

UNIVERSITY of TASMANIA

MENZIES 

Institute for Medical Research

Communities for Walkability

A citizen science project to
connect local spaces and places

Cygnet Report

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.

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- 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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Project Investigators:

- Associate Professor Verity Cleland, Menzies Institute for Medical Research, University of Tasmania
- Professor Anna Timperio, Deakin University
- Dr Kim Jose, Menzies Institute for Medical Research, University of Tasmania
- Associate Professor Melanie Davern, RMIT University
- Dion Lester, Local Government Association of Tasmania
- Dr Lynden Leppard, Local Government Association of Tasmania
- Kate Garvey, Public Health Services, Tasmanian Department of Health
- Dr Yvonne Laird, The University of Sydney
- Dr Samantha Rowbotham, The University of Sydney

Cygnet Community Members:

We would like to thank the Cygnet 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 Cygnet that make it easier or harder for community members to be active and walk around their town ('walkability'). Cygnet has a range of community facilities including an oval, sports centre, a reserve and other services including two medical clinics, a pharmacy, a supermarket, two primary schools and a town hall. Cygnet is known as a creative community with a range of popular festivals and events.

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

In the spatial walkability assessment, Cygnet's walkability was rated high (good walkability) compared to the other 91 towns in the study. The spatial maps showed that Cygnet is more walkable along the main street and is less walkable towards the northern and southern edges of town. The audits and workshop discussion suggest that Cygnet has a range of features that support walking and active recreation in the area. Burtons Reserve was recognised as one of the key features which includes walking paths alongside the bay as well as a playground, skatepark, barbeque area and fitness equipment. The town is surrounded by farmland, natural bushland and access to the river and beaches which were also important spaces for recreation.

In the town wide audit, most facilities and features in Cygnet were rated as being in good or excellent condition. The audit highlighted a lack of shared footpaths (there are some available in Burtons Reserve as well as a path along Lymington Road to the Sailing Club) with these paths considered fair or poor for cyclists. In addition, the condition of the recreational centre and swimming pool were rated fair or poor, as both had some restrictions on use. The Program and Policy assessment suggests there are some local programs to support walking and physical activity, such as for seniors or private classes at the Cygnet Sports Centre. However, less was known about policies related to bikeways and pedestrian walkways, or footpath construction in new developments.

The town segment audits reported a good range of sporting and recreational facilities. Overall, footpath quality was rated good or excellent in five of seven segments. Discussion at the workshop suggested this was not always the case and that footpath quality varied throughout Cygnet.

Priorities

Three priorities were identified as having potential to improve the walkability throughout Cygnet:



1

Addressing pedestrian safety

Along the main street, safety was a concern due to the limited crossing spaces and minimal signage to make vehicle drivers aware of pedestrians. Without designated crossing spaces, getting across Mary Street is difficult for pedestrians as the road curves slightly and limits visibility. Safety was also an issue in areas where pedestrians must walk along the road, such as along Lymington Road between the Sailing Club and the public jetty on the southeast of the town.



2

Improving connectivity

Connectivity between footpaths, infrastructure and amenities was considered a high priority by the community members. In many locations, there are footpaths on one side of the road but at times these paths do not link up. Disconnected footpaths and the lack of pedestrian-friendly connections between infrastructure was highlighted as an issue. As a result, pedestrians are required to walk on a road or road verge or cross to an alternate footpath.



3

Improving footpaths and general infrastructure

Maintaining current footpaths to ensure they are good quality and not impacted by overgrowth was identified as a concern. Provision of general infrastructure, such as pedestrian signage and lighting, could support walking around Cygnet.

Potential Solutions

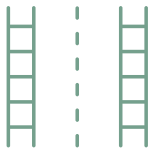
During the workshop, a range of solutions to address these priorities were identified to support walkability in Cygnet. This included options such as improving the quality and condition of footpaths, creating better connected footpaths (and connecting paths to general infrastructure), addition of traffic calming measures, increased directional and distance signage, a public toilet at the school oval and street lighting. More specifically, solutions included:



Adding pedestrian-focused measures, particularly along the main road (Mary Street), which may include traffic calming, reduced speed, improved signage, and a pedestrian crossing.



Improving connectivity, focusing on better connecting paths and other community amenities throughout Cygnet.



Upgrading footpaths, particularly areas with unsafe surfaces.



Improving the general infrastructure around the town including more lighting and installation of rocks or bollards to separate the public toilet and carpark in Burtons Reserve.

Beautiful

~~DANGEROUS~~

Roads

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lines

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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 town wide 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), 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. These images have been used throughout this report. 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, 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
- ◀ (opposite page) 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.

► (opposite page) The walking path through the Port Cygnet Wildlife Sanctuary



Port Cygnet Wildlife Sanctuary
Pets and firearms are prohibited
Do not disturb wildlife



Overview of Cygnet

This project explored walkability in Cygnet, a small town in the south-east of Tasmania in the Huon Valley Council municipality. Cygnet is located 15km south of Huonville and 55km south of Hobart and has a population of 1057 people¹. The area has a population density of 0.1 residents per square kilometre (compared to Inner Hobart which covers an area of 62.2 square kilometres and has a density of 1,356 residents per square kilometre).

The town sits on Port Cygnet adjoining the Huon River and is well-known for locally-grown produce and a thriving art, craft and music scene. Many popular events are held in the town including the Cygnet Market, Cygnet Art Trail, Cygnet Folk Festival (incorporating the Way to St James Cygnet event), Cygnet CycleFest and the Easter Chamber Music and Jazz Festival. Residents felt the sense of community in Cygnet is one of the key drawcards of the town.

The community has to be right up the top there if you ask me. That's why I moved here.

Cygnet has a range of community facilities, shops and services including two medical clinics, supermarkets, primary schools, petrol stations, a post office, a pharmacy, a town hall, pubs, cafés, churches, a sport centre, parks (Loongana Park along Mary Street and a park in Burtons Reserve) and reserves



(Burtons Reserve and the Port Cygnet Wildlife Sanctuary). Most of the town sits along the main road of Mary Street, with residential areas to the north and south. To the north and south, Mary Street becomes the Channel Highway which links Cygnet to Huonville and Hobart (via the D'Entrecasteaux Channel). The town is surrounded by farmland, natural bushland and access to the river and beaches. Natural environments (such as Burtons Reserve and the path along Lymington Road) are important spaces for walking and other recreation. Many Cygnet locals travel via car or public transport to Hobart for employment or for other services such as hospitals.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021

The Huon Valley Council released the Huon Valley Priority Projects plan in 2021 which includes plans to develop a road corridor parallel to Mary Street to address traffic congestion. Currently, there is the Land Use and Development Strategy project which aims to deliver a clear plan around housing, infrastructure, and employment within the Huon Valley. Consultation with community on the strategy occurred in the first half of 2023, with Council currently preparing the new township plans for each town in the Huon Valley municipality.

There are many active community groups in Cygnet including University of the Third Age (U3A), Landcare, the Cygnet Community Arts Council and The Cygnet Association who are key advocates for improving the local community. The Cygnet Association have been advocating for important changes as well as funding for heritage signs on buildings and completing town beautification projects. The Association is releasing a leaflet for residents with the key walks in the area.

Images.

- ◀ (opposite) Cygnet Town Hall. Credit: Tourism Tasmania and Rob Burnett. All Rights Reserved
- ▼ The popular Cygnet Folk Festival is held in January each year in locations throughout the town. Credit: Tourism Tasmania and Steven Pearce Photography. 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, housing density and an index of access to services of daily living (such as supermarkets and petrol stations). These three attributes were used to indicate overall walkability and then ranked to represent Cygnet’s 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) showing the walkability around Cygnet. Overall, the spatial walkability assessment ranked Cygnet as having high walkability compared with the 91 other towns analysed in Phase 1. The maps indicate that Cygnet is more walkable (green and light green) along the main street with low walkability (pink) towards the northern and southern edges of town.

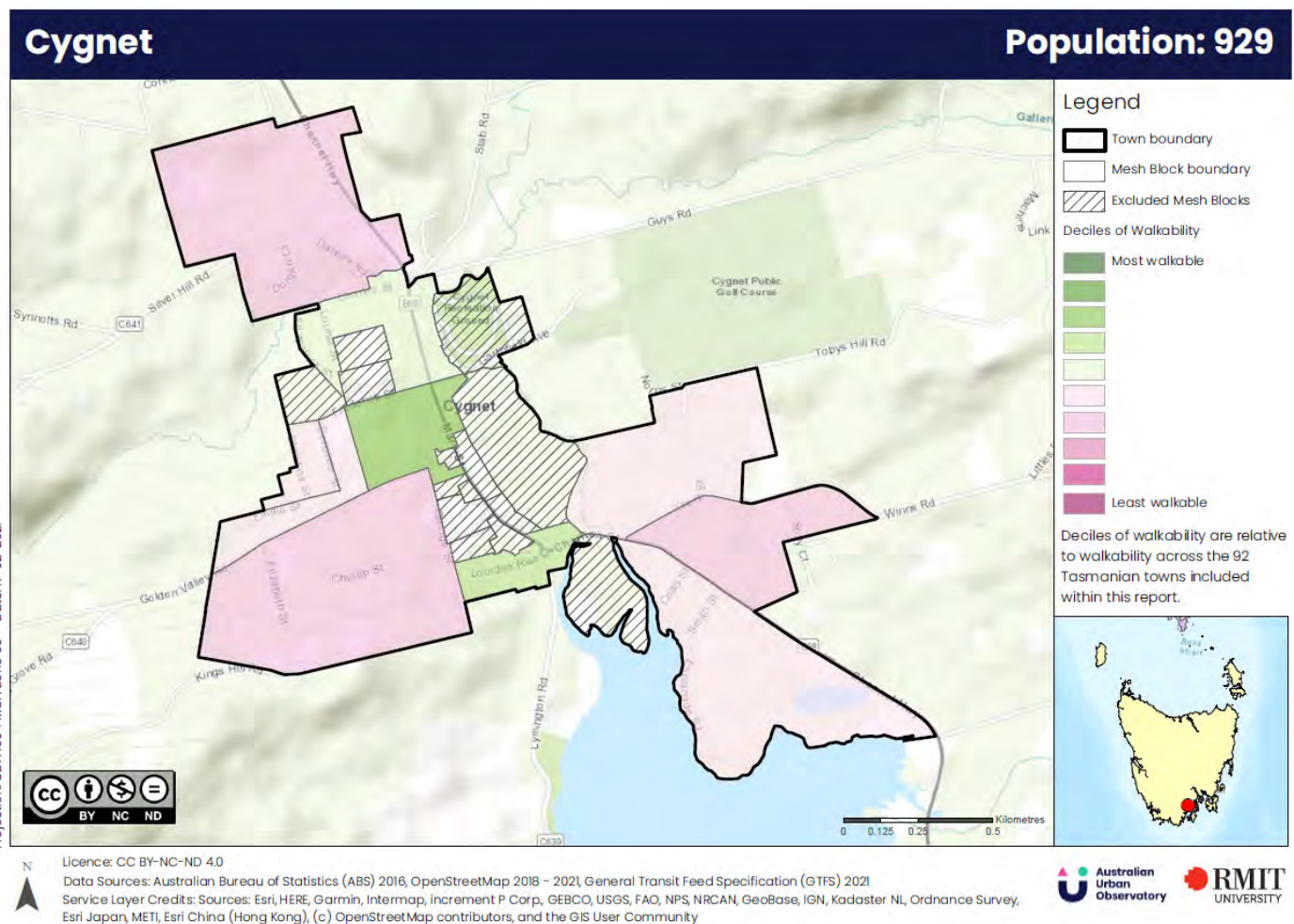


Figure 1. Cygnet spatial map²

² Spatial map data sources: ABS 2016, OpenStreetMap 2018-2021 and General Transit Feed Specification 2021.

Audit and workshop findings

In Cygnet, two Community Champions completed the town wide facilities and programs/policies audits that examined the features in the area that support walking and physical activity. The Community Champions then selected the segments of the area to be audited by the Citizen Scientists between October 2022 and January 2023. Six Citizen Scientists conducted detailed walkability audits to examine key features in specific segments of the town. 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. Citizen Scientists also took photos of key features that impacted on walkability in the segment.

Initial findings from the audits were presented to the community at the community workshop. The community workshop was held in Cygnet on 20 February 2023 with four community members present to discuss the findings. Following the workshop, this report was produced for the Cygnet community. Community Champions and Citizen Scientists provided feedback on this report and can use the report to bring about change in their community.

Image.

- ▼ Seating overlooking the Port Cygnet. Burtons Reserve is across the water and the walking trail to the sailing club to the right



Town wide and policy/ Program audit findings

The range of community facilities in Cygnet was reflected in the town wide audit. The assessment captured the availability of amenities and physical features including two schools, walking tracks and trails, oval, community facilities as well as the nearby Huon River and beaches. In the audit, most facilities and features in Cygnet were rated as in good or excellent condition. Burtons Reserve was considered a good or excellent space for recreation with walking trails, park, toilets, skatepark, playground available, however the shared paths were considered fair or poor for cyclists. The recreational centre and swimming pool were rated fair or poor as both had some restrictions on use (the recreational centre is not available during school hours or during school holidays and the swimming pool is for private hire). A private gym was listed as not present in the

Town Wide Assessment, however, during the workshop a community member advised that there is a council-operated facility (the Cygnet Sports Centre) offering rostered sports as well as exercise classes (including yoga and aerobics). This demonstrates a lack of knowledge of this facility within the community.

The town programs/policies audit 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 assessment suggests there are some programs to support walking and physical activity, however, less was known about related policies. For example, the Council does have a Walking Track Strategy (2017) and Recreation Plan, however, these were not known to the community member. Whilst the audit highlights a lack of awareness regarding council policies about bikeways or pedestrian walkways, it was noted that:

Facilities rated Good/Excellent	Facilities rated Fair/Poor	Facilities not present
<p>Hiking/walking trails (Burtons Reserve and Randalls Bay)</p> <hr/> <p>Public park</p> <hr/> <p>Public toilets</p> <hr/> <p>Swimming beach (Drip Beach, Egg and Bacon Beach, Randalls Beach, Kayes Beach)</p> <hr/> <p>River (Huon River)</p> <hr/> <p>Skatepark (at Burtons Reserve)</p> <hr/> <p>Playground</p> <hr/> <p>Playing fields (Cygnet Oval and oval at Cygnet Primary School)</p> <hr/> <p>Indoor or outdoor courts (at Cygnet Primary School)</p> <hr/> <p>Other: Indoor and outdoor cricket nets</p>	<p>Biking trails (shared paths at Burtons Reserve)</p> <hr/> <p>Swimming pool (private)</p> <hr/> <p>Town Recreational Centre (at Cygnet Primary School)</p>	<p>Lake</p> <hr/> <p>Private gym³</p>

³ As mentioned, a gym was listed in the Town Wide assessment as not present however, there is a council-operated facility in Cygnet where sports activities and exercise classes are held.

Table 1. Facilities in Cygnet as captured in the town wide audit.



The new housing areas of Cygnet appear to have footpaths included but they don't always connect to existing footpaths, some abruptly end.

Whilst it was recognised that council do clear obstacles from footpaths, there was concern that during footpath development it is common to have no alternative route provided. This results in pedestrians needing to walk on the side of the road.

The audit captured physical activity programs including those for seniors and private classes at the Cygnet Sports Centre. It was suggested that increased programs could further support improving physical activity behaviours in Cygnet.



Those living within town would benefit from [a Walk to School] program.

I would like to see a policy or program that supports walking and being active in Cygnet.



Image.

▲ Loongana Park along Mary Street includes seating and a public toilet

Street segment audits: Overview of facilities

Seven segments of Cygnet were audited by six Citizen Scientists (Figure 2). This includes two Citizen Scientist who completed two audits each, two Citizen Scientist who completed one audit and one audit completed by two separate Citizen Scientists. The street segment audits revealed the following:

- Six segments were reported to have paved footpaths and six segments had unpaved footpaths. Of the segments with paved footpaths, three had footpaths only on one side of the road and three had intermittent paved footpaths.
- The quality of paved footpaths was reported as good or excellent in five segments and fair or poor in one segment. The quality of unpaved footpaths was reported as good or excellent in two segments and fair or poor in four segments.
- Traffic volume was rated low in two segments, medium in three segments and high in two segments.
- Only four segments were well-connected to key facilities and locations in the area.
- Five segments were reported as walkable overall, however, four of these segments were not considered appropriate for an older person, someone with limited mobility or a pram. Only two segments were reported to be walkable for a child (aged 10) to walk on their own.
- Six segments were rated as aesthetically pleasing.

In general, the Citizen Scientists felt there was a good range of sporting and recreational facilities that were well maintained by the council and used by the local community.



Figure 3. Audited segments completed in Nubeena and White Beach.

Features that support walking and being active (facilitators)

The natural spaces and environments around Cygnet are key spaces used by community members to engage in walking and other physical activities. Burtons Reserve was a key location that has a range of facilities including a playground, skatepark, public toilets, barbeque area, fitness equipment and walking tracks along the harbour. The importance of the reserve is reflected in these discussions.



P1: That's a really popular park, isn't it?
P2: Yeah, it's great.
P3: It's beautiful.



P1: The reserve is well used.
P2: A lot of people walk to the reserve, and there's a little walking track around there. And a nice little bridge across.

The walking track from Burtons Reserve and along the water to the yacht club (following Lymington Road through the Port Cygnet Wildlife Sanctuary) was a popular walking route with a beautiful aesthetic.

[It is a] nice walk with some lovely views on the harbour. There is a seat halfway.

There [are] many places to access the river around Cygnet.

Furthermore, many community members also appreciated the country aesthetic of the town and segments.



Fresh country air, larger rural properties, mountains in the background, large gardens.



Images.

- ▲ Overlooking Port Cygnet and the bridge across Agnes Rivulet to Burtons Reserve
- ▼ A local enjoys the beautiful environment surrounding Cygnet

In town, community members identified the Cygnet Sports Centre as a great community facility. The centre has rostered indoor and outdoor sporting activities (including netball, soccer, badminton and basketball) as well as fitness and yoga classes.





The sports centre up at the school is also pretty heavily used.

Some areas were reported to have good footpaths, particularly those built in the newer developments.

[On] Dorgan Court...there is footpath the whole way around, and then Dances Road, again they did footpath down there and a really good footbridge.

In addition, there are some popular natural spaces (bushland and beaches about 7km away) that are further out from the town centre. Community members used the bush trails surrounding the town (such as on Guys Road) for walking and trail running.

“

P1: I haven't even started talking about trails yet...All these beautiful ridgelines... (are used by the) ...trail runners in the community.

P2: There's a lot of people who walk up Guys Road, that's beautiful up in there.

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

Connectivity

Whilst only three audit segments were rated as not being well-connected to other locations in town, the workshop discussion revealed there were areas throughout Cygnet where

Images.

- ▲ (opposite page) Seating and playground at Burtons Reserve with the Scout Hall in the distance
- ▼ (opposite page) Fitness equipment and seating along Agnes Rivulet in Burtons Reserve

connectivity was limited. This resulted in physical disconnection in the town and reduced accessibility for some people. In particular, the lack of connectivity between current footpaths and other infrastructure was a concern.

“

The new housing areas of Cygnet appear to have footpaths included but they don't always connect to existing footpaths, some abruptly end.

These two streets, so Christina and Donohoe, their footpaths don't continue. There's maybe 10 metres where, if it did, then you could actually have all of this linked, and it's suburban, quiet. It's bizarre.

Image.

▼ Footpaths along Frederick Street





This means that pedestrians are having to cross the road multiple times or walk on the roads or rough unpaved tracks as noted at the workshop and during the audit.

“ Poor connections and abrupt ending of path, multiple crossings to continue on a footpath all decrease walkability.

This also includes the path from the roundabout to the Port Cygnet Sailing Club, which stops after the sailing club requiring pedestrians to walk along the road. Furthermore, some key community locations are not currently easy for pedestrians to access. The new toilet block at the skatepark was described as a great facility, however community members felt access was obstructed by the carpark on one side.



You still can't get out the side of [the toilet block] ...you just naturally go right, but someone had parked right there. You can't go – you've got to go back around and go out the other side.

There was the perception that the local council could be doing more to prioritise pedestrian walkways and ensuring footpaths are better connected. In addition, one community member noted it was important that council ensures there is a safe alternative route for pedestrians whilst completing any footpath works.

When there is footpath works in progress often there is no alternative footpath on the other side of the road rather a narrow dirt track.

Images.

- ▲ The end of the footpath along Silver Hill Road
- ▼ After the Port Cygnet Sailing Club, pedestrians must walk alongside Lymington Road



In other locations, guttering or low quality of the pavement makes it difficult to walk. The IGA and the medical clinic along George Street were reported to have high guttering that pedestrians have to navigate.

Some of the footpaths are in terrible condition, some undulate up and down across driveways that may not be easily walked across by an older person.

In addition, community members said that there could be areas of very good footpaths followed by sections that were very poor or had no footpath present.

“ It can be so good and then you go 100 metres off and it’s terrible, and if that’s where your house is you can’t get to the good bit. So how diverse it can be straight off. And comparing Jetty Road to parts of Silver Hill, they could be different towns, it’s amazing.

Footpath quality and accessibility

The segment audit suggests that footpaths are common throughout Cygnet with six of the seven segments reported to have paved footpaths present. While five of these segments were rated as good or excellent quality, the community workshop discussion suggested that this was not an entirely accurate reflection of footpath quality throughout Cygnet. Community members said there were many locations where footpaths were impacted by overgrowth.



This part of the main road where The Top Pub is, that bit of footpath there, that is always out and overgrown and I can tell you, you cannot get a pram [past].

Images.

- ▲ Hole in pipe in front of the Cygnet School
- ▶ Cracked footpaths covered in gravel can be difficult for pedestrians to navigate



The segment is all good condition footpath until the school.

As a result of poor footpath quality and inadequate footpath connectivity, community members felt accessibility was limited for some people. A lack of paved footpaths and steep paths were deemed unsuitable for people who use a mobility device. For example, there is a steep section along Jetty Road and Lourdes Rise.

Lourdes Rise to George St Junction is steep and unpaved. This would be very challenging for some.

Along the main street, there are no clear crossing points which leads to difficulty getting across Mary Street, particularly when there is increased traffic making visibility limited.

“

The junction near Frederick Street footpath ramps do not connect or line up.

I completed this segment with a pram, but I would consider myself fit and agile. Most of the road crossings are very difficult with poor path quality and connections.

Safety

Safety also emerged as an issue impacting on walkability. Along the main street, there are limited crossings and minimal signage to make vehicles aware of pedestrians.

“

I couldn't find much at all saying [Mary Street] is a pedestrian zone... there was only really one [crossing] – you know the one of the generic small people, kids crossing, that was only up near the school really.

Without clear crossing spaces, getting across Mary Street has been increasingly difficult particularly as the road curves slightly, limiting visibility. In addition, many people have noticed an increase in traffic along Mary Street which exacerbates this.

“

It's got so much busier. I mean 15 years ago it was quiet. You never used the car park, you'd always just park outside the shop, but not now.

[Traffic can be] constant so you've got to wait for 10 minutes, go, and have another coffee.

There are parts where it's difficult to see oncoming traffic.

The crossing at the Lymington Road/Channel Highway roundabout was also difficult for pedestrians with prams as it is 'too narrow'. Residents suggest there have been a number of accidents and near-misses.

“

It's a miracle there hasn't been an accident yet.

At times, the lack of crossings combines with the lack of pedestrian signage to create potential vehicle hazards. Community members described times where vehicles will slow down for pedestrians but unintentionally cause dangers for other vehicles.



Image.

▲ Looking north along Mary Street in Cygnet

“

It is so awkward when people see the pram and then they try and slow down for you, but then you see the car slamming into the back of them and you just think ‘ooh’. Just needs to be clear, like I wasn’t asking for you to stop.

Safety was also an issue in areas where pedestrians must walk along the road. In particular, the route along Jetty Road is beautiful but considered very dangerous as it is narrow, and vehicles often travel fast along it.

Half the segment is very walkable, and the other is walkable at your own risk.

Most school children will catch the bus to school for both social and safety reasons, including those who live nearby.

“

Depending on time-of-day walking along the main road can be unpleasant and feel too close to traffic.

Some people would drive because it’s so dangerous, and if you can’t move quickly, you’d have to drive because it would be too dangerous.



This is similar for residents who live on the eastern side of town along the Channel Highway (after the roundabout). Although a footpath is present, the walking path was considered not as pleasant due to the proximity and speed of traffic.



P1: It's almost like people hit the roundabout and then they're like –

P2: Woosh.

P1: 'Right, I'm out of town, I'm going' and they just [speed up].

In addition, the roads were considered particularly unsafe for cyclists as there are no dedicated bike paths. Although many cyclists do ride bikes in Cygnet (and there is now the annual Cycling Festival) many community members expressed concerns about riding on the roads.

I wouldn't even dare going down Lymington Road on my bike...I've got a bicycle and apart from George Street...there's nowhere I dare go.

For some community members, areas such as the skatepark and particular houses were avoided due to occasional anti-social behaviour. However, it was recognised during the workshop that communities need to cater for diverse community groups and needs:



P1: You need places for everybody don't you? When it disrupts maybe is...

p2: Well, the broken glass –

P3: Broken glass is not good, not using rubbish bins.

Image.

◀ (opposite) Parts of the walking track towards the sailing club run alongside Lymington Road and car parking

Lighting

Lighting has also been discussed by community members as something impacting on walkability, particularly during the winter months.

Street lighting is very limited and walking in winter when it's dark [or] very early requires personal lighting such as a head torch and high-vis apparel for safety. Street lighting in some areas may encourage more winter activity.

The lack of lighting around the town did not encourage pedestrians enough to engage in walking and other recreational activities.

Improved planning

Finally, community members also discussed the importance of strong planning to support health and physical activity throughout Cygnet. By creating strong lines of communication and sharing knowledge, the community members want to work alongside the council to make improvements to the community. There was the perception that collaboration would lead to many positive changes for Cygnet.



P1: I think collaboration. I think it is too much to ask Council to build every track. I know the finances, I know how overworked everybody is...the rates would have to go up a lot to start to deal with these things.

P2: Yeah, but if the labour is provided and –

P1: That's the thing, that's where you get the collaboration.

High-level community planning was considered important along with utilising the strengths and resources within the community to ensure effective solutions.

Priorities

During the community workshops, participants were asked which of the identified barriers they considered a priority for action. In Cygnet, the key priorities were to improve connectivity, footpaths, and general infrastructure.



Priority 1: Addressing pedestrian safety

Community members wanted to improve pedestrian safety in Cygnet, particularly along Mary Street where crossings, paths and speed limits were of concern. Ensuring a safe crossing space for pedestrians across Mary Street is a priority due to traffic and safety. There were also key places throughout the community where pedestrian safety could be improved, such as along Lymington Road.



Priority 2: Improving connectivity

Improving connectivity was identified by participants as necessary to enable community members to easily walk around Cygnet. There are some locations where a footpath will end, or paths do not link up, resulting in pedestrians needing to walk on a road or road verge or cross to an alternate footpath. In addition,

ensuring key facilities (such as the public toilets at Burtons Reserve) have clear and non-obstructed connections are also important. This was particularly important along Mary Street where it is difficult for pedestrians to cross due to limited visibility and no clear crossings. Community members also discussed the potential benefits of a bike/walk trail between Cygnet and Huonville (15km away) to increase connectivity between the two towns.



Priority 3: Improving footpaths and general infrastructure

Improving and better maintaining general infrastructure was identified as a key priority to support walking around Cygnet. This includes ensuring footpaths are good quality and do not have overgrowth impacting use. Other infrastructure including pedestrian signage and lighting could help to improve pedestrian safety and enjoyment.

Images.

- ▲ *(opposite)* Carparking along Lymington Road. After the sailing club, the walking trail ends with pedestrians are required to walk on the road.
- ▼ *(opposite)* Car park along Mary Street



Possible Solutions

During the workshop participants were asked to consider possible ways to address the identified priorities. The following presents the solutions discussed by community members to address the key challenges in Cygnet. It was recognised that some solutions could be ‘very simple’:

“

You don't have to reinvent the wheel; you just have to implement strategies that have already worked.

Importantly, community members felt the need to ensure solutions focused on enhancing the positive community culture in Cygnet.

[Cygnet is] going to grow... So, it's about how you maintain [the sense of] community, and this sort of thing. Making it walkable is a key thing to keep the town as that sort of place.

Footpaths

Community members felt improvements to footpaths around Cygnet would help to address connectivity and safety concerns. This includes upgrading the surface of some paved footpaths, extending sections of footpaths and connecting footpaths with key infrastructure (e.g. walking trails) and amenities (e.g. public toilet block).

You see there's the GP...some sort of link in through there I think would be really good.

Images.

- ▶ *(opposite)* Access track from Lourdes Rise to George Street
- ▼ Footpaths along Charles Street







Image.

- ▲ Mountable kerb for pedestrians to cross along Mary Street

Upgrading older infrastructure, particularly locations with high guttering was also discussed.

Community members also felt some new connections between current walking paths could ensure there is a connected network of paths throughout Cygnet. A bigger, longer-term solution of developing a shared footpath and cycleway between Cygnet and Huonville was also discussed.

Traffic calming

Adding traffic calming measures along Mary Street was discussed as a key priority. This includes exploring options for a safe space for pedestrians to cross, signage and reducing the speed.



I think there's quite a big elderly population [who] take a long time to cross the road, and you need to have education, traffic calming, a whole lot of indicators to say, 'Look, this is a pedestrian area, slow down, chill out, it's only going to take you a minute.'

Community members felt that having signage at high-risk points this would help to reduce the number of accidents and near-misses.

In addition, community members felt that reducing the speed along Mary Street could help to increase the safety of pedestrians. While community members were aware of the potential new street development, there was recognition that this may be some time away.

We need to slow down the traffic for sure. But the new street will get great improvement.

“

Lowering the speed on Mary Street would be great. It's what, 50 at the moment? The school is just there, these kids they run round.

Other solutions

Discussion focused on making some small improvements at Burtons Reserve to further support locals to utilise the space. Increased directional and distance signage was considered a useful way for people to plan walking routes around the community. This could further support the walking map leaflet developed by the Cygnet Association. In addition, a simple solution to improve the connectivity and create a separation between the toilet block and the carpark was proposed:

“

P1: A few BFRs, big, fat rocks.

P2: And then you get your artists to paint the rocks and then they become the town's rocks.

The need for public toilets at the school oval was also discussed. Currently, the oval is available for public use outside of school hours, however, there are no publicly accessible toilets or changerooms.

Whilst there is lighting along Mary Street, residents felt that more streetlights could increase people walking around Cygnet. This

was particularly important during the winter months when days are shorter.

There is also the potential for community and council to collaborate to create a community resource of the physical activity resources available in Cygnet. Many community members were unaware of the 'mystery gym' (the Cygnet Sports Centre) operated by the Council at Cygnet Primary School. Ensuring all members of the community are aware of programs available could also support engagement in walking and other physical activities.

“

P1: There's the sports centre at the school, there is a room at the end that is a gym –

P2: Oh, is there?

P3: I didn't even know that.

Planning and collaboration

Finally, community members discussed the importance of high-level planning to ensure solutions that align with relevant strategies and policies.

There's been a lot of ad-hoc planning, and nobody's really focused on linking it all together.

As mentioned, community members felt that improved planning and collaboration could help to ensure targeted action whilst also considering the strengths and resources that already exist in Cygnet.

Conclusion

Cygnets is a town in the south-east of Tasmania with a range of community facilities that support walking and other physical activities. Burtons Reserve was considered an excellent space for recreation with walking trails, a park, toilets, skatepark, fitness equipment and a playground available. There were other key locations including the Cygnets Recreation Ground and the indoor courts/ovals at Cygnets Primary School. The audits completed by the Community Champions and Citizen Scientists highlight the valuable assets in Cygnets, as well as areas that could be improved.

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

- Adding traffic calming measures such as increased signage, reduced speed and pedestrian crossing spaces.
- Improving connectivity focusing on better connecting paths and other community amenities throughout Cygnets.

- Upgrading footpaths, particularly areas with unsafe surfaces.
- Improving the general infrastructure around the town, including lighting and rocks or similar to separate between the Burtons Reserve public toilet/carpark.

A range of possible solutions would help to address these priorities including traffic calming measures, upgrades to some paved footpaths, extending sections of footpaths, increased directional and distance signage, a public toilet at the school oval and street lighting.

Image.

- ▶ (opposite) Looking along Slab Road towards Mary Street



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