6.3 AC/DC Public Celebration

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Executive Summary

1. This report responds to a Council Notice of Motion requesting celebration concepts recognising AC/DC's cultural legacy in Melbourne, aligned with their upcoming MCG performances in November 2025 and the 50th anniversary in February 2026 of the "It's a Long Way to the Top" film clip that was recorded on Swanston Street.

2. On 1 July 2025, the Future Melbourne Committee resolved as follows:

   2.1. Notes that AC/DC have announced dates for their Australian leg of their POWER UP album international tour and are due to perform at Melbourne's MCG on 12 and 16 November 2025.

   2.2. Supports in principle the City of Melbourne holding and facilitating events:

      2.2.1. Coinciding with AC/DC's Melbourne shows in November 2025.

      2.2.2. In February 2026 to mark the 50th anniversary of AC/DC's iconic It's a Long Way to the Top music video.

   2.3. Requests management:

      2.3.1. Engage with AC/DC management in the development of these celebrations.

      2.3.2. Work with the Victorian Government to explore co-hosting and facilitating these celebrations.

      2.3.3. Explore corporate partnership and funding opportunities to enhance events and offset costs to City of Melbourne.

      2.3.4. Engage with the music industry, including venue operators, and the community in Melbourne to maximise benefits of these celebrations.

   2.4. Requests management to advise on an appropriate funding strategy which includes operational budget, third party funding sources, and if needed the Councillor Discretionary Fund.

   2.5. Requests a report back to the Future Melbourne Committee by 19 August 2025 with options for the committee to consider and final sign-off on any expenditure.

3. AC/DC's management has confirmed that the band will not be available for public performances outside of concert dates. Therefore, two alternative city activation options are proposed to celebrate and recognise AC/DC's significant contribution to Melbourne's live music scene. This includes a concert at Federation Square to provide a large-scale public celebration featuring a high-profile tribute act, with Birrarung Marr as an overflow site; and lighting installation in AC/DC Lane as a permanent recognition of the band in an iconic part of Melbourne.

Recommendation from Management

4. That the Future Melbourne Committee resolve to:

   4.1. Endorse planning for both the Federation Square concert and the AC/DC installation delivered in November 2025 within the proposed budget of $110,000.

Purpose

5. To present Council with options to celebrate AC/DC's enduring cultural connection to Melbourne in line with the upcoming international tour and 50th anniversary of the iconic Swanston Street video and provide direction on the preferred option to progress the AC/DC celebration program.

Background

6. On 23 February 1976, AC/DC filmed their iconic music video "It's a Long Way to the Top (If You Wanna Rock 'n' Roll)" along Swanston Street, establishing a lasting link between the band and Melbourne. The 50th anniversary in 2026 offers an opportunity to recognise this cultural milestone and celebrate one of Australia's most successful global music exports.

7. AC/DC will perform at the MCG on 12 and 16 November 2025 as part of their POWER UP international tour. Management was requested through a Notice of Motion to explore events tied to the band's visit and the anniversary, including potential Swanston Street closures, civic engagement, and partnership opportunities.

8. Since the Notice of Motion, the City of Melbourne has received requests from AC/DC enthusiasts and cover bands to be part of celebrations, highlighting the passion and excitement for this iconic band in our city.

9. Discussions with Sony Music have confirmed the band will not engage in events outside the planned concerts at the MCG. This has informed the scope and recommendations in this report.

Key Considerations

10. A Federation Square concert offers a large-scale, civic celebration in the heart of Melbourne. The event would feature a high-profile tribute band showcasing the city's reputation as Australia's live music capital. The event is proposed to align with AC/DC's MCG concerts. This option creates a centralised celebration of Melbourne's music culture in a major civic space, with free public access.

11. The AC/DC Lane installation is proposed to create a striking visual marker in one of Melbourne's famous laneways named in AC/DC's honour. Timed to coincide with the November concerts and leverage local excitement, this would deliver an enduring tribute to the band and provide a permanent legacy installation that enhances the laneway precinct visitor experience.

12. In the development of both options, management will engage with the music industry and the community in Melbourne to maximise benefits of these celebrations.

13. Analysis of recent high-impact events demonstrates the substantial contribution these moments make to Melbourne's visitor economy. The proposed Federation Square Tribute Concert may attract an audience of up to 20,000. Using an average spend of $81 per person, based on benchmarks from recent City of Melbourne events such as Firelight Festival and Moomba, the estimated direct economic contribution would range between $1.2 million and $1.6 million. This spend is likely to be distributed across hospitality, transport, and retail in the city centre.

14. Note that other options have also been explored following the Notice of Motion. These have included:

    14.1. A themed float at Moomba 2026 or a marching band performing AC/DC music in the parade, inspired by the 1976 video and AC/DC's musical legacy. This approach leverages an existing event to achieve civic celebration at reduced complexity however timing does not align to the anniversary date of the filming of the "It's a Long Way to the Top" music video.

    14.2. A full-scale tribute parade replicating the 1976 film clip along Swanston Street was also scoped and costed. This concept involved a rolling flatbed truck with a live tribute band, full road and tram closures, safety and security overlay and a tribute performance culminating at Federation Square. The total estimated cost was $1,000,000. However, following consultation with Sony Music and confirmation that the band will not participate in any civic or public-facing activities outside their MCG performances, this option is no longer recommended for consideration

Legal

15. There are no direct legal implications as a result of the recommendation from management.

Finance

16. The Federation Square concert would be delivered in partnership with the State Government's Melbourne Arts Precinct Corporation with negotiations underway on event scope and cost. Cost considerations include crowd control infrastructure, emergency access planning, potential road closures and protection, all tailored to the expected size and nature of the activation.

17. The cost of the laneway installation is also being determined but will include design, fabrication and installation. Partnership and co-investment will be actively pursued to reduce the financial contribution required by Council, however given the timeline for delivery opportunities may be limited.

18. Management seeks approval of up to $110,000 to cover event delivery and laneway installation costs.

Conflict of Interest

19. No member of Council staff, or other person engaged under a contract, involved in advising on or preparing this report has declared a material or general conflict of interest in relation to the matter of the report.

Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities

20. The recommendation contained in this report is compatible with the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006* as it does not raise any human rights issues.

Health and Safety

21. In developing this proposal, no immediate Occupational Health and Safety issues have been identified. Should any of the scoped options proceed, a risk-based approach would be applied to determine the scale of public safety infrastructure required. This may include crowd control infrastructure, road closures, hostile vehicle mitigation and emergency access planning, tailored to the expected size and nature of each activation.

22. All proposed activations will undergo comprehensive risk, safety and crowd management assessments, ensuring that appropriate measures are implemented in line with City of Melbourne standards and inter-agency protocols. This approach allows safety responses to be proportionate, scalable, and responsive to event-specific risk factors.

Consultation

23. Preliminary planning discussions have been held with the Melbourne Arts Precinct Corporation and Federation Square to confirm venue availability and logistics. Sony Music, representing AC/DC, has been consulted to explore the possibility of band involvement and ensure proposed activities align with the band's brand parameters. Discussions have also taken place with key music industry stakeholders to assess the feasibility of tribute acts and secure appropriate talent for the proposed Federation Square concert.

Relevance to Council Plan and Council Policies

24. These activations support the objectives of the Experience Melbourne 2028 Destination Management Plan, particularly in strengthening the city's identity as Australia's live music capital and delivering high-impact cultural programming that enhances Melbourne's global reputation. The proposals align with key pillars including 'Unique Identity and Place', 'Ground-breaking Creativity' and 'Vibrant People and Places', by celebrating the city's music heritage, activating public space, and attracting visitation to the central city.

Social Impacts

25. The proposed activations are expected to generate positive social impacts by providing accessible public celebrations that foster community pride and cultural participation. Both the Federation Square concert and

the AC/DC Lane installation are designed to be inclusive, family-friendly experiences that contribute to Melbourne's identity and liveability. These moments provide a shared point of civic celebration that appeals to a wide demographic, reinforcing Melbourne's reputation as a welcoming, creative, and community-focused city.

Gender Impact Assessment

26. A formal Gender Impact Assessment has not been conducted for this proposal. However, the event concepts have been developed with inclusivity in mind and aim to offer safe, family-friendly public programming. Crowd management and risk planning processes will incorporate gender safety considerations to ensure welcoming environments for all attendees.

Environmental Impacts

27. Environmental impacts are expected to be minimal given the scale and nature of the proposed activations. Planning and delivery will follow City of Melbourne's sustainability policies, including the use of efficient energy and waste minimisation strategies.

Attachment List

Nil