

UNIVERSITY of TASMANIA

**MENZIES** 

Institute for Medical Research

## Communities for Walkability

A citizen science project to  
connect local spaces and places

# Zeehan Report

[walkrural.com.au](http://walkrural.com.au)

## Acknowledgment of Country

The University of Tasmania pays its respects to elders past and present and to the many Aboriginal people that did not make elder status and to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community that continues to care for Country.

We acknowledge the profound effect of climate change on this Country and seek to work alongside Tasmanian Aboriginal communities, with their deep wisdom and knowledge, to address climate change and its impacts.

The Palawa people belong to one of the world's oldest living cultures, continually resident on this Country for over 65,000 years. They have survived and adapted to significant climate changes over this time, such as sea-level rise and extreme rainfall variability, and as such embody thousands of generations of intimate place-based knowledge.

We acknowledge with deep respect that this knowledge represents a range of cultural

practices, wisdom, traditions, and ways of knowing the world that provide accurate and useful climate change information, observations, and solutions.

The University of Tasmania likewise recognises a history of truth that acknowledges the impacts of invasion and colonisation upon Aboriginal people, resulting in forcible removal from their lands.

Our island is deeply unique, with cities and towns surrounded by spectacular landscapes of bushland, waterways, mountain ranges, and beaches.

The University of Tasmania stands for a future that profoundly respects and acknowledges Aboriginal perspectives, culture, language, and history, and a continued effort to fight for Aboriginal justice and rights paving the way for a strong future.

## Acknowledgments

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- Public Health Services, Tasmanian Government Department of Health
- Local Government Association Tasmania
- Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition, Deakin University
- Centre for Urban Research, RMIT
- Menzies Centre for Health Policy, University of Sydney



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### Zeehan Community Members:

We would like to thank the Zeehan community members involved in collecting data and information for the audits and those who attended the workshops to discuss the findings and provided feedback on the report. Your input has been invaluable and critical to the development of this report.

~~HEROVS~~

Roads

beach

us

NATURE 

Speed

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# Executive Summary

The Communities for Walkability project aimed to identify features of Zeehan that make it easier or harder for community members to be active and walk around their town ('walkability'). Zeehan has a range of community facilities including a primary school, sportsground and other services including a supermarket, a study hub, heritage centre and neighbourhood house. The area is well-known for its rich mining history and heritage, with some popular tourist attractions and mountain biking.

This report summarises the information collected through spatial walkability assessments, audits (town wide, program/policy and street segments) and discussions at the community workshop. This report brings together the findings from the three project phases to provide a summary of the key issues impacting walkability in the area.



## Key Findings

When assessed spatially, Zeehan's walkability was rated high overall. Zeehan has a range of assets that support walking and active recreation in the area as identified in the town wide audit. The program and policy audit suggests that while there are some programs and policies addressing walking and active recreation, this could be improved. The West Coast Council Footpath Strategic Asset Management Plan was discussed during the workshop and reference has been made to this plan in the following report.

Zeehan has some key assets recognised by community members as supporting walkability. The natural reserves and bush tracks (Zeehan rivulet, Mount Heemskirk and Mount Dundas) surrounding the town are important spaces for recreation. The town is located along the Zeehan Highway with key facilities in the town (such as the supermarket and school) spread along the 2km length of road. Most of these key facilities are in walking distance for residents, however the length of the road does present challenges for some people.

## Priorities

Two priorities were identified as impacting negatively on physical and social connectivity and walkability in Zeehan. These include:



1

### General Infrastructure

The data suggests there is a lack of general infrastructure to support walkability throughout the town. The quality of footpaths varies across the town with many footpaths in need of upgrades. As the town is spread out along the main road, additional infrastructure would support community members to walk more and would also help to reduce barriers caused by the varied weather in Zeehan (hot and sunny in summer and cold and wet in winter). Improvements to make the most of the surrounding natural environment would also take advantage of the surrounding natural environment and make the town more welcoming.



2

### Connectivity

There is a lack of connection between infrastructure to support pedestrians to move around the community. Currently, some paths do not link up resulting in pedestrians needing to walk on a road or road verge or cross to an alternative footpath. In addition, some community infrastructures (such as bus shelters) are also not linked to footpaths.

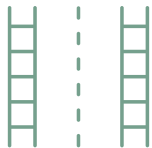
There was strong support for investment in the physical infrastructure to connect the town as this was considered important for building social cohesion in the Zeehan community.

## Potential Solutions

During the community workshop, a range of solutions to address these priorities were identified to support greater walkability in the Zeehan. This includes options that might support greater walkability such shelters, seating, lighting, signage, landscaping and planting trees. In addition, there was strong support for continuing to upgrade and improve the footpaths and trails around the town. More specifically, solutions included:



Making improvements to the general infrastructure around Zeehan, including shelters, seating and lighting.



The need for improvements to the general quality of footpaths.



Improving connectivity throughout the area, including improving better linkages between footpaths and trails.



Beautiful

~~DANGEROUS~~

Roads

CARS

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# What is the Communities for Walkability Project ?

Communities for Walkability is a citizen science project to identify environmental characteristics that influence walkability and physical activity in rural Tasmania. This is important because the environments where people live, learn, work, play and age influence health and physical activity. The project involved three key phases:

1. A spatial assessment of walkability
2. Audits of the town's walkability using a townwide assessment tool, policy and program assessment tool and street segment walkability audits
3. A community workshop.



## Phase 1 — Spatial Walkability Assessments

To inform the selection of the 10 towns involved in the Communities for Walkability project, phase 1 involved conducting a spatial analysis of walkability for transport in 92 small rural towns across Tasmania with populations less than 6,000 people. This work was completed by project team members at RMIT University in Melbourne who are world-leaders in spatial assessments of walkability. They have developed the Australian Urban Observatory ([auo.org.au](http://auo.org.au)), which includes liveability and walkability assessments across the 21 largest cities in Australia, including Hobart and Launceston in Tasmania. Spatial walkability assessments use Geographic Information Systems to understand the walkability of an area based on three key components: daily destinations (something to walk to), street connectivity (a way to get there) and dwelling density (people to service the destinations and shops). These three factors were summed to produce a final walkability score for towns resulting in an overall walkability rating of high (top third of walkability scores), medium (middle third of walkability scores) or low walkability (bottom third of walkability scores).

It is also important to note that factors like footpaths, roundabouts or signalled pedestrian lights are not included in these spatial walkability assessments. Previous research suggests that these urban design factors have a big influence on the willingness of residents to walk for transport which has a direct effect on physical activity levels and overall health. However, most of this previous research has been conducted in big cities and less is known about how valuable spatial walkability assessments are for understanding walkability in smaller rural towns. Thus, while spatial map scores are suggestive of walkability, this study aims to better understand how applicable they are within a rural context.

## Phase 2 — Town Audits

Building on the spatial walkability assessments, the second phase involved a Citizen Science approach in 10 towns across Tasmania. Citizen science is valuable within health-related research projects for many reasons, including:

1. Gaining new perspectives on problems and solutions
2. Monitoring policy and program implementation
3. Obtaining difficult to access data
4. Mobilising support for action to improve health
5. Gathering locally relevant data to inform policy and practice

In each town, local leaders (‘Community Champions’) contributed to the project by identifying which parts (‘segments’) of the town to audit, recruiting ‘Citizen Scientists’ and completing town audits (including the town wide assessment and policy and programs assessment). Next, the Citizen Scientists completed street segment audits of the physical environment using the online walkability audit tool with the purpose of providing greater understanding of specific features within the town.

As part of the segment audits, community members took photos of town features that supported or hindered walkability. It is important to note that the findings are general in nature as not all sections of the town have been audited. Instead, the findings highlight the broader features supporting and hindering walkability throughout the town.

## Phase 3 — Community Workshops

Once each town had completed the audits and taken photos, a summary of the audit data was shared with community members at a community workshop. The workshop discussion enabled a greater understanding about the features impacting on walkability in the towns, and identified priority areas for action and potential solutions. In each town, researchers facilitated a community workshop which was attended by Community Champion/s, Citizen Scientists and other interested community members.



### *Images.*

- ▲ Documents to aid discussion at the workshop
- ◀ Citizen Scientist completing an audit segment using the online audit tool

# Introduction

Being active is good for our health – it can prevent us from getting diseases like heart disease, diabetes, breast and colon cancers, and osteoporosis. It is also great for managing our weight, blood pressure and cholesterol, and for keeping us mentally healthy and well. Research has shown that people living in rural parts of Australia are less active than those who live in urban areas. It is also known that rates of preventable health conditions such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure tend to be higher in rural Australia than in urban Australia.

It is well known that walkable neighbourhoods provide health, environmental, social and economic benefits. A neighbourhood's walkability is the degree to which it has safe, designated areas for people to walk or bike to work, school, dining, shopping, medical services, recreation and entertainment. Walkable communities are easier to get around, they support everyday connections and foster a greater sense of community through increased informal and spontaneous social interactions. In cities, research shows that the physical environment where people live, work, study and play can affect physical activity levels.

However, there is minimal research showing what 'walkability' looks like in rural areas. Small towns and some rural council areas may have access to fewer resources to develop the infrastructure to support walkability and active lifestyles. This project was designed to help find out more about walkability in rural areas and what might be needed to support this.

Most of the research studies looking at walkability focus on cities and large towns and not much is known about how our environment helps or stops communities from being active in rural and regional areas.

The report includes quotes from people who attended the workshop or from comments they made using the online audit tool. Photos have been included to provide local examples of features that hindered or supported walkability. It is hoped the findings included here will support further discussions in the town as well as support local action to encourage walking in the area.

*Image.*

► Zeehan town centre including old mining equipment



# Overview of Zeehan

Zeehan is a small town located on the West Coast of Tasmania. The town is hidden in a valley of rugged hills and rainforest and is well known for its rich mining history and heritage, with some popular tourist attractions. Once Tasmania's third largest town (and known as the 'Silver City'), Zeehan currently has a population of 722 people. The population density of the West Coast region is approximately one person per square kilometre (compared to Hobart which covers an area of 6.6 square kilometres and has a density of 1356 people per square kilometre).

The Zeehan township is nestled in a small valley, located along Main Street. The town is spread out along approximately 2km of the Zeehan Highway and has a range of community facilities. This includes a public library, primary school, pharmacy, IGA supermarket, heritage centre, sports centre, golf club, mountain bike trails, swimming pool, park, Centrelink office and accommodation. The town is surrounded by natural bushland on public land with tracks and trails available for various recreational purposes including walking, mountain bike riding, horse riding and dirt bike riding. Zeehan also has historical attractions including the West Coast Heritage Centre and Spray Tunnel, a walking track through an abandoned railway tunnel.

The population of Zeehan has fluctuated over the years, often in relation to the opening and closure of nearby mining projects. Currently, Zeehan has increased tourism interest as a mountain bike destination and there are new mining projects commencing resulting in increases to the population.

[The mine has] 60 [employees] there at the moment [and is expected to grow] so it's 160 people... We've also got mountain bike tracks which are going to have an influx of people through, not just Zeehan but throughout the West Coast, and you've got the community housing as well which is going to probably bring people into town.



The relaxed lifestyle and proximity to the natural environment were two of the key reasons community members choose to live in Zeehan. However, community members felt there was a disconnect between the town's two main populations, residents and the non-resident mine workers.

*Images.*

- ▶ Mining equipment at the Zeehan Heritage Centre  
Credit: Tourism Tasmania. All Rights Reserved
- ▼ Main Street, Zeehan  
Credit: Tourism Tasmania. All Rights Reserved



# Findings From the Project

## Spatial walkability assessment findings

The spatial analysis completed in the first phase of the project examined the local neighbourhood attributes of street connectivity, dwelling density and an index of access to services of daily living. These three attributes were used to indicate overall walkability and then given a rank to represent its position in relation to the other 91 small towns in Tasmania. Each attribute, as well as the overall walkability score, is classified as low, medium or high walkability.

The spatial analysis resulted in the creation of a Spatial Map (*Figure 1*) that helps to show the walkability in Zeehan. Overall, the spatial walkability assessment ranked Zeehan as high walkability. The map shows walkability across Zeehan, from areas that are most walkable (green to light green) to least walkable (pink to dark pink). The maps indicate that Zeehan is generally very walkable along the Main Street, apart from the section north from Irwell Street and south of Main Street after Shaw Street.

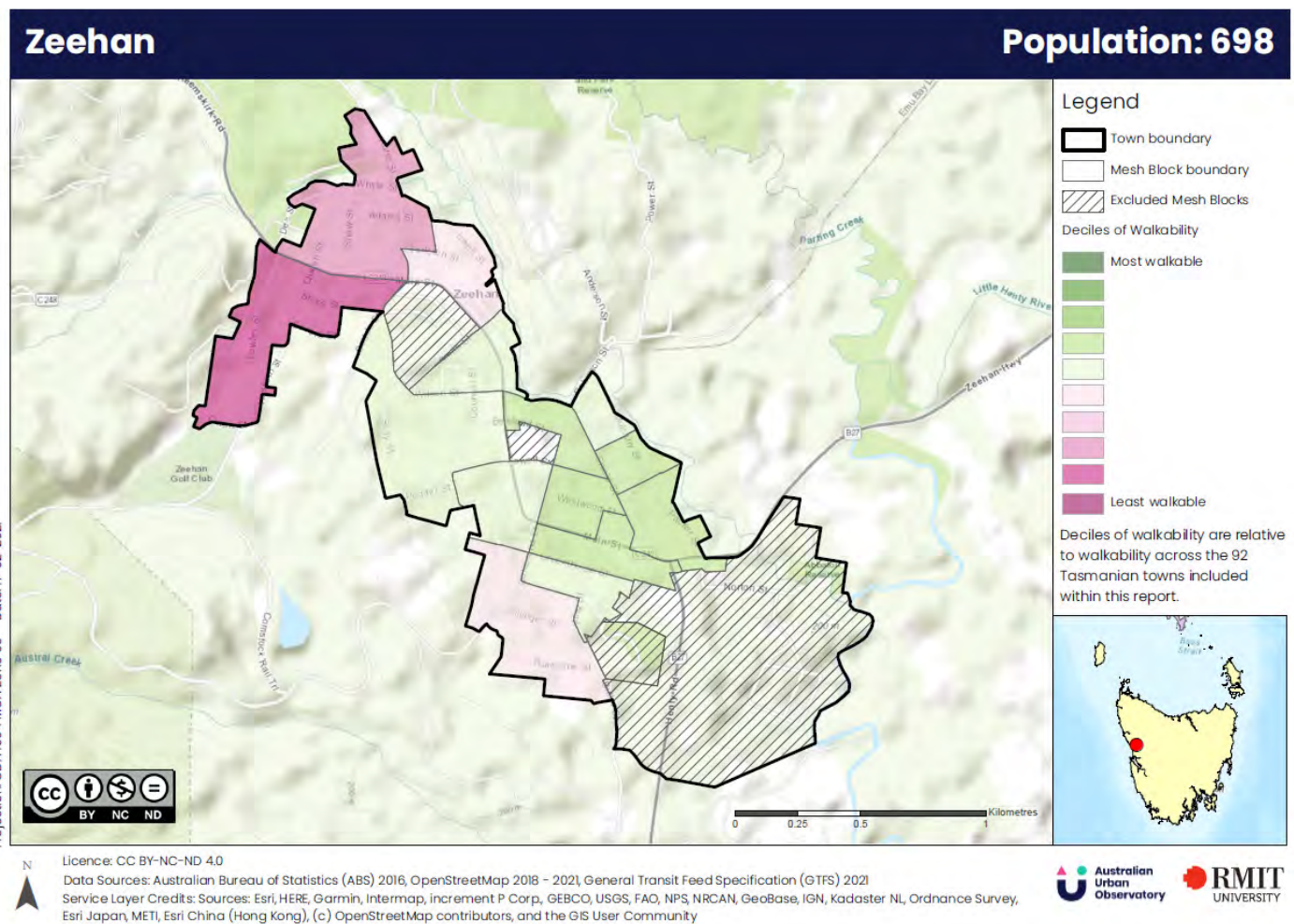


Figure 1. Spatial Map for Zeehan

(Spatial map data sources: ABS 2016, OpenStreetMap 2018-2021 and General Transit Feed Specification 2021)



## Audit and workshop findings

In Zeehan, one Community Champion completed the town wide facilities and program/policies audits that examined the features in the area that supported walking and physical activity. The Community Champion then selected the segments of the area to be audited by the Citizen Scientists which occurred between February and March 2022 (see *Figure 2* for audit map). Eight Citizen Scientists conducted detailed walkability audits to examine six specific segments of the area. While they walked a segment, Citizen Scientists used the audit tool to respond to questions about the segment including the presence of features such as paved footpaths, unpaved footpaths, crossing, signage, roads and other safety features.

Initial findings from the audits were presented to the community at the community workshop. The community workshop was held in Zeehan on 2 June 2022 with seven community members present to discuss the findings. Following the workshop, this report was produced for the Zeehan community. Community Champions and Citizen Scientists provided feedback on this report and can use the report to bring about change in their community.



*Image.*

▲ Howard's Park is located in the town centre, along Main Road

## Town wide and policy/ Program audit findings

The range of community facilities in Zeehan was reflected in the town wide audit. The assessment captured the availability of amenities and physical features such as a primary school, walking tracks and trails, parks/playgrounds, swimming pool, squash centre, mountain bike trails, community facilities (UTAS Study Hub, Neighbourhood Centre) as well as the nature reserves. In the audit, around half of the recorded facilities and features in Zeehan were rated as in good/excellent condition and half were rated as fair/poor.

While recreational facilities were reported to be regularly maintained by the council, it was recognised that many facilities need upgrading due to aging facilities. There are some significant developments planned to include a renewal of the gym facilities (with the current plans replacing the squash courts) as well as the swimming pool and Howards Park/Skate Park. The local swimming pool is only open during the summer months, there are limited sporting clubs and no indoor gym.

The town programs/policies assessment examined the availability of health and physical activity related programs and/or policies in the area, including those run at the local school. The Program and Policy audit suggests there could be improvements to support walking and other physical activity in the area. The audit recognises the West Coast Council has a range of relevant policies and strategies such as the West Coast Community Plan, Sport and Recreation Plan, Asset Management Strategy and Liveable Communities Strategy. There is a local council works team who complete general maintenance around the town including clearing roadside gutters of debris after heavy rain, maintaining nature strips, upgrading driveway drainage and picking up roadside rubbish.

Once a year, school students participate in 'Walk to School Day'. Some structured activities were present, such as the West Coast Mountain Biking Club, Zeehan Netball Association, First Queenstown Scouts (with a Zeehan offshoot) and programs run at the Neighbourhood Centre, however these were generally limited to programs for youth and children.

Facilities rated Good/Excellent	Facilities rated Fair/Poor	Facilities not present
<p>Biking Trails (Spray Tunnel loop, Oonah Hill and Mt Heemskirk which is currently under construction)</p> <p>Public Parks (Howards Park)</p> <p>Public Toilets</p> <p>Swimming Pool (open during Summer months)</p> <p>Playground</p> <p>Other: West Coast Study Hub, local churches, Lions Club and Men's Shed.</p>	<p>Hiking/walking trails (Spray Tunnel, Mt Zeehan, old Emu Railway, King Hill, Queen Hill, Mt Dundas, Tunnel Hill, Parting Creek and others)</p> <p>Lake (Parting Creek Lake)</p> <p>Skate Park (Howards Park)</p> <p>Town Recreational Facility (Zeehan Gym Complex)</p> <p>Playing Fields (Recreation Ground with club rooms, grandstand and cricket nets)</p> <p>Indoor courts (Zeehan Gym Complex)</p>	<p>Swimming Beach Lake (Lake Barrington is approximately 50km away)</p>

Table 1. Facilities in Zeehan as captured in the Town Wide Audit

## Street segment audits: Overview of facilities

Six segments of Zeehan were audited by the Citizen Scientists (Figure 2). While they walked a segment, Citizen Scientists used the audit tool to respond to questions about the segment including the presence of features such as paved footpaths, unpaved footpaths, crossing, signage, roads and other safety features. In Zeehan the segment audits revealed the following findings:

- Three of the segments were reported to have footpaths available. The quality of footpaths was rated as fair/poor in two of these segments.
- Of the segments with footpaths, one segment had paths on both sides of the street, one

segment had a path on one side of the street and one segment had intermittent paths.

- Four of the segments were considered to be easily walkable.
- Three segments were reported to have footpaths or trails linking the segment to other locations in the town. The two segments reported to have limited connectivity were segments 4 and 5.
- Accessibility of the segments was reported as poor with only three segments considered appropriate for an older person. Similarly, three segments were reported to be walkable for a child (aged 10) to walk on their own.

In general, Zeehan was considered by the Citizen Scientists to have a range of different sporting and recreational facilities that were used by the local community.

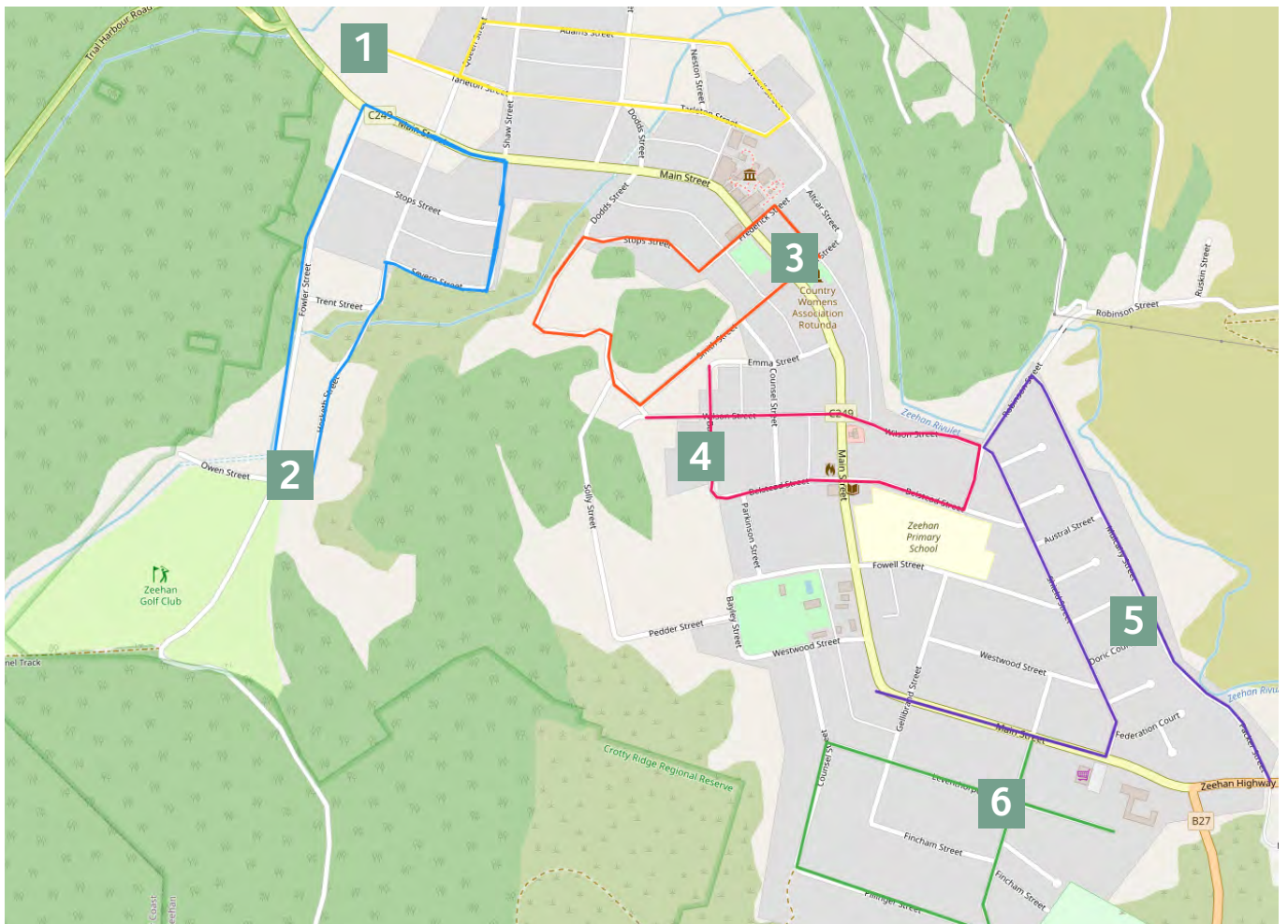


Figure 2. Audited segments completed in Zeehan

## Features that support walking and being active (facilitators)

The natural environment around Zeehan was considered an important factor supporting community members to engage in walking and other physical activity. The bushland and reserves surrounding the town (including along the Zeehan rivulet, around Mount Heemskirk and Mount Dundas) provide important and aesthetic spaces for many people in the area. These natural spaces were also linked to the identity of Zeehan and were one of the key reasons many people choose to live in Zeehan.



*Image.*

▲ Path along Zeehan Highway

The Zeehan township is in a small valley with generally flat topography. Community members felt that there were suitable footpaths available throughout the town, particularly along the main road. The audit data says that:



The Main Steet is attractive, having the park, skate park, toilets, seating, BBQ, CWA rotunda and old local buildings along with improved walkability."

Seating is available along the Zeehan Highway which helps to break up the long main road.

The one on Main Street...the seat is facing [Mount] Dundas. I often sit there, it's beautiful, it's really nice.

The Howards Park playground and skate park in the centre of town is popular with children and young people. The park also has a barbeque area and a half court with a basketball ring.

The kids congregate there in town, so they usually leave school, and they go straight to the skate park. So, the majority of kids will hang out there.

We'd get our coffee and sit in the park, and it was really lovely to be able to sit in the park and look.

In all audit segments, the traffic was reported as low, and the workshop participants said traffic was not a barrier to walkability in the community. Community members also felt that footpaths in the town centre were reasonably maintained and supported connectivity with the main amenities and facilities in town.

“

Yeah, the Council did a good job the last couple of years cleaning all the court footpaths up. They were good. A lot of work that went into those.

*Image.*

- ▼ Howards Park has a range of facilities including seating, a rotunda and skate park

The growth of tourism, and particularly the area as a mountain biking destination, has led to development of some infrastructure across Zeehan. As a result, there has been an increase in community members participating in mountain biking (such as the monthly West Coast Mountain Biking Club event).

Signage is good for the Spray Tunnel Loop and MTB track (which caters to tourists).



## Features that make it difficult to walk and be active (barriers)

### Footpaths and walking trails

The segment audit data suggests that footpaths were commonly found along the main street and in residential areas, however infrastructure was limited in areas beyond this (such as segments 1 and 2).

“ We did the Queen Hill segment and basically found – it’s really very rural, there’s no real infrastructure...open drains, no footpaths, yeah. No sealed road at one point as well.

Footpaths were in better condition in residential areas, non-existent along backstreets.

The back streets of Zeehan are not well marked sometimes and don't follow a predictable pattern.

While the spatial map shows the central areas of Zeehan (along the Main Road) are more walkable, the audit segment assessments suggest that walkability declines moving away from the main road.

The data suggested half of the segments audited did not have footpaths and two out of three with footpaths were reported as poor quality. These findings aligned with the consultation document West Coast Council Footpath and Strategic Management Plan findings. Community members said that some paths were covered in moss, had cracked and broken pavement or tripping hazards (such as tree roots, old gutters, open drains or uneven dirt roads). At times, footpaths would end or do not link up which means people have to cross the road more often to access paved footpaths.



“ P1: It is narrow because there’s also an old gutter.  
P2: Oh yeah, and you nearly get your ankle in that all the time.

In other locations footpaths were not available, instead pedestrians were required to walk on the road or road verges. This aligns with the segment audits where five segments were reported to have poor/fair buffers and shoulders along roads.

#### *Images.*

- ▲ Locally made signage
- ▶ Intersection of Packer Street and Zeehan Highway







## Accessibility

Due to the poor quality of footpaths throughout the community, many residents felt accessibility was limited for some people. In the segment audits, only two segments were reported to be accessible for older people or prams (segments 1 and 5). Although the spatial map suggested that walkability was good along the Main Street of Zeehan, community members said the spread of the town over a 2km distance reduced walkability and accessibility for many people.

Elderly and those with limited mobility may find accessibility difficult due to the conditions of the footpaths. Prams may be hard to push because of the moss.

For many people in Zeehan, the bushland and public reserves surrounding the town are key spaces for engagement in walking and other physical activities. These areas tend to have rough tracks that are not widely accessible as they are unsigned and more suited for people who enjoy bushwalking.

“

Most of our bushwalks rely mainly on trails or existing tramways and roads that are no longer driveable. Say like the top of King Hill for instance.

We enjoy it, but it might not be everybody's cup of tea. I don't know, it depends what you're looking for from your walk. We tend to be like wilderness people, so we don't mind if we have to climb over rocks and things like that, whereas if you're going with a pram or something certain situations might be a bit more tricky.

## Weather and driving culture

Weather was discussed by community members as having a significant impact on walking in the area, including for students and families getting to and from school. The reduced light during the day, low temperatures and wet weather were common at certain times of year and were acknowledged to create some barriers in engagement.

Winter, it does get pretty dark down the streets.

This influenced a reliance on cars with community members identifying that Zeehan had a culture where many community members would drive in preference to walking.

“

I don't know specifically, I have no stats, but it seems to me quite a lot of people drive to school. A lot of children – I don't want to say most, but a lot of children end up getting dropped off one way or the other.

I'm always surprised to see as many people dropping people off as what they do.

However, discussion recognised that the car culture combined with the lengthy town zone in Zeehan might be a more significant barrier than the weather and availability of suitable footpaths.

“

You can't change the weather. I don't think it's footpath-related at all. I just think because the residential housing is so widespread across Zeehan, they all drive to central Zeehan to drop their kids off.

*Image.*

◀ Gravel track near Wilson's Street

At the end of the day footpaths [around the school] end up not being an issue because people don't use them for that purpose anyway.

The school does have an annual 'Walk to School Day' but it was recognised that this could be further encouraged throughout the year.

## Lighting

Whilst there is lighting along the main road, residents felt that more streetlights could increase participation at certain times of year. This was important for community members who work long hours and leave home before the sun rises and after the sun has set.

I was thinking about the demographic here; so I don't see any sunshine for seven days because I [work] underground. So, if I want to go for a walk I can't go for a walk because there's no lighting.

Community members felt the lights that are currently around the town did not give off enough light to be useful for engaging in walking and other recreational activities. This is particularly challenging along some roads, such as those with the open drainage.

“

On the main street for the most part you've got the lights, but then if you get off the main street and it's the white sort of lights...[they] don't do anything.

I think lighting's a big one. I've walked home from just the Heritage Centre across the road when it's dark...and some parts were quite dark, and I couldn't really even see what was going on.

## Shelter and seating

The lack of shelter and seating was identified as a barrier due to the expansive length of the Zeehan township. Community members noted that the council has been removing some older bus shelters and replacing others across the town. The town and residential areas have limited trees or other structures to provide shade or shelter during all seasons.

There's not much seating around on our footpaths, especially for myself, I could walk all day, but more elderly, they need to have that break.

“

It would probably be nice to utilise a few shelters or something, because it is such a long stretch [along the main road].

Shelter was also important in winter and on sunny summer days. In some locations (such as to the north of the main town area on the Zeehan Highway), shelters did not have suitable footpath connections.

“

There is one bus shelter on the end of Shield Street up near Federation Court, but [for my son], he gets off at Pringles [supermarket] and it's raining and he's walking back down to Battery Court, that's a fair walk all down Shield Street, and especially if you're walking from Pringles all the way down to the other end of town there's no shelter.

### Images.

- ▲ Pedestrians often walk along the wide road verges
- ▼ Bench seat along Main Street



It feels like [the sun] starts to beat down a little bit because there are no shelters... there's no natural shade [on residential streets] or anything like that.

It was noted that some of the current seating available in town was not placed in the most favourable locations or positions. Community members want community infrastructure to connect and create opportunities for interaction with the natural environment surrounding their town.

“

We'd get our coffee and sit in the park, and it was really lovely to be able to sit in the park and look, but we noticed that most of the benches faced away from nature, it was towards the street.

“

For young kids it would be quite startling. My husband doesn't particularly like dogs either.

What you'll generally find is there's dogs like that, people just avoid that particular area. My parents still walk, but they just walk down this end of town.

But that impacts on people's amenity of the town. Eventually you end up, 'This is the only way we can go because of [the dogs]'.  
“

## Dogs

I was just on the phone to my dad, it's funny because none of us have brought it up; he said get rid of the dogs and we will go for a walk.

For some community members, the routes they chose to walk (or not walk) were determined by the presence of aggressive dogs in some locations. The presence of loud, barking and territorial dogs made walking less enjoyable in particular locations.



### Image.

- Open drainage along Adams Road
- ◄ Pedestrians often walk along the back streets of Zeehan to access the surrounding bushland



# Priorities

During the community workshop, participants were asked to consider possible ways to address these barriers. The following section presents the solutions discussed by community members to address the key challenges in Zeehan. The key priorities were improving general walking infrastructure and improving the connectivity throughout Zeehan.



## Priority 1: Improving general infrastructure

Discussion highlighted the key priority of improving and erecting general infrastructure to support walking around Zeehan. Suggestions included the addition or upgrading of street furniture (seating, shelters, lighting, signage) and improvements to the surface of the current tracks and paths. While some areas had some provision of seating and shelters, adding more of this around Zeehan was considered important with the suggestion that they should be spaced out and positioned thoughtfully (such as to face points of interest or beautiful natural environments). In addition, planting trees in residential streets and landscaping gardens was

suggested to enhance the aesthetic value of the area and provide shade. Adding signage to bush trails or key paths throughout town was also discussed.



## Priority 2: Improving connectivity

Improving connectivity was identified to enable community members to easily walk around the community. Informal tracks already exist throughout the bushland surrounding Zeehan that could be better maintained. Upgrading the surface of these informal tracks (such as the track to the Zeehan Pioneer Cemetery), and signage would increase track accessibility and support walkability in this area. Community members also felt these areas could help to bring in tourists. In the main town area, improving or extending walking paths would improve connectivity. The West Coast Council Footpath Strategic Asset Management Plan will contribute to upgrading some areas.

*Image.*

- Shopping zone including footpath along Main Road



# Possible Solutions

The following section presents the solutions discussed by community members to address the key challenges in Zeehan. In general, community members wanted new facilities or infrastructure that reflected the culture and history of their town.

Any new place that's designed with some aesthetic in mind I think it should try to embrace the history of the place maybe.

## Footpaths and trails

Community members felt that improvements could be made to improve the general condition of footpaths throughout Zeehan.

I think [improvements] should start in the epicentre and then spread. That's the way I think footpaths should go; focus on the main areas in town and then obviously work your way out to more residential areas. Especially with housing, they definitely need footpaths.

“

Prioritise where the most houses are I think, just work on those first.

It was recognised that the council was currently completing maintenance and making some improvements to some footpaths around the town. Discussion suggested that some areas could benefit from the development of paths e.g., roads with open drainage (Adams Street) or limited space for pedestrians (Hesketh Street, Fowler Street). On wider roads, simply painting a footpath along one side was considered an option to provide pedestrians with access.

The bush tracks and trails around town were important spaces for participating in walking and activities and community members felt these could be improved to support engagement. These tracks are currently for the 'adventure' bushwalker as paths were unsigned and often filled with puddles, uneven ground, undergrowth and rocks or other debris. It was suggested to better maintain key tracks such as the trail to the Zeehan Pioneer Cemetery, Spray Tunnel or along the Zeehan rivulet.

There are readymade paths where if they were cleaned up, you don't have to... cut out a new trail anywhere. The trails are there, it would just be a case of cleaning them up and...making them a little bit more accessible.

## Shelters and seating

Adding and improving shelters around the town was considered an important priority as the town is spread out a long distance. Community members felt this would increase participation in walking by ensuring there are spaces available to sit and provide safety from the weather along the way (both hot/sunny and cold/ rainy days).

“

I think especially for the older demographic and those prams and families with young children, if there's more shelters and stuff, you're going to find more people are going to come out and use the footpaths I think if there's more things available, structure for them.

*Image.*

► Zeehan rest stop with seating and a bin





It would probably be nice to utilise a few shelters or something, because it is such a long stretch and if people have to walk to the supermarket and there's a bit of a shower or they're just older and needed [some protection].

It was important that shelters are distributed evenly around the town and that they were easily accessed by suitable footpaths.

Similarly, benches and seats were also suggested to provide spaces for people to stop and sit for a rest or to enjoy the ambiance. Many community members really enjoyed some of the current seating options, however it was crucial that these were positioned suitably.

“

We'd get our coffee and sit in the park, and it was really lovely to be able to sit in the park and look, but we noticed that most of the benches faced away from nature, it was towards the street.

## Signage

Adding signage was discussed as a measure to direct locals to tracks and paths. This would help to link footpaths and trails throughout the community to create a more unified network of trails. Community members also suggested having signage celebrating the history of the town (such as information boards at historic locations).

## Lighting

Improvements to residential street lighting was recommended to allow for greater visibility. Community members felt there was not enough streetlights across the town and that current streetlights were not bright enough to support walking in the late afternoons and evenings. This was particularly relevant for residents

who worked long hours (such as those at the mine). In addition, it was recommended that any lighting could be designed in line with the history of Zeehan.

Maybe channel our history here in Zeehan because we used to have the old lights here at one point. I think there's old photos of the old kerosene lights that we used to have on Main Street, especially outside the Gaiety Theatre.

## Landscaping and trees

Community members recognised that many of the roads in the main town area did not have trees planted for shade or aesthetics.

I've noticed in major cities some of their footpaths have trees that have been there for such a long time and they're growing up through the footpath, but they're stunning some of these trees, and they create shelter.

“

The segment could be improved with the planting of trees along the side of the footpath (where possible). This would make the segment more aesthetically pleasing as well as provide shade to walkers.

This is an important consideration particularly with planning and design of the upcoming developments (including Howards Park).

*Image.*

- Many roads have wide road buffers suitable for pedestrians



# Conclusion

Zeehan is a town on the West Coast of Tasmania with a range of community facilities that support walking and physical activity in the area including a park, oval, swimming pool and walking trails. It has a good range of community sporting and recreational facilities with development plans for the gym, swimming pool and park in process. The audits completed by the Community Champions and Citizen Scientists highlight the valuable assets in Zeehan as well as areas that could be improved.

The audit process and workshop identified features in Zeehan considered a priority to increase walkability and physical activity participation in the area. Community members felt that the key priorities were:

- Improve the general infrastructure around the town including improving the quality of footpaths, providing suitable shelters, seating and lighting; and developing and maintaining bush walking trails.
- Improve connectivity focusing on better connecting paths throughout the town, maintaining bush tracks and providing signage.

A range of possible solutions would help to address these priorities including upgrading footpaths as well as infrastructure measures including shelters, seating, signage, lighting and landscaping.



## *Images.*

- ◀ Zeehan Heritage Centre  
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- ▶ Zeehan Heritage precinct from above  
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