, the Argyle Street Car Park, the Woolworths supermarket and the Royal Hobart/Hobart Private Hospitals. Consequently the pedestrian surface is often interrupted by cross overs and frontage consisting of either blank elevations or receiving bays. Although the subsequent degree of vehicles crossing the pedestrian space is high, it appears that a suitable level of self regulation allows movements to be undertaken safely and without actual conflict. However, many users of the street appeared unsure and the perception amongst those who tend to have lower levels of confidence when using public space appeared to be that the space was not pedestrian friendly or safe.

- The level of coherent wayfinding and clear signage was considered poor. Despite only limited periods of observation, several and regular occurrences of older people or those with reduced mobility were seen to exit the covered passage from Argyle Street Car Park seeking the Hospitals, but clearly unsure of where they were or the most suitable route that they should take. It was reasonable to speculate that they were not regular visitors to this part of the townscape or indeed to Hobart and the lack of signage, coherent pavement and busy vehicular movements over pedestrian pavings routes appeared often imposing and at times overwhelming.

- Recent development, especially by the Royal Hospital, has led to a number of instances of poorly finished treatments, visual clutter in the form of left over signage or pole barriers, and the use of 'problem solving' but 'clunky' temporary solutions such as the metal railing to the pedestrian path below the new private footbridge. The principal public faces of two of the major uses (The Royal and Woolworths) are in other locations, thus the architectural style and choice of finish materials of the public faces onto Argyle Street are clearly secondary and poor in standard.

## key objectives and aims

- **reintegrated the streetscape back into the wider townscape.**
- **provide coherent footpath surfaces to re-enforce perception of pedestrian safety.**
- **improve wayfinding through both signage and footpath treatments with particular focus on the elderly.**
- **create elements of visual interest.**
- **introduction of features that expand the public perception of the current townscape beyond that of the immediate uses.**
- **reduce unwanted visual clutter and remove poor quality treatments.**
- **have no detrimental impact upon current levels of vehicular movements.**





# proposal key

## stage one -

1. street tree provision .....



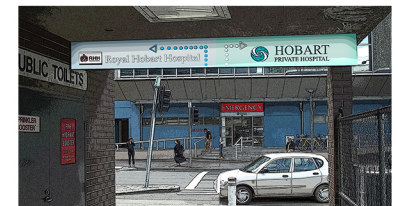
2. single paving treatment - car park entrance/exit



3. sponsored mural .....



4. wayfinding signage.....



5. temporary seating project.....



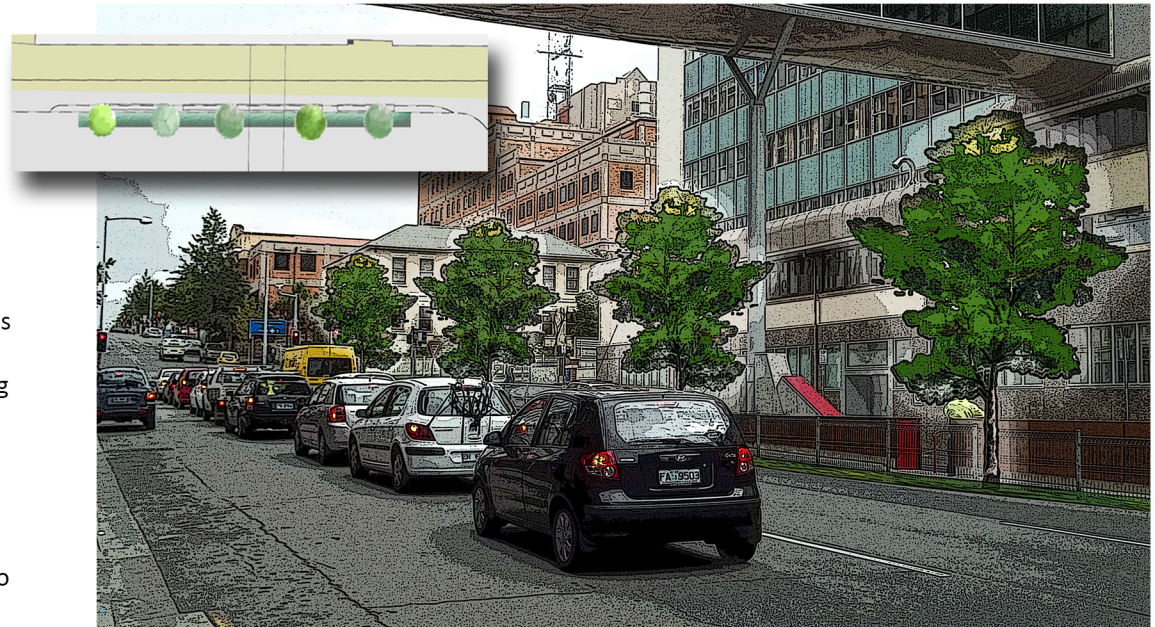


## 1. street tree provision

stated aim - reintegration of streetscape into the wider townscape  
create elements of visual interest

The overarching visual appearance of the immediate block is one of hard surfaces and absence of visual interest. It is noted that the provision of street trees is a significant factor in the visual experience of Argyle Street to neighbouring blocks. It is considered that the similar provision of street trees within the immediate block would not only soften the visual hard edges of the townscape, but also act as visual link to the neighbouring blocks, helping to visually stitch the townscape together and create a sense of coherence.

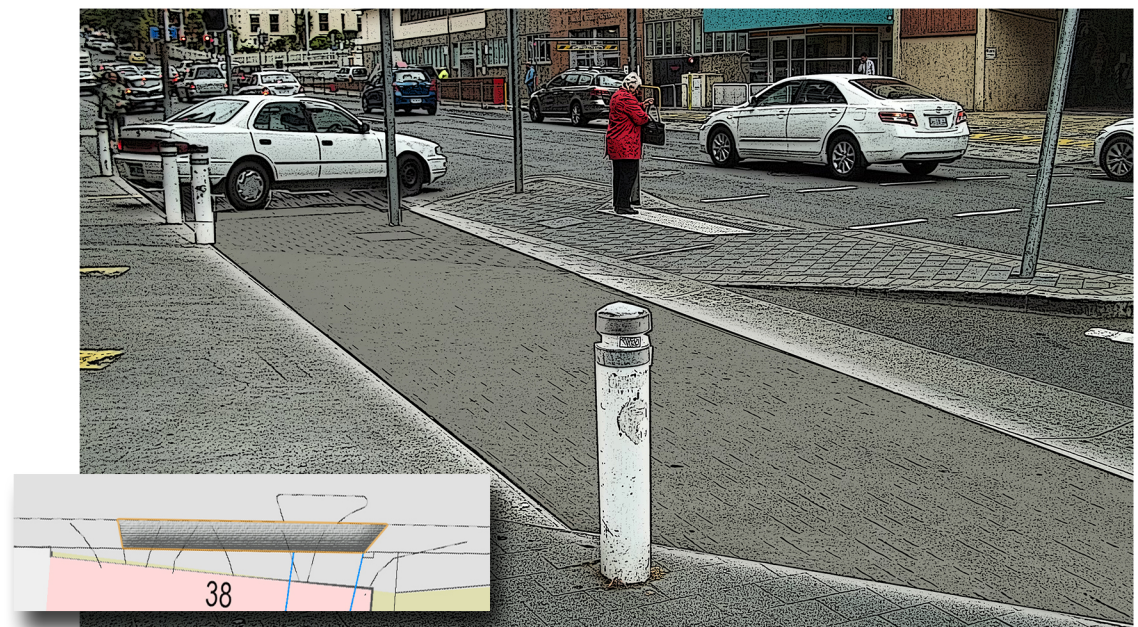
The area chosen is currently given over to pedestrian use. However, it is noted that the use of this area of footpath was extremely low and that Council retains ownership of a comparable strip of land on the other side of the support barrier of the new footbridge for continued pedestrian access to this section of the street.



## 2. single paving treatment - car park entrance/exit

stated aim - provide coherent footpath  
improve wayfinding  
reintegration of streetscape into the wider townscape

The entrance and egress of the Argyle Street Car Park appears to be operating in a relatively free and self regulating manner. The introduction of specific intervention or control to the operation is therefore considered unnecessary and counterproductive. However, the perception from pedestrians would appear to indicate that the elderly and those with reduced mobility did find the area intimidating. As such, the introduction of a continuous strip of paving impressed concrete to form a more pedestrian focused treatment would help to re-enforce the existing self regulation by vehicle users, whilst also increasing the perception of pre-eminence to the pedestrian user.







### 3. sponsored mural

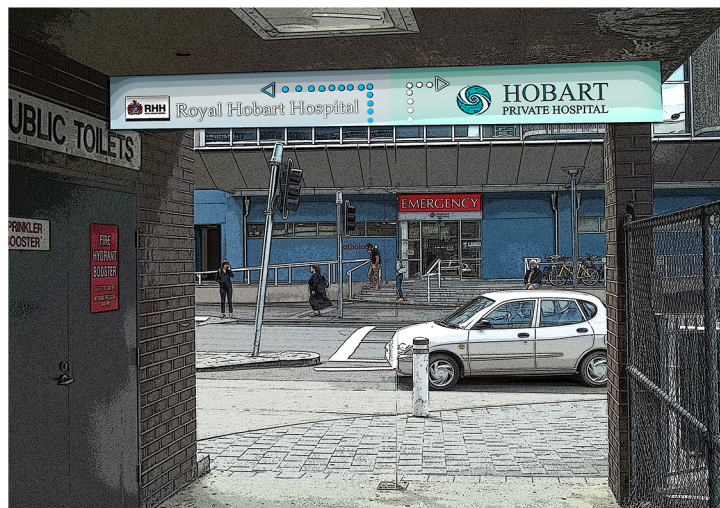
stated aim - create elements of visual interest

The provision of bold large scale murals onto existing blank opening vehicular doors would bring much needed visual interest to the street scene whilst also potentially providing opportunity for bringing a greater sense of place to the townscape. Examples chosen for illustration include the potential use of a reproduction of an early photograph of the former Bird in Hand Hotel which formerly stood on the site of the Argyle Street Car Park. All works would require permission and sponsorship from the owners of the site.

### 4. wayfinding signage

stated aim - improve wayfinding through signage

The provision of new signage at points immediately or close to the pedestrian exit points of the Argyle Street Car Park are seen as the principal requirements for local wayfinding. It would establish a clear visual and understandable link between one side of Argyle Road and the other and help simplify the townscape to the unfamiliar user. Signage should be uncluttered, easy to read and large enough for those with limited eyesight to read.



### 5. temporary seating project

stated aim - create elements of visual interest

features that expand the public perception of the townscape

The provision of a rolling 'exhibition' of experimental and fun street furniture in an area of left over space that smokers have discovered to be a sun-trap. The intention is to make use of an underused space in a way that also creates public interest and helps redefine to a degree the rather limited use and interpretation of the townscape.



# proposal key

## stage two -

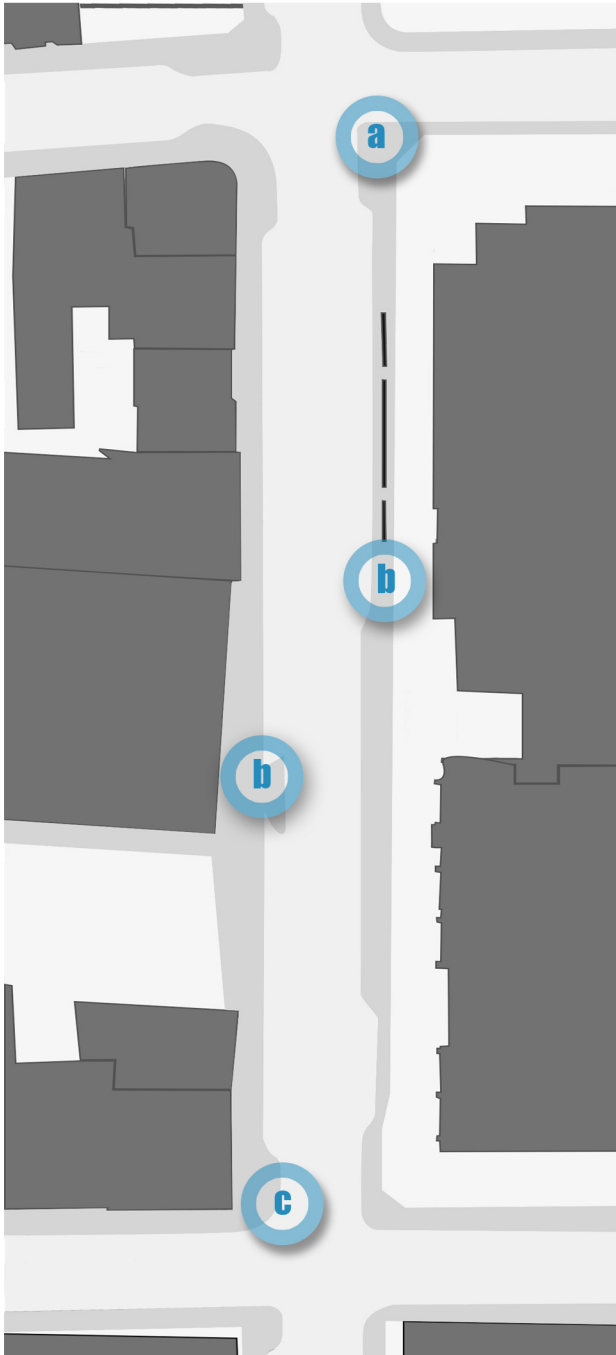
a. sculptural piece .....



b. removal of visual clutter and simplification .....



c. removal of seating in favour of food cart .....







### a. sculptural piece

stated aim - create elements of visual interest  
reintegrate the streetscape into the wider townscape

The provision of a bold large scale sculptural piece to the otherwise weak corner of Argyle and Liverpool Streets not only adds visual interest to the street scene but also provides both a grand statement to the entrance of the Royal Hospital zone, as well as providing a distinctive landmark. It therefore performs the role of allowing the block to be stitched back into the wider CBD by becoming part of the notable landmarks of the city.

Clearly such a structure lays outside of the Council provision or budget and would have to be sought by way of private finance or state level grant. The Council can however encourage such provision and mark the site out as a possible recipient if sources of revenue for public art were to become available.



### b. removal of visual clutter and simplification

stated aim - reduce unwanted visual clutter and remove poor quality treatments.

There are several pieces of poorly finished and maintained pieces of barrier and maximum height restriction poles within the concrete apron of the Royal Hospital non emergency ambulance bay, along with seemingly no longer required markings. All appear to be left over from earlier works and merely confuse and distract from both the streetscape and clear pedestrian routes.



### c. removal of seating in favour of food cart

stated aim - create elements of visual interest  
features that expand the public perception of the townscape

The retention of public seating in locations which fail to attract users could be questioned. The area of seating located to the corner of Argyle and Collins is one such location. It is speculated that in the event that food cart licences were to be rolled out within the CBD of Hobart, the provision of such a use on this corner might make a far greater and positive impact upon the vibrancy of the townscape than the current arrangement.