



# MOLONG TOWN CENTRE ISSUES PAPER

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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To experience the charm of Molong you must visit everything in its town centre, from restaurants, cafes, shops, galleries and pubs. Everyone is welcome.

Molong is renowned for its fine wines, wool and beef cattle. Set against an easterly vista of Molong Creek and rolling hills above, Molong's Main-street (Bank Street) showcases this productive landscape and is a streetscape of considerable historic and architectural significance.

Council has committed funding to develop the Molong Town Centre Plan. This plan aims to engage with stakeholders to develop new ideas and urban renewal projects to make the centre more attractive to a range of stakeholders.

Following the public exhibition of the Molong Town Centre Issues Paper and consideration of issues raised, Council intends to engage an urban designer to work with interested members of the community to design meaningful / beneficial improvements as part of the development of the Molong Town Centre Plan.

Without these investments Molong's Town Centre will continue to be challenged by other nearby centres for shopping and services, which could lead to deterioration of town centre assets and appeal.

Public exhibition of the Molong Town Centre Issues Paper and consideration of feedback will be directly followed by the preparation of the draft Molong Town Centre Plan.



# 1. INTRODUCTION

Cabonne Shire Council and the Molong Advancement Group agree that it is time to plan for the next phase of the development of the Molong Town Centre.

Similar to its establishment, railway development and post war phases, Molong Town Centre is facing significant challenges, borne about by our inextricably connected world which is changing the way we communicate, work, travel, shop and seek enjoyment in life.

Town planning is placing more emphasis on centres that serve both local and visitor markets. This is particularly important in regional NSW where resident populations are relatively stable and attracting new markets is a challenge.

To grow the economy in Molong Town Centre requires consideration of the needs of existing and emerging markets as well as an emphasis on features that clearly identifies the centre and maximises its appeal.

The Molong Town Centre Issues Paper has been prepared as a precursor to the preparation of the Molong Town Centre Plan. The aim of the issues paper is to explore the relevant issues that need to be considered with community members, so as to better inform the development of the Molong Town Centre Plan.

Public exhibition of the Molong Town Centre Issues Paper and consideration of feedback will be directly followed by the preparation of the draft Molong Town Centre Plan.



## 2. WHY A NEW PLAN?

Australia's retailers continue to work through the 2019-20 financial year under challenging conditions. Some of the pressures faced by local businesses in Molong include:

- Growing access to private motor vehicles and improvements to vehicle comfort continues to influence people's appetite to travel to access goods and services.
- Growing access to on-line shopping services such as EBAY is offering cheaper and quicker retailing to customers all over Australia.
- Shrinking market share to larger commercial centres such as Orange and Dubbo that offer higher order goods and services to customers.
- Rising operating costs (rents, wages, electricity and other overhead costs).
- Just-in-time freight services, favouring larger scale companies and franchises that take out the middle service provider, which would traditionally have operated at Molong.
- Reduced revenue base, as regular customers continue to limit discretionary spending in town as they work through a drought.
- Reduced dependence on physical stores due to online marketing and direct freight services.

Strategies are required to sustain Molong Town Centre as a whole, which will largely be achieved by securing a resilient customer base through all circumstances.

Any significant increases in the customer base at Molong will likely come from new markets, such as visitors from nearby centres as well as people travelling through the region or visiting friends and family or to attend an event. To support future commercial growth and activity in Molong will therefore require greater consideration of the key issues that influence these new markets to turn their attention to Molong Town Centre.

Part of the appeal of Molong Town Centre is its rich architectural heritage. Many of the buildings in Bank Street (the town's Main-street) date back to the 1870s and help tell the incredibly interesting story of early settlement in the area. Combined with easy-to-negotiate roads, footpaths, parking and commercial premises, the Molong Town Centre has potential to serve a much larger customer base.

A new plan that focuses on urban renewal, place making, parking and wayfinding projects are worthwhile investments for Cabonne Shire Council and the wider community. These projects should aim to improve the attraction, amenity and ease of access throughout Molong Town Centre. They will benefit existing residents and businesses as well as new and emerging markets.

## 3. PLAN MAKING APPROACH

The Molong Town Centre Plan will be undertaken in the following stages:

1

### Molong Town Centre Issues Paper

The public exhibition of the Molong Town Centre Issues Paper is the first official step in realising the possibilities and opportunities of the centre through an urban renewal approach. Feedback from the exhibition of the Issues Paper will be used to inform subsequent stages and brief an urban designer to assist with the Inquiry-by-Design Workshops.

2

### Inquiry-by-Design Workshops

Inquiry-by-Design Workshops will be organised by Council to identify potential projects and programs. The workshops will be facilitated by an urban designer with experience in Town Centre planning. The aim of the workshops will be to explore ways to create more attractive public spaces in Molong Town Centre. The findings of the workshops will help the Project Team prepare the Molong Town Centre Plan.

3

### Molong Town Centre Plan

The Molong Town Centre Plan will provide an urban design plan for Bank Street, as well as other key sites that underpin Town Centre objectives. The Molong Town Centre Plan will document the tasks and projects proposed to be tackled over the next 10 year period. It is in this document that a number of tangible actions (new projects and programs) will be decided upon. The Plan will be placed on public exhibition to gain important feedback on proposed actions.



## 4. VISION & OPPORTUNITY

The vision for the Molong Town Centre Plan could be:

*“Molong Town Centre is a place to relax and recharge your batteries, with its beautiful heritage buildings, quality footpaths, easy parking servicing and an attractive array of active street frontages and colourful spaces.”*

The Molong Town Centre Plan will focus on a number of urban renewal projects, involving partnerships possibly between Cabonne Shire Council, local businesses, Molong Advancement Group, State government agencies and interested members of the community. These projects will be aimed at improving the attraction, amenity and growth potential of Molong Town Centre. They will benefit existing residents and businesses and are also aimed at appealing to new and emerging markets such as visitors to the centre, markets and events.

It is intended that the finalised Molong Town Centre Plan will be the primary guiding document to programme Council's own work to upgrade the centre of Molong.

## 5. TOWN CENTRE ANALYSIS

Molong Town Centre is unique in terms of its layout, character and functioning. Greater understanding of the constraints and opportunities of this 'footprint' can assist in formulating new plans for the future.

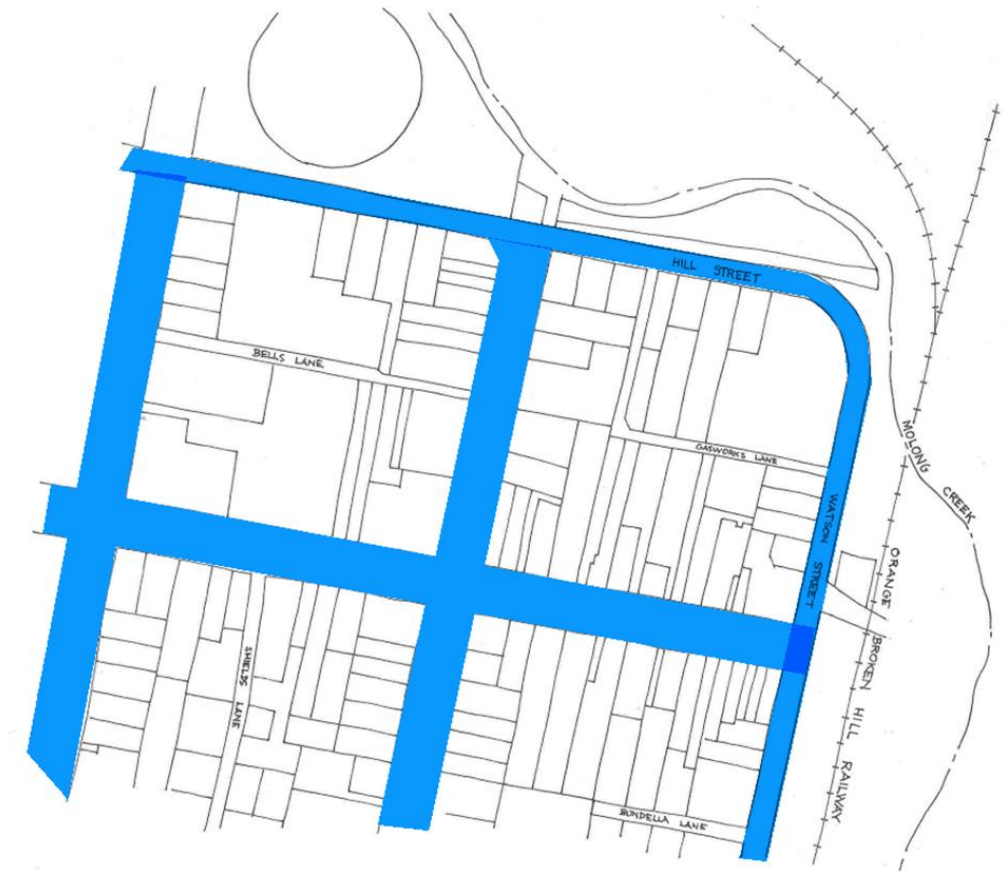
This section briefly analyses some of the key elements of the Town Centre.

### Molong Town Centre Street Layout

Molong Town Centre benefits from a traditional urban grid pattern (largely rectangular blocks and right angle intersections) which aids traffic circulation and produces focal areas and distinct character areas between street blocks.

Bank Street is the Main-street in Molong Town Centre, and runs in an east-west direction.

When asked where the centre of town is, most people have indicated east of the Post Office in Bank Street. This area comprises the mainstay of retail activity in town.





## Extent of the Molong Town Centre

Business activity in Molong is roughly contained within a relatively small precinct along Bank Street, bordered by Edward Street to the west and the Mitchell Highway to the east.



## Approaches to Molong Town Centre

Molong's Town Centre Bank Street is mainly approached from the Mitchell Highway, north-west and south-east. The town centre can also be approach from Edward Street.

A detailed description of the approaches to Bank Street is provided below:

### Northern Approach

The approach to the Molong's Town Centre from the north starts from the approach to town along the Mitchell Highway.

At the intersection of Edward Street and the Mitchell Highway, you have entered the Molong urban area, boasting a mix of commercial, residential and open space land-use. There is no clear Way-finding material advising motorists of opportunities to stop and visit Molong Town Centre at this intersection.

Driving further east / south-east, the Molong Creek, Railway Station and commercial land-uses are present (motel, service station, café and caravan park).

The intersection of Bank Street and the Mitchell Highway is the gateway to Molong Town Centre. There is no clear Way-finding material advising motorists of opportunities to stop and visit the centre at this intersection.

Driving past the intersection, motorists are presented with a brief glimpse of Bank Street, with a number of historic two-storied and single storey buildings and established street trees being visible. Urban infrastructure, such as light poles, overhead power lines and street furniture are incongruous from this view. Car and long vehicle parking appears limited from this view of Bank Street. There is limited parking for cars and long vehicles in Watson Street, but these spaces are separated / disassociated from the commercial precinct.

Driving past the shopping precinct, grain storage silos and the railway are on the left and dwellings and isolated commercial / industrial land-use is on the right (west).

### Southern Approach

The approach to the Molong Town Centre from the south starts along the Mitchell Highway as Molong Township is approached.

The intersection of Bank Street and the Mitchell Highway is the gateway to Molong Town Centre. There is no clear way-finding material advising motorists of opportunities to stop and visit the centre at this intersection.

Driving past the intersection, motorists are present with a brief glimpse of the commercial centre, with the Freemason's Hotel being the dominant feature at the intersection. Urban infrastructure, such as light poles, overhead power lines appear and street furniture are incongruous from this view.

Car parking appears minimal and there appears to be limited opportunities to stop, particularly for long vehicles. There is limited parking for cars and long vehicles in Watson Street, but these spaces are separated / disassociated from the commercial precinct.

Driving past the shopping precinct, the Caravan Park and open spaces along the Molong Creek are attractive. The service station, café and motel provide convenient opportunities for motorists to stop and take a break. Car parking appears limited, random and haphazard along this section of the Mitchell Highway.

### Western Approach

The centre of Molong is also approached from the west via Edward Street, which appears to be used mainly by residents of Molong or traffic familiar with the local conditions.

The approach is characterised by urban dwellings and community facilities (Council Chambers, Medical Centre) and open space. Views of the Main-street are intimate and appealing.

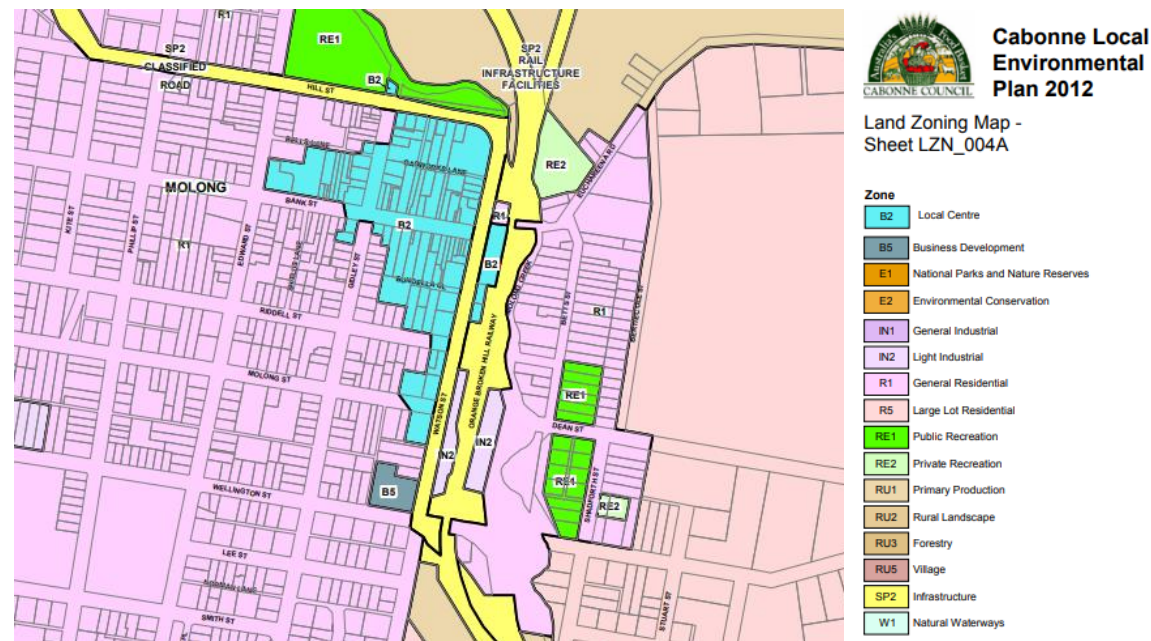
The intersection of Edward Street and Bank Street is the logical western end / main crossing point / potential gateway / way-finding destination.

The following map shows the main elements that feature when driving through Molong Town Centre.



## Land-use in Molong Town Centre

The Town Centre of Molong is made up of a number of land-uses, which all contribute to the attraction and character of the centre. The following map is an extract from the Cabonne Local Environmental Plan 2012 and shows the current zoning applying to Molong Town Centre and immediate surrounds.



Source: Cabonne Local Environmental Plan 2012

The Molong Town Centre is primarily zoned B2 Local Centre, which strongly supports local businesses in the Central Business District (CBD) of Molong. Public recreation and general residential zones surround the CBD. A more detailed description of the current land-uses that comprise Molong Town Centre is provided in this section.

### COMMERCIAL

A variety of commercial land-uses are located in Molong Town Centre, largely centred on the eastern section of Bank Street, between the Mitchell Highway and Gidley Street. The main commercial land-uses include a supermarket, various food shops, specialty retail stores selling clothing, shoes and other personalised products, chemist, accountant, medical practices, real estate office, post office, newsagency, bank and hotels. Wider afield to the north of the centre are rural supplies, motel, Caravan Park, fuel and mechanical services. Cabonne Council's Administration Centre is located towards the western end of the centre.

### SIGNIFICANT OPEN SPACE

The Molong Village Green is the only public open space in Molong Town Centre. This public green space is located on the north-west corner of Bank and Gidley streets.

Dr Ross Memorial Recreation Ground and the Molong Swimming Pool are located north of Molong Town Centre, fronting the Mitchell Highway. To the east of the Mitchell Highway (and across the railway line and Molong Creek) is the Molong Bowling Club. These facilities are attractors for community events and public recreation activities. The Molong Caravan Park (located directly north-east of Molong Town Centre) appears as open space from the Mitchell Highway and provides accommodation right in the heart of the Town Centre.

The Molong Creek is located on the urban fringe of town, approximately 100-200 metres north and east of the town centre. This riparian area provides significant green space relief to the built-up areas of town, and opportunity for passive and structured recreation.

### SURROUNDING RESIDENTIAL

Residential dwellings border parts of the Molong Town Centre and provide interest, passive surveillance and activity in and around the centre.

## Traffic and Parking

A description of parking available in the Molong Town Centre is provided below. Further investigation of parking locations and pedestrian flow paths would assist in understanding traffic and parking issues.

### *Car Parking*

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The mainstay of parking in Molong Town Centre is currently provided as public parking within Bank Street via reverse angle parking either side of the road. Provision is made for both short and long term stays to be accommodated in the Town Centre. Other side streets are also used by motorists to access the town centre.

Parking appears adequate for daily needs of staff and visitors. There are a number of vehicle entrances off streets that appear to be infrequently used. These driveways erode potential parking in the centre and there may be merit in exploring whether they are required to be maintained.

There are limited off-street parking facilities. An area north of Bank Street is used as an informal car park.

Parking would be in demand during busy times, such as Saturday mornings and during events.

### *Disabled Parking*

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Limited disabled parking spaces are currently located in the Town Centre of Molong. There is no disabled parking readily visible within off-street parking areas / car parks on private land.

### *Long Vehicle Parking*

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There is no dedicated long vehicle parking in the Molong Town Centre, nor is it likely justified given the priority for reverse angle parking to meet the parking needs of the centre. Trucks and long recreational vehicles tend to park along the Mitchell Highway and side streets.

There are limited sign-posted loading zones for retail and commercial services in Bank Street.

## Pedestrian Movement and Pavements

The Molong Town Centre has two main pavement types; concrete and paving on most footpaths and bitumen seal on streets, laneways and some footpaths.

Footpath pavements are generally in good condition along streets. Evidence of footpath surface failure (particularly lifting of paved edges and large cracks) can be observed along some street sections. All these surfaces need to be maintained to high standards to provide safe and hardwearing surfaces for all pedestrians in all weather conditions and at all times of the day.

To achieve safe road conditions and an inclusive centre, provision must be made for less able and more vulnerable pedestrians (generally older residents, children or a person with a disability). Preliminary investigation reveals limited crossing points for pedestrian to connect to both sides of the Main-street. Tactile ground surface indicators (TGSi) are generally absent from intersections in the Town Centre. The design and condition of kerb ramps can also be an issue limiting pedestrian movement throughout the centre. The alignment, grade, levels and surface condition of kerb ramps all need careful review to ensure they are suitable for all users.

Further investigation of crossing points, suitable for all users, is suggested in the Inquiry-by-Design workshops.

## Street Assets

### Street Lights

Up until the late 1980's, Bank Street formed part of the Mitchell Highway route. The street lights installed in Molong Town Centre were therefore designed for motor vehicle drivers travelling along the main road environment, rather than for pedestrians. These lights are quite tall and provide general luminance throughout the Town Centre.

Lower to the ground pedestrian lights are generally not installed in urban streets around the Town Centre. The addition of pedestrian lights would provide greater luminance at pedestrian level, which is important for increasing actual and perceived safety along the street network.

### Street Trees

Bank Street is well endowed with street trees. The Town Centre appears less barren than other centres in the region where street trees are not well established. Facing hotter climate conditions, it may be timely to introduce additional trees at key locations in the Town Centre; species that complements existing street trees and provides more cooling shade and green spaces in summer months.

### Street furniture

A range of styles and forms of seats, litter bins, planter boxes, bollards, and signs are found throughout the Molong Town Centre. The different styles of planter boxes and seating tend to differentiate along different areas of the Town Centre. Seating varies between modern metal street seating and older wooden style seating.

There is little consistency of appearance in street furniture and the style of most furniture is dated in appearance.

There is additional colourful table and chair sets on the street seating supplied by local cafes.

### Services and Infrastructure

Streets in town have overhead power lines either side of the road. Bank Street has underground power and the streetscape remains uncluttered with overhead lines. Water mains, sewerage mains, stormwater pipes and telecommunications are also located underground within the footpath areas.

### Public Art

There is a general absence of public artwork in the Molong Town Centre. There are a number of activity / character areas in the centre where the surrounding built form lacks interest or is showing signs of deterioration. Public artwork could be incorporated in a variety of forms in these areas to create a strong and inviting sense of place. It would be a good opportunity to showcase the skill of local talent, further developing the strong identity within Molong.



## Built Form

Molong Town Centre exhibits a mix of architectural styles that portray the evolution of the town. Commercial buildings on both sides of Bank Street provide a richness of built form in the centre.

There are a number of Victorian and interwar era buildings that make significant positive contributions to the streetscape. Several buildings retain timbered verandahs, which positively influence the character of the Main-street as well as provide opportunities for shade, shelter, motor scooter and bicycle parking and outdoor dining.

The Freemason Hotel is a dominant and easily identifiable building at the eastern end of the Town Centre, fronting both Bank Street and the Mitchell Highway. This landmark building is two storeys with a long timber verandah.

A heritage incentive scheme and heritage advisory service has been established by Council to assist with small-scale built form restoration projects and urban design matters.



## Activity Generators

Molong Town Centre generates the most activity in town. It is where locals and visitors come to collect daily provisions, eat and drink at pubs and cafes as well as attend events and utilise community facilities.

Dr Ross Memorial Recreation Ground and the Molong Swimming Pool, located directly north of the Town Centre, also attract significant patrons at certain times, including weekend markets and during structured sporting activities, and to use public toilets, barbecues and picnic areas at the park ground.

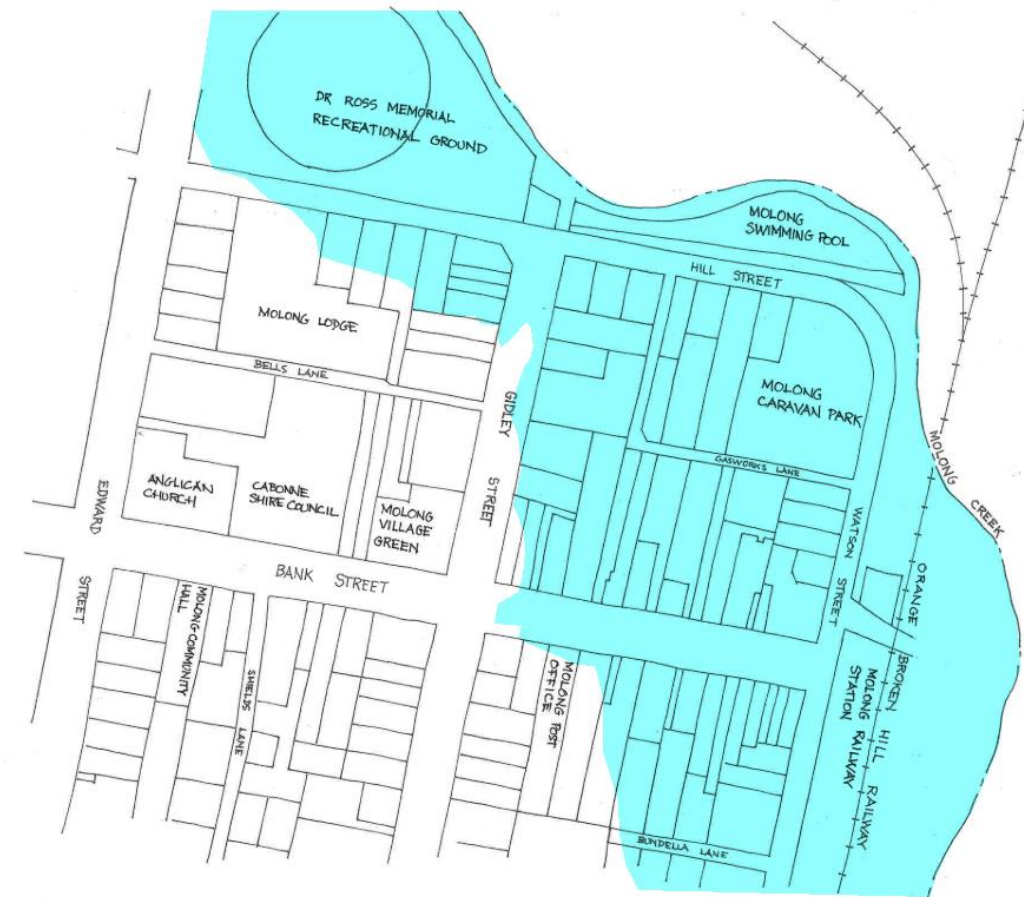
Other facilities that border the town centre, such as the Cabonne Council Administration Centre and Town Library, the Molong Caravan Park, motel and various churches and community facilities also attract visitors and contribute to the vibrancy of the centre. There are also numerous clubs, playing fields and other attractors in the wider Molong area, such as the RSL Club, Golf Club, Bowling Club, Pony Club and camp draft arena, Showground and sporting fields.

Schools, manufacturing industries and other employment generators, such as the Molong Health Service, are not large enough to function as major activity generators. However, they are critical services to the local community.



## Flooding

The Town Centre of Molong is subject to flooding of the Molong Creek. The approximate extent of the recorded flooding is shown on the following map.





## 6. KEY ISSUES

This section explores the key issues underpinning the future growth and prosperity of Molong Town Centre. It also introduces fundamental town planning principles that need to be understood to arrive at the right mix of options that have the greatest potential to optimally position the centre.

### Minimising Flood Risk

Part of the Molong Town Centre is affected by flooding of the Molong Creek. A number of historic factors influenced the location of Molong Town Centre, including the benefits of the railway and a water supply close to town. Major flooding has occurred in recent times in 1956, 1990 and 2005.

Until the impacts of creek and stormwater flooding are robustly addressed, there could be expected a diminished appetite for upgrades to flood affected building and spaces.

A Molong Floodplain Management Study has been prepared, with a range of possible measures examined to find those most suited to Molong, based on economic, technical, social and environmental criteria, and the likely level of community support for each measure.

Flood management options and solutions may need to be revisited by experienced and practical engineers as part of the Molong Town Centre Plan.

### Maintaining the Built Environment

A number of prominent buildings in the Molong town centre were built in the Victorian era or the interwar period. While these older style buildings provide interest and appeal in the Mainstreet, they also present some challenges due to their age, condition and compliance with building code and disability access matters.

Managing heritage buildings throughout Australia has often been seen as a sensitive issue. Today, best practice management focuses on efforts to ensure heritage buildings are maintained over time, while allowing changes necessary to adapt buildings to new uses.

Incentive funding for building restoration and access to premises are important initiatives to stimulate investment in the built form.

Property owners, real estate agents, architects, heritage advisors, planners and builders appear to be working closely on some projects to ensure heritage buildings continue to make strong contributions to the Molong Town Centre. Recent building awning upgrades in Molong Mainstreet provide positive examples of this being achieved.



## Stimulating Property Investment

The property investment sector underpins the Molong Town Centre and is potentially one of the main drivers of change for a more active and attractive centre.

Whilst Council can undertake improvements to the public domain, it is the cumulative effect of the built form that often creates the strongest impression of the wealth and vitality of the Town Centre. Shop proprietors can make significant improvements to their signage and internal spaces, but the property owner has control over much of the appearance of the external façade of the building.

A significant proportion of real estate in the Molong Town Centre is owned by private investors and not large corporations. Major refurbishments of existing premises are big decisions for these property owners and are largely governed by their confidence on a return on investment.

At present, decisions to upgrade premises in the Molong Town Centre appear to be largely driven by maintenance issues and tenancy requests. There are few existing premises currently undergoing major refurbishments. The Telegraph Hotel is planning a major refurbishment, which should not only benefit hotel customers but the Mains-street as a whole due to the positive visual façade improvements facing Bank Street. These types of initiatives should be supported by the wider community, as they provide leadership for other property owners to upgrade their properties. In time they should also demonstrate the benefits of extra expenditure in lifting rents and property values.

Greater focus on government policies that increase appetite for property owners and businesses to invest in building refurbishments and maintenance is considered vital in the current context. Council can play a particularly important role in encouraging property reinvestment, as the authority responsible for administering most of the regularly framework relating to planning, building regulation, heritage and footpath trading in the Town Centre.

Resolution of the flooding issues in lower Bank Street should be a priority for the Molong Town Centre Plan. Additional Main-street beautification works could also act as a catalyst for private sector building upgrades.



## Consolidating Activity & Land-use

The Molong Town Centre has historically comprised a mix of commercial and residential accommodation.

To create a successful town centre, activity needs to be contained in such a manner that opportunities for exchange are promoted, pedestrian movement is easy and a sense of conviviality is harnessed.

Activity is achieved through:

- A connected centre; one that is comfortable to walk throughout.
- Active building frontages and general business vitality.
- Creating environmentally attractive / comfortable streets and public spaces.
- Providing appropriate amenities and infrastructure.

Land-use planning under the Cabonne Local Environmental Plan 2012 reinforces Molong Town Centre as the principal area of retail activity, which is appropriate given the current competition pressures from other nearby commercial centres.

Creation of new commercial precincts outside the Molong Town Centre is not recommended in the current context. However, strategies that encourage residential uses, bed and breakfast accommodation and businesses normally related to home occupations and industries, such as micro-breweries, may be worthy of consideration in the Town Centre. More residents and small businesses in the Town Centre have potential to generate a micro-economy for products and services.

To achieve a vibrant / active Town Centre may require more enterprising and flexible planning guidelines and possibly a real estate sector interested in maximising floor space usage.



Source: City of Kalamundra

## Defining the Activity Centre

Key to providing a cohesive activity centre is to define its core. The core is the centre of action, the central meeting place and the area people are naturally drawn to. It will be the magnet of activity in the Molong Town Centre. It should contain a mix of activities that allows for activation over extended periods (throughout the day and into the evening).

Activities must therefore be appropriate to the core and build on each other – retail, entertainment, lifestyle, necessary amenities and services, dining and short stay functions are some of the activities appropriate to town cores.

The built form within the core must also have orientation and character that promotes activity – in this way the core is defined, easily recognisable and the logical heart of Molong. Strategies that encourage the enhancement of building façades and shop windows as well as appropriate outdoor advertising signage that makes strong / positive contributions to the Main-street as a whole are worthy of consideration.

Commercial facilities and services that cater to the visitor market also need to be clearly identified / sign-posted. This will allow visitors to access the central shopping precinct and amenities of the town. A signage plan could be developed outlining the signs required for tourist attractions, parking, public amenities and unauthorised sites if required.

## Bridging the Gap

Molong's Town Centre can be difficult to cross when traffic is busy, particularly for more vulnerable pedestrians.

Molong Township is already challenged by nearby regional centres offering more variety and competitive goods and services. It is critical that Molong's Main-street becomes more cohesive, and businesses both sides of Bank Street become more physically connected.

Actions that connect both sides of the Molong Town Centre for pedestrians (especially more vulnerable pedestrians) are important to the viability of the centre. 'Walkability' defines the commercial heart of the Town Centre, so it follows that pedestrian facilities should facilitate movement across both sides of the Main-street.



## Providing the Right Support Services

Choosing the right facilities to support target markets is essential to ensure that public and community investments will pay dividends.

Providing easy access to parking and pedestrian movement throughout the Town Centre is important for local community members visiting the centre on a daily / weekly basis. Providing gateways and Way-finding signage to parking areas (including long vehicle parking) as well as parklands and public toilets in the Town Centre are important for meeting expectations of new markets.

For local and visitor markets, the following projects may have merit:

- Public car parks around the periphery of the Bank Street retail core.
- Disabled car parking spaces near the retail core and specific land-uses such as Council Administration Centre, Library, pharmacies etc.
- Long vehicle parking for parking of caravans, boats and longer vehicles which are otherwise difficult to accommodate. Parking spaces need to line-marked and located in areas providing easy access to the town shopping precinct and amenities.
- Amenities - clean public toilets providing for all users.
- Directional signage - both for motorists and pedestrians.

## Supporting Existing Markets

Molong is becoming renowned for its country town ambience.

While the Molong Town Centre Plan must primarily serve the needs of the local community, there may be merit in marketing the appeal of Molong to the burgeoning inland visitor market sector, which in turn could support existing / new local businesses. Strategies could include the following:

- Marketing the appeal of the Molong Town Centre, quarterly community markets as well as other attractions in the wider region in tourism brochures and websites, special events information and on signage at the approaches to the Town Centre and further afield.
- Undertaking a more comprehensive Way-finding signage approach to key destinations in Molong Town Centre.

It is important that the Molong Town Centre forms a dominant theme for the new marketing approach. Tourist and visitor markets choose to experience distinct and inviting centres. Convenience, comfort and safety are also key ingredients in catering to visitor markets. A major challenge for Molong is to inject purpose, quality and art into the public spaces and the built form to make the centre as interesting and attractive as possible.

Key to marketing is the need for Molong to have its own unique identity, showcasing its positive characteristics and ensuring that local businesses are able to adopt / support this brand into the future. Molong's shopping precinct is characteristic and an appealing / comfortable environment for new activity. So too are the community markets and other events at Dr Ross Memorial Recreation Ground and the Molong Swimming Pool.



## Exploring New Markets

When population and household growth are not expected to significantly increase in the medium term, the challenge for commercial centres to remain strong and viable is to look for other potential markets, innovations and / or business models.

While the strongest market for Molong's Town Centre is the local community (town residents, nearby smaller villages and surrounding farms), there is merit in exploring opportunities to attract more visitors to Molong. Likely visitor markets are:

- Weekend Visits – where residents from the surrounding region make a special trip to visit the centre to catch-up with friends and / or relatives over a coffee or meal.
- Events Tourism – where visitors are invited / encouraged to attend town events, recreational activities and festivals.
- RV Travelling Tourism – where improvements are made to encourage RV travellers to make Molong a destination / stop-over, as part of their touring holiday.
- Specific catered visitations – such as scheduled bus visits to the Yarn Market Craft Cottage.

'Baby Boomers' will reach their peak by 2021 and the RV market will continue to grow as travelling tourism is a very popular retirement activity. Tapping into the RV travelling market has potential for Molong, given its close proximity to established north-south touring routes.

The burgeoning Gippsland to Queensland route via Cooma, Cowra and Molong is worthy of further exploration. RV motorists travelling between Victoria, NSW and Qld tend to choose the quieter driving routes over the Pacific and Newell Highway. Centrally located places that allow RV travellers to restock with water, dump sewage tanks and experience clean showers and toilet facilities are popular with RV travellers. Utilising appropriate communication channels, such as the CMCA website, can assist in promoting the RV facilities.



## Using the Town Centre Night & Day

There are some opportunities for some businesses to extend their operations into evening and weekend periods to service residents, tourists and other visitors to the Town Centre.

Night-time land-uses include hotels, clubs, restaurants, cafes, entertainment, theatre, festivals, music, pop-up shops and food stalls, markets, art / culture and some retail stores. These types of land-uses could be explored to determine if they are viable in the Molong Town Centre.

Local support of night time traders is vital to creating sustainable night-time economies, especially in off-peak periods where there are few tourists and visitors.

There is no 24 hour fuel available in Molong, which has an influence on travelling markets.

Improvements to night-time lighting in the Town Centre and lighting of events and character areas could support the growth of the night-time economy.





## 7. TAKING THE NEXT STEPS

Following the Molong Town Centre Issues Paper, it is intended to run a number of workshops to explore ideas and urban design concepts that may assist the aims and objectives of the Molong Town Centre Plan. This section introduces the Inquiry-by-Design Workshops intended to be run in 2020.

### Charter for the Inquiry-by-Design Workshops

At the core of the Molong Town Centre Plan will be a series of Inquiry-by-Design Workshops. These community workshops will be assisted by an urban designer to explore ideas and options that could make the town centre more vibrant. The main aims of the Inquiry-by-Design Workshops are:

- Raise awareness of the principles of best practice urban design.
- Explore and demonstrate how urban design techniques can be applied in the Molong context.
- Explore and develop ideas, solutions and outcomes to redesign public spaces.

The rules applying to the Inquiry-by-Design workshops are simple, as follows:

- Everyone is welcome to participate.
- No idea is a bad idea.
- Every idea must be reasonable in the Cabonne context.
- A good idea or design concept does not guarantee its implementation.
- Council need to program what is actionable.

At the end of the Inquiry-by-Design process, a suite of recommendations will be visualised and available in the Molong Town Centre Plan. While actual sites in the Molong Town Centre will be examined and real issues will be faced, the outcomes of the Inquiry-by-Design Workshops are not necessarily binding.

