North West CBD/ Legal and Financial district.
The Western end of the city was once largely industrial due to its proximity to the docks. This industrial character has significantly changed since the Second World War, with modern skyscrapers and car parks subsuming many laneways and laneway buildings. In many cases historic bluestone lanes are now completely surrounded by glass and steel towers, however several significant laneways still exist throughout the area.
Strong protection of these remaining laneways is particularly important here as more developments are being proposed. The recent sale of Elliot Lane highlights the need to preserve some human scale spaces within this precinct, offering respite from the muscular corporate towers and modern apartment buildings overshadowing these areas. As the population of the area increases, there is opportunity for many of the historic lanes to contribute as much interest, vibrancy and economic opportunity for smaller businesses as those in the central part of the city.
1. Sampson Lane (Class 3)

Sampson Lane is flanked on both sides of its entrance by historically significant neo-Georgian brick buildings, (The former Women’s Venereal Disease clinic is currently under consideration for heritage protection in Amendment C186 due to its association with the history of women’s health in Victoria and devastation wrought by venereal disease at the conclusion of World War I).

The buildings and the lane itself are currently under threat from a Victoria University proposal to develop the site and remove the historic built fabric entirely. This is a case where innovative and creative design solutions could both save the lane and the buildings flanking it, with a tower set back behind. This would not only preserve the heritage buildings but would allow the laneway to form a dynamic and lively gateway into the university precinct.
2. Barry Lane (Class 3)
Barry Lane is surrounded on both sides by heritage brick structures such as the backs of shops fronting Queen St., the Danish club on Lt. Bourke, and the baroque rendered facade of a 1920’s warehouse on Lonsdale St (currently also under consideration for heritage protection in Amendment C186). Bluestone channel forms the centre of this concrete lane, adding to its suitability for future restoration.
3. St Johns Lane and St Patricks Alley (Class 3)

These lanes are both wonderful reminders of the historical significance provided by the names of lanes in Melbourne. St. Johns lane is a fascinating lanescape evidently with very early bluestone cobbles and heritage brick walls on all sides. The entrance to St. Patricks Alley has a fine Victorian era building (D-graded) on one side. The names of both of these laneways tell an important story about the social nature of colonial Australia, and the sharp divides that existed between Catholics and the Protestant ruling class in Melbourne (a divide that, among other things, gave birth to the legend and infamy of Ned Kelly’s rebellious conflict with the authorities of the day). Early reports from the 1840’s tell of St. Johns Lane being the scene of large-scale sectarian violence where a melee and gunfight broke out at a protestant Irish pub (which has long since disappeared from the lanescape). This was a response to the flying of anti-Catholic banners celebrating the 16th century Battle of Boyne, inflaming tension in the community.

Gunshots were fired from nearby St. Patricks alley into the pub, causing casualties. The strife only came to an end when the local British army garrison stormed the lane with bayonets fixed, declaring marshal law in the city for a number of weeks following this now little known incident.

This serves to demonstrate well how the history of our laneways is intimately tied in with the history of Melbourne, and it is through the preservation of laneways that the history of our city and society may continue to be told with richness and immediacy for future generations.
4. Little Queen and Little William Street (Class 3)

These two lanes are interesting as north-south versions of the more famous ‘Little’ streets in the CBD. Both are also interesting for the way in which the more unassuming elements of these vistas interact with the landmark buildings which form a key part of these lanescapes. Lt. Queen (this page) contains heritage signage, linking the lane to it’s past as the home of Melbourne’s earliest Synagogue. Also located in the lane is a 1930’s substation building and side facades of heritage buildings facing Bourke St.

Lt .William (next page) displays two opposing faces, one side of the lane is modern while the other reveals intact heritage buildings. The Goldsbrough Mort Building’s heavy stonework and the simple side facade of a Victorian era building on Lt. Bourke St anchor the laneway in it’s heritage context with landmark vistas of the Supreme Court Dome and heritage listed modernist classic 141 William st dominating.
5. Cosgrave Lane (Class 3)

The character of Cosgrave Lane is largely derived from the backs of unprotected heritage buildings and old signage associated with the former commerce transacted in the buildings fronting King Street. Many of these shop backs retain historic integrity where the frontages have been altered. This gritty lane runs out into the western end of Bourke St. with its grand heritage listed buildings - a fascinating contrast for the pedestrian using this lane.
6. Uniacke Court (Class 3)

On the map Uniacke Court appears as a dead end off Little Bourke St., but is actually linked to King St via a 24 hour access car park entrance. The 1920’s building on the corner is home to a nightclub and the lane contains street art as well as untouched heritage structures and historic signage dating to the 1920’s. The lane also contains an interesting but seemingly disused garage building with an Art Deco façade. This lane has excellent adaptive re-use potential and merits investigation as a future site of revitalization within the city.
7. Brown Alley and Merrits Place (Class 2)

One of Melbourne’s best laneway networks, Brown Alley (this page) is predominantly paved with bluestone, and flanked at one entrance by heritage listed bluestone buildings rich in character. The other end contains an inter-war brick warehouse and is also flanked by the the character-filled back of an unlisted heritage pub. Hidden within this network, a plaza with mature willow trees is surrounded by original bluestone paving and wonderful bluestone heritage structures. Merrits Lane displays a huge heritage façade now part of a car and sections of bluestone paving with a post-modern entry arch at its north end.
8. Alston and Elliot Lane (Class 3)

Undoubtedly two of the most interesting lanes in the Western CBD, it may already be too late to salvage these historic thoroughfares. Alston lane (on this page) has bluestone paving in poor condition and party removed. Its character comes from an altered hotel and shops on King St., and two Edwardian era warehouses (one with exclusive laneway frontage). These important remnants of the area's past will soon disappear when the Central Equity apartment tower is built.

Elliot lane (on the next page), also paved with bluestone and surrounded by 19th century low-rise structures, makes a ‘dogleg’ from Little Lonsdale St. and meets Alston Lane. It was sold by the City of Melbourne last year, and will disappear completely under the footprint of the Central Equity apartment tower. This is a profound loss with respect to what might have been a future laneway precinct, in a block that will soon be completely devoid of heritage character, in a city that prides itself on the hidden charms of its iconic lanes.
9. Gough Alley (Class 3)

Gough Alley is a dead-end laneway with the lowest grading under the current City of Melbourne policy. None-the-less it displays much heritage character including historic signage, cast iron pipework and bluestone paving, and an entrance flanked by rare Art Nouveau buildings.
10. Manton Lane (Class 3)
Manton Lane doglegs from Little Lonsdale St to Lonsdale St with a broad concrete paved section acting as an interesting narrow passageway, barely wide enough for a person to fit through, which leads into the main street. Changes in width and scale like this are a unique part of the laneway experience in Melbourne. This lanescape is flanked on 3 sides by heritage walls, some with corrugated iron outbuildings and interesting bricked up ‘blind’ windows. A number of smaller laneway buildings appear to have been joined together here.
11. Park Street (Class 3)

Park Street runs between LaTrobe St. and Lt Lonsdale St. Park St. and now largely exhibits the character of a modern corporate laneway with the exception of Victorian era shops at the Lt. Lonsdale St entrance, and an interesting inter-war substation (D-graded) and adjacent laneway with bluestone guttering. Both, however, provide a human scale and heritage charm to a laneway that would otherwise be hostile to pedestrians.
12. Wicklow Place (Class 3)

Wicklow Place is an intact bluestone laneway, which turns past a Federation era warehouse on Little Lonsdale St. To the rear of the warehouse are the intact bluestone walls of an 1855 Gold Rush era structure (both currently under consideration for heritage protection in Amendment C186). The other side of the lane is a mix of modern and heritage elements.
14. Eagle Alley (Class 3)

Eagle Alley is full of contrasts. Entering from King St behind one of Melbourne’s oldest buildings (Russell’s Corner Shop, 1850) the lane has the character of a McCubbin painting depicting Melbourne’s colonial past. This quickly changes, however, as the pedestrian moves around a turn into a sterile modern environment of blank tower walls. Further on, a mix of old and new is provided by a large 1920’s warehouse on King St. and landmark skyscrapers in the distance along the lane’s line-of-sight, providing interest and another change in character.
14. Warner, Brights, Healeys, Chisolm, Rose and Cleve Lanes. (All Class 3)
Clockwise from top left. The Western end of the CBD contains a number of lanes where all the heritage character has been replaced by modern developments and skyscrapers, but where bluestone paving remains intact.