

ANNUAL REPORT 2025



OPEN HOUSE
MELBOURNE

OUR PROGRAMMING EXISTS ON WHAT ALWAYS WAS AND ALWAYS WILL BE THE LAND OF THE PEOPLE OF THE KULIN NATION. WE PAY OUR RESPECTS TO ELDERS PAST, PRESENT AND EMERGING, AS WELL AS TO ALL ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE IN THE WIDER MELBOURNE COMMUNITY AND BEYOND.

INDIGENOUS SOVEREIGNTY HAS NEVER BEEN CEDED IN AUSTRALIA AND WE ARE MINDFUL OF THIS IN EVERYTHING WE DO, GIVEN OUR FOCUS ON THE MODERN BUILT ENVIRONMENT.

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TOWN HALL OF FOOTSCRAY



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

THE STORY OF OPEN HOUSE MELBOURNE IS A STORY OF PEOPLE.

At the heart of everything we do are more than 2000 Volunteers and Collaborators who generously give their time each year, welcoming thousands of visitors and sharing their places and expertise to enrich our collective understanding of the built environment and demonstrate the transformational potential of good design.

This year also marked a period of consolidation and growth in governance. The Management Committee strengthened its subcommittee structure (Risk and Governance, Fundraising and the Program Advisory Group), ensuring that Open House Melbourne is well supported through a robust framework of oversight, strategy and expert guidance. Strategic planning and risk workshops delivered in partnership with Right Lane Consulting and Elucidate Melbourne provided clarity around values, partnerships and long-term sustainability, laying a strong foundation for the next stage of organisational maturity.

2024/2025 has seen us embed the priorities of our new Strategic Plan, which focuses on strengthening our community, expanding our programming and securing a sustainable future. The innovative ways in which our program has evolved, through initiatives like *Making Home*, *Designing with Country*, *Catalyst Conversations* and *Open Nature*, reflect not only a diversity of voices but also a diversification of funding, strengthening our independence and sustainability.

We are proud that our work has continued to achieve strong recognition and reach. Over the past year, Open House Melbourne generated more than 423 media stories across television, print, radio and digital platforms, achieving a reach of 235 million engagements. Our digital audience also continues to grow with more than 68,000 social media followers, continued high e-newsletter open rate (42.2%) and a significant increase in website traffic year-on-year (25% from 2024). This expanding public profile amplifies our design advocacy and demonstrates Melbourne's appetite for engaging with the built environment in meaningful and accessible ways.

Connecting people of all ages and backgrounds with place and design is also at the heart of what we do and this year this was strengthened with initiatives like *Making Home*, *Open Play* and *Open Studio*. Our programs are made possible by the generosity of our sponsors, partners and patrons whose support enables us to expand our reach and deepen our impact. We particularly thank the City of Melbourne, Creative Victoria, Studio Payne and Efront Digital for their support alongside the many program partners, practice partners, precinct partners and media partners who stand beside us.

Special thanks must go to our small and dedicated team, Dr Tania Davidge, Piera Maclean, Katie Evans and Veda Varcoe whose creativity, skill and commitment ensure our programs are delivered with thoughtfulness and flair. With modest resources they tirelessly orchestrate a year-round program of remarkable scope and impact. Working closely with our team to amplify our stories is our publicist Adam Valentine and we thank him for his hard work too.

I also want to acknowledge my fellow Committee members—Amy Muir, Leanne Olden, Daniella Sequeira, Stuart Harrison, Caryn Kakas, Gemma Pinnell and Dr Fleur Watson. Their expertise and generosity of time provide strong, steady governance and ensure that Open House Melbourne continues to thrive and I am deeply appreciative of their guidance and insight.

Open House Melbourne's strength also lies in its capacity for collaboration and advocacy. This year, our leadership engaged with local and state government to highlight the role of good design in shaping a more equitable and sustainable Victoria. Through initiatives such as *Density Done Well* and the team's international visit to Open Christchurch brought communities, practitioners and policymakers together to explore how design excellence supports housing, justice, infrastructure and heritage outcomes.

Thanks to our Collaborators, we also launched our first online Access Map that helped identify mobility-friendly and neurodiverse-considerate sites over the Weekend. Already we are seeing the benefits of this work: more diverse audiences and new collaborations that extend our impact across Victoria.

Looking ahead, there is much to celebrate. In 2026 we will welcome our two millionth participant since 2008 and in 2027 we will mark the 20th anniversary of Open House Melbourne. These milestones remind us that Open House Melbourne is more than a festival: it is a movement powered by people that invites every Victorian to participate in shaping a more inclusive, sustainable and liveable future.



SAM REDSTON
President, Open House Melbourne

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR + CHIEF CURATOR

2024/2025 HAS SEEN OPEN HOUSE MELBOURNE BUILD MOMENTUM, DEEPENING PEOPLE'S CONNECTION TO PLACE AND STRENGTHENING OUR ADVOCACY FOR GOOD DESIGN ACROSS VICTORIA.

Over the past twelve months, Open House Melbourne has delivered one of its most ambitious year-round programs to date, inviting the public to explore, through the lens of design, the critical issues shaping our state, now and into the future.

Through our program we connect people to the places and ideas that shape Victoria. Our *Making Home* series opened five projects to the public, highlighting the complexity of delivering social housing and the important role design plays in creating homes where people are housed with dignity and respect. The *Summer Fun(draising)* tours kept audiences connected through the warmer months and for Melbourne Design Week we built on the success of last year's *Design + Death* program, exploring the ways memorialisation shapes our city.

With the Metro Tunnel Creative Program, we discovered how *Creativity in Construction* is transforming the experience of the city across five new Metro Tunnel Stations and explored the *Art at Anzac* station with artists Fiona Hall and Dr Raafat Ishak. *Open Play* engaged younger audiences in hands-on encounters with architecture and heritage at MPavilion, Eltham Library and sites across Melbourne, while *Open Studio* invited tertiary students into leading practices to learn firsthand from practitioners and graduates. Together, these programs underscored the breadth of Open House Melbourne's remit: expanding public understanding of good design from the scale of everyday life to the complexity of city-shaping infrastructure.

This year, we delivered on the *Open House Melbourne Strategic Plan*: educating, engaging and inspiring through our programming; strengthening our community; and building a stable future for the organisation. A key focus of the strategy is revenue diversification. Working with the City of Melbourne, we piloted a new model of community consultation for the *Draft Melbourne Heritage Strategy*. We designed and delivered an engagement program that unpacked key priorities, invited dialogue and built a broader public understanding of heritage's diversity and value. Engaging over 690 participants, the program enabled meaningful and informed participation, solicited detailed feedback and created a deeper sense of connection to Melbourne's layered heritage.

As always, our calendar was anchored by the Open House Melbourne Weekend. Like many festivals, the Weekend has faced challenges in the aftermath of COVID, yet it has grown from strength to strength since 2022. The 2025 festival invited people to share their *Stories of the City*. It was defined by an incredible sense of community as Melbourne threw open its doors with warmth, generosity and pride. Over 1,600 Collaborators, almost 500 Volunteers and nearly 70,000 audience members came together to celebrate the buildings, places and spaces that make Melbourne unique. It takes an extraordinary collective effort to deliver the Weekend and this year's festival was a powerful reminder of its impact.

During the 2025 Weekend festival, we strengthened our understanding of our audience with an on-the-ground *Demographic + Cultural Design Engagement* survey, developed in consultation with Professor Katya Johanson, Associate Dean of Creative Humanities at Edith Cowan University. Collecting 478 responses across nine sites, the survey reinforced Open House Melbourne's role as the gateway connecting people with good design and the architecture and heritage of our city. A quarter of respondents were newcomers to design, while more than half (54%) said Open House Melbourne's programs are the only way they engage culturally with design. Significantly, 24% of attendees identified as linguistically diverse, well above the 14% of Victoria's arts and culture audience identified in Creative Victoria's 2025 *Audience Atlas Report*, demonstrating the accessibility and reach of our events.

Our achievements this year are the result of a focused and collaborative effort. The Open House Melbourne team is small but highly effective, working closely with a skilled and committed Board. Together, we bring agility and creativity to our work, responding quickly to opportunities and testing new ways to engage our audience with design in the city and across Victoria. Our work is grounded in a shared purpose, it is this collective strength and clarity of vision that underpins the success of our programs, our relationships and the impact we deliver.

This year marked the 18th Open House Melbourne Weekend, a milestone that reflects our significant impact and the extraordinary contribution of our collaborators, partners, volunteers and audience. We are strongly positioned for the future, with exciting projects on the horizon for 2025/2026, as we look ahead to our 20th festival in 2027.

In the face of significant social, economic and environmental challenges, our advocacy has never been more vital. Over the past year, we have worked closely with local councils, state government, partner organisations and communities to build a shared understanding of the importance of good design. As Victoria continues to grow, design is critical across every sector—from the creative industries through to justice, health, infrastructure and housing. Our work demonstrates that great design is not optional but essential. It creates places people love and value, places they call home, and helps ensure a more resilient, inclusive and sustainable Victoria.



TANIA DAVIDGE



Above—Tania Davidge. Photo: Claire Curnow

STRATEGY ON A PAGE

PURPOSE

Open House Melbourne is an independent not-for-profit organisation that champions the role of good design in shaping our buildings, places and communities to support Victoria as a vibrant and liveable state.

VISION

OUR WORK

Open House Melbourne connects people to place, informing and empowering them to play an active role in shaping their environment.

Through our programming, we build public understanding of the positive impact of good design, inspiring people to explore, celebrate and care for their cities, suburbs and regions.

VALUES

OPENNESS

We embody openness through transparency, generosity and a willingness to listen, creating a welcoming space for learning and exchange.

COMMUNITY

We foster an inclusive community, creating opportunities for connection, shared knowledge and belonging.

CURIOSITY

We embrace curiosity through creativity and experimentation, exploring issues and creating moments of wonder and surprise.

COLLABORATION

We collaborate with purpose with respect for people and place. We draw on diverse expertise to amplify ideas and enrich public understanding and experience.

COMMITMENTS

Underpinning our values is our commitment to:

- First Peoples First—recognising and incorporating First Peoples’ knowledge and sovereignty.
- Advocating for good design that is inclusive, sustainable and accessible.
- Supporting design literacy and civic participation across Victoria.

GOALS

STRENGTHEN AND GROW THE OPEN HOUSE MELBOURNE COMMUNITY. EDUCATE, ENGAGE, AND INSPIRE THROUGH INFORMATIVE AND CREATIVE PROGRAMMING. ENSURE A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR OPEN HOUSE MELBOURNE.



Queens & Collins, Open House Melbourne Weekend 2025. Photo: James Henry.

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE GOVERNANCE

This year saw a new approach to meeting structure, with meetings of the Management Committee occurring less frequently to allow for the various sub-committees to meet more frequently and take a more proactive role in managing Open House Melbourne. Meetings of the Management Committee have continued to be primarily held in person, with a hybrid model adopted as needed to allow for flexibility. This approach has worked well and ensured a high level of attendance throughout the year. The focus of these meetings has been to ensure the longer term financial stability of Open House Melbourne, growth of the team and a broader program throughout the year, including the delivery of unique programs such as *Death + Design*.

OUR PEOPLE

Stability has been the theme of this year, with the Open House Melbourne Management Committee remaining largely unchanged from 2024. Tania Davidge, as Executive Director and Chief Curator, continues to enthusiastically lead the Management Committee as the organisation grows and evolves in a complex operating environment. Sam Redston and Amy Muir have continued as President and Vice President respectively, while Leanne Olden has also continued as Secretary. Daniella Sequeira has more than ably stepped into the shoes of Matthew Bowen as Treasurer, continuing the support Open House Melbourne receives from Syracuse.

The team has also remained stable with Piera Maclean continuing in her role as Program Manager and Katie Evans continuing in her role as Partnerships + Communications Manager. Veda Varcoe has joined the team on a part-time basis as a Program + Volunteer Coordinator.

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to Tania and the entire team, whose dedication and enthusiasm are reflected in the vibrant, diverse and innovative program delivered throughout the year, with another successful Weekend resulting in record attendance. Our gratitude also goes to the Building Council, Volunteer Council and our energetic Volunteers and Collaborators, all of whom continue to show unwavering commitment to the Open House movement and our ongoing endeavours in Melbourne. Their invaluable support is fundamental to the identity and success of Open House Melbourne.

STRATEGIC PLANNING AND RISK WORKSHOPS

Following on from an initial strategic planning workshop held on 26 April 2024 and the launch of Open House Melbourne's *Strategy on a Page*, a further strategy workshop was held on 4 April 2025.

The workshop was again run by Right Lane Consulting (organised by Committee member Gemma Pinnell) and focused on values and partnerships, with a view of providing practical support to the Open House Melbourne team in enacting the *Strategy on the Page*. A special session was also held with Open House Melbourne's new risk advisor, Emily O'Brien of Elucidate Melbourne, to refresh the risk matrix and strategy for the organisation. The Committee notes its particular thanks to Gemma for providing Right Lane Consulting's time on a pro bono basis.

SUB-COMMITTEE / ADVISORY GROUPS

Two subcommittees and an advisory group were re-established in 2025, with these subcommittees taking on a more prominent role in the management of Open House Melbourne. Each subcommittee will meet regularly to address the outcomes for each group.

See below the summary of responsibilities for each committee:

Ⓜ RISK & GOVERNANCE

Chair: Leanne Olden

- Manage all governance issues, including workplace policies and procedures
- Respond to the strategic objectives of the organisation with analysis of data and reporting recommendations and insights
- Consider and respond to risk review and pre-event risk evaluations

Ⓜ FUNDRAISING

Chair: Sam Redston

- New opportunities focus, working to milestones based on program launch, OHM weekend and Open Circle initiatives
- Skill set to support OHM capacity in marketing & communications
- Prepare an annual plan for fundraising and communications

Ⓜ PROGRAM ADVISORY GROUP

Chair: Dr. Fleur Watson

- Ran two key workshop discussions to feed into annual program development and EOI processes
- Additional meetings/workshops will be added as the subcommittee determined necessary

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING ATTENDANCE

↘ [DOWNLOAD HERE](#)

OUR PEOPLE

OPEN HOUSE TEAM

TANIA DAVIDGE*

Executive Director/Chief Curator (1 FTE)

PIERA MACLEAN

Program Manager (1 FTE)

KATIE EVANS

Partnerships + Communications Manager (1 FTE)

VEDA VARCOE

Volunteer and Program Coordinator (0.7 FTE)

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE*

SAM REDSTON

Director, Flot & Jet Creative Projects and Events
Board Member and President

AMY MUIR

Director, MUIR Architecture
Board Member and Vice President

DANIELLA SEQUEIRA

CA, Director, Syracuse
Board Member and Treasurer

LEANNE OLDEN

Partner, Pinsent Masons
Board Member and Secretary

CARYN KAKAS

Head of Housing Strategy, ANZ
Board Member

DR. FLEUR WATSON

Associate Professor, RMIT
Board Member

GEMMA PINNELL

Principal, Right Lane Consulting
Board Members

STUART HARRISON

Director, Harrison & White
Board Member

BUILDING COUNCIL*

STEVE STEFANOPOULOS OAM (CHAIR)

ADRIANO ZAROSINSKI (DEPUTY CHAIR)

ALICE BLACKWOOD

HEATH GLEDHILL

MITCHELL GOW

NAOMI BARUN

PAUL ROSER

SOPHIE CLELAND

VOLUNTEER COUNCIL*

ANDREW PURVIS (CHAIR)

STEPHANIE BATEMAN

LUISE RAEDER

MARIA PANETTIERI

KIM WILSON

ARTUR HAJDA

REBECCA ANTHONY

NEIL HARKNESS

PROGRAM ADVISORY GROUP (PAG)

FLEUR WATSON (CHAIR)*

SAM REDSTON*

ANNA O'SULLIVAN*

KATYA CREMA

ALEXIS KALAGAS*

SANDRA GITHINJI

BEC COLE

SHELLEY PENN

MILLIE CATTLIN*

*ASSOCIATION MEMBERS

ADVISORS

MARGAUX BONNE, CPD*

MICHAEL CAMARRI, DATA

AMBASSADOR

PETER MADDISON*

ASSOCIATION MEMBERS

ADAM PUSTOLA

ALISON CLEARY

BEN MORGAN

CHARLES TREMLETT

DAMIAN BUTLER

DAMIAN SABATINI

DANIELLE JOHNSTON

ELENI KAPONIS

ELOISE GLANVILLE

EMMA TELFER

EMMA APPLETON

JACQUELINE DI BLASI

JEREMY KING

JIM GARDINER

JOHN PETIT

JOY VILLALINO

KAT SMITH

KIERAN LEONG

KIM IRONS

LAVANYA ARULANANDAM

LEO MARTIN

LYNNE PEPPER

MARCIA HARKINS

MARGAUX BONNE

MARGOT WILLUMSEN

MARK DAVIS

MARY DOUGHERTY

MATTHEW BOWEN

MELANY HAYES

NAOMI STEAD

NATHAN MILESI

NIC CULNANE

NICK ROUSE

PATRICK RUNDLE

PAUL BORELLA

PETER MADDISON

PHOEBE HARRISON

QUAN PAYNE

ROHAN TROLLOPE

SALLY DOBELL

SHAUN NEWING

SOPHIE NEWING

STEVEN NEAVE

TIM LESLIE

VICTORIA BENNETT

VON SLATER



FINANCE

REVENUE IN 2025 IS RECORDED AS \$759,687, REPRESENTING AN INCREASE OF \$94,341 (14%) COMPARED WITH 2024 (\$665,346).

The 2024/2025 financial year reflects another strong performance for Open House Melbourne. Amid ongoing economic pressures and post-COVID challenges, expenditure was carefully managed, with organisational efficiency and revenue diversification remaining key priorities.

Event revenue recorded a significant uplift, driven by significant new projects, strong public engagement and high participation across popular sites, resulting in booking fees and program funding that exceeded expectations. We recognise this as an exceptional year and have adjusted the 2025/2026 budget to reflect more moderate growth.

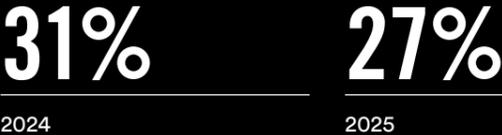
Open House Melbourne remains committed to strengthening its financial foundation and ensuring long-term sustainability. This year, all post-pandemic loans were repaid. We expanded our work on the Department of Transport and Planning's *Plan for Victoria*, designing and delivering the community consultation for the City of Melbourne's *Draft Melbourne Heritage Strategy: Stories of People and Place*.

The increase in 2024/2025 revenue places us on track to expand our core team to five staff members, rebuild the Operational Contingency reserves drawn down during COVID and position the organisation to celebrate its 20th Festival in 2027.

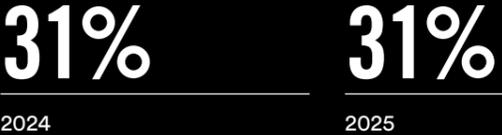
Open House Melbourne closes the year in a strong financial position, well placed for future growth and continued impact.

REVENUE BY TYPE—2024 V 2025

GRANT INCOME



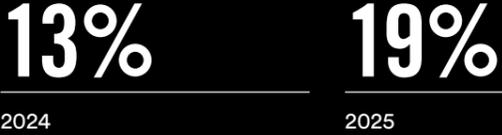
PROGRAM FUNDING



SPONSORSHIP RECEIPTS



EVENT REVENUE



DONATIONS



MEMBERSHIP*



* Open House Melbourne is phasing out memberships





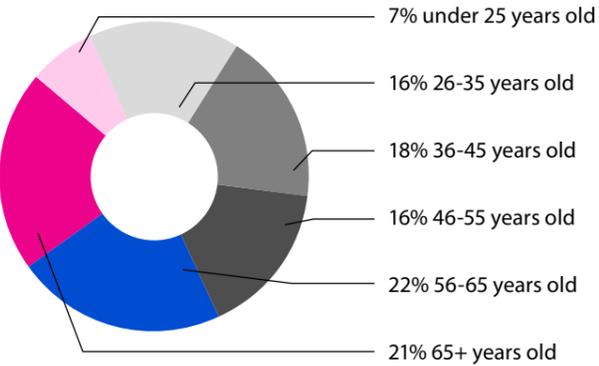
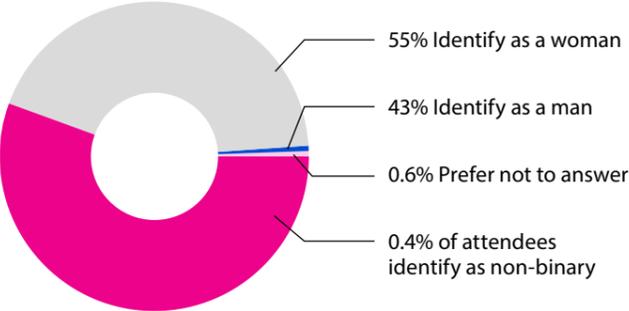
OUR COMMUNITY

RESPONDENTS IDENTIFY AS:

- 4%**
Person with a disability or carer
- 24%**
Speak a language other than English at home
- 10%**
Studying, one quarter are international students
- 23%**
Born overseas

OUR AUDIENCE COMES FROM A VARIETY OF SECTORS INCLUDING

- 16%**
Education
- 13%**
Health
- 11%**
Architecture, Design and Heritage
- 8%**
Government
- 7%**
Manufacturing, Construction and Transportation
- 6%**
Arts and Culture
- 5%**
Hospitality and Retail



OPEN CIRCLE

PATRONS

DANIEL DORALL

OPEN 2500

EMMA TELFER
SOPHIE AND SHAUN NEWING

OPEN 1000

ANDREW PURVIS

Open Circle is Open House Melbourne's donor community, bringing together supporters who share a passion for design and its role in shaping vibrant, connected places. Two events are held each year to celebrate our work and connect with fellow supporters of Melbourne's built environment.

As a final event for 2024, an elevated *Open Circle* gathering at Wildwood House celebrated Open House Melbourne's achievements. A significant modernist residence designed by Robin Boyd, the house is recognised for its seamless integration with the surrounding bush landscape and its enduring influence on Australian residential design. This event offered members and partners the opportunity to learn about the home's history and design, connect with peers and acknowledge the generosity and impact of Open House Melbourne's donor community.

In March, *Open Circle* members gathered at the award-winning Northcote House by LLDS, a private residence that has received international recognition including the 2024 Premier Award for Australian Interior Design and Dezeen's House of the Year. Members experienced the home's striking design and heard directly from hosts and architects David Leggett and Dr. Paul Loh about their design philosophy and approach.



DESIGN ADVOCACY

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCILS AND ARTS LEADERS

Open House Melbourne deepened relationships with local government and cultural leaders through a program of councillor tours and presentations. Our team met with councillors from Port Phillip and Maribyrnong, delivered a city tour with City of Melbourne councillors and held one-on-one meetings with councillors from Yarra and Stonnington. These engagements, alongside discussions with arts leaders, provided valuable opportunities to share Open House Melbourne's offerings and to highlight the role of design in shaping vibrant, inclusive and resilient communities.

MINISTERIAL ADVOCACY

Advocacy at the ministerial level continued to be a priority for Open House Melbourne. Executive Director Tania Davidge and Chair Sam Redston met with Minister for Creative Industries Colin Brooks and Creative Victoria Chief Executive Claire Febey to present the organisation's work and reinforce the value of sustained investment in cultural design programs. Open House Melbourne's multi-year Creative Victoria funding was highlighted as a cornerstone of our ability to deliver impactful year-round programming, including the flagship Weekend Festival, the largest architecture and built environment festival in Oceania, at exceptional value to the public.

As part of our *Making Home* program, Open House Melbourne hosted a 'Density Done Well' site tour of the Bangs Street housing project with the Attorney-General and Minister for Planning Sonya Kilkenny, MP John Berger and Victorian Government Architect Jill Garner. Delivered through a Ground Lease Model partnership with Homes Victoria, Building Communities, JCB and CHL, the project demonstrates a new approach to delivering sustainable, high-quality public housing while retaining public ownership of land. The tour explored the site's master planning, architectural design, public realm and stewardship models, sparking vital conversations about housing delivery, density and design excellence.

DENSITY DONE WELL – PARLIAMENTARY EXHIBITION

Open House Melbourne collaborated on the *Density Done Well* exhibition, led by the Australian Institute of Architects Victorian Chapter Housing Committee. The exhibition was launched at a Parliamentary preview event, officially opened by Minister Sonya Kilkenny and Victorian Government Architect Jill Garner. By showcasing exemplary Victorian housing projects, the exhibition advanced the conversation on the importance of density that connects communities to amenity, services, transport and public space.

EDUCATION

Open House Melbourne continued to advance design literacy through education and thought leadership. Executive Director Tania Davidge delivered lectures and talks at leading forums, including *The Architecture of Making an Impact* at the Melbourne School of Design and *Choose Your Own Adventure* for Parlour. These presentations examined design advocacy and collective impact through case studies spanning practice-based research, grassroots campaigns and Open House Melbourne's own programming.

OPEN CHRISTCHURCH

The Open House Melbourne team travelled to Ōtautahi Christchurch to attend the Open Christchurch festival, an inspiring opportunity to experience a city defined by its extraordinary mix of heritage and contemporary architecture. Highlights included attending the talks *Beyond the Walls: The Power of Whareniui* and *Great Walls* and *Children of the Christchurch Modernists*, as well as behind-the-scenes tours of Te Kaha Stadium, The Court Theatre, the Transitional Cathedral, Christchurch Town Hall, the Canterbury Provincial Council Buildings and Rāpaki. The visit strengthened relationships between the two festivals and provided valuable opportunities for shared learning in design advocacy, deepening understanding of how opening buildings and spaces can inspire communities to engage with the built environment and the role good design plays in shaping inclusive, resilient cities.



OPEN HOUSE PROGRAM REVIEW



WHOLE PROGRAM STATISTICS

KEY STATS:

87,581

Program engagements including building visits, tours, talks and online programming

229

Programs delivered

1,054

Individual talks, tours, exhibitions etc.

121,148

Total subscribers across email and social media

591

Volunteers

2,800+

Volunteer hours contributed

630

Volunteer Shifts

450

Media items

235,363,317

Media reach





MAKING HOME

In 2024-25, Open House Melbourne presented five community housing tours as part of our ongoing *Making Home* series. First established in 2022, *Making Home* focuses on social, affordable and innovative housing and examines the forces shaping housing in Victoria.

This year's tours showcased the extraordinary breadth of community housing design in Victoria, for an engaged public audience, opening up benchmark projects to demonstrate how design is responding to contemporary challenges such as density, placemaking and sustainability.

Making Home is presented by Open House Melbourne with the assistance of the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation.

492

Attendance

36

Volunteers

94%

Felt inspired and empowered to advocate for good design in the built environment after attending a Making Home event

MAKING HOME: BELMONT SATURDAY 23 NOVEMBER 2024

Beginning in regional Victoria, the Belmont housing project in Geelong, designed by Kennedy Nolan for Housing Choices Australia, is a two-storey apartment model that could not have been delivered by the market. With generous landscaping, a community garden and careful attention to context and sustainability, the project provides new homes for residents on the Victorian Housing Register (VHR) and increased amenity for the neighbourhood.

ATTENDANCE: 66

MAKING HOME: MAKE ROOM SATURDAY 18 JANUARY 2025

Tours of Make Room offered insight into how purposeful partnerships can transform an underused council asset into life-changing accommodation, supporting people experiencing rough sleeping or chronic homelessness into long-term secure housing. Delivered by the City of Melbourne and Unison Housing, the retrofit of a heritage building designed by i2C Architects with landscape by Tract, Make Room provides housing and wraparound health and social services in partnership with Cohealth and Ngwala Willumbong. Drawing on significant additional funding from the Victorian government, philanthropy and business, the project sets a new benchmark for local government-led social housing.

ATTENDANCE: 120

MAKING HOME: NIGHTINGALE WURRU WURRU BIIK SATURDAY 24 MAY 2025

In Brunswick, Wurru wurru biik, developed by Nightingale Housing, is a sustainable housing development redefining inclusive urban living for social impact. The Nightingale model reserves 20% of residences across its projects for social housing, with apartment design following a tenure-blind approach to foster greater social and economic inclusion.

ATTENDANCE: 81

MAKING HOME: ARKIT FACTORY FRIDAY 13 JUNE 2025

ARKit Factory tours in Sunshine revealed the potential of prefabricated modular construction to deliver affordable, sustainable social housing in regional Victoria. Developed for Haven Home Safe, the Horsham Housing project demonstrates how design-led manufacturing can provide flexible and fast responses to the housing needs of communities across Victoria.

ATTENDANCE: 100

MAKING HOME: SUMMERHILL VILLAGE SATURDAY 21 JUNE 2025

Summerhill Village in Footscray, designed by TANDEM Design Studio, showcased a purpose-built social housing project for women over the age of 55. Owned by the United Housing Co-operative and the Lions Club of Footscray, the medium-density complex supports independent living and ageing in place, while its co-operative model encourages resident participation, shared responsibility and active contribution to community wellbeing.

ATTENDANCE: 125

THIS WAS OUTSTANDING! JUST SO INSPIRING AND IMPORTANT. MAKE ROOM WAS EXCEPTIONALLY WELL CONSIDERED AND I AM SO HOPEFUL FOR THE FUTURE WHEN INITIATIVES LIKE THIS CAN BE FUNDED AND BROUGHT TO LIFE. EXCITING AND HEARTENING TO SEE OUR MOST VULNERABLE BEING LOOKED AFTER SO HOLISTICALLY AND CAREFULLY. BRAVO TO EVERYONE INVOLVED AND PLEASE CAN WE HAVE A LOT MORE OF THIS

I DEEPLY APPRECIATE THE INITIATIVE AND EFFORT OF OPEN HOUSE MELBOURNE IN EDUCATING AND PROMOTING GOOD DESIGN AND SUSTAINABILITY AS FABRIC TO ENHANCING HEALTHY AND VIBRANT SOCIAL FABRIC

SUMMER FUN(DRAISERS)

Brought to you with the generous support of our friends and partners, this year's *Summer Fun(draisers)* offered new and special opportunities as well as returning crowd favourites from Weekend Festivals past. These intimate, limited capacity tours took audiences up close and behind-the-scenes with design experts, all the while making a valued contribution to Open House Melbourne.

\$13,565

Funds Raised

293

Attendance

17

Volunteers

NORTH MELBOURNE: TWENTIETH-CENTURY CHANGE IN A NINETEENTH-CENTURY SUBURB FRIDAY 29 NOVEMBER 2024

Historian and heritage landscape specialists from Lovell Chen led a walking tour through North Melbourne, exploring twentieth-century changes in this predominantly nineteenth-century suburb, with a focus on models for social housing, landscape and urban change, post-war migration and religious expression.

LOBBY: ART + ARCHITECTURE FRIDAY 15 NOVEMBER 2024 + FRIDAY 14 MARCH 2025

Art advisor Helen Sweatman led attendees on a walking tour through lobbies of iconic commercial buildings and galleries within the bustling CBD, exploring the relationship between art and architecture and considering how these transitional spaces influence the identity, culture and urban landscape of Melbourne.

CITYLINK CONTROL ROOM TOUR SATURDAY 26 + SUNDAY 27 OCTOBER 2024

Participants stepped inside the CityLink Traffic Control Room for a behind-the-scenes glimpse at the technology and 24/7 operations Transurban staff use to monitor and manage incidents along 45 kilometres of road: from the Monash Freeway, the Domain and Burnley tunnels, over the Bolte Bridge, along the Tullamarine Freeway and out across the West Gate Bridge, taking in sections of the West Gate Freeway.

KTA APARTMENTS SUMMER WALKING TOUR SATURDAY 8 FEBRUARY 2025

Architects Kerstin Thompson and Lynn Chew led participants on a walking tour stopping at four KTA multi-residential projects located in Fitzroy. From Kerr Street Residences to Church on Napier, the tour highlighted the design moments, insights and learnings that influenced and shaped each development.

'PAST AND PRESENT' WALKING TOUR WITH BATES SMART THURSDAY 20 FEBRUARY 2025

Studio Director Johan Hermijanto guided a walking tour sharing Bates Smart's architectural history and legacy; from the 1860s-era St Michael's Church to the award-winning contemporary residential towers on Spring Street and everything in between.

DISCOVER PENTRIDGE PIAZZA WITH ASPECT STUDIOS FRIDAY 21 FEBRUARY 2025

Erwin Taal of ASPECT Studios and lead designer of Pentridge Piazza explored the transformation of former Pentridge Prison into a residential and retail precinct on a walking tour through key spaces where layered history and contemporary design have converged in the new Central Piazza and surrounding areas.

RE/DISCOVER ROYAL PARK WITH GML HERITAGE AND CITY OF MELBOURNE WEDNESDAY 26 FEBRUARY 2025

Participants followed specialists Dr. Christina Dyson and Dr. Helen Doyle of GML and Alicia Otto from City of Melbourne on a tour tracing the layered and historical significance of Royal Park and its varied and evolving uses, gaining insights into the long-term vision and management under a new conservation plan.

CITY SECRETS WALKING TOUR WITH PETER MADDISON FRIDAY 14 MARCH 2025

Open House Melbourne's Ambassador and original host of Grand Designs Australia Peter Maddison highlighted the design elements and influences of some of the city's contemporary and architectural gems on a guided walk from Federation Square to Spring Street to ICI House.

CATALYST CONVERSATIONS

Catalyst Conversations look at the design and delivery of significant projects to tell stories of their impact on the communities and the places in which they are located. Delivered via both podcast and in-person events, these conversations unpack how catalyst projects connect people to place and help audiences to better understand why good design is important and how people can influence the shape and form of the places in which they live.

THIS IS PUBLIC... SPACE MONDAY 24 FEBRUARY 2025

Who owns public space, how do we engage with it and how should it be shaped for the future? These were the questions at the heart of *This is Public... Space*, a panel discussion examining the vital role of public space as a resource for connection, learning, protest, commemoration and celebration.

Moderated by Walkley Award-winning journalist Dr. Jeff Sparrow, the conversation brought together Claire Martin (Associate Director, OCULUS), Katrina Sedgwick OAM (Director and CEO, Melbourne Arts Precinct Corporation), Dr Kim Dovey (Chair of Architecture and Urban Design, University of Melbourne) and Sarah Lynn Rees (Associate Principal, Jackson Clements Burrows Architects), who together challenged conventional thinking on what makes a space truly public.

In front of a sellout audience at The Edge, Fed Square, the panel reflected on how we define and use public spaces as Melbourne continues to transform, from landmark projects like the Melbourne Arts Precinct Transformation to grassroots urban interventions, footpaths and plazas. Together, they explored how these spaces can foster democracy, social inclusion and climate resilience.

This is Public... Space was presented by the City of Melbourne in partnership with program curators Open House Melbourne and event partner Fed Square.

540

Attendance

CATALYST PODCAST SERIES RELEASED ONLINE THROUGH OCTOBER + NOVEMBER 2024

The *Catalyst Podcast* series unpacks clever design solutions in the built environment. Host Tania Davidge was joined in conversation with designers and field experts to explore themes and issues that act as catalysts for creative design thinking.

CRITTERS AS CATALYST

In this episode, we looked at Critters as Catalysts for design and engineering. Speaking with engineer Peter Standen from Partridge and architect Stuart Harrison from Harrison and White we explored how engineering and design can help take care of our more-than-human friends.

FLOOD AS CATALYST

In this episode, Tania Davidge spoke with planner Jane Keddie from Hansen Partnership and architect James Davidson from JDA Co. to discuss how planning and design can work with the weather and environmental flows to mitigate risk and rethink our relationship to water.

AUDIENCE AS CATALYST

This conversation looked at audiences as a catalyst for design through the lens of Performing Arts Centres. Tania Davidge chatted with Professor Katya Johanson from Edith Cowan University and architect and founding director Ian McDougall from ARM Architecture to help us unpack the relationship between an audience and the design of the contemporary performing arts centre.

PLAY AS CATALYST

This episode looked at play as a catalyst for design, creativity and engaging people with the city. Speaking with Professor Lisa Grocott from Monash University and artist Mike Hewson, we discovered the ways play and a playful mindset can foster connection and creativity in the city.

END OF LIFE AS CATALYST

This conversation unpacked the end of life as a catalyst for the design of palliative care facilities and considered the design of the places in which we might die and reflected on how we can live a good life, right up until the end. We looked at what it means to die with dignity and addressed how we can help our loved ones to lead the conversation, allowing them agency at the end of life.

The Catalyst Podcast series is presented by Open House Melbourne and produced with the assistance of the Alastair Swayn Foundation. The Catalyst Podcast series was recorded at The Push, Collingwood Yards.

994

Listens

I USE THE ANZAC PAVILION AREA WEEKLY AS I WORK AND LIVE IN THE AREA. IT IS HEAVENLY AND SO BEAUTIFULLY DESIGNED. IT WAS A JOY TO HEAR ALL THE ARTISTS TALK ABOUT THE METRO TUNNEL WORKS.

THIS WAS A THOROUGHLY ENJOYABLE AND INFORMATIVE EVENT AND MY HUSBAND AND I FELT PRIVILEGED TO BE ABLE TO ATTEND IT.

CATALYST CONVERSATIONS

CREATIVITY + CONSTRUCTION: PUBLIC ART AND INFRASTRUCTURE

THURSDAY 22 MAY 2025

As part of Melbourne Design Week 2025, Open House Melbourne and Metro Tunnel Creative Program presented *Creativity and Construction: Public Art and Infrastructure*.

Held in The Edge at Fed Square, the event explored the intersection of art, architecture and infrastructure through Melbourne's Metro Tunnel Project. The conversation took the audience behind the scenes, revealing some of the ways creative expression and First Nations' knowledge and culture have been thoughtfully embedded across the five new stations.

The discussion, moderated by ABC TV presenter Namila Benson, focused on three key projects: Maree Clarke's powerful line-wide artwork *Tracks*; Jefa Greenaway's award-winning Casuarina Pavilion at Anzac Station; and Stephen Banham's evocative typographic installation *One Day in Our Park* at Arden Station.

Together, the speakers unpacked the complexities of working at the intersection of art and major infrastructure, shedding light on the creative processes, cultural collaboration, design intent and the technical challenges of bringing public artworks to life within such a large-scale project.

It was a compelling conversation that celebrated the enduring legacy of these works and their role in shaping not only the experience of the Metro Tunnel, but also the cultural and architectural identity of contemporary Melbourne and Victoria.

Creativity and Construction: Public Art and Infrastructure was presented by Open House Melbourne and Metro Tunnel Creative Program in partnership with Fed Square. This event was part of Melbourne Design Week 2025, an initiative of the Victorian Government in collaboration with the NGV.

160

Attendance

RAAFAT'S WORK IS SO GREAT. LUCKY PEOPLE WHO WILL USE THIS STATION EVERY DAY AS THEIR LOCAL STOP. IT WAS LIGHT AND INSPIRING AND HE SPOKE SO WELL.



VERY INFORMATIVE AND INSPIRING WORKS THAT BEAUTIFY A PUBLIC SPACE.

HERITAGE CONVERSATIONS: A LIFE IN PHOTOS—JOHN GOLLINGS

SATURDAY 24 MAY 2025

As part of the 2025 Ballarat Heritage festival, Open House Melbourne presented *Heritage Conversations: A life in photos—John Gollings*, in partnership with the Heritage Council of Victoria and the City of Ballarat.

John Gollings began studying architecture before a chance opportunity led him into photography. He first produced iconic advertising campaigns in fashion and tourism before turning to architectural photography as his peers established practices. Over decades, he has created some of Australia's most enduring architectural images, from Melbourne to Ballarat or the Uluru Cultural Centre to Parliament House, shaping how Australian architecture is seen nationally and internationally.

Held at the beautiful Ballarat Mechanics Institute, the afternoon offered a warm, generous and inspiring conversation that was enthusiastically embraced by the Ballarat community. The event drew a full house, with audience members captivated by John's reflections on a life behind the lens. Questions flowed well beyond the formal session, with many people staying to speak with John afterwards.

Presented by Open House Melbourne in partnership with the Heritage Council of Victoria and the City of Ballarat.

250

Attendance

ART AT ANZAC WITH DR RAAFAT ISHAK AND FIONA HALL

SATURDAY 20 SEPTEMBER 2025

An onsite walk + talk with Dr. Raafat Ishak and Fiona Hall, hosted by Dr. David Sequeira, was held to celebrate their permanent artworks at the new Anzac Station.

Host Dr. David Sequeira warmly welcomed the audience with enthusiasm and humour and effectively set the tone for the event. Dr. Raafat Ishak spoke succinctly about his work before engaging with many audience questions about the process and inspiration for his work.

Attendees had the opportunity to walk through the concourse level of the station and experience the artworks up close before hearing from Fiona Hall about the history and inspiration for her work panel work and carrier-pigeon sculptures. Attendees were invited to collect a handmade vinyl bag, made from the artwork hoardings surrounding the station construction sites, upon their departure and approach the speakers for any final questions before leaving.

Art at Anzac was presented by Open House Melbourne and Metro Tunnel Creative Program.

91

Attendance

HERITAGE STRATEGY

MAY + JUNE 2025

The City of Melbourne engaged Open House Melbourne to deliver a co-designed community consultation on the *Draft Melbourne Heritage Strategy: Stories of People and Place*. Centred on five priority areas—Aboriginal heritage, powerful experiences, distinctive places, the climate and biodiversity emergency and stewardship—the program invited the public and key stakeholders to share perspectives on how the city’s heritage should be valued, managed and strengthened.

Running over six weeks, the program combined two panel discussions (with facilitated audience Q+As), a family *Open Play* workshop, an *Open Studio* for students, stakeholder ‘Walkshops’ and interactive activations, along with an online survey. A total of 691 people participated in the engagement program (351 in attendance, 331 survey responses, 9 submissions) and 918 interactions for the activations were received. Together, these activities introduced children and families to heritage, engaged wider audiences in accessible conversations and offered immersive, place-based experiences to critically reflect on the Draft Strategy.

7

Events

351

Attendance

691

Total engagements

918

Interactions with activations

STORIES OF HERITAGE: A PANEL CONVERSATION THURSDAY 8 MAY 2025

Melbourne has lived many lives, each layer contributing to the city’s rich heritage. *Stories of Heritage* amplified experiences and revealed both visible and hidden histories, fostering a deeper understanding of Melbourne’s past, its ongoing evolution and people’s connection to place.

Tania Davidge, Executive Director of Open House Melbourne, facilitated a panel conversation with Jason Eades, Director of Aboriginal Melbourne, City of Melbourne; Mark Wang, CEO of the Museum of Chinese Australian History; and Dr Helen Doyle, historian at GML Heritage. Together, they shared and unpacked the role of storytelling in connecting communities to both visible heritage and histories often hidden from view.

CHALLENGING HERITAGE OR HERITAGE CHALLENGES?: A PANEL CONVERSATION THURSDAY 5 JUNE

Within the context of a housing and climate crisis and shifting social values, this panel conversation explored how heritage can adapt to contemporary challenges while safeguarding what makes Melbourne unique.

Kerstin Thompson, Director and Principal at KTA; Patrick Kennedy, Principal at Kennedy Nolan; and Dr. James Lesh, Founding Director of Heritage Workshop; joined Jo Cannington, Director of City Strategy at the City of Melbourne, to share insights and unpack the challenges facing heritage.

Together, they examined the complexities of achieving meaningful heritage outcomes and considered how to best protect the city’s character and identity while ensuring heritage places remain relevant for both present and future generations.

WALKSHOPS MAY + JUNE 2025

A series of three ‘Walkshops’ offered place-based learning opportunities for targeted stakeholder groups: peak bodies, heritage societies and residents’ groups and business representatives. Using curated walking tours to explore real-world examples of heritage in action, participants were invited to reflect on the Draft Strategy’s priorities in the context of liveable neighbourhoods, First Nations knowledge, sustainability and stewardship. Post-walk sessions enabled facilitated discussion and direct feedback.

ACTIVATIONS

Participants shared their attitudes and reflections through engaging with a variety of interactive activities. These included exploring the digital Aboriginal Melbourne map tool, sharing personal experiences on postcards, completing a heritage-themed crossword, contributing ideas on colourful speech bubbles, creating personal itineraries with string, reflecting on their neighbourhoods, using pipe cleaners to indicate priorities and voting with stickers on accessibility and inclusivity. These hands-on and participatory methods generated rich, visual insights into public values, preferences and ideas for the city’s heritage.

The OPEN Play and OPEN Studio delivered as part of this program are reported on below.





I LIKED LISTENING TO THE RICH AND DIFFERENT SKILLSET OF THE PRESENTERS. ALSO, THAT THERE WERE MATURE AND NEW PEOPLE IN THE INDUSTRY PRESENTING THEIR EXPERIENCES IN THE FIELD.

I ENJOYED LISTENING TO THE PROJECTS AND GETTING A TOUR OF THE OFFICE. I'D NEVER BEEN TO AN ARCHITECTURAL OFFICE BEFORE SO IT WAS A UNIQUE EXPERIENCE.



OPEN STUDIO

Open Studio offers a curated program of studio visits designed to connect students with leading built environment, planning and landscape practices.

Through informative and interactive formats, *Open Studio* provides an invaluable opportunity for students across disciplines, including architecture, urban planning, landscape architecture, urban design and property development, to gain first-hand insight into professional practice. Through the presentation of real time projects, students can see how a practice operates and what role a graduate can play there.

After graduation, students do not always have the opportunity to experience a practice, large or small. By stepping into studios and engaging directly with practitioners, students can experience what a future career in the industry might look like.

143

Attendance

OPEN STUDIO: DESIGN FRIDAYS AT ARCHITECTUS FRIDAY 18 OCTOBER 2025

Students were invited to get a glimpse into what studio life is like at Architectus, one of Australia's largest and most diverse architectural practices. Architectus graduates presented live projects to the students and explained their roles within them. Students had the opportunity to meet with practicing architects and designers across different stages of their careers and areas of work.

OPEN STUDIO: GML HERITAGE THURSDAY 29 MAY 2025 (AS PART OF THE HERITAGE STRATEGY CONSULTATION)

Open Studio: GML Heritage provided an invaluable opportunity for students across disciplines—including architecture, urban planning, landscape architecture, urban design and property development—to gain first-hand insight into professional practice and, in this edition, share and unpack the City's key heritage priorities. Students learned about the diverse heritage work undertaken by GML and were invited to contribute their perspective on what heritage should look like in the future.

OPEN STUDIO: HANSEN PARTNERSHIP THURSDAY 26 JUNE 2025

Students were invited to learn about the daily workings of Hansen Partnership through current and past projects. They were offered a tangible understanding of workflows, problem-solving approaches and collaborative dynamics, before enjoying a networking opportunity with designers from all levels of the practice.

OPEN STUDIO: HAYBALL THURSDAY 28 AUGUST 2025

After a tour of the studio to learn how Hayball thinks and works, a panel of Hayball students and graduates presented their project and practice experience. Through a deep-dive panel discussion, they generously shared kernels of wisdom they've accumulated to date and their advice for students emerging into their professional careers.

FIRST OPPORTUNITY TO ATTEND PENTRIDGE CINEMA. THOUGHT PROVOKING FILM. INSPIRED ME TO GET MY AFFAIRS IN ORDER AND TO 'WRITE IT DOWN'.

THANK YOU FOR BEING INCLUSIVE AND WELCOMING. KEEP DOING WHAT YOU'RE DOING! VERY EDUCATIONAL AND THOUGHT PROVOKING.

THANK YOU OPEN HOUSE FOR THE UNIQUE PROGRAMS YOU OFFER TO THE PUBLIC YEAR AFTER YEAR.

ATTENDED SOLO ON A WHIM. EXCELLENT TOPIC, VENUE AND SPEAKERS. THE VITAL ROLE OF COMMUNITY IN DEATH WAS POWERFUL, WITHOUT THE NEGATIVE MESSAGING OF HOW DISCONNECTED OUR SOCIETY CURRENTLY IS. MOVING, HEARTWARMING AND A WAKE UP CALL.

THE BEYOND THE GRAVE SYMPOSIUM HAD EXCELLENT SPEAKERS THAT COVERED THE IDEA OF PUBLIC MEMORIALISATION AND DESIGN IN DEPTH. THERE WAS ALSO AN ENGAGING ACTIVITY THAT ALLOWED ME TO REFLECT ON THE TYPE OF BURIAL/MEMORIALISATION I MIGHT HAVE. THE EDUCATION CENTRE AT THE SHRINE WAS A COMFORTABLE AND BEAUTIFUL VENUE

DESIGN + DEATH: BEYOND THE GRAVE

MAY 2025 (AS PART OF MELBOURNE DESIGN WEEK)

Expanding on last year's *Six Feet Under* program, *Design + Death: Beyond the Grave* moved from the cemetery to explore the evolving relationships between memory, place and identity in the context of death, culture, commemoration and urban planning.

Across the program, experts examined how spaces, whether steeped in historical significance, tied to cultural narratives, or embedded within the urban landscape, serve as powerful touchstones for our personal and collective understanding of mortality and memory.

Design + Death: Beyond the Grave was presented by Open House Melbourne, supported by program partners DeathTech Research Team, Greater Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust, DocPlay and the Shrine of Remembrance. This program was part of Melbourne Design Week 2025, an initiative of the Victorian Government in collaboration with the NGV.

201

Attendance

8

Volunteers

DEATH, DESIGN AND THE MACABRE: ECHOES OF THE PAST THROUGH DESIGN

THURSDAY 15 MAY 2025

Held in the eerie, theme-responsive site at the Old Melbourne Gaol, this conversation examined how design shapes engagement with landmarks marked by death, tragedy and the macabre, from global sites like Alcatraz and the Tower of London to Melbourne's Pentridge Piazza, Carlton's Underbelly, Old Melbourne Gaol and the city's spooky laneways. Discussions highlighted how technology and dark tourism bring these histories to life through true crime stories, ghost tours and celebrity memorials.

Natasha Mitchell, host of ABC Radio National's *Big Ideas*, led the conversation with Dr. Sue Hodges, Managing Director of SHP and Erwin Taal, Senior Associate at ASPECT Studios.

Together, they reflected on how design can respect and challenge the legacies of such places and create meaningful connections while navigating the balance between educational value, emotional weight and ethical considerations.

The event was recorded and later reshared by ABC Radio National's *Big Ideas* to national audiences.

LIFE IN BLOOM: FLORAL ARRANGEMENT WORKSHOP

MONDAY 19 MAY 2025

Life in Bloom offered a unique exploration of floral design, where the beauty of flowers was showcased in a stark, almost morgue-like setting that highlighted their intricate details. Led by Kayla Moon of XFLOS, participants learned to create arrangements that considered both aesthetic impact and deeper symbolic meaning.

Drawing on her experience working in a hospital florist, crafting arrangements for births, celebrations and farewells, Kayla guided attendees in using dead and dying flowers to practice floral techniques while reflecting on the role of flowers in marking life's significant moments.

TENDER: DOCUMENTARY SCREENING

WEDNESDAY 21 MAY 2025

Held at Pentridge's Palace Cinema, this screening of *TENDER* offered a compelling look at a community learning to be as present in death as we are in birth. Set in the industrial seaside town of Port Kembla, the film follows a determined group taking on the responsibility of caring for their own dead, a practice often considered taboo. Through stories of resilience, humour and heartbreak, viewers witnessed the group navigate community-based funerals while facing personal challenges, including a life-threatening illness within their ranks.

Following the screening, a Q+A featured Tender Funerals CEO Jenny Briscoe-Hough in conversation with Stephanie Longmuir from the DeathTech Research Team, providing further insight into community-led approaches to death care.

BEYOND THE GRAVE—MEMORIALISATION SYMPOSIUM

SUNDAY 25 MAY 2025

The *Memorialisation Symposium* brought together experts and participants to examine how spaces, whether historically significant, culturally meaningful or embedded in the urban landscape, serve as touchstones for our personal and collective understanding of mortality and memory.

The day began with a conversation between Amy Muir and Professor Philip Goad on the intersection of memorialisation and city planning, exploring how iconic sites like Melbourne's Shrine of Remembrance function as symbols of collective memory and integral elements of urban design. This was followed by an interactive activation led by the Greater Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust, encouraging participants to reflect on how they want to be remembered, fostering dialogue, creative engagement and feedback to inform future initiatives. The symposium concluded with a panel discussion featuring Carlo Missio, Neil Masterton and Sam Holleran, moderated by Tania Davidge, examining the past, present and future of memorial landscapes and the balance between tradition, inclusion and innovation in commemorative spaces. Guests were also invited to witness the Shrine of Remembrance's weekly Last Post Service, offering a poignant moment for reflection and connection to conclude their experience.

OPEN HOUSE MELBOURNE WEEKEND: STORIES OF THE CITY

FRIDAY 25 JULY + SATURDAY 26 JULY + SUNDAY 27
JULY 2025

The Weekend 2025 festival truly embodied the idea of an 'Open House'. Melbourne threw open its doors with warmth, generosity and pride to welcome people into the buildings, places and spaces that make our city unique. Our audience embraced the program with passion and curiosity, exploring new spaces, discovering the unexpected and reconnecting with much-loved favourites.

At Open House Melbourne, we often speak about how our program connects people to place and this year's theme *Stories of the City* made that connection tangible. Cities are more than bricks and mortar. It is people's stories that give the places we love their identity and personality. Our stories connect people to the city, to each other and to community.

As the largest architecture and built environment festival in Asia Pacific, the Weekend continues to grow in scale and impact. In 2025, the festival attracted nearly 70,000 in-person and online visits including open buildings, tours, talks, events, exhibitions and online programs. To experience the Weekend, visitors travelled from across Victoria and interstate, with regional audiences increasing year on year.

Stories of the City resonated across metropolitan Melbourne. To celebrate the theme, the ARBV presented *Tales of Melbourne Theatres*, while the Melbourne Camera Club's exhibition captured visual stories of architecture, culture and community. In a collaboration with Bates Smart, Open House Melbourne invited the public to share their own anecdotes and memories of Melbourne for an exhibition at the Bates Smart Gallery of personal stories of connection to place. Additionally, Open House Melbourne partnered with Maptivate, Tract and Architecture and Access to deliver our first online *Access Map*, identifying twelve neurodiversity and mobility-friendly sites on our program.

This year the festival expanded to include a full Friday of programming, giving audiences more of what they love. Over 30 new experiences were offered, from behind-the-scenes access at the Younghusband Woolstore and Essendon Fields Airport, to thought-provoking conversations on retrofit at 500 Bourke and the University of Melbourne and designing low carbon *Homes of the Future*.

190

Program Listings

97

New Programs

1,015

Tours, talks, workshops,
performances and
exhibitions

46

New Collaborators



WEEKEND HIGHLIGHTS

DESIGNING WITH COUNTRY WEDNESDAY 23 JULY 2025

The notion of Country is fundamental to Indigenous ways of knowing, being and designing, yet as architects and landscape architects increasingly seek to engage with this concept, important questions remain, what is Country, how do diverse Indigenous communities across Australia define and relate to it and how might a deeper understanding transform contemporary design practices? This year's *Designing with Country* explored these questions with leading Indigenous thinkers Owen Café and Leila Gurruwiwi, in conversation with Dr. Jock Gilbert and Christine Phillips from RMIT's Yulendj Weelam Lab. Together, they unpacked the complexity and richness of Country, offered insight into its meaning, relevance and potential to shape a more culturally responsive built environment and engaged thoughtfully with audience questions throughout.

Designing with Country was presented by Melbourne Conversations in partnership with program curators Open House Melbourne and event partner Fed Square.

ATTENDANCE: 500

MODERN MELBOURNE: GREG BURGESS SUNDAY 28 JULY 2025

Modern Melbourne is a series that documents the extraordinary practice of our most important architects and designers and looks at their lasting impact on Melbourne.

In this episode, Greg Burgess, a unique figure in Australian architecture, reflects on his community-focused approach to design and how he has used architecture to foster relationships with clients, communities and Country to create spaces full of meaning and spirit. In conversation with Dr Peter Raisbeck at Eltham Library, Greg reveals how he has consistently championed this approach, producing work noted for its complex geometries, innovative materials and deep cultural insights.

This sold-out premiere screening at ACMI Cinema 2 was followed by a Q&A with the Heritage Council.

ATTENDANCE: 168

WEEKEND HIGHLIGHTS

HERITAGE STORIES OF THE CITY WITH SALLY CAPP AND EDDIE BUTLER-BOWDON MONDAY 28 JULY 2025

Former Lord Mayor Sally Capp and curator Eddie Butler-Bowdon from the City of Melbourne's Art and Heritage Collection presented a captivating conversation that lifted the lid on Melbourne's hidden stories. Through stories of their favourite artefacts from the vast civic collection, they shared surprising, quirky and powerful tales that have shaped the city, from political power moves to artistic revolutions, while reflecting on the evolving significance of heritage and the importance of keeping the collection relevant. They emphasised that the Collection reflects the City of Melbourne's values by honouring the past, while presenting a contemporary perspective on heritage. This unique instalment of the Heritage Address offered audiences a rare glimpse behind the scenes of Melbourne's cultural treasure trove, where every object holds a story waiting to be told.

Modern Melbourne and the Heritage Address are presented by Open House Melbourne in partnership with the Heritage Council of Victoria.

ATTENDANCE: 482

STROLL THE CITY

Open House Melbourne continues to build on the *Stroll the City* platform with two new exciting additions launched as part of the *Stories of the City Weekend*.

Designing Culture: Melbourne Arts Precinct dived into the evolution and development of the Melbourne Arts Precinct. Open House Melbourne's Executive Director and architect Tania Davidge, along with special guests, shared the architectural characteristics that have shaped this pocket of our city and the significant project underway that will transform this iconic cultural precinct.

Anzac Station is one of five new underground train stations as a part of the Metro Tunnel Project. With guidance from Kylie from the Metro Tunnel Project and an ensemble of special guests, participants journeyed through the station in-person while hearing, via the *Stroll the City* audio, about the station's design and exploring amazing artworks and the hidden details of one of Melbourne's future architectural icons.

ACCESS MAP

In 2025, Open House Melbourne launched the *Access Map*, a digital tool designed to make the Weekend more inclusive and accessible. Highlighting mobility-friendly and neurodiverse-considerate sites, the Map helps visitors plan their journeys with confidence, including nearby amenities and supports. Available on mobile and desktop, it marked a major step in ensuring the Weekend welcomes all visitors and reflects our commitment to access and equity.

3,654

Stroll the City Engagements

50,224

Access Map Views



ON-THE-GROUND SURVEY

During the Weekend 2025 festival, Open House Melbourne complemented our online data collection with an on-the-ground survey to better understand our audience demographics and cultural design engagement. The survey questions and methodology were developed in consultation with Professor Katya Johanson, Associate Dean of Creative Humanities at Edith Cowan University.

We collected 478 responses from visitors across nine key sites: ABC Southbank, the ANZ Gothic Bank and Verdon Chambers, Bates Smart Gallery, Como House and Gardens, Essendon Fields Airport Terminal, Mission Whitten Oval, Port Phillip EcoCentre, Werribee Park Mansion and Youngusband Woolstore.

KEY FINDINGS: AN ENTRY POINT TO GOOD DESIGN

A significant portion of our audience (25%) are newcomers to Open House Melbourne and the broader cultural design scene, with respondents indicating they had not attended any similar design events in the last three years. This suggests Open House Melbourne is a gateway for design exploration and discovery.

THE ONLY TOUCHPOINT FOR DESIGN

Open House Melbourne provides a unique experience. For over half of our audience (54%), the Weekend festival and our events are the only way they engage with and experience design culturally.

A BROAD AUDIENCE

A remarkable 24% of our audience identified as linguistically diverse. This is significantly higher than the 14% of Victoria's arts and culture audience reported by Creative Victoria's 2025 Audience Atlas Report.¹

Of the respondents who identified as linguistically diverse, 47% had not attended any other design or architecture event in the past three years apart from Open House Melbourne.

[CLICK TO SEE THE FULL REPORT](#)

OPEN PLAY

Open Play is Open House Melbourne's educational program for young people and youth exploring the role good design plays in shaping our community and city.

This program offers a first step in a young person's informal pathway towards a creative and design-aware future. The program encourages children and their parents and guardians, to become aware of their surroundings and seek to understand how our buildings, places and spaces are interconnected. It empowers children to understand their creative potential and the role we can all play in contributing to and shaping the world around us through design.

OPEN PLAY AT MPAVILION MONDAY 13 JANUARY + MONDAY 20 JANUARY 2025

Using colourful felt shapes inspired by MPavilion's park setting, children aged 3 to 10 puzzled through playful, hands-on activities which encouraged them to solve design challenges in creative ways. Delivered in a relaxed, drop-in format under the cool shade of Tadao Ando's MPavilion, the workshop invited kids to join in at their own pace and explore imaginative approaches to design.

ATTENDANCE: 250

OPEN PLAY AT ELTHAM LIBRARY SUNDAY 27 JULY 2025 (AS PART OF THE WEEKEND 2025)

As part of the Weekend, families were invited to participate in creative, hands-on activities responding to the Stories of the City theme. Inspired by the shapes and spaces of the Eltham Library, children and families reimaged their own buildings using colourful tactile felt and reflected on local heritage by creating photo-collage artworks to take home.

ATTENDANCE: 45



100 STORY BUILDING: WEIRD DOORS OF THE WEST

To celebrate the *Stories of the City* theme for this year's Open House Melbourne Weekend, we partnered with 100 Story Building to present *Weird Doors of the West*, a two-day story-making program for young people held during the school holidays. Inspired by the hidden histories and imagined mysteries behind Melbourne's built environment, participants became "story detectives," uncovering the secrets behind strange doors and forgotten entrances across the city. With support from heritage architects and Major Practice Partners Lovell Chen and the expert facilitators from 100 Story Building, children explored creativity, architecture and place through storytelling. The resulting stories were showcased in the *Stories of the City* exhibition at the Bates Smart Gallery during the Open House Melbourne Weekend.

ATTENDANCE: 20

HERITAGE STRATEGY OPEN PLAY

Open Play was presented at the City Library as a hands-on, drop-in workshop engaging families and young people in creative conversations about heritage. Using art and craft as an entry point, children created collages from black-and-white images of heritage and imagined future places, adding pops of colour to express their ideas before transforming their artworks into 'film rolls' housed inside cardboard cameras. This playful activity invited participants to explore the question, *What makes something heritage?*, connecting past, present and future through a child's lens. Facilitators also engaged parents in completing surveys, ensuring the program contributed valuable insights while offering an accessible and joyful way for families to participate in the city's heritage dialogue.

ATTENDANCE: 13



OUR VOLUNTEERS

Open House Melbourne's volunteer community continues to be the heart of the Weekend and year-round programs. In 2025, volunteers once again brought warmth, knowledge and enthusiasm to sites across the city, welcoming visitors and helping deliver meaningful public experiences.

This year, three quarters of volunteers attended at least one training session, reflecting their strong commitment to learning and engagement. The annual Volunteer Thank You Celebration brought together 122 volunteers to acknowledge their incredible contribution and celebrate another successful year. Notably, 97% of volunteers said they would return to volunteer for Open House, a testament to the sense of connection, purpose and

YEAR ROUND

99

Total volunteers recruited

243

Total volunteer hours

WEEKEND

492

Volunteers

570+

Shifts completed

2,500+

Volunteer hours

18-85

Age range of Open House volunteers

75%

of volunteers joined the Open House program because they enjoy cultural events, connecting with new people and have a passion for architecture.

70%

highlighted giving back to the community as a key motivation for their involvement.

OUR COLLABORATORS

Our programs at Open House Melbourne are made possible thanks to the incredible dedication and generosity of our Volunteers and Collaborators.

Open House Melbourne's Collaborators bring invaluable time, expertise and insight to the program, most often on a voluntary basis.

As speakers and presenters throughout our year-round program, our Collaborators shape and enrich these events, offering specialist knowledge, guidance and support to enhance the visitor experience.

The commitment from our Weekend Collaborators demonstrates a strong dedication to sharing Melbourne's architecture, culture and heritage with the wider community.

Together, these generous contributions ensure the program's continued growth and quality.

YEAR ROUND

108

Individual speakers + presenters

WEEKEND

198

Individual speakers + presenters



Volunteer at Open House Melbourne Weekend 2025. Photo: Nick Bebbington.

REACH + PROFILE

WEBSITE

1,075,488

Total views
(30% increase on 2024)

176,641

Active users
(27% increase on 2024)

89%

of attendees accessed program information online

15,970

Stroll the City views

Valued website developer and Major Partner Efront made a number of significant updates during the reporting period.

In 2025, Efront undertook a comprehensive suite of web development improvements to enhance the Open House Melbourne website's usability, accessibility and long-term functionality. Key work included a full program archive audit, cleaning up unused URLs, broken backlinks and sitemap issues, with a new process established for individually archiving events year-round, including a consistent archived event template and improved Airtable connectivity. Efront also implemented a series of updates across the What's On views, refining map pop-up styling, reversing booking indicator icons for clarity and improving hover and featured-tag functions to deliver a more intuitive user experience.

On individual event pages, Efront introduced a set of targeted layout improvements, including dynamic "delivered by" labelling, more comprehensive accessibility and getting-here information pulled from Airtable, clickable address mapping and clearer field headings. The itinerary tool saw the removal of archived events, a 'clear itinerary' function and planned UX upgrades including accordion toggles, booking indicators and date/time summaries. Most significantly, in the backend, Efront set up an API integration between Airtable and Humanitix to automate event creation, status updates and ticketing data flow back to the website. This process saved a significant amount of data entry time and avoided unnecessary human error mistakes.

Finally, for *Stroll the City*, Efront updated content upload scripts to allow future tour data to be uploaded via Excel and ensured all tours have individual URLs, streamlining ongoing maintenance and improving the sustainability of year-round programming online.

Our strategy is to drive all visitation to the website, the primary source of information about the individual programs. For the 2025 Open House Melbourne Weekend, 89% of attendees accessed program information online, leading to 912,213 page views, a 25% increase on 2024, and 117,310 users (up 12%).

NEWSLETTER

52,984

EDM subscribers
(end of September 2025)

42.2%

Open rate (average)

21,356

Total EDM clicks

Open House Melbourne continues to use Mailchimp as its e-newsletter platform. A total of 22 EDMs (average two per month) were sent to an average audience of 51,117 readers and 42% open rate.

Throughout the 2025 July Weekend campaign, five newsletters were sent promoting the Weekend program, reaching more than 348,959 emails. The average open rate was 42.2% with the most popular newsletter being the City of Melbourne solus and the Program Live edition recording the highest number of click throughs.



REACH + PROFILE

SOCIAL MEDIA

68,164

Total social media followers

386,398

Facebook views

775,663

Instagram views

54,770

LinkedIn impressions

6,139

Views on YouTube

445.5

YouTube Hours

In 2025, Facebook and Instagram were the primary social media platforms that were used to engage with audiences, communicate Weekend program information to our audiences and encourage participation in the broader Weekend conversations. Open House Melbourne utilised a social media management tool to coordinate posting schedules, sharing this information with key partners throughout the year so they, too, could coordinate aligned post messaging. Posts to LinkedIn sat outside of this scheduling tool and were more targeted.

Open House Melbourne has a total active audience across all social media platforms of 68,164, including channels on Facebook (28,640 followers), Instagram (26,162 followers), Twitter (9K followers but not active), YouTube (997 subscribers) and LinkedIn (3,397 followers).

During the Weekend campaign period, our social media channels experienced an overall growth of 8% in audience numbers. All channels maintained a steady growth of activity and engagement in the lead-up and remained strong throughout the campaign period.

TOP POSTS

FACEBOOK



INSTAGRAM



LINKEDIN



MEDIA EVALUATION

Throughout the last year, Open House Melbourne has worked in partnership with program media teams to ensure the best coverage of our program.

The NGV managed the publicity for Melbourne Design Week, supported by Open House Melbourne, with a number of articles published across The Age, Arts Hub and other local papers. One of the *Design + Death Symposium* talks was hosted and recorded by ABC's *Big Ideas* podcast and published in July 2025.

Throughout the year Tania Davidge and panel speakers participated in a number of radio interviews promoting the programs presented across the year.

The Open House Melbourne Weekend 2025 media campaign was managed by publicist Adam Valentine, who lead a comprehensive built environment and design campaign that generated 423 total pieces of media coverage across television, print, radio and online coverage. A total PR value of \$2,273,636 (Meltwater) and a reach of 235,363,317.

Online editorial was achieved across major news, arts, design and lifestyle digital platforms, including The Herald Sun, Time Out, Concrete Playground, ArtsHub, Broadsheet, The Design Files, Australian Associated Press and notably in The Age who produced a significant number of articles featuring Weekend programs this year.

Broadcast media coverage was secured across TV programs Channel Nine News, Channel 7 News, ABC News Breakfast & Postcards. Radio interviews ran across 3AW, ABC Radio Melbourne, Triple R and Joy. News bulletins also aired on the major radio commercial networks in Melbourne. (Includes syndications).

Print coverage was achieved across major metropolitan titles, including The Age and Herald Sun; as well as local news titles like CBD News, Star Weekly News Group and Southbank Local News.

[CLICK TO SEE THE FULL REPORT](#)

Click above link to see the full report and to view the media clippings from the campaign as well as a breakdown of the circulation and PR Value.

235,363,317

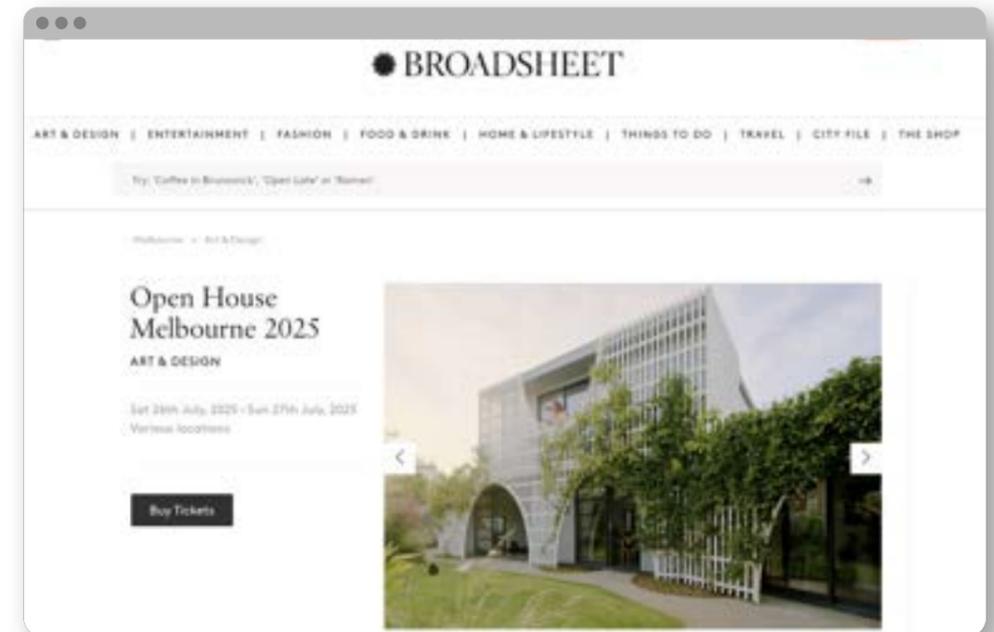
Total reach across print, online, TV and radio

\$2,273,636

Total PR value (Meltwater)

423

Media hits generated from 1 June to 1 August 2025





THANK YOU

As this report demonstrates, Open House Melbourne continues to deliver a bold, city-shaping program with wide-reaching impact. None of this would be possible without the commitment and generosity of the many organisations and individuals who bring our work to life. We extend our deepest thanks to our Major Sponsors the City of Melbourne, Creative Victoria, Efront and Studio Payne, whose creativity and innovation in branding and digital design amplify our public program year after year.

Our heartfelt thanks also go to the Open House Melbourne Board, Building Council, Volunteer Council, Program Advisors, our Ambassador, Association Members, Collaborators and our Practice, Program and Precinct Partners, as well as our Media and Digital Partners, Donors and Supporters. We are grateful to the 500+ passionate volunteers in pink vests whose dedication and energy are the backbone of the Open House experience.

Finally, we thank our audiences. Your enthusiasm, curiosity and love for the city and good design inspire everything we do. It is a privilege to create programs for such an engaged and passionate community.

OPEN HOUSE MELBOURNE TEAM



2025 SPONSORS, PARTNERS + PATRONS

PRECINCT PARTNERS



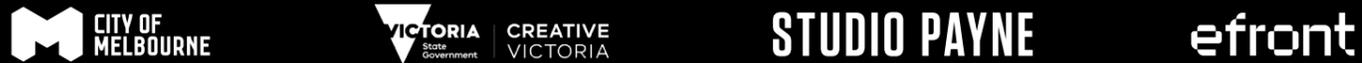
PRACTICE PARTNERS



PROGRAM PARTNERS



MAJOR SPONSORS



MAJOR PROGRAM PARTNERS



MAJOR PRECINCT PARTNER

MEDIA AND DIGITAL PARTNERS



VENUE PARTNERS

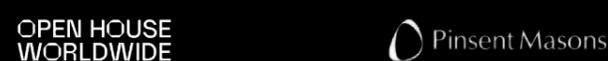


MAJOR PRACTICE PARTNERS



SPONSORS

SUPPORTERS



PATRON



APPENDIX

- **PROGRAM FRAMEWORK**

- ↳ [DOWNLOAD HERE](#)

- **WEEKEND REPORT**

- ↳ [DOWNLOAD HERE](#)

- **FINANCE**

- ↳ [DOWNLOAD HERE](#)

- **MAKING HOME REPORT**

- ↳ [DOWNLOAD HERE](#)

- **DESIGN + DEATH REPORT**

- ↳ [DOWNLOAD HERE](#)

- **BALLARAT HERITAGE FESTIVAL**

- ↳ [DOWNLOAD HERE](#)

- **CATALYST PODCAST REPORT**

- ↳ [DOWNLOAD HERE](#)

- **CREATIVITY AND CONSTRUCTION**

- ↳ [DOWNLOAD HERE](#)

- **ART AT ANZAC REPORT**

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- **HERITAGE STRATEGY REPORT**

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