

## 2 background and context

### 2.1 the place

Heathmont is designated a Neighbourhood Activity Centre (NAC) within the Maroondah Planning Scheme. The Centre is located approximately 24 kms east of the Melbourne Central Activities Area (CAA) and 1.5kms south east of Ringwood Transit City (or Central Activities District CAD), in the southwest of the Maroondah municipality. The Centre lies at the intersection of Canterbury Road and the Belgrave metropolitan railway line with the Heathmont Railway Station at its heart. The railway station is located 38 minutes travel time from Melbourne. Direct vehicle access to the Melbourne CAA is provided via Canterbury Road to Eastlink and the Eastern Freeway. Good road access is also available to industrial areas in Ringwood, Bayswater and Kilsyth.

The Heathmont commercial strip at the heart of the NAC plays a local service role, which is typically characterised by a dominance of small businesses, offices and shops with limited speciality stores. Canterbury Road is Heathmont's major movement corridor and acts as the central spine of the Activity Centre. When combined with the intersecting railway line, this creates four separate precincts of commercial and community activities described as follows:

- Retail activities between Allens Road and the railway line on the south side of Canterbury Road, north-east of the railway line;
- Retail activities between La Porchetta's Restaurant and the railway station on the north side of Canterbury Road, south-west of the railway line;
- Commercial, office and community uses between Campbell Street and the Uniting Church on the north side of Canterbury Road, north-east of the railway line
- Mix of personal services between Heathmont Road and the Heathmont Dental Clinic on the south side of Canterbury Road, south-west of the railway line.

There are limited community and institutional facilities located within the study area. Only the Heathmont Preschool and Kindergarten, Heathmont Scout Hall and Heathmont Uniting Church and Community Living Centre are found within the boundary of the NAC. More broadly, within one kilometre of the Heathmont Railway Station are Great Ryrie Primary School, Aquinas College, Heathmont East Primary School, Heathmont Bowling Club, Heathmont College and Marlborough Primary School.

The established residential hinterland surrounding the Canterbury Road commercial strip consists primarily of conventional residential development of single storey, detached dwellings on relatively large allotments. Dwellings generally exhibit a post-war residential character. Some medium density housing is scattered throughout the study area, however there are recognisable clusters adjoining the Canterbury Road commercial strip, as well as in small pockets where land is less constrained by topography and vegetation.

Three local parks are located within the Heathmont NAC. This includes the small park on Viviani Crescent, adjoining the Heathmont Preschool and Kindergarten, FJC Rogers Reserve located between Heathmont Railway Station and Campbell Street, and Kathleen Barrow Reserve adjoining the southwest side of the railway line. It is the combination of these naturally vegetated parklands as well as the treed backdrop, undulating topography and general natural setting that give Heathmont a 'bush village' feel. In addition, the Heathmont NAC is characterised by low scale built form, with most buildings being single storey in height. There are limited buildings that are double storey in height or higher, other than within the Canterbury Road commercial strip. Unique to Heathmont is the clear definition of the village experience and scale, with an emphasis on gateways to the Canterbury Road commercial strip that are established by topography and built form, which ensure distinction from the surrounding suburban area.

### 2.2 the people

Heathmont has a mix of residents ranging from young families to older residents, as well as a number of newly arrived migrants. Background research identified the following key demographic characteristics:

- In 2011, Heathmont had an estimated population of 9,314 people. Within the next 20 years the area is expected to absorb an additional 1,433 people, resulting in estimated population of 10,747 people by 2031.
- In 2011, 24.5% of the population was aged between 0 and 19, and 23.2% were aged 60 years and over.
- In 2011, Heathmont had an estimated 3,582 households. The dominant household type was families which accounted for 34.1% of all households.
- By 2031 it is expected that there will be a total of 4,155 households in Heathmont. The largest increase is forecast to be in couple families with dependents, which will comprise 33.9% of all households and increase by 190 to 1,410 households by 2031.
- By 2031 lone person households are also forecast to increase by 136 households comprising 19.7% of all households by 2031 compared to 19.1% in 2011.



## 2.3 the policy

A Structure Plan seeks to influence land use and development and this is guided primarily by current State and Local Planning Policy Frameworks. The Local Planning Policy Framework must support the State framework and cannot contradict it.

The most important piece of policy for the Heathmont NAC is 'activity centre' policy. Activity Centres are defined within State Planning Policy as being areas which provide a variety of land uses and are highly accessible to the community, supporting a concentration of retail, residential, commercial, administrative, entertainment and cultural developments. Planning for these areas needs to encourage a diversity of housing types at higher densities in and around Activity Centres, reduce the number of private motorised trips, encourage physical activity, healthier lifestyles and broaden the mix of uses. State policy also refers to Melbourne 2030, which defines a hierarchy of centres and outlines in more detail the roles of the different types of centres. Maroondah's Local Planning Policy defines Heathmont as being a Neighbourhood Activity Centre. Expectations associated with Neighbourhood Activity Centres are as follows:

*Neighbourhood Activity Centres are dominated by small businesses and shops. They offer some local convenience services and at least some public transport. Their key features are:*

- generally, a limited mix of uses meeting local convenience needs
- generally less than 10,000 square metres of retail floor space
- accessible to a viable user population by walking/cycling
- accessibility by local bus services, and public transport links to one or more Principal or Major Activity Centres
- their role as important community focal points, ideally close to schools, libraries, child care, health services, police stations and other facilities that benefit from good public transport.

- *From a metropolitan perspective, these centres contribute to the goal of encouraging walking, cycling and local public transport use, particularly where they are part of a network of centres. Redevelopment in middle and outer suburbs and development of new growth areas should provide viable locations for Neighbourhood Activity Centres in areas where their current distribution is inadequate. Their location should be planned in conjunction with the design of local public transport services*
- *Higher-density housing will be encouraged in and around Neighbourhood Activity Centres. It should be designed to fit the context and enhance the character of the area while providing a variety of housing options for different types of households. Development of these centres can improve access to local services and accommodate the changing housing needs of those who do not want to break their links with their local community.*

(Melbourne 2030, DPCD, p 49)

This State level policy is weighed up against any Local Planning Policy when there is debate on planning matters and as such, it is important that the Heathmont NAC Structure Plan provides a balanced outcome.

Other relevant policy includes recognition of the importance of distinct local identities through acknowledgement of different neighbourhood characters in both State and Local Planning Policy. Statutory protection provided under local policy for canopy vegetation, landscape character and ridgeline protection within the City of Maroondah is also a key planning consideration. Of note are the existing Significant Landscape, Vegetation Protection and Design and Development Planning Scheme Overlays that apply to the Activity Centre.

The creation of high quality public spaces, cycle and pedestrian linkages and more intensive residential development where high quality public transport exists are other common themes between State and Local policy affecting the Activity Centre.

## 2.4 the project

The Heathmont NAC Structure Plan consists of four main project stages:

- Stage 1: project inception (getting the project started)
- Stage 2: background (learning more about the place, people and policy)
- Stage 3: formulation of structure plan (generating the vision for the Centre)
- Stage 4: project delivery (implementing the plan)

