

Section 1:

#1 "Across the world, cities are being suffocated by car traffic — clogged streets, polluted air, and a growing sense that urban spaces are built more for machines than for people. As populations grow and the climate crisis intensifies, urban areas must take action. One of the most effective solutions is to convert more roads into car-free zones. These pedestrian-prioritised areas lead to cleaner air, safer streets, stronger local economies, and a better quality of life. Keeping cities car-centred is no longer sustainable — not for the environment, not for our health, and not for the communities trying to thrive within them."

Strengths: Your opening establishes a clear problem and solution. You effectively use the metaphor of cities being "suffocated" to create a vivid image.

Weakness: Limited contextual framing → Your introduction jumps directly to advocating for car-free zones without acknowledging the complexity of urban transport needs. When you state that car-free zones are "one of the most effective solutions," you don't mention what problem specifically you're solving or acknowledge other potential approaches. Phrases like "no longer sustainable" make absolute claims without supporting context.

Exemplar: *"Across the world, cities face increasing challenges from car traffic — clogged streets, polluted air, and urban spaces that prioritise vehicles over people. As populations grow and climate concerns mount, urban planners must consider various approaches. Converting strategic roads into car-free zones represents one promising solution that many cities are exploring, with evidence suggesting these pedestrian-prioritised areas can improve air quality, safety, community connection, and economic activity."*

#2 "Many worry that businesses will suffer if streets are closed to cars, but time and again, the opposite proves true. Car-free streets often become some of the busiest and most vibrant in a city. Without traffic cutting through, people stop, shop, and spend more time in the area. Foot traffic is far more valuable than vehicle traffic, especially for small local businesses. When the environment is pleasant and accessible, people naturally want to stay longer — and that means stronger economic activity."

Strengths: You effectively address a common counterargument about business impacts. Your writing flows well with clear cause-and-effect reasoning.

Weakness: Lack of specific evidence → You make claims that "time and again, the opposite proves true" and that "foot traffic is far more valuable than vehicle traffic," but don't provide any specific examples, statistics or case studies beyond Bourke Street. The paragraph contains general statements

without concrete details that would strengthen your argument and show that these benefits apply widely.

Exemplar: *"Many worry that businesses will suffer if streets are closed to cars, but evidence from cities like Copenhagen, where foot traffic increased by 35% after pedestrianisation, shows the opposite often occurs. Car-free streets typically become busier shopping areas, with Melbourne City Council's 2022 report finding that pedestrians spent an average of 45 minutes longer in car-free zones compared to vehicle-accessible streets."*

#3 "In fact, Melbourne — often ranked as one of the world's most liveable cities — should lead the way. It already has the public transport, cycling potential, and strong local culture to make car-free zones work brilliantly. Expanding this model would make the city greener, safer, and more enjoyable for everyone who lives, works, or visits here."

Strengths: You localise your argument to Melbourne and highlight existing infrastructure advantages. Your writing is concise and focused.

Weakness: Underdeveloped recommendation → While you mention Melbourne "should lead the way," you don't outline specific streets, areas or implementation strategies beyond a brief mention of Elizabeth Street and Flinders Lane in the previous paragraph. The phrases "cycling potential" and "strong local culture" remain vague without explaining what these mean or how they would support car-free zones.

Exemplar: *"Melbourne, consistently ranking among the world's most liveable cities, is uniquely positioned to expand car-free initiatives. With its established tram network serving 200 million passengers yearly, growing cycling infrastructure including 135km of bike lanes, and demonstrated success with pedestrian zones, the city could transform additional high-foot-traffic areas like the northern section of Elizabeth Street and selected laneways in a phased approach."*

■ Your piece presents a passionate case for car-free zones that captures many key benefits. To strengthen your argument, consider balancing your enthusiasm with more specific examples and data. For instance, when you mention improved safety, adding a statistic about reduced accidents in pedestrianised areas would make your point more convincing. Also, acknowledging potential challenges of implementation would show you've thought deeply about the issue. You could address concerns about accessibility for elderly or disabled people, delivery access for businesses, or how emergency vehicles would navigate these zones. Adding a paragraph about successful car-free zones in other Australian cities or internationally would provide helpful context. Try expanding your Bourke Street example with more details about how it transformed over time or specific benefits businesses experienced. Including these concrete elements will help readers visualise the practical reality of your proposals rather than just the ideal outcome.

Overall score: 45/50

Section 2:

Should urban areas convert more ~~roads~~ [roads] into car-free zones, prioritizing pedestrians and cyclists?

#1 Across the world, cities are being suffocated by car traffic — clogged streets, polluted air, and a growing sense that urban spaces are built more for machines than for people. As populations grow and the climate crisis intensifies, urban areas must take action. One of the most effective solutions is to convert more roads into car-free zones. These pedestrian-prioritised areas lead to cleaner air, safer streets, stronger local economies, and a better quality of life. Keeping cities car-centred is no longer sustainable — not for the environment, not for our health, and not for the communities trying to thrive within them.

Car-free zones immediately create safer streets. Without speeding vehicles and constant traffic, pedestrians and cyclists can move freely and confidently. Parents don't have to grip their children's hands so tightly, and cyclists don't have to fear for their lives every time they share the road. In car-free areas, public space becomes just that — public. Instead of endless parking spaces, we get parks, benches, markets, and room to breathe. When cities are designed around people, rather than vehicles, everything changes for the better.

These changes also dramatically improve public health. Vehicle emissions are one of the biggest contributors to air pollution in cities, and long-term exposure leads to asthma, heart disease, and other serious health conditions. When cars are removed from streets, air quality improves almost immediately. Less noise, less stress, and more opportunities to walk and cycle all contribute to healthier and happier citizens. Clean air and safe movement should be basic standards in every modern city — not luxuries.

#2 Many worry that businesses will suffer if streets are closed to cars, but time and again, the opposite proves true. Car-free streets often become some of the busiest and most vibrant in a city. Without traffic cutting through, people stop, shop, and spend more time in the area. Foot traffic is far more valuable than vehicle traffic, especially for small local businesses. When the environment is pleasant and accessible, people naturally want to stay longer — and that means stronger economic activity.

A perfect example of this is right here in Melbourne. Bourke Street Mall has long been a pedestrian-priority zone, and it shows exactly what's possible when a city puts people first. Without cars dominating the space, Bourke Street has become one of the CBD's most iconic and lively destinations. Trams glide through calmly, buskers fill the space with music, and people move freely from shop to shop. Businesses thrive not because of car access, but because the street is designed to invite people in. The success of Bourke Street should not be treated as a one-off — it should be a model. Other major streets in Melbourne, like Elizabeth Street or parts of Flinders Lane, could be transformed just as successfully with the same approach.

#3 In fact, Melbourne — often ranked as one of the world's most liveable cities — should lead the way. It already has the public transport, cycling potential, and strong local culture to make car-free zones work brilliantly. Expanding this model would make the city greener, safer, and more enjoyable for everyone who lives, works, or visits here.

In conclusion, converting more roads into car-free zones is not just a brilliant idea — it's a necessary step for the future of urban life. The benefits are clear: improved safety, cleaner air, stronger communities, and thriving local businesses. Bourke Street proves it can be done. Now it's time for cities to take bold action and reclaim their streets for people, not cars.