Generous City

Weekend Report 2026

#generouscity

OPEN HOUSE MELBOURNE

Acknowledgement of Country

Open House Melbourne acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands, waters and skies where we work and program and pay respect to Elders past and present. Given our focus on the urban environment, we recognise and honour the knowledge, stories and care that have shaped these places for tens of thousands of years.

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Executive Summary



This year's Open House Melbourne festival was truly something special. The crowds came out in droves to explore the city and celebrate the role great design plays in making the places we love. Across the Weekend, we saw how design can make a difference to the way we live, connect with and experience our city.

"At Open House Melbourne, we often talk about how our program brings people together and connects people to place—and this year's theme, *Generous City*, brought this life. A generous city gives more than it takes and it shares what it has."

The Weekend 2026 reflected this spirit in so many ways. More than 2,200 people come together to deliver the festival. Our community opened their doors and welcomed people into the places and spaces they love. They shared their expertise and knowledge, offered their stories and gave their time.

As we move towards our 20th festival in 2027, Open House Melbourne continues to grow in scale and impact. Attendance was up across the board, with people lining up to take a look behind the scenes at Parliament House and Government House. In 2026, the festival attracted over 80,000 visits across open buildings, tours, talks, events, exhibitions and online programs, generating an estimated $3.6 million in economic value for the city.

Across 182 program listings, Open House Melbourne Collaborators delivered almost 1,100 tours, talks, workshops, performances and exhibitions, complemented by livestreamed and on-demand programming. The festival attracted 45 new Collaborators and 95 new programs were delivered by both new and returning participants.

This year, we opened the festival with a Welcome to Country at the new smoking dish in City Square. Senior Wurundjeri Elder Aunty Joy Murphy Wandin AO and her son, Craig Murphy Wandin, spoke beautifully about what Country means to them. We were cleansed by smoke and, as the heavens opened, by water too. Following the ceremony, our *Designing with Country* conversation kicked off at Fed Square. Aunty Joy was joined by architect Stasinos Mantzis from Greenshoot and Djinjama's Dr Danièle Hromek. Thoughtfully hosted by Dr Kat Nelligan, the conversation explored how pathways, trails and infrastructure can act as living cultural lines.

Across the Weekend, Foodbank Victoria and the Salvation Army spoke directly to the *Generous City* theme. There was a wonderful selection of walking tours including *The Architecture that Shaped Melbourne Shopping, Williamstown's Historic Public Houses* and a self-guided children's *Treasure Hunt* by Lovell Chen. Perennial favourites included Trades Hall and Literary Institute, Orica House, ANZ Gothic Bank Museum and Verdon Chambers and State Library Victoria, where we delivered an *Open Play* children's workshop.

Melbourne Quarter was a team highlight, with a tour of their commercial tower unexpectedly taking in an impromptu tour of the new Channel 7 Studios. For the transportation enthusiasts there were tram depots, train stations, the new Transurban Freeway Control Centre headquarters and a firsthand look at Melbourne Airport's new drop off and pick up zones. Creative precincts and studios including Collingwood Yards, Gasworks Creative Precinct and Everfresh Studio opened their doors, while a number of architecture studios, including Architectus, Wardle, Snøhetta and ARM Architecture, invited people to step inside and see how design takes shape.

"The program offered opportunities to experience not just what Melbourne is today, but what it is becoming."

Along the Upfield train line, visitors discovered the sense of community and neighbourhood coalescing around the Nightingale projects. The Melbourne Arts Precinct Transformation tours revealed the changes underway as construction advances on the Fox: NGV Contemporary, the Arts Centre Melbourne's Theatres Building and the new urban garden, Laak Boorndap. In South Yarra Prahran, social housing tours brought the city's housing history to life, exploring older towers alongside new projects at Simmons Street by Hayball, Essex Street by KTA and Bangs Street by Jackson Clements Burrows Architects. Together, these projects offered a glimpse of the civic ambition and public investment shaping Melbourne's next chapter.

Conversations important to how our city grows were also central to the program. *For-giving City* looked at how buildings might become key participants in Melbourne's regenerative future. *Safeguarding Creative Spaces in Transforming Cities* reflected on the tensions between place-making, gentrification and cultural infrastructure. The AIA's *Density Done Well* exhibition, paired with the opportunity to experience residential housing projects ranging from the timeless Stanhill Apartments through to The Fabric in Altona, Nine Wilson Avenue and Northumberland Road Social Housing, brought considerations of how we might live better more closely together to life.

This year *Modern Melbourne* featured architect John Denton in conversation with Government Architect Jill Garner. John reflected on contemporary city shaping through projects such as the Melbourne Museum and his role as the first Victorian Government Architect. The documentary explored his contributions to Melbourne through structured processes of city making. John's insight was beautifully complimented by the final event of this year's program, the *Heritage Address*, presented by writer Robyn Annear. Robyn's exploration of the messiness and chaotic life of Melbourne's less planned urban moments—its laneways—was filled with wit, charm and curiosity. Taken together the two events made the perfect pair and spoke to the breadth and depth of the Open House Melbourne Weekend festival.

Our community cares deeply about this city—its past, present and future. The Open House Melbourne festival brings us together to celebrate great design, inspire better outcomes and broaden public understanding. Through our nineteen festivals, we have built a community of passionate design ambassadors and advocates. At a time when social cohesion matters more than ever, we need more spaces where people can come together across difference, encounter new ideas and develop a deeper understanding of the places we share. Open House Melbourne creates those opportunities. It gives people permission to be curious about their city, to ask questions of the people shaping it and to imagine what it could become.

It is a privilege to deliver the Open House Melbourne Weekend festival with, and for, people who love the city and great design as much as we do. It lifts me up to see how much people give to our program and the joy they take from it. That generosity is what makes Open House Melbourne possible.

We look forward to seeing you all again in 2027 to celebrate our 20th festival.

Tania Davidge
Executive Director | Chief Curator


YAMAHA

Visitation + Impact

How many?

80,529

Weekend program engagements including building visits, tours, talks and online programming

$3.6M

Economic Impact

1,085

Experiences delivered across 182 programs

45

New Collaborators

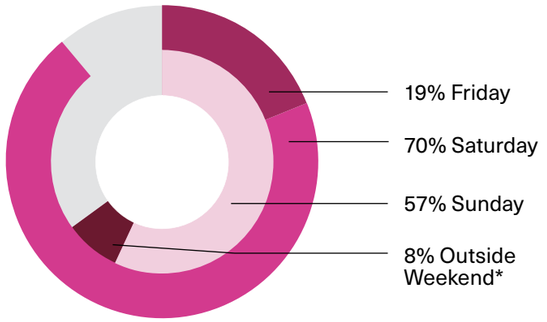
471

Volunteers recruited

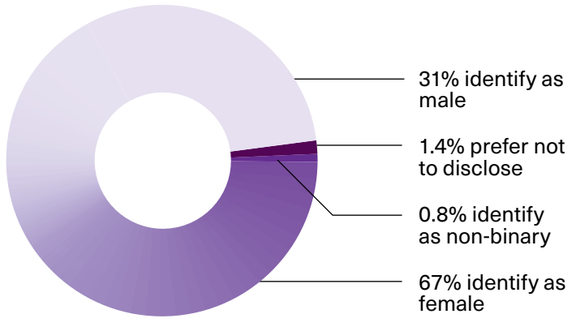
Information drawn from 898 online survey responses, unless otherwise noted.

When

*Includes Designing with Country + Heritage Address

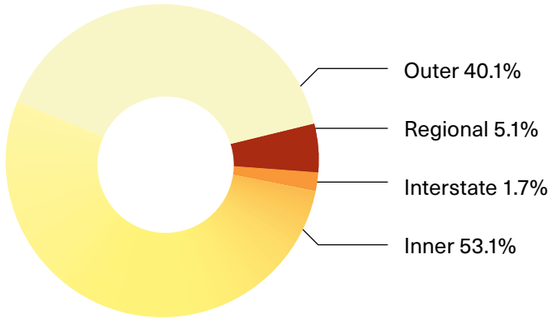


Who

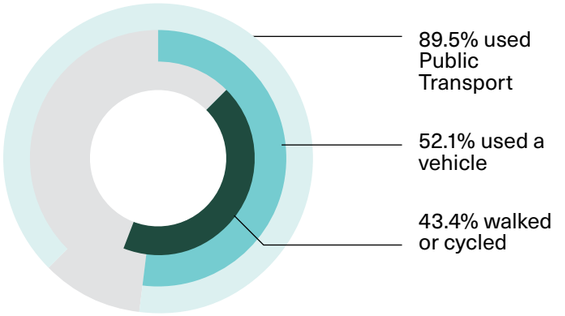


Where from

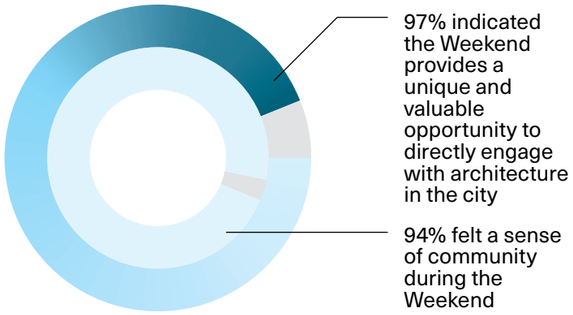
*From the online survey and ticketing data



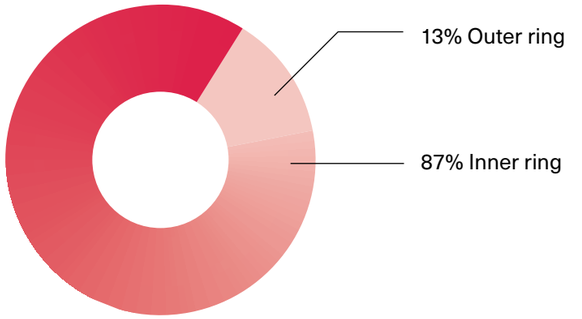
Transport



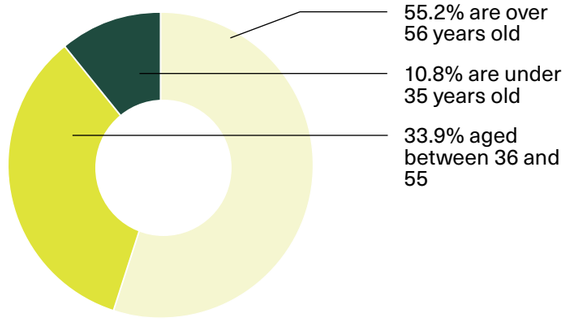
Impact



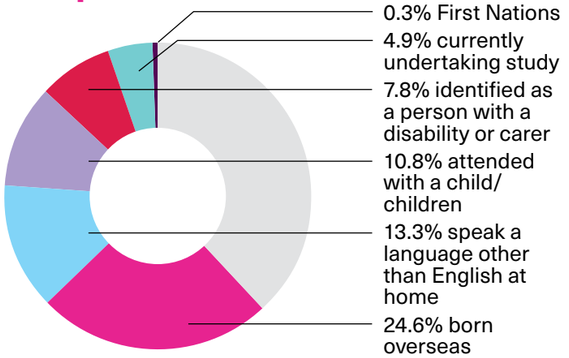
Program locations



Age



People




REALMstudios
Grounded Studios
FIRE PUMP ROOM

Program Insights

182

Programs delivered

1,085

Individual talks, tours, exhibitions etc

98%

Indicated the Weekend sparked their curiosity and made them want to find out more

98%

Of visitors gained new insights and knowledge.

98%

The Weekend provides an important addition to the cultural life of the area

96%

Indicated the Weekend was well organised

This year's program of 182 listings responded to the theme *Generous City*, attracting 45 new Collaborators and delivering 95 new programs by both new and returning contributors.

The program curation, led by Open House Melbourne's experienced Building Council of architecture, heritage, sustainability, landscape, planning and urban design experts resulted in a diverse breadth of offer, from walking tours and architect-led building tours to themed talks and open exhibitions. The program reflected a strong commitment from Collaborators to providing engaging and varied experiences for visitors of all ages and interests.

Bookings were required for 77 programs, while 79 were fully open access and 26 combined both elements. Pre-bookings are determined in consultation with Collaborators and are essential for all residential sites and recommended for limited-capacity or timed tours. First-time Collaborators commonly opted for bookings to better manage attendance, while some returning Collaborators shifted from booked to open access formats as their confidence and delivery capacity increased. We anticipate a continued transition towards open access experiences as Collaborators grow their capability year on year.

Ticketing for pre-booked programs was once again released across two dates, reinforcing Open House Melbourne's commitment to equitable access for limited-capacity events across the program. Improved ticketing analytics revealed overwhelming demand for ticketed programs with 5,023 registered on waitlists for fully booked programs. This demonstrates a strong demand and an opportunity for Open House Melbourne and Collaborators to increase and expand their programming to better meet audience needs in future.

Extended Programs

Responding to increasing demand for Weekend events, and a successful 2025 pilot, this year Open House Melbourne expanded programming into an official 3-day lineup of events running from Friday 24 through to Sunday 26 July. More than 4,400 visitors engaged with over 48 events in the first day of the program. The extended offering provided Collaborators with program flexibility, tapped into a weekday audience and established the foundation for ambitious programming in years to come.

Designing with Country celebrated its second year at Fed Square's The Edge in collaboration with City of Melbourne as part of Melbourne Conversations, bringing together leading voices in First Nations knowledge, architecture and urban design. Senior Wurundjeri Elder Aunty Joy Murphy AO joined respected design leaders Dr Danièle Hromek and Stas Mantzis for a significant edition of the program hosted by Dr Kat Nelligan. Together, with an audience of over 500, they reflected on approaches to 'designing with Country' considering how lines—whether songlines, walking trails or transport corridors—carry knowledge, memory and responsibility, and how design can meaningfully support deeper, ongoing connections with Country.

The Open House Melbourne team settled into a new home at the Victorian Trades Hall in Carlton, placing the organisation in the pulse of the city to serve as a central hub over the Weekend. The move streamlined program operations for the team, volunteers and collaborators, and welcomed more than 500 visitors for talks, tours and workshops onsite across the Weekend program.



First Nations

The *Generous City* Weekend opened with a special Welcome to Country from Senior Wurundjeri Elder Aunty Joy Murphy Wandin AO and son Craig Murphy Wandin at the City Square smoking dish. The ceremony continued Open House Melbourne's commitment to First Peoples First—recognising and incorporating First Peoples' knowledge and sovereignty. The event took place ahead of the Weekend's *Designing with Country* conversation kicked off at Fed Square's The Edge.

Across the Weekend, more than 50 cultural, social and economic opportunities were created for First Peoples. The program featured 9 First Nations-centred walks, talks, tours, workshops and exhibitions, attracting 5,898 attendees. A dedicated First Nations itinerary featuring these programs received 313 views.

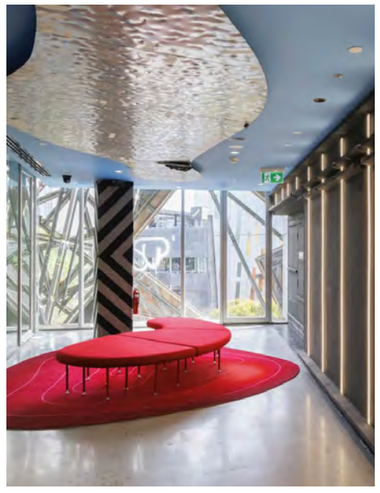
"To celebrate First Nations codesign and provide an opportunity for the public to learn about Wurundjeri culture."

NGURRAK BARRING



Wurundjeri Cultural Walks led by a Senior Educator from the Wurundjeri Education Unit shared Wurundjeri perspectives on Country.

KOORIE HERITAGE TRUST



Self-guided tours of the First Peoples arts and cultural centre collection and exhibitions.

DESIGNING WITH COUNTRY



Leading voices in First Nations knowledge, architecture and urban design this conversation explored how pathways, trails and infrastructure can act as living cultural line.

QUEEN VICTORIA WOMEN'S CENTRE—WEAVING WORKSHOP



First Nations Weaving Workshop facilitated by Trina Dalton-Oogjes, connected to the Centre's Indigenous sculpture *Creative Resilience*.

CRAFT VICTORIA



First Peoples–led exhibition, *Camp Stove*, curated by Kate ten Buuren explored Queer Blak survivance and offered insight into First Nations perspectives, storytelling and material practice.

DONKEY WHEELHOUSE



Renowned Mparntwe / Alice Springs art collective No Fixed Gallery transformed the Donkey Wheelhouse basement into a celebration of First Nations culture, community and connection.

POTTER MUSEUM OF ART—NGARN WA'NGAL: ART OF THE GUM TREE



Ngarn Wa'ngal: Art of the gum tree explored the eucalypt as a source of creative inspiration connecting us to this land and shaping our cultural and personal identities. Ngarn Wa'ngal is Woi Wurrung for 'breathing for us'.

CONNECTION TO COUNTRY: MELBOURNE METRO TUNNEL AND BEYOND



Senior Wurundjeri Elder Aunty Joy Murphy and Greenshoot principal/design lead Stas Mantzis toured the *Connection to Country* design interventions at the State Library and Town Hall stations.

MELBOURNE ATHENAEUM LIBRARY: A HIDDEN GEM



Exhibition *Colour of Time* featured First Nations Culture in Glass Art, led by artist Ricki Gugumah Martin and others.

Creative Spaces

Central to Open House Melbourne's program is sharing what goes on behind the scenes of Melbourne's creative industries, opening more than 10 studios, workshops, arts precincts and workplaces. From architecture and design practices to artist-led spaces and cultural hubs, the program offered a rare opportunity to explore the environments that support creativity, collaboration and innovation across the city.

Across the Weekend, 710 creative practitioners engaged by Collaborators to deliver their program, with 95% of Collaborators recognising Open House Melbourne as an important platform for creatives to develop and share new work. Visitors were active in their use of the Creative Spaces itinerary with 613 users engaging in the digital guide,

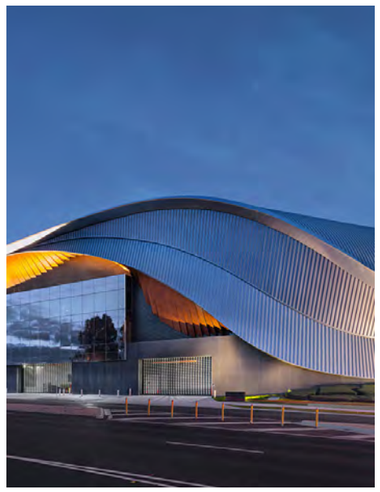
"People want to be invited into our space. Open House was a great way to bridge that gap."

GASWORKS CREATIVE PRECINCT



An open studio invitation to explore the re-purposed utilitarian buildings which have become places of creativity.

BUNJIL PLACE



Exhibition *The Offbeat* Sari celebrated the contemporary sari as a metaphor for the layered and complex definitions of India today.

COLLINGWOOD YARDS



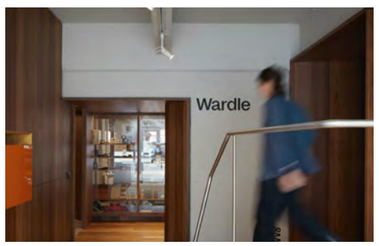
Home to artists, galleries, cultural organisations, restaurants, bars, retail stores, and offices Collingwood Yards is a not-for-profit arts precinct open for everyone to explore.

EVERFRESH STUDIO



Visitors were invited to explore the studio, view works in progress, and see how the space reflects the personalities and practices of its artists.

WARDLE STUDIO



Wardle opened its doors for visitors to wander through the studio and explore project pin-ups and a collection of project prototypes.

FOOTSCRAY COMMUNITY ARTS



Visitors explored the FCA's ongoing commitment to contemporary practice and local voices in the collection's exhibition *SURFACED*.

FIRESTATION PRINT STUDIO



Visitors were invited to learn and practice printmaking at the Firestation Print Studio, hosted by this welcoming and vibrant artistic community.

ABBOTSFORD CONVENT



A series of heritage tours and talks on how architecture, design and art can keep cultural sites socially relevant and accessible.

NEXT WAVE



Curator-led tour of *Around the Block,* an outdoor exhibition of moving image works presented in collaboration with neighbouring galleries, activating the street as a shared cultural corridor.

OPEN PLAY



Open House Melbourne, through its youth design development program, partnered with State Library Victoria and Lovell Chen to present an engaging and location-appropriate activity that invited families to create their own push-pin compass.

A template designed by Studio Payne was provided to colour and cut, aligned with the *Generous City* brand identity, before children and families attached their design to a circular piece of card and used a pin to hold a turning dial in place.

Participants were then invited to take part in a city-wide treasure hunt designed by Lovell Chen, turning a simple hands-on activity into an invitation to explore the city and discover its stories through play.

Visitor Engagement

Why did you attend?

94%

Attended to improve their cultural awareness of Melbourne

95%

To stay informed and learn more about the city's architecture

82%

Stay informed about the factors that influence the planning of Melbourne

96%

For pure entertainment and enjoyment

An online visitor survey was distributed to ticket holders via direct email and to our broader audience via our newsletter and social media, garnering 898 responses with a 78% completion rate.

In-person surveys were conducted at ANZ Gothic Bank Museum and Verdon Chambers, Foodbank Victoria, Victorian Archives Centre, Melbourne Electronic Sound Studio (MESS), Firestation Print Studio, Rock Posters Printing Factory, Victorian Trades Hall,the Open House Melbourne Info Hub, Melbourne Airport, State Library Victoria and Melbourne Quarter.

Data collected from both survey formats provided rich insight into audience demographics, motivations and experience.

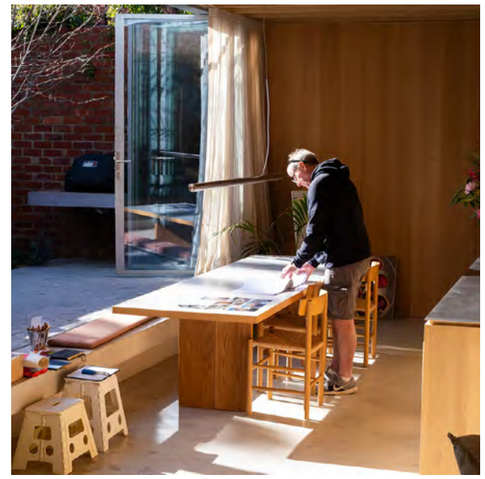
Open House Melbourne continued to welcome an engaged and curious audience with 34% attending for the first time and more than 66% of audiences previously attending an in-person event.

Visitors highlighted the program's diversity, openness, friendly atmosphere and sense of community as factors motivating their returning and attendance more broadly. 41% visited three or more buildings or events, making use of the new Weekend itinerary webpage to plan out their experience. The itinerary page engaged over 13,900 users across the program.

Visitors were asked about their highlight experience and what made it meaningful or memorable. The following quotes are a selection of their responses.

"Even reading the program gives insights into our great city. Seeing inside buildings I know but haven't entered connected me with their story and their landscape."

"The openness and diversity of people that attend. As a designer I always like to strike up conversations to see why people have attended and what else they're looking at for the weekend, and if they're outside of the design world what brought them in and what they're wanting to learn."







"Engaging with like-minded people exciting and interesting places.

Economic Impact

Spending

$3.6M

Economic Impact

42%

Spent more than $30 per day

43%

Spent on transportation

98%

Spent on cafes, restaurants and bars

The Weekend generated strong economic activity beyond program attendance, with visitors spending across hospitality, transport, retail, entertainment and accommodation. Hospitality was the strongest area of expenditure, with 98% of respondents spending on dining out, including cafes, restaurants and bars, while 22% also spent on groceries and snacks.

Visitor spending was meaningful, with 42% spending more than $30 per day, including 23% spending $51 or more. The Weekend also supported movement across Melbourne, with almost half of attendees spending on transport, while others reported expenditure on shopping, entertainment, tourist attractions, accommodation and program booking fees.

Ticketing + Uptake

The $7 booking fee applied to each ticket for pre-booked programs. This fee contributes to ticketing administration costs and represents a commitment by visitors to attend. The fee had minimal impact on the uptake of tickets for highly popular limited capacity programs with both the first and second releases booking out within minutes of going live. Of the sites that required pre-bookings, 71% were fully booked prior to the Weekend, suggesting that for most visitors the small fee doesn't present a barrier but rather encourages visitors to carefully consider and plan their Weekend itinerary. This ensures a level of equity by discouraging visitors to book up multiple spots and then not showing up, improving overall attendance on the day.

In the few instances where programs had a slow uptake on tickets and the booking fee was identified as a possible barrier, the program was shifted to open access in consultation with the Collaborator. Collaborators delivering pre-booked programs reported they experienced full or nearly full tour and event groups, despite wet and windy weather across the Weekend.

The Lucky Last Minute Ticket was rolled out for the second year and captured 187 walk ups on the day for fully-booked programs that could support the capacity. Broadly, this was received positively as an equitable tool for managing walk ups and with improved education and training for Collaborators and Volunteers on how to manage this operationally, it will remain a useful initiative.

The most highly sought after programs included private homes Cairo Flats, Bustle House, Light Well House as well as behind-the-scenes tours of ACMI: Blackmagic Design Media Preservation Lab, The Australian Ballet, ANZ Gothic Bank and Verdon Chambers, Government House, Fed Square's behind-the-scenes tours and Transurban Freeway Control Centre, where tickets were booked up instantly. Uptake of tickets across the program was steady in the lead up to the Weekend but allowed for those accessing the program later in the campaign period to access pre-booked programs nearer to the event.

Of the 119 events with bookings, 71% were fully booked prior to the Weekend. Of the 11,706 bookings made through Humanitix, 10,382 incurred a booking fee.

The booking fee was balanced by a continued strong commitment to offering high quality open access programs for which no pre-booking or ticketing required, maintaining Open House Melbourne's commitment to offering free programming to a broad public audience.

Of the 119 events with bookings, 71% were fully booked prior to the Weekend.



Access

Access Map

In 2026, Open House Melbourne continued to develop the Access Map, working with Major Program Partner Maptivate and Program Partners Architecture & Access and Openly Inclusive to improve the way visitors can discover, understand and plan for access across the Weekend. Building on its launch in 2025, the Access Map remained a key inclusion initiative, providing detailed accessibility information for participating venues and helping visitors make informed choices about where to go and what to expect. This year's focus was on refining the user experience, improving the quality and clarity of information, and working with Collaborators to expand the range and usefulness of access information available to visitors.

42,610

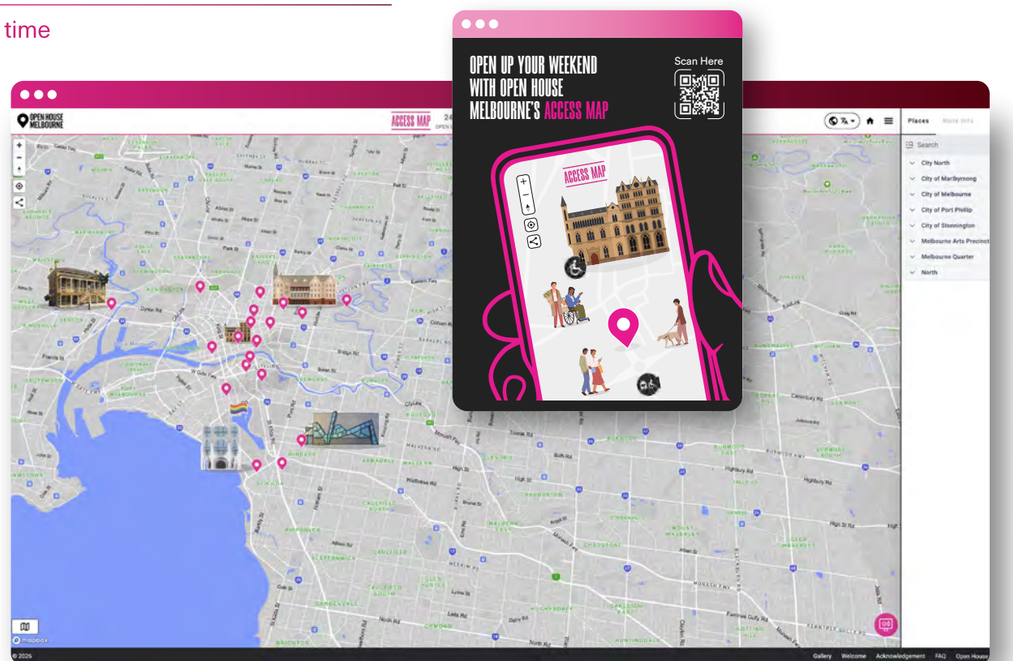
Access Map views

4:16 MINS

Average session time

Ability Works was engaged to undertake user testing of the Access Map, providing practical feedback from an accessibility perspective and identifying opportunities to improve the experience for people with diverse access needs. Open House Melbourne Worked closely with Maptivate and their development team to simplify language, improve heading structure, add image alt text and clearer labels, strengthen colour contrast, improve the visibility of video and access icons and refine the search and map interface.

A number of further improvements remain in progress or are planned for 2027. The process also identified opportunities to improve consistency between the main Open House Melbourne website and Access Map, and to continue working with Collaborators to improve the quality and accuracy of venue access information.



Audio Description Professional Development

Open House Melbourne partnered with PolySensory to deliver two professional development workshops on audio description (AD), initially offered to Collaborators featured on the Access Map and then opened to all Collaborators through a second callout. Led by professional audio describer Polly Goodwin, the two-hour sessions introduced the principles of audio description and practical techniques for making tours and programs more accessible to people who are blind or have low vision. Using Trades Hall as a training environment, participants explored how to incorporate descriptive language and other accessibility considerations into their own programs, while sharing ideas and experiences with fellow Collaborators.

Accessible Programming

Open House Melbourne also worked directly with individual sites to identify opportunities to strengthen the accessibility of their programs and tailor experiences to different access needs. For example, the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA) engaged Loom to lead a dedicated audio-described tour for people who are blind or have low vision. This approach supported Collaborators to move beyond providing access information towards actively programming experiences designed with particular audiences in mind.

Disability Networks and Advocacy

A focus continues to be building relationships with disability networks and advocacy organisations to strengthen awareness and confidence in Open House Melbourne's accessibility approach. Video was used as an important tool to promote the Access Map and demonstrate how it can support visitors in planning their Weekend experience. In partnership with Maptivate, Open House Melbourne developed a series of stories featuring four participating sites—Fitzroy Neighbourhood House, the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA), Melbourne Quarter and Today—highlighting their accessibility features and helping visitors better



Open House Melbourne Key Programs

DESIGNING WITH COUNTRY
Wednesday 22 July
The Edge, Fed Square



Bringing together leading voices in First Nations knowledge, architecture and urban design *Designing with Country* explored how pathways, trails and infrastructure can act as living cultural lines. In partnership with the City of Melbourne as part of their Melbourne Conversation series, respected design leaders Dr Danièle Hromek and Stas Mantzis joined Senior Wurundjeri Elder Aunty Joy Murphy AO on stage at Fed Square's The Edge for a generous conversation hosted by Dr Kat Nelligan. Together, they reflected on approaches to 'designing with Country' considering how lines—whether songlines, walking trails or transport corridors—carry knowledge, memory and responsibility, and how design can meaningfully support deeper, ongoing connections with Country.

Presented by Melbourne Conversations in partnership with program curators Open House Melbourne and event partner Fed Square.

MODERN MELBOURNE PREMIERE: JOHN DENTON
Sunday 26 July
ACMI Cinema 2



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, John Denton, one of Australia's most influential architects, reflected on the formation of Denton Corker Marshall in the early 1970's together with Bill Corker and Barrie Marshall and how the practice went on to shape civic and cultural life both in Australia and internationally. In conversation with Jill Garner at the Melbourne Museum, John provided compelling insight into an architectural body of work that is at once generous, rigorous, and responsive to place, history and public life.

This sellout premiere screening at ACMI Cinema 2 was followed by a Q&A with Heritage Council.

Produced and presented by Open House Melbourne in partnership with the Heritage Council of Victoria.

HERITAGE ADDRESS WITH ROBYN ANNEAR
Monday 27 July
Solidarity Hall, Trades Hall



Historian and curator Robyn Annear delved deep into the formative history of Melbourne's laneways and the shadow network they weave through the city blocks.

Once a laneway-sceptic, Annear captivated the packed audience with her telling of how the 'City of Lanes' rapidly evolved from Robert Hoddle's orderly town grid, defined by broad, straight, surveillable streets. Through layered archives, she revealed the gradual transition of judiciously regulated allotments into webbed passages stitched between what was meant to be seen.

Produced and presented by Open House Melbourne in partnership with the Heritage Council of Victoria.

Info Hub



Friday 17 July–Thursday 23 July, 10am–6pm
Friday 24 July, 9am–6pm
Saturday 25 July, 9am–6pm
Sunday 26 July, 9am–5pm

4,910
Info Hub attendance

Open in the week leading up to and across the Weekend festival, the Info Hub is a welcoming and accessible starting point for the Open House Melbourne Weekend. Located outside Melbourne Town Hall, the Hub provides a central place for visitors to find inspiration, practical information and guidance as they navigate the program.

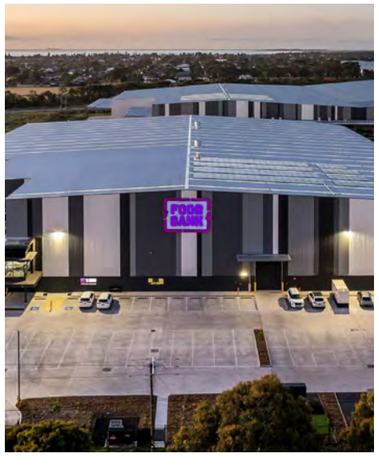
Open House Melbourne volunteers staff the Hub, providing a friendly and knowledgeable first point of connection with the public. They help visitors discover must-see buildings and special events, answer questions, provide directions and offer real-time guidance to help people make the most of their Weekend.

Visitors can pick up the printed program, self-guided tour brochures and information provided by Collaborators, with QR codes throughout the Hub directing people to the Open House Melbourne website for further details and real-time program information.

Highlight Programs

FOODBANK VICTORIA

“A visit to Foodbank Victoria [was] a great insight into the work that this amazing organisation is doing in feeding so may Victorians each day. Well organised tour, informative & very welcoming & friendly group of volunteers and staff.”



A guided tour through Foodbank’s newly opened warehouse and 18-metre bendy supermarket buses that offer a mini supermarket experience on wheels.

BUSTLE HOUSE

“The owner of the Bustle house in Northcote generously gave us her time by actually being at home and chatting warmly.”



A peak inside a fascinating nineteenth-century Victorian conversion, Bustle House, with the client and architect.

MELBOURNE ELECTRONIC SOUND STUDIO (MESS)

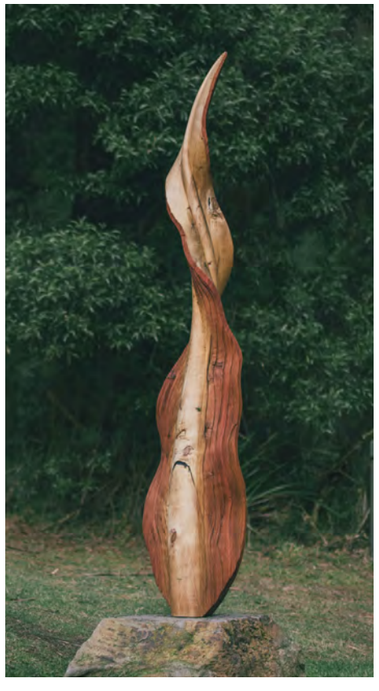
“Connect people and creativity in a studio space that has hybrid roles as a living museum and working collection; as well as a working and social space.”



An invitation into one of the most historically significant collections of electronic musical instruments worldwide.

NGURRAK BARRING

“Joe the Aboriginal guide at the ngurrak barring walk and the guide from Yarra Ranges was excellent.”



Wurundjeri Cultural Walks led by a Senior Educator from the Wurundjeri Education Unit sharing perspectives on Country and touring the newly installed architectural nodes.

MELBOURNE ARCADES

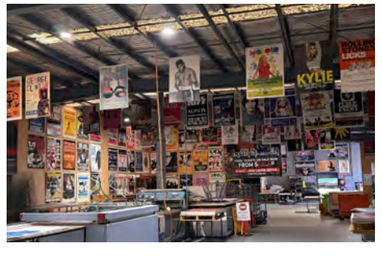
“The arcades tour highlights our remaining beauties.”



A guided walking tour through some of Melbourne's most beautiful and historic city arcades, uncovering the rich stories and intricate details often overlooked in everyday city life.

ROCK POSTERS

“Rock Posters was an excellent insight into a treasured everyday art form and the hosts provided insightful and friendly info on what they do and why.”



An opportunity to explore the extensive archive of original posters spanning decades of iconic Australian music history.

TRANSURBAN FREEWAY CONTROL CENTRE

“I've been trying to get tickets for years. It was fascinating. A bit of education that everyone who uses roads should have.”



A tour of new state-of-the-art Freeway Control Centre at Footscray which operates CityLink and the new West Gate Tunnel.

Returning Favourites

ACMI: BLACKMAGIC DESIGN MEDIA PRESERVATION LAB

“Something I have never seen before and cannot normally access.”



A purpose-built, glass fronted laboratory where the ACMI Registration and Collections team undertake preservation activities for analogue, time-based media, digital and complex software-based games and artefacts.

AUSTRALIAN TAPESTRY WORKSHOP

“The Australian Tapestry Workshop and ArtBank Melbourne were both incredibly creatively stimulating and fulfilling and I loved being able to engage with these spaces at my own pace and learn more about them.”



An open door to galleries, weaving floor, Artists-in-Residence spaces, and a glimpse into a bespoke on-site dye laboratory.

PARLIAMENT HOUSE

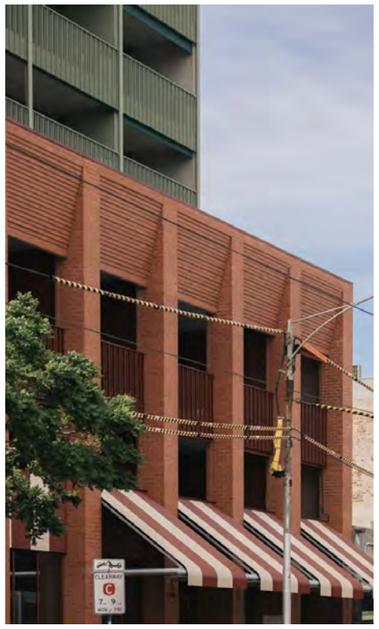
“Visited Parliament House which was fantastic and our guide and all staff I came across were fabulous, welcoming and very interesting to listen to.”



Guided tours of Parliament House, allowing visitors to learn about the historic building and the role of Parliament in debating issues and passing laws.

NIGHTINGALE HOUSING

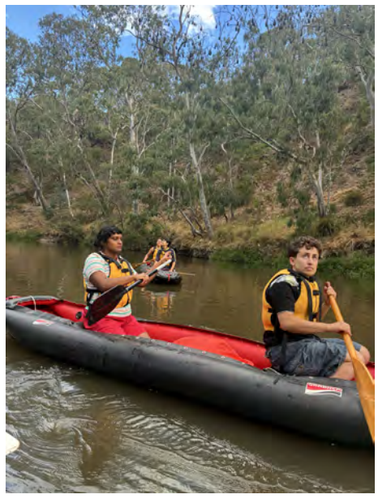
“Love learning about some hidden gems. I was aware of The Nightingale projects but this was the first chance I’ve had to look inside.”



A guided tour of the new Nightingale Umarkoo Wayi, designed by architects Kennedy Nolan with landscape by Amanda Oliver Gardens, providing a deeper understanding of what “density done well” can look like.

BIRRARUNG

“Birrarung kayaking was such a unique activity for the weekend.”



A kayak tour along the Birrarung from the suburbs and under the Eastern Freeway to contemplate Burndup Birrarung burndap umarkoo, 'What's good for the Yarra is good for all' in Woi-wurrung language.

Collaborator Engagement

100%

Would choose to participate in the Open House Weekend again next year

45

New Collaborators

136

New programs from new and returning collaborators

93%

Believe the Weekend provides an important addition to the cultural life of the area

85%

Felt a sense of community during the Open House Melbourne Weekend

85%

Of Collaborators participate in Open House Melbourne to engage with the local community

Expressions of Interest opened to the public in October 2025 and were communicated through our networks via a direct email invite to past Collaborators and organisational contacts, Open House Melbourne's newsletter and across social media. Targeted approaches were made to new, unique and award-winning projects identified by the Building Council.

A total of 195 submissions were received. Submissions were reviewed by the Open House Melbourne curatorial team together with the Building Council and a total of 188 were accepted into the program. This allowed for an anticipated drop-off of approximately up to 10% between acceptance emails being sent and the Weekend delivery. 182 programs were promoted at the Program Launch and some late cancellations due to Collaborator circumstances resulted in a final total of 180 programs being delivered across the Weekend.

The *Generous City* program engaged over 180 Collaborators (architecture + design practices, building owners/managers, community groups) in the organisation up to the Weekend with an additional 1,000+ paid staff and 780+ organisation-affiliated volunteers participating on the Weekend to assist in delivering the program.

In the spirit of the Weekend's theme *Generous City*, the Open House Melbourne team set aside time to call and discuss program proposals with more than 188 Collaborators early in project planning. One-on-one calls were valuable in relationship building and workshopping program issues. Strong communication continued with an online briefing session, frequent emails and reminders, and Collaborator Portal to share resources, timelines, key dates, marketing assets and other important operational information.

This year's record attendance at the online Collaborator Briefing of 168, demonstrates strong engagement by Collaborators with the program and Open House Melbourne. Of survey respondents, 90% felt adequately prepared for the Weekend with only 4 incidents reported across the Weekend program.

Collaborators were asked to share memorable experiences from their Weekend. The following quotes are a selection of their responses.

"It's wonderful to gain the perspective of the visitor who is almost always interested, curious and grateful for the experience. It's a perfect reminder of why we are part of the program."



"Both our volunteers were fabulous. We had a higher than expected turnout on both days and some great conversations."



"Building awareness and encourage engagment around the City North Social Innovation Precinct and its future development and usage aspirations."



"Our collaboration with Open House Melbourne was a tremendous success, generating enthusiastic engagement with ngurrak barring, lots of positive feedback and a significant appetite for more programming."

Precincts + Itineraries

7
Precincts

12
Itineraries

36,698
Views

13,900
Users

Open House Melbourne continued to strengthen its precinct model in 2026, helping visitors navigate and engage with the program offerings by geographical area. The precincts were City of Melbourne, City North, Melbourne Quarter and Melbourne Arts Precinct, alongside the surrounding precincts of Port Phillip, Maribyrnong and Stonnington.

Open House Melbourne coordinated meetings within each precinct during the EOI phase to connect and build relationships with Collaborators and support prospective participants through the EOI process. Representatives from each Precinct were invited to host and/or attend these sessions took place across the City of Melbourne, Melbourne Arts Precinct, Stonnington, Port Phillip and Maribyrnong.

The digital precinct itinerary offerings performed strongly, with engagement increasing by an average of 50% compared with 2025. This growth reflects a visitor profile increasingly expecting curated itineraries, a dedicated marketing campaign promoting the itineraries and strong support from each precinct in promoting their local programs. Additional themed itineraries also grouped program offerings around themes including *Density Done Well* and *Family Fun*, providing visitors with further ways to navigate the program.

To support this activity, each precinct partner received a tailored package of digital and promotional assets for use across their own platforms. The print program was also structured by geographical area, helping readers navigate the program through a precinct-based lens, with each precinct provided with copies to distribute locally. Throughout the campaign, Open House Melbourne provided ongoing support to Precinct Partners to ensure each precinct had a strong platform to showcase its program, highlight neighbourhood features and welcome visitors through precinct-specific video content.



City of Melbourne
45% of attendees
Itinerary Engagement: 6,168 views / 3,994 users

Melbourne Arts Precinct
24% of attendees
Itinerary engagement: 2,566 views / 1,828 users

Melbourne Quarter
0.1% of attendees
Itinerary engagement: 1,690 views / 1,388 user

Stonnington
3% of attendees
Itinerary engagement: 2,624 views / 1,919 users

City of Port Phillip
6% of attendees
Itinerary engagement: 2,950 views / 1,871 users

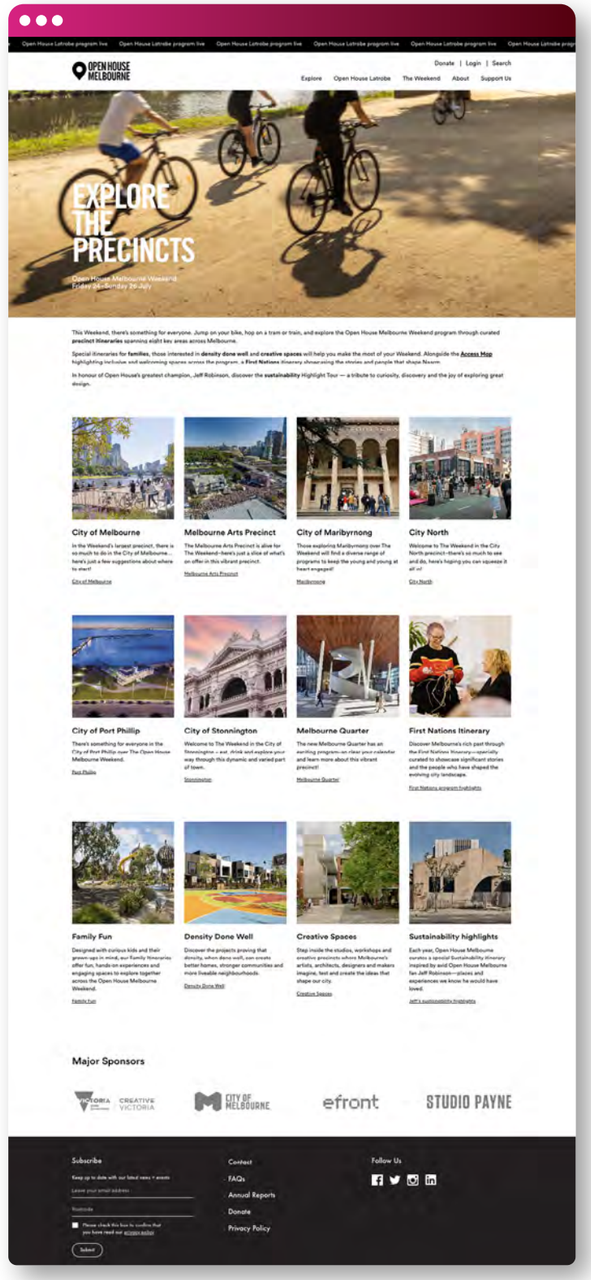
City of Maribyrnong
1% of attendees
Itinerary engagement: 1,771 views / 1,339 users

City North
9% of attendees
Itinerary engagement: 2,540 views / 1,936 users

Family Fun
Website engagement: 1,222 views / 851 users

Density Done Well
Website engagement: 1,194 views / 853 users

Sustainability
Website engagement: 857 views / 616 users



Volunteer Engagement

471

Volunteers recruited

355

Volunteer training attendance / Three quarters of volunteers attended at least one training session

2,243

Volunteer hours contributed

553

Shifts

45%

Participated for the first time in 2026

55%

Returning Volunteers

95%

Would return to volunteer for Open House

This year, 439 Volunteers came together across the Open House Melbourne Weekend, bringing their time, energy and extraordinary commitment to buildings and programs across the city. Their contribution continues to be a cornerstone of the Weekend, creating welcoming experiences for visitors, sharing knowledge and helping audiences discover more of Melbourne.

Volunteers bring a genuine passion and personal connection to the program, with 72% volunteering because they enjoy being part of cultural and public events, 71% want to support Open House Melbourne's mission and programs, 65% are passionate about good design and 64% enjoy meeting new people. More than half also volunteer because they want to give back to their community.

For many, this passion is expressed in creative and personal ways throughout the Weekend. At Newport Substation, volunteer Luise embraced the building's early-1900s history by dressing in steampunk attire, bringing a playful sense of storytelling to the site. At the Ukrainian Cathedral, volunteer Joanna knitted a scarf in Ukrainian colours to wear during her shift. These moments reflect the care, creativity and sense of ownership Volunteers bring to their roles.

The volunteer community continues to span generations, with this year's cohort ranging in age from 18 to 85. Almost half volunteered for the first time, bringing fresh perspectives, alongside a strong community of experienced volunteers. This includes 29 volunteers reaching their five-year milestone, 13 reaching ten years and six reaching 15 years in 2026. Together, they form an intergenerational community that shares knowledge, welcomes new people and brings a genuine curiosity about Melbourne to the Weekend.

Open House Melbourne's own channels remain the strongest pathway into volunteering, with 59% identifying these channels as how they found the opportunity. Other important pathways included the RMIT newsletter and careers board (60%), City of Melbourne channels (11%), recommendations from friends (8%) and the National Trust newsletter (5%). These results provide a strong foundation to grow volunteer recruitment through our own channels while exploring new advertising and recruitment initiatives.

The diversity of motivations, ages and experiences within the volunteer cohort is one of the Weekend's greatest strengths. Whether volunteering to share a passion for good design, meet people, learn new skills, contribute to their community or simply be part of a much-loved cultural event, volunteers bring enthusiasm and generosity that extends well beyond their individual shifts—helping make Open House Melbourne a welcoming, knowledgeable and distinctly community-led festival.

"Seeing the diverse collection of buildings, the passionate collaborators and meeting all the volunteers - everyone was just happy & smiling."





"I had the opportunity to meet many people from the industry, and I was very happy to be part of such an educational and inspiring event as a volunteer."

"I met so many wonderful people among the Volunteers, Zone Managers, visitors, Open House team, and event collaborators and made so many new connections. It was also nice to be around people and have the chance to help them with their questions and having casual chats. It was really fulfilling to see people enjoy the event and have a memorable and positive experience with Open House."



Marketing Campaign

Over the Weekend campaign period from 24 June to 12 August 2026, an integrated marketing and media campaign was rolled out to promote the *Generous City* program, with the goal to strengthen the festival's profile and reach as a leading cultural event.

The marketing campaign incorporated e-newsletters, social media, paid ads, grassroots outreach, a paste-up campaign and promotion via our printed broadsheet publication. In addition, the marketing campaign was supported by ground-based volunteers at a stand-alone information hub (Info Hub) that acted as a central point for information sharing and visitor engagement. The Info Hub generated strong engagement with preliminary program content, helping to build an awareness of the program and drive attendance across the Weekend.

Open House Melbourne's most powerful marketing and communications activities continue to be its EDM and a targeted media campaign, managed by publicist Adam Valentine, which involves print, radio, digital media and TV news coverage. Together, these channels helped extend the campaign's reach and contribute strongly to word-of-mouth promotion.

Collaborators were also integral in driving awareness and engagement in the lead up to and during the Weekend, through individual cross-promotional efforts on social media, their own paid PR activities and digital coverage.

Open House newsletter—31%

Open House social media (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn)—25%

News articles or media—20%

Word of mouth—19%

City of Melbourne What's On—13%

Other organisation's social media (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn)—7%

Other—7%

Open House Info Hub—5%

Printed Program—4%

Just saw it happening—4%

Street Posters—2%

ArchitectureAU—2%

31%

Open House e-news

25%

Open House social media (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn)

18%

Word of mouth

13%

City of Melbourne What's On


NEWS 09

Socceroo's drug drive bust

'Speedy' Volpato delivers 'positive result' for cocaine

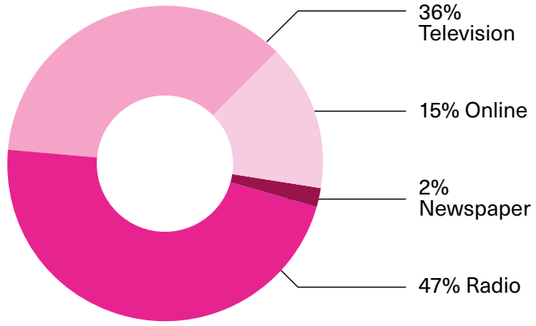
Ding! Ding! All aboard for our hidden stops

Bushwhacked by Albo interview fallout

Media Reach

The Open House Melbourne Weekend media campaign, managed by publicist Adam Valentine, generated 281 pieces of media coverage across television, print, radio and online platforms. According to MediaNet, this resulted in a cumulative potential reach of 175,683,313, including syndicated coverage.

The campaign generated an estimated equivalent media value of $4.39 million recruited, based on 175.7 million cumulative potential media reach and an illustrative $25 CPM benchmark; this is an advertising equivalent estimate and should not be interpreted as the actual commercial value of the earned media coverage.



Print newspapers and online editorial coverage was secured across major news, arts, design and lifestyle outlets, including The Herald Sun, Time Out, Architecture Australia, Concrete Playground, ArtsHub, Broadsheet, Beat, Green Magazine and The Design Files. Notably, The Age produced a significant volume of coverage this year, further extending the Weekend's reach across a broad metropolitan audience. There was also an increase in local newspaper coverage, with multiple articles appearing across metropolitan editions of the Star Weekly News Group.

Broadcast media coverage was secured across television programs including Channel Nine News, ABC News Breakfast and Postcards. Radio interviews were secured with 3AW, ABC Radio Melbourne, Triple R and JOY, with news bulletins also featuring Open House Melbourne across Melbourne's major commercial radio networks.

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.

175,683,313

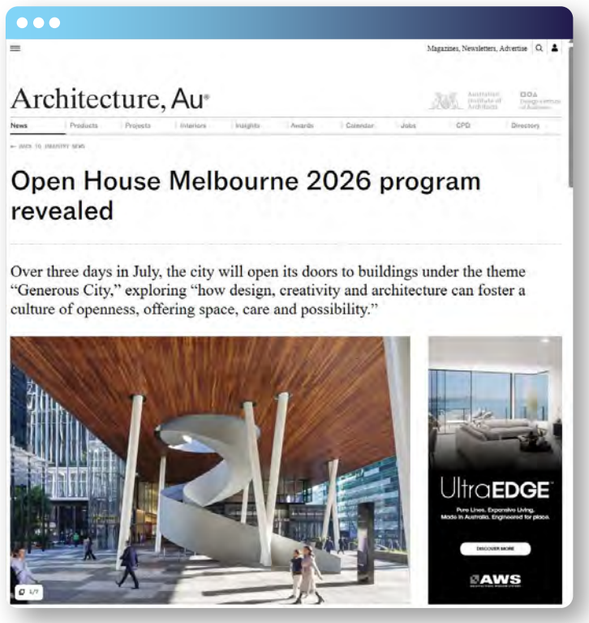
Total reach across print, online, TV and radio

$4.39M

Total PR value
(estimated based on $25 CPM benchmark)

281

Media hits during Weekend campaign


Architecture, Au

Open House Melbourne 2026 program revealed

Over three days in July, the city will open its doors to buildings under the theme "Generous City," exploring "how design, creativity and architecture can foster a culture of openness, offering space, care and possibility."

UltraEDGE

Website

91%

Of attendees accessed program information online

973,503

Page views (7% increase on 2025)

121,747

Users (8% increase on 2025)

Developments

The Open House Melbourne website continues to be the central platform for audience engagement, with 91% of attendees accessing program information online. In line with our strategy to drive all visitation to the website as the primary source of program information, in addition to the program itself, we consolidated the information available on the website to feature three parts: what to expect on the Weekend, Itineraries and Access Map. The website had a total of 973,503 page views—and 121,747 users (8% increase from 2025), with an average engagement time per user over 4 minutes.

Also continuing to be popular among avid Weekend fans was the itinerary tool, with more than 20 thousand active users of the Itinerary and Account pages, with visitors using the itinerary tool to plan and personalise their Weekend. This was a 50% increased on 2025.

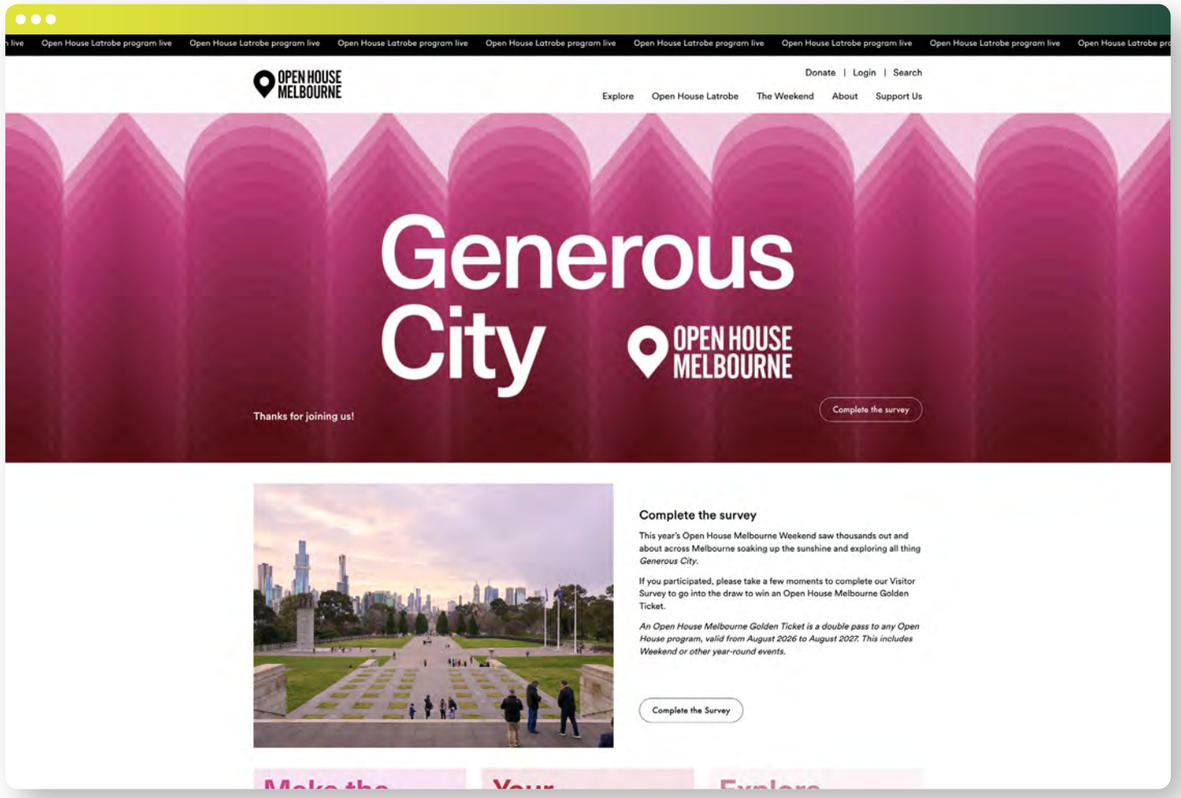
The UserWay accessibility platform remained available across the site, offering an accessibility menu that enhances usability and user experience.

Most viewed pages (views/users):

1. The Weekend program (205,297 / 51,459)
2. Open House Melbourne landing page (77,769 / 41,080)
3. The Weekend homepage (60,757 / 34,480)
4. Itineraries page (37,351 / 13,897)
5. My account (setting up an itinerary) (24,168 / 7,020)

Most visited event pages:

1. ANZ Gothic Bank Museum and Verdon Chambers
2. 171 Collins Street
3. 5x4 Haye Lane Project
4. Rock Posters
5. 623 Collins State Bank House
6. Port of Melbourne Boat Tour
7. Government House
8. Victorian Archives
9. Bustle House
10. Bush Modern at Eltham Library



TRAFFIC ACQUISITION (user/engagement time):

Direct—52,050 users / 2m 38s
Organic search—39,709 users / 7m 07s
Referral—14,082 users / 3m 42s
Organic Social—11,053 users / 1m 18s
Paid Social—3,454 users / 34s
Email—976 users / 2m 38s
AI Assistant—314 users / 34s
Unassigned—38 users / 42s

WEBSITE ACQUISITIONS (sessions)

The following websites were crucial in directing traffic to the Open House Melbourne website:

1. Google search (37.4%) 93,344
2. (net set) (37.9%) 74,623
3. City of Melbourne What's On (%) 4,598
4. Facebook.com (%) 3,211
5. Fb (%) 3,179\
6. Timeout.com (%) 3,093
7. Bing search (%) 2,92
8. Linktr.ee (%) 2,483

E-Newsletters

Including the launch of the Weekend theme, there were seven newsletters sent promoting the Weekend program, reaching more than 372,516 emails. The average open rate was 50.1% with the most popular newsletter being the City of Melbourne solus and the Program Live edition recording the highest number of click-throughs. This increase in engagement is due to a new ‘resend’ function in Mailchimp.

54,745

Total subscribers to email database (at end of campaign)

50.10%

Average campaign open rate

32,508

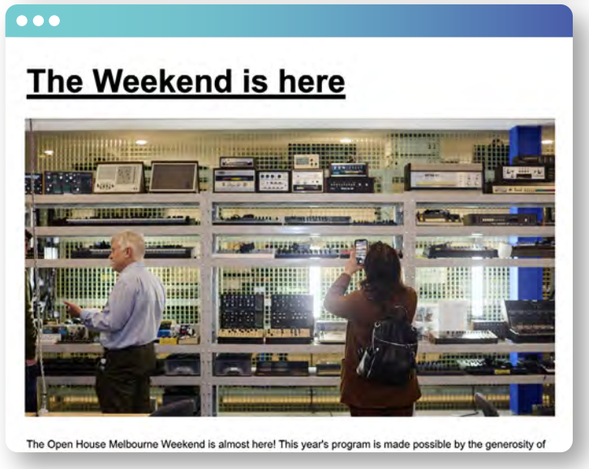
Total campaign click rate

4%

Increase in email subscribers (during campaign period)







Social Media

In 2026, Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn were the primary social media platforms that were used to engage with audiences to communicate Weekend program information and encourage participation in the broader Weekend conversations.

Open House Melbourne has a total active audience across all social media platforms of 71,506 including channels on Facebook (29K followers), Instagram (29K followers), Twitter (9K followers), YouTube (1K subscribers) and LinkedIn (4K followers). During the campaign period, our social media channels experienced an overall growth of 5% across the platforms.

126,251

Total subscribers across email and social media database 5% increase on 2025)

INSTAGRAM

28,623
Followers

426,066
Views

29,107
Reach

5,068
Content Interactions

LINKEDIN

4,037
Followers

1,252
Page views

592
Reactions

23,837
Impressions

FACEBOOK

28,727
Followers

289,750
Page views

9,961
Visits engagements

1,159
Interactions

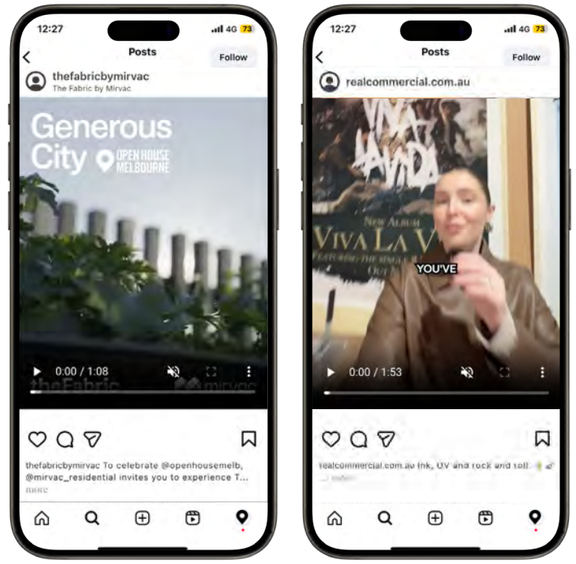
YOUTUBE

1,048
Subscribers

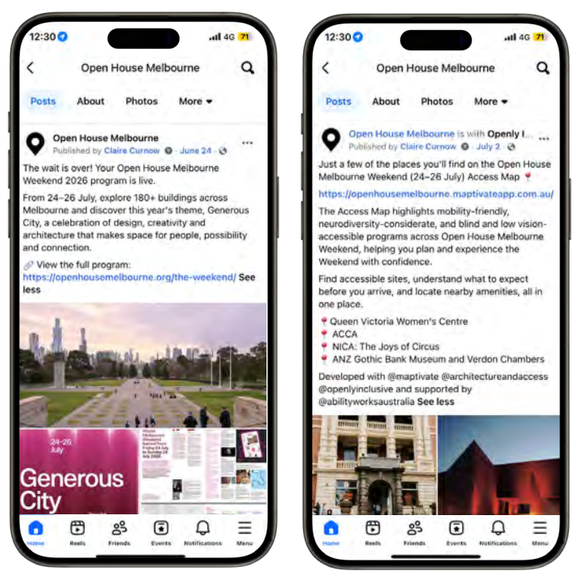
TWITTER

9,071
Followers

Top two posts—Instagram



Top two posts—Facebook





Identity

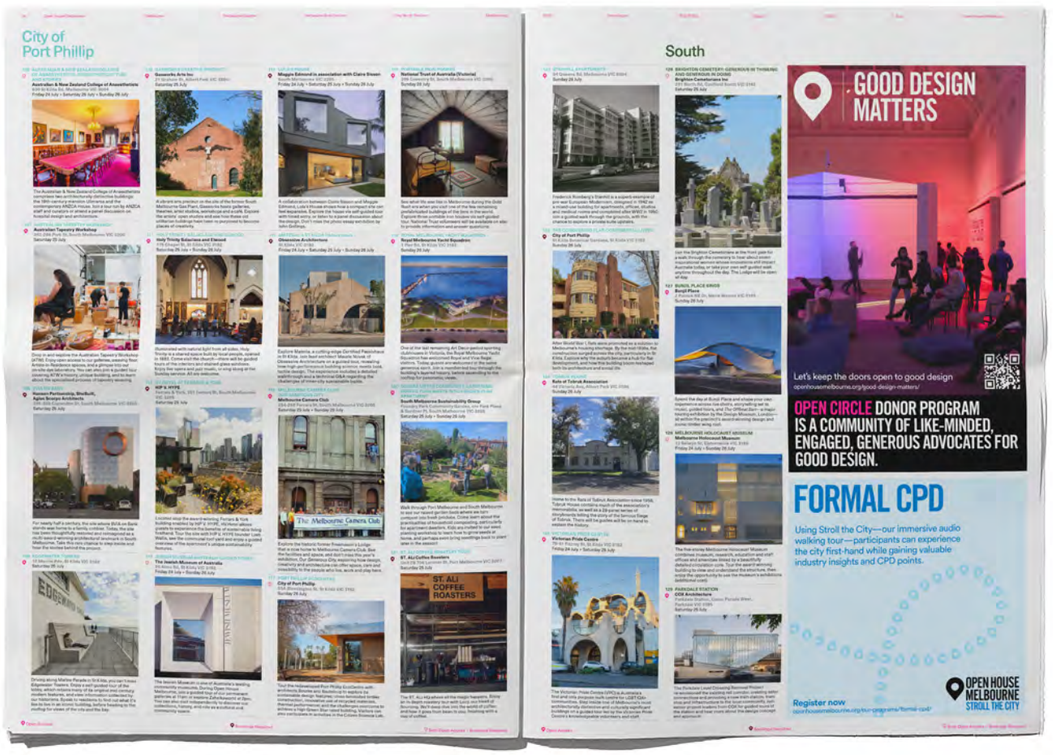
Central to communicating a consistent program and content is a consistent brand identity that can be presented across all of our marketing and communication channels. Valued Major Partner Studio Payne developed the *Generous City* identity, which was developed noting the following:

A generous city shares what it has: welcoming public places, buildings that invite participation, and infrastructure designed with empathy and equity in mind. This theme asks us to imagine a city that gives more than it takes—where design supports community, accessibility and the simple act of looking after one another.

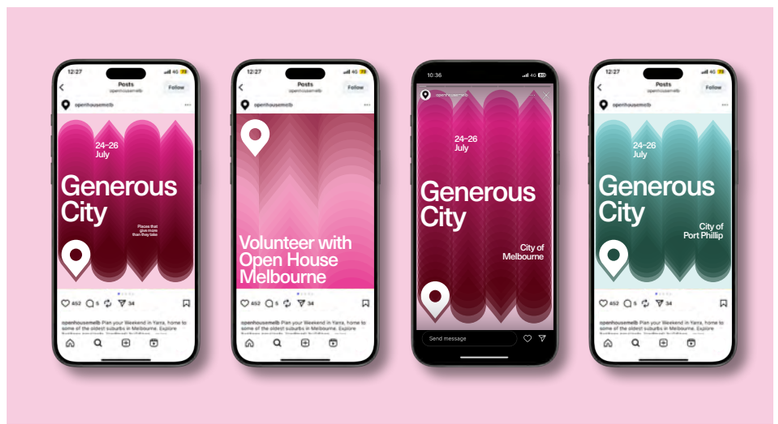
As part of the extensive collection of assets provided by Studio Payne, they provided Collaborators with a detailed marketing kit of signatures, posters, social media tiles, newsletter headers and upon request, custom signage, all supported by an accompanying style guide. This consistent application across a wider range of assets allowed Collaborators to brand their own programs in alignment with the broader marketing of the Weekend.

The printed program (in broadsheet format) provided an introduction to the program with welcome messages, tips and tricks for a successful Weekend experience, QR code links to itineraries and highlight programs as well as high level program information and images, accompanied by maps.









Thank you

The Open House Melbourne team is a small team who deliver a huge program with significant impact. I would like to acknowledge Piera Maclean, Katie Evans, Veda Varcoe and Nikki van der Horst, whose dedication and hard work ensured the Weekend 2026 was a resounding success.

Open House Melbourne relies on the support and generosity of many dedicated organisations and people. We could not present our extensive program without the significant contributions of the Open House Melbourne Board, Building and Volunteer Councils, our advisors and ambassador.

We thank our Major Sponsors—the City of Melbourne, Creative Victoria and Open House Melbourne's long-term partners Studio Payne and Efront—for their support.

Deep and sincere thanks to our Collaborators, Partners, Sponsors, Supporters, Donors and almost 500 passionate and pink-vested Volunteers.

And finally, I would like to acknowledge the passionate engagement and enthusiastic participation of our audience—it is wonderful to program for people who love the city and good design as much as we do.

Thank you.

Tania Davidge
Executive Director | Chief Curator

Appendix

FULL PROGRAM LIST

View Full Program Here

OPEN HOUSE MELBOURNE
#generouscity

2026 Sponsors, Partners + Patrons

MAJOR PARTNERS

CITY OF MELBOURNE
VICTORIA State Government | CREATIVE VICTORIA
STUDIO PAYNE
efront

MAJOR PROGRAM PARTNERS

MAPTIVATE
HERITAGE COUNCIL VICTORIA

MAJOR PRACTICE PARTNER

LOVELL CHEN

PRACTICE PARTNERS

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Openly Inclusive making inclusivity simple
Readings

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CITY OF PORT PHILLIP
City of STONNINGTON
MAP CO Melbourne Arts Precinct Corporation
Maribyrnong CITY COUNCIL
MQ Melbourne Quarter
lendlease
mirvac
RMIT UNIVERSITY | City North Social Innovation Precinct

MEDIA AND PRINT PARTNERS

Adam Valentine.
Architecture, Au
boom studios
DOCPLAY
ROCK POST-ERS

SUPPORTERS

OPEN HOUSE WORLDWIDE
Pinsent Masons
SYRACUSE

PATRON

DANIEL DORALL

Open House Melbourne could not deliver the Weekend program without the generosity and support of our Building and Volunteer Councils. Heartfelt thanks to Building Council members Adriano Zarosinski (Chair), Sophie Cleland, Naomi Barun, Alice Blackwood, Heath Gledhill, Paul Roser, Alisha Baker and Mitchell Gow and Volunteer Council members Andrew Purvis (Chair), Stephanie Bateman, Maria Panettieri, Luise Raeder, Kim Wilson, Rebecca Anthony, Artur Hajda and Atieh Dibaei.

OPEN HOUSE
MELBOURNE