

Right to the Night Report

[October 2018]















Right to the Night Project Evaluation

Prepared for the City of Ballarat by Alison Peipers Consulting

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Glossary

Geo-spatial mapping	Software products that use computerised data provided by users to create a customised map
Hits	Individual visits to the Right to the Night website
Locations	Addresses within the Ballarat city centre posted by website visitors by dropping a pin
Participants	People who engaged with the <i>Right to the Night</i> website and either posted a location of interest themselves or had someone else post their location

Acknowledgements

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Contributions from the following organisations and people are acknowledged with thanks:

- The seven *Right to the Night* project partners: City of Ballarat, Federation University, Australian Catholic University, Centre for Multicultural Youth, Women's Health Grampians, Ballarat Community Health and Victoria Police.
- Ballarat Community Safety Advisory Committee
- Team 337 GovHack 2018
- Monash University XYX Laboratory
- OurWatch
- Plan International
- Ballarat residents who engaged with the project and shared information and insights on the interactive website.

Right to the Night - Project Evaluation

Summary of results

The *Right to the Night* project was conducted by the City of Ballarat and project partners to help improve community safety. It used an interactive website to gather ideas from local residents, mostly women and girls, about locations in the Ballarat city centre they considered safe or unsafe.

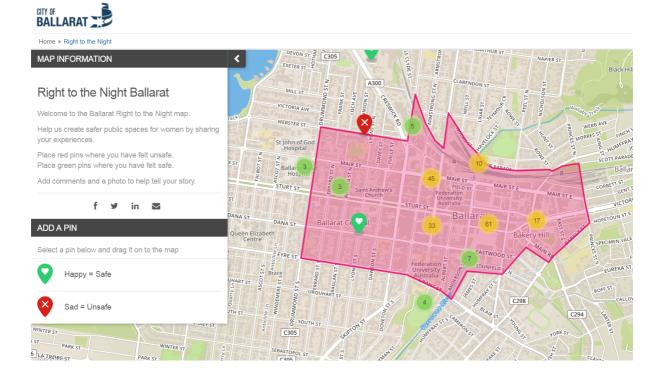
Between March and May 2018, 153 people added at least one location of interest to the website. They shared more than 300 locations in total and explained why they thought each location was either safe or unsafe.

Participants were mostly female (86 per cent). Their ages ranged from 10 to 67 years, with an average age of 35 years.

Safe locations were generally well lit and often in busy areas with lots of people and obvious security. Unsafe locations were typically those where unpredictable people congregate, or in areas with poor lighting, unkept buildings or litter.

The number one concern for participants was intimidating public behaviour. Various locations across the city centre were thought to be unsafe because participants had either been personally harassed or intimidated there, or they had witnessed public drunkenness, drug-affected people or intimidating behaviour in those locations.

The City of Ballarat and its project partners will use the results from *Right to the Night* to inform decision-making around the design of safer public spaces within Ballarat.



Introduction

Right to the Night is a geo-spatial mapping pilot project designed to gather information which can be used to improve community safety. Conducted by the City of Ballarat between March and May 2018, the project used an interactive, online tool to collect data and ideas from local women and girls about their perceptions of safety in the Ballarat city centre.

This project evaluation seeks to summarise, analyse and interpret the data collected via *Right to the Night*. The results will be used to inform future decision-making around the design of safer and more inclusive public spaces within Ballarat, and beyond.

Right to the Night - background

The *Right to the Night* project was instigated by the City of Ballarat to gather data and ideas from local women and girls to inform decision-making around public safety and urban design.

It was based on the *Free to Be* project, conducted in the City of Melbourne in 2016 by Crowdspot and Monash University's XYX Laboratory.

The project helped address Recommendation 3 from the *Right to the Night: Australian Girls on Their Safety in Public Places Report* developed by Plan International and Our Watch.

It recommended that girls and women be involved in developing the solutions for safer and more inclusive public places and called on councils, urban and public transport planners to listen to the views of young people, particularly young women, about the use of public places and public transport.¹

In developing *Right to the Night*, the City of Ballarat brought together a group of seven project partners to oversee the project: City of Ballarat, Federation University, Australian Catholic University, Centre for Multicultural Youth, Women's Health Grampians, Ballarat Community Health and Victoria Police.

A cross-sector approach, using new technologies and marketing platforms, was used to engage the community in a 'collaborative conversation' about public safety.

Over a three month period, the City of Ballarat invited women and girls to add locations they considered 'safe' or 'unsafe' to an interactive online map. Participants had the option to add short narratives of actual experiences and were encouraged to share the project link on social media.

The project communications strategy included a pre-launch, postcards, advertising in local publications, footpath decals, Quick Response (QR) codes, bus-stop signage and media coverage.

Local business owners, particularly from the late-night entertainment industry, were also involved.

Facilitated urban walks were offered for community groups and individuals who may have had difficulty engaging with the online platform or participating without support. They included including disadvantaged young women, newly arrived migrants and community members from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Six urban walks were scheduled and two took place, engaging six women. Their suggestions were added to the website by Council staff. Poor weather and uptake resulted in the remaining urban walks being cancelled. Urban walks were also available by contacting the project lead.

¹ Plan International and Our Watch. (2016) A right to the night: Australian girls on their safety in public places

What did we find out?

Website participants

Over the three-month period between March to May 2018, there were 1815 hits to the *Right to the Night* website.

One-hundred and fifty-three people (participants) made contributions to the interactive site by adding at least one location of interest (safe or unsafe). ²

As the *Right to the Night* project targeted women in Ballarat, it was not surprising that participants were predominantly female (86%). Nineteen males (12%) and two people who nominated 'other' for their gender (1%) added posts.³

Three participants (2%) identified as having a disability and 10 (7%) were from a culturally and linguistically diverse background.

The age of participants ranged from 10 to 67 years, with an average age of 35 years. A good spread of ages was achieved, as shown in Figure 1.

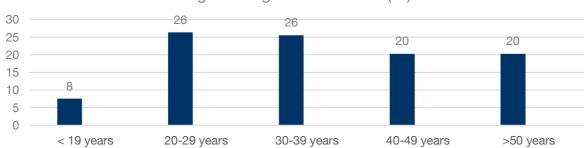


Figure 1: Age of site visitors (%)

Of the 63 participants who provided their suburb, over a third (35%) lived in Ballarat East. (Figure 2)

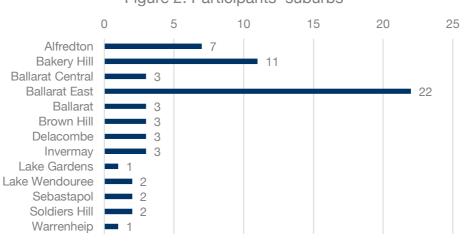


Figure 2: Participants' suburbs

² The locations added by the 153 participants were associated with 134 unique website users. It was clear from the data that some website users included information on behalf of friends and/or family as there were various ages and genders associated with their locations. This also accounted for the entry of locations provided through the facilitated walks.

³ Gender was not always provided.

Male participants

The 19 male participants ranged in age from 10 to 65 years. Together, they added 27 locations; nine per cent of the total locations.

Males were more likely to share unsafe locations than females (81% vs 77%) and more likely to share locations related to unpredictable people (64% vs 42%). Despite these differences, the concerns they raised were quite similar to those raised by female participants. Male and female results have been combined in the overall data, with differences and similarities noted where appropriate.

Participant interactions

Site participants added a total of 305 locations of interest.

The number of locations added by individual participants ranged from one to 14 locations, with the majority of participants (77%) adding one (57%) or two locations (20%). (Figure 2)

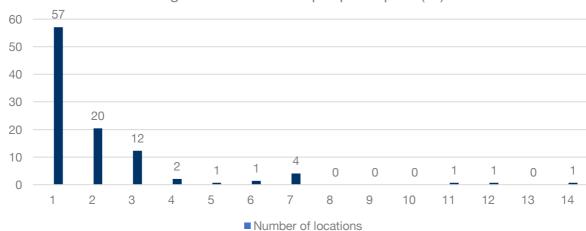


Figure 2: # Locations per participant (%)

Safe and unsafe locations

Participants were asked to classify their locations as either safe or unsafe. As shown in Figure 3, the majority of locations (77%) were considered unsafe, although almost a quarter (23%) were marked as safe. The percentage split between safe and unsafe locations was the same for those added by females alone.

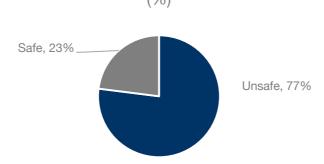


Figure 3: Location category - safe vs unsafe (%)

Participants were asked to nominate their reason for identifying a location as safe or unsafe from a list of options. As shown in Figure 4, the most common reason for a location being considered safe (43%) was it being well lit (considered lighting). The most common reason for a location to have been considered unsafe (54%) was the presence of unpredictable people (homeless, drunk/drugged, teen

gangs). When 'well lit' was associated with unsafe locations, participants' comments suggested that they meant poor lighting was the issue. When 'lots of people activity' was associated with an unsafe location, comments indicated that it was likely to have been related to unpredictable people. When the reason was nominated as 'other' an analysis of participants' comments showed that for safe locations, never having an issues in that place was a common rationale. For unsafe locations, the 'other' reason was often related to poor lighting, lack of activity or a general feeling of unease.

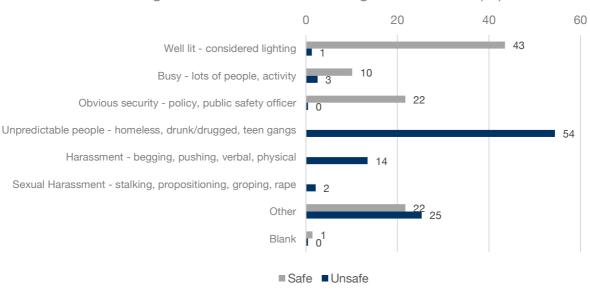


Figure 4: Reason for nominating safe or unsafe (%)

Every participant added a comment about their locations. After comparing the nominated reasons for deciding why a location felt safe or unsafe with the comments provided, common themes arose as described in Table 1. These observations were consistent across all participants, with no particular themes related to participants' age.

Typical attributes of safe locations Typical attributes of unsafe locations Well lit (most common response) The presence of unpredictable people (most No dark hidden spots common response)- e.g. those under the influence of alcohol and/or other drugs, Busy - lots of people and activity Presence of security homeless people, groups of men, aggressive Public art young people, groups loitering etc. Clean, tidy infrastructure Limited lighting Being approached for money or harassed No loiterers Public drug use or dealing Open spaces Isolated areas Family-friendly atmosphere Presence of litter Culturally diverse atmosphere Dirty unkept buildings Passing traffic Graffiti Uneven footpaths No footpaths

Table 1: Location attributes

Locations of particular interest

Participants added locations, both safe and unsafe, across the whole of the Ballarat city centre.

In some areas, safe or unsafe locations were more common, indicating particular trends.

Several areas received a mix of both safe and unsafe location posts, reinforcing the diversity of experiences and opinions within the community.

The following locations of interest reflect multiple location posting where clear themes emerged. The outcomes were consistent for the locations nominated by females and males.⁴

Unsafe areas

Coles/Woolworths supermarket car park

The supermarket car park off Little Bridge Street was identified as a hot spot. Thirty-one participants posted the car park as an unsafe location. All were concerned about drug and/or alcohol affected people hanging around the car park, asking for cigarettes or money and generally intimidating or harassing others. Several participants said that they avoid shopping in the area because it feels unsafe. There were calls for better security and lighting.

'I never go to the supermarkets at night - not safe at all. I've been approached several times for money with one male telling me he always asks females who are by themselves. In another incident one male stood in front of my car asking for money where I couldn't move my car forward to leave the park. Both were at night time. There's security (well used to be) inside the supermarkets but you're on your own once in the car park.'



Little Bridge Street

Adjacent to the supermarket car park, Little Bridge Street received 25 unsafe posts with many comments relating to the bus exchange and the unpredictable, intimidating people who congregate in the area. The area was of concern, day and night.

Several participants also commented on litter problems in the area, no doubt related to the groups that gather there. There were calls for increased security and transit police presence.

'I feel uneasy and unsafe every time I am here. I am only here during the day. There are always people (from teenage girls to middle aged men) yelling, fighting, arguing, swearing, intimidating the general public and there used to be drug and alcohol affected in the toilets and bus stop area here.'

'I was there at 8pm and there were already drug and drunk people there. I felt like I was about to be mugged.'

'The bus stop is totally unsafe. Angry people on drugs or dealing here. Teenage bullies. Not a good place. Get a bus from somewhere else if you need to. Don't walk past, go a different way.'

⁴ Please note that many additional locations were marked as unsafe by one or two participants. It would be worth planners assessing all the unsafe locations as solutions could be applied in various areas.



Bridge Mall

There were 13 unsafe locations associated with Bridge Mall. Again, concerns related to the intimidating people who congregate there and the violent behaviour they express.

'The alleys around Bridge Mall are scary. McDonald's Bakery Hill is also a congregation area for groups of young men / teenagers. Even during the day I make sure my keys are handy in case I need to defend myself.'

Hospital precinct

Twenty participants added unsafe locations near the hospital. They commented on the recent changes in all-day parking availability in the hospital precinct and the challenges faced by female staff now having to walk long distances to their cars in often poorly lit streets.

Without wanting to undermine participants' safety concerns, their negative feelings could also be related to changes in access to all-day parking options. In addition to the recent changes to all-day parking near the hospital, information about further potential changes to car parking across the city centre was made public around the time of the *Right to the Night* project. All postings were lodged after 15 May, perhaps in direct response to the policy change.

'It is very dark in the side streets near the hospital and I feel incredibly unsafe when I walk to my car after 6pm at night. Since Council made changes to the all-day parking around the hospital precinct I now need to walk at least 3 blocks in the dark back to my car. I often feel unsafe walking on the uneven footpath, not to mention how scared I feel as a young female walking alone in dark streets. It would be great if Council could reconsider making some all-day parking closer to the Base hospital.'

Outside Central Square

There were seven unsafe locations associated with Armstrong Street South, outside Central Square. Concerns related to young people loitering in the area.

Safe areas

Lydiard Street North

The largest congregation of safe locations (10) were in Lydiard Street North between Sturt and Mair Streets. Comments related to the safety that comes with areas being busy.

'Very well lit, plenty of people around due to the proximity of the cinema and restaurants.'



Sturt Street

There were seven safe locations added along Sturt Street, between Armstrong and Lydiard Streets. Participants spoke positively about the lighting and the presence of security guards at the taxi rank.

'I always feel safe in the Sturt Street gardens, they are well lit at night and there are generally always people around.'

Mixed responses

There were mixed comments in relation to the Ballarat Railway Station and surrounding areas. The unsafe locations generally related to the parking area at night.

'Too dark when looking for my car after going to Melbourne on the train.'

'Never any issue arriving late at night or early morning. Nor collecting family from the bus depot at late hours.'

Locations requiring practical interventions

Across the city centre, various locations were identified as needing practical interventions to address poor lighting, litter or uneven footpaths. In many cases, they were isolated additions. For some, there were contradictory, safe locations.

All addresses where practical concerns were mentioned are listed in Appendix 1, along with participants' comments if they were specific.

Ongoing engagement with participants

Of the participants who added a location, 19 registered their email for future contact and indicated their topics of interest.

How do these finding compare to other projects?

Although on a smaller scale, *Right to the Night* found many similar outcomes to the *Free to Be* project.⁵

Both projects were conducted over a three-month period. *Free to Be* attracted roughly seven times the number of participants as *Right to the Night* (1000 vs 153) and participants nominated roughly four times the number of locations (1318 vs 305).

Within both projects, safe spaces were associated with good lighting, an area being busy with lots of people and obvious security. Unsafe spaces were those where unpredictable people congregated, where harassment was likely and areas with poor physical conditions, such as poor lighting, litter or smells.

Within the denser Melbourne city centre, a few different themes emerged, particularly related to sexual harassment, advertising and large crowds.

Free to Be participants provided many comments that mentioned incidents of sexual harassment, groping and assault. There were only four comments related to sexual harassment from females in Ballarat, although over half the location posts and comments related to general harassment by unpredictable people.

According to the SBS article about *Free to Be*, Melbourne researchers found that if a place was extremely busy with little room to move, it was usually considered 'unsafe' due to the threat of groping and grabbing that could occur under the guise of bodies pushing together. Unsurprisingly, this issue was not raised in Ballarat.

The impact of advertising on how safe or unsafe an area feels was a characteristic of the Melbourne research, but not within Ballarat. *Free to Be* participants indicated that the safer spaces were places that had friendly and gentle advertising, banners, signage and shops (e.g. Little Cupcakes and Doughnut Time). In the unsafe spaces, boorish, bright, and masculine advertising was noticeably present, plus gendered, sexual messaging and aggressive names and logos on surrounding shops.

Despite these differences, which were likely influenced by the size of the two cities and their population density, the themes that emerged through the two projects appeared to be quite similar.

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⁵ Free to Be research findings were taken from an online new article written by Chloe Sargeant and published on SBS. As they were not provided nor confirmed by Monash University, they should not be interpreted as final findings. Source: https://www.sbs.com.au/topics/life/culture/article/2017/03/27/why-some-women-melbourne-feel-unsafe-new-interactive-map-reveals-all

Recommendations

1. Develop a multi-stakeholder strategy for addressing loitering and intimidating public behaviour

The most common complaints raised through *Right to the Night* were in relation to intimidating public behaviour. Various locations across the city centre were deemed unsafe because participants had either been personally harassed or intimidated there, or they had witnessed public drunkenness, drug-affected individuals or intimidating behaviour in those locations.

A multi-stakeholder approach is needed to address this complex issue across Ballarat. In-line with Ballarat's Community Safety Strategic Statement 2017-2021, contributing social, economic and environmental factors will need to be considered. Plans should include developing a clear understanding of the reasons why individuals and groups congregate in particular areas and an assessment of any design features that may be creating an atmosphere that invites or encourages loitering. Short and long-term strategies will be required, ideally drawn from evidence of successful strategies undertaken in other cities, both in Australia and overseas.

2. Improve public safety in the Little Bridge Street/Coles car park area

The Little Bridge Street/Coles car park area was clearly seen as the most dangerous area in the city centre. Almost one in five postings (18%), were of unsafe locations in the area, with consistent complaints of loitering and abusive, intimidating, gang-like behaviour. This is no doubt having an impact on shoppers and public transport users.

Suggestions were given for improving lighting, redirecting buses to other locations and increasing the police/security presence. One participant noted that the supermarket security guards remain inside and do not have a presence in the car park. It would be worth investigating whether this is the case, and if so, how their roles could evolve to improve safety within the car park.

A variety of strategies will be needed to address the issues in this area. They should be considered as part of recommendation one, above.

3. Assess the locations listed as requiring practical interventions to address lighting, litter or footpaths

Participants reported that various locations were in need of better lighting, improved footpaths or had litter problems. These locations should be assessed to determine whether improvements are possible and to plan for changes where appropriate.

4. Consider opportunities for increasing all-day parking options in the hospital precinct

The high number of locations related to safety concerns in the hospital precinct warrants consideration. Hospital staff are obviously unhappy about the change in parking options and concerned about their personal safety.

Any opportunities for increasing all-day parking will need to be considered in light of the Proposed Smarter Parking Plan, developed by the City of Ballarat after a consultation process that involved staff and users from both Hospitals. The Proposed Smarter Parking Plan which will be considered by Council in late 2018.

5. Consider *Right to the Night* results alongside other sources of information to build a comprehensive picture of public safety in Ballarat

The information shared on the *Right to the Night* website provides useful insights into public opinion on the safety of locations across the Ballarat city centre, however, the limitations of these results should be acknowledged. They are opinions gathered from a potentially anonymous group of people

over a short period of time. Any biases remain unknown and opinions were not always consistent, despite the emergence of some clear trends.

To build a more comprehensive picture of safety issues, data from other sources should also be considered, including crime statistics, complaints to the City of Ballarat or Victoria Police related to safety, etc.

6. Review website data collection fields if geo-spacial mapping is used for future public consultations

There were some challenges in analysing the data collected via the *Right to the Night* website that could be overcome by altering the collection fields. This should include more clearly defining whether locations belonged to the website user or had been added on behalf of others.

By allowing participants to add multiple issues of concern to their locations, it would be easier to categorise locations that had several positive or negative features.

7. Maintain the momentum created by Right to the Night

Ballarat residents are clearly interested in issues of public safety. The City of Ballarat is encouraged to share the findings from *Right to the Night* and any resulting actions widely – both internally and externally.

Share project findings with public space designers to inform the development of safe and inclusive spaces.

Consider involving women who engaged with the website as consumer representatives on any future working groups and follow-up with participants who supplied their email addresses.

Conclusion

Right to the Night has provided the City of Ballarat with useful insights into local women and girl's perceptions of safe and unsafe location across the city centre.

Residents engaged well with the interactive, online platform and freely shared information on more than 300 locations they thought to be either safe or unsafe. The safe locations were often in the busy restaurant and cinema area where there were lots of people around and obvious security.

The quality of the lighting was an important factor in a location being considered safe or unsafe.

The number one concern for participants was intimidating public behaviour. Various locations across the city centre were deemed unsafe because participants had either been personally harassed or intimidated there, or they had witnessed public drunkenness, drug-affected individuals or intimidating behaviour in those locations.

Other attributes of unsafe spaces included the poor physical condition of an area or buildings, and the presence of litter.

As with all project evaluations, the most important step lies in applying the results to improve a situation. By instigating *Right to the Night*, the City of Ballarat has demonstrated its intention to improve public safety, and the value it places on the input of residents. Momentum and interest for addressing safety concerns has started to build.

A series of recommendations has been included in this report to help address the outcomes of *Right to the Night*. These recommendations, together with the considered input of the seven project partners, and the ongoing engagement of residents, will hopefully inspire and inform solutions for safer public spaces across Ballarat: places where women and girls, and indeed all residents, feel welcomed, comfortable and safe.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Locations requiring practical interventions

Please note that as addresses were added by participants dropping pins on a map, their intention may have been to indicate an area rather than an exact address. The text in brackets has been taken from participant comments.

Issue	Addresses highlighted
Poor lighting	17-19 Albert Street, Ballarat Central
(Addrosoo with	129 Albert Street, Ballarat Central
(Addresses with any mention of	38c Armstrong Street North, Ballarat Central
poor lighting in	109 Armstrong Street North, Ballarat Central (dark carpark)
participants'	112 Armstrong Street North, Ballarat Central
comments)	17 Armstrong Street South, Ballarat Central
,	315-317 Armstrong Street South, Ballarat Central
	4 Doveton Crescent, Soldiers Hill (dark parking north side of train line)
	60 Bridge Mall, Ballarat Central
	33 Camp Street, Ballarat Central
	1 Curtis Street, Ballarat Central
	28 Curtis Street, Ballarat Central
	202-206 Doveton Street North, Ballarat Central (train station car park)
	102 Dana Street, Ballarat Central
	202-206 Doveton Street North, Ballarat Central
	14 Drummond Street North, Ballarat Central (poor lighting in surrounding streets)
	X2
	24 Drummond Street North, Ballarat Central
	28 Drummond Street North, Ballarat Central 32 Drummond Street North, Ballarat Central
	1-54 Eastwood Street, Ballarat Central
	15 Errard Street South, Ballarat Central (dim streetlights covered by trees) X2
	24 Errard Street North, Ballarat Central (minimal lighting and bushes on corner
	Mair and Errard St)
	509 Eyre Street, Ballarat Central
	1167 Eyre Street, Ballarat Central (little lighting once past Eyre St)
	2 Field Street, Ballarat Central (undercover car park) X3
	15 Field Street, Ballarat Central
	606 Humffray Street South, Ballarat Central
	43 Little Bridge Street, Ballarat Central
	107 Lydiard Street South, Ballarat Central
	140-202 Lydiard Street North, Soldiers Hill
	108 Lyons Street South, Ballarat Central
	5 Market Street, Ballarat Central
	8 Mair Street, Ballarat Central
	805 Mair Street, Ballarat Central
	43 Peel Street South, Ballarat Central (quite dark near dog park)
	132 Raglan Street South, Ballarat Central
	6 Steinfeld Street South, Golden Point (Lack of lighting. Unattended
	bushes/shrubs that impede visibility along the creek)
	427 Sturt St, Ballarat
	502 Sturt Street, Ballarat Central
	5 Victoria Street, Sebastopol
	31 Webster Street, Ballarat Central X2
	37 Webster Street, Ballarat Central

	51 Webster Street, Ballarat Central (There is extremely poor lighting along this street and large trees which shield the existing lights) 61 Webster Street, Ballarat Central 73 Webster Street, Ballarat Central 403 Wendouree Parade, Lake Wendouree
Litter (Addresses with any mention of litter or rubbish in participants' comments)	Ballarat Visitor Information Centres, Cnr Eureka & Rodier Sts, Ballarat 14 Drummond Street South, Ballarat Central 7 Eastwood Street, Ballarat Central (front of supermarket) 120 Lewis Street, Ballarat Central 16 Little Bridge Street, Ballarat Central 33 Little Bridge Street, Ballarat Central 43 Little Bridge Street, Ballarat Central 41 Little Bridge Street, Ballarat Central 43 Little Bridge Street, Ballarat Central 43 Little Bridge Street, Ballarat Central 45 Peel Street South, Bakery Hill (rubbish and graffiti) 29 Scott Parade, Ballarat East (broken fences and rubbish)
Uneven or no footpath (Addresses with any mention of footpaths in participants' comments)	38c Armstrong Street North, Ballarat Central (uneven footpath) 315-317 Armstrong Street South, Ballarat Central 14 Drummond Street South, Ballarat Central (uneven footpath) 24 Drummond Street North, Ballarat Central
General amenity	16 Little Bridge Street, Ballarat Central (Not much greenery, no art, interactions between cars and pedestrians, senior citizens building is run down. Low level planting in planter boxes might help. Zebra lines for pedestrians crossing car park entrances.) 16 Little Bridge Street, Ballarat Central (Badly designed, vacant shops) 3 Davies Street, Ballarat Central (Isolated and poor amenity in area) 1 Eastwood Street, Ballarat Central (isolated, poorly maintained streetscape) 10 Grenville Street North, Ballarat Central (smelly) 13-15 Mair Street East, Ballarat Central (public urination, graffiti)

