

LEURA

Description of area surveyed

The Leura study area focussed on the central commercial precinct block which is bounded by the Leura Mall, Megalong Street, Railway Parade and Grose Street. The study area is bounded to the north by the Great Western Highway and extends south along The Leura Mall, east along Railway Parade, Megalong Street and west along Megalong Street.



Fig. 1: Leura Study Area

Summary of parking in Leura

Leura is a busy village and key tourist destination, with visitors arriving by public transport, private bus tour and driving. Congestion and difficulties finding parking spaces are often reported, particularly during busy tourist peaks, long weekends and special events.

Parking in Leura is available in a combination of off-street and on-street parking areas. There is a small commuter parking area to the north of the railway station and many commuters park along Railway Parade or Grose Street where there are no time restrictions for parking.

The main street, Leura Mall, has the highest demand spaces and provides 1 hour parking. In 2012 electronic parking sensors were installed to improve turnover. If a space cannot be found quickly, alternative spaces can usually be found either in adjacent streets or in the public car park. Additional parking is available in Megalong Street, The Mall south of Megalong Street, Grose Street and Railway Parade.

At busy times, the parked vehicles spread further along adjacent streets. Unlike other towns (e.g. Wentworth Falls), parking in Leura is generally not constrained by topography or town boundaries. Paved footpaths link more remote on-street parking with The Mall, and

combined with a pleasant streetscape provide visitors/tourists with considerable parking opportunities. However for the elderly and less able, and those needing to carry groceries and other shopping, the lack of weekend parking close to the supermarket in particular can be problematic. It also contributes to substantial traffic congestion throughout the town centre as people drive around looking for spaces.

There is a bus stop in Megalong Street providing drop off areas for tourist coaches and mini buses as well as a bus stop for local buses.

Loading zones were observed to be in high demand during business hours. Delivery vans that could not fit in the loading zone were observed either occupying vacant spaces or double parking to unload, which restricted traffic passing through the town centre.

Adjoining and adjacent land uses

The commercial precinct, centred on Leura Mall, is the focus for the study area and is dominated by retail uses. Many of the existing dwellings in Grose Street and Railway Parade have been adapted and now contain professional business premises such as medical, dental and legal offices. Many of the land uses cater for the tourist market including accommodation at the periphery of the study area. The shops are generally small boutique shops and include cafés and restaurants.

The Ritz Nursing Home is located on the corner of Megalong Street and Leura Mall and is the largest allotment within the study area. Beyond the commercial hub the study area is dominated by older style dwellings, many on larger than average allotments surrounded by mature gardens.

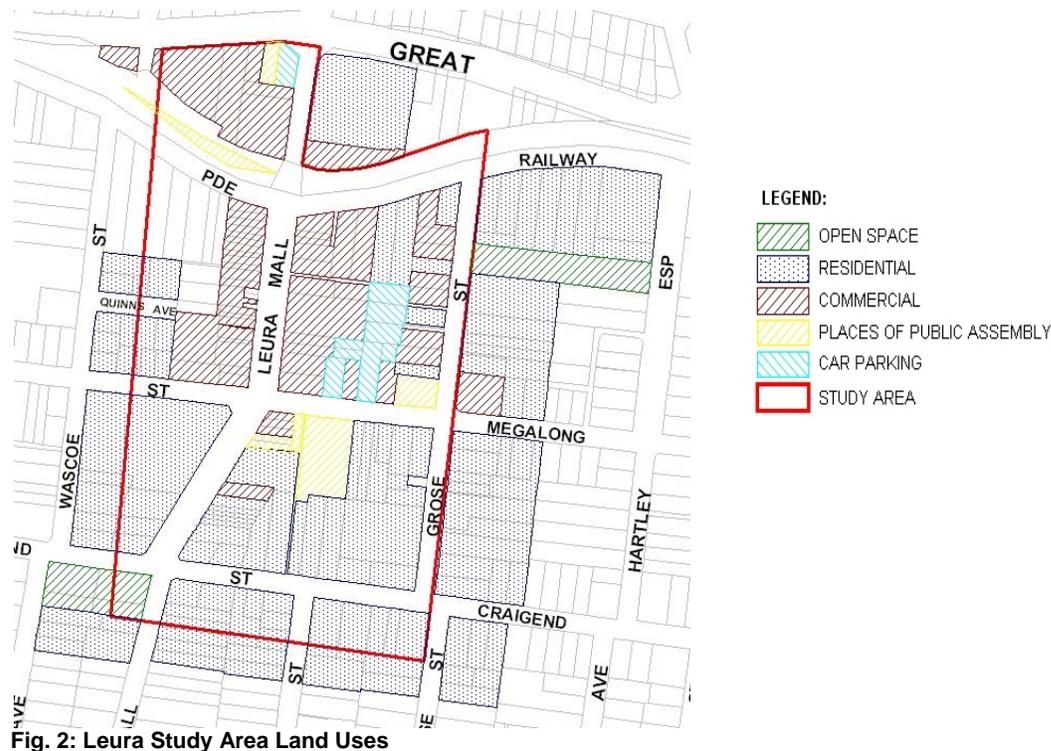


Fig. 2: Leura Study Area Land Uses

Characteristics

- Off-street parking

- Restrictions

The main off-street parking area is a public parking area accessible from Megalong Street. There is parking at grade for 129 vehicles and Woolworths underground parking has spaces for 62 vehicles, in a combination of 1 hour and 2 hour time restricted parking.

The only facility which displays available parking spaces is for the underground carpark at Woolworths, which has an electronic board displaying vacancies at the ground floor entrance. Otherwise on busy weekends, many vehicles enter the carpark and circulate, often leaving without finding a space. A one-way system throughout the car park may help improve efficiencies and reduce confusion and congestion.

There is good pedestrian and vehicular access into this car park. Tourist coaches park to the east of the entrances to this parking area and customers walk from the bus drop off point to the town centre along the adjacent footpath. Pedestrians have right of way and vehicles must give way to pedestrians, frequently disrupting the flow of traffic in the locality.

- Accessible spaces

There are three accessible spaces located in the public car park behind Woolworths.

- On-street parking

- Restriction

Parallel on-street parking is available in the Leura Mall and is time restricted to 1 hour parking during business hours every day. This is enforced via an electronic parking system, which registers when cars park and is used by Rangers for enforcement.

- Accessible spaces

Three accessible spaces are provided, one in the Leura Mall and two in Railway Parade.

- Bus, train and taxi services

Both local and tourist bus services link Leura town centre with residential areas of Leura and with Katoomba. A local bus service links Leura with towns east and Katoomba.

There is an average of 28 trains per day stopping at Leura travelling between Katoomba and Sydney and return. Leura station is staffed but is not currently wheelchair accessible; however Transport for NSW has included Leura Station in its Transport Access program. Construction has commenced and is due for completion June 2017. The proposed improvements include:

- New lift and stairs;
- A new canopy over the lift, stairs and part of the platform;
- Upgraded toilet facilities;
- Formalised taxi rank on Railway Parade;
- An accessible path from the station to the taxi rank;
- New kiss and ride zone; and
- Bicycle facilities, improved lighting and CCTV security surveillance.

A taxi rank is available in Railway Parade adjacent to the entrance to the railway station.

Links

- Roads
Leura has a regular grid of roads with roundabouts at major intersections, making entering and exiting the commercial area relatively straightforward and similarly for motorists searching for parking spaces.
- Footpaths
The Mall has footpaths on both sides of the street and a central median. Paved footpaths fan out along the adjacent streets where people regularly park. There are pedestrian walkways linking The Mall with Grose Street through Leura Car Park.

There are several seats for the public to use in the central part of the town as well as cafés with outdoor seating.
- Bike Path/Shared paths
The Blue Mountains Bike Plan has identified Routes L13, L13 East, L12a, L12 and Rec 6. Regional route is located along the Great Western Highway. The Great Blue Mountains Trail is currently under construct (2017) which will connect Mt Victoria to Katoomba.



Fig. 3: Leura Study Area Links

Safety & security

- Lighting
Street lighting is provided in Leura.
- Vegetation
Leura has numerous street trees, the majority of which are exotic species. The trees are well maintained and contribute positively to the character of Leura in particular and the Blue Mountains in general.

Signage

- Directional
There are signs on the Great Western Highway directing motorists to Leura town centre. There are blue signs within the town centre directing motorists to the public parking areas.
- Parking restrictions
Parking restrictions signs in Leura are consistent, clear in their intention, easily interpreted, and are generally well maintained.

Community demographics

In 2016 Leura had a population of 4,641 residents which is an increase of 270 persons from 2011. There were 2,532 dwellings, an increase of 224 from 2011. The average household size is 2.04 persons which is a slight decrease from 2011 where it was 2.16. In 2016, the population density in Leura was 4.27 persons per hectare.

In 2016, 82% of households in Leura had access to one or more motor vehicles.

Forecast i.d.¹ estimate that the population of Leura will increase by around 7% by 2036. In 2011, 1003 residents travelled to work in a private vehicle which is the same as the figure for 2006 and an increase from the 2001 figures. In 2011, approximately 174 Leura residents used public transport for at least some of their journey to work which is the same as the figure in 2006. A further 81 residents walked to work and 6 rode a bicycle.

Capacity

Leura is a major tourist destination in the Blue Mountains and the parking data clearly reflects this. The peak demand for parking occurs on weekends but much of the central section of the commercial precinct is near capacity most days and is very busy during business hours (9am – 5pm Monday to Friday). This is indicative of a healthy village economy.

The average parking occupancy on week days was 80% in 2010-12 increasing to 83% in 2016, with some locations (The Mall, Council's carpark, Megalong Street between The Mall and Grose Street) being close to 100% capacity.

Leura has the capacity to cater for periods of high demand for parking, in and around the commercial centre, by vehicles parking along adjacent streets. The streets are generally wide providing space for cars to park on both sides, and the larger allotments mean there are fewer crossings. This combined with well maintained footpaths, results in parking further from the town centre being a viable option.

Leura Mall was often at capacity, with turnover data suggesting that, on average, these spaces are occupied for approximately 50 minutes. It was observed that as parking spaces became available they were occupied.

The impact of tourist bus parking in this location has increasingly been a cause for community and Council concern. In particular, significant bus numbers and at times illegal parking has resulted in restricted sight distance for vehicles exiting Grose Street and the public car parking area with delays in traffic circulation. Substantial volumes of passengers embarking and disembarking from the buses also cause potential vehicle/pedestrian conflicts. This issue is being addressed through a separate study: The Leura Tourist Bus Parking Strategy.

¹ i.d. community 2017. Blue Mountains City Council Population Forecast, Forecast i.d. <http://forecast.id.com.au/blue-mountains>



Rangers' comments

In 2010-2012, the Rangers advised that there was a focus on enforcement in Leura, particularly with regard to safety and turnover. They noted that visibility was reduced in locations in Leura due to the tourist coaches and that the combination of coaches, pedestrians and cars results in congestion for through traffic. The rangers further noted that motorists searching for convenient parking spaces result in traffic congestion.

In 2016 the Rangers advised that the electronic monitoring that have been installed have effectively increased the turn-over on Leura Mall, although this has pushed vehicles into the Woolworths underground private carpark, and increased use of the rear Council free car park often close to or beyond capacity. Furthermore, the Rangers noted that during business hours particularly, the lack of pedestrian pathways / links through the car park impact on traffic flows and safety.

Tourist Bus Parking

Tourist bus parking is currently available in Gross Street, Megalong Street and Craigend Street. There is informal parking occurring in other roads in the vicinity.

Conclusions

Leura is a very popular and thriving local shopping area and tourist destination and there is very high demand for parking throughout the week and weekends. There has been an increase in demand for parking in central Leura between 2010-12 and 2015-16 of 3% during weekdays and 9% during weekends. Parking in the central area is regularly at capacity on weekends.

There is already a focus on enforcement of parking restrictions and Council conducted an electronic monitoring trial in 2012 for a 3 month period. This trial was successful, and electronic monitoring is now fully operational in The Mall between Railway Parade and Megalong Street.

In Leura there is opportunity for parking to spread further from the commercial hub of The Mall in an easterly direction along Megalong and Grose Streets and south along The Mall and Craigend Street. The footpaths are in good condition and the streetscape is attractive which makes a walk to a destination an attractive option. However this does not suit everyone- particularly locals shopping and those with a temporary or permanent disability or the elderly.

The small commuter parking area is frequently at capacity, with vehicles parking east along Railway Parade.

The issue of tourist coaches parking in central Leura (both during the week and at weekends) is causing considerable congestion, amenity and safety issues for drivers and pedestrians, and this issue is being addressed through the preparation of a separate Leura Tourist Bus Strategy.

Managing visitor parking- particularly on weekends- is key to maintaining amenity in the town, which is currently being eroded by high levels of congestion caused by parking difficulties on busy weekends.

Recommendations

- Le.1 Review and implement parking restriction and direction signage.
- Le.2 Enforce current parking restrictions.
- Le.3 Implement Leura Tourist Bus Parking strategy and VIISP actions re: bus parking
- Le.4 Investigate potential pedestrian improvements and the re-introduction of a one-way system in the Council car park, instead of the current 2 entrance/exits off Megalong Street.
- Le.5 Investigate expansion of electronic parking sensors to Railway Parade (southern side), and the sections of Grose Street and Megalong Street closest to the town centre.
- Le.6 Investigate potential to introduce pay parking metres in Leura Mall (7 days/week) to encourage higher turnover of vehicles. Consider operating this similarly to Echo Point Pay parking, where residents are eligible to apply for a residents permit allowing free parking.
- Le.7 Advocate for better commuter parking with Transport for NSW.
- Le.8 Implement actions from Destination Management Plan.
- Le.9 Investigate longer term solutions including the potential for the provision of a park and ride site to service Leura village and nearby tourism locations.
- Le.10 Development and implementation of a Parking Precinct Plan.

Leura Data and Analysis

RETAIL & TOURIST PARKING



Number of vehicles parked – weekdays

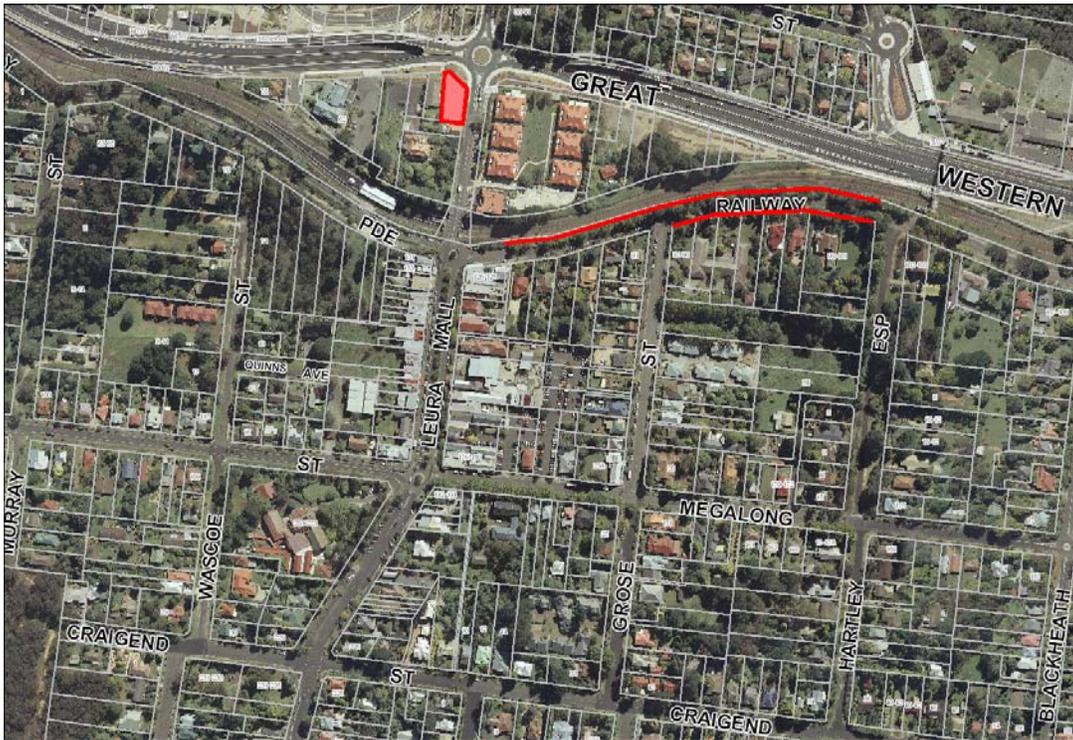
	Spaces available	2010-2012		2015-2016		Difference	Maximum number/ percentage occupancy
		Average occupancy - vehicles	Average percentage occupancy	Average occupancy - vehicles	Average percentage occupancy		
The Mall north of railway	13	13	100%	13	100%	0%	13/100%
The Mall between Railway & Megalong	47	42	90%	45	96%	6%	47/100%
The Mall between Megalong & Craigend	61	56	92%	50	82%	-10%	61/100%
Grose St between Railway & Megalong	56	54	97%	51	91%	-6%	58/104%
Grose St between Megalong & Craigend	34	16	48%	17	50%	9%	27/79%
Railway Pde between The Mall & Grose St	30	28	93%	29	97%	4%	32/107%
Railway Pde east Grose	36	18	49%	24	67%	17%	30/83%
Megalong St west The Mall	19	7	35%	7	37%	2%	12/63%
Megalong St between The Mall & Grose	16	16	98%	16	100%	2%	17/106%
Megalong St east Grose St	21	11	52%	11	52%	1%	21/100%
Leura Car Park Woolworths open	129	118	92%	126	98%	6%	131/102%
Woolworths underground car park	62	40	65%	45	73%	7%	62/100%
Total	524	419	80%	434	83%	+3%	

Note for all tables: Occupancy data and percentages are rounded to nearest whole number. Where percentage occupancy is shown to be over 100% it is because additional vehicles were parked illegally.

Number of vehicles parked – weekends

	Spaces available	2010-2012		2015-2016		Difference	Maximum number/ percentage occupancy
		Average occupancy - vehicles	Average percentage occupancy	Average occupancy - vehicles	Average percentage occupancy		
The Mall north of railway	13	12	90%	13	100%	10%	13/100%
The Mall between Railway & Megalong	47	45	96%	47	100%	4%	47/100%
The Mall between Megalong & Craigend	61	60	98%	71	116%	19%	71/116%
Grose St between Railway & Megalong	56	55	98%	44	79%	-19%	56/100%
Grose St between Megalong & Craigend	34	20	56%	28	82%	24%	28/82%
Railway Pde between The Mall & Grose St	30	30	100%	36	120%	22%	36/120%
Railway Pde east Grose	36	9	25%	21	58%	33%	21/58%
Megalong St west The Mall	19	14	75%	15	79%	4%	19/100%
Megalong St between The Mall & Grose	16	16	100%	16	100%	0%	16/100%
Megalong St east Grose St	21	17	80%	30	143%	63%	30/143%
Leura Car Park Woolworths open	129	129	100%	129	100%	0%	129/100%
Woolworths underground car park	62	62	100%	62	100%	0%	62/100%
Total	524	468	89%	512	98%	+9%	

COMMUTER PARKING – WEEKDAYS



Number of vehicles parked

	Spaces available	2010-2012		2015-2016		Difference	Maximum number/ percentage occupancy
		Average occupancy - vehicles	Average percentage occupancy	Average occupancy - vehicles	Average percentage occupancy		
Commuter car park	19	17	89%	18	95%	+5%	19/100%
Railway Pde between The Mall & Grose St	30	26	87%	28	90%	+3%	31/103%
Railway Pde east Grose	36	14	39%	28	78%	+39%	30/83%
Total	85	57	67%	67	89%	+22%	

