

Overview

Community Reference Groups (CRGs) were established for each Activity Centre to provide advice to the Department of Transport and Planning in developing its Activity Centre Plans. The advice was developed over 3 sessions in June 2025.

All Statements of Advice will be released publicly alongside other engagement outcomes during Phase 2 engagement planned for September 2025.

Statement of Advice – Hughesdale Station

What we value about the Activity Centre:

A summary of what CRG members believe makes the place unique and worth protecting.

The Hughesdale Activity Centre holds a special place in the hearts of its community. It is a functional, walkable, and welcoming neighbourhood that blends old and new, offering a mix of practical amenities, local charm, and strong connections to nearby green spaces. The following points highlight what the community values most about this area and why it is considered worthy of protection and careful planning.

Character and Atmosphere

- Hughesdale feels safe, small-scale, and community-oriented, with a laid-back, friendly vibe.
- Makes it easy to get around on foot or by bike.
- The area includes a mix of old and new developments, reflecting its evolving identity.
- While the main shopping strip is seen by some as lacking visual cohesion or feeling a bit tired, others appreciate its functionality and potential for renewal.
- The quieter side streets are especially valued for their charm and stronger sense of community appeal.

What Makes Hughesdale Special

- Hughesdale is known for its diverse and friendly community.
- It is highly walkable, with essential services, shops, transport, schools, and parks all within close reach.
- Its location offers convenient access to a wider network of suburbs and Melbourne's broader amenities.
- The sky rail reserve is used by locals and visitors for walking, cycling, and recreation.

Natural Environment and Open Space

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- While Hughesdale has limited green space within the Activity Centre itself, nearby parks and gardens are appreciated for offering places to relax, play, and connect.
 - The surrounding reserves and community trails help bring nature into the daily routines of residents and visitors, especially along the sky rail corridor.
 - The community values any opportunity to enhance or protect open space in and around the Centre, recognising the role it plays in wellbeing and neighbourhood appeal.

Movement and Public Space Use

- Walking and cycling are central to how people move through the area, supported by flat, accessible streets and pathways.
- Public transport is available, particularly via Hughesdale Station, though some community members note limitations in its frequency and reach of buses.
- The public realm, while generally functional, presents opportunities for improvement—more seating, shade, greenery, and gathering spaces would enhance everyday use.

Places and Landmarks We Recognise

- Key places that give Hughesdale its identity include the local Post Office, Hughesdale Station, and popular commercial spots like the pharmacy, OC Bar, and Wines on Poath.
- The Sky rail Reserve stands out as both a recreational and visual landmark, creating a linear open space used by many.
- Mural art adds colour and cultural interest, reflecting community identity and creativity.
- There is no dominant architectural style—rather, a mix of building types and eras contributes to the area’s unique, lived-in feel*

**The CRG disagreed on this point.*

Our Advice

Part A: General Advice

How do we plan for more homes in and around Hughesdale while strengthening the things that make it unique?

- Preserve and enhance what already works: Hughesdale’s walkability, access to local parks, and village feel are cherished. Any future planning must safeguard these features while accommodating more residents.
- Public spaces must grow with the population: As density increases, especially through apartment developments, accessible and quality open spaces will become crucial for community wellbeing. These areas function as “backyards” for apartment dwellers.
- Respect Hughesdale’s character: High-density development is accepted, [but it must reflect the area’s existing charm. This includes thoughtful architectural design, appropriate building materials, and diverse, human-scale streetscapes]. Note- there was disagreement within CRG on this point.
- Ensure homes are liveable for all types of residents: There is strong support for ensuring new apartments are suitable for families—this means minimum size requirements and more affordable three-bedroom options, not just premium penthouses.

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- Involve the community early: Collaborative design and planning processes are encouraged, especially when it comes to shared infrastructure, green space, and visual aesthetics.
 - Development to encourage apartments to bring people into the area. Developers need certainty and scale for commercial viability*

**Strong CRG divergence with agreement and disagreement on this statement.*

Part B: Thematic advice across four key areas:

Public and Green Space

- Green space is valued and insufficient:
 - Boyd Park, while popular, is narrow and often dominated by many user groups in a small space.
 - From Dandenong Road to the train line and Poath Road to Warrigal Road, there are no green spaces—this area needs urgent attention.
 - As more high-density housing is developed, existing green areas will face more pressure and new ones will be essential.
- Parks are multi-purpose and must serve diverse needs:
 - Residents want spaces where children can play, adults can work remotely, and families can gather—this includes shaded seating, tables, and infrastructure like gazebos and playgrounds.
 - Galbally Reserve is appreciated for its quieter environment and good connectivity for cycling.
 - Boyd Park is praised for its native trees and facilities but noted to be intimidating for those uncomfortable around off-leash dogs.
 - Town plaza is needed.
- Larger recreational spaces are lacking:
 - The community wants facilities for sport and recreation such as football, basketball, and netball to accommodate population growth.
 - Some existing parks are already nearing full capacity.
- Call for more trees and natural elements:
 - Strong support for more large, climate-resilient canopy trees, especially along major thoroughfares like Poath Road*

**Notes of CRG disagreement.*

Moving Around

- Walkability is a key strength:
 - Hughesdale is highly walkable, with a well-connected network of footpaths and short distances between key destinations.
 - People appreciate the ease of walking to shops, parks, and transport but want safer and better-lit walking paths, especially after dark.
- Cycling infrastructure needs improvement:
 - While some enjoy cycling, it's seen as unsafe due to busy roads. More separated bike lanes are requested. Resolving pain chokepoints in existing paths.
 - Bike safety concerns limit uptake, especially among less experienced riders.
- Driving is increasingly difficult. Pain points include:
 - Poath Road and Kangaroo Road roundabout

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- Euston Road intersections (Poath and Warrigal intersections)
 - Chadstone traffic backing up into Hughesdale
 - Traffic congestion is worsening and needs attention before adding more residents.
 - New developments should be encouraging active transport.
 - Signage and parking need attention:
 - Better directional signage to key places (e.g., Chadstone, parks) is requested.
 - Railway Parade is too narrow for its current use and needs redesign to improve safety and parking.
 - More off-street parking maybe needed, especially as more homes are built. Permit systems should balance resident needs with visitor access*
 - Public transport is good but buses need work:
 - Trains are well used and appreciated.
 - Bus services are limited by route coverage, infrequency, and poor connectivity—especially important for those unable to walk or cycle.

* *Note of disagreement.*

Safety

Overall, Hughesdale is considered safe:

- Residents report generally feeling safe walking around, even after dark, but there are key areas of concern.
- Lighting is a recurring issue:
 - More maintenance around lighting is needed in:
 - Parks (e.g., Boyd Park, Galbally Reserve)
 - The Hughesdale–Oakleigh bike path
 - Warrigal Road underpass
 - Better lighting would encourage active transport and increase nighttime usage of public space.
- Design should support safety without over-policing:
 - Open, active, and well-lit spaces encourage community use and natural surveillance.
 - There is resistance to excessive lighting in parks, which may conflict with their character and biodiversity.
- Gendered experiences of safety noted:
 - While many men report feeling safe in all areas, some women avoid places like Boyd Park after dark, suggesting a need to design with inclusive safety in mind.
- Station presence supports security:
 - Protective Services Officers (PSOs) at Hughesdale Station are seen as positive, though some residents are unclear if they patrol ground areas or only platforms.
- Traffic safety is linked to congestion and design:
 - A dedicated right-turn arrow at Poath and Neerim Roads is requested to reduce crashes and delays.
 - A redesign of narrow roads could prevent accidents and improve overall accessibility.

Local Infrastructure

Infrastructure must match growth:

- As population increases, services such as schools, roads, water, sewage, and electricity must be upgraded to avoid strain.
- Questions remain about school capacity, particularly for state secondary options.
- Emergency services and local GPs already feel overstretched—expansion is needed.
- Streetscapes need trees and bins:

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- Tree planting along Poath Road and other main routes is essential for climate resilience and comfort.
 - More bins, particularly between Chadstone and Hughesdale Station, are needed to handle litter from foot traffic.
 - Need for more inclusive community spaces:
 - More tables and seating in public areas are desired for meals, gathering, and remote work.
 - A new community centre at or near the station is suggested to activate the area and support local engagement (e.g., art displays, yoga, pop-ups), including vacant shops.
 - Balance density with quality design:
 - High-density development is acceptable if it comes with strong architectural standards, well-considered colours and materials, and appropriate street interfaces. Some CRG members agreed that this needs to be counter balanced with re-vitality and commercial viability.
 - Developers should contribute to local infrastructure (e.g., childcare centres, public amenities).
 - Childcare and maternal services are insufficient:
 - Limited hours and availability are a concern. These services must be expanded alongside housing growth.
 - Need for stronger inter-council cooperation:
 - Hughesdale straddles the boundary between Monash and Glen Eira councils.
 - Residents want a more coordinated approach to planning, infrastructure, and services across the two jurisdictions.

Key Areas of Agreement and Disagreement

Strong Areas of Agreement

- More green space is essential: There's a consistent call for expanding and improving public parks, especially in underserved areas.
- Infrastructure must scale with population: Roads, schools, services, and public transport need upgrades concurrently with density increases.
- Walkability and active transport are valued: Residents want to walk and cycle safely; better lighting and pathways will support this.
- Community interaction is a priority: Public spaces that bring people together—like seating, plazas, and community centres—are seen as vital. And parks.
- Architectural standards matter: High-density living is acceptable if it reflects good design and community character and build quality.
- Safety needs to be inclusive: While generally safe, lighting and design improvements can help everyone feel secure.

Divergent Views or Open Questions

- Extent of lighting in parks: Some residents desire more lighting for safety; others worry about disrupting the natural environment or ambience.
- Permit parking vs. visitor access: Calls for more permit zones exist, but there's also concern about ensuring enough visitor parking and not over-regulating street use.
- Dog access in parks: While some appreciate dog-friendly areas, others find off-leash dogs in the way. Clearer designations or separated areas in parks may help through more parks.
- How best to activate underused spaces: Ideas like pop-up shops and multifunctional community centres were suggested, but more work is needed to decide location, funding, and programming.

Considerations

Areas where the community was open to acceptable compromises, and areas where compromise was not supported.

Considerations for the Hughesdale Activity Centre

- The community is open to more townhouses, apartments, and shop-top housing, provided there is certainty around building quality, height limits, and materials.
- Public transport routes—such as Poath Road, Dandenong Road, Warrigal Road, and Neerim Road—are seen as logical places for additional housing due to accessibility and need to include bus routes.
- There is recognition that the elevated rail line sets a benchmark for acceptable building height in certain areas.
- Materials and colours are critical to ensure that new developments blend into the existing character; brick and mixed materials are preferred over monolithic finishes.
- Concerns were raised about the overlap between Hughesdale and Chadstone Activity Centres, which could lead to inconsistent planning controls.
- The community supports protecting heritage areas, particularly where a Heritage Overlay is in place. [There is a call for clear alignment between heritage controls and allowable building heights.]* one CRG member disagreed with this section.
- Tree canopy retention and enhancement are seen as important to soften the visual impact of new buildings and preserve a green outlook.
- Overshadowing of local parks and the use of sheer walls adjacent to them are strongly discouraged.
- In areas with unique physical constraints (such as narrow or dead-end streets), special care should be taken with development scale and parking needs.

Key Areas of Agreement and Disagreement

Areas of Agreement (Community Consensus)

- Support for Medium Density: There is a general willingness to support increased housing—particularly townhouses and shop-top apartments—so long as development respects the area's look and feel.
- Transit-Oriented Development: Public transport corridors are widely accepted as suitable locations for increased housing.
- Respect for Heritage and Character: Strong consensus exists around protecting heritage areas and maintaining the visual identity of Hughesdale. **one CRG member does not agree that Hughesdale has a unique visual identity. This should be assessed on a street-by-street basis.*
- Importance of Materiality: Developments should reflect the architectural language of the area, with a mixture of textures and finishes.
- Transparency and Feedback: Community members want to see the results of public engagement and how feedback has shaped planning outcomes.

Areas of No Compromise

- Short-Stay Rentals: There is strong resistance to the growth of short-term accommodation (like Airbnb), due to its impact on housing affordability and availability. The community sees this as incompatible with long-term housing goals.
- Visual and Environmental Impact on Parks: No compromise is supported on issues like overshadowing of parks or sheer walls adjacent to them. Parks are seen as vital assets deserving full protection.

Areas of Disagreement

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- Areas of disagreement - Heritage vs. Height Conflicts: The community insists that heritage overlays must take precedence over height allowances. Developments that exceed what's appropriate for heritage zones are unacceptable. **Disagreement within CRG on this point.*
 - Contextual Design: There is little tolerance for developments that ignore street width, local parking limitations, or create a "caved-in" feeling in tightly knit neighbourhoods.

Key Messages for Planners – Hughesdale Station

Final key messages the group would like to leave with decision-makers.

- 1. Protect Hughesdale's Walkable, Village Feel**
 - The community deeply values Hughesdale's safe, walkable streets and have a desire to develop a close-knit atmosphere. Future development must keep this human-scale character intact, with thoughtful design that supports walking, cycling, and connection to local shops, parks, and transport.
- 2. Green Spaces Are Essential, Not Optional**
 - Parks and open spaces are in short supply and already under pressure. As the population grows, new and improved green areas must be delivered to meet the everyday needs of residents for relaxation, play, and connection.
- 3. Good Design Builds Community Trust**
 - While more housing is accepted, people want developments that reflect the local look and feel. This means using quality materials, respecting street context, and ensuring new buildings add to—not overwhelm—the neighbourhood character. **One CRG member disagrees with this statement.*
- 4. Plan for Growth, Not Just Buildings**
 - Infrastructure and services must grow with the population. This includes schools, childcare, health services, roads, and public transport. The community expects these upgrades to happen alongside new development—not after it.
- 5. Put the Community at the Centre**
 - Residents want a say in shaping their area. Involving the community early and clearly showing how their feedback.