



Odgers and Verity Laneways Project

REPORT ON WHAT WE HEARD

From 25 October – 22 November 2021, the community and identified stakeholders were invited to review and give feedback on proposed design concepts for Verity and Odgers Lanes, located within Canberra's iconic Sydney and Melbourne Buildings (SMB).

We sought feedback on the following design and operational elements:

- Proposed time-of-day closures for Verity Lane.
- Proposed special-event closure times for Odgers Lane.
- Suggested times that the decorative lighting should be activated.
- Proposed reduction in loading zones in Odgers Lane.
- Suggestions for events and activities that could be held in the laneways.
- General feedback about the draft concept designs.

In addition to seeking feedback on the above elements, specific questions were asked of SMB businesses about how they currently use the laneways. These questions sought to understand the following:

- How the businesses use the laneways
- How many delivery and service vehicles visit the laneways to service their business and at what time of the day they arrive.

Broadly speaking, the engagement program identified:

- Strong in-principle support for upgrading the laneways, particularly from members of the broader community
- Notable support from businesses and owners within the Melbourne building for maintaining the existing number of Loading zones in Odgers Lane
- A number of alternative time-of-day closure-time suggestions for Verity Lane and many suggestions for events and activities to activate both laneways.

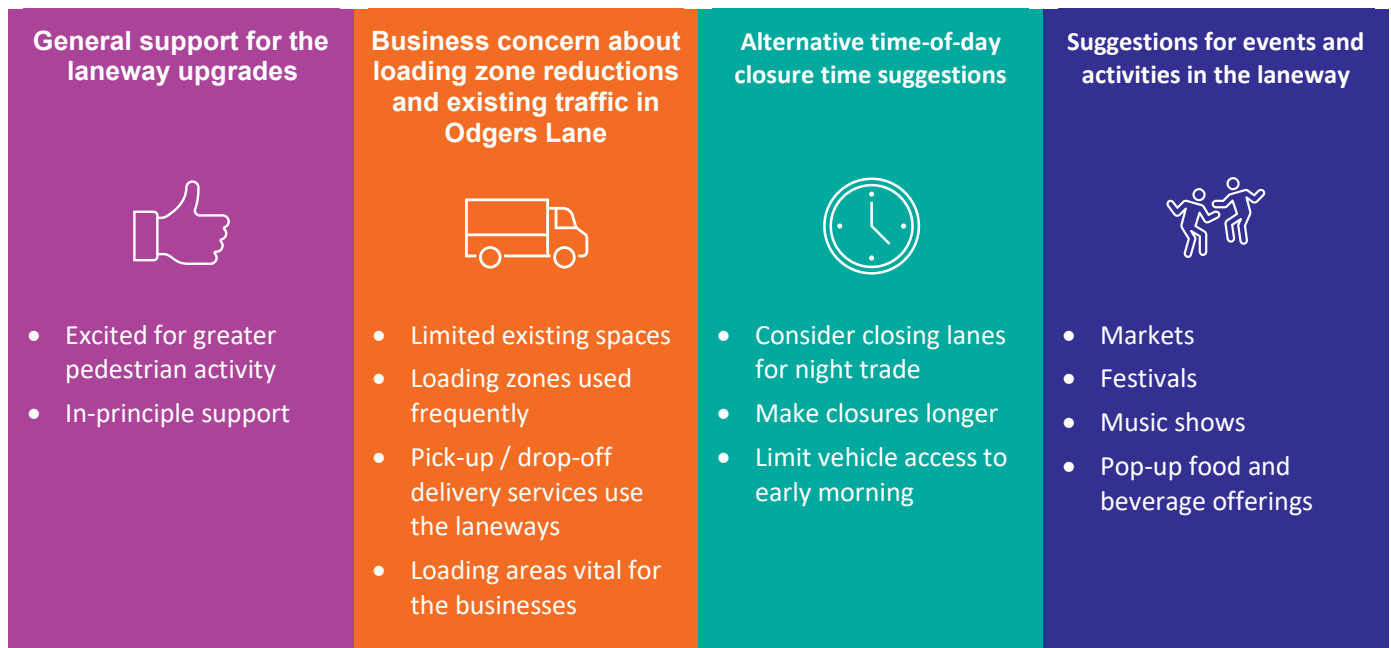


Figure 1: Key insights from feedback.



THE CONVERSATION

Feedback heard during the consultation program was captured through stakeholder meetings, surveys, email, phone calls and doorknocks to all businesses within the SMB.

An online drop-in session was also offered but not utilised due to limited community and stakeholder interest. Table 1 below outlines the number of engagements for each engagement channel.

WHO WE ENGAGED

Feedback was sought from a number of stakeholder groups during the consultation process:

- All businesses and tenants within the SMBs
- SMB building owners
- Identified stakeholder organisations
- The broader Canberra community.

Table 1: How feedback was received from the various stakeholder groups

Feedback channel	Who contributed
YourSay online business and community survey	SMB property owners / SMB businesses: 8 Broader community: 21
Emails / submissions	SMB Building owner or business: 11 General community: 1 Stakeholder organisation: 4
Doorknocked	Of 85 businesses doorknocked, where verbal feedback was received: 12
Stakeholder meetings	Stakeholder meetings held: 11

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Table 2 outlines the key insights from the feedback received.

The four key insights listed below outline the most frequently reoccurring feedback received. Listed beneath the key insights are seven minor themes that summarise the majority of the remaining reoccurring feedback. The table also details how the Authority is responding to the feedback.



Table 2: Key insights, minor themes and how the Authority is responding

Insights from the community and stakeholders	How the City Renewal Authority is responding
<p>Key insight one – Support for the project</p> <p>There is strong in-principal support for the draft laneway designs and activating the spaces for pedestrians and outdoor dining.</p>	<p>The Authority welcomes the support from the community and will continue to look at ways to activate the laneways whilst ensuring they remain functional for the businesses that rely on them.</p>
<p>Key insight two - Business concern about loading zone reductions and existing traffic in Odgers Lane</p> <p>Whilst not representing the majority of Melbourne Building businesses and building owners, a significant proportion of these building owners and businesses disagreed with reducing the amount of loading zones as shown in the first draft concept design. Several businesses suggested there was need for more loading zones and a need for accommodating pick-up/drop-off services. They also cited existing congestion in the laneway as problematic and that this would be further compounded should the Authority proceed with reducing vehicle access and taking away the loading zones.</p>	<p>The Authority undertook a review of the draft design concept for Odgers Lane following this feedback. A revised design (see figure 2) has been created and was shared with businesses within, and owners of, the Melbourne Building in December 2021. The revised design will see the number of loading zones increased but also include a time-of-day closure to vehicles to activate the laneways during weekday lunchtime periods.</p>
<p>Key insight three - Alternative time-of-day closure time suggestions for Verity Lane</p> <p>A number of community members, businesses and building owners supported the idea of implementing time-of-day closures in Verity Lane (currently proposed 11.30am – 2.30pm Monday to Friday and during special events). However, a number of participants suggested alternative times or even extending the closure periods.</p>	<p>The Authority has noted the suggestions for alternative time-of-day closures and will consider these as the project progresses, noting that COVID-19 trading conditions have created scope for considering alternative times to better suit the businesses.</p>
<p>Key insight four – Suggestions for events and activities</p> <p>Approximately 1 in 10 items of feedback were suggestions of ways to activate the laneways with events and activities.</p>	<p>The Authority welcomes the suggestions for events and activities and will consider these, in consultation with the SMB businesses, once the laneway upgrades have concluded.</p>
Other minor themes identified	
<p>1. Construction concerns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laneway upgrades will disrupt business due to limited access to loading zones, car spaces and bins, etc. Avoid construction in November and December, as these are critical trade months. Protection of plane trees is a priority. 	<p>The Authority closely considered the feedback from Melbourne Building businesses about sewer works taking place in November and December 2021. In light of the feedback received and noting the already difficult trading conditions brought about by the COVID-19 lockdown</p>



Insights from the community and stakeholders

- Managing laneway works when Light Rail Stage 2 construction is underway.
- Find alternative loading zone and private car spaces during construction

How the City Renewal Authority is responding

between August and October 2021, the Authority worked with Icon Water (who is undertaking the works) to reschedule the works to January 2022. This will be a more favourable time to complete the works for many businesses who traditionally experience quieter trading during this time.

With regards to protecting the plane trees, Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS), as the lead agency for the construction works, will work with the construction contractor to ensure the necessary protection measures have been put in place to protect the trees.

With regards to managing the dual disruptive impacts of light rail construction and the laneway upgrades, the Authority is collaborating closely with Major Projects Canberra, as the lead agency for delivering Light Rail Stage 2, to coordinate both projects in an effort to reduce the overall impacts.

With regards to provision of alternative car and loading zone spaces during construction, TCCS will work with the construction contractor and relevant ACT Government agencies to investigate temporary parking and loading zone arrangements.

2. Laneway design and inclusion suggestions such as:

- glass roof over laneways
- do not use asphalt for the paving
- street art
- bicycle parking
- include greenery

The Authority notes the diverse array of design ideas and possible inclusions in the laneway upgrades.

The current designs provide a functional structure to the laneway which allow for further potential enhancements to be added in the future should funding become available (e.g. replacement of the asphalt to cobble paving, street art or additional greenery).

Following consultation, bike parking has been included in each laneway.

3. Safety and lighting

- Lighting in laneways is contained and therefore would not disrupt view of the night sky.
- More lighting to improve safety.
- Include festoon lighting in both entryways to Odgers and Verity Lanes.
- Survey feedback regarding duration times for the proposed decorative lighting indicated a preference for switching the lighting off at midnight but having it remain on later during special events.

The Authority notes the various suggestions for lighting and safety ideas. The following points are made in response to the suggestions:

- The Authority will be proceeding with placing festoon lighting in both vehicle entryways of Odgers and Verity Lanes.
- The proposed street lighting upgrades are anticipated to improve night visibility.

Due to cost, technical restrictions and managing the heritage-listed plane trees, decorative lighting in the trees has since been omitted from the scope of works.



Insights from the community and stakeholders

How the City Renewal Authority is responding

4. Increase pedestrian access and outdoor dining in the laneways

- No cars in the laneways at all.
- Remove a loading zone in Verity Lane.
- Loading zones can create useful spaces.
- Accommodate cargo bikes.

The Authority notes the feedback regarding preferences for increasing pedestrian activity and further activation of the laneways. Upon conclusion of the works, the Authority will monitor how the laneways are functioning and will consult with SMB businesses and owners if there is scope for implementing additional measures to further activate the laneways for pedestrians and outdoor dining.

5. General dissatisfaction with the proposed draft designs

- General dissatisfaction with the Authority's approach including limited consultation about timing of Icon Water sewer works scheduled for November/December 2021.
- Not happy (no reason given).

The Authority has noted feedback about the broader design approach to activating the laneways. In response to these concerns, a number of meetings were held with stakeholders and businesses to explore the feedback. It is anticipated that the redesign of Odgers Lane will address some of the comments that simply implied general dissatisfaction with the design.

With regards to concerns raised about the timing of works, the Authority, upon hearing this feedback early in the consultation period, worked with Icon Water and Odgers Lane businesses to delay the timing of the sewer renewal works. They were rescheduled to take place during a quieter trading period for the affected businesses.

6. Concerns about time-of-day closures in Verity Lane

- How do we manage emergency supplier and contractor access.
- Alternative arrangements would need to be made.

The Authority has noted concerns about the proposed time-of-day closures. Time-of-day closures can be changed as and when required as it simply involves removing, reinstalling, and locking portable bollards in the laneway. The Authority will monitor the functionality of the time-of-day closures once in operation and will consult with SMB businesses and owners if the current proposed timing does not appear suitable.

7. Concerns about impacts to Odgers Lane business - Church Neighbourhood Goods

Concerns were raised by Melbourne Building businesses that there would be significant impacts to Church Neighbourhood Goods which is a hospitality and retail business that operates in Odgers Lane.

The Authority is engaging directly with the proprietors of Church Neighbourhood Goods regarding the impacts to their business.

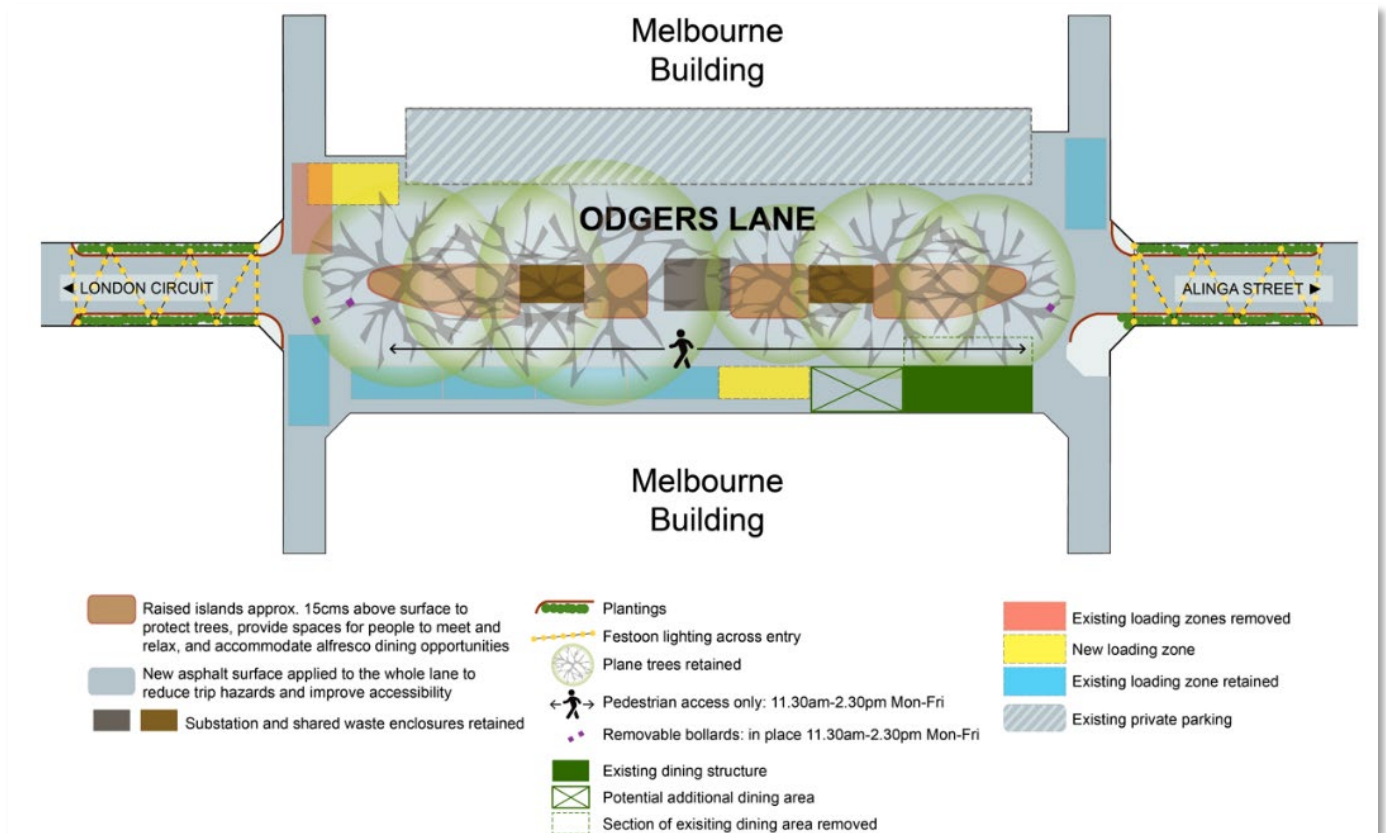


Figure 2: Revised design of Odgers Lane, following community and stakeholder feedback

WHAT'S NEXT?

We have used the insights from this consultation process to refine the streetscape upgrade designs.

Once the designs are approved and construction timeframes are in place, the Authority will maintain an open line of communication with SMB owners and businesses to ensure they are kept up-to-date about the construction process. Discussions will be ongoing with a number of identified SMB owners and businesses that have storage and outdoor dining infrastructure in the laneways that will be affected by the upgrades.

For project updates, subscribe to the Authority's [regular e-newsletter](#).

To find out more about Odgers and Verity Lanes upgrade and other initiatives, policies and projects in Canberra visit www.yoursay.act.gov.au or follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.



Key Timings

25 October 2021

Consultation on Odgers and Verity Lane upgrades commenced and surveys launched

The four-week consultation was promoted via several social media posts and a media release.

26 October - 22 November 2021

Stakeholder meetings take place

Stakeholder meetings were held with SMB businesses and owners as well as service providers and government agencies throughout the four-week consultation period.

4 November 2021

Doorknock to SMB businesses undertaken

All businesses within the SMB were doorknocked. They were provided with flyers and any initial feedback was noted.

22 November 2021

Consultation concluded and surveys closed

All feedback was analysed following conclusion of the consultation period. This information is used to inform the final concept designs.

December 2021 – January 2022

Laneway designs finalised and approved

The designs were reviewed against the feedback received and design approval sought from TCCS before construction commences.

January – February 2022

Icon Water sewer works

Icon Water is commencing works to upgrade the sewer infrastructure in Odgers Lane which is required before the main works can commence.

Mid-2022

Construction on the laneway drainage infrastructure and laneway surface commences

The Authority will hand over the project to TCCS to manage construction.

Mid - End-2022

Ongoing engagement and consultation with owners and businesses

The Authority and TCCS will work with SMB businesses and owners to help mitigate construction impacts and consult on:

- property and vehicle parking access during construction
- impacts to existing storage areas and outdoor dining infrastructure in the laneways.

End 2022

Laneway upgrades complete

It is anticipated that the works will conclude at the end of 2022. The Authority will then commence monitoring the functionality of the revised laneway designs. Engagement with SMB businesses and owners will be undertaken where adjustments or changes to the time-of-day closures are required.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR FEEDBACK****538**

We reached 538 people
via YourSay

11

We held 11 meetings with
Sydney and Melbourne
Buildings businesses and
owners

29

29 survey submissions
were received

85

We visited 85 businesses
within the Sydney and
Melbourne Buildings

90+

90+ people engaged with
the social media posts
about the laneway
upgrades

16

We received 16 emails
with written feedback

68

We received 68 feedback
contributions in total

4

We derived four key
insights from the
feedback received