



Bluestone Infrastructure Policy

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This policy has been authorised.


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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This Infrastructure Bluestone Policy (Policy) is intended to encourage best practice outcomes (heritage and accessibility) for laneways and road infrastructure containing bluestone elements.

2 Scope

The Policy applies to Council's bluestone infrastructure on roads, whether they are protected by a Heritage Overlay or not.

The Policy is intended to achieve best practice accessibility applicable to each laneway classification (Class 1, Class 2, and Class 3 laneways) as defined in the Rights of Way Strategy 2011-2021.

The Policy sets out different approaches for the management of existing bluestone road and laneway infrastructure and new works. Under this policy, a laneway is a bluestone laneway whether it is fully or partly paved with bluestone pavers.

3 Context

3.1.1 Cultural significance

While replacement of bluestone infrastructure with concrete or asphalt can provide a similar level of service to residents, the character of bluestone infrastructure provides residents with a link to our recent past.

Council recognises the cultural significance and heritage value of bluestone laneways, crossovers, kerb and channel. Their significance / value, lies in the following: -

- their fabric – locally quarried bluestone pavers.
- their form – including the pattern in which the pavers are laid, as well as the profile across laneways, crossovers and kerbs and channels.
- their uses – as drainage and as access ways for vehicles, including their historical use as night cart lanes.
- their association with the Merri-bek community who continue to value them.

3.1.2 Preservation

Council is committed to the preservation of bluestone laneways and kerb and channel infrastructure. The following actions will be undertaken: -



- original bluestone assets including their form and pattern will be retained wherever possible;
- incomplete bluestone infrastructure (whether by damage or alteration) will be reinstated if there is sufficient evidence to enable the reinstatement to a historically representative result.
- research previous forms of bluestone assets where necessary.

4 Objectives

The objectives of the Policy are as follows: -

- To provide guidance for maintenance and reinstatement of bluestone kerbs and channels and laneways.
- To confirm Council's obligation to provide an equitable pedestrian network in respect of bluestone paving and laneway infrastructure.
- To provide a design approach to new streetscape works that may use bluestone or a combination of bluestone and other materials.

5 Policy details

5.1 Existing Bluestone Road Infrastructure

Where existing bluestone infrastructure exists, Council is committed to the following: -

- Retaining the cultural significance (heritage value) of existing bluestone laneways and bluestone kerb and channel by maintaining, repairing (long term) and reinstating them using bluestone pavers that closely match the existing fabric.
- Recognising the need to reconstruct bluestone laneways to provide adequate loading and drainage capacities

Reinstatement of laneways or kerbs and channels where only a few remaining bluestone pavers remain, should be based on evidence, such as photographs that clearly show the pattern and profile of a previous form of the laneway or kerb and channel.

Where the available evidence is insufficient to determine some details, such as the junction of a laneway invert with a street channel, the detailing should be the simplest possible – in this case it would be a simple T-junction, rather than an elaborate curved junction for which there is no evidence.

Where there is insufficient evidence to be certain that bluestone pavers were used for a laneway, it should be finished in pigmented porous concrete, or porous asphalt over porous concrete.



Where existing bluestone laneways or kerbs and channels have different patterns or styles of laying along their lengths (reflecting distinct phases of construction) the differences should be retained, and not removed in favour of a homogenous style.

5.2 Bluestones Paving as Footpath

The historical bluestone cobbles are not an appropriate surface for primary pedestrian access, particularly for wheelchairs.

A 1.0 metre (minimum) wide, smooth central Continuous Accessible Path of Travel (refer AS1428.1-2009 and Council's Technical Notes) will be provided on a bluestone laneway, when the laneway is reconstructed, and it is

- the only path of access to a new or existing development; or
- a highly utilised, direct path to a significant destination, e.g., a school
- a highly utilised direct link to public transport

Smooth, fully sawn, bluestone paving with 2mm (maximum) profile variation is considered suitable. Rough sawcut/ split bluestone and/or conventional cobbled bluestone pavers are not acceptable.

At many locations (estimate 600), bluestone laneways pass across asphalt or concrete footpaths, resulting in pedestrians crossing bluestone cobbles. Council will undertake works to ameliorate this area to form a smooth, fully sawn, bluestone paving (as described above) when the laneway is being reconstructed. The works will also be undertaken to address this issue as part of the footpath renewal program. This work will be prioritised based on footpath hierarchy and in response to customer feedback.

This work will be carried out using the Technical Notes Part A 100.06 at

[Technical Notes Part A 100.06](#)

5.3 Bluestones Retaining Walls

Bluestone pavers have been used to construct mass masonry retaining walls. Structural computations may not have been used in the design of these walls. The renewal or upgrading of these assets with bluestone materials may significantly affect Council and private assets. Hence renewal of bluestone retaining walls, especially walls over 1.0m in height, needs to be considered on an individual site basis.

5.4 New Street Works

Manufactured bluestone may be used in the construction of new street works where pre-existing bluestone pavers is not evident. Examples of new work include: -



- New median strips or pedestrian islands where none had existed previously.
- Changed road/ lane arrangements, such blocking a road/lane to better manage traffic flows.
- New drainage works or upgraded drainage works such as culverts and sumps, which may, or may not, be inserted amongst existing bluestone kerb and channel and laneways.
- Entirely new paving, landscaping, footpaths, bridges or other infrastructure.

These new works should be approached differently from the repair or reinstatement of existing bluestone assets.

To avoid confusion between new and old, new works should not be constructed of bluestone, unless it is used in a distinctly modern, yet sympathetic way, such as fully sawn bluestone paving, kerbs, or other landscape elements. Bluestone bollards, turned to modern profiles are acceptable. Alternatives for new work include concrete (pre-cast or laid in-situ) that is pigmented to tone in with adjacent bluestone, or asphalt paving.

6 Roles and responsibilities

6.1 Bluestone Laneways as Footpaths

Bluestone laneways were constructed to provide vehicular access to the rear of properties. They are not considered to be the pedestrian access to properties. Hence depressions, vertical displacements and regular water ponding which would adversely affect a footpath or a shared path, are not considered by Council as defects requiring rectification on laneways.

Where part of a bluestone laneway has been constructed using smooth, fully sawn, bluestone paving, that part of the laneway will be considered as a footpath, for maintenance purposes.

6.2 Bluestone Laneway Maintenance

Maintenance of bluestone assets is undertaken by the City Works Unit in accordance with the standards of the Road Management Plan 2021. Works are programmed from either of the following: -

- Regular (3 yearly) inspections by the City Works Unit
- Assessment of issues raised by residents (customer requests)

The replacement of bluestone areas with asphalt or concrete should only be undertaken where the bluestones cannot be replaced in a timely manner to eliminate a significant risk to the public. The bluestones should be reinstated as soon as practical, as a maintenance operation.



Where substantial areas of a bluestone laneway are no longer fully paved with bluestone, placing of asphalt or bluestone in the non-bluestone areas is permissible, until the laneway is fully reconstructed. Reconstruction of laneways in heritage areas will be prioritised.

6.3 Prioritisation of Bluestone Laneway Renewals

Bluestone laneways will be renewed based on the following: -

- Local flooding issues (into private property), requiring installation of underground drainage
- High maintenance expenditure to constantly reset moving bluestone pavers

Bluestone laneways provide a low-speed knobbly surface. Neither the roughness of nor undulations in the surface are triggers to require renewal of the laneway

6.4 Bluestone Retaining Walls

Maintenance of bluestone assets is undertaken by the City Works Unit in accordance with the standards of the Road Management Plan 2021. Issues are identified by either of the following: -

- Regular (6 monthly) inspections by the City Works Unit for walls over 1.5m (max.) height
- Regular (3 yearly) inspections by the City Works Unit for walls over 1.0m (max. height)
- Assessment of issues raised by residents (customer requests) for all other walls

Maintenance will be carried out based on the methodology provided in the Retaining Wall Inspection/Condition Manual 2023.

7 Monitoring, Evaluating and Review

Within the City of Merri-bek, on Council local roads and laneways, Council is responsible for

- 67 km bluestone laneways
- 193 km several types of bluestone kerbing

The success of the implementation of this policy can be determined by the preservation of these assets and the minimisation of lengths of bluestone laneways where asphalt/concrete patches which have been replaced by bluestone paving as an interim measure.



8 Definitions

Term	Definition
DDA 1992	Disability Discrimination Act
Australian Standard AS1428.1-2009	Australian Standard Design for access and mobility, Part 1: General requirements for access-new building work
Continuous Accessible Path of Travel	An uninterrupted, stepless, path of travel of appropriate width, gradient, crossfall, and other features, as defined and elaborated in AS 1428.1-2009.
Classification of Rights of Way (ROW)	The system of ROW classification was developed under Rights of Way Strategy 2011-2021.
Class 1 ROW	ROW that are within the boundaries for the activity centres and are seen as critical for pedestrian and bicyclist permeability. Class 1 ROW are required for public access and exhibit values of connectivity and proximity to mixed-use activity areas.
Class 2 ROW	ROW throughout the municipality that may be needed for public use for several reasons: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve pedestrian permeability and provide convenient connections to promote use of walking and cycling.• Provide connections and permeability in and around local activity generators, transport nodes or open space areas.• Are a part of the off-street bicycle network.• Have an important drainage function.• Are near other Council assets, or public space.• Offers future strategic development opportunities.
Class 3 ROW	ROW that are not within an activity centre but are needed for private access to properties.
Class 4 ROW	Any ROW that is no longer required for public use and can be discontinued and sold. This class includes any ROW that has previously been discontinued but not yet sold or has had their title transferred to Council.
Bluestone laneway	A laneway that has bluestone kerb and channel and/ or paving either in full or part.



Term	Definition
Adaptation	Changing a place to suit the existing use or a proposed use.
Associations	The connections that exist between people and a place.
Conservation	All the processes of looking after a place to retain its cultural significance.
Cultural significance	Aesthetic, historic, scientific social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations.
Fabric	The physical material of a place
Form	The pattern and profile of the arrangement of bluestone pitchers.
Maintenance	The continuous protective care of a place and its setting.
New works	In this context new works refers to new ROW construction and where no bluestone currently exists.
Pitcher	A large bluestone block used for paving or kerb and channel, generally roughly shaped but not smooth.
Reconstruction	Returning a place to a known earlier state by removing accretions or reassembling elements without the introduction of new material.
Use	The functions of a place including the activities that are dependent on the place.

9 Associated Documents

The following documents are integral to Merri-bek's Bluestone Infrastructure Policy.

- Merri-bek Technical Notes Part A
- Merri-bek – a Bluestone City, a historical narrative
- Visionary Design Development Pty Ltd, 2014, 'Report on Achieving Bluestone Laneways Accessibility', prepared for the then City of Moreland.

10 References

Australian Standards for Design for Access and Mobility (AS1428.1-2009).

The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance, 2013.

Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA).

Equal Opportunity Act 1995.

City of Moreland Disability Advisory Committee, 2012, Outline of submission bluestone laneway reconstruction.

Merri-bek Planning Scheme, Local Planning Policies cl.22.03 and 22.06.

City of Moreland, 2014-2015, Analysis of Bluestone Laneway Trial Reconstruction Methods.

City of Merri-bek Rights of Way Strategy 2011-2021 (Including 2018 Supplement).

City of Merri-bek Technical Notes Part A (Rev 9 December 2015) or updated version.

Visionary Design Development Pty Ltd, 2013, report on the Accessibility/Mobility and Legislative Implications of Replacing Non-Heritage Bluestone Laneways with Concrete, prepared for the City of Moreland.

Visionary Design Development Pty Ltd, 2014, report on achieving Bluestone Laneways Accessibility prepared for the City of Moreland.