

CREATIVE INDUSTRY SPACE PROPOSAL

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT

January 2021

For the City of Greater Dandenong

Table of Contents

<u>ENGAGEMENT OBJECTIVES</u>	2
ENGAGEMENT PROCESS.....	2
METHODOLOGY	3
STAKEHOLDERS IDENTIFIED & ENGAGED.....	4
ENGAGEMENT DATA	5
<u>CONSULTATION OUTCOMES</u>	7
HEADLINE STATISTICS – SURVEY SUMMARY	7
<u>FORUM & SURVEY FEEDBACK</u>	11
WHY DO WE NEED A CREATIVE INDUSTRY SPACE?.....	11
HEARING THE VOICES OF OUR CREATIVE, ENGAGED, DIVERSE AND INNOVATIVE COMMUNITIES.....	12
DESIGN & FACILITIES SUPPORTING CREATIVE INDUSTRIES	13
<u>DESIGN CRITERIA SUMMARY – INFRASTRUCTURE</u>	16
STUDIO ARTS – WALKER STREET GALLERY	16
PEP BUILDING REDEVELOPMENT	16
<u>OPPORTUNITIES</u>	20
REVITALISING CENTRAL DANDENONG – LEVERAGING THE CREATIVE ECONOMY	20
EDUCATION AND TRAINEE PARTNERSHIPS.....	21
GALLERY OF ART LINKAGE	22
<u>OPERATIONAL MODEL</u>	25
MANAGEMENT / GOVERNANCE MODEL.....	25
GOVERNANCE/ MANAGEMENT MODELS ALTERNATIVES INCLUDE:	26
<u>BENCHMARK VENUES</u>	27
<u>NEXT STEPS – CONTINUING ENGAGEMENT. STAYING IN TOUCH.</u>	29

Engagement Objectives

In early 2020 the City of Greater Dandenong undertook a feasibility study into re-purposing the now unused Precinct Energy Plant building in the Dandenong CBD to expand Council's delivery of services to the community.

Located on the corner of Halpin Way and Moysey Lane, the former Co-Generation building adjoins the Old Masonic Hall building, currently undergoing redevelopment for the new Greater Dandenong Gallery of Art.

The initial internal consultation process included feasibility work undertaken by Six Degrees Architects.

Council, architectural and consultant findings from this early feasibility study found in favour of utilising the building to expand the region's 'cultural precinct' and its arts and cultural heritage services. Specifically, it identified the opportunity to redevelop the building as a 'Creative Industry' facility.

These findings were informed by the nature and location of the building itself and by identified gaps in Council's current service delivery of arts and cultural programs along with future opportunities for the community, creative economy and cultural ecology.

The *Feasibility Report* proposed the creation of a space that is a generator of new ideas, a generator of change, and a generator of cultural, creative and economic activity. The space would enable 'cultural production' – the making of new art – rather than expanding existing 'arts and cultural presentation' capacity within the City of Greater Dandenong.

In October 2020 Council began a community-based consultation process to seek feedback and input from stakeholders who may be directly engaged with a Creative Industry Space, along with the wider general community regarding broader re-purposing options for this facility and Council service delivery.

The community engagement sought feedback on support or otherwise for the initial proposal and looked to both expand on and refine the potential for services to be offered to sectors of the community by a repurposed industrial space in the heart of Dandenong.

The community feedback received, and input gathered during this consultation process informs our final report and recommendations to Council.

Engagement Process

This proposed project was determined to have a potential 'medium' level of impact on community – that is, it is likely to raise interest, debate and varying views within a select set of interest groups, and if it proceeds will provide a new service or activity delivered by Council.

Accordingly, it required a *medium level* 'consult and involve' engagement process with the community sector.

In order to facilitate and expediate the consultation process, Council engaged the services *Ross Farnell Cultural Consulting* to work with staff in driving the engagement forward.

A two-tier engagement process was developed. For those stakeholders identified as more highly engaged or impacted the engagement framework enabled multiple opportunities for the provision of information, input and feedback, followed by on-line forum opportunities to capture detailed stakeholder responses to the proposal through in-depth discussion.

For stakeholders identified with a lower level of interest or impact, engagement was offered via the same detailed provision of project information with feedback captured via online survey and social media.

Methodology

Commencing mid-November 2020, a seven-week community engagement and consultation was undertaken within the COVID-19 restricted environment regarding public gatherings in Victoria. These restrictions precluded a number of the more traditional engagement methods such as in-person focus groups, workshops and meetings with stakeholders.

Therefore, the engagement methods utilised maximised alternative forms of engagement that could be undertaken in the online space.

The Engagement Framework and Communication Plan was specifically developed to reach those identified project stakeholders such as creative makers and producers that to this point have had little or no engagement with Council, including those forging new digital and alternative platform media works. It sought also to engage the interested CALD and First Nations communities and to connect with the seldom-engaged younger creative demographic, including those outside of any formal education setting. The digital space was identified as the key opportunity to engage this cohort.

The following engagement and communication mediums were employed:

Web online – Council Project Page

A combined project information and feedback portal incorporating project reports, maps, images, feasibility report, video, downloadable information, survey link and forum registration

Surveys – online

Survey Monkey format. 2 Surveys developed – general ‘community and creative’ sector and the ‘arts & education professional and peers’ sector.

Promoted and distributed via direct email, web, social media, print media and posters.

Social Media

A comprehensive Social Media Plan was developed for a staged roll-out during the seven-week consultation. Social platforms utilised: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube.

Facilitated online Forums – (Focus groups)

Utilising the accessible Zoom format, two online forums were offered to provide the platform for detailed discussion and feedback. Session one was provided for the arts and education profession, with session two open to all community members. Registration was by direct invitation to known stakeholders and via online ‘opt-in’ promoted through social and other media.

Video

An ‘online friendly’ one-minute project video was created to generate project interest, provide information and provoke active responses and feedback. A shorter 15-second version was created specifically for Instagram.

Traditional Media

Council generated media releases distributed to all usual media outlets and contacts.

Council Newsletter – distributed to all households.

Posters – Fact Sheets

As Council venues and service centres began to open to the public, single page information and ‘call to action’ flyers were created, distributed and posted.

Stakeholders Identified & Engaged

- Arts Organisations, related interest & user groups. City of Greater Dandenong.
- Creative Practitioners: Artists, Producers, Makers. Live in or engaged with CGD.
- Cultural Organisations. Including CALD, First Nations
- Councillors and Elected Members
- Arts Advisory Board – CGD
- Education Sector – Tertiary and Secondary. CGD and regionally.
- Arts Organisations, Producers & User Groups. Outside of CGD - engaged with region.
- Community Organisations
- Arts Sector Peers. Surrounding LGA arts & culture, venues, touring companies, State arts bodies.
- Business and Commerce. CGD.
- Residents and Ratepayers. CGD.

Engagement Data

In summary, the community engagement process for the Creative Industry Space reached people over 35,000 times. With an engagement of over 5% on social media and including surveys completed, web page visits and click throughs, over 2,000 people actively engaged with the consultation messaging.

TOTALS

- **Overall Reach:** **35,000+**
- **Engagement:** **2,000+**

DETAILS

- **Surveys** Completed. 103 (99 + 4)
- **Forum** on-line attendees. 24 (5 + 19)
- **Stakeholders** directly identified and contacted. 270
- **Demographics** of Survey Respondents
 - 45% - aged 16 yrs to 34 yrs
 - 65% - aged under 44 yrs.
 - 56% - female
 - 33% - male
 - 11% - identify as gender diverse or prefer not to say
 - 56% - work in the CGD
 - 86% - identify as an artist or other creative practitioner or producer
 - 55% - create, perform or produce work in CGD

Social Media Reach and Engagement

Platform / Date	Reach	Video Views	Engagement
Fbook – Arts in CGD All posts	1,084	n/a	31
Fbook – Drum All posts	14,667	n/a	994
Fbook. CGD 11.18.20	2,950	1,843	280
Fbook. CGD 30.11.20	1,053	n/a	42
Fbook. CGD 17.12.20	804	n/a	21

Fbook. Arts Hub 01.12.20	8,643 *	n/a	331
Instagram CGD 18.11.20	344	145	33
Instagram CGD 30.11.20	623	n/a	58
Instagram CGD 12.17.20	631	n/a	29
LinkedIN CGD 2.12.20	816	n/a	22
LinkedIN Arts Hub 30.11.20	732 *	n/a	19
Twitter CGD 7.12.20	539	60	8
Twitter Arts Hub 30.11.20	918 *	n/a	7
TOTALS	33,804	2,048	1,875 5.54%

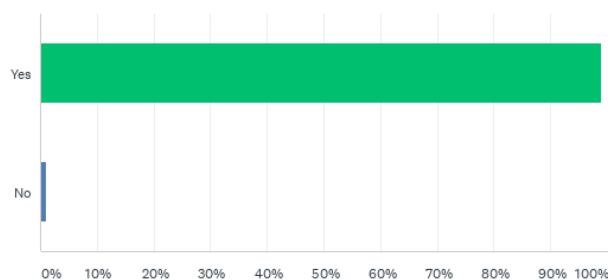
* *Impressions*. Number of times content displayed vs. *Reach*. Number of people who see content.

- **CGD Web Page** – Creative Space: Views: **796**
- **Arts Hub**. Paid Featured Listing, e-news and social media posts
 - **E-newsletter**: 7 dates distributed from Dec 2 to Dec 19.
 - Unique click throughs: **389**
 - Open Rate Av **14%**
 - **Unique Page views**: **651**

Consultation Outcomes

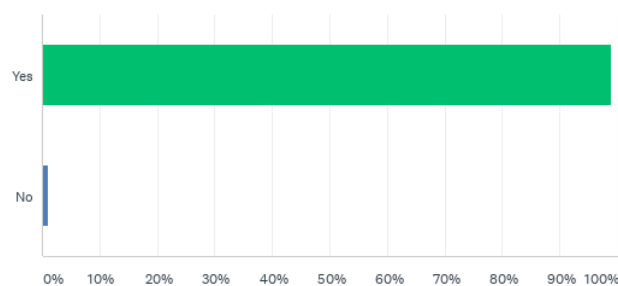
Headline Statistics – Survey Summary

Q1 Council's feasibility study identified a creative industry 'making' space as a preferred way to redevelop this building because of its location, the type of building and a lack of this type of facility in our region. Do you support the development of a 'Creative Industry Space' on this site?



99% - in favour of the Creative Industry Space redevelopment proposal.¹

Q3 Council's feasibility study proposes the development of a local 'making art' space to complement our theatre and gallery venues. This will enable our community to tell their own stories through art and support our 'creative industries' and artists. Do you agree that there is a need for this type of creative making facility in our community?

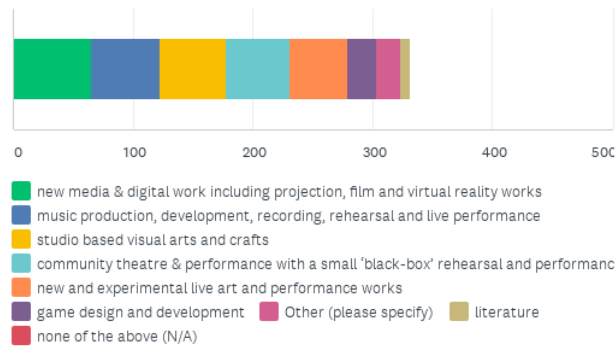


99% - agreed there was a need for a 'making art space' in the CGD which would enable our community to tell their own stories through art and support our creative industries and artists.²

¹ The one 'no' response was likely a 'false negative' as all other parts of their response did not reflect a 'no' answer. This would increase the result to 100%

² As above

Q4 If the building was redeveloped as a space to create new art, what art forms do you believe should be supported by the new facilities provided? Select up to 4 options only.



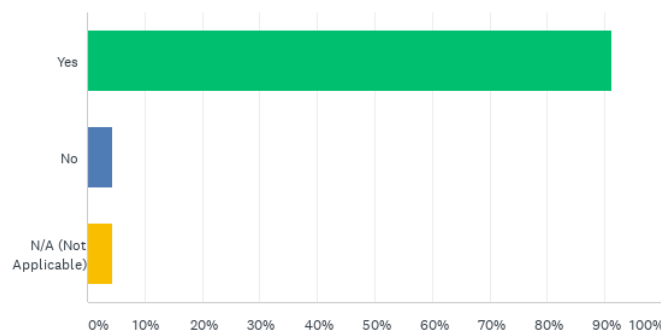
The most popular art forms supported by community were:

1. New media and digital work including projection, film and virtual reality works (71%)
2. Music production, development, recording, rehearsal and live performance (62%)
3. Studio based visual arts and crafts (61%)
4. Community theatre & performance including a small 'black-box' space (58%)
5. New and experimental live art and performance works (52%)

The arts and education sector largely agreed, although had some differences:

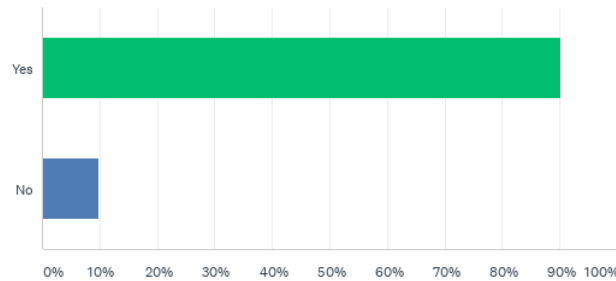
1. New and experimental live art - equal first preference (100%)
2. Game design and development - equal second priority (66%)

Q5 A redeveloped facility may include creative co-working spaces, helping the region's artists collaborate on new work, share skills and come together as a creative community. Is a creative co-working space important to you either in your own creative practice or as a community member who supports the arts?



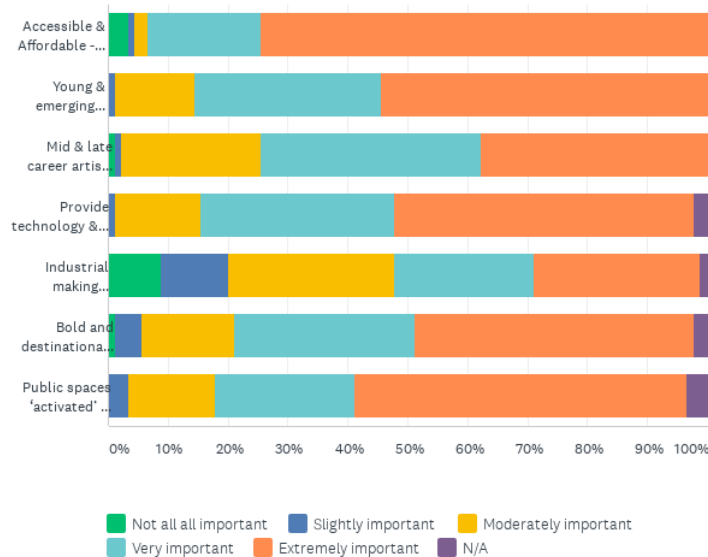
92% - support the inclusion of creative co-working and collaborative arts spaces.

Q6 Council is interested to explore linking a redeveloped creative facility with the education sector including at the tertiary level, expanding students' access to creative making tools, spaces, skills and learning. Do you believe there is a need to support arts education and skill development as part of this redevelopment?



91% - support linking a new Creative Industry Space with the Education sector and skill development.

Q10 Please rank the following statements in accordance with their importance to you. A new creative space should:



Those attributes of any new space that were most important to respondents were:

1. *Be accessible and affordable for artists and community regardless of background or ability (4.6 / 5.0)*

2. *Offer opportunities for younger and emerging artists* **(4.39 / 5.0)**
 3. *Provide public spaces like the open rooftop, that can be 'activated' for a range of arts and cultural events* **(4.36 / 5.0)**
 4. *Provide the technology and space that enable the creation of new and emerging creative practice* **(4.34 / 5.0)**
-

Forum & Survey Feedback

Forum and survey respondents provided a wealth of detailed feedback, input and discussion regarding all aspects of the proposal. They demonstrated a deep engagement with the proposal and provided considered responses to the Creative Industry Space's future uses, potential, opportunities, design and operations.

Most importantly there was unanimous and enthusiastic support for the proposal, one which generated genuine enthusiasm for the potential a Creative Industry Space offered the City of Greater Dandenong, its artists, creators, community, culture and economy.

Why do we need a Creative Industry Space?

“The creative economy will have a great impact on the second largest satellite city in the south-east... With the large investments in the region, it is vital to foster the creative economy and related industries in order to bring and encourage more creative business endeavours and workshops in Dandenong - serving local and surrounding artists, designers and more.”

Respondent aged 25 to 34. Creative practitioner.

Stakeholders expanded on their support for the proposal with thoughtful responses, many of which made the important link to Victoria's growing creative economy, and the potential for the City of Dandenong to embrace and capitalise on this.

The proposal is seen to 'fill a gap in the Victorian and our region's arts ecology – the space to create a new vision', and doing so 'address the unique cultural, social and artistic position of Dandenong'.

A Creative Industry Space 'enables business and arts to come together – while directly supporting creative and social enterprise start-ups.' This investment in the artists of our region was seen as an important way to help stop the ongoing exodus of Dandenong's creatives and their skills to the Melbourne CBD in search of supportive and accessible spaces and infrastructure.

Not only will this this “*promote a culture of creativity, innovation and industry*”, as one respondent so succinctly put it, but it will provide valuable cultural input and creative activation to the Victorian Government's ongoing Revitalising Central Dandenong program. Dovetailing directly into the adjoining RCD Sites that will see substantial investment and development commencing with master planning in 2021 provides yet further opportunity for the Creative Industry Space and the RCD program itself. See '*Opportunities*'.

Relevant and illuminating examples were offered by stakeholders of art and creativity transforming cities – Detroit for example – citing the integration of a strong arts community into a City's cultural identity as intrinsic to growing its 'brand', attracting diverse businesses and building its economic, cultural and social future.

At a more 'localised' level, the development of a Creative Industry Space was seen by the community as a way to provide for pathways to economic sustainability for our creative practitioners, providing the space, tools, collaborative opportunities and professional development to take their work and their stories to the next level of development, with commercial and income generation potential. In this way too it may be a potential 'launching pad' for artists post TAFE or other tertiary arts study, developing their disciplines, skills and ideas into the public arena. See [Opportunities – Education](#).

Hearing the Voices of our Creative, Engaged, Diverse and Innovative Communities

The digital arts landscape is yet to see a significant development of stories, expressions, experimentations and images that come from Middle Eastern, West and South Asian or North and Central African communities. Indigenous communities face this too, and through exciting new artforms Indigenous artists would be able to bring de-colonial lenses to the community through their expressions.

There is an advantage here to pioneer and nurture voices which are often silenced in alternative and "future forward" discussions. This sort of initiative ensures the technologies and networks of tomorrow do not inherit the narrow, othering lenses they currently bear to the disadvantage and harm of the marginalized.

Respondent aged 16 to 24. Creates or produces art in CGD.

Stakeholders identified a unique opportunity for the proposed facility to create a space where all of the City of Dandenong's diverse communities can be seen and be heard, where important stories can be told through creative arts mediums. The ability to communicate across language barriers through the universal language of making and creating was seen as a driver to bring communities together, support social cohesion and mental well-being and provide the means to exchange ideas: creating a more vibrant and engaged community.

Citing the well-documented connections between creativity and identity, providing a space and the tools to express themselves was identified as an essential pathway to enabling diverse cultures to interact, contribute meaningfully and feel connected to their local community.

These professional development opportunities extended to the capacity to provide accessible workshop facilities to enable learning and development across a raft of arts forms and creative endeavours; from digital media to art therapy, craft making and cultural food preparation to performance and photography.

Importantly, many of the newer digital mediums are seen as more accessible and relevant creative conduits for younger CALD, migrant and refugee communities to tell their stories than those more traditional western art-forms of 'studio arts' or 'stage performance'. Including music production as well as game and visual digital mediums like projection and video these multi-modal art forms are often best placed to 'speak' to their intended audiences and offer a direct, affordable and popular conduit into their communities via numerous digital distribution platforms and social media.

In providing such spaces and tools, the Creative Industry Space has the potential to not only enable but to amplify these hitherto silenced voices throughout our community.

Design & Facilities supporting Creative Industries

Community feedback and input directly affecting design directions for the proposed Creative Industry Space can be broadly separated into three categories:

1. design solutions that create spaces for particular types of art making / production
2. design that enables differing types of use, access, activation and operation
3. design that engages the public and wider community as well as the creative sector

1. Design that enables art forms

Across all respondents the art-forms that were both highly 'scored' and most discussed, when 'grouping' similar modes, were:

- a) digital and new media work – including projection, film, game and all related modes
- b) community and experimental theatre including live art and performance
- c) music production, development, recording and performance; and,
- d) studio based visual arts and crafts

From a space-utilisation, amenity and design perspective, the first three are relatively complimentary. They work with the existing building as regards the lack of natural light, large spaces with high ceilings and industrial materials; and could potentially be developed as complimentary uses within the same spaces and fit-out.

There is clear demand also for studio-based visual arts making spaces that is currently not met in CGD. One solution to accommodate all of these needs may be to design one floor of the new space as primarily 'digital, new media, music and performance' and the other as 'studio visual arts'. However, a less compromised and therefore better solution would be to find an alternative existing space suited for 'studio visual arts' such as the existing Walker St Gallery including what is now its Black Box performance space (which would be replaced with a better, more purpose designed small performance space in the new building redevelopment). This would allow the new Creative Industry Space to be designed specifically around the needs of the digital and performative multi-modal arts forms identified including music. (See [Design Criteria](#))

Forum discussion and comments submitted also identified various other arts-forms for consideration, including Dance (fits with smaller performance / live art space), sculptural, prop making and large-scale works including for festival and events (industrial messy making spaces) and photography (dark room facilities). These types of spaces would require specific amenities such as wash up areas, ventilation and extraction, OHS working considerations and potentially storage.

In the 'digital and new media' space it was seen as imperative to 'remove the digital barriers', enabling access to the creation of new media and digital works by all members of the region's community. While this would entail access to technology, it is also about the design and capability of the spaces, which may include 'green screen' walls, motion capture

studio and a production studio for both visual and audio digital works including music recording.

In the Studio and Visual arts context some respondents were keen to see a smaller, affordable, accessible and quick turnaround exhibition space that provides a 'low-risk' space for experimental work. This was seen as important to enable innovation without the risk of large cost investment on behalf of the artists.

Informatively, the type of performance space advocated was very much of the same criteria – one that was on a small enough scale to be accessible (in all ways) and to allow for the creation of experimental work without high-cost risk, be that by community, cultural or established theatre groups. It was noted that the black box performance space at Walker St does not provide any adequate back of house, dressing room or front of house facilities for users, thereby greatly limiting its potential.

It is clear that with just two internal floors and an open roof-top floor available for redevelopment that a Creative Industry Space could not adequately address and provide for all of these uses and arts forms and that it should not attempt to be all things to all people.

A prioritised rationalisation of uses is proposed in the *Design Criteria - Infrastructure* section below.

2. Design enabling types of use, access, activation and operation

"Affordability is Accessibility"

The joint issues of affordability and accessibility were raised as the highest of priorities in all facets of the engagement. They scored as the highest ranked 'necessary attribute' and were discussed at length in the forums.

While affordability is partly a function of operational and managerial models – discussed later – design will invariably dictate how an arts facility is managed, operated and the level of community accessibility and 'ownership'.

Stakeholders identified a clear opportunity to differentiate this space from The Drum Theatre, the Gallery of Art and other such 'professional spaces', which are seen as prohibitively expensive for artists and the community to access, especially in regard to creating and developing new or experimental community-based works and stories.

To remove these barriers to participation the design should factor in robust and easy to 'self-operate' technology, facilities and amenities, reducing expensive operational costs and staffing needs. Ideally parts of the facility should be able to be self-accessed by creatives, seven-days a week and of evenings.

Accessibility in the broadest sense was emphasised by respondents – from standard DDA compliant all-abilities access to all areas of the facility, to considering wheelchair recharging, ways to assist people with disabilities in the space, and accessing the facility for the wider south-eastern region, including the proximity to public transport and parking.

Spaces for Collaboration

“Creative co-working is intrinsic to supportive and innovative arts cultures.”

Collaborative creative spaces were a high priority for potential users of the facility. Many respondents argued that co-working spaces are vital to support the cross-pollination of creative ideas, leading to innovation, while being essential for professional development and supporting young and emerging artists.

A collaborative space where multi-modal artists could come together was seen to create a possibility for vibrant socially engaged arts practices and performances: “Bringing diverse artists together would provide the conditions for exciting projects and innovation in the arts.”

“Our communities are strengthened through collaboration and this is especially true in the arts.”

Collaborative making spaces do present design and operational challenges, including the mix and negotiation of public versus private space and balancing the needs of collaborative work with those of individual practice.

While open workshop and hot desk working areas are desired by many, they will be impracticable for other creative work. Final design outcomes will need to further survey different demand to quantify the mix of spaces. While building in spatial flexibility – movable walls for example – provides one design solution, from an operational perspective these present challenges and room configuration changes can become costly, thus impacting affordability and accessibility.

3. Design that engages the public as well as the creative sector

Stakeholders were clear in their call to ensure a new Creative Industry space was welcoming and non-intimidating both externally and internally.

Many examples were provided of existing arts facilities that are seen to present both physical and metaphysical ‘barriers’ to entry and exploration, from The Drum Theatre to Bunjil Place. Such barriers are even more keenly felt by migrant and refugee communities, and these are the diverse yet often silenced voices that need to be enabled and heard through creativity in any new space.

A strong case was made to ensure the space is ‘approachable’ and communicates what it is and does from the outside, opening up through design and public activation to Halpin Way and the spaces around it. Considerations to meld inside with outside included public art activation that breaks down barriers – such as digital projection onto the external walls, external lighting creating a ‘safe place’ in the evening, external water fountains, seating, phone charging and night-time activation that creates a welcoming community space for all.

A sustainable space inside and out also inspired discussion – from green walls outside to a community garden inviting participation on the roof-top. This extended to arts markets surrounding the space, contributing to financial sustainability for creatives.

Design Criteria Summary – infrastructure

The following is not intended as a detailed design brief, but rather updates the core infrastructure capability requirements developed as a design brief during the initial feasibility study, ensuring that input and feedback from this community consultation has been incorporated.

The vision for the facility remains that of a ‘creative generator’ – a generator of new ideas and works, generator of change, and generator of cultural, creative and economic activity.

Studio Arts – Walker Street Gallery

The design criteria below are based on the assumption that the PEP building will need to be repurposed for all key artforms identified, including studio and visual arts. As such, it looks to achieve a large diversity of functions across the space available. In doing so there would be inevitable compromises of space, purpose and activation as well as operational complexity, as this compact area attempts to be ‘all things to all people’.

As indicated earlier, a better solution would be to retain all of the Walker St Gallery site as a visual art making and production studio space, as well as serving as the identified small, low risk exhibition space for new and experimental works. This facility could work as one with the redeveloped PEP building and would be a part of the newly developed Creative Industry Space, forming ‘two campuses’ effectively of the same creative generator. It would allow the redevelopment of the former PEP site to more effectively ‘specialise’ in the digital and performance mediums, offering advantages in terms of design, fit out, activation and operations.

Should that option become available, then these design criteria would be split across the two sites with all visual art production facilities moving to the Walker St site.

PEP Building Redevelopment

Level One. Ground Floor

Visual and studio arts production. Making, industrial and ‘messy’ space.

Primarily collaborative, large open workshop spaces for the making of visual art that can include sculptural, props (theatre, festivals, events) and large-scale visual works.

Can be utilised by artists, collectives, community, education and cultural groups for making, designing, fabricating and other activities including workshops, training and PD.

The ability to create smaller activation ‘shells’ or temporary private studio spaces is desirable, however this flexibility needs to be simple and easy to operate and should be able to be managed by users where possible.

Retains the industrial materiality of the existing building.

- Wet Area facilities – wash up/ steel benches & sinks / concrete floor – opening out onto the rear laneway for access/ loading bay / materials.
- Ventilation, air extraction, industrial power and natural light requirements where

possible.

- Addition of washroom facilities and artists community kitchen and social space.

Public / exterior interface: 'open up' the building to Halpin Way including public visibility, transparency and wayfinding. Brings some of the interior / functionality of the building to the public gaze make that experience visible.

- Incorporate public art and community use facilities external to the building, such as 3 phase and other power, digital projection points, external audio and sound-scape installation capability, seating, creative yet 'safe space' night-time lighting and etc.
- Create an entrance way that is open, transparent and inviting. Non-intimidating.
- Consider external 'green wall' or other similar elements – signalling sustainable practices and potentially roof top activation – gardens.
- Consideration to enable out of hours access by user groups. How to achieve safely and securely, with limited area access if necessary, yet retaining access to key facilities and amenities.

Gallery of Art Storage: the old 'transformer room' serves as an excellent and needed adjunct to the temporary storage needs of the new Gallery of Art for touring exhibitions and other incoming works, as well as gallery furniture. It may also serve as a small 'work space' for framing, stretching, hanging and other necessary gallery back of house functions.

Level Two

Digital, new media, performance & music

From a design, amenity, services and activation perspective, the identified priority art forms of digital and new media work (including projection, film and game design), community and experimental theatre including live art and performance, and music production and recording are relatively complimentary and could work within shared spaces and facilities.

To achieve all of these functions within one level, the 'mezzanine' design solution provided by Six Degrees Architects in the Feasibility Study provides a way to maximise available 'floor space' and the provision for differing modes of art production.

Level 2 – A:

Performance, community and experimental theatre development.

From experimental performance to community theatre and digital projection, this space is multi-function but within the clear parameters of presenting and enabling new work, while been accessible and affordable for community.

It is also the space that extends the capabilities of both the new Gallery of Art and The Drum theatre.

As a blackbox space fitted out for performance and presentation flexibility, it should be able to retain its industrial ambiance. With simple black out theatre drape tracking running full

height around all walls, this space can be fully curtained for live performance, or return to exposed concrete walls for other functions.

The space should retain its flat floor functionality, best suited to music performance, live art, digital arts, installations, 3D work and sit-down functions. But it should have the capacity to easily bump in temporary staging and some seating risers to extend sightline capacity for 'stage' performances.

The space should be easy to use and to operate, and simple to convert and set up for a range of purposes as identified. Users can easily and swiftly perform simple room set ups and provide basic audio-visual capability, without having to bring in venue technical staff.

Ideal seating capacity will need to be further tested with stakeholders, but is not likely to exceed 100 persons.

It should have easy access to amenities including toilets, small but functional and fully accessible 'back of house' dressing room/s, potentially self-catering, data, projection and audio. Patrons, audiences and users should feel connected to and invited to explore the facilities other creative spaces and feel connected and invited to explore the adjoining Gallery, creative and hospitality spaces.

Fit out will include:

- Full ceiling grid for suspending and rigging lighting, audio, projection, drapes, installations, screens.
- Electrics and Data cabling and capacity to grid and to wall patch panels – control points: digital and dmx controls
- Dimmer rack – theatrical lighting system.
- Main PA hanging/ rigging points.

See [Functional Brief v1.0](#) for full details.

This space will also need to serve as a digital exhibition space. See below.

Level 2 – M:

Digital, new media & music (including projection, film and game design, recording)

To achieve the desired capabilities and outputs these art forms will need to occupy both a well-designed mezzanine level, but also share the main floor level 2 area that will need to incorporate digital capabilities as well as performance fit out. Operationally this will create high-demand and present issues around scheduling, room set up and multi-use functionality. Glazed sound-proofing between the mezzanine and performance space may be necessary.

Art forms to be enabled include Film, Game development, VR, Digital Design, Projection Works, Music and Sound Production, Live Art and other cross-artform performative work.

To be a generator of new creative enterprise it will need to be able to accommodate multiple, temporary workstations at times, while also having the ability to be easily 'cleared' and used as one large working/ R&D space for new work of scale and scope.

‘Workstations’ therefore need to be simple and able to be collapsed and stored. Users need to be able to ‘plug and play’ quickly into the facility’s digital infrastructure.

The level 2 ‘performance space’ will need to double as a digital exhibition space, capable of:

- Immersive digital environments
- VR
- Multi-screen/ sound
- Projection Work – exhibition space.
- Small intimate Live Art performance space
- For experimental and cross media live art
- Small work rehearsal and development.

This will require facilities such as:

- Green Screen utilising the 5m height.
- Large projection screen or alternatively cyclorama wall for projection - 5m height.
- Ceiling grid for hanging projection and audio equipment, plus some lighting but not at the level of major performance lighting.
- Should include basic lighting power, DMX control cabling etc.
- All cabling associated with audio and projection through full digital capability.
- Floor traps for power, data and audio lines at locations within the space – for workstations/ flexible set ups.
- 3 phase power available multiple points
- Cat 6 to hub connectivity throughout

It should be a ‘safe’ space when equipment is packed down so that community and community artists are able to safely access and utilise the space affordably without the need for paid technicians and etc.

Level 3 – Rooftop

Public Space, events, activation and revenue

As this space is open to the elements, and budgets will be limited, it is suggested to make this space capable of being activated seasonally as weather permits, rather than creating an ‘all year around space’ requiring expensive solutions.

The rooftop location presents opportunity for public activation, community engagement and education opportunities through cultural events and urban sustainability, incorporating rooftop gardens with community ownership.

The design will need to open out to the rooftop views in at least two directions. This might be effectively achieved through ‘framed’ windows to the skyline cut into the existing panel walls

Identified uses for this space are:

- Event space. Outdoor Events with a difference on the rooftop in the CBD.
- Income Generator / A revenue space – Function Income. Commercial. Social Enterprise
- A green space – community rooftop garden / Green walls.

- Summer Bar
- Roof Top Cinema / digital projection space.
- Outdoor gigs: live bands/ DJs/ Video

Design and amenities to incorporate include:

- Roofed but open sided pavilion along one edge. This provides an under shelter and protected space from where to set up many different functions, be it bar, serving, projection, technical or other.
 - provide all essential services and amenities:
 - Water supply. Multiple points
 - Drainage (Bar, other).
 - 3 Phase, 20a and standard Power
 - truss rigging points for stage/ lighting/ cinema/performance
 - Data connectivity to floors 1 and 2. Allows connection between all spaces – performance.
 - Toilet amenities. Should be able to use Level 2 amenities if good access.
 - Storage – Share the Plenum room storage on Level 3.
 - Green Room – Share the Plenum room space on Level 3.
-

Opportunities

The redevelopment of the PEP building into a Creative Industry Space offers a raft of opportunity and potential for Council, the region's artists and creative economy, and for the city's broader community. From urban renewal to skill development and creative community engagement to artistic outcomes, the redevelopment has the potential to position the City of Greater Dandenong as a driver of innovation and creativity, in turn attracting destinational, tourism, partnership and investment opportunities.

Revitalising Central Dandenong – Leveraging the Creative Economy

The development of a culturally activated and community engaged Creative Industry Space adjacent to the identified Revitalising Central Dandenong (RCD) sites 11, 12 and 15 provides the opportunity to leverage and add value to both developments.

Situated just one block from the soon to be redeveloped Little India precinct on Foster Street the PEP building is perfectly positioned to provide the creative catalyst and cultural hub for the RCD developments, with positive flow-on effects for both sites. External public-art activation moving outside of the Creative Space into Halpin Way will ensure public linkage and engagement between these sites, furthering the viability of the creative industries and artists while ensuring the transformative value of art and creativity flow into

the newly developed precincts and their infrastructure. There is real opportunity for the City of Dandenong to connect with and become a leading example of sustainable, connected, liveable and 'smart cities'.³

It was informative that the 'creative economy' opportunity of the proposed Creative Industry Space figured so prominently in the stakeholders' consultation responses. There was no particular 'prompt' or 'tick box' to identify the creative economy opportunities, and yet many respondents provided detailed, informed and insightful feedback on the potential of this proposal to promote a culture of creativity, innovation and industry, and the opportunity to transform the City of Greater Dandenong through its development. This extended to the positive effect on the CGD 'brand' through creative industry support, development and association, cultural tourism potential through creative precinct development, and for social cohesion, resilience and well-being.

There is also real potential to incorporate social enterprise into the Creative Industry Space model – be that in providing catering/ hospitality/ café services for the new space (and potentially the adjoining Gallery of Art), or within arts technology training and related creative enterprise endeavours.



RCD Areas with proposed Creative Industry Space building highlighted Red

Education and Trainee Partnerships

We asked stakeholders about the importance to them of linking a new Creative Industry Space to the Education sector and skill development, with a strong **91%** supporting the connection.

Drilling further into their responses, respondents made clear connections between creativity, social well-being, arts education and the importance of creative skills to future

³ See for example: <https://www.smartcitiesdive.com/ex/sustainablecitiescollective/arts-proven-economic-driver-placemaking/20266/>

work and employment opportunities. As one person noted: *“We are all lifelong learners. Engagement in the arts prepares people not just for work, but for life.”*

Q7 You answered YES to supporting arts education. Please tell us why from the following options. You can select multiple options.



The education sector itself is keen to be engaged.

“We teach the visual arts: multimedia, art, media arts, game development and performing arts. We are super keen!!!! We are in desperate need of visual arts support in our community” Keysborough College

This space was seen as a critical opportunity to demonstrate to VCE and tertiary students a clear pathway that their arts can take them, and to provide a launching pad for artists post-TAFE, where they can develop their disciplines and ideas to the next level.

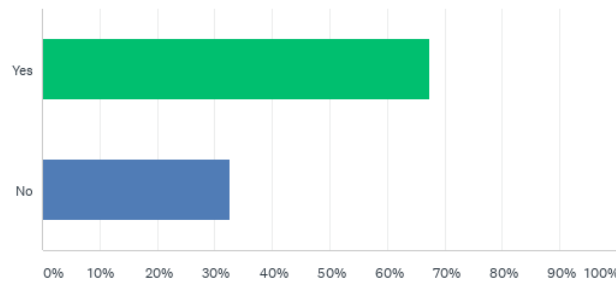
Crucially, there is real potential to explore formal partnerships with the tertiary sector that could provide funded traineeships and mentorships with the TAFE and wider sector, providing on-site training in theatre and gallery technician, new media, digital arts, sound, music and film production, while potentially providing affordable support for and mentoring to emerging artists working in the space.

Gallery of Art linkage

“There needs to be a link to the curatorial intent of the gallery of art. What is the vision of the gallery, what does it stand for, what is its focus, what does it present? Only then can the creative industry space feed into this.”

We asked surveyed stakeholders if it was important to them to explore opportunities of linking a new Creative Industry Space to the new Gallery of Art.

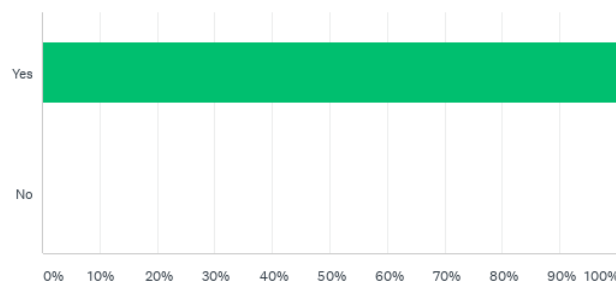
Q8 Is it important for you that this redevelopment links into the new adjoining Gallery of Art?
(Information about the Greater Dandenong Gallery of Art here)



Whilst the **68%** 'yes' response to this question was the lowest ranking of our 'yes/ no' answers, it is an accurate reflection of the many stakeholders who are not engaged with the traditional visual arts mediums.

For the *Arts and Education* professional sector however, it was a different story.

Q8 Do you believe it would be advantageous to link this creative industry space development into the new adjoining Gallery of Art?(Information about the Greater Dandenong Gallery of Art here)

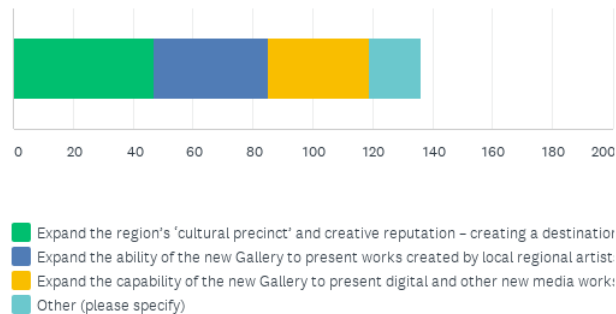


100% of the Arts & Education stakeholders believed it was 'important' for this redevelopment to link into the new Gallery of Art.

The follow up detailed responses showed a fairly equal rating of reasons as to why 'yes' respondents saw opportunity in linking these facilities. These opportunities are:

- a) Expand the capability of the new Gallery to present digital and other new media works
- b) Expand the ability of the new Gallery to present works created by local regional artists
- c) Expand the region's 'cultural precinct' and creative reputation – creating a destination for tourists as well as our local community

Q9 Please tell us why it is important to link to the new Gallery of Art from the following options.



The opportunity for the new Creative Industry Space to be a ‘making and producing feeder’ space of new and locally produced community-based, new media and experimental work into the Gallery of Art was seen as a clear linkage, potential pathway and advantage for many respondents:

“If there were avenues to exhibit in the Gallery of Art, this would ensure that artists of certain marginalized dispositions are uplifted and most importantly represented (on) their own terms.”

It was noted that the Creative Industry Space offers a more inclusive and less intimidating space with a level of community engagement that many ‘white wall galleries’ lack. Utilising this welcoming space and ‘more accessible channel’ provides future opportunities to cross-pollinate audiences and artists between the two spaces, literally breaking down traditional barriers, and developing new, diverse audiences for the Gallery of Art.

This new space is an essential link, as it adds some important elements that are lacking in the gallery space, that is fully hands-on making of arts, and particularly performing arts, and hybrid arts- art forms that can be physical, messy, noisy, busy and subversive. These may be works in progress, honouring the process, not just the product. A making space that is inclusive of performing arts, is a sign to the community that the arts is about participation and everyone can enjoy experiencing the arts, and themselves as creative beings, in many different ways.

The co-location of these spaces also provides the opportunity to build a ‘critical mass’ of cultural activation and infrastructure, thereby creating a true cultural precinct that engages, builds further cultural capital and feeds the cultural ecology of the entire region. There are further clear advantages here for the cultural activation of the RCD precinct, and for the positioning of the City of Dandenong as vibrant and ‘destinational’.

Operational Model

Both the forum discussions and survey feedback delved into the linkage between accessibility, affordability and operational models.

Many stakeholders cited standard local government facility operational models as ‘barriers’ to community engagement and truly diverse accessibility.

Furthermore, the operational model decided on to best enable the creation of new works in the space will inform the final design and fit-out.

The issue of staffing and affordability was a common concern of stakeholders. While discussion was in favour of having ‘studio technicians’ or similar on hand to assist artists with the technical aspects of their work/ tools – be that digital or physical fabrication – there was also a desire to move away from a model that required paid theatre technicians for example to be hired for every rehearsal, workshop and performance. The emphasis here was on ‘self-operating’, thereby reducing costs but also providing important skills and professional development within the community.

One way to achieve this outcome may be through a formal education sector trainee and professional development partnership. It was acknowledged however that OHS is an issue to be addressed in such working spaces and managing this without staffing is problematic.

Artist access to collaborative, studio and working spaces also needs careful consideration. There are numerous models for running studio spaces – no matter the artform. These vary from spaces that are allocated on 1-to-3-year terms to artists / collectives based on ‘application’, to models that operate on part-time or casual studio occupancy, and models that provide for a mix of these possibilities. It was generally felt that the ‘long term tenancy’ model was too limiting in terms of broad access to the spaces and facilities by many, with shorter term, collaborative studio access being more the more desirable option.

Management / Governance Model

The philosophy of the space is crucial - the agency of those running the space is important. Those managing need ownership and need to be invested in the outcomes and opportunities generated – with community representation in the management.

Those running (the Space) should reflect the culturally diverse community it works within. For arts spaces to broaden their constituency, they must broaden the cultural diversity of their management and staff.

Stakeholders broadly addressed ways in which the management of the proposed space might broaden community engagement. With a view to engendering greater ‘community ownership of and investment in’ the Creative Industry Space, this discussion canvassed models other than one of direct management by Council.

Respondents looked to models that might better enable, for example, the use of volunteers in a range of roles from front of house to technical support; the ability to attract philanthropic funding through Charity and DGR tax status; active, formal partnering with

allied sectors such as Education and the use of mentoring to deliver programs and develop skills.

The varying advantages, disadvantages and costs to both Council and community of these differing models should be fully investigated with a view to delivering the best possible outcomes for the creative sector and community wishing to utilise and be invested in a new Creative Industry Space.

Governance/ Management Models alternatives include:

Council Direct Management as a separate entity.

This model would incur the greatest direct recurring annual operational costs to Council and may necessitate the on-charging of costs to end users that could prove prohibitively expensive. It precludes applying for a range of other external funding. It requires the greatest level of direct staffing.

Council Direct Management as part of Gallery of Art or another existing Department.

While offering some amortisation of Council's management and operational costs through sharing of resources across facilities, this model also provides little opportunity to manage 'differently' for community ownership and for affordability. It also precludes applying for a range of other external funding.

Special Committee of Council.

Provides a hybrid 'council – independent' model, with clear governance oversight and end control by Council, while providing for community agency in the management and operations of the facility. Likely limits external funding attractiveness under taxation law but would be better positioned to run volunteering programs and partnership programs than direct Council management.

Company Limited by Guarantee – Not for Profit.

Further independence from Council. Constitution may dictate minimum Council representation for governance oversight. Provides for direct community management, agency and 'ownership'. Would still require a level of Council annual operational funding. Over time this model would be expected to ramp-up self-generated revenue through both entrepreneurial programming and activities, and through external government and philanthropic funding. The company model provides for some legal options that differ to an incorporated association.

Incorporated Association – Not for Profit.

Further independence from Council. Constitution may dictate minimum Council representation for governance oversight. Provides for direct community management, agency and 'ownership'. Would still require a level of Council annual operational funding. Over time this model would be expected to ramp-up self-generated revenue through both entrepreneurial programming and activities, and through external government and philanthropic funding. The incorporated association model provides for some legal options that differ to a company.

Benchmark Venues

The following venue redevelopments present examples where similarly industrial buildings have been repurposed for cultural and creative activation with a focus on contemporary, and experimental artforms that engage younger and broader audiences. They have achieved measurable successful outcomes in terms of building and attracting new audiences, producing new works and creating distinctive, iconic, highly regarded and destinational identities.

The Substation – Newport. Victoria

<https://thesubstation.org.au/venues/>

The SUBSTATION is a not-for-profit multi arts centre located in a 100-year-old repurposed, industrial building.

The SUBSTATION presents an annual curated program of creative development, residencies and presentation. Engaging with artists from across artistic disciplines, working in non-traditional modes and across art-forms, The SUBSTATION provides the opportunity for artists and audiences to connect with its unique space and the distinctive location of Newport.

Reflecting the broader history of Melbourne’s inner west, the space encourages artists to engage with the post-industrial space which fosters a culture of interconnectedness, collaboration and independence, and where we value new ideas, imagination and difference.

Despite significant differences in the fabric of the buildings, there are many similarities between the Substation and PEP Generator Building. This includes connecting the industrial history of the regions with their new, expanding creative ecologies and industries.

Carriageworks – Sydney. NSW

<https://carriageworks.com.au/venues/>

Carriageworks is the largest multi-arts centre in Australia. It commissions Australian and International artists to make monumental new work that intersects with contemporary ideas. Reflecting the diverse communities of urban Sydney, the artist-led program is ambitious, radical and always inclusive. Carriageworks has been one of those institutions that is renowned for doing things well and getting it right – a mix of government/private funding; a thriving respected international program; a respectful First Nations lens; and an engaged cross-general cross-demographic audience.

Like the Substation, it brings together the region’s industrial history with a revitalised creative energy and economic activity.

Collingwood Yards – Melbourne.

<https://collingwoodyards.org/about/>

Collingwood Yards — which is opening in stages throughout 2020 — is a new, permanent and affordable home for scores of artists and independent arts organisations working across music, visual arts, performance, digital media, creative industries and beyond. Situated across the former Collingwood Technical School campus, Collingwood Yards spans over 6500sqm.

Collingwood Yards is run by Contemporary Arts Precincts, a charitable social enterprise based in Melbourne.

Our aim is to ensure that the core operations of our spaces can be financially self sustaining at below market rents. Both the Collingwood Yards site and the organisation built to run it have been designed from the ground up to minimise the cost and complexity of operations. The efficiencies generated will be invested back in the community through more affordable rents and investment in future facilities, initiatives and programs.

Watershed – Bristol. UK

<https://www.watershed.co.uk/about-us>

<https://www.watershed.co.uk/studio/>

Watershed opened its doors in 1982 and declared itself to be ‘Britain’s First Media Centre’ seeking to capture and contextualise the shift in media at the point when satellite TV and Channel 4 were starting up. As the leading film culture and digital media centre in the South West, Watershed advances education, skills, appreciation and understanding of the arts with a particular focus on film, media and digital technologies.

Watershed champions engagement, imagination and ingenuity, working locally, nationally and globally from our home in Bristol, UK.

Watershed has three cinemas (commercial income), the Pervasive Media Studio and a café & bar.

Like the other examples, it connects and reinvents the region’s industrial history with a 21C creative economy.

Pervasive Media Studio @ Watershed

A diverse community exploring creative technology

The Pervasive Media Studio, is a world-leading research lab, home to a thriving community of artists, technologists, start-ups, researchers and industry.

It is a place of creative, commercial and academic collaborations and is responsible for the international Playable Cities Program.

Playable City program / Watershed UK / Melbourne

Playable City puts people and play at the heart of future cities around the world.

<https://www.playablecity.com/>

<https://www.playablecity.com/cities/melbourne/>

Casula Powerhouse – Liverpool. NSW.

<http://www.casulapowerhouse.com/about/the-building>

Built in 1951 by the NSW Electricity Commission, the Casula Powerhouse was then known as the Liverpool Powerhouse.

In 1985 the residents of Liverpool decided by plebiscite that the building should become an arts centre. An ambitious development took place, and the centre opened its doors in 1994.

The Casula Powerhouse reopened on 5 April 2008 with significantly improved and new facilities. The centre now houses an international standard exhibition space, and a 326 seat state of the art theatre. The centre also boasts a multi-purpose theatre/performance space, artists' studios and artists' residency spaces and 7 exhibition spaces.

Next Steps – Continuing Engagement.

Staying in touch.

Through this consultation process we have successfully engaged a passionate and creative cohort who have much to offer as the project progresses to design.

These stakeholders are keen to stay meaningfully engaged throughout this project. Not only does this provide opportunity for fresh perspectives to final outcomes, it builds community ownership over the space and deep engagement with Council – key imperatives for creating vibrant ongoing activation and utilisation of all of our cultural facilities by our diverse communities, and for ensuring the design, operations and activation of a new Creative Industry Space for the City of Greater Dandenong are successful.

Stakeholders should be re-engaged for dialogue and feedback at key project milestones, with consultation timing ensuring there is scope for community input to inform outcomes of project stages.

Ross Farnell Cultural Consulting

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