

Melbourne

CREATING A GREAT STREET

Melbourne, Australia

Melbourne offers an example of how great cities start with great streets. **Lord Mayor Robert Doyle** sums up the renaissance of Swanston Street to become a pre-eminent, people-friendly civic space.



01 Swanston Street prior to the redevelopment.

The Challenge

Swanston Street has been the most frequented pedestrian strip in Melbourne since the 1850s and has the busiest tram route in the world. Melbourne's civic spine is trodden on by more pedestrians per day than Regent Street, London. It is home to some of the city's marvellous historic buildings, including the Town Hall, State Library and St Paul's Cathedral.

It is also the main parade route, with grand processions celebrating Australia Day, Moomba, Christmas, Melbourne Cup, Australian Football League Grand Final and Anzac Day travelling down the thoroughfare.

When I became Lord Mayor in 2008, the road was a mess. At night, private vehicles could use it, but during the day, it operated as a quasi-mall that allowed buses, taxis and delivery vans only at certain times. It was confusing and disjointed, and also unsafe. Motorists, pedestrians and cyclists were not happy.

As a city, we needed to come up with an engineering solution to fix the traffic chaos and improve safety and amenity on the thoroughfare. The catalyst for action for me happened in September 2008, when a young, pregnant cyclist slipped on the tram tracks and was killed by a tour bus that ran over her.





The Solution

The City of Melbourne wanted to develop Swanston Street as the pre-eminent civic space that provides enhanced experiences for shoppers, visitors, workers, cyclists and tram patrons. There were five goals: for it to be a civic street, a people street, a shopping street, an accessible street and a gateway.

Councillors asked our urban designers to come up with a design solution which could achieve all the goals. The city authorities went out to residents, businesses and the wider public to ask them to have their say on a range of technically viable design options.

Initially, I was opposed to the idea of banning cars from Swanston Street but the more I considered it, the more it made sense. No great city wants to bring more cars into its heart. They do the opposite.

The City of Melbourne spent A\$25.6 million to redevelop Swanston Street, with the first stage finished in late 2011 and the redevelopment completed in 2013.

The project included restricting private cars and taxis from entering the busy pedestrian and cycling route between Latrobe and Flinders Streets. Delivery vehicles could

01 Swanston Street, bustling with people.

02 Swanston Street, outside of the Melbourne State Library.

03 Platforms were installed to allow people to board and alight trams safely.

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service businesses during limited hours. It involved installing new platforms for the public tram service, widening footpaths, improving bike lanes and beautifying and opening up public spaces.

The project aimed to build on the existing civic qualities of the street by creating four high quality public spaces: City Square, Bourke Street Mall, the State Library and the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT). The footpaths outside these great civic landmarks were extended to meet tram stops and provide greater definition of these spaces.



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It was all done properly. Swanston Street is paved in bamstone, the best bluestone. There is beautiful new lighting, a stormwater collection system to service nearby trees, and increased priority for trams, pedestrians and cyclists.

The clutter that was there has been removed. It has been an elegant and simple solution using the best materials, and thinking about the use of the street, public transport, pedestrians and cyclists.

To undertake this massive project, we had to work with various stakeholders who regulate Swanston Street, including the state transport department, tram operator and roads authority. An inter-agency steering group was convened to keep the lines of communication open, to collaborate and see the project through to fruition.



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We made sure that residents and businesses did not feel that this redevelopment was forced on them. We consulted widely with ratepayers and undertook an extensive community consultation campaign to listen to feedback and adapt our plans to suit the community's expectations.

Melbourne was recently ranked third in the Monocle Survey for Quality of Life. Monocle states that the most liveable cities in the world "get the essentials right". I believe Swanston Street is one example of that: getting the essentials right.

01
02 Swanston Street was redesigned following close consultation with all stakeholders.

03 Swanston Street during the day.

The Outcome

Today, Swanston Street works. It is safer, more attractive, less congested and more efficient.

The retail and hospitality sectors have also reaped the benefits. Increased pedestrians and tram passengers means more customers. The recently released Walking Plan revealed that increasing walking connectivity in the city by 10% would result in A\$2.1 billion in economic uplift.

Pedestrian counts have been increasing dramatically. Over the last four years, there has been a 14% increase in foot traffic during

the day on weekdays and a 20% increase during the day on weekends.

The answer to creating a city for people is this: create great streets, and all the rest will follow. Great cities need to be accessible, safe and attractive. Their streets need to be active and supportive of vibrant pedestrian economies and public transport users.

The Swanston Street redevelopment has made Melbourne a more people-friendly city. It has truly revitalised the city's heart.



Robert Doyle has been the serving Lord Mayor of Melbourne since 2008. He is a Principal at The Nous Group, Chairman of Melbourne Health, President of the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, Chairman of the Royal Melbourne Hospital Foundation and a Trustee of the Shrine of Remembrance. A Member of Victoria's Parliament for 14 years, Robert was Leader of the Opposition and Leader of the Liberal Party for four years. He has also been Shadow Minister for Health and Parliamentary Secretary for Health.

Find out more of Mayor Doyle's thoughts on Melbourne's cycling culture in his interview with CLC during the WORLD CITIES SUMMIT:



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e6L4GvEf_zg

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