

6.4 City of Melbourne Heritage Strategy: Stories of People and Place

Report Author: Dana Foenander, Acting Principal Strategic Planner

Report Presenter: Jo Cannington, Director City Strategy

Executive Leader: Evan Counsel, General Manager Strategy, Planning and Climate Change

Executive Summary

1. The purpose of this report is to seek adoption of the City of Melbourne Heritage Strategy 2025: Stories of People and Place (the Strategy).
2. Council's current Heritage Strategy, developed in 2013, primarily focused on the built environment. Its key objectives were to complete heritage reviews and update the planning scheme to ensure that under-recognised places across the municipality were appropriately protected through the application of the Heritage Overlay. Extensive work has been undertaken since 2013, and the final two neighbourhood heritage reviews are currently underway.
3. The new Heritage Strategy 2025: Stories of People and Place (the Strategy) seeks to reflect contemporary community values and respond to emerging challenges. It addresses important issues including climate change, housing, economic growth, multiculturalism and Aboriginal Cultural Heritage.
4. The Strategy is a non-statutory document and does not propose new planning controls or changes to planning systems.
5. The Strategy will guide how heritage is managed in the municipality for the next 10 years and inform the future work program for heritage projects. It takes a 'people-centred' approach which seeks to put community values at the core of how heritage is understood and promoted in the municipality.
6. The Strategy includes five priority areas. These are: Aboriginal Heritage, Powerful Experiences of our Multicultural City, Distinctive Places, Climate and Biodiversity Emergency and Stewardship
7. The draft Strategy was endorsed for public consultation by Future Melbourne Committee (FMC) on 20 August 2024. Consultation ran from 5 May to 16 June 2025. The Participate Melbourne webpage had over 4900 views and the survey received 341 responses.
8. The Strategy has been updated to reflect feedback heard from stakeholders and the broader community. The Community Consultation Report is at Attachment 3 to this document.
9. The Strategy includes an Implementation Plan which outlines the objectives of the actions in the Strategy and informs their delivery timelines and outcomes. For ease of use, management has developed a simplified Summary Document for the Strategy. Please see Attachment 1 for the Strategy and Implementation Plan and Attachment 2 for Summary Document.

Recommendation from management

10. That the Future Melbourne Committee resolves to:
 - 10.1. Adopt the City of Melbourne Heritage Strategy 2025: Stories of People and Place as annexed to the minutes.
 - 10.2. Authorise the General Manager, Planning and Climate Change to make minor editorial changes to City of Melbourne Heritage Strategy 2025: Stories of People and Place prior to publication.

Purpose

11. The purpose of this report is to seek adoption of the City of Melbourne Heritage Strategy 2025: Stories of People and Place (Attachment 1).

Alignment with Council's Strategic Planning Program

12. Deliver on Vision 2050: A city for people: Melbourne's strength lies in the diversity, resilience, talents and grit of our people. Our city is made from diverse stories, our celebrated heritage, our intercultural connections, our creativity. Its character comes through commitments to design, music, arts, culture, sport and entertainment
13. Deliver on Council Plan 2025-2029: Strategic Priority: *Building a city for people*, Key Activity: *Design a city shaped by culture, stories and heritage*.

Background

14. Council's current Heritage Strategy, developed in 2013, primarily focused on the built environment. Its key objectives were to complete heritage reviews and update the planning scheme to ensure that under-recognised places across the municipality were appropriately protected through the application of the Heritage Overlay. Extensive work has been undertaken since 2013, and the final two neighbourhood heritage reviews are currently underway.
 15. The new City of Melbourne Heritage Strategy 2025: Stories of People and Place (the Strategy) seeks to reflect contemporary community values and respond to emerging challenges. It addresses important issues including climate change, housing, economic growth, multiculturalism and Aboriginal Cultural Heritage.
 16. To inform the Strategy, a Discussion Paper was developed in 2024. Engagement on the Discussion Paper ran from 20 February to 19 March 2024 and feedback was integrated into the draft Strategy.
 17. The draft Strategy was endorsed for public consultation by Future Melbourne Committee on 20 August 2024. Consultation ran from 5 May to 16 June 2025.
 18. The Community Consultation Report is attached and provides a detailed description of the consultation methodology and analysis of the feedback (refer to Attachment 3).
 19. The purpose of the Strategy is to:
 - 19.1. guide how heritage is managed in the municipality for the next 10 years whilst addressing current challenges including climate change mitigation
 - 19.2. introduce a 'people-centred' approach that focuses on the values, stories and culture of the many diverse ethnic, cultural and religious groups in Melbourne, whilst still recognising the importance of built heritage
 - 19.3. emphasise the contribution that heritage makes to Melbourne's economy and how businesses might benefit from this
 - 19.4. integrate planning for Aboriginal heritage and broader multicultural heritage in one Heritage Strategy
 - 19.5. deliver a 'whole-of-council' document that is relevant, timely and accessible to the community through the inclusion of an Implementation Plan and simplified Summary Document.
 20. The Strategy includes five priority areas, which we aim to embrace a people-centred, city-wide approach. These are: Aboriginal Heritage, Powerful Experiences of our Multicultural City, Distinctive Places, Climate and Biodiversity Emergency and Stewardship.
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21. The Strategy is a non-statutory document and does not propose new planning controls or changes to planning systems.
22. The “Forward” will be inserted in the document at the design stage post-FMC and before publication, where other minor design issues will be amended including updated index and page numbers.

Key considerations

23. Key messages from consultation on the draft Strategy and have been integrated into the document. In response to feedback some sections and specific actions have been updated for clarity or to include additional information. Key amendments in the Strategy include:
 - 23.1. greater emphasis on the stories of the many different ethnic and cultural groups in Melbourne including updating the ‘Powerful Experiences’ priority area to ‘Powerful Experiences of our Multicultural City’
 - 23.2. greater emphasis on the importance of built heritage in addition to intangible heritage and stories
 - 23.3. a new Action added at 1.3: ‘Progressing with initiatives and projects that emerged from engagement with Traditional Owners and the Aboriginal community for this Strategy, acknowledging that this document creates a foundation for ongoing work, commitment and collaboration.’
 - 23.4. a new ‘way of working’ titled ‘self-determination’, to support Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Groups in determining their own priorities and be involved in decision making that affects them.
24. The Strategy, Implementation Plan and the simplified Summary Document are attached.

Legal

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

Finance

26. There are no financial implications as a result of the recommendation from management.

Conflict of interest

27. 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

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

Health and Safety

29. In developing this proposal, no Occupational Health and Safety issues or opportunities have been identified.

Consultation

30. Consultation for the draft Strategy was compliant with the City of Melbourne Community Engagement Policy and a detailed Community Engagement Plan was developed to support the program.

31. Consultation on the draft Strategy ran from 5 May to 16 June 2025. The consultation was far-reaching and targeted often underrepresented groups. Activities occurred at various times and locations to ensure many opportunities for participation. Consultation activities were a mix of in-person and online.
32. Stakeholders included:
 - 32.1. general community, including targeted engagement with business owners, parents and full-time carers, peak bodies from areas of planning, heritage and urban design and university students
 - 32.2. Traditional Owners and the broader Aboriginal community
 - 32.3. Council staff who will use the Strategy.
33. Consultation activities included:
 - 33.1. general consultation activities including two Open House panel discussions at Trades Hall, an online survey and postcard drop with survey QR-code link
 - 33.2. in-person targeted 'walkshops' with business owners and peak bodies
 - 33.3. Open Studio workshop with university students
 - 33.4. consultation with Traditional Owners including at least two online yarns and a walk on Country with members from both Bunurong and Wurundjeri Traditional Owner groups.
 - 33.5. consultation with the broader Aboriginal community including a postcard drop and launch of a targeted survey at the NAIDOC in the City 2025 event.
 - 33.6. five workshops held with internal stakeholders.
34. The Participate Melbourne webpage had over 4900 views and the survey received 341 responses. It was one of the highest participation numbers of engagement in a heritage project in recent years.

Relevance to Council Plan and Council Policies

35. Deliver on Vision 2050: A city for people: Melbourne's strength lies in the diversity, resilience, talents and grit of our people. Our city is made from diverse stories, our celebrated heritage, our intercultural connections, our creativity. Its character comes through commitments to design, music, arts, culture, sport and entertainment
36. Deliver on Council Plan 2025-2029: Strategic Priority: *Building a city for people*, Key Activity: *Design a city shaped by culture, stories and heritage*.

Social and environmental impacts

Social impacts

37. The Strategy will have a positive social impact by introducing a 'people-centred heritage' approach. This approach considers community values and stories as an integral part of heritage work and management, alongside the protection of built heritage fabric. The approach aims to reflect heritage in an accessible and relevant way to the broader community.
 38. The Strategy raises awareness about the importance of intangible heritage, and how heritage includes the stories, customs, art, culture and histories of the diverse cultural and ethnic groups that live, work and visit the municipality.
 39. The Strategy proposes a cohesive and integrated approach to Aboriginal Cultural heritage management by including Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal heritage in one document. It seeks to benefit and strengthen the relationship between Council and Traditional Owners and foster ongoing collaboration and partnerships.
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Gender Impact Assessment

40. A Gender Impact Assessment was completed for this project.
41. The following adjustments were made to the project and consultation program because of the Gender Impact Assessment:
 - 41.1. Updates to the consultant brief template to require consultant consideration of gender impacts and intersectionality.
 - 41.2. Community consultation was designed to facilitate engagement with under-represented groups such as the broader Aboriginal Community and parent and carers.
 - 41.3. Emphasis on the 'people-centred' approach proposed by the Strategy, which embeds a more inclusive community-based approach to understanding and managing heritage (including Aboriginal Cultural Heritage).

Environmental impacts

42. A key goal of the Strategy is to ensure that heritage does not act as a barrier to mitigating climate change. 'The climate and biodiversity emergency' is one of the five priority areas of the strategy, and it identifies issues as well as opportunities for heritage to positively contribute to climate change mitigation.
43. The Strategy contains a set of actions and delivery timelines that guide how management's future heritage work can help address climate change. These actions support measures such as adaptive reuse of heritage buildings, retrofit, protecting heritage trees and encouraging Indigenous plantings and more guidance and support for the community on how to upgrade their own heritage buildings.
44. Management undertook internal engagement with Climate Change and City Resilience to develop the Strategy, to ensure the document aligns with Council's existing strategic work including the Climate Change Mitigation Strategy and the Nature in City Strategy.

Attachment List

1. Attachment 1 - City of Melbourne Heritage Strategy 2025 D M 19702282 [6.4.1 - 48 pages]
2. Attachment 2 - City of Melbourne Heritage Strategy 2025 - Summary Document D M 19702365 [6.4.2 - 27 pages]
3. Attachment 3 - Community consultation report D M 19446652 [6.4.3 - 53 pages]



CITY OF MELBOURNE
HERITAGE STRATEGY 2025
STORIES OF PEOPLE AND PLACE



Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

The City of Melbourne respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land we govern, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong / Boon Wurrung peoples of the Kulin and pays respect to their Elders past and present. We acknowledge and honour the unbroken spiritual, cultural and political connection they maintained to this unique place for more than 2000 generations.

We accept the invitation in the Uluru Statement from the Heart and are committed to walking together to build a better future.

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1. Foreword

Placeholder

2. Glossary

Burra Charter – the basic principles and procedures to be followed in the conservation of Australian heritage places, published by ICOMOS Australia.

Country – a term Aboriginal people use that can be described as the lands with which they have a traditional attachment or relationship. Caring for Country is an approach that embraces the Aboriginal philosophy that if we care for Country, Country will care for us.

Cultural heritage – Victorian heritage legislation refers to Aboriginal cultural heritage and uses the term heritage to refer to non-Aboriginal heritage. However, cultural values are central to both.

Heritage – what people value and want to pass on to the future. It includes Aboriginal cultural heritage and historic heritage, and tangible and intangible heritage. Some but not all of that heritage is formally protected.

Heritage activities – used here to mean the many ways people actively engage with heritage, including their heritage or that of others, including researching family history or restoring vintage vehicles or buildings.

Heritage assets – the things people value and want to pass on to the future including physical things such as buildings, places, landscapes or objects and intangible heritage such as traditions, stories and memories.

Heritage building – formally defined in heritage legislation as a building that is a place, or forms part of a place, that has been given heritage protection under a planning scheme.

Heritage experiences – the different ways that people encounter the past in their lives and as residents, workers and visitors, including public programs and events, exhibitions, walks, signage and digital media.

Heritage Overlay – one of several overlays in the Victorian Planning Provisions. The Heritage Overlay protects sites with heritage value and includes lists of places of local and state significance.

Intangible heritage – things people value that don't have a physical form, such as knowledge, skills and languages. They are not usually protected in planning but can be protected through intellectual property rights.

Interpretation – the different ways of telling stories that enable people to encounter and understand the past, whether online or in-person, including exhibitions, productions, events, public programs, artworks, talks, plaques and signage.

People-centred approach – a way of working that recognises that heritage is what people value, that it delivers wider benefits, and that it is important to involve people and communities in heritage activities and in caring for heritage assets.

Planning scheme – a statutory document setting out objectives, policies and provisions relating to the use, development, protection and conservation of land in this area to which it now applies.

Protected heritage places – buildings and sites formally protected under local, state or national heritage legislation, including places under World Heritage, the Victorian Heritage Register and the Heritage Overlay.

Statement of Significance – a document that describes what, how and why a place has heritage significance. It is incorporated into the planning scheme and guides planning decisions.

Sustainable development – development that meets the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by member nations in 2015.

Sustainable development goals – seventeen goals that provide a roadmap for global efforts to achieve sustainability to 2030 and beyond. City of Melbourne is committed to the goals as a framework for shaping action.

Tangible heritage – heritage that has a physical form such as buildings, places, landscapes, collections and infrastructure. It distinguishes physical heritage assets from intangible heritage assets.

Victorian Heritage Register – lists places deemed to be of cultural significance to the State of Victoria. Places on the list are protected by Heritage Victoria under the *Heritage Act 2017*.

Wellbeing – wellbeing approaches to policy go beyond macroeconomic statistics to recognise that social progress is about improving the wellbeing of people and households. Local councils have a role in supporting community members to achieve optimal health and wellbeing under the *Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*. Australia's new wellbeing framework measures our progress towards a more healthy, secure, sustainable, cohesive and prosperous Australia.

3. Council Plan 2025 – 29 and M2050 Vision



The community aspirations which underpin our vision are:

A city for people: Melbourne’s strength lies in the diversity, resilience, talents and grit of our people. Our city is made from diverse stories, our celebrated heritage, our intercultural connections, our creativity. Its character comes through commitments to design, music, arts, culture, sport and entertainment.

.....

Optimistic leadership: We govern with transparency and fairness, for a city that will move forward together, where people feel hope and pride in their place. We create opportunities for the next generations and foster leadership among all who live, work, study and visit our city.

.....

Green and alive: Our parks, gardens and greenery are connected across every neighbourhood, street and building. We create vibrant places and experiences, celebrating culture and design.

.....

Back ambition and champion innovation: Bold ideas flourish here, where entrepreneurship, creativity and design shape our city’s future. Melbourne is a city of opportunity and prosperity, where people can live their best lives.

.....

Building on our foundations: Our city is shaped by the custodianship of First Peoples, whose connection to Country spans more than 2000 generations. We celebrate the rich migrant stories of resilience, aspiration and contribution that have helped define Melbourne’s identity. Together, we build on these foundations – guided by our city’s motto*, Vires Acquirit Eundo (We gather strength as we go) – to create our shared future.

.....

Grounded in First Nations knowledge and culture: Our city honours and empowers First Peoples self-determination, guided by their knowledge, culture and enduring connection to Country, working together to care for and shape Melbourne for the next 2000 generations to come.

.....

Leading on climate action: Our systems are connected, our city is renewable, our communities are resilient and prepared. We restore, renew and replenish our natural environment and biodiversity.

.....

Delivering for everyone: We design our city for equity, dignity and connection, to improve housing, health and wellbeing – no matter your life stage, cultural background, gender, ability, or financial position.

.....

* The City of Melbourne’s motto is 182 years old, established in 1843.

4. Introduction

This is our new Heritage Strategy for the City of Melbourne. The strategy sets a new direction, based on a broad, people-centred and city-wide approach to cultural heritage.

We have taken the opportunity to review what we have achieved since the last strategy was published in 2013 and to consider some of the challenges ahead. We are proud of what we have achieved, including a series of comprehensive Heritage Reviews for our neighbourhoods, an updated heritage protection system and the first online map of Aboriginal Melbourne, working with Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with connections to the City of Melbourne, to begin to capture the places and landmarks that hold special significance.

However, much has changed since 2013, and we need to reconsider our priorities in light of the major challenges that we face as a city. In this strategy, we outline five priorities for our work on heritage:

- Aboriginal heritage
- Powerful experiences of our multicultural city
- Distinctive places
- The climate and biodiversity emergency
- Stewardship.

In line with the Uluru Statement from the Heart, we need to walk together with the Traditional Owners of the land, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung, and the Bunurong / Boon Wurrung peoples, as well as other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with connections to the City of Melbourne.

One of our headline challenges is the climate and biodiversity emergency. Heritage must be part of the solution and not contribute to the problem. When we consider sustainable development in Melbourne's future, we need to consider culture – including heritage – alongside environmental and social issues. Our city is growing fast, and we must find new and more creative ways to both care for people's heritage and address other issues that are important to our community and impact their lives, such as the need for an increased housing supply.

We recognise that how we work is just as important as what we do. We have introduced six ways of working that embed a broad, people-centred, city-wide approach into everything we do. We will be respectful and informed, collaborative, integrated, inclusive, people-centred, long-term and sustainable. We will support self-determination for Traditional Owners and the Aboriginal community.

Plan on a page

PLAN ON A PAGE

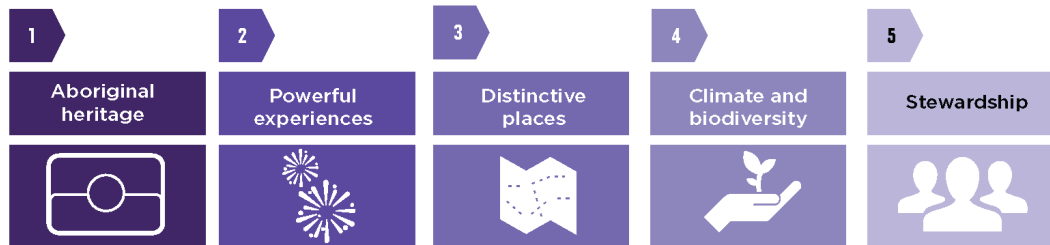
HOW DO WE DEFINE HERITAGE?



MISSION

The City of Melbourne embraces a broad, people-centred, city-wide approach to cultural heritage that is respectful and informed, inclusive, integrated and collaborative, and recognises the long-term contribution heritage can make to the city's future.

OUR PRIORITIES



OUR WAYS OF WORKING



5. Heritage snapshot

We have compiled an overview of the rich diversity of the City of Melbourne’s heritage, including some of the people and organisations involved.

Aboriginal heritage

Vast areas of cultural heritage sensitivity across the municipality have been identified, which may contain Aboriginal heritage. The local Heritage Overlay lists three places as Aboriginal heritage places and many more potential places have been identified through our recent heritage reviews. Mapping Aboriginal Melbourne, an interactive digital map developed with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities, maps places of Aboriginal historical and cultural significance within the municipality.

Locations of Aboriginal cultural significance



Top left: *Eel Trap*, 2003, Fiona Clark (Kirrae Whurrong) and Ken McKean, location – Birrarung Marr
 Top right: *Futurescape*, 2013, Helen Bodycomb (and the children at ArtPlay), location – Backyard at ArtPlay, Birrarung Marr
 Bottom left: *Birrarrung Wilam (Common Ground)*, 2006, Vicki Couzens (Kirrae Whurrong/Gunditjmara), Lee Darroch (Yorta Yorta, Mutti Mutti and Trawlwoolway) and Treahna Hamm (Yorta Yorta), location – ArtPlay, Birrarung Marr
 Bottom right: Smoking ceremony at narm ngarrgu Library and Family Services, Munro development, 2024

Heritage places in the City of Melbourne

HERITAGE PLACES IN THE CITY OF MELBOURNE



740 Locally protected heritage places and precincts

332 Victorian Heritage Register places



8 National Heritage List Places

1 UNESCO World Heritage site
Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens

Our heritage listings include:

Parks, gardens and reserves	Trees	Cultural landscapes	Museums	Libraries	Hotels and pubs
Cafes and restaurants	Dwellings	Places of worship	Railway stations	Bridges	Major sports venues

Parks and gardens

The City of Melbourne has nearly 480 hectares of internationally acclaimed parks and gardens. Most of our 14 major parks and gardens have some form of heritage protection or include important cultural assets, such as the World Heritage-listed Carlton Gardens and Royal Exhibition Building. While not all are heritage-listed, smaller local parks and reserves also add definitive character to our neighbourhoods. Many trees on private properties and in public spaces have heritage protection.



Heritage buildings as creative hubs and exhibition and community spaces

City of Melbourne manages galleries, exhibition spaces and studio spaces, some of which are housed in historic buildings. For example, the Meat Market is an iconic heritage-listed building, which provides a hub for creative arts and cultural productions. A former railway signal box houses the Signal creative hub, while other historic buildings such as Kathleen Syme Library, Kensington Town Hall, Boyd Community Hub and Melbourne Town Hall provide public facilities and host exhibitions and events.



Heritage fleet

Melbourne is home to a significant number of historic vessels and replicas of historic ships. The heritage fleet comprises the Alma Doepel, Enterprize, Steam Tug Wattle, Polly Woodside and the Mission to Seafarers building, which opens vessels to the public and provides sailing experiences. The Australian Register of Heritage Vessels includes many other historic vessels with connections to Melbourne.

Our collections

Our City Collection is an eclectic and important range of cultural material, comprising 8000 items from public art and memorials to historical artefacts, photography and more. The City Gallery at Melbourne Town Hall presents frequent exhibitions on city life past and present. Specialist curators collaborate with artists and filmmakers to offer intriguing views of Melbourne life. Our seven public libraries provide physical and digital resources to help visitors explore the history of their house, create a family tree, research history, or simply browse. The libraries also offer interactive self-guided walks and access to various exhibits.



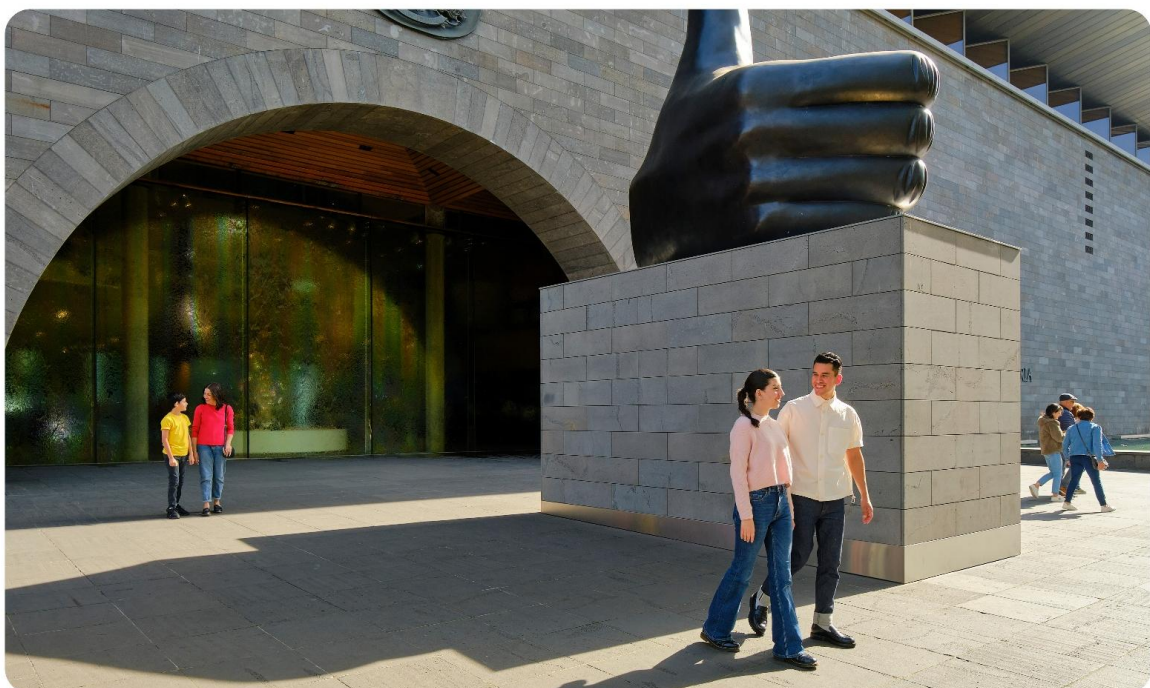
Languages and cultural diversity

Melbourne is home to one of the most multicultural communities in Australia. More than half of residents were born overseas and use a language other than English at home. The city's residents speak more than 100 languages and come from around 140 different cultures. Cultural diversity is also celebrated within our streetscapes. Chinatown and Lygon Street boast a rich and long-standing history of migration to the municipality. Chinatown was first protected over 40 years ago and today maintains a vibrant and ever-evolving network of colourful traditional signage, food and cultural events.

People and organisations

Many other people and organisations are involved in heritage in the municipality.

- **Owners and occupiers** – The majority of protected heritage places are owned or occupied by individual householders. Others are owned or occupied by businesses or not-for-profit organisations. A relatively small percentage of heritage assets are open to the public – the majority are in everyday use as residences, business premises or public services.
- **Volunteers** – Heritage relies heavily on volunteers. Approximately 14 per cent of people in the municipality volunteer, although we don't know how many of those volunteer for heritage activities.
- **Heritage organisations, museums and galleries** – Melbourne hosts a range of museums, galleries and heritage visitor attractions, including the Australian Centre for the Moving Image, Melbourne Immigration Museum, Melbourne Museum, National Gallery of Victoria, Shrine of Remembrance and the Old Treasury Building Museum.
- **Community** – Many passionate local organisations advocate for community heritage including a wide range of Aboriginal community organisations, six historical societies including the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, 16 resident and community groups and the Genealogical Society of Victoria, which represents 46 member societies. A range of other not-for-profit organisations look after cultural heritage, often opening it up to the public by providing exhibitions and heritage experiences. These include the National Trust (Victoria), which opens places like Old Melbourne Gaol to the public for interactive tours. Working Heritage manages 16 sites across Victoria, including several in our municipality. There are many other wonderful museums and heritage attractions across the city.



6. Why heritage?

6.1 What is heritage?

Heritage shapes our neighbourhoods and the places where we work and play. It is beneath our feet and all around us. The often-untold stories of the people of Melbourne are written in buildings, streets and open spaces. Food, cultural traditions, languages, stories and memories are also part of our heritage. Heritage contributes to the distinctiveness that makes Melbourne special and is core to the cultural diversity of our city.

The word heritage can be confusing. Is it just buildings that are formally protected under heritage and planning legislation? Or does it go beyond that?

Our new strategy starts with a very broad view of heritage, defining it as the things people care about and want to hand on to the future. It is inspired by the Aboriginal philosophy of caring for Country, and the idea that if we care for Country, Country will look after us.

This document uses the terms 'heritage' and 'cultural heritage' interchangeably. Although Victorian heritage legislation distinguishes Aboriginal cultural heritage from other heritage, this strategy takes an integrated approach to the term.

This broad view includes physical places, landscapes and buildings, collections and other physical things that matter to us, as well as intangible stories and memories. While all of these may be important to people, only some are formally protected.

Heritage is also something that we experience. Festivals and activities such as Open House Melbourne, NAIDOC Week events or Lunar New Year events bring people together to encounter cultural heritage. Museums, libraries, public parks and cultural hubs all provide ways to engage with our past.

Heritage activities can also be the things we do in our own lives when we research, share, protect or advocate for history, tradition or our own heritage. Perhaps you have researched your family history, restored a much-loved object, building or vehicle, or belong to one of Melbourne's many active historical societies, or community, multicultural and neighbourhood groups, or heritage technology groups?

6.2 What can heritage do for us?

So why does heritage matter? Heritage can be seen as a luxury, or, sometimes, an impediment to growth.

Yet comprehending our heritage and history is vital to understanding, inclusion and belonging. All who live and work in the municipality encounter heritage in our daily lives. Heritage experiences can impact people in many different ways, perhaps through encountering new or surprising stories. Heritage can bring people together, but it also has the potential to divide us.

Caring for heritage can also deliver wider public benefits. Older buildings are an important carbon sink and reusing them can contribute to decarbonisation. Heritage activities can foster social connections and new skills; seeing one's heritage and stories reflected in the city can create a powerful sense of belonging and inclusion. Heritage makes the places people live, work and visit distinctive and special.

Heritage sectors (for example, museums and architecture) are a key part of the creative industries which play an important role in Victoria's economy, contributing \$38.5 billion as a whole in the financial year ending 2022. International research has also shown that creative businesses located in historic places can be more successful than those located elsewhere.

Heritage is a large contributor to Melbourne's visitor economy. Melbourne is considered Australia's capital for culture and history, which are major drivers of visitation. Individual heritage sites are core to the visitor experience, such as Old Melbourne Gaol, the Queen Victoria Market, or Federation Square – Melbourne's premier meeting place, visitor destination and event location. More than one in four international tourists to Melbourne visit historic or heritage buildings.

6.3 Heritage, wellbeing and sustainable development

Cultural heritage can also play an important role in wellbeing and sustainable development. There is a move toward placing people’s wellbeing at the heart of our thinking about the economy and how society functions now and in the future. Heritage can contribute to wellbeing through both caring for heritage assets and engaging in heritage activities.

Sustainable development meets the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Cities around the world are now promoting culture as part of sustainability, noting that the arts, culture, and heritage can contribute to sustainable development in their own right and by contributing to other goals.

City of Melbourne recognises the importance of sustainability – how we balance ecological, social and economic factors in order to protect the planet, halt climate change and promote social development for present and future generations. We were one of the first cities to sign up to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and create a Voluntary Local Review of our progress towards them. The review provides a guiding framework for us to assess how we are tackling global challenges with local action – to end poverty, protect the planet and support peace and prosperity by 2030. Heritage can contribute to our efforts to achieve a number of the SDGs.

Heritage and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

How can heritage contribute to the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?		
<p>Health and wellbeing goals (SDG 1,2,3,4,5)</p>	<p>Taking part in heritage activities can bring people together, create social connections and deliver mental and physical health benefits.</p>	
<p>Sustainable economic growth (SDG 8,9)</p>	<p>The heritage sector can contribute to local economies through its role in the visitor economy and through jobs in architecture, construction, repair, interpretation, museums, archaeology and visitor attractions.</p>	
<p>Sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11)</p>	<p>Caring for and reusing heritage assets can create more distinctive places, that reflect people’s diverse stories.</p>	
<p>Climate action: responsible consumption and production (SDG 12,13)</p>	<p>Making better use of existing buildings can reduce the need for additional carbon emissions from new construction. Traditional Owner knowledge around plants and environmental management can also help manage the environment.</p>	

7. Our role





7.1 What is our role in heritage?

As the local council, City of Melbourne provides municipal services that support the community, including planning, community services, recreation and arts and culture.

Heritage is relevant to many aspects of our work including:

- Support for Aboriginal cultural heritage – We are committed to working with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal people to ensure Aboriginal heritage can continue to enrich the city and be considered through planning and development processes.
- Planning services – Heritage is part of the wider role we play in both strategic and statutory planning processes. As the local planning authority, we work in partnership with others to research, identify, protect and manage heritage in the municipality and keep the local Heritage Overlay up-to-date, reflecting expert knowledge and changing views of what is important. We are also the responsible authority in relation to most planning permits and ensure that heritage is given due weight in decisions about the future of the city to achieve net community benefit.
- Cultural and community services – Heritage activities are part of the work of many of our cultural and community services, including arts and creativity, libraries, public programs and events.
- Property management services – City of Melbourne maintains and manages a wide range of heritage places and items, including parks, buildings, collections and public art. All have a history and many are formally protected. Most are open to the public and help us deliver wider community services.
- Support for heritage owners – We support heritage owners through our Melbourne Heritage Restoration Fund and by providing advice and information, such as the recent Heritage Owner's Guide.
- Strategic projects – We take an active role in Melbourne's future when we lead projects such as the Greenline Project, where heritage is core to the creative design approach.

Heritage organisations and their responsibilities

HERITAGE AND LEVELS OF RESPONSIBILITY			
Organisation	Responsible for...	Authority	
	Community and local heritage groups	Providing input and guidance on the identification, protection and celebration of heritage places and objects of significance. Through engagement, these groups can provide much-needed information on the value of these places at the local level.	Local / Regional
	Registered Aboriginal Parties	Representing the Traditional Owners of particular lands throughout Victoria. These owners act as the primary source of knowledge and guidance on matters relating to Aboriginal places or objects and speak on matters of management and protection within their lands.	
	Local council	The identification, protection, management and celebration of heritage places and objects that are of significance to their community. Councils identify places of significance, list them in the local Heritage Overlay and manage changes through planning permit applications.	
	Department of Transport and Planning	Administer any changes to the Planning Scheme including the local Heritage Overlay and local Heritage Policies.	Victoria
	Heritage Victoria	Recommend places for the Victorian Heritage Register and Victorian Inventory and manage changes to these places through heritage permit applications.	
	Heritage Council of Victoria	Decide which recommended places should be included on the Victorian Heritage Register and review permit decisions made by Heritage Victoria.	
	Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council	The obligations of the state under the <i>Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006</i> , seeking to represent the Reconciliation Action Plans, return First Nations ancestors to Country, protect secret and sacred objects and provide advice to federal and state authorities on Aboriginal cultural heritage.	
	First Peoples State Relations (FPSR)	Victorian Government branch working with Traditional Owners on cultural heritage management and the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria on treaty negotiations. FPSR are also involved in the State response to the Yoo-rook Justice Commission, and provide support to the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council.	
	The Uluru Dialogue	Represents the cultural authority of, and leads education on, the Uluru Statement from the Heart.	National
	Australian Heritage Council	Advises the Minister for the Environment in making recommendations to the National Heritage Register.	
	UNESCO	Identification, protection and preservation of sites deemed to be of "outstanding value to humanity".	International
	International Council on Monuments and Sites	Advocates for the protection of cultural heritage places internationally through providing research and guidance for conservation and management.	
	United Nations	Support the implementation and evaluation of the Sustainable Development Goals that aim to provide peace and prosperity for all people and protect our environment.	

8. Creating the strategy

8.1 What have we achieved?

Our last heritage strategy was published in 2013. It focused on heritage protection, including managing our extensive heritage information, creating new ways to protect heritage, looking after our existing heritage and celebrating and communicating heritage in partnership with the community and other stakeholders. The significant amount of work done since 2013 ensures the future growth of the city will be informed by its distinctive heritage.

We are proud that we have achieved much of what we set out to do. We commissioned a series of neighbourhood heritage reviews, which captured what is special and distinctive about each of our local areas. These reviews included investigating previously unloved or under-protected heritage, such as modernist buildings. The table at Section 7.2 shows the status of our heritage reviews. All of the reviews recommend changes to our heritage controls, and some of these changes are still being progressed through Planning Scheme Amendments.

In the last two years alone, our Melbourne Heritage Restoration Fund has helped 36 heritage building owners to repair their buildings in order to help keep them in use. We updated our system of categorising heritage places and introduced a new policy to guide the development of heritage places, which applies to all new heritage planning permit applications. We created a Heritage Design Guide to provide simple advice for developers and key stakeholders. Our Heritage Owner's Guide helps owners understand how they can maintain, change or develop heritage buildings. We have improved the way we identify, assess and document gaps in the recording of items and places of cultural and natural heritage significance. Our art and heritage collection at Town Hall is now publicly accessible, helping everyone access, understand and celebrate parts of Melbourne's history and heritage.

We have also pioneered a new collaborative approach toward heritage studies through the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review co-research model. It sets a methodology for identifying places of significance to Aboriginal people and how these places can be protected, working with Traditional Owners to better understand their connections and stories.

The Aboriginal Heritage Action Plan was published in 2015. It has directed our work with Traditional Owners to create an online map of Aboriginal Melbourne – which establishes a vital starting point for telling stories and planning for the future – as well as many projects that celebrate Melbourne as an Aboriginal place, including narmngarru Library and Family Services.



Linda, Library Branch and Community Heritage Team Leader, standing at the front of the Boyd Community Hub in Southbank

8.2 A snapshot of changes to local heritage controls since 2013

The 2013 Heritage Strategy commissioned a series of heritage reviews. Since 2013, the Council has overseen a rolling program of suburb-by-suburb heritage reviews and other policy changes, to ensure that contemporary understandings about where heritage fabric exists are reflected in the Melbourne Planning Scheme. Prior to these reviews, most parts of the municipality were relying on heritage studies completed in the 1980s.

The most significant local heritage related changes to the planning scheme are shown in the table below:

City of Melbourne's heritage review history and completion dates

Heritage Review	Planning Scheme Amendment	Gazetted date* / Other status
Central City Heritage Review Part 1	C186Pt1	2013
Kensington Heritage Review	C215	2015
City North Heritage Review	C198	2015
Arden-Macaulay Heritage Review	C207	2016
Central City Heritage Review Part 2	C186Pt2	2016
Guildford And Hardware Lanes Heritage Review	C271	2019
Local Heritage Policy Review	C258	2020
Heritage Gradings Conversion Part 1	C258	2020
West Melbourne Heritage Review	C258	2020
Southbank Heritage Review	C305	2021
Fishermans Bend Heritage Review	C394	2022
Hoddle Grid Heritage Review	C387	2022
Heritage Gradings Conversion Part 2	C396	2022
North Melbourne Heritage Review	C403	2023
Carlton Heritage Review	C405	2023
South Yarra Heritage Review	C426	2025
Parkville Heritage Review	C444	On public exhibition, 2025
East Melbourne Heritage Review	-	Review completed, 2025

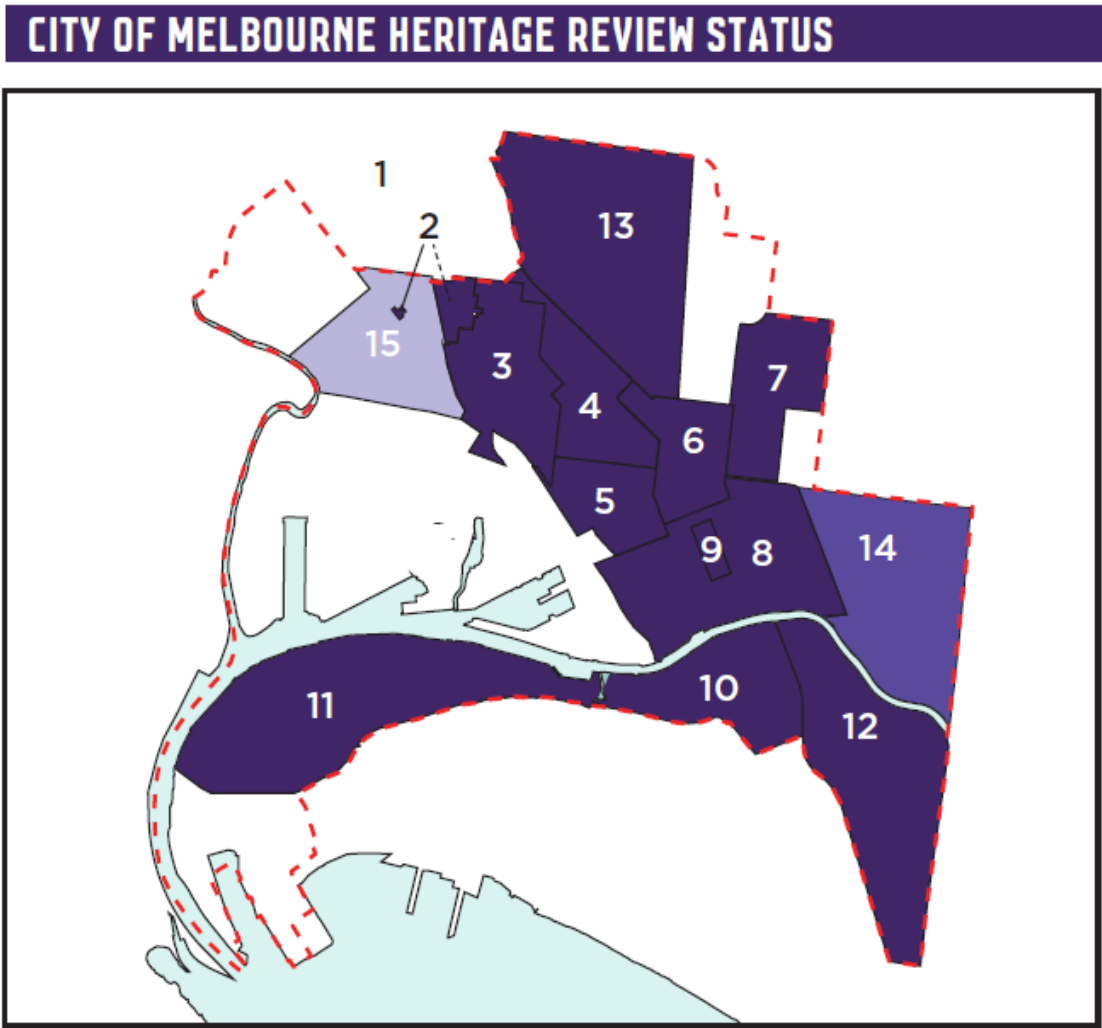
* Date gazetted into the planning scheme

Planning scheme amendments are not retrospective, in that they do not alter planning permissions already granted. As such, it takes some time for any changes to heritage policies and controls to take effect. This is particularly true of the changes to the local heritage policy secured in 2020: these changes resist 'facadism' in the central city, and support more solar panels on roofs outside the central city, for example, but will only result in changes to the built environment by planning permit.

Together, these changes to the Melbourne Planning Scheme constitute more strategic work on heritage than had been undertaken in a generation. We have been getting our house in order, so that the extraordinary pace of infill development and population growth in the inner city is guided by, and not inhibited by, contemporary understandings about where built heritage exists.

For these reasons, the Heritage Strategy does not commission significant new updates to heritage controls in any particular precinct.

City of Melbourne's heritage review status, October 2025



KEY

COMPLETED HERITAGE REVIEWS

- 1. Updated heritage categorisation system and local heritage policy - whole municipality
- 2. Kensington (part)
- 3. Arden-Macaulay
- 4. North Melbourne
- 5. West Melbourne
- 6. City North
- 7. Carlton
- 8. Hoddle Grid
- 9. Guildford and Hardware Lane Precinct
- 10. Southbank
- 11. Fishermans Bend
- 12. South Yarra
- 13. Parkville

CURRENT HERITAGE REVIEWS

- 14. East Melbourne and Jolimont

FUTURE HERITAGE REVIEWS

- 15. Kensington

--- City of Melbourne boundary

8.3 Why do we need a new strategy?

Much has changed since the 2013 strategy was published and new challenges are ahead. We have an opportunity to go beyond heritage protection and think differently, exploring how heritage can contribute to our wider work. We need to do more to understand how different people engage with and experience heritage across the municipality.

We recognise that we must be guided by Aboriginal cultural heritage. Aboriginal stories and connections are central to the story of Melbourne. We need to do more to acknowledge Aboriginal stories in everything we do while respecting the authority of Traditional Owners and learning from Aboriginal thinking and philosophy about caring for Country.

The City of Melbourne is made up of a diverse community, with many ethnicities and cultural groups contributing to our vibrant city. We must ensure that the many layers of our history and people are represented in how we manage, protect and promote heritage. This includes migrant, working class, women and gender-diverse, LGBTQIA+ and other under-represented groups and sharing stories of adversity, hardship and activism.

We need to ensure that heritage does not prevent us from addressing our problems. Melbourne has been growing fast, and it faces immense pressure to provide affordable, secure and well-located housing. In this context, heritage can be seen as a barrier to be removed rather than a feature that can contribute character to change.

Heritage has also been understood as a barrier to responding to the climate emergency, but this needs to change. We need to consider how heritage can help achieve a zero-carbon future.

Above all, we need to acknowledge that heritage is not easy. People value their heritage and that of others in different ways. When untold stories finally come to light, they can change our understanding of ourselves and of others. Our ideas of heritage change over time, as each new generation comes to terms with the past. As part of our new plan, we need to continue to reflect on those changing ideas about heritage.

8.4 Who has been involved?

We have created this strategy in collaboration with others. To start the conversation, we published the Heritage, People and Place Discussion Paper 2024. We put forward the idea of a people-centred approach to heritage that focused not just on why heritage matters to people, but ways to empower people to get involved. It explored how this could be achieved through five focus areas – reflecting Aboriginal heritage at the centre of the municipality; heritage interpretation; heritage, urban change and economic growth; heritage and climate change; and innovative heritage planning approaches.

Over four weeks in early 2024, we reached out to residents, businesses, government agencies, industry partners and other relevant stakeholders by conducting workshops, exhibiting promotional tools and releasing an online survey. Our aim was to understand what aspects of heritage are valued by the community and how the community would like to see heritage protected, managed and celebrated. We also met with Traditional Owners to discuss this strategy and a potential approach to heritage interpretation.

Informed by feedback from the Discussion Paper, we developed a draft Heritage Strategy which contained five priority areas and 'ways of working'. We undertook engagement on the draft Heritage Strategy in mid-2025. Engagement was designed to be far-reaching and use a variety of methods including an online survey, workshops and live panel discussions. We spoke with the general community, business owners, parents and full-time carers, young people, peak bodies, Traditional Owners and the broader Aboriginal community.

We heard that there was a need for more emphasis on the rich multicultural histories that make up Melbourne. We also heard about the continued importance of built heritage in the municipality and the need for clear communication of the stories behind these places. There was a strong desire for Aboriginal cultural heritage to feature prominently throughout the city. The feedback we heard through all stages of consultation has been incorporated into this Heritage Strategy.



Anthony standing in the wine cellar of a restaurant in a heritage building

8.5 Project methodology

The strategy was an in-depth process spanning a number of years. The timeline below outlines its stages of development, including periods of consultation for the Discussion Paper and the draft Heritage Strategy.

Timeline of the development of the Heritage Strategy

Project Methodology

Timeline

- ✓ **Development of Discussion paper**
2023 to February 2024
- ✓ **Community consultation on Discussion paper**
20 Feb 2024 to 19 March 2024
- ✓ **Analysis of feedback and development of draft City of Melbourne Heritage Strategy 2024: Stories of People and Place**
April to July 2024
- ✓ **Draft Heritage Strategy endorsed by Future Melbourne Committee for community consultation**
2 August 2024
- ✓ **Community consultation on draft Heritage Strategy**
5 May to 16 June 2025
- ✓ **Analysis of feedback and finalisation of Heritage Strategy**
July to October 2025
- ☆ **City of Melbourne Heritage Strategy 2025: Stories of People and Place presented to Future Melbourne Committee for adoption**
Scheduled for 2 December 2025

8.6 What we heard from our community

Community consultation responses

“New developments must all take significant steps towards the recognition of Indigenous culture, land and Lore”
survey participant

“We cannot keep adding housing developments to the city fringe. It’s not fair or equitable to lock people out of amenity. Ultimately it will make most of Melbourne unliveable”
survey participant

“Ensure “community” feedback represents an accurate cross-section of the community. The current structure of “community consultations” enables certain demographics to have louder voices”
survey participant

“Melbourne has had waves of immigration, there is a multicultural history to tell”
workshop participant

“There are important Aboriginal places in South Yarra and Melbourne and they should be identified and explained on site (with pictures if possible) so people will understand what went on here before colonisation. Over the last 50 years or more developers and those with money have been the winners, not our heritage. This needs to change”
survey participant

“Tell multiple stories at the same place. You are always on Country”
workshop participant

“Deep research, “real” meaningful consultation, embrace the difficult and challenging”
workshop participant

“Understanding our past equips us to understand and deal with the future”
survey participant

“Try to ensure that the stories that we tell are relevant to the demographic / transient population”
workshop participant

Over the past 10 years, we have also received thousands of community comments on heritage in response to many other projects.

Community feedback on heritage over the last 10 years

OUR COMMUNITY



City of Melbourne’s Community Vision shows that the community’s aspirations include:

- We celebrate and protect Melbourne’s unique places.
- Aboriginal cultures are central to Melbourne’s identity.

Understanding the city’s history is also important to visitors, who are often interested in experiencing history through our places and people. Many tourists visit a heritage building, site or monument during their stay.

City of Melbourne has **six historical societies**.

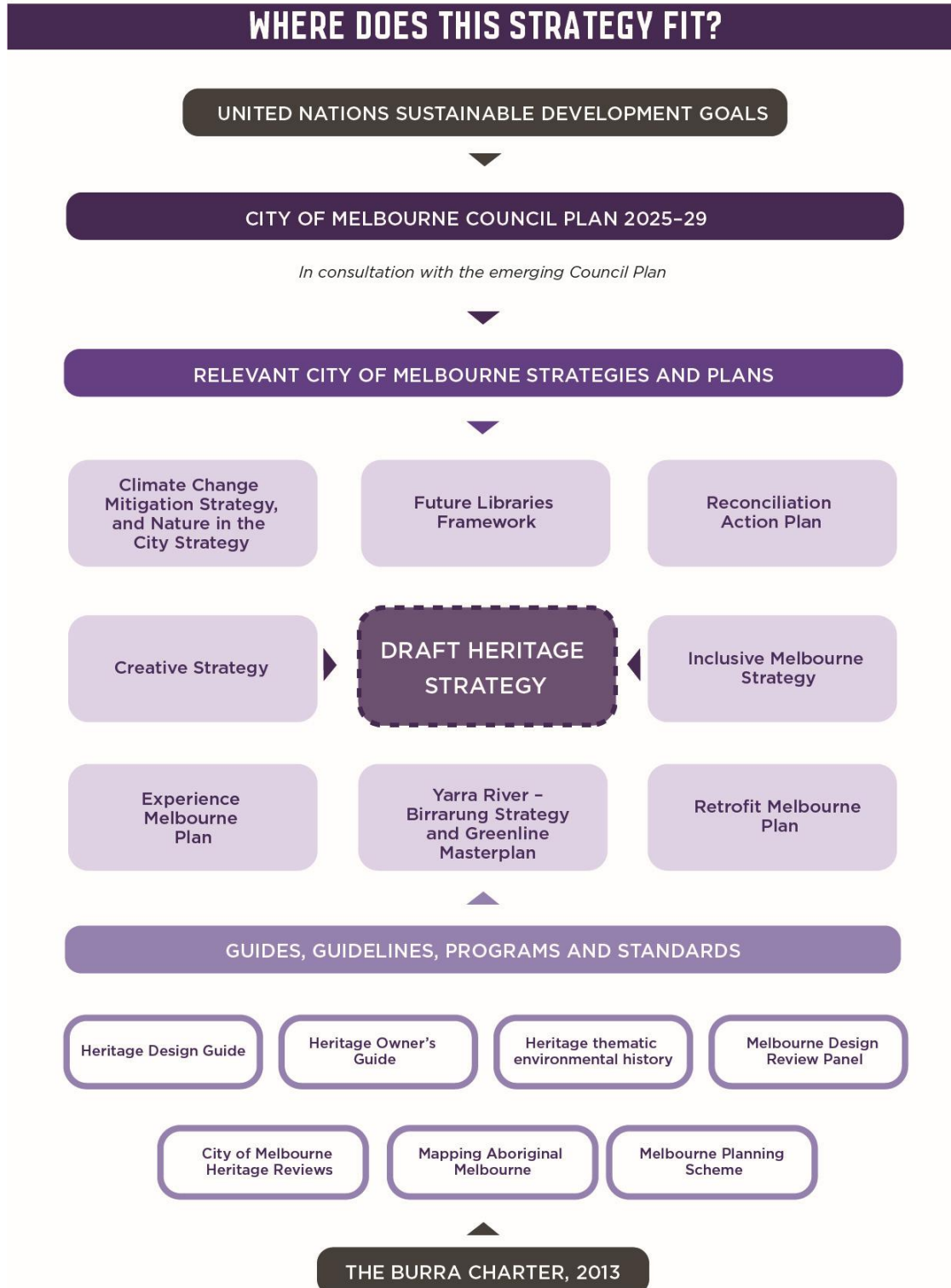
We have **16 resident and community groups** across the municipality.

<p>West Melbourne The continued liveability and character of West Melbourne rely on future development that produces high-quality, sustainable buildings that respect the neighbourhood’s highly valued and unique heritage.</p>
<p>Parkville Residents highly value the protection and retention of Parkville’s unique character as one of Melbourne’s most intact neighbourhoods.</p>
<p>Southbank There is limited heritage protection in this area. Many residents believe that Aboriginal heritage identification, protection and interpretation should be a key neighbourhood priority.</p>
<p>Carlton Many residents have pointed to Carlton’s rich history of multiculturalism, which can be found in the diversity of shops and residences throughout the suburb.</p>
<p>East Melbourne As one of Melbourne’s oldest suburbs, East Melbourne is home to many iconic heritage buildings that many residents believe add to its charm, character and village feel.</p>
<p>Flemington No applicable data as this area contains Flemington Racecourse.</p>

<p>North Melbourne The area hosts some of Melbourne’s oldest buildings alongside new developments. Residents believe North Melbourne needs better promotion for its unique character and identity.</p>
<p>South Yarra Residents are seeking greater protection of the eclectic mix of building typologies, as well as Aboriginal culture and stories that are represented in the area.</p>
<p>Melbourne CBD Residents identified heritage buildings as crucial parts of the city’s character that should be protected.</p>
<p>Docklands As a new suburb, Docklands is still developing. There are many projects underway to make the area a connected, activated and welcoming place for visitors and residents.</p>
<p>Kensington Many residents value the existing heritage homes in the area and growth will respect its village-like feel, maintain the green streets and protect the views of the city.</p>
<p>Fishermans Bend No applicable data.</p>

8.7 Making the link to other plans

How the Heritage Strategy relates to other City of Melbourne plans, policy and programs



9. Mission and approach

9.1 Mission

City of Melbourne embraces a broad, people-centred, city-wide approach to cultural heritage that is respectful and informed, inclusive, integrated and collaborative, and recognises the long-term contribution heritage can make to the city's future.

An inclusive view of heritage embraces both Aboriginal cultural heritage and the heritage of the many other ethnic and cultural groups that make up the City of Melbourne. We recognise and respect the leadership and authority of Traditional Owners and other cultural leaders.

It includes places that are formally protected for their cultural and natural significance. It acknowledges the importance of Country and recognises the responsibilities of caring for Country. It extends to other tangible (or physical) heritage that people value and want to pass on to the future, such as collections, public artworks and memorials, historic ships and technology and archives. It also recognises the importance of intangible cultural heritage – the stories, traditions and languages of the diverse communities of Melbourne.

This broad view also recognises that heritage is something we experience in our city every day, as visitors, workers and residents, shaping the places we live, work and play. It reflects the value of heritage activities – the things that we do in our own lives, or collectively when we come together to research, care for, or advocate for our shared heritage.



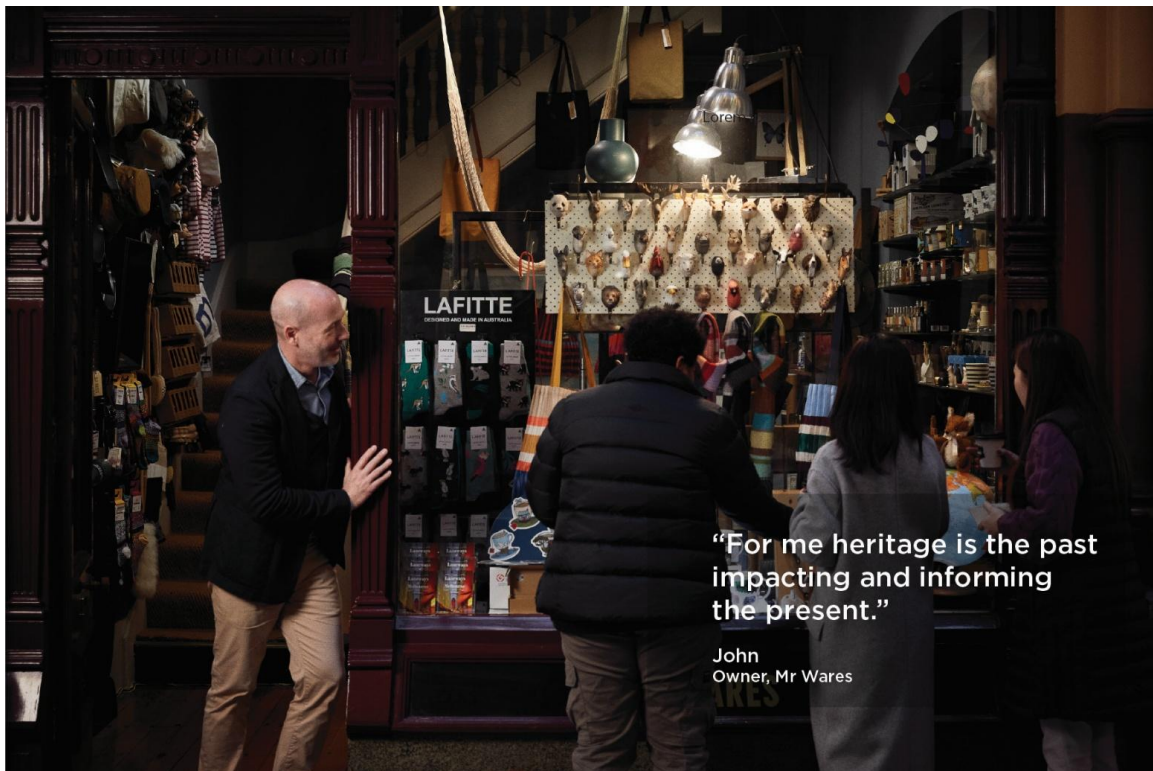
People dining on the footpath in a heritage streetscape in Carlton

9.2 A people-centred approach

This strategy takes a people-centred approach, by finding ways to connect and work with our community. Since our last heritage strategy, we have focused on identifying and protecting places that are important to people across the City of Melbourne. We can now focus on finding new ways to work with people to care for and understand heritage, involving diverse members of our community and respecting heritage expertise.

A people-centred approach is key to everything we do at City of Melbourne. Listening to the voices of the community is critical to success. We recognise that heritage is significant because of people’s connection to it and that caring for heritage can create wider public value.

To take this approach, we must involve and empower communities in our heritage work, ensuring that the heritage and stories of all people are acknowledged and celebrated, reflecting current values. This means moving beyond statutory processes. It could result in more underrepresented places being considered for protection and could provide more opportunities for community involvement in heritage reviews, but it does not change the statutory process for applying heritage controls, which must be done in accordance with Victorian Government guidance.



John and customers standing in front of a heritage shopfront in the Block Arcade

9.3 A whole-of-City-of-Melbourne approach

Cultural heritage does not exist in a silo. It is part of the identity of our city and can be a foundation that helps us achieve other things. This is a strategy for how heritage can contribute to our wider work.

Six ways of working

An inclusive, people-centred, whole-of-city approach to heritage means working differently. We propose six ways of working that will help us do that, recognising that how we work with people is as important as what we do. They are not specific to heritage but are inspired by international thinking on sustainability and wellbeing, which require us all to work differently. They draw on guiding principles set out in other City of Melbourne strategies.

Respectful and informed working means ensuring we understand and respect the values and perspectives of others. It means listening to and learning from others and gathering data and information before making decisions.

Collaborative working involves co-creation and co-production. It recognises that we can achieve more by working together on projects and initiatives to find shared goals.

Integrated working focuses on our integrated approach to policymaking. Integrated means considering the full range of consequences or impacts of action so that activity in one policy area or strategy can complement, rather than undermine, the work of others.

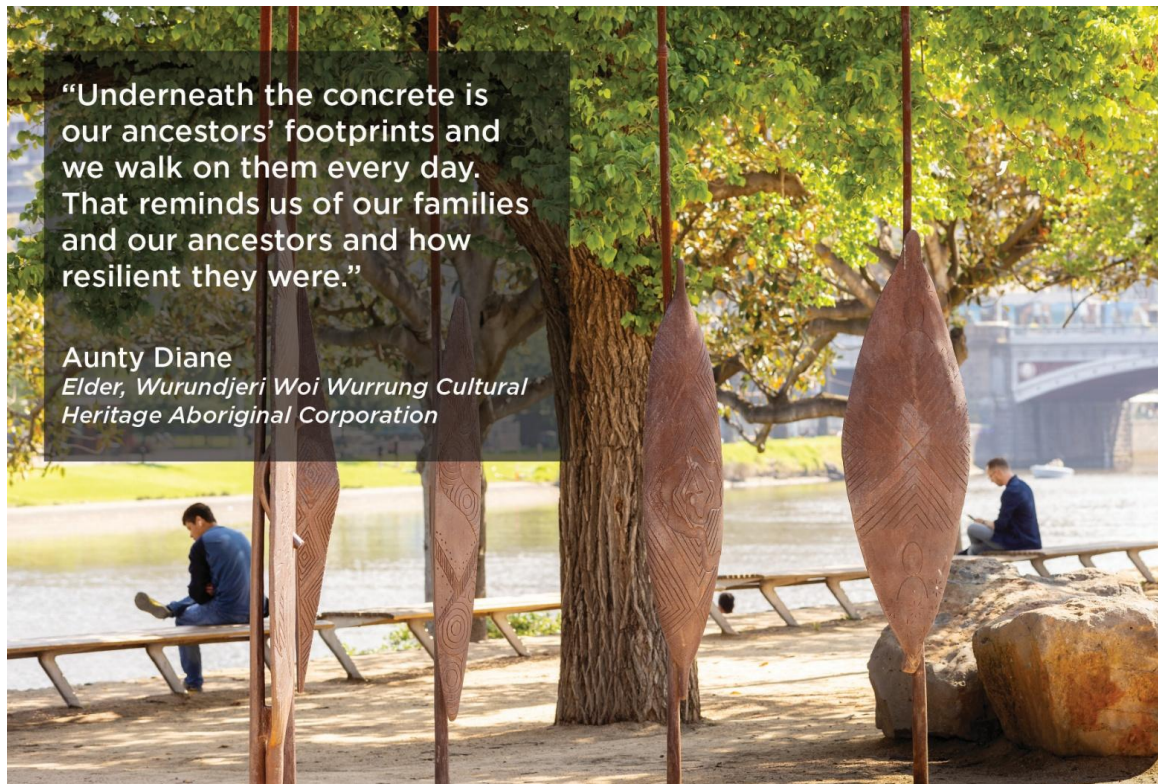
Inclusive working recognises the importance of involving a diverse range of people in helping to shape the decisions that will affect their lives. It goes beyond consultation to finding ways to involve people in the ongoing realisation of actions within the strategy in conjunction with final decision-making.

Long-term and sustainable working ensures we focus on long-term solutions. It includes a shift to how actions can be preventative, acting early to tackle the root of the problem, by considering how decisions will impact the wellbeing of future as well as current generations.

Self-determination for Traditional Owners and the broader Aboriginal community is supported. We seek to ensure they have the power to determine priorities and be involved in decisions that affect them by establishing pathways that encourage reciprocal engagement with Council.

10. Our priorities

10.1 Aboriginal heritage



“Underneath the concrete is our ancestors’ footprints and we walk on them every day. That reminds us of our families and our ancestors and how resilient they were.”

Aunty Diane
Elder, Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural
Heritage Aboriginal Corporation

Birrarung Wilam (Common Ground) sculpture at Birrarung Marr, Wurundjeri Country

Aboriginal heritage and the future of the city

Melbourne is an Aboriginal city. Aboriginal culture and heritage is important to the stories we tell, the way we care for place and our approach to climate change. Traditional Owners provide leadership on Aboriginal cultural heritage issues. Other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples also continue to have important connections to the municipality.

The Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council describes Aboriginal cultural heritage as including meaningful places and objects, and going beyond that to include intangible heritage including knowledge and lore. Aboriginal cultural heritage cannot be isolated from other heritage. Past, contemporary and continuing Aboriginal stories are woven into the places, heritage buildings and landscapes of the city. Aboriginal stories, language and traditions are intrinsically linked to the landscape and our heritage experiences today.

The principles of self-determination are vital to cultural heritage management, set out in Dhawura Ngilan: A vision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage in Australia and the Best Practice Standards in Indigenous cultural heritage management and legislation.

In addition to mapping Aboriginal Melbourne and the activities in the Aboriginal Heritage Action Plan 2015–18, we have been working with Traditional Owners on a co-creation approach to heritage research as part of the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review. But that is only part of the transformation to embed Aboriginal cultural heritage into our work.

It is also important to acknowledge that Aboriginal heritage in Victoria is protected under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (the Act) and local councils do not influence its application. The Act recognises Registered Aboriginal Parties as the primary guardians, keepers and knowledge holders of Aboriginal cultural heritage. Our role is to acknowledge Aboriginal heritage and celebrate continuing Aboriginal culture as vital to our city identity.

Opportunities and challenges

Aboriginal cultural heritage, language and storytelling are already reflected in so many different aspects of our work, from the Council Plan 2025–29, which speaks of Aboriginal self-determination and reconciliation, to planning and development, creativity, the visitor economy, the Melbourne Arts Precinct and the Greenline Project. We have much to learn from Aboriginal people about Country and Caring for Country, which is inspiring new urban design thinking.

However, there are also challenges. During our consultation, we heard that truth-telling about our heritage is vital as we strive for reconciliation. The places and stories of the Traditional Owners, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong / Boon Wurrung peoples of the Kulin, as well as other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who have a connection to the city, should be told as part of our living history and identity. Engagement must be meaningful and we should not shy away from learning from uncomfortable stories that are appropriate to be shared.

We heard that non-Aboriginal people want to know more about the Aboriginal culture and stories of Melbourne, but also recognise the need to respect culturally sensitive knowledge.

Traditional Owners and workshop and survey participants told us we need to centralise Aboriginal culture, heritage and knowledge into heritage planning and change standard approaches to provide Traditional Owners with more opportunities to influence future change. Most respondents saw the design of public spaces, community events, public art and on-site interpretation as priorities for acknowledging Aboriginal cultural heritage. People were also interested in Aboriginal place names for different parts of the city.

The Hoddle Grid Heritage Review taught us about the value of a co-creation approach to research, in line with the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies' ethical principles. This approach demonstrates the potential to continue taking a layered approach to heritage, recognising that all heritage places in Melbourne are on Country and side-by-side with other heritage values.



Robert standing in the Koorie Heritage Trust on Wurundjeri Country

Our priority

We will respect the knowledge and authority of Traditional Owners regarding the municipality's Aboriginal cultural heritage. We will work together with Traditional Owners and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with connections to the City of Melbourne to ensure their culture and stories they want shared are elevated in all our heritage activities, including experiences, placemaking, stewardship and addressing the climate emergency.

We will collaborate with Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with connections to the City of Melbourne in exploring the following actions:

- 1.1 Empowering Traditional Owners to shape the way Aboriginal cultural heritage is prominently acknowledged, respected, and interpreted across all City of Melbourne heritage activities
- 1.2 Embedding Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Leadership within the Aboriginal City Framework
- 1.3 Progressing with initiatives and projects that emerged from engagement with Traditional Owners and the Aboriginal community for this strategy, acknowledging that this document creates a foundation for ongoing work, commitment and collaboration
- 1.4 Progressing actions from our recent Heritage Reviews that relate to Aboriginal cultural heritage, in collaboration with Traditional Owners and the broader Aboriginal community
- 1.5 Continuing to develop and progress innovative truth-telling tools (such as the Aboriginal Mapping project) in line with our future Interpretation Strategy.



Re-established indigenous plants in West Gate Park on Bunurong Country

10.2 Powerful experiences of our multicultural city



Elizabeth, CO.AS.IT. Manager Italian Historical Society and Museo Italiano standing in the Museo Italiano

How heritage interpretation creates powerful experiences

Heritage places need to be understood for them to remain meaningful and supported by the community. Heritage interpretation aims to strengthen the relationship between people and heritage places by sharing the stories and connections a place holds with those who live, work in, or visit the city. It can take many forms, commonly including signage and artwork, but can also include wayfinding, events, digital media, building and public realm design.

Every year, the Open House Melbourne event – the largest built-environment festival in Australia – opens hundreds of heritage and modern places to the public, inspiring conversations about the importance of good design in shaping communities. It is one of the many examples of how transformational heritage experiences can encourage us to think differently.

Creative and cultural experiences such as these are one of the top three reasons people visit the City of Melbourne. Heritage is key to how visitors – and our existing residents and workers – experience our city. Heritage protection shapes the setting in which experiences happen by giving the city its distinctive physical form and character, while powerful heritage stories can amaze, delight, or challenge us.

Across the city, artists, curators, designers, historians and community leaders tell stories that connect us with the past. For example, 40 of Melbourne’s historic laneways have been revitalised by artists through the recent Flash Forward visual and acoustic art initiative. At the Old Treasury building, curators work with filmmakers and other artists to showcase the history of Melbourne and Victoria.

The city is an open-air gallery. We encounter culture, heritage and stories in the public realm through signage and tours as we meander through heritage buildings like the Block Arcade or see monuments against the city skyline. Our eclectic city collection of public art, memorials and historic artefacts continues to inspire new stories. We also experience the past through digital media, festivals, exhibitions and performances.

Heritage interpretation should be a key component of our work to reveal and celebrate our city’s different layers of history. Good interpretation requires care; it should capture the attention and connect heritage and people’s own personal experiences to meet the needs of different audiences. Communicating heritage requires compassion: not

everyone wants to celebrate the past. Many of Melbourne's public institutions are multi-layered places that also hold stories of pain and trauma.

Opportunities and challenges

Heritage activities, storytelling and interpretation can contribute directly to many of our city-wide ambitions. It is important to capture the layered histories of the many cultural, religious and ethnic groups that make up the City of Melbourne. In addition, embedding Aboriginal culture, heritage and stories into the public realm helps people understand whose Country they are on and can transform the very essence of the Melbourne experience.

Heritage experiences connect visitors with the psyche of place and contribute to our ambitions for creative Melbourne. They ensure that the city leaves visitors with the feeling of having connected with something intangible yet distinctively Melbourne.

The heritage collections held by our libraries foster a sense of belonging to ensure our city and its community thrive through citizen engagement and better access to city data. Seeing your stories reflected in the city – whoever you are – is part of the vision of our Inclusive Melbourne Strategy.

But there are also challenges. As people's ideas about the past change, we must rethink how we tell stories and whose stories are being told and not told. For example, fewer than 2 per cent of the 580 statues in Melbourne, and only five of the 25 on City of Melbourne land, represent women. We must tell a more diverse story of Melbourne's past.

Through engagement, participants told us that a respectful and inclusive approach to interpreting heritage is important, recognising that many places have more than one story. They argued for a layered approach, telling multiple stories of places and involving people in interpretation and storytelling. We also heard more from Traditional Owners about how they interpret the city, and the need to share their stories so we better understand the meaning and history of places.

Knowledge and information about the past are essential to creating great experiences. However, we also heard that there are gaps in how we manage the huge amount of knowledge and data about the city's past. It is not widely accessible and can easily be lost as we transition to new technology. We must also consider how people with different abilities can participate.

Our priority

Create many more powerful heritage experiences that connect people to the multi-layered stories of Melbourne, through creative, informed, inclusive and accessible interpretation.

We will collaborate with others to explore the following actions:

- 2.1 Working with Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with connections to Melbourne to co-create an approach to making Aboriginal culture, stories and language visible across the city, including immersive experiences, events, festivals, public art, signage and more
- 2.2 Working with neighbouring municipalities to share stories that carry across boundaries
- 2.3 Creating a role for a city historian to raise awareness of the city's history and embed history and heritage across everything we do
- 2.4 Developing a heritage interpretation strategy for the municipality, co-created with Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with connections to Melbourne, involving historical societies and local people. This could include:
 - gathering stories the community deems important in interpreting the city's tangible and intangible heritage, such as adding new stories to historic sites to show the layers of our past
 - a framework to promote high-quality interpretation as part of new development, to ensure that good storytelling informs design
 - direction to ensure our existing and new plaques and memorials reflect people's diversity and their contemporary values, including under-represented groups and stories
 - a heritage hoardings policy, to create temporary structures to tell heritage stories, representing the multiple voices of the community
 - an approach to affirm distinct stories and narratives for our diverse neighbourhoods, celebrating their unique sense of place and culture
 - using technology and digital tools to enhance experiences and help address accessibility challenges.

- 2.5 Enhancing the role of heritage in the City of Melbourne's brand and experiences and its reputation as the cultural capital of Australia and empower businesses to take this approach
- 2.6 Exploring an improved management system for heritage and historical content across City of Melbourne to help others more easily access heritage information.

10.3 Distinctive places



Dana sitting in a heritage residence with their dog

How heritage can create distinctive places and neighbourhoods

Heritage is what makes Melbourne different. Country, history, place and water have shaped the Melbourne of today. They give our city its special character and the distinctiveness that drives our visitor economy, attracts creative industries and businesses and makes Melbourne a great place to live, work and play. While there is a growing need to acknowledge culture and intangible heritage, built heritage is also greatly important in telling the story of our city.

Melbourne boasts established neighbourhoods with distinct cultural identities, from the Italian enclave of Lygon Street in Carlton to the longest continuing Chinatown in Australia. Through it all is the ongoing cultural heritage of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong / Boon Wurrung peoples, and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who connect to this place. The city blends well-preserved Victorian architecture with cutting-edge modern landmarks. From the iconic Flinders Street Station to the world heritage-listed Royal Exhibition Building and the contemporary marvels of heritage-listed Federation Square, the city's architecture, vibrant streets and iconic laneways mirror its evolving cultural narrative.

Planning for the city's future is integral to its sustainability, prosperity and distinctiveness. From an early focus on building controls to more strategic planning in the 1980s that highlighted Melbourne's unique character and the role of parks, boulevards and historic precincts, our role has always been to care for what makes it special.

The full public value of heritage is not well understood. Heritage can play a vital role in shaping the future. Conserving heritage is not about creating monuments frozen in time – instead, it is a way of managing change to celebrate the defining elements of our history. Change includes alteration, development and adaptive reuse; indeed, the best way to conserve a building is to keep it in use.

People's changing view of heritage and its cultural significance is critical to shaping this process. Heritage is one of the planning goals in Victoria and must be considered alongside other priorities in achieving net public benefit. Caring for heritage can also contribute to other planning goals, such as economic or environmental benefit.



Michael standing in front of the doorway of his restaurant in a heritage building

Opportunities and challenges

Heritage is an opportunity to shape better places, not to create a barrier to change. We can celebrate heritage as an important feature of our city's sustainable development and economic growth, and there are many examples of how heritage has facilitated high-quality design. Heritage buildings can be adapted and complemented by modern additions, giving places another life and meaning – ensuring they continue to contribute to our city's culture and story. Heritage places can also complement more affordable housing and increase in supply by playing a role in shaping high quality design and planning of better quality and denser housing. The relationship between heritage and housing supply and affordability needs to be better understood as we work to tackle the housing crisis. However, through our engagement on the Discussion Paper, we heard that we need to find ways to protect what is important while allowing our city to grow and prosper. Survey and workshop feedback reminded us that urban living should be accessible and heritage should not be a barrier to a more inclusive city.

'City identity' and 'place' were the two most important benefits of heritage identified by survey participants. Nevertheless, most survey participants felt that we do not provide the right balance between heritage protection and opportunity for new development. Some said heritage has a negative effect on housing which is a growing issue; others were concerned about the quality of new developments and missed opportunities for placemaking and integration. Some felt that developers were winning out over residents and communities advocating for heritage protection.

We heard that Country can be hard to discern and we need to do more to make it legible – reflecting the views, waterways, landforms and topography that shaped Melbourne and restoring some of the lost indigenous species and planting that once flourished.

We heard about the need for innovative heritage planning and processes, such as engaging communities more, so that underrepresented stories can be acknowledged. Others said heritage processes and systems are not always easy to understand. People asked how we can protect places that are important for their social function, such as a pub, cafe or a much-loved venue. Some were concerned about preserving individual sites: keeping the facade may not be sufficient because the heritage is inside the building, but, in most cases, interiors are not protected.

There were mixed views on the need for flexibility in managing changes to heritage, with equal numbers of survey participants advocating for more, less or targeted flexibility. Some felt that heritage protection might be driving construction in greenfield developments, while others were concerned at the perception that heritage is anti-development, rather than part of the evolving story of Melbourne. We need to better understand the contribution that heritage makes to tourism, character, amenity and liveability, and the retention of unique skills and trades.

Our new neighbourhood model provides an opportunity for people-centred heritage. It uses a place-based approach to bring diverse perspectives into neighbourhood planning by understanding the priorities of residents, students, businesses, workers and visitors.

Our priority

We will celebrate and preserve the city's diverse cultural heritage. We will embed heritage into planning and design at an early stage to ensure that the distinctive and special qualities of the city and its neighbourhoods continue to be legible and inform the way they grow.

We will collaborate with others to explore the following actions:

- 3.1 Empowering Traditional Owners and the broader Aboriginal community to play a greater role in embedding Aboriginal cultural heritage in future planning and design
- 3.2 Identifying view lines of Country and exploring how their importance and meaning can be better understood
- 3.3 Fostering creative methods of engagement that encourage active participation in shaping our city, neighbourhoods and streets, and community input about what makes neighbourhoods special or distinctive
- 3.4 Balancing expert heritage advice on planning decisions, and the views of communities where these differ
- 3.5 Continuing to review how we protect heritage, including post-war heritage, previously unloved heritage such as modernist buildings, building interiors and the heritage of under-represented groups or periods and Melbourne's multicultural communities
- 3.6 Promoting examples where heritage has enabled sustainable development, good design, and economic activity
- 3.7 Exploring the need for improved guidance and mechanisms to assess when economic, social and environmental considerations might override policy objectives to retain heritage fabric.



People walking through Chinatown, Little Bourke Street

10.4 The climate and biodiversity emergency



Two people standing in a lush, green, welcoming Melbourne laneway

“The greenest building is the one that already exists”

Carl Elefante – former president of the American Institute of Architects.

How heritage can help address the climate and biodiversity emergency

Heritage conservation can help address climate change by retaining the energy and carbon embodied in heritage building fabric and by reducing waste.

Existing buildings account for more than two-thirds of energy consumption and emissions in the municipality. However, retrofitting and adapting buildings causes fewer construction emissions than a knockdown rebuild approach. Retrofitting with an innovative design can improve environmental performance and liveability. Reusing existing buildings reduces construction waste and avoids demand for new steel or concrete.

Heritage can also foster nature and ecology in the city. Aboriginal approaches to caring for Country, including knowledge of indigenous plant species, have much to teach us about biodiversity and ecological resilience. Many of our major parks and green spaces are cultural heritage assets. Our system of local heritage protection also involves protecting urban trees, and other important trees are protected through our Exceptional Tree Register. Our canopy contributes to ecological resilience and cooling the city.

On the other hand, climate change-driven fire, flood and extreme weather events pose a risk to heritage. Existing buildings may need to be adapted to respond to more extreme weather. Loss of cultural heritage, including places, stories and treasured items, can have a significant impact on individuals and whole communities.

Opportunities and challenges

In 2019, City of Melbourne declared a climate and biodiversity emergency. We are committed to net zero emissions by 2040. Our Climate Change Mitigation Strategy commits us to four priorities for achieving our emissions reduction targets. Heritage can contribute to two of these: zero emission buildings and precincts, and reducing the impact of waste.

To reach zero emissions, the city's buildings must be transformed – so we are driving better reuse of existing buildings, including heritage buildings. Our Retrofit Melbourne framework helps facilitate investment to retrofit mid-tier commercial buildings to make them zero-carbon ready. The heritage sector is also learning more about modest retrofit mechanisms that may not always need a permit, such as improving heating and cooling systems, secondary glazing and insulation. However, we learned from workshop feedback that the private sector continues to struggle with meeting heritage requirements as well as building codes designed for modern buildings.

Making better use of existing buildings and infrastructure, including heritage buildings, can reduce waste. Cities consume three-quarters of all natural resources globally, which is why Melbourne has adopted the principles of the circular economy. A circular economy keeps products and materials in use and preserves and regenerates natural capital.

Industry experts told us that we need to do more to incentivise retrofitting heritage buildings. Challenges include the need for specialist materials and modern standards for thermal comfort. Although installing solar panels on heritage buildings has benefits, there is debate about how best to do so. People also asked for more information about retrofitting and suggested incentives such as targets and rewards for sustainable retrofits.

Going beyond heritage, the bigger and more strategic challenge is to acknowledge the value of embodied energy in existing buildings, whether listed or not, and to encourage their reuse. There is a risk that current energy efficiency ratings can create unintended incentives to demolish existing buildings.

We also have an opportunity to strengthen the link between heritage and nature in the city. Our ambition is for thriving biodiversity and ecosystem resilience. As we protect heritage trees and facilitate the greening of buildings and heritage laneways, we can also increase people's thermal comfort on the streets.

Our priority

We will contribute to our zero emissions target by encouraging the retrofit and reuse of existing buildings to make use of their embodied carbon, and contribute to nature in the city by protecting heritage trees and encouraging initiatives such as greening historic places.

We will collaborate with others to explore the following actions:

- 4.1 Helping achieve zero-emission buildings and precincts by exploring the need for clearer guidance or policy updates to guide how to retrofit heritage and older buildings, including strategies for addressing issues such as glazing, solar panels and particular types of heritage, such as post-war buildings
- 4.2 Adopting circular economy principles by making better use of existing buildings and promoting examples of adaptive reuse
- 4.3 Exploring ways to address both energy efficiency and cultural significance in heritage buildings
- 4.4 Understanding more about the value of embodied carbon in existing buildings, including heritage buildings, in decarbonising construction
- 4.5 Protecting heritage trees and encouraging new planting associated with heritage spaces and buildings
- 4.6 Increasing indigenous plant species in heritage projects, drawing on Aboriginal knowledge and expertise
- 4.7 Advocating for incentives to promote retrofit and adaptive reuse as an alternative to new construction
- 4.8 Considering whether planning permits should continue to be required for visible solar panels on local heritage places across the municipality.

10.5 Stewardship



Emma standing inside heritage venue Meat Market in North Melbourne

The value of stewardship

Practising heritage in all forms is about stewardship – caring for the things people value and want to pass on to the future, whether physical or intangible.

Stewardship starts with everyday care. It can include maintaining or repairing things to extend their life. Keeping things in use is one of the best ways to sustain our heritage, whether languages, traditions or buildings. Traditional Owners have an ongoing stewardship role in caring for Country and people on Country.

Caring for our shared heritage creates wider public value. There are economic, social, environmental and cultural benefits from caring for heritage. It delivers wider rewards, from the mental health benefits of connecting with stories and seeing one’s history acknowledged, to the economic impact of the heritage sector. Importantly, caring for heritage does not stop change – it is simply a starting point for how we shape the future. Innovative design, writing and creativity often spring from exploring, honouring and reimagining our past.

At City of Melbourne, we are proud heritage stewards. We care for a portfolio of heritage buildings, open spaces and collections. Some are open to the public and others support our core services and functions. We also assist others to care for their heritage, helping them keep heritage buildings in use and providing support for conservation through our Melbourne Heritage Restoration Fund. We work in partnership with a range of community and not-for-profit organisations that care for Melbourne’s heritage.

Opportunities and challenges

We have already highlighted how caring for heritage contributes to wider City of Melbourne goals, from planning and placemaking, addressing climate change and reducing waste, to the visitor and creative economies. There are a range of tools, such as conservation management plans, that can help property owners or managers care for their buildings in a way that also respects their cultural significance.

But stewardship is not always easy. As a property manager, we know how important it is to maintain and manage what we have. Day-to-day maintenance – sometimes known as preventative conservation, or repair works are vital,

but often unglamorous aspects of caring for heritage and can require access to heritage craft skills or Traditional Owner knowledge in caring for Country. Property managers can face technical challenges.

Engagement participants told us that we need to do more to acknowledge the value of heritage, including the wider cultural and social benefits. We heard that we need to do more to recognise unsung heritage heroes – the community groups and individuals who play a vital role in caring for our past. We were reminded of the benefits of adaptive reuse as a way to care for heritage places and deepening their history, allowing existing buildings to be reinvigorated as they are repurposed as spaces for housing and commercial uses such as the recent City of Melbourne Make Room initiative. Participants pointed to examples of arts organisations that reuse heritage buildings, keeping them in community use while protecting urban distinctiveness.

Our priority

We will take a sustainable approach to heritage stewardship, in a way that recognises not just why heritage matters to people, but also the wider social, economic, place-based and cultural impacts and benefits of conserving it.

We will collaborate with others to explore the following actions:

- 5.1 Showing leadership through the stewardship of our own properties, collections and open spaces, by maintaining and managing them well and ensuring that they are accessible and inclusive
- 5.2 Finding ways to better support and engage with heritage managers and custodians, including Traditional Owners, community groups, businesses and individual owners, and creating regular opportunities for these groups and individuals to come together and share knowledge and information
- 5.3 Seeking to understand the barriers that prevent people and organisations from caring for and investing in heritage and exploring ways to address barriers to adaptive reuse
- 5.4 Complementing our program of arts research with heritage research to understand more about how it creates public value for the municipality
- 5.5 Exploring ways to celebrate Melbourne's unsung heritage heroes, including community groups and individuals who are leading the way in caring for, researching or interpreting heritage.



Brendan standing in his workshop in the Nicholas Building

11. Implementation plan

Aboriginal Heritage Priority Area		Supporting statement	
Action	Why this action is important and how we'll achieve this	City of Melbourne's role	Implementation timeframe
<p>Action 1.1 Empowering Traditional Owners to shape the way Aboriginal cultural heritage is prominently acknowledged, respected, and interpreted across all City of Melbourne heritage activities.</p>	<p>Moving beyond business as usual, City of Melbourne seeks to support the self-determination of Traditional Owners, building on key principles from the Reconciliation Action Plan.</p>	<p>Partner, advocate</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Action 1.2 Embedding Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Leadership within the Aboriginal City Framework.</p>	<p>City of Melbourne engages with Aboriginal cultural heritage across multiple projects and work areas.</p> <p>Embedding Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Leadership within the Aboriginal City Framework, an existing commitment under the Stretch Reconciliation Action 2024–27, will provide an opportunity to coordinate, establish gaps and promote best practice around projects involving Aboriginal cultural heritage across the organisation.</p>	<p>Deliver, partner</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Action 1.3 Progressing with initiatives and projects that emerged from engagement with Traditional Owners and the Aboriginal community for this strategy, acknowledging that this document creates a foundation for ongoing work, commitment, and collaboration.</p>	<p>To ensure ideas and initiatives brought forward during consultation are captured and explored as projects in partnership with Aboriginal Melbourne and Traditional Owners.</p>	<p>Deliver, partner</p>	<p>Immediate, ongoing</p>
<p>Action 1.4 Progressing actions from our recent Heritage Reviews that relate to Aboriginal cultural heritage, in collaboration with Traditional Owners and the broader Aboriginal community.</p>	<p>Our Heritage Reviews have included Aboriginal Cultural Values assessments that still need to be actioned, which will add to the existing value of the Heritage Review work.</p> <p>This work could include an audit of Aboriginal Heritage to ensure current management and processes are complying with legislation.</p>	<p>Deliver, partner</p>	<p>Immediate</p>
<p>Action 1.5 Continuing to develop and progress innovative truth-telling tools (such as the Aboriginal Mapping project) in line with our future Interpretation Strategy.</p>	<p>Explore better ways of communicating Aboriginal cultural heritage through technology and innovation. Enhance the accessibility and user experience to achieve more widespread use.</p>	<p>Deliver</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

Powerful Experiences of our Multicultural City Priority Area		Supporting statement	
Action	Why this action is important and how we'll achieve this	City of Melbourne's role	Implementation timeframe
<p>Action 2.1 Working with Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with connections to Melbourne to co-create an approach to making Aboriginal culture, stories and language visible across the city, including immersive experiences, events, festivals, public art, signage and more.</p>	<p>Ensure that Aboriginal culture is embedded in place-making and that interpretation communicates that we are always on Country. An example of this could be through Aboriginal place naming.</p>	<p>Deliver, partner</p>	<p>Medium</p>
<p>Action 2.2 Working with neighbouring municipalities to share stories that carry across boundaries.</p>	<p>Acknowledging that history of places and stories of the city are not confined to existing boundaries and may cross over to other municipalities.</p>	<p>Partner</p>	<p>Long-term</p>
<p>Action 2.3 Creating a role for a city historian to raise awareness of the city's history and embed history and heritage across everything we do.</p>	<p>Taking cues from other major cities that have been invested in the promotion and sharing of heritage stories and have successfully engaged communities in their city's history.</p>	<p>Advocate</p>	<p>Medium</p>
<p>Action 2.4 Developing a Heritage Interpretation Strategy for the municipality, co-created with Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with connections to Melbourne, involving historical societies and local people. This could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> gathering stories the community deems important in interpreting the city's tangible and intangible heritage, such as adding new stories to historic sites to show the layers of our past a framework to promote high-quality interpretation as part of new development, to ensure that good storytelling informs design direction to ensure our existing and new plaques and memorials reflect people's diversity and their contemporary values, including 	<p>Encouraging meaningful interpretation to inform the design of new developments and inform city policies and projects.</p> <p>Communicate and make heritage more accessible to the public through oral histories, art and other channels.</p>	<p>Deliver, partner</p>	<p>Medium</p>

<p>under-represented groups and stories</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a heritage hoardings policy, to create temporary structures to tell heritage stories, representing the multiple voices of the community • an approach to affirm distinct stories and narratives for our diverse neighbourhoods, celebrating their unique sense of place and culture • using technology and digital tools to enhance experiences and help address accessibility challenges. 			
<p>Action 2.5 Enhancing the role of heritage in the City of Melbourne’s brand and experiences and its reputation as the cultural capital of Australia and empower businesses to take this approach.</p>	<p>Appreciating the public value of heritage to the city and promoting this as part of our brand.</p> <p>Use heritage to enhance commercial activity in Melbourne.</p>	<p>Deliver, partner</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Action 2.6 Exploring an improved management system for heritage and historical content across City of Melbourne to help others more easily access heritage information.</p>	<p>Ensuring heritage information and processes are organised, accessible and easy to understand, including heritage data, heritage reviews and statements of significance.</p>	<p>Deliver</p>	<p>Long-term</p>

<i>Distinctive Places Priority Area</i>		<i>Supporting statement</i>	
Action	Why this action is important and how we’ll achieve this	City of Melbourne’s role	Implementation timeframe
<p>Action 3.1 Empowering Traditional Owners and the broader Aboriginal community to play a greater role in embedding Aboriginal cultural heritage in future planning and design.</p>	<p>Embedding Aboriginal heritage in design through the development of an Interpretation Strategy (See Action 2.4).</p>	<p>Deliver, partner</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Action 3.2 Identifying view lines of Country and exploring how their importance and meaning can be better understood.</p>	<p>Acknowledge remaining view lines that exist in the city and communicating their significance, for example, through mapping and interpretation.</p>	<p>Partner</p>	<p>Medium</p>
<p>Action 3.3 Fostering creative methods of engagement that encourage active participation in shaping our city, neighbourhoods and streets, and community input about what makes neighbourhoods special or distinctive.</p>	<p>Making engagement broad and inclusive and a celebration of local stories.</p>	<p>Deliver, partner</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

Action 3.4 Balancing expert heritage advice on planning decisions, and the views of communities where these differ.	Recognising there are diverse views about heritage in our city that influence planning decisions and ensuring our policies support balanced outcomes.	Deliver, partner	Ongoing
Action 3.5 Continuing to review how we protect heritage, including post-war heritage, previously unloved heritage such as modernist buildings, building interiors and the heritage of under-represented groups or periods and Melbourne’s multicultural communities.	Acknowledging that community values around heritage are continually evolving. Ensuring we continue to review our built heritage to ensure that heritage protections reflect community values.	Deliver	Ongoing
Action 3.6 Promoting examples where heritage has enabled sustainable development, good design, and economic activity.	Explore ways to communicate how heritage can enable good design outcomes to encourage the retention of heritage fabric in development projects.	Deliver	Ongoing
Action 3.7 Exploring the need for improved guidance and mechanisms to assess when economic, social and environmental considerations might override policy objectives to retain heritage fabric.	Ensuring our heritage policy enables us to make decisions that factor in a wide range of considerations that may go beyond the scope of heritage specifically. This will help us reach balanced planning outcomes.	Deliver	Ongoing

<i>Climate and Biodiversity Emergency Supporting statement</i>			
<i>Priority Area</i>			
Action	Why this action is important and how we’ll achieve this	City of Melbourne’s role	Implementation timeframe
Action 4.1 Helping achieve zero-emission buildings and precincts by exploring the need for clearer guidance or policy updates to guide how to retrofit heritage and older buildings, including strategies for addressing issues such as glazing, solar panels and particular types of heritage, such as post-war buildings.	Providing simple guidance on how property owners can upgrade their buildings within existing planning controls.	Deliver	Immediate
Action 4.2 Adopting circular economy principles by making better use of existing buildings and promoting examples of adaptive reuse.	Advocating for better methods building owners can use to retain, reuse or retrofit their existing buildings and its elements, giving them new life.	Advocate	Long-term, ongoing

<p>Action 4.3 Exploring ways to address both energy efficiency and cultural significance in heritage buildings.</p>	<p>Monitoring our heritage policy to ensure that it addresses these important elements. This will keep the policy current and help us to reach balanced and considered planning outcomes.</p>	<p>Deliver</p>	<p>Medium</p>
<p>Action 4.4 Understanding more about the value of embodied carbon in existing buildings, including heritage buildings, in decarbonising construction.</p>	<p>Advocate to the Victorian State Government for more research into the value of embodied carbon which can be used to advocate for more sustainable development outcomes.</p>	<p>Advocate</p>	<p>Medium</p>
<p>Action 4.5 Protecting heritage trees and encouraging new plantings associated with heritage spaces and buildings.</p>	<p>Recognising that heritage trees have climate value in reducing urban heat in the city. Working to protect these trees where possible to retain established canopy cover.</p>	<p>Deliver</p>	<p>Immediate, ongoing</p>
<p>Action 4.6 Increasing indigenous plant species in heritage projects, drawing on Aboriginal knowledge and expertise.</p>	<p>Encourage indigenous plantings for the many benefits they provide to the city, including increased biodiversity and recognition of Country.</p>	<p>Deliver, partner</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Action 4.7 Advocating for incentives to promote retrofit and adaptive reuse as an alternative to new construction.</p>	<p>Acknowledging the financial barriers to retrofitting buildings in Australia. Advocate to Victorian and Australian governments for support to grow this industry to enable the viability of retrofit locally as it is overseas.</p>	<p>Advocate</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Action 4.8 Considering whether planning permits should continue to be required for visible solar panels on local heritage places across the municipality.</p>	<p>Monitoring our heritage policy to ensure that it is current and enables good planning outcomes.</p>	<p>Deliver</p>	<p>Immediate</p>

<i>Stewardship Priority Area</i>	<i>Supporting statement</i>		
Action	Why this action is important and how we'll achieve this	City of Melbourne's role	Implementation timeframe
<p>Action 5.1 Showing leadership through the stewardship of our own properties, collections and open spaces, by maintaining and managing them well and ensuring that they are accessible and inclusive.</p>	<p>City of Melbourne to lead by example as the custodian of heritage places.</p>	<p>Deliver</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Action 5.2</p>		<p>Deliver, partner</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

<p>Finding ways to better support and engage with heritage managers and custodians, including Traditional Owners, community groups, businesses and individual owners, and creating regular opportunities for these groups and individuals to come together and share knowledge and information.</p>	<p>Council to collaborate with organisations including museums, community groups, and historical societies to share knowledge and support heritage initiatives.</p>		
<p>Action 5.3 Seeking to understand the barriers that prevent people and organisations from caring for and investing in heritage and exploring ways to address barriers to adaptive reuse.</p>	<p>Explore ways to highlight the incentives for investing in and celebrating heritage, understanding what matters to our community and getting them involved in adaptive reuse.</p>	<p>Deliver, partner</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Action 5.4 Complementing our program of arts research with heritage research to understand more about how it creates public value for the municipality.</p>	<p>Explore how we can best showcase the public value of heritage to the city in a similar way to how the arts are celebrated and promoted.</p>	<p>Deliver</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Action 5.5 Exploring ways to celebrate Melbourne's unsung heritage heroes, including community groups and individuals who are leading the way in caring for, researching or interpreting heritage.</p>	<p>Explore how we can better acknowledge the contribution that community groups and organisations make to the city to ensure their value is known and celebrated.</p>	<p>Deliver, partner, advocate</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

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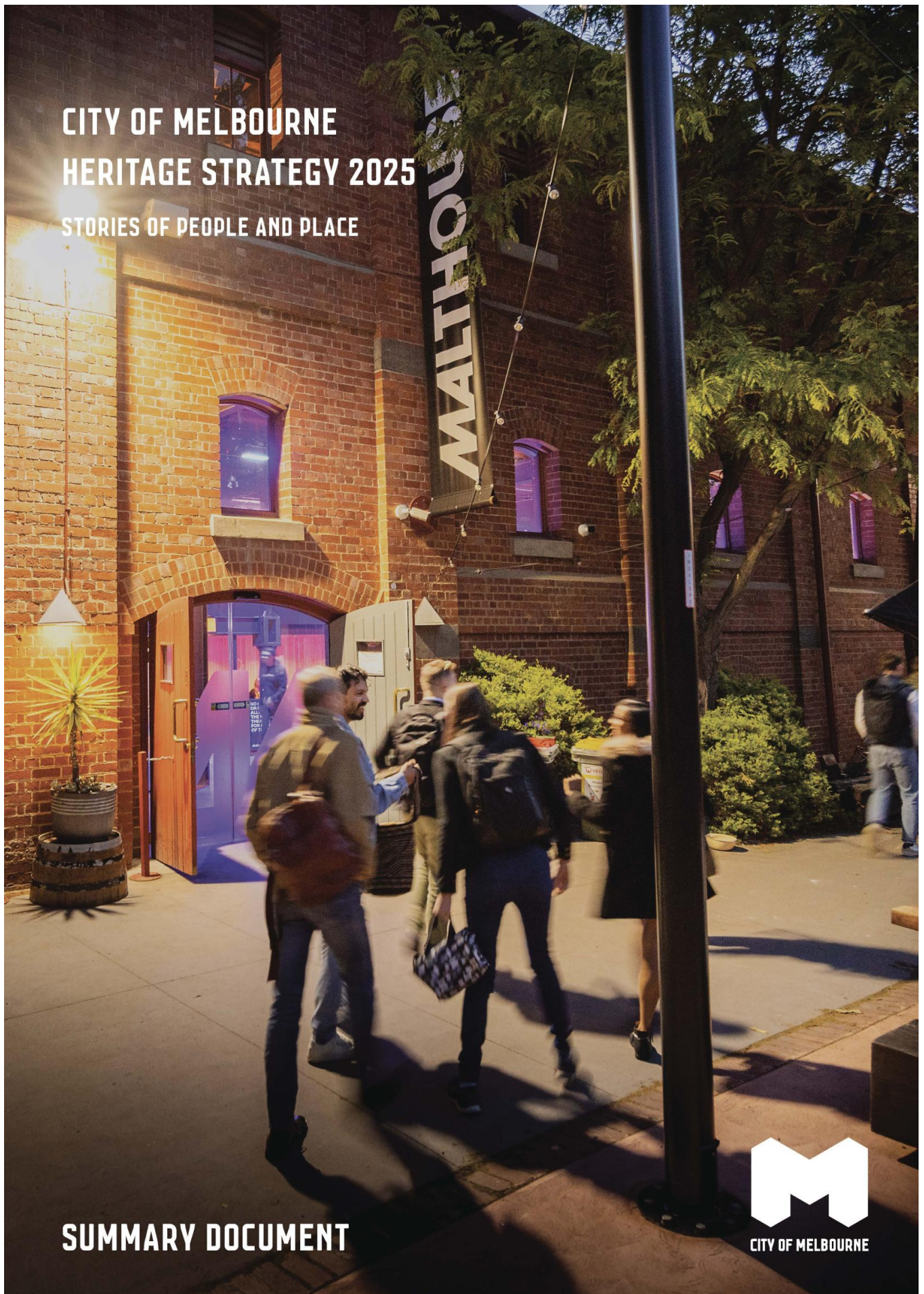
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**CITY OF MELBOURNE
HERITAGE STRATEGY 2025
STORIES OF PEOPLE AND PLACE**

SUMMARY DOCUMENT



Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

The City of Melbourne respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land we govern, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong / Boon Wurrung peoples of the Kulin and pays respect to their Elders past and present. We acknowledge and honour the unbroken spiritual, cultural and political connection they maintained to this unique place for more than 2000 generations.

We accept the invitation in the Uluru Statement from the Heart and are committed to walking together to build a better future.

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1. Foreword

Placeholder

2. Glossary

Country – a term Aboriginal people use that can be described as the lands with which they have a traditional attachment or relationship. Caring for Country is an approach that embraces the Aboriginal philosophy that if we care for Country, Country will care for us.

Cultural heritage – Victorian heritage legislation refers to Aboriginal cultural heritage and uses the term heritage to refer to non-Aboriginal heritage. However, cultural values are central to both.

Heritage – what people value and want to pass on to the future. It includes Aboriginal cultural heritage and historic heritage, and tangible and intangible heritage. Some but not all of that heritage is formally protected.

Heritage assets – the things people value and want to pass on to the future including physical things such as buildings, places, landscapes or objects and intangible heritage such as traditions, stories and memories.

Heritage building – formally defined in heritage legislation as a building that is a place, or forms part of a place, that has been given heritage protection under a planning scheme.

Heritage experiences – the different ways that people encounter the past in their lives and as residents, workers and visitors, including public programs and events, exhibitions, walks, signage and digital media.

Heritage Overlay – one of several overlays in the Victorian Planning Provisions. The Heritage Overlay protects sites with heritage value and includes lists of places of local and state significance.

Intangible heritage – things people value that don't have a physical form, such as knowledge, skills and languages. They are not usually protected in planning but can be protected through intellectual property rights.

Interpretation – the different ways of telling stories that enable people to encounter and understand the past, whether online or in-person, including exhibitions, productions, events, public programs, artworks, talks, plaques and signage.

People-centred approach – a way of working that recognises that heritage is what people value, that it delivers wider benefits, and that it is important to involve people and communities in heritage activities and in caring for heritage assets.

Planning scheme – a statutory document setting out objectives, policies and provisions relating to the use, development, protection and conservation of land in this area to which it now applies.

Protected heritage places – buildings and sites formally protected under local, state or national heritage legislation, including places under World Heritage, the Victorian Heritage Register and the Heritage Overlay.

Statement of Significance – a document that describes what, how and why a place has heritage significance. It is incorporated into the planning scheme and guides planning decisions.

Sustainable development – development that meets the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by member nations in 2015.

Sustainable development goals – seventeen goals that provide a roadmap for global efforts to achieve sustainability to 2030 and beyond. City of Melbourne is committed to the goals as a framework for shaping action.

Tangible heritage – heritage that has a physical form such as buildings, places, landscapes, collections and infrastructure. It distinguishes physical heritage assets from intangible heritage assets.

Victorian Heritage Register – lists places deemed to be of cultural significance to the State of Victoria. Places on the list are protected by Heritage Victoria under the *Heritage Act 2017*.

Wellbeing – wellbeing approaches to policy go beyond macroeconomic statistics to recognise that social progress is about improving the wellbeing of people and households. Local councils have a role in supporting community members to achieve optimal health and wellbeing under the *Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*. Australia's new wellbeing framework measures our progress towards a more healthy, secure, sustainable, cohesive and prosperous Australia.

3. Council Plan 2025 – 29 and M2050 Vision



The community aspirations which underpin our vision are:

A city for people: Melbourne’s strength lies in the diversity, resilience, talents and grit of our people. Our city is made from diverse stories, our celebrated heritage, our intercultural connections, our creativity. Its character comes through commitments to design, music, arts, culture, sport and entertainment.

Optimistic leadership: We govern with transparency and fairness, for a city that will move forward together, where people feel hope and pride in their place. We create opportunities for the next generations and foster leadership among all who live, work, study and visit our city.

Green and alive: Our parks, gardens and greenery are connected across every neighbourhood, street and building. We create vibrant places and experiences, celebrating culture and design.

Back ambition and champion innovation: Bold ideas flourish here, where entrepreneurship, creativity and design shape our city’s future. Melbourne is a city of opportunity and prosperity, where people can live their best lives.

Building on our foundations: Our city is shaped by the custodianship of First Peoples, whose connection to Country spans more than 2000 generations. We celebrate the rich migrant stories of resilience, aspiration and contribution that have helped define Melbourne’s identity. Together, we build on these foundations – guided by our city’s motto*, *Vires Acquirit Eundo* (We gather strength as we go) – to create our shared future.

Grounded in First Nations knowledge and culture: Our city honours and empowers First Peoples self-determination, guided by their knowledge, culture and enduring connection to Country, working together to care for and shape Melbourne for the next 2000 generations to come.

Leading on climate action: Our systems are connected, our city is renewable, our communities are resilient and prepared. We restore, renew and replenish our natural environment and biodiversity.

Delivering for everyone: We design our city for equity, dignity and connection, to improve housing, health and wellbeing – no matter your life stage, cultural background, gender, ability, or financial position.

* The City of Melbourne’s motto is 182 years old, established in 1843.

4. Introduction

This document provides a summary of our new Heritage Strategy for the City of Melbourne. It has been prepared to provide a shorter version of the City of Melbourne Heritage Strategy 2025: Stories of people and place, focusing predominantly on actions and implementation.

The strategy sets a new direction, based on a broad, people-centred and city-wide approach to cultural heritage.

We have taken the opportunity to review what we have achieved since the last strategy was published in 2013 and to consider some of the challenges ahead. We are proud of what we have achieved, including a series of comprehensive Heritage Reviews for our neighbourhoods, an updated heritage protection system and the first online map of Aboriginal Melbourne, working with Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with connections to the City of Melbourne, to begin to capture the places and landmarks that hold special significance.

However, much has changed since 2013, and we need to reconsider our priorities in light of the major challenges that we face as a city.

In this strategy, we outline five priorities for our work on heritage:

- Aboriginal heritage
- Powerful experiences of our multicultural city
- Distinctive places
- Climate and biodiversity emergency
- Stewardship.

In line with the Uluru Statement from the Heart, we need to walk together with the Traditional Owners of the land, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung, and the Bunurong / Boon Wurrung peoples, as well as other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with connections to the City of Melbourne.

One of our headline challenges is the climate and biodiversity emergency. Heritage must be part of the solution and not contribute to the problem. When we consider sustainable development in Melbourne's future, we need to consider culture – including heritage – alongside environmental and social issues. Our city is growing fast, and we must find new and more creative ways to both care for people's heritage and address other issues that are important to our community and impact their lives, such as the need for an increased housing supply.

We recognise that how we work is just as important as what we do. We have introduced six ways of working that embed a broad, people-centred, city-wide approach into everything we do. We will be respectful and informed, collaborative, integrated, inclusive, and long-term and sustainable. We will support self-determination for Traditional Owners and the Aboriginal community.

Plan on a page



5. Heritage snapshot

Locations of Aboriginal cultural significance

140 Locations of Aboriginal cultural significance
Such as camping and ceremonial sites, examples of people living on country, places of ceremony, public art, sculptures, landscapes.



Top left: *Eel Trap*, 2003, Fiona Clark (Kirrae Whurrong) and Ken McKean, location – Birrarung Marr
 Top right: *Futurescape*, 2013, Helen Bodycomb (and the children at ArtPlay), location – Backyard at ArtPlay, Birrarung Marr
 Bottom left: *Birrarung Wilam (Common Ground)*, 2006, Vicki Couzens (Kirrae Whurrong / Gunditjmara), Lee Darroch (Yorta Yorta, Mutti Mutti and Trawlwoolway) and Treaahna Hamm (Yorta Yorta), location – ArtPlay, Birrarung Marr
 Bottom right: Smoking ceremony at narm ngarrgu Library and Family Services, Munro development, 2024

Heritage places in the City of Melbourne

HERITAGE PLACES IN THE CITY OF MELBOURNE



740 Locally protected heritage places and precincts

332 Victorian Heritage Register places



8 National Heritage List Places

1 UNESCO World Heritage site
Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens

Our heritage listings include:

Parks, gardens and reserves	Trees	Cultural landscapes	Museums	Libraries	Hotels and pubs
Cafes and restaurants	Dwellings	Places of worship	Railway stations	Bridges	Major sports venues

6. Why do we need a new heritage strategy?

Much has changed since the 2013 strategy was published, and new challenges are ahead. We have an opportunity to go beyond heritage protection and think differently, exploring how heritage can contribute to our wider work. We need to do more to understand how different people engage with and experience heritage across the municipality.

We recognise that we must be guided by Aboriginal cultural heritage. Aboriginal stories and connections are central to the story of Melbourne. We need to do more to acknowledge Aboriginal stories in everything we do while respecting the authority of Traditional Owners and learning from Aboriginal thinking and philosophy about caring for Country.

The City of Melbourne is made up of a diverse community, with many ethnicities and cultural groups contributing to our vibrant city. We must ensure that the many layers of our history and people are represented in how we manage, protect and promote heritage. This includes migrant, working class, women and gender-diverse, LGBTQIA+ and other under-represented groups and sharing stories of adversity, hardship and activism.

We need to ensure that heritage does not prevent us from addressing our problems. Melbourne has been growing fast, and it faces immense pressure to provide affordable, secure and well-located housing. In this context, heritage can be seen as a barrier to be removed rather than a feature that can contribute character to change. Heritage has also been understood as a barrier to responding to the climate emergency, but this needs to change. We need to consider how heritage can help achieve a zero-carbon future.

Above all, we need to acknowledge that heritage is not easy. People value their heritage and that of others in different ways. When untold stories finally come to light, they can change our understanding of ourselves and of others. Our ideas of heritage change over time, as each new generation comes to terms with the past. As part of our new plan, we need to continue to reflect on those changing ideas about heritage.

7. What is heritage?

Heritage shapes our neighbourhoods and the places where we work and play. It is beneath our feet and all around us. The often-untold stories of the people of Melbourne are written in buildings, streets and open spaces. Food, cultural traditions, languages, stories and memories are also part of our heritage. Heritage contributes to the distinctiveness that makes Melbourne special and is core to the cultural diversity of our city.

Our new strategy starts with a very broad view of heritage, defining it as the things people care about and want to hand on to the future. It is inspired by the Aboriginal philosophy of caring for Country, and the idea that if we care for Country, Country will look after us. This document uses the terms ‘heritage’ and ‘cultural heritage’ interchangeably.

This broad view includes physical places, landscapes and buildings, collections and other physical things that matter to us, as well as intangible stories and memories. While all of these may be important to people, only some are formally protected.

Heritage is also something that we experience. Festivals and activities bring people together to encounter cultural heritage. Museums, libraries, public parks and cultural hubs all provide ways to engage with our past. Heritage activities can also be the things we do in our own lives when we research, share, protect or advocate for history, tradition or our own heritage.

7.1 What can heritage do for us?

Comprehending our heritage and history is vital to understanding, inclusion and belonging. All who live and work in the municipality encounter heritage in our daily lives. Heritage experiences can impact people in many different ways, perhaps through encountering new or surprising stories. Heritage can bring people together, but it also has the potential to divide us.

Caring for heritage can also deliver wider public benefits. Older buildings are an important carbon sink and reusing them can contribute to decarbonisation. Heritage activities can foster social connections and new skills; seeing one’s heritage and stories reflected in the city can create a powerful sense of belonging and inclusion. Heritage makes the places people live, work and visit distinctive and special.

Heritage sectors (for example, museums and architecture) are a key part of the creative industries, which play an important role in Victoria’s economy, contributing \$38.5 billion as a whole in the financial year ending 2022. Melbourne is considered Australia’s capital for culture and history, which are major drivers of visitation.

Cultural heritage can also play an important role in wellbeing and sustainable development. There is a move toward placing people’s wellbeing at the heart of our thinking about the economy and how society functions now and in the future. Cities around the world are now promoting culture as part of sustainability, noting that the arts, culture and heritage can contribute to sustainable development in their own right and by contributing to other goals.

8. Mission and approach

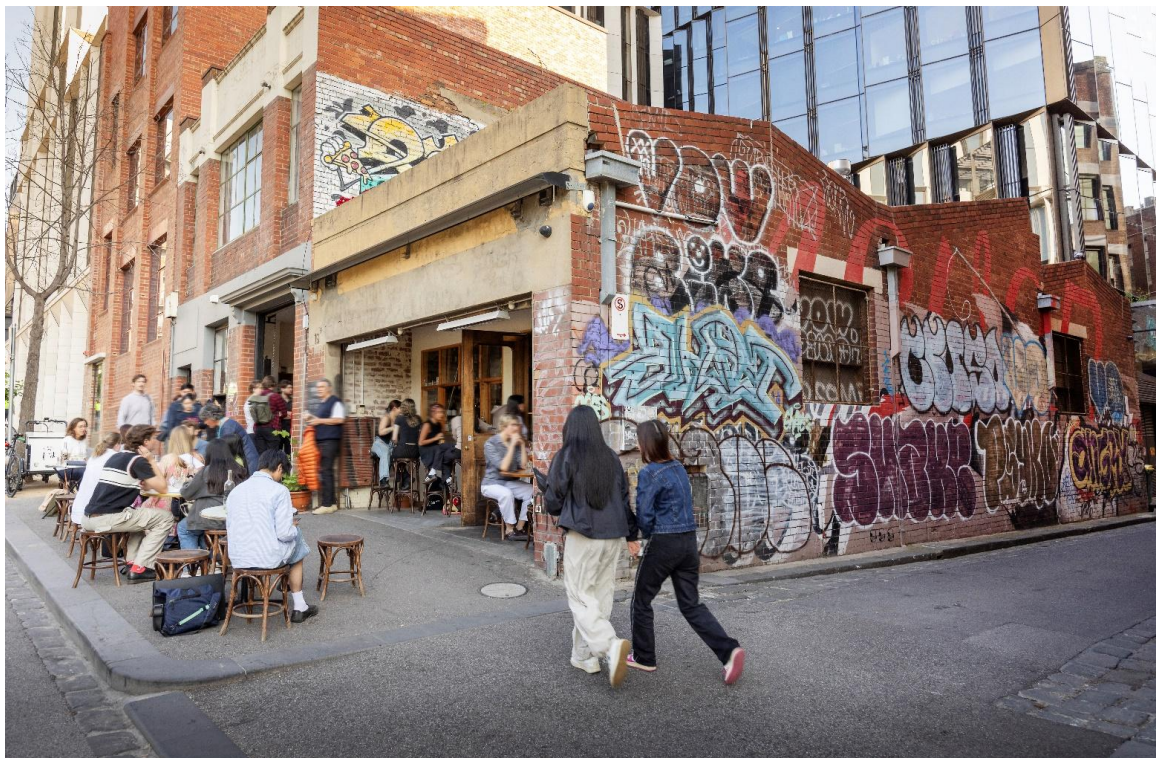
City of Melbourne embraces a broad, people-centred, city-wide approach to cultural heritage that is respectful and informed, inclusive, integrated and collaborative, and recognises the long-term contribution heritage can make to the city's future.

8.1 A people-centred approach

This strategy takes a people-centred approach by finding ways to connect and work with our community. Since our last heritage strategy, we have focused on identifying and protecting places that are important to people across the City of Melbourne. We can now focus on finding new ways to work with people to care for and understand heritage, involving diverse members of our community and respecting heritage expertise.

A people-centred approach is central to everything we do at City of Melbourne. Listening to the voices of the community is critical to success. We recognise that heritage is significant because of people's connection to it and that caring for heritage can create wider public value.

To take this approach, we must involve and empower communities in our heritage work, ensuring that the heritage and stories of all people are acknowledged and celebrated, reflecting current values. This means moving beyond statutory processes. It could result in more underrepresented places being considered for protection and could provide more opportunities for community involvement in heritage reviews, but it does not change the statutory process for applying heritage controls, which must be done in accordance with Victorian Government guidance.



People dining on the footpath in a heritage streetscape in Carlton

8.2 Ways of working

Cultural heritage does not exist in a silo. It is part of the identity of our city and can be a foundation that helps us achieve other things. This is a strategy for how heritage can contribute to our wider work.

An inclusive, people-centred, whole-of-city approach to heritage means working differently. We propose six ways of working that will help us do that, recognising that how we work with people is as important as what we do. They are not specific to heritage but are inspired by international thinking on sustainability and wellbeing, which requires us all to work differently. They draw on guiding principles set out in other City of Melbourne strategies.

Respectful and informed working means ensuring we understand and respect the values and perspectives of others. It means listening to and learning from others and gathering data and information before making decisions.

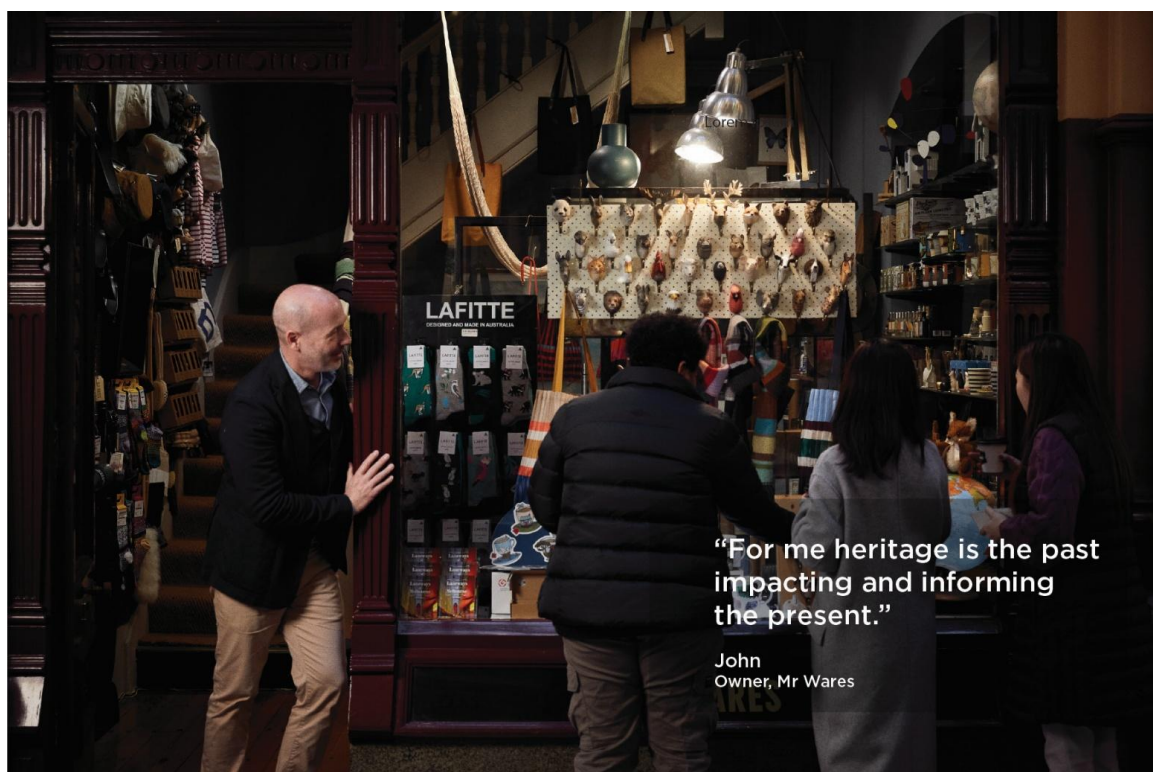
Collaborative working involves co-creation and co-production. It recognises that we can achieve more by working together on projects and initiatives to find shared goals.

Integrated working focuses on our integrated approach to policymaking. Integrated means considering the full range of consequences or impacts of action so that activity in one policy area or strategy can complement, rather than undermine, the work of others.

Inclusive working recognises the importance of involving a diverse range of people in helping to shape the decisions that will affect their lives. It goes beyond consultation to finding ways to involve people in the ongoing realisation of actions within the strategy in conjunction with final decision-making.

Long-term and sustainable working ensures we focus on long-term solutions. It includes a shift to how actions can be preventative, acting early to tackle the root of the problem, by considering how decisions will impact the wellbeing of future as well as current generations.

Self-determination for Traditional Owners and the broader Aboriginal community is supported. We seek to ensure they have the power to determine priorities and be involved in decisions that affect them by establishing pathways that encourage reciprocal engagement with Council.



John and customers standing in front of a heritage shopfront in the Block Arcade

9. Priorities and actions

9.1 Aboriginal heritage

Aboriginal heritage and the future of the city

Melbourne is an Aboriginal city. Aboriginal cultural heritage cannot be isolated from other heritage. Past, contemporary and continuing Aboriginal stories are woven into the places, heritage buildings and landscapes of the city. Aboriginal stories, language and traditions are intrinsically linked to the landscape and our heritage experiences today.

Opportunities and challenges

During our consultation, we heard that truth-telling about our heritage is vital as we strive for reconciliation. Engagement must be meaningful, and we should not shy away from learning from uncomfortable stories that are appropriate to be shared. We heard that non-Aboriginal people want to know more about the Aboriginal culture and stories of Melbourne, but also recognise the need to respect culturally sensitive knowledge.

Traditional Owners and workshop and survey participants told us we need to centralise Aboriginal culture, heritage and knowledge into heritage planning and change standard approaches to provide Traditional Owners with more opportunities to influence future change. Most respondents saw the design of public spaces, community events, public art and on-site interpretation as priorities for acknowledging Aboriginal cultural heritage. People were also interested in Aboriginal place names for different parts of the city.

Our priority

We will respect the knowledge and authority of Traditional Owners regarding the municipality's Aboriginal cultural heritage. We will work together with Traditional Owners and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with connections to the City of Melbourne to ensure their culture and stories they want shared are elevated in all our heritage activities, including experiences, placemaking, stewardship and addressing the climate emergency.

We will collaborate with Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with connections to the City of Melbourne in exploring the following actions:

- 1.1 Empowering Traditional Owners to shape the way Aboriginal cultural heritage is prominently acknowledged, respected and interpreted across all City of Melbourne heritage activities
- 1.2 Embedding Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Leadership within the Aboriginal City Framework
- 1.3 Progressing with initiatives and projects that emerged from engagement with Traditional Owners and the Aboriginal community for this strategy, acknowledging that this document creates a foundation for ongoing work, commitment and collaboration
- 1.4 Progressing actions from our recent Heritage Reviews that relate to Aboriginal cultural heritage, in collaboration with Traditional Owners and the broader Aboriginal community
- 1.5 Continuing to develop and progress innovative truth-telling tools (such as the Aboriginal Mapping project) in line with our future Interpretation Strategy.

9.2 Powerful experiences of our multicultural city

How heritage interpretation creates powerful experiences

Heritage places need to be understood in order to remain meaningful and supported by the community. Heritage interpretation can take many forms, commonly including signage and artwork, but can also include wayfinding, events, digital media, building and public realm design. Good interpretation requires care; it should capture the attention and connect heritage and people's own personal experiences to meet the needs of different audiences. Many of Melbourne's public institutions are multi-layered places that also hold stories of pain and trauma.

Opportunities and challenges

Heritage activities, storytelling and interpretation can contribute directly to many of our city-wide ambitions. It is important to capture the layered histories of the many cultural, religious and ethnic groups that make up the City of Melbourne. As people's ideas about the past change, we must rethink how we tell stories and whose stories are being told and not told.

Through engagement, participants told us that a respectful and inclusive approach to interpreting heritage is important, recognising that many places have more than one story. They argued for a layered approach, telling multiple stories of places and involving people in interpretation and storytelling.

Our priority

Create many more powerful heritage experiences that connect people to the multi-layered stories of Melbourne, through creative, informed, inclusive and accessible interpretation.

We will collaborate with others to explore the following actions:

- 2.1 Working with Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with connections to Melbourne to co-create an approach to making Aboriginal culture, stories and language visible across the city, including immersive experiences, events, festivals, public art, signage and more
- 2.2 Working with neighbouring municipalities to share stories that carry across boundaries
- 2.3 Creating a role for a city historian to raise awareness of the city's history and embed history and heritage across everything we do
- 2.4 Developing a heritage interpretation strategy for the municipality, co-created with Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with connections to Melbourne, involving historical societies and local people. This could include:
 - gathering stories the community deems important in interpreting the city's tangible and intangible heritage, such as adding new stories to historic sites to show the layers of our past
 - a framework to promote high-quality interpretation as part of new development, to ensure that good storytelling informs design
 - direction to ensure our existing and new plaques and memorials reflect people's diversity and their contemporary values, including underrepresented groups and stories
 - a heritage hoardings policy, to create temporary structures to tell heritage stories, representing the multiple voices of the community
 - an approach to affirm distinct stories and narratives for our diverse neighbourhoods, celebrating their unique sense of place and culture
 - using technology and digital tools to enhance experiences and help address accessibility challenges.
- 2.5 Enhancing the role of heritage in the City of Melbourne's brand and experiences and its reputation as the cultural capital of Australia and empowering businesses to take this approach
- 2.6 Exploring an improved management system for heritage and historical content across City of Melbourne to help others more easily access heritage information.

9.3 Distinctive places

How heritage can create distinctive places and neighbourhoods

Country, history, place and water have shaped the Melbourne of today. They give our city its special character and the distinctiveness that drives our visitor economy, attracts creative industries and businesses and makes Melbourne a great place to live, work and play. Conserving heritage is not about creating monuments frozen in time – instead, it is a way of managing change to celebrate the defining elements of our history.

Opportunities and challenges

Heritage is an opportunity to shape better places, not to create a barrier to change. Heritage buildings can be adapted and complemented by modern additions, giving places another life and meaning – ensuring they continue to contribute to our city's culture and story. Our new neighbourhood model provides an opportunity for people-centred heritage. It uses a place-based approach to bring diverse perspectives into neighbourhood planning by understanding the priorities of residents, students, businesses, workers and visitors.

Through our engagement, we heard that we need to find ways to protect what is important while allowing our city to grow and prosper. Survey and workshop feedback reminded us that urban living should be accessible and heritage should not be a barrier to a more inclusive city. There were mixed views on the need for flexibility in managing changes to heritage, with equal numbers of survey participants advocating for more, less or targeted flexibility.

Our priority

We will celebrate and preserve the city's diverse cultural heritage. We will embed heritage into planning and design at an early stage to ensure that the distinctive and special qualities of the city and its neighbourhoods continue to be legible and inform the way they grow.

We will collaborate with others to explore the following actions:

- 3.1 Empowering Traditional Owners and the broader Aboriginal community to play a greater role in embedding Aboriginal cultural heritage in future planning and design
- 3.2 Identifying view lines of Country and exploring how their importance and meaning can be better understood
- 3.3 Fostering creative methods of engagement that encourage active participation in shaping our city, neighbourhoods and streets, and community input about what makes neighbourhoods special or distinctive
- 3.4 Balancing expert heritage advice on planning decisions, and the views of communities where these differ
- 3.5 Continuing to review how we protect heritage, including post-war heritage, previously unloved heritage such as modernist buildings, building interiors and the heritage of under-represented groups or periods and Melbourne's multicultural communities
- 3.6 Promoting examples where heritage has enabled sustainable development, good design, and economic activity
- 3.7 Exploring the need for improved guidance and mechanisms to assess when economic, social and environmental considerations might override policy objectives to retain heritage fabric.

9.4 The climate and biodiversity emergency



Two people standing in a lush, green, welcoming Melbourne laneway

“The greenest building is the one that already exists”

Carl Elefante – former president of the American Institute of Architects.

How heritage can help address the climate and biodiversity emergency

Retrofitting and adapting buildings causes fewer construction emissions than a knockdown rebuild approach. Reusing existing buildings reduces construction waste and avoids demand for new steel or concrete. Heritage can also foster nature and ecology in the city. Many of our major parks and green spaces are cultural heritage assets. Our system of local heritage protection also involves protecting urban trees. Other important trees are protected through our Exceptional Tree Register.

Opportunities and challenges

To reach zero emissions, the city’s buildings must be transformed – so we are driving better reuse of existing buildings, including heritage buildings. Our Retrofit Melbourne framework helps facilitate investment to retrofit mid-tier commercial buildings to make them zero-carbon ready. The heritage sector is also learning more about modest retrofit mechanisms that may not always need a permit, such as improving heating and cooling systems, secondary glazing and insulation.

However, we learned from workshop feedback that the private sector continues to struggle with meeting heritage requirements as well as building codes designed for modern buildings. Industry experts told us that we need to do more to incentivise retrofitting heritage buildings. Challenges include the need for specialist materials and modern standards for thermal comfort. Although installing solar panels on heritage buildings has benefits, there is debate about how best to do so.

Our priority

We will contribute to our zero emissions target by encouraging the retrofit and reuse of existing buildings to make use of their embodied carbon, and contribute to nature in the city by protecting heritage trees and encouraging initiatives such as greening historic places.

We will collaborate with others to explore the following actions:

- 4.1 Helping achieve zero-emission buildings and precincts by exploring the need for clearer guidance or policy updates to guide how to retrofit heritage and older buildings, including strategies for addressing issues such as glazing, solar panels and particular types of heritage, such as post-war buildings
- 4.2 Adopting circular economy principles by making better use of existing buildings and promoting examples of adaptive reuse
- 4.3 Exploring ways to address both energy efficiency and cultural significance in heritage buildings
- 4.4 Understanding more about the value of embodied carbon in existing buildings, including heritage buildings, in decarbonising construction
- 4.5 Protecting heritage trees and encouraging new planting associated with heritage spaces and buildings
- 4.6 Increasing indigenous plant species in heritage projects, drawing on Aboriginal knowledge and expertise
- 4.7 Advocating for incentives to promote retrofit and adaptive reuse as an alternative to new construction
- 4.8 Considering whether planning permits should continue to be required for visible solar panels on local heritage places across the municipality.

9.5 Stewardship

The value of stewardship

Practising heritage in all its forms is about stewardship – caring for the things people value and want to pass on to the future, whether physical or intangible. Caring for our shared heritage creates wider public value. There are economic, social, environmental and cultural benefits from caring for heritage. Importantly, caring for heritage does not stop change – it is simply a starting point for how we shape the future. Innovative design, writing and creativity often spring from exploring, honouring and reimagining our past.

Opportunities and challenges

Stewardship is not always easy. Day-to-day maintenance – sometimes known as preventative conservation, or repair works are vital, but often unglamorous aspects of caring for heritage and can require access to heritage craft skills or Traditional Owner knowledge in caring for Country. Property managers can face technical challenges.

Engagement participants told us that we need to do more to acknowledge the value of heritage, including the wider cultural and social benefits. We heard that we need to do more to recognise unsung heritage heroes – the community groups and individuals who play a vital role in caring for our past. We were reminded of the benefits of adaptive reuse as a way to care for heritage places and deepen their history.

Our priority

We will take a sustainable approach to heritage stewardship, in a way that recognises not just why heritage matters to people, but also the wider social, economic, place-based and cultural impacts and benefits of conserving it.

We will collaborate with others to explore the following actions:

- 5.1 Showing leadership through the stewardship of our own properties, collections and open spaces, by maintaining and managing them well and ensuring that they are accessible and inclusive
- 5.2 Finding ways to better support and engage with heritage managers and custodians, including Traditional Owners, community groups, businesses and individual owners, and creating regular opportunities for these groups and individuals to come together and share knowledge and information
- 5.3 Seeking to understand the barriers that prevent people and organisations from caring for and investing in heritage and exploring ways to address barriers to adaptive reuse
- 5.4 Complementing our program of arts research with heritage research to understand more about how it creates public value for the municipality
- 5.5 Exploring ways to celebrate Melbourne's unsung heritage heroes, including community groups and individuals who are leading the way in caring for, researching or interpreting heritage.

10. Implementation plan

<i>Aboriginal Heritage Priority Area</i>		<i>Supporting statement</i>	
Action	Why this action is important and how we'll achieve this	City of Melbourne's role	Implementation timeframe
Action 1.1 Empowering Traditional Owners to shape the way Aboriginal cultural heritage is prominently acknowledged, respected, and interpreted across all City of Melbourne heritage activities.	Moving beyond business as usual, City of Melbourne seeks to support the self-determination of Traditional Owners, building on key principles from the Reconciliation Action Plan.	Partner, advocate	Ongoing
Action 1.2 Embedding Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Leadership within the Aboriginal City Framework.	City of Melbourne engages with Aboriginal cultural heritage across multiple projects and work areas. Embedding Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Leadership within the Aboriginal City Framework, an existing commitment under the Stretch Reconciliation Action 2024–27, will provide an opportunity to coordinate, establish gaps and promote best practice around projects involving Aboriginal cultural heritage across the organisation.	Deliver, partner	Ongoing
Action 1.3 Progressing with initiatives and projects that emerged from engagement with Traditional Owners and the Aboriginal community for this strategy, acknowledging that this document creates a foundation for ongoing work, commitment, and collaboration.	To ensure ideas and initiatives brought forward during consultation are captured and explored as projects in partnership with Aboriginal Melbourne and Traditional Owners.	Deliver, partner	Immediate, ongoing
Action 1.4 Progressing actions from our recent Heritage Reviews that relate to Aboriginal cultural heritage, in collaboration with Traditional Owners and the broader Aboriginal community.	Our Heritage Reviews have included Aboriginal Cultural Values assessments that still need to be actioned, which will add to the existing value of the Heritage Review work. This work could include an audit of Aboriginal heritage to ensure current management and processes are complying with legislation.	Deliver, partner	Immediate
Action 1.5 Continuing to develop and progress innovative truth-telling tools (such as the Aboriginal Mapping project) in line with our future Interpretation Strategy.	Explore better ways of communicating Aboriginal cultural heritage through technology and innovation. Enhance the accessibility and user experience to achieve more widespread use.	Deliver	Ongoing
<i>Powerful Experiences of our Multicultural City Priority Area</i>		<i>Supporting statement</i>	

Action	Why this action is important and how we'll achieve this	City of Melbourne's role	Implementation timeframe
<p>Action 2.1 Working with Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with connections to Melbourne to co-create an approach to making Aboriginal culture, stories and language visible across the city, including immersive experiences, events, festivals, public art, signage and more.</p>	<p>Ensure that Aboriginal culture is embedded in place-making and that interpretation communicates that we are always on Country. An example of this could be through Aboriginal place naming.</p>	<p>Deliver, partner</p>	<p>Medium</p>
<p>Action 2.2 Working with neighbouring municipalities to share stories that carry across boundaries.</p>	<p>Acknowledging that history of places and stories of the city are not confined to existing boundaries and may cross over to other municipalities.</p>	<p>Partner</p>	<p>Long-term</p>
<p>Action 2.3 Creating a role for a city historian to raise awareness of the city's history and embed history and heritage across everything we do.</p>	<p>Taking cues from other major cities that have been invested in the promotion and sharing of heritage stories and have successfully engaged communities in their city's history.</p>	<p>Advocate</p>	<p>Medium</p>
<p>Action 2.4 Developing a Heritage Interpretation Strategy for the municipality, co-created with Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with connections to Melbourne, involving historical societies and local people. This could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gathering stories the community deems important in interpreting the city's tangible and intangible heritage, such as adding new stories to historic sites to show the layers of our past • a framework to promote high-quality interpretation as part of new development, to ensure that good storytelling informs design • direction to ensure our existing and new plaques and memorials reflect people's diversity and their contemporary values, including under-represented groups and stories • a heritage hoardings policy, to create temporary structures to tell heritage stories, representing the multiple voices of the community 	<p>Encouraging meaningful interpretation to inform the design of new developments and inform city policies and projects.</p> <p>Communicate and make heritage more accessible to the public through oral histories, art and other channels.</p>	<p>Deliver, partner</p>	<p>Medium</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> an approach to affirm distinct stories and narratives for our diverse neighbourhoods, celebrating their unique sense of place and culture using technology and digital tools to enhance experiences and help address accessibility challenges. 			
Action 2.5 Enhancing the role of heritage in the City of Melbourne’s brand and experiences and its reputation as the cultural capital of Australia and empower businesses to take this approach.	Appreciating the public value of heritage to the city and promoting this as part of our brand. Use heritage to enhance commercial activity in Melbourne.	Deliver, partner	Ongoing
Action 2.6 Exploring an improved management system for heritage and historical content across City of Melbourne to help others more easily access heritage information.	Ensuring heritage information and processes are organised, accessible and easy to understand, including heritage data, heritage reviews and statements of significance.	Deliver	Long-term

<i>Distinctive Places Priority Area</i>		<i>Supporting statement</i>	
Action	Why this action is important and how we’ll achieve this	City of Melbourne’s role	Implementation timeframe
Action 3.1 Empowering Traditional Owners and the broader Aboriginal community to play a greater role in embedding Aboriginal cultural heritage in future planning and design.	Embedding Aboriginal heritage in design through the development of an Interpretation Strategy (See Action 2.4).	Deliver, partner	Ongoing
Action 3.2 Identifying view lines of Country and exploring how their importance and meaning can be better understood.	Acknowledge remaining view lines that exist in the city and communicating their significance, for example, through mapping and interpretation.	Partner	Medium
Action 3.3 Fostering creative methods of engagement that encourage active participation in shaping our city, neighbourhoods and streets, and community input about what makes neighbourhoods special or distinctive.	Making engagement broad and inclusive and a celebration of local stories.	Deliver, partner	Ongoing
Action 3.4 Balancing expert heritage advice on planning decisions, and the views of communities where these differ.	Recognising there are diverse views about heritage in our city that influence planning decisions and ensuring our policies support balanced outcomes.	Deliver, partner	Ongoing

<p>Action 3.5 Continuing to review how we protect heritage, including post-war heritage, previously unloved heritage such as modernist buildings, building interiors and the heritage of under-represented groups or periods and Melbourne’s multicultural communities.</p>	<p>Acknowledging that community values around heritage are continually evolving. Ensuring we continue to review our built heritage to ensure that heritage protections reflect community values.</p>	<p>Deliver</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Action 3.6 Promoting examples where heritage has enabled sustainable development, good design, and economic activity.</p>	<p>Explore ways to communicate how heritage can enable good design outcomes to encourage the retention of heritage fabric in development projects.</p>	<p>Deliver</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Action 3.7 Exploring the need for improved guidance and mechanisms to assess when economic, social and environmental considerations might override policy objectives to retain heritage fabric.</p>	<p>Ensuring our heritage policy enables us to make decisions that factor in a wide range of considerations that may go beyond the scope of heritage specifically. This will help us reach balanced planning outcomes.</p>	<p>Deliver</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

<i>Climate and Biodiversity Emergency</i>		<i>Supporting statement</i>	
<i>Priority Area</i>			
Action	Why this action is important and how we’ll achieve this	City of Melbourne’s role	Implementation timeframe
<p>Action 4.1 Helping achieve zero-emission buildings and precincts by exploring the need for clearer guidance or policy updates to guide how to retrofit heritage and older buildings, including strategies for addressing issues such as glazing, solar panels and particular types of heritage, such as post-war buildings.</p>	<p>Providing simple guidance on how property owners can upgrade their buildings within existing planning controls.</p>	<p>Deliver</p>	<p>Immediate</p>
<p>Action 4.2 Adopting circular economy principles by making better use of existing buildings and promoting examples of adaptive reuse.</p>	<p>Advocating for better methods building owners can use to retain, reuse or retrofit their existing buildings and its elements, giving them new life.</p>	<p>Advocate</p>	<p>Long-term, ongoing</p>
<p>Action 4.3 Exploring ways to address both energy efficiency and cultural significance in heritage buildings.</p>	<p>Monitoring our heritage policy to ensure that it addresses these important elements. This will keep the policy current and help us to reach balanced and considered planning outcomes.</p>	<p>Deliver</p>	<p>Medium</p>
<p>Action 4.4 Understanding more about the value of embodied carbon in existing buildings, including heritage buildings, in decarbonising construction.</p>	<p>Advocate to the Victorian Government for more research into the value of embodied carbon which can be used to advocate for more sustainable development outcomes.</p>	<p>Advocate</p>	<p>Medium</p>

Action 4.5 Protecting heritage trees and encouraging new plantings associated with heritage spaces and buildings.	Recognising that heritage trees have climate value in reducing urban heat in the city. Working to protect these trees where possible to retain established canopy cover.	Deliver	Immediate, ongoing
Action 4.6 Increasing indigenous plant species in heritage projects, drawing on Aboriginal knowledge and expertise.	Encourage indigenous plantings for the many benefits they provide to the city, including increased biodiversity and recognition of Country.	Deliver, partner	Ongoing
Action 4.7 Advocating for incentives to promote retrofit and adaptive reuse as an alternative to new construction.	Acknowledging the financial barriers to retrofitting buildings in Australia. Advocate to the Victorian and Australian governments for support to grow this industry to enable the viability of retrofit locally as it is overseas.	Advocate	Ongoing
Action 4.8 Considering whether planning permits should continue to be required for visible solar panels on local heritage places across the municipality.	Monitoring our heritage policy to ensure that it is current and enables good planning outcomes.	Deliver	Immediate

<i>Stewardship Priority Area</i>		<i>Supporting statement</i>	
Action	Why this action is important and how we'll achieve this	City of Melbourne's role	Implementation timeframe
Action 5.1 Showing leadership through the stewardship of our own properties, collections and open spaces, by maintaining and managing them well and ensuring that they are accessible and inclusive.	City of Melbourne to lead by example as the custodian of heritage places.	Deliver	Ongoing
Action 5.2 Finding ways to better support and engage with heritage managers and custodians, including Traditional Owners, community groups, businesses and individual owners, and creating regular opportunities for these groups and individuals to come together and share knowledge and information.	Council to collaborate with organisations including museums, community groups, and historical societies to share knowledge and support heritage initiatives.	Deliver, partner	Ongoing
Action 5.3 Seeking to understand the barriers that prevent people and organisations from caring for and investing in heritage and exploring ways to address barriers to adaptive reuse.	Explore ways to highlight the incentives for investing in and celebrating heritage, understanding what matters to our community and getting them involved in adaptive reuse.	Deliver, partner	Ongoing

<p>Action 5.4 Complementing our program of arts research with heritage research to understand more about how it creates public value for the municipality.</p>	<p>Explore how we can best showcase the public value of heritage to the city in a similar way to how the arts are celebrated and promoted.</p>	<p>Deliver</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Action 5.5 Exploring ways to celebrate Melbourne’s unsung heritage heroes, including community groups and individuals who are leading the way in caring for, researching or interpreting heritage.</p>	<p>Explore how we can better acknowledge the contribution that community groups and organisations make to the city to ensure their value is known and celebrated.</p>	<p>Deliver, partner, advocate</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>



Draft Heritage Strategy Community Consultation Report 2025



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1. Executive Summary

The City of Melbourne (CoM) engaged Open House Melbourne (OHM) to facilitate community feedback on the *Draft Melbourne Heritage Strategy: Stories of People and Place* (Draft Strategy).

Centred on the Draft Strategy's five priority areas—Aboriginal heritage, powerful experiences, distinctive places, the climate and biodiversity emergency and stewardship—the consultation program invited the public and key stakeholders (peak bodies, heritage societies + residents groups and businesses) to share perspectives on how the city's heritage should be valued and managed into the future and identify gaps and areas for improvement within the Strategy.

The co-designed community consultation delivered a multifaceted engagement program that fostered broad, inclusive participation. The program deepened community understanding of the significance and diversity of Melbourne's heritage, building public heritage literacy and inviting critical dialogue and comment.

Engagement Program

Open to the public across a six-week period, the program included two panel discussions, a family Open Play workshop, an Open Studio for students and three key stakeholder 'Walkshops', each paired with supporting engagement activities (activations). These programs operated across three levels—introducing children and families to heritage, engaging broader audiences through accessible conversations and offering immersive, place-based experiences that encouraged critical reflection on the Draft Strategy. An online Participate Melbourne survey ran in parallel to the program.

Interactions

In total, 691 people participated across the community consultation program, with some individuals engaging in more than one activity. Engagement took place through a range of formats, including Panel Conversations — *Stories of Heritage* and *Challenging Heritage or Heritage Challenges?* (270 participants), Open Play (13), Open Studio (18), Walkshops (50), the Participate Melbourne Survey (331), and 9 additional written submissions. In addition, the associated program activations attracted significant interest, gathering a further 918 responses from participants.

What we heard

Community Heritage Values

The consultation program gathered a wealth of insightful, thoughtful and detailed feedback demonstrating participants' deep interest in, and connection to, heritage in the city. Through the engagement process five community heritage values emerged:

- **Meaningful and multi-layered heritage:** emotionally meaningful, culturally rich and deeply connected to place.
- **Sense and value of place:** part of daily life, tied to social history, identity and belonging through iconic landmarks, distinctive neighbourhoods and parklands gardens and landscapes.
- **Living heritage:** a living, dynamic system that grows alongside the city and its people and should not be fixed or elitist—but rather adapt to social change, housing and climate pressures and social needs to embrace contemporary relevance.
- **Inclusive, accessible heritage:** something that reflects many voices, stories and ways of knowing underpinned by respectful collaboration with First Nations communities.
- **Community participation and empowerment:** heritage shaped by community knowledge and experience that benefits from collaborative leadership and the fostering of shared responsibility across sectors and the community.

Community Consultation - Draft Strategy: Five Priorities

The community resonated strongly with the five key priorities presented in the Draft Strategy demonstrating broad support for its mission and approach. Participants emphasised authentic engagement with Aboriginal heritage calling for truth-telling, recognition of Country and inclusion of

Aboriginal perspectives, noting the importance of understanding Aboriginal heritage as living, place-based and connected to ecological and social systems. There was strong resonance with the Strategy's focus on powerful (and participatory) heritage experiences, reflecting people's desire for storytelling that is authentic, emotional and inclusive—brought to life through oral histories, arts activations and immersive formats such as walking tours and festivals. The community affirmed an emphasis on distinctive places, with many valuing precinct-based approaches that recognise the cultural, social and ecological uniqueness of local neighbourhoods and well-loved sites. Community responses further endorsed attention to the climate and biodiversity emergency, with widespread support for adaptive reuse, sustainable upgrades and Indigenous plantings as part of an ecologically grounded approach to heritage. Finally, participants strongly supported the Strategy's focus on stewardship, calling for shared responsibility, community-led care models and better access to education tools and resources.

Community responses highlighted areas where the Draft Strategy could be strengthened to better meet public expectations:

- Participants called for stronger commitments to First Nations led approaches, co-governance and a deeper integration of Aboriginal culture across themes and sectors.
- There was clear support for a stronger focus on intangible and community-led heritage, including lived traditions, migrant histories and diverse storytelling through digital, sensory and multilingual formats.
- Respondents advocated for greater recognition of emerging, overlooked and 'lost' places and histories, as well as clearer guidance on balancing heritage and new development.
- Participants felt the Draft Strategy could more explicitly connect heritage to climate action and traditional ecological knowledge, with practical tools for adaptive reuse, greening initiatives and sustainable upgrades.
- The community highlighted the need for stronger stewardship frameworks to maintain and protect heritage places, with clear roles and responsibilities and transparent feedback loops. Participants recommended providing funding pathways, educational resources and networking support for community groups

Recommendations

The Draft Strategy Community Consultation program generated rich qualitative insights, reflecting a high level of informed and engaged community participation. The recommendations made capture the breadth of community sentiment, applying across the entire Strategy—and, in some cases, extending beyond its scope. They highlight opportunities for the City of Melbourne to strengthen heritage outcomes, demonstrate leadership, respond to emerging challenges and communicate heritage more effectively across four areas:

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

The community highlighted the need to identify intersectional ways of working focused on intangible, multicultural and intergenerational heritage. Participants called for heritage policy and programming that embeds oral histories, rituals, and migrant stories alongside built heritage. Recommendations emphasise community-led and culturally safe approaches, co-designed programs and new pathways for young people to actively shape and share Melbourne's evolving heritage.

Leadership, Governance and Accountability

Strong leadership, clear governance and accountability were highlighted by participants who called for the City of Melbourne to lead by example through its communications, buildings and capital works. Recommendations emphasised firm heritage protections, transparent decision-making, clear roles and responsibilities and robust measurement and feedback mechanisms to demonstrate progress and ensure community input is reflected.

Adaptation, Climate and Contemporary Challenges

Community feedback emphasised the need to address contemporary challenges—such as housing, accessibility and climate resilience—without compromising heritage significance. Recommendations focused on adaptive reuse, inclusive design and climate-smart practices, alongside policy alignment and demonstration projects to showcase sustainable, culturally rich solutions.

Communication, Engagement and Storytelling

Community engagement revealed opportunities to communicate heritage values and decisions in ways that are inclusive, engaging and accessible. Recommendations include adopting a multi-tiered approach to communicating heritage and using creative practices, immersive experiences such as tours and festivals, arts-based activations and digital tools to bring heritage to life. Strategies that leverage heritage places to create jobs, support creative industries and enhance Melbourne’s cultural and economic profile should be supported

Next Steps

The Draft Heritage Strategy community consultation and subsequent recommendations will be considered as part of the Final Heritage Strategy in 2025, including an implementation plan with agreed actions and timeframes.



Workshop community consultation. Photo: Courtesy of Open House Melbourne.

2. Introduction

2.1 Context of the Draft Heritage Strategy Community Consultation

The City of Melbourne's (CoM) existing Heritage Strategy was published in 2013. Over the past decade, this strategy has delivered many significant achievements focused primarily on addressing inconsistent and outdated heritage controls. Since 2013, thinking around cultural heritage has changed, as have the challenges a new Heritage Strategy needs to consider as we move forward.

To guide its heritage work into the future, the CoM is updating the Heritage Strategy to reflect its current strategic objectives and contemporary heritage thinking and practices. This new work represents a significant shift in the City's ways of working.

To develop a new Heritage Strategy, two phases of community consultation have been undertaken. The first phase focused on the discussion paper, *Heritage, People and Place*. It tested new ideas and topics with diverse voices from the community and key stakeholders to inform the themes outlined in the *Draft Melbourne Heritage Strategy: Stories of People and Place* (Draft Strategy). The work presented in this report represents the second phase of community consultation focused on the Draft Strategy.

The CoM's Draft Strategy, aims to find the balance between the tangible and intangible aspects of heritage by taking a people-centric approach to ensure our city remains the unique and engaging place we all love. The new Draft Strategy places people firmly at the centre in a twofold manner by:

- placing emphasis on the social and community values that animate the bricks and mortar of our heritage places and drive people's connection to place, and,
- empowering the community to help shape cultural heritage.

The CoM sees the new Heritage Strategy as an opportunity to think differently about heritage—to consider its contribution more broadly to the city and its work and focus on the relationship between people, place, cultural heritage and challenges that are impacting heritage and the built environment.

This shift in heritage thinking also provided the CoM an opportunity to explore a different approach to community and stakeholder engagement. Open House Melbourne co-designed and delivered an engagement program for the project designed to unpack key issues identified in the Draft Strategy and build greater public understanding of heritage's value and diversity. This program enabled informed participation and fostered a deeper connection to heritage for the participants.

The Draft Strategy has identified five priorities that are relevant to the future of heritage.

- Aboriginal heritage
- Powerful experiences
- Distinctive places
- The climate and biodiversity emergency
- Stewardship

These priorities provided the framework for the community consultation, guiding discussions and inviting people to contribute their perspectives on how Melbourne's heritage should be valued, celebrated and managed into the future.

2.2 Purpose and Objectives of the Engagement

To shape the CoM's new Heritage Strategy, the Draft Strategy Community Consultation process gathered considered and constructive feedback from a broad cross-section of the community.

OHM programmed and delivered a suite of inclusive and creative events and activities designed to invite meaningful participation from people of all backgrounds and experiences. This in-person program was complemented with digital engagement via Participation Melbourne. A strong focus was placed on reaching communities typically underrepresented in heritage conversations, such as young people and culturally diverse groups.

Key aims

- Gather broad community and stakeholder feedback from peak government bodies, industry experts, property and business owners, historical and resident groups, families, students and the broader public on what aspects of the Draft Strategy are working well and where improvements are needed.
- Understand how the Draft Strategy responds to key city challenges,—particularly the climate and biodiversity emergency, population growth, and representation of diverse stories and histories.
- Identify any additional concerns or gaps in the draft that the community believes should be addressed.
- Develop clear actions, responsibilities, and priorities to guide the implementation of the final strategy.
- Educate and engage the public through the consultation process on the many forms and values of heritage—including tangible and intangible elements—and how they enrich community life and urban identity.
- Connect with people who don't usually engage in heritage issues, ensuring a wide range of voices helped shape the CoM's long-term heritage vision.

These objectives guided the design and delivery of the engagement process and form the foundation of the insights in this report.

3. Consultation Approach

3.1 Engagement Principles

Open House Melbourne (OHM) adopted a people-centric approach to delivering the Draft Heritage Strategy consultation (Draft Strategy), placing community voices at the heart of every stage of the engagement process. Guided by the International Association for Public participation (IAP2) core values¹ and aligned with the CoM's vision for inclusive heritage planning, OHM focused on creating meaningful, accessible and empowering experiences for participants—whether they were long-time residents, first-time contributors or underrepresented groups in heritage discourse. Key principles included:

People First

Engagement activities were designed to capture lived experience alongside specialist knowledge, with no assumed expertise required. All programs were designed to be inclusive and held in welcoming spaces that encouraged participation through conversation, observation and hands-on interaction.

Co-Design and Collaboration

Developed in partnership with the City of Melbourne, the program combined CoM's knowledge of community dynamics with OHM's expertise in accessible, inclusive engagement. This ensured activities aligned with the Draft Strategy's priorities while staying responsive to participant needs.

Informed and Active Participation

Through talks, tours and creative workshops (Walkshops and Open Play), participants built heritage literacy and explored the Draft Strategy's five priorities in situ. These interactive formats enabled diverse voices to share perspectives and reflect on competing interests, while also encouraging participants to contribute meaningful feedback.

¹ <https://www.iap2.org/page/corevalues>



Broad Inclusion

Events were designed to appeal to a wide demographic and targeted groups often underrepresented in heritage engagement, including businesses, students, and families—helping to broaden the conversation beyond traditional audiences.

Trust and Transparency

As an independent and trusted organisation, OHM brought credibility to the process by clearly communicating the purpose of the Draft Strategy and how feedback would be used, ensuring participants felt confident their voices would be reflected in the new Heritage Strategy.

3.2 Stakeholder Groups

As with many arts and cultural settings, ‘threshold fear’ can be a barrier to participation in community consultation—where individuals hesitate to engage because they feel underqualified, uninformed or out of place. Similarly, digital engagement via a survey can also be a barrier to participation for many community groups who face language, digital literacy and other access barriers. To address this, the consultation was intentionally designed to be open, inclusive and accessible. It sought to reach a wide cross-section of stakeholders, engaging the following groups, many of whom had not participated in previous community consultation activities:

General Public

The ‘general public’ included a broad cross-section of Melbourne residents (from within and outside of CoM boundaries), spanning ages, cultural backgrounds and levels of familiarity with heritage. This group included families, young people and students, as well as long-time residents with personal connections to the city’s evolution and newcomers curious about its identity and stories.

Peak Bodies

Stakeholders from government agencies, statutory authorities and industry organisations in planning, environment, architecture, heritage and cultural policy. Their perspectives reflected legislative frameworks, professional standards and mandates to influence or deliver policy at scale, offering strategic insights into how heritage intersects with planning, governance and community wellbeing.

Heritage Societies + Residents Groups

Local historical societies, volunteer-led community groups and individuals with long-standing commitments to protecting Melbourne’s cultural and built heritage. Embedded in local communities, they brought deep knowledge, passion and strong advocacy grounded in lived experience and long-term civic participation.

Businesses

Commercial property owners, retail and hospitality operators, many working within heritage buildings or precincts. Their views were shaped by the realities of maintaining heritage properties, navigating planning processes and balancing conservation with economic viability. They emphasised heritage’s role in precinct identity, tourism and vibrancy alongside business sustainability.

3.3 Consultation

As part of the Draft Melbourne Heritage Strategy (Draft Strategy) consultation, the City of Melbourne (CoM) and Open House Melbourne (OHM) co-designed and delivered a multifaceted engagement program designed to build heritage literacy, invite critical dialogue and facilitate broad, inclusive participation. Beginning with a digital survey that was shared and distributed widely through Participate Melbourne, the engagement program led by OHM addressed three levels of participation and knowledge building.

At the entry level, the Open Play program was designed to engage children with ideas of heritage and sought feedback from their parents or carers. At a deeper level the panel conversations and the Open Studio program were designed to reach broad audiences, presenting the complexity of heritage in accessible and relatable ways. At the most immersive level, the Walkshops were developed to provide a

place-based, reflective experience that invited participants to think critically about the Draft Strategy in the context of Melbourne's changing neighbourhoods and challenges, engaging participants in dialogue and deeper personal reflection.

3.3.1 Program delivery

OHM delivered two panel discussions designed to unpack the Draft Strategy's key themes, an Open Play family workshop, an Open Studio aimed at tertiary design students and three key stakeholder Walkshops which integrated information, experience and participation.

A total of 691 people participated in the engagement program (351 attendance, 331 survey responses, 9 submission) and 918 interactions for the activations were received. Each program was paired with associated engagement activities and an online Participate Melbourne survey ran in parallel to the program. The following summarises the engagement activities delivered as part of the Draft Heritage Strategy consultation program.

See Appendix A for a detailed overview of the consultation methods, activations and participation.

Panel conversations – General public

270 participants

Two panel conversations at Trades Hall *Stories of Heritage* and *Challenging Heritage or Heritage Challenges?* brought together speakers from government, academia, design and community sectors to unpack topics such as hidden histories, tangible and intangible heritage, climate adaptation, custodianship and the balance between growth and conservation.

Panels included facilitated Q&As and interactive Activations aligned to the Draft Strategy's five priorities. These included mapping exercises, visual prompts, voting activities and place-based storytelling, all designed to surface community values and deepen engagement beyond simple attendance.

Walkshops – Key Stakeholders

50 participants

Walkshops offered place-based learning opportunities for targeted stakeholder groups—peak bodies, heritage societies and residents groups, and business representatives—using curated walking tours to explore real-world examples of heritage in action. Participants reflected on the Draft Strategy's priorities in the context of liveable neighbourhoods, First Nations knowledge, sustainability and stewardship. Post-walk sessions enabled facilitated discussion and direct feedback.

Open Studio – University Students

18 participants

Open Studio with GML Heritage offered students and emerging professionals a behind-the-scenes look at heritage practice, with presentations and small-group discussions spanning archaeology, built heritage, inclusive narratives and climate resilience.

Open Play – Children and their families

13 participants

Open Play, held at City Library, engaged young people and families through a hands-on art activity using craft and photography to explore the question: *What makes something heritage?* The drop-in format supported informal creative participation with facilitators capturing parent feedback via onsite surveys.

Activations – All

918 interactions

Interactive activities (activations) designed to gather a variety of information both quantitative and qualitative accompanied all in-person programming, offering creative and tactile ways for participants to reflect on and respond to the Draft Strategy's five key priorities.

Participate Melbourne Survey – General public

331 responses

The Participate Melbourne survey, led by CoM, was the digital platform for community feedback on key Draft Strategy themes.

Additional Submissions

(9) additional submissions were received by CoM via email, providing an avenue for more detailed or formal feedback on the Draft Strategy from interested individuals and organisations.

3.3.2 Communication

The CoM and OHM employed complementary communications strategies to reach a broad cross-section of the general public, recognising that each organisation would engage different segments of the community.

OHM leveraged its established cultural audience through organic channels including Instagram, Facebook, e-newsletters (EDMs) and its website, targeting those already engaged with design, architecture, and urban issues. In parallel, the CoM undertook a more formal public engagement approach, using social media advertising, its Participate Melbourne platform and promotion through internal networks across council teams. This coordinated effort ensured the consultation reached both existing heritage-aware audiences and the broader public, including residents who may not typically engage with heritage discussions.

4. Insights

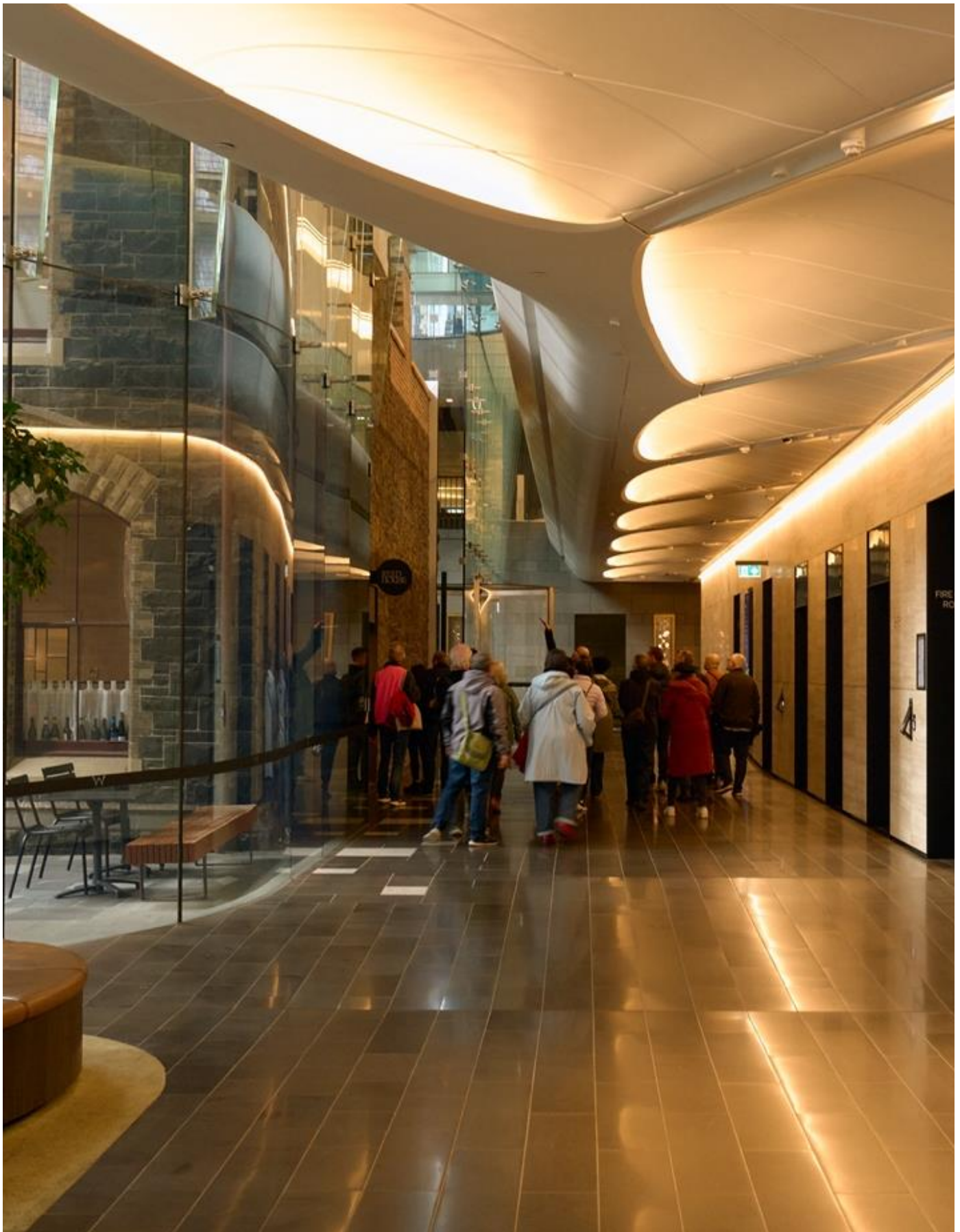
4.1 What we heard

The full 'What we heard' summary can be found in Appendix B.

General Public

Feedback from general public activations used at the public talks, Open Studio and Open Play sessions highlighted engaging with Aboriginal heritage in both formal and informal ways—through Welcome to Country, smoking ceremonies, exhibitions at cultural institutions, architectural works like the William Barak Building and even personal initiatives such as native planting and protest art. Walking tours and informal city walks were seen as a powerful tool to reveal layers of Indigenous knowledge embedded in the landscape. Participants characterised powerful heritage experiences as enriching, authentic and inclusive, calling for more layered storytelling to be delivered through tours, creative activations, digital platforms and educational partnerships.

Iconic sites such as Queen Victoria Market, NGV, Federation Square and Carlton Gardens were frequently identified as central to Melbourne's heritage identity, while neighbourhood reflections revealed strong connections to distinctive local cultural character and memory, such as Carlton's Italian heritage and the CBD's "hidden stories." Climate and biodiversity conversations showed clear support for adaptive reuse, retrofitting and sustainable approaches, with incentives for upgrading heritage buildings particularly valued. Stewardship feedback emphasised inclusivity, cultural safety and accessibility—calling for regular open days, online portals and the sharing of multi-layered histories. Participants consistently advocated for collaborative approaches that link heritage with design, education and business, ensuring heritage is woven into everyday civic life.



Participants affirmed the Draft Strategy direction while also pointing to opportunities for deeper collaboration, stronger sustainability incentives and more diverse storytelling, which inform the recommendations outlined later in this report.

Key Stakeholders

Insights gathered from key stakeholders during the Walkshops demonstrated interest in broader definitions of heritage that include intangible practices, ecological values and incorporating living traditions. Peak bodies stressed the need to reframe heritage through a contemporary and diverse lens—valuing heritage as both cultural and ecological. They highlighted the urgency of transparent, collaborative decision-making and the need to balance competing priorities such as housing, climate action and heritage protection. Business participants recognised the cultural and commercial value of heritage, identifying how heritage storytelling strengthens branding, identity and customer engagement, while also calling for support mechanisms to help them adaptively reuse heritage places.

Historical societies and resident groups highlighted the need for early, meaningful engagement with all stakeholders and expressed concern around planning protections. Their feedback called for increased government accountability and stronger statutory frameworks to safeguard heritage. Residents framed themselves as central custodians and advocates for heritage, contrasting at times with peak bodies' more top-down perspective. Across all groups, there was consensus on the value of living heritage and inclusive stewardship models, though participants stressed different roles and responsibilities across government, business and communities to ensure Melbourne's heritage is sustained and respected into the future.

Broadly, the key stakeholder feedback aligned with the Draft Strategy's definitions of heritage, embedding collaboration and prioritising adaptive reuse. At the same time, they highlighted areas where the Heritage Strategy could go further—particularly in ensuring stronger statutory protections, clarifying stewardship roles across sectors and embedding community voices earlier in decision-making.

Online Survey

Feedback from online surveys reinforced the Draft Strategy's priorities and went on to highlight strong support for immersive and inclusive storytelling, recognition of multicultural and under-represented histories and the protection of both built and intangible heritage. Respondents identified public artworks, signage and centres such as the Koorie Heritage Trust as key ways of experiencing Aboriginal heritage, while also calling for expanded co-naming, digital interpretation tools, and community-led storytelling. Many participants supported immersive events, precinct-based cultural activity, and stronger safeguards for at-risk sites, while noting frustration with demolition and "facadism." Climate and sustainability feedback emphasised practical incentives and guidance for retrofitting heritage buildings, aligning with the Draft Strategy's focus on adaptive reuse and climate-responsive heritage management.

Respondents consistently called for more accessible experiences—including open days, online portals, and diverse storytelling—to ensure heritage is visible and meaningful in everyday life. Survey analysis showed that residents tended to value local engagement and community learning, whereas non-residents placed greater emphasis on practical heritage resources, including sustainability guidance and adaptive reuse support.

Overall, the online surveys highlighted a clear and shared vision for Melbourne's heritage and reinforced the importance of embedding heritage in everyday cultural, social, and civic life, ensuring it remains a distinctive and living part of Melbourne for both residents and visitors.

Nine additional submissions were received in response to the Draft Strategy. Each presented distinct perspectives and concerns, these can be found summarised in Appendix B.

4.2 Heritage Values

Drawing on respondent's feedback, a wide spectrum of cultural, social, environmental and historical values emerge, reflecting the many ways people connect with place and identity. These values do not

simply describe what heritage is, but should actively shape the priorities and direction of the new Heritage Strategy, ensuring it responds to community perspectives and lived experience.

Community heritage values:

Meaningful and multi-layered connection to heritage

Participants expressed a desire for heritage that is emotionally meaningful, culturally rich and deeply connected to place:

- Heritage experiences were described as enriching, reflective, layered and inclusive.
- Intangible heritage—stories, food, music, rituals—was seen as central to identity and memory.
- Heritage was linked to green space, ecology and sensory memory.
- A 'biocultural' view emerged: valuing people, culture and environment as interconnected.

Sense and value of place

Participants valued heritage as part of daily life, tied to social history, identity and belonging through iconic landmarks, distinctive neighbourhoods and parklands gardens and landscapes:

- Key destinations included Queen Victoria Market, Botanic Gardens, NGV, Federation Square and Chinatown.
- Preference for walkable, 'culturally rich' precincts.
- Neighbourhoods like Carlton, Parkville, North Melbourne, and East Melbourne celebrated for multiculturalism, green space and built character.
- Local pride tied to social history, identity and belonging.
- Strong interest in the heritage of Melbourne's parklands, gardens and landscapes.

Living heritage

The community sees heritage as a living, dynamic system that grows alongside the city and its people:

- Adapt to social and environmental shifts
- Respond to housing and climate pressures
- Embrace contemporary relevance and challenge perceptions of heritage as outdated, fixed or elitist

Inclusive, accessible heritage

Participants expressed strong values around inclusion, seeing heritage as something that should reflect many voices, stories and ways of knowing. This included:

- Valuing cultural safety and respectful collaboration with First Nations communities
- Embracing truth-telling, language revival, and recognition of deep time and Country
- Championing physical and digital access to heritage places and stories
- Honouring untold, multi-layered histories that reflect diverse lived experiences
- Recognising heritage as a shared civic resource—open, participatory and welcoming to all

Community participation and empowerment

Participants highlighted that heritage should be shaped by community knowledge and experience. It benefits from collaborative leadership and the fostering of shared responsibility across sectors and the community:

- Empowering diverse community voices
- Supporting and valuing local knowledge
- Enabling co-designed and collaborative processes
- Strengthening heritage through trust, resourcing, and partnership
- Encouraging creative and cultural expression as a form of stewardship

4.3 Feedback on Draft Strategy Themes

The community consultation demonstrates broad support for the Draft Strategy mission and approach² and the key priorities it lays out. Agreement that a people centric approach is needed as evidenced the strong positive responses across the consultation events program for intangible cultural heritage.

The following section provides a detailed analysis of the consultation findings, identifying areas where community feedback strongly aligns with the Draft Strategy's intent and priorities, as well as highlighting gaps and opportunities for refinement.

4.3.1 What's Working Well / Strong Alignment with the Draft Strategy

4.3.1.1 *Aboriginal Heritage*

- There is strong alignment with the community's call for truth-telling, recognition of Country and the inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives in planning and interpretation.
- The Draft Strategy's naming of this as a standalone theme demonstrates a commitment to visibility and priority.
- The importance of Aboriginal heritage being understood as living, place-based and inseparable from ecological and social systems is also reflected in the wider Draft Strategy narrative.
- There is community support for tools like the Mapping Aboriginal Melbourne platform, but low awareness of their existence (76% unaware).

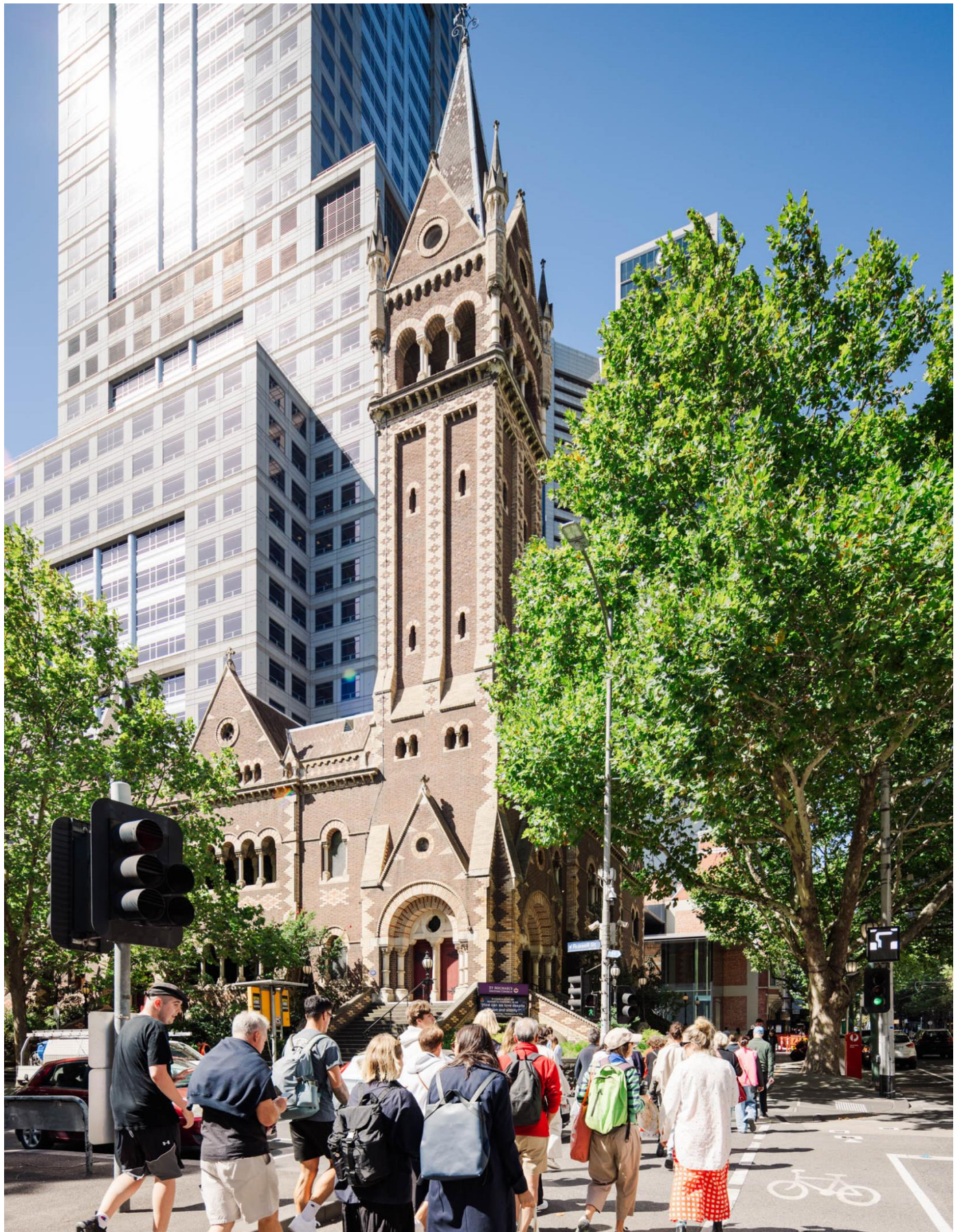
4.3.1.2 *Powerful Experiences*

- The community's emphasis on experiences that are *enriching, authentic, reflective* and *inclusive* is well-supported in this theme.
- The Draft Strategy recognises the emotional and layered nature of heritage, aligning with how people want to feel connected through storytelling, interpretation and participation.
- The value of oral histories and the arts is echoed in proposed operational approaches.
- Public support for immersive and participatory formats—like walking tours, arts activations, festivals, events and interactive signage—shows alignment with the Draft Strategy's interest in layered, emotionally resonant storytelling.
- There is particular enthusiasm for connecting interpretation with lived experience and community voice, as seen in calls for soundscapes, storytelling apps and oral histories.

4.3.1.3 *Distinctive Places*

- The Draft Strategy's support for precinct-based thinking reflects strong public interest in recognising the unique social, ecological and architectural identities of different neighbourhoods.
- Support for heritage storytelling beyond the built form—such as Camp Sovereignty, early utility projects, and sites with no remaining fabric—aligns with Draft Strategy intentions to broaden definitions of significance.
- The Draft Strategy's attention to precinct-based planning and the uniqueness of local heritage aligns strongly with community feedback that values walkable, much-loved places like Queen Victoria Market, Chinatown, Carlton Gardens and the Yarra River.
- There is clear support for heritage addressing not only architecture and built fabric but also cultural, social and ecological practices and issues.
- The role of heritage in attracting business, tourism and layered experiences has been well captured.

² p23 DHS



4.3.1.4 *The Climate and Biodiversity Emergency*

- The Draft Strategy acknowledges the urgency of climate change and its intersection with heritage.
- There is strong public support for retrofitting and adaptive reuse of large heritage buildings as a response to climate change.
- Accessible guides for sustainable upgrades (supported by over 400 respondents across four options) show strong alignment with the Draft Strategy's goals to intersect heritage and sustainability.
- Support for Indigenous plantings reflects alignment with ecologically grounded cultural practice.
- The inclusion of landscape and biodiversity as part of cultural significance is a strength.

4.3.1.5 *Stewardship*

- The Draft Strategy identifies the need for shared responsibility, which aligns closely with the emphasis from community groups, businesses and professionals on collaborative, well-resourced and community-led stewardship.
- The recognition of education and advocacy aligns with professional sector needs.
- There is support for the idea of a 'heritage network'—a collaborative model of governance and knowledge sharing—which fits the Draft Strategy's direction.
- The community supports shared care models and sees value in co-designed, neighbourhood-level stewardship of local places, particularly those not yet formally recognised.
- Respondents called for practical education tools—including policy clarity, visual guides, and reduced red tape—mirroring the Draft Strategy's intent to support capacity-building.

4.4.2 Areas for Further Development or Clarification

4.4.2.1 *Aboriginal Heritage*

- While the theme is present, respondents called for stronger commitments to co-governance, not just consultation.
- More clarity is needed on how First Nations voices will lead and how their knowledge systems will be embedded across other themes, not siloed.
- The Draft Strategy could better articulate how cultural safety will be ensured and how consultation will move beyond acknowledgment to shared decision-making.
- The Draft Strategy should increase visibility and access to First Nations-led digital tools—especially given low awareness (76% unaware) of Mapping Aboriginal Melbourne.
- Support for deeper integration of Aboriginal culture across events, signage and city design suggests the need to embed First Nations knowledge beyond a single theme or section.

4.4.2.2 *Powerful Experiences*

- The Draft Strategy could further clarify how intangible heritage will be supported, particularly lived traditions, migrant histories and ongoing cultural practices.
- While storytelling is mentioned, mechanisms for community co-creation, rather than top-down interpretation, need to be explored.
- There is an opportunity to support more inclusive formats for heritage communication—digital, performative, sensory and multilingual.
- The Draft Strategy should clearly outline how community-led storytelling—particularly by multicultural, LGBTQIA+ and working-class communities—will be supported and woven into the operational outputs.
- Consider investing in heritage communication across multiple formats: soundscapes, digital tours, app-based guides and multilingual interpretation.

- More public-facing activations in underused heritage buildings were requested—opportunities exist for arts and cultural partnerships here.

4.4.2.3 *Distinctive Places*

- There could be stronger support for emerging and overlooked places, not just established icons.
- The Draft Strategy should consider greater protection for intangible character, such as social rituals, community uses and layered histories beyond the built environment. We saw support for landscapes and public realm.
- Clarity is needed around how heritage and new development can co-exist, with tools or examples provided.
- Support exists for recognising 'lost' or 'erased' heritage places—such as Henderson Springs or Little Lon—as part of Melbourne's layered story, can the Draft Strategy provide more?
- The Draft Strategy could better explain how everyday buildings (post-war flats, commercial sites) are being reassessed for their cultural and social value.

4.4.2.4 *The Climate and Biodiversity Emergency*

- The Draft Strategy could go further in aligning with circular economy principles, including clearer support for adaptive reuse frameworks.
- The link between traditional ecological knowledge and sustainable planning could be more explicit.
- Specific actions on tree protection, urban cooling and green infrastructure in heritage precincts could be strengthened.
- Clarify how regulations around planning permits, solar panels and double glazing could be made more flexible without compromising heritage significance.
- Address community desire for low-barrier, household-level actions, such as retrofitting guides and greening initiatives.
- Opportunities exist to foreground traditional ecological knowledge, particularly in relation to Indigenous planting and waterway care.

4.4.2.5 *Stewardship*

- The Draft Strategy should outline clearer roles, responsibilities and funding pathways for community groups and small organisations undertaking local heritage care.
- There is a gap around how the CoM will support broader education, including skills training and public understanding of heritage's value (is there a commitment to intersect with other tiers of government?)
- Clarify how feedback will be looped back to communities.
- There was interest expressed in a Heritage Network model by resident group stakeholders.
- Participants expressed a need for clearer information about which places are heritage-listed and how the public can nominate, protect or care for unlisted sites.
- Greater emphasis should be placed on maintaining minimum standards for heritage places and deterring demolition by neglect.
- Consider incorporating a public-facing feedback loop so residents can see how their contributions are reflected in outcomes.



5. Recommendations

The Draft Strategy Community Consultation program generated rich qualitative insights, reflecting a high level of informed and engaged community participation. Four key areas for further development emerged:

- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
- Leadership, Governance and Accountability
- Adaptation, Climate and Contemporary Challenges
- Communication, Engagement and Storytelling

While aligned with the Strategy's overarching themes, the following recommendations capture the breadth of community sentiment, applying across the entire Strategy—and, in some cases, extending beyond its scope. They highlight opportunities for the City of Melbourne to strengthen heritage outcomes, demonstrate leadership, respond to emerging challenges and communicate heritage more effectively.

5.1 Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Intangible Heritage

Whilst intangible heritage is acknowledged in the mission, it is under-recognised across the Draft Strategy and primarily sits under "Powerful Experiences," rather than being embedded across all themes.

Recommendations:

- Embed intangible heritage—including oral histories, social rituals, food, memory, and language—across all themes (noting less relevant to Climate and Biodiversity).
- Fund community-led projects that celebrate and protect these living traditions and ensure heritage policy recognises more than just the built form.
- Support the protection and promotion of rituals, stories, and languages through formal policy and listings, not just events or interpretation.

Ways of Working

Inclusivity is highlighted in the Draft Strategy however the document could go further in addressing specific barriers to heritage participation—especially for different demographics people with disabilities, CALD communities, people experiencing disadvantage and residents/tenants.

Recommendations:

- Commit to intersectional approaches to consultation and activation (e.g. language access, childcare, mobility needs).
- Embed cultural safety principles in engagement with First Nations and migrant communities.
- Ensure place-based stories reflect a pluralistic Melbourne, not just dominant or institutional narratives.
- Build on strong support for diverse storytelling, including Jewish, Arab, LGBTQIA+, and working-class histories.

Multicultural and Migrant Heritage

While multicultural sites (e.g., Lygon Street, Chinatown) were highlighted by engagement participants, the Draft Strategy identifies the heritage of multicultural communities under 'distinctive places' but does not articulate how migrant histories might be identified, protected or celebrated.

Recommendations:

- Include migrant and diasporic heritage within powerful experiences and stewardship.
- Support cultural mapping, oral histories, and new heritage listings that reflect Melbourne's diverse migration stories—especially more recent histories and intangible contributions.
- Partner with multicultural communities and organisations to co-design heritage programs, ensuring cultural safety and community-led decision-making (ways of working).
- Recognise food, festivals, places of worship, and everyday spaces as vital parts of living migrant heritage—not just landmark architecture.

- Celebrate living multicultural heritage through food, fashion, music, small business precincts, and religious architecture—not just iconic historical narratives

Intergenerational Participation and Youth Engagement

There's limited focus on how younger generations are meaningfully engaged in shaping the future of heritage. While young people (students and early career) showed strong participation in the consultation, there's no obvious pathway for ongoing involvement.

Recommendations:

- Co-design programs with schools, unis, and youth organisations.
- Create heritage-based learning opportunities tied to climate action, design, and civic participation.
- Feature youth voices in interpretation, tours, or online storytelling platforms.
- Enable digital storytelling platforms where young people can engage more meaningfully.

5.2 Leadership, Governance and Accountability

Role of the City of Melbourne as a Leader

The Strategy could more clearly articulate how the CoM will lead by example—in its own buildings, communications, procurement or capital works programs.

Recommendations:

- Pilot best-practice adaptive reuse or interpretation in city-owned heritage assets.
- Show leadership on climate-smart heritage retrofits, interpretation, and inclusive public space design.
- Use city infrastructure (e.g. signage, lighting, events) to demonstrate living heritage in action.
- Highlight potential for demonstration projects in lesser-known or empty heritage buildings.

Definition and Language Around Heritage Strategy

There remains confusion and misconception about what 'heritage' actually means—particularly among the general public and new communities.

Recommendations:

- Use consistent, accessible language throughout (e.g., define 'adaptive reuse', 'cultural significance' in plain terms), giving examples to help people understand its nuance and complexity.
- Provide diagrams or infographics to show how heritage intersects with other city priorities (housing, climate, equity, etc.).
- Include and define the concept of 'living heritage'—capturing both ongoing cultural practices and adaptive use of physical places to respond to societal needs and values
- The strategy should clearly define heritage across the tangible and intangible.

Roles and Responsibilities

Participants identified frustration with current heritage planning processes and demonstrated concern with issues such as developer influence, demolition by neglect and discretionary approvals.

Feedback included:

- Advocating for firm, non-discretionary heritage protections in the planning scheme.
- Creating clear policy positions on vacant and neglected buildings, e.g., higher rates, mandatory upkeep, or incentives for adaptive reuse.
- Reviewing past planning amendments that may have weakened protections.
- Improving transparency by publicly sharing planning outcomes involving heritage properties—both approvals and losses.
- Consider advocating for a review of facadism practices, which many survey respondents harshly criticised.

Recommendations:

- Clarify the scope of the Strategy and its relationship to other governing regulations, policies, operational plans (beyond CoM) etc.
- Clarify the role and responsibilities of who ensures the Strategy is achieved.

Measurement, Accountability and Feedback Loops

There is currently no clear way for the community to know how their input is used, or how success will be measured.

Recommendations:

- Introduce clear KPIs and evaluation mechanisms aligned to each Strategy theme.
- Define feedback loops and reporting cycles—what has changed in response to engagement, what hasn't, and why.
- Use dashboards or annual reports to show progress across key themes, e.g., number of buildings adapted vs. demolished, new stories collected, First Nations projects funded.

5.3 Adaptation, Climate and Contemporary Challenges

Adaptation: Housing + Accessibility

Participants raised concerns about how heritage places can be adapted to meet contemporary needs such as housing and accessibility, offering a range of ideas for the City of Melbourne to consider.

Recommendations:

- Demonstrate how heritage and housing goals can coexist through adaptive reuse, thoughtful density, and design quality.
- Use demonstration projects to show how heritage places can accommodate housing, particularly social infrastructure, without erasure.
- Support policy alignment between heritage and housing sectors—ensuring heritage is considered early in housing policy and planning frameworks.
- Incentivise the retention and reuse of heritage fabric in publicly funded housing projects to showcase sustainable, culturally rich models of urban renewal.
- Advocate for the inclusion of heritage-informed housing design guides, especially for medium-density and affordable housing.
- Outline how heritage buildings can sensitively respond to the needs of people with disability through inclusive design solutions, without compromising heritage significance.
- Provide clearer planning guidance and case studies that show how accessibility upgrades—such as ramps, lifts, and tactile signage—can be successfully and appropriately integrated into heritage places.

Climate Resilience in Action

The Draft Strategy frames climate and biodiversity as an opportunity, however many respondents consider the climate emergency as a primary risk to heritage.

Recommendations:

To complement the Strategy the CoM has the opportunity to:

- Showcase best-practice climate adaptation in heritage sites and support innovation in reuse over demolition.
- Leverage traditional knowledge and design—including Indigenous land management practices and historic climate-responsive architecture—to inform future planning.
- Embed heritage into climate policy by aligning heritage protection with circular economy, biodiversity and liveable city goals within council.
- Develop plain-language sustainability guides, as requested by 128 respondents, and ensure climate-smart retrofits are embedded in capital works.



5.4 Communication, Engagement and Storytelling

Communicating Heritage

The Draft Strategy community engagement revealed a communication gap, with limited public clarity on how heritage values, decisions and opportunities are effectively shared with the broader public—particularly in ways that are inclusive, engaging and accessible across diverse communities.

Recommendations:

- Take a multi-tiered approach to heritage engagement in the city: accessible, introductory materials for those who are curious but less familiar, alongside more immersive and in-depth opportunities for those who are already engaged and seeking deeper involvement.
- Adjacent to the Strategy, develop a city-wide heritage communications plan that includes place-based storytelling, digital tools, and visual signage to make heritage (and the Strategy) more visible, accessible, relatable and locally meaningful.
- Develop inclusive opportunities for communities to come together to share knowledge, celebrate diverse heritage experiences, and learn from one another through events, workshops, storytelling and local partnerships.

Creative Practice and the Arts

Creative practices and the arts were strongly highlighted by participants as powerful ways to communicate heritage and engage the public with heritage places.

Recommendations:

- Embed arts-based approaches in heritage practice—such as festivals, performance, residencies, and public art—to activate places, expand access, and deepen engagement.
- Collaborate with local creatives, including migrant and First Nations artists, to reimagine sites and share layered, place-based stories that reflect evolving identities.
- Support responsive, short-term activations—like installations or performances that engage with seasonal, social, or environmental shifts—highlighting heritage as dynamic and alive.
- Create and support programs that blend celebration with reflection, such as festivals, walking tours, sound trails or storytelling evenings, to draw people to lesser-known heritage places in meaningful ways.
- Position the arts not just as an interpretation tool, but as a core method of heritage engagement and storytelling—across all Draft Strategy themes.

Innovation and Digital Engagement

Participants support the use of digital tools such as QR codes, soundscapes and online platforms to communicate heritage however, there is limited awareness of the CoM's existing resources (eg Mapping Aboriginal Melbourne). This presents an opportunity for the CoM to consider leveraging digital tools to better communicate heritage values and stories.

Recommendations:

- Recognise and accommodate evolving technologies by enabling heritage systems and frameworks to adapt and integrate with new innovations.
- Develop city-wide digital heritage infrastructure—such as walking/cycling heritage trails (and the like), archives, and interpretation tools.
- Ensure digital platforms are inclusive (multi-lingual, accessible) and creatively engage younger and underrepresented audiences.
- Partner with artists, technologists, and communities to co-create immersive digital experiences—such as augmented reality, podcasts, and virtual reconstructions.
- Invest in and use digital platforms to collect and share community stories, allowing for evolving, user-generated content that reflects diverse perspectives and lived experience. These platforms should be youth-friendly and multilingual digital platforms.

Economic and Workforce Development

The Draft Strategy underrepresents the economic and employment potential of heritage—particularly its role in tourism, the creative industries and traditional trades. It should recognise heritage as a jobs-rich sector and support initiatives that ensure long-term industry sustainability.

Recommendations:

- Measure economic impact of heritage precincts.
- Leverage heritage precincts as local economic engines, attracting tourism, small businesses, and creative enterprises through place-based investment and marketing.
- Align with Melbourne's creative and economic development goals.
- Incentivise private and social enterprise investment in heritage places, unlocking job creation while retaining cultural value.
- Promote Melbourne's heritage as a distinctive economic asset in global city branding and tourism campaigns.

6. Engagement Evaluation

The Draft Melbourne Heritage Strategy community consultation reached a broad and diverse range of community members, professionals, and stakeholders through a mix of programmed events, surveys and digital engagement as detailed in Appendix A.

A total of 351 people participated in the Open House Melbourne program events. Observational data indicated a cross-section of age groups were present across the various programs. At the first panel, a slightly higher proportion of attendees looked to be aged 55 and over, and no children were observed. The second panel, *Challenging Heritage or Heritage Challenges*, skewed younger, with more attendees observed in the 18–45 age bracket, also with no children observed.

The Open Studio session, was notable for attracting a group of generally younger participants, including students who attended to learn more about heritage in practice. Meanwhile, the Open Play session, aimed at engaging children and families, recorded families visiting the library. The Walkshop sessions were targeted stakeholder workshops, representing a well-rounded cross-section of professional bodies and sector leaders.

There were a total of 331 individual contributions, with survey analytics showing 3,141 unique visitors, 3,602 visits and 4,900 total views to the survey webpage. The peak activity occurred on 11 June, resulting in 72 submissions, with 78% of responses (266) received in the final week of consultation.

Beyond formal survey responses, additional inputs came through stakeholder engagements and public activations. The stakeholder Walkshops generated 546 data points, and public activations contributed a further 918 data points, supporting a robust evidence base for community values, priorities, and expectations around heritage.

Collectively, this comprehensive and multi-channel engagement approach has drawn in new voices, sustained relationships with key stakeholders, and strengthened the evidence base to inform the development of a more inclusive and forward-looking heritage Draft Strategy.

7. Consultation Summary

The Draft Melbourne Heritage Strategy consultation has demonstrated strong community and stakeholder support for a people-centred approach to heritage that values both tangible and intangible dimensions of Melbourne's identity. Through a comprehensive engagement program—spanning public events with accompanying creative activations, targeted stakeholder workshops (Walkshops) and the Participate Melbourne survey—diverse voices contributed perspectives on the Draft Strategy and the future of heritage in the city.

The consultation process successfully broadened participation beyond traditional heritage audiences, engaging young people, families, businesses, residents and professional stakeholders. Survey results and event data confirmed both a high level of interest and a willingness to contribute meaningfully to the future of Melbourne’s heritage. Importantly, over half of survey respondents were new to CoM consultation processes, signalling success in reaching underrepresented voices.

Participants consistently emphasised the importance of truth-telling, Aboriginal cultural leadership, inclusive storytelling and recognition of everyday as well as iconic places. Feedback highlighted strong alignment between community values and the Draft Strategy’s five priorities: Aboriginal heritage, powerful experiences, distinctive places, the climate and biodiversity emergency, and stewardship. At the same time, participants identified areas for further development, including clearer mechanisms for recognising intangible and multicultural heritage, improved communication and visibility of heritage tools and processes between CoM and stakeholders, stronger connections between heritage and housing and more practical resources to support adaptive reuse, sustainability and inclusive stewardship.

The consultation findings have directly informed a set of recommendations that aim to strengthen the Strategy’s delivery and impact. These recommendations emphasise embedding Aboriginal cultural leadership and truth-telling throughout implementation; improving recognition and visibility of intangible, multicultural and everyday heritage; enhancing communication and accessibility of heritage tools for both communities and professionals; and developing practical guidance and incentives to support adaptive reuse, sustainability and housing outcomes. Together, these recommendations provide a clear pathway for translating community priorities into actionable steps that will guide the protection, celebration and stewardship of Melbourne’s heritage over the coming decade.

The Draft Heritage Strategy community consultation and subsequent recommendations will be considered as part of the final Heritage Strategy in 2025, including an implementation plan with agreed actions and timeframes.



Stories of Heritage panel conversation at Trades Hall. Photo: Courtesy of Open House Melbourne.

Appendix A

Panel Conversations

The panel conversations formed a key pillar of the community consultation, designed to bring the Draft Melbourne Heritage Strategy to life through storytelling, personal reflection, the sharing of professional knowledge and public dialogue.

Held as evening events to maximise accessibility, each panel took place in Solidarity Hall at Trades Hall—an iconic, centrally located, heritage-listed venue that exemplifies Melbourne’s layered civic and social history. The public forum format invited Melburnians to engage with each panel’s theme through a facilitated conversation, followed by an audience Q&A, with questions submitted via Slido to encourage broad (anonymous) participation. Following the discussion, attendees were invited to take part in interactive Activations, providing an opportunity to reflect further and contribute directly to the Draft Heritage Strategy consultation.

Panel 1: Stories of Heritage

Thursday 8 May, 6.30-8pm

The *Stories of Heritage: A Panel Conversation* explored the many layers of Melbourne’s history, focusing on how storytelling acts as a powerful tool for deepening public connection to heritage. The conversation foregrounded the importance of recognising both celebrated and overlooked narratives in shaping our understanding of place. Framed within the context of the Strategy’s people-centred approach, the event encouraged panelist to reflect on whose stories are told, how they are preserved, and what heritage means in a rapidly evolving city.

Speakers Facilitated by Open House Melbourne’s Executive Director Tania Davidge, the panel featured:

- Jason Eades, Director Aboriginal Melbourne, City of Melbourne, who spoke to the role of First Nations perspectives and the importance of truth-telling in heritage work.
- Mark Wang, CEO of the Museum of Chinese Australian History, who shared insights into migrant histories and the role of cultural institutions in preserving community memory.
- Dr Helen Doyle, historian at GML Heritage, who brought a research-based lens to historical storytelling, with a focus on built form, archival practice, and cultural landscape.

Panel questions asked by host:

Question 1: Our city has heritage stories that are visible in its built fabric (examples - trades hall etc) this is the City’s tangible heritage. They speak of a time or place solidified in bricks and mortar. However, there are many histories that we don’t see - the city’s hidden histories. These might be social, environmental or historic - stories that might be better understood through oral or written narratives. From your perspective - what are some of Melbourne or Naarm’s most significant hidden histories?

Question 2: What are some good examples of how we are presenting the these stories?

Question 3: What are the challenges? What more could we be doing? What stories are we missing?

Question 4: What are the spaces and places you have visited that have done this well (communicated a places hidden histories or multi-layers) Can we learn from international examples?

Question 5 What does stewardship and/or custodianship mean in this context?

Panel 2: Challenging Heritage or Heritage Challenges?

Thursday 5 June, 6.30-8pm

Challenging Heritage or Heritage Challenges? explored how Melbourne's heritage can respond to contemporary pressures—particularly the housing crisis, climate emergency, and shifting social values. The discussion focused on balancing the protection of the city's character and identity with the need to ensure heritage places remain relevant, adaptive, and accessible for future generations.

Together, the panellists unpacked the complex tensions between conservation and change—debating how heritage can evolve to support sustainability, inclusivity, and urban growth without compromising its cultural value. The conversation encouraged attendees to critically reflect on what heritage protects, who it serves, and how it must adapt to remain meaningful in a rapidly changing city.

Speakers Facilitated by Jo Cannington, Director City Strategy at the City of Melbourne, the panel featured:

- Kerstin Thompson reflected on the challenge of developing new housing types within heritage contexts. She called for a future-focused, climate-responsive approach that expands heritage beyond physical fabric to include social and cultural values.
- Patrick Kennedy discussed the limitations of current heritage assessment processes and the need to resolve tensions with modern regulations. He advocated for creative adaptation as a way to bring new life and meaning to heritage infrastructure.
- James Lesh positioned heritage as a dynamic practice that can drive better outcomes in housing, design, and community life. He emphasised its role in addressing contemporary challenges, from equity to sustainability and net-zero goals.

Panel questions asked by host:

Question 1: The way we value heritage, and the types of heritage we value is always changing. For example, the Royal Exhibition Building was once being considered for demolition - it is now on the World Heritage Register and is a distinctive part of our City. How do we allow change without losing what future generations might value?

Question 2: Heritage can sometimes be seen as a barrier to change. How can we see it and value it as a feature of future growth? For example, can we allow for more housing but keep the character that makes our neighbourhoods desirable places to live?

Question 3: How should we address the impact of climate change on heritage sites and buildings? Do we need more flexible controls that enable changes with low impact on built fabric, but high impact on energy efficiency and thermal comfort? (e.g solar panels and double glazing)

Question 4: The draft Heritage Strategy takes a 'people centred' approach to heritage – what does this mean to you? How can this be reflected in the growth and change of our city? (people centred means highlighting community values and connections to places – emphasising social values.)

Question 5: How do we balance the interests of developers and property owners with the need to retain heritage values? Have you seen this done well in other parts of Australia or in other countries?

Question 6: The retrofit challenge has emerged recently as we try and find new uses for buildings such as office buildings. Should this be a focus for Australia as it is in the UK and other parts of Europe?

Question 7: How can heritage practice better reflect current and future community values?

Walkshops

Three Walkshops were held to engage specific stakeholder groups in meaningful, place-based conversations about the future of heritage in the city. Each Walkshop invited participants to experience a curated walking tour that unpacked the Draft Strategy's five key priorities through the direct experience of the built environment.

The Walkshop stakeholders were identified using internal City of Melbourne team lists and by reaching out across the organisation to tap into broader networks—including tourism businesses via

Experience Melbourne, local retailers through the Business Concierge, and peak bodies and industry experts through City Design, Climate Change and City Resilience, and Aboriginal Melbourne. Open House Melbourne invited people to each event through the booking system Humanitix.

- Peak bodies and community groups took part in Walkshops at Federation Square, exploring the site's cultural significance, architectural value, and evolving civic role.
- The business group participated in a separate Walkshop from Myers Place to City Library, using the surrounding laneways to prompt discussion around economic change, business challenges and examples of adaptive reuse.

Following each Walkshop, participants joined a facilitated session to reflect on what they had observed, share insights, and contribute directly to shaping the Strategy.

Fed Square Walking tour itinerary:

Stop 1 – The Square (in front of KHT): Aboriginal Heritage and Powerful Experiences The walkshop began by inviting participants to consider Federation Square as a site of living culture and ongoing connection to Country. The discussion highlighted the Tanderrum ceremony—revived on this site after more than a century—as a powerful example of cultural gathering and diplomacy, reinforcing the Square's social significance in Melbourne's collective memory and its role in recognising First Nations presence in the heart of the city.

Stop 2 – The Atrium: Distinctive Places and the Climate and Biodiversity Emergency Using Federation Square as a case study in both architectural innovation and environmental responsibility, this stop unpacked the Square's cultural significance, its rare example of large-scale deconstructivist design, and its role as a climate-resilient, carbon-neutral precinct featuring passive cooling, rainwater harvesting, and green infrastructure.

Stop 3 – Princes Walk (view of Fed Sq): Stewardship The last stop, invited participants to reflect on what it means to care for and sustain public places like Federation Square over time. Participants considered shifts in management, the evolving civic role of the Square, and how community-driven programming strengthens connection to place and heritage values.

Facilitated questions:

The questions asked during the facilitation were developed in collaboration with the City of Melbourne.

Peak bodies questions:

"Firstly allowing a moment of rest and reflection following the walking tour, individually think about Melbourne's diverse neighbourhoods and communities, what are some ways we can acknowledge intangible (living) heritage?"

"As a group, consider what does stewardship and/or custodianship mean in this context (the previous activity)? What are the roles of community groups, local government, state government, business, peak bodies in stewardship and promotion of 'heritage'?"

In a few words describe the biggest challenge for heritage currently. If you had 5 years to turn that around, what strategies would you undertake?

"Adapting to changing needs. What are factors that the Strategy should consider when balancing difficult decisions? Eg more housing or better sustainability"

Follow-up question, "How are you managing flooding, accessibility, adaptive reuse, embodied carbon, landscape design."

Heritage societies and resident group questions:

“Firstly allowing a moment of rest and reflection following the walking tour, individually think about Melbourne’s diverse neighbourhoods and communities, what are some ways we can acknowledge intangible (living) heritage?”

“As a group, consider what does stewardship and/or custodianship mean in this context (the previous activity)? What are the roles of community groups, local government, state government, business, peak bodies in stewardship and promotion of ‘heritage’?”

In a few words describe the biggest challenge for heritage currently. If you had 5 years to turn that around, what strategies would you undertake?

“Adapting to changing needs. What are factors that the Strategy should consider when balancing difficult decisions? Eg more housing or better sustainability”

“How can we (CoM) better engage with local groups?” “How would you envisage a heritage network working?”

Myers Place to City Library itinerary (Business stakeholders)

Stop 1 – Myers Place: Distinctive Places & Powerful Experiences Participants considered the layered history of Melbourne’s laneways—from informal slums and service routes to vibrant social and cultural hubs. The discussion explored how laneways have contributed to the city’s human scale and urban reinvigoration, especially following initiatives like Postcode 3000.

Stop 2 – Little Collins & Ridgeway Place: Distinctive Places This stop explored the concept of *borrowed amenity* and the surrounding architectural heritage, including the Melbourne Club and Lyceum Club. It highlighted the role of women in shaping modernist design and reflected on how heritage buildings contribute to the city’s cultural and spatial richness.

Stop 3 – Collins Place to Hoosier Lane: Climate and Biodiversity Emergency & Aboriginal Melbourne Participants examined adaptive reuse in the context of mid-century office buildings and the challenge of climate-resilient heritage. The walk also spotlighted First Nations storytelling in the urban landscape, including Maree Clarke’s *Barerarerungar*, which embeds Indigenous knowledge into the city’s built form.

Stop 4 – City Library: Stewardship The final stop considered the role of heritage in Melbourne’s shifting city economy. With the rise of experiential and cultural engagement over transactional visits, participants reflected on how the character and stories of heritage places add value, meaning, and vibrancy to the city—and why stewardship is a shared responsibility.

Facilitated questions (Business group):

Does the character of heritage places attract business’ and customers?

Does the story of these heritage places add value / meaning?

What are the main challenges of operating a business in a heritage place?

Where do get information on the requirements you need to comply with? Rank these is their ease of access and provision of quality information.

During the business Walkshop, participants completed a worksheet-style Activation designed to build understanding of heritage roles and processes through a mix of interactive quiz questions, including:

- Mix and match the number of heritage places and precincts in the City of Melbourne
- A quiz on “Who is responsible?” – distinguishing between the roles of City of Melbourne and Heritage Victoria
- A planning scenario asking participants to identify when a planning permit is required for a property listed as a local heritage place in the planning scheme

Open Studio

Open Studio: GML Heritage
GML Heritage Office, Drummond Street, Carlton
Thursday 29 May, 4-6pm

Hosted by GML Heritage, Open Studio provided a behind-the-scenes look at the daily workings of GML Heritage—a leading Australian heritage and archaeological consultancy with over 30 years' experience connecting people and place. Their multidisciplinary team includes archaeologists, architects, historians, Aboriginal Cultural Values specialists, built and landscape heritage experts, interpretation planners, and designers.

Through the presentation of real-time and past projects, students were given a tangible understanding of professional workflows, collaborative dynamics, and the kinds of complex, place-based challenges GML navigates across sectors.

Across a group presentation and small group sessions, a panel of experts shared insights across diverse themes central to both practice and the City's draft priorities:

- Edwina Jans – introduced the session, provided an overview of GML's multidisciplinary practice, and framed the discussion within the context of the Draft Melbourne Heritage Strategy and the future of heritage in professional practice.
- Kristine Slawinski unpacked the often-overlooked heritage of interiors, showing how design elements can embody memory, use, and meaning.
- Chairim Byun explored heritage resilience, considering how heritage places can respond to and withstand environmental and social pressures.
- Therese McCarthy offered a global perspective through her work on World Heritage, focusing on the Royal Exhibition Building.
- Dr Christina Dyson discussed people-centred heritage, with a spotlight on the City of Yarra's LGBTIQ+ Heritage Study and the value of inclusive, community-led narratives.
- Emma Moore presented on Aboriginal cultural values and archaeology, reflecting on how these continue to shape and inform contemporary society and heritage decision-making.

Students and facilitators were highly engaged throughout the session, with nearly a third of the time dedicated to debriefing and asking thoughtful, specific questions following each small group presentation. All participants actively took part in the interactive activations located throughout the building, contributing to a lively and collaborative learning environment.

Open Play

Open Play, Open House Melbourne's youth design literacy program, was presented at the City Library—a hands-on, drop-in session designed to engage families and young people. Using art and craft as the hook, the activity encouraged creative exploration of what heritage means, inviting children to reflect on the past and imagine the future of the city in a playful, accessible way.

In this drop-in art and craft session, children used black-and-white images of heritage and imagined future heritage places to create thoughtful and playful collages exploring the question: *What makes something heritage?* Pops of colour were added for fun and expression, and the finished artworks were transformed into 'film rolls' and placed inside cardboard cameras—connecting the past, present and future through a child's lens.

All materials were provided, and families could participate at their own pace. The session offered a fun, accessible way to contribute to the city's heritage conversation through creativity and imagination.

Facilitators actively engaged with parents to complete the survey via iPads provided.

Activations

The Activations were designed to address the five key priorities identified in the Draft Heritage Strategy as follows:

Aboriginal Heritage

1. Panel attendees were invited to engage with the Aboriginal Melbourne mapping tool through an interactive iPad display, allowing them to explore Indigenous heritage digitally.
2. Participants at both panels and Open Studio shared their personal experiences of Aboriginal heritage in the city by writing responses anonymously on postcards, which were then collected in a submission box.

Powerful Experiences

1. Attendees of the first panel, workshops, and Open Studio were invited to engage with a crossword puzzle activity where they circled their top three words that resonate with a powerful heritage experience in the City of Melbourne. This activity helped identify key themes that shape how people connect with heritage.

The word list included terms like *Transformative, Celebratory, Collaborative, Family, Traditional, Reflective, Immersive, Pride, Emotional, Inspiring, Authentic, Layered, Inclusive, Educational, Nostalgic, Timeless, Connected, Customary, Enriching, and Legacy.*

2. A vibrant, interactive visual prompt featuring colourful speech bubbles invited participants to respond to the question: *“How do you think the City of Melbourne can better share the many layers of our history with people who live, work, or visit the city?”* People wrote their ideas directly onto the bubbles, resulting in a visually rich display that captured a wide range of creative suggestions—going well beyond the options provided in the formal survey.

Distinctive Places

1. Panel guests were invited to create a personal Melbourne itinerary by using a piece of string to loop together a minimum of three heritage places they would recommend to a friend or family member visiting the city. The City of Melbourne identified 22 key heritage sites for participants to choose from, including landmarks like the Queen Victoria Market, Federation Square, Carlton Gardens, the MCG, and the Capitol Theatre.

Each participant used a string colour corresponding to their age group (0–24, 25–34, 35–49, 50–64, 65+), allowing for insights into generational patterns in place-based heritage preferences.

2. As part of the workshops as a warm-up exercise during the peak body and community group sessions, and the first panel event, participants were invited to reflect on what is special to them about their neighbourhood in relation to Melbourne’s diverse cultural heritage. Responses were written on paper and placed into dedicated buckets for each neighbourhood. This activation encouraged place-based storytelling and helped capture what communities value most about their local areas.

Climate and biodiversity emergency

At both panel events, the Open Studio, and Workshops (excluding business), participants responded to survey question #7 — *“What would help you better understand how heritage can assist the community to respond to the evolving climate and biodiversity emergency?”* — by placing one or two pipe cleaners into jars representing their top preferences. This tactile, visual activity helped gauge collective priorities around sustainability, adaptation, and knowledge-sharing in heritage contexts.

Stewardship

At both panel events, the Open Studio, and workshops as a warm-up exercise during the peak body and community group sessions, guests received two stickers upon arrival/departure to vote on their top preferences in response to the question: *“How can we make our heritage places more accessible and inclusive for the public?”* This simple, visual activation allowed participants to express their priorities around inclusion, cultural safety, physical access, and broader public engagement with heritage places.

Participate Melbourne Survey

The Participate Melbourne survey was developed through a collaborative process between the City of Melbourne's Community Engagement and Heritage Strategy project teams. An initial foundation meeting was held to align the survey's design with the consultation's overarching purpose and objectives. Towards the end of the development process, the Director of City Strategy reviewed the questions to ensure they met strategic expectations and standards. The survey was live on the Participate Melbourne platform from 5 May to 16 June 2025. During this period, the page received 3,141 unique visitors and 4,900 total views, resulting in 341 completed surveys. The survey formed a core component of the public consultation process, enabling wide-reaching community input into the Draft Melbourne Heritage Strategy.

The questions were:

1. How have you learned about or explored the Draft Heritage Strategy so far?
2. Which consultation event did you attend?

Aboriginal Heritage

3. How have you experienced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander connections, heritage and stories in the city?
4. Have you previously heard of or have you used the Mapping Aboriginal Melbourne Tool?

Powerful Experiences

5. How do you think the City of Melbourne can better share the many layers of our history with people who live, work, or visit the city?
6. Heritage places often play a key role in creating the distinctive neighbourhoods that make up the City of Melbourne. How can we better recognise and reflect the special qualities that communities value in their neighbourhoods?

Distinctive Places

7. We aim to embed heritage into future city planning and design, ensuring our neighbourhoods remain distinctive while they grow and adapt to change. What work should we prioritise to support this?

Climate and biodiversity

8. What would help you better understand how heritage can assist the community to respond to the evolving climate and biodiversity emergency?

Stewardship

9. How can we make our heritage places more accessible and inclusive for the public?
10. Melbourne is Australia's capital of history and culture - attracting visitors and boosting the local economy. What do you think City of Melbourne could do to better understand and promote the value of heritage to visitors and locals?
11. If you have any additional feedback or comments on the key priorities in the Draft Heritage Strategy, please share them here:

Additional submissions

Additional Submissions were also received via email, providing an avenue for more detailed or formal feedback on the Draft Strategy from interested individuals and organisations.

Appendix B

1 General Public Activations

The following section summarises data collected through public-facing activations undertaken during the Draft Strategy consultation (Public talks, Open Studio and Open Play events), organised by key thematic priorities.

1.1 Aboriginal Heritage

As part of the Activations, 64 responses were written on postcards, with respondents sharing their personal experiences and reflections on how they have engaged with Aboriginal heritage in Melbourne. Participants described engaging with Aboriginal heritage in Melbourne through educational experiences including tours, talks (41%), the landscape and the public realm (38%), the arts (30%), museums and cultural institutions (22%) and First Nations' Welcome to Country ceremonies and talks/events and Acknowledgements of Country (19%) and signage and naming (9%).

The responses demonstrated a recurring sentiment that Aboriginal heritage in Melbourne is often experienced in subtle, "quieter ways"—through observation, storytelling, cultural expression and elements in the landscape—both built and natural.

Participants cited Welcome to Country ceremonies, smoking ceremonies, and acknowledgements of Country at public events, festivals and universities as key touchpoints. Cultural institutions like the Koorie Heritage Trust, Botanic Gardens, the State Library of Victoria, NGV and Heide MoMA were commonly mentioned for their exhibitions and public programming. A couple of responses included festivals such as the Yarra River Fest.

Several participants (13%) reflected on walking tours—both formal (such as those led by the Koorie Heritage Trust and universities and informal (city walks, walking trails)—as meaningful ways in which significant sites like Birrarung Marr, the Birrarung/Yarra and Royal Park were highlighted, helping to reveal the layers of Indigenous knowledge embedded in the city's landscape. Others spoke of learning through university studies, especially in design, architecture and environmental subjects, where Indigenous perspectives were integrated into teaching and critique.

Art featured strongly across the responses and included murals, public artworks, and art in galleries and cultural institutions. Three respondents mentioned architectural installations and architecture incorporating First Nations elements or artwork, with one respondent mentioning the William Barak Building on Swanston Street, Carlton as a powerful reminder with a strong civic presence. Several participants mentioned personal or community initiatives such as native planting projects, school working bees, and fashion or protest art as ways Aboriginal heritage is expressed and engaged with by the broader community.

1.2 Powerful Experiences

1.2.1 Find-a-word puzzle

The Powerful Experience find-a-word puzzle activation received 69 responses; this activity was also used as a warm-up exercise during the Peak Body and Resident Group Walkshops. Participants were asked to *circle three words that resonated when thinking about a powerful heritage experience in Melbourne*. The most resonant words were:

- 'Enriching' (36%) – standing out as the most selected word
- 'Authentic' (28%) and 'reflective' (23%) followed closely, suggesting a desire for meaningful and thoughtful connections to heritage
- Other frequently selected words included 'layered' (22%), 'inclusive' (19%), and 'collaborative' (17%), highlighting themes of complexity, diversity, and shared experience

Words like ‘celebratory’, ‘legacy’, ‘connected’, and ‘educational’ also featured prominently, reflecting a wide range of values associated with heritage—from pride and learning to cultural continuity and emotional connection.

Overall, the results reveal that participants see powerful heritage experiences as those that are enriching, genuine, inclusive, and encourage deep reflection on the many layers of Melbourne’s past and present.

1.2.2 *Speech bubble*

In response to the speech bubble activation, 36 participants responded to the a questions that was adapted from the Participate Melbourne survey question 5. *“How do you think the CoM can better share the many layers of our history?”* with a wide range of creative, practical, and community-focused suggestions.

Many emphasised the importance of guided tours, heritage walks, and expert-led storytelling (22%), as well as interactive installations, photo exhibits, and soundscapes to bring heritage to life in various , immersive ways (17%). There was strong interest in using digital tools—such as virtual trails, QR-linked plaques, social media platforms (e.g. TikTok, Instagram), and public multimedia displays—to reach broader and younger audiences (33%). Participants also suggested educational options, like “Horrible Histories” style content and classroom partnerships, to build early connections to place and history (8%).

A high portion of responses advocated for better collaboration and community consultation across council teams, especially to link heritage with design, business, education, and events (31%). Ideas included using heritage as a storytelling tool for businesses, supporting cultural precincts, and involving local custodians and diverse voices in shaping narratives (17%). Suggestions included renaming iconic places, creating time capsules, and collecting community stories to deepen engagement and reflect the city’s many histories. Overall, participants called for more accessible, diverse, and layered storytelling that integrates heritage into everyday life and civic identity.

1.3 Distinctive places

1.3.1 *Iconic heritage sites*

Participants were asked to map out a cultural itinerary for visitors, selecting from 22 iconic heritage sites across Melbourne, with 69 people indicating 209 mentions of key sites. The Queen Victoria Market emerged as the clear favourite across all demographics, with 24 mentions (35%), reflecting its broad appeal as a vibrant, living heritage destination.

Other top choices included:

- The Tan + Royal Botanical Gardens (25%)
- NGV (23%), notably the most popular among 50–64 year olds
- Federation Square, Degraives Street, Chinatown, and the Shrine of Remembrance, all with 12 mentions each (17%)

Places like Lygon Street, Carlton; Carlton Gardens and the Royal Exhibition Building; Birrarung Marr and the Yarra River; and Flinders Street Station each received 11 mentions (16%), highlighting a strong preference for walkable precincts rich in cultural, social, and architectural significance.

Among 65+ participants, St Patrick’s Cathedral, Melbourne Zoo, and Old Melbourne Goal were equally the most selected sites—suggesting an interest in more historic and iconic institutions.

Of the participants, the most represented age group was 25–34 year olds, a group that showed strong engagement and a diverse range of itinerary choices, indicating a vibrant connection to Melbourne’s layered cultural landscape.

1.3.2 *Neighbourhoods*

During the activation seeking feedback on what is special to people about their neighbourhoods, participants were asked: *“Thinking about Melbourne’s diverse cultural heritage, what is special to you*

about this neighbourhood?” A total of 34 submissions highlighted a cross-section of valued local places and cultural connections.

Carlton (7 responses)

Carlton was celebrated for its Italian and multicultural heritage, student life, and lively culture. Responses mentioned iconic local institutions like The Clyde Hotel and Cyrus Art Lounge, as well as the Italian architectural influence, nightlife, and affordable food. Many reflected on Carlton as a place of refuge and learning, especially for University of Melbourne students, and as a layered cultural landscape blending Indigenous, migrant, and academic histories.

Carlton, Parkville & Surrounding Suburbs (3 responses)

These areas were seen as cultural crossroads—home to a blend of Indigenous, colonial, and migrant histories, as well as a place that fosters knowledge exchange through universities and museums. People appreciated the interwoven open spaces, food culture, and ongoing acknowledgement of heritage in daily life.

CBD (7 responses)

The CBD was described as rich with hidden stories, full of secret places, historic layers, and diverse personal memories. Participants reflected on sites like Hosier Lane, Queen Victoria Market, and NGV, and recognised the city as having “more history per square metre than almost anywhere else in Australia.” Some spoke about the poetics of loss, referencing places remembered through their demolition rather than preservation, like those in Whelan the Wrecker’s book.

East Melbourne (4 responses)

East Melbourne was valued for its heritage character, cobble streets, art deco apartments, and green spaces like Fitzroy Gardens. It was seen as a peaceful area that respects its architectural past and provides a strong connection to urban nature.

Parkville (4 responses)

Parkville was appreciated for its parklands, academic buildings, and deep time layers of history—particularly Royal Park’s Indigenous and colonial stories. Respondents saw it as a place where people, knowledge, and landscape intersect meaningfully.

North Melbourne (1 response)

North Melbourne was seen as a microcosm of contrast—from grand terraces to social housing, and light industrial landmarks like the Meat Market. A respondent appreciated its eclectic, layered character and community depth.

Southbank (3 responses)

Southbank was highlighted for its arts and cultural infrastructure, including The Malthouse, Sturt Street’s modernist buildings, and the Arts Precinct more broadly. Some called for a multicultural arts venue to better reflect the diversity of Melbourne’s cultural landscape.

General themes across neighbourhoods and other municipalities

Some responses focused on broader observations across neighbourhoods, especially the green spaces and the importance of preserving what makes Melbourne distinct, even when other more “viable” solutions are available. One comment noted how some areas—like St Kilda Road between City of Melbourne and City of Port Phillip—can fall between planning jurisdictions, risking heritage oversight.

1.4 Climate and Biodiversity

Participants were asked to indicate their agreement with the draft sustainability-focused heritage initiatives using a pipe cleaner to indicate their preferences. Of the 217 responses, most people using just one pipe cleaner to vote, the most supported actions were incentives for retrofitting and adaptive reuse of large commercial or residential buildings (28%), followed by a guide on adapting heritage buildings to operate more sustainably (25%). Other priorities included community learning opportunities (14%), policy flexibility for climate-friendly upgrades (12%), increasing Indigenous plantings at heritage sites (11%) and a guide for simple improvements without a planning permit (10%).

1.5 Stewardship

As part of the sticker activation, 291 participants responded to the question “*How can we make heritage places more accessible and inclusive?*” by voting for their top preferences.

The most preferred action was to share multi-layered histories, including untold stories, selected by 85 participants (29%), indicating strong support for deeper, more diverse storytelling at heritage sites.

Other key priorities included:

- Ensuring cultural safety and prioritising inclusivity (21%), reflecting the importance of respectful and welcoming environments
- Increasing public access through regular open days and hours (14%)
- Improving physical accessibility (13%), highlighting the need for inclusive design
- Establishing site-specific tours with local business collaboration (12%)
- Creating an online portal to highlight accessible heritage places (11%)

Only 3 respondents (1%) selected “None of the above,” showing broad support for multiple inclusive strategies.

2 Key Stakeholders

The following section summarises data collected through facilitated Walkshops—peak bodies (heritage experts and professionals/cultural organisations and institutions), historical societies and resident groups, and business—held as part of the consultation, with insights organised according to the Draft Strategy’s key thematic priorities.

2.1 Aboriginal Heritage

Across the three Walkshops, participants acknowledged the theme of Aboriginal Heritage within broader discussions, highlighting the importance of cultural mapping, truth-telling, and inclusion of First Nations stories, languages, and voices.

2.1.1 Peak bodies

In responding to other questions, respondents (10) indicated desire for decolonising heritage notions and spaces, recognising heritage as not only human but also ecological—valuing urban places as habitats for plants and animals. Consultation with Traditional Owners was emphasised as essential, alongside adopting a holistic understanding of Country, wellbeing, and respect for the environment. Key challenges identified include redefining heritage through a contemporary and diverse lens, maintaining relevance amid housing pressures, balancing competing needs such as climate action and biodiversity, and addressing negative perceptions of heritage as restrictive or outdated. These participants (8) advocated for immersive, inclusive engagement strategies that allow long-term investment in heritage experiences and for heritage decision-making to be transparent, collaborative, and culturally safe. They called for expanded definitions of heritage to include intangible cultural practices, ecological values, and layered histories, stressing the need for flexible, bespoke approaches in planning and preservation that accommodate diverse community voices, evolving urban contexts, and sustainable adaptive reuse.

2.1.2 Historical societies and resident groups

The historical societies and residents groups consultation participants did not directly reference Aboriginal Heritage into their broader heritage discussions, however, emphasised the importance of early and meaningful engagement with all stakeholders—eg First Nations, developers, peak bodies, community groups, and sporting organisations—to ensure that heritage values are understood before decisions are made.

2.1.3 Business

Business stakeholders did not explicitly mention Aboriginal heritage in their feedback; instead they, focused on colonial-era heritage.

2.2 Powerful Experiences

There were no direct facilitated questions about the Powerful Experiences theme during sessions with peak bodies or heritage societies and residents groups; however, related ideas emerged organically through broader discussions and have been addressed under the other themes.

2.2.1 Business

Under the theme of Powerful Heritage Experiences, business stakeholders reflected on whether the character of heritage places attracts customers and whether the stories embedded in these places add value and meaning to their business offerings.

Participants identified that heritage character and storytelling significantly enhance the appeal of places to business identity and their customers. The layered histories of heritage sites create a strong sense of place that draws people in, offering more than just a transactional experience. Businesses benefit from this authenticity, using it to shape branding, storytelling, and customer engagement. Examples like Little Lon demonstrated how narrative and heritage can enrich the business offering—tourists and locals alike are attracted to the visible connection between past and present, fostering a sense of participation in history. The CoM precinct provided strong examples of the integration of heritage and commercial identity, where local businesses use historical references in product naming and experiences, such as gin tastings linked to place. Similarly, Causeway House highlighted that customers are more drawn to places of character and interest, rather than generic or “white box” environments.

Participants identified heritage-led experiences like history tours between bars also show the potential for storytelling to enhance customer engagement and foot traffic. Even in more challenging cases, like the Baptist Church’s Greek Revival façade, participants indicated the built heritage prompts design dialogue and navigation of site-specific constraints, adding value through distinction.

There was, however, a recognised need for support mechanisms to help businesses make the necessary changes—whether financial, technical, or regulatory—so they can work with heritage rather than be burdened by it. Participants indicated that when supported and well-integrated, the character and story of heritage places not only add meaning but create commercial and cultural value.

2.3 Distinctive Places

2.3.1 Peak bodies + Heritage societies and resident groups

Peak bodies and heritage societies and resident groups were both asked: *“Firstly, allowing a moment of rest and reflection following the walking tour, individually think about Melbourne’s diverse neighbourhoods and communities — what are some ways we can acknowledge intangible (living) heritage?”* Their responses have been combined, as both groups identified similar approaches to recognising and valuing intangible heritage.

Across the two Walkshops, a total of 146 individual data points were collected. There was a strong focus on preserving and celebrating non-physical or intangible heritage—such as language, music, food, festivals, social rituals, and emotional connections to place—highlighting the importance of lived traditions, truth-telling, and collective memory.

Of the 63 responses that related specifically to intangible heritage, participants most commonly identified place (neighbourhoods, precincts, landscapes etc) as holding significant intangible value (37%). This was followed by references to art, artefacts and cultural practices (25%), historical accounts and social histories (21%) and Aboriginal and marginalised histories (14%). Additionally, 17% of responses highlighted the importance of recognising non-human and ecological heritage, including seasonal qualities and climate challenges such as flooding.

In terms of engaging the public with heritage (75 data points), participants most frequently cited the use of art and creative practice as tools to communicate heritage (34%), alongside storytelling (30%). Responses focused on storytelling included mentions of oral histories, soundscapes, signage, documentaries and truth-telling. Place (including built fabric) and landscape were also seen as central to fostering a public understanding of heritage (26%) and were often connected with heritage-focused

programming including talks, tours, events, and festivals (22%). Interpretative signage, naming, and marketing were also recognised as effective tools to communicate heritage (19%).

Thirty-five data points related to the development of future approaches to sharing heritage, 40% of responses identified that consultation and collaboration with communities is critical in order to empower communities to define and share what matters to them. Additionally, 34% of responses noted the need for research and mapping to support how the CoM frames and communicates heritage.

A recurring theme identified in the responses centred on the importance of the value of heritage being deeply associated with a sense of place. Walkshop participants emphasised emotional and cultural connections to place, including local rituals, neighbourhood identity, Indigenous walking tracks, seasonal changes, and ecological patterns.

Responses also reflected “living heritage” as a subtheme—speaking to heritage as dynamic and participatory, something shaped by communities over time rather than fixed in the past. Living heritage requires ongoing community input to recognise and renew cultural meaning and highlights shared responsibility across generations.

2.4 Climate and biodiversity

2.4.1 Peak Bodies

The following summary reflects peak body responses to the prompt framed around the theme of climate and biodiversity: “*Adapting to changing needs – what factors should the Strategy consider when navigating difficult decisions?*”

When balancing difficult decisions, participants indicated collaboration across all stakeholders is essential, alongside recognition that conflicts of interest are inevitable—progress relies on compromise rather than rigid, black-and-white thinking (38%). More broadly, participants indicated there needs to be creativity and flexibility to manage competing values, finding bespoke ways to integrate heritage with development and that one size does not fit all (21%). Some participants (17%) indicated the Strategy should prioritise ecological and environmental factors first, followed by human and social considerations, and then the vulnerability of built heritage.

Some identified diverse and transparent consultation is crucial, using clear language accessible to both heritage and non-heritage audiences (21%). One participant indicated the Strategy should also deeply consider First Nations histories—including difficult or overlooked narratives—and engage with what the community values about each place. And another participant indicated World heritage should be given priority, with careful attention to environmental aspects such as soil types, flooding, fire risk, and native flora and fauna.

Other comments from participants included the need for decision-making processes to be open and collaborative, not conducted behind closed doors, with honest reflection on what may be lost or gained. Experts relevant to each place should be consulted to provide nuanced insights. Someone else indicated the Strategy must acknowledge negative perceptions of heritage, consider sustainability, and avoid formulaic approaches, instead favouring place-based, context-sensitive solutions.

Another participant indicated planning should occur at a precinct level, identifying all factors influencing a place. A genuine circular approach is needed—not just “cradle to grave,” but “cradle to cradle”—promoting adaptive reuse and sustainable stewardship to ensure heritage remains vibrant and relevant into the future.

In response to the question, “*How are you managing flooding, accessibility, adaptive reuse, embodied carbon, and landscape design?*”, peak body stakeholders provided 52 responses, drawing on their professional experience and perspective. The following is a summary of the key areas of action, noting 36% of responses focused on advocacy and leadership, 28% cited education and awareness activities, 23% identified environmental solutions, and 9% addressed the adaptive reuse of heritage buildings to keep them useful and relevant.

Flooding and Landscape Design

Rather than resisting natural systems, new strategies are embracing the inherent changeability of landscape and climate—designing with flooding, capturing flows, and adapting to new modelling such as Melbourne’s updated flood zones. Landscape design is recognised as a living cultural layer, with attention to biodiversity, tree loss, and historical ambitions of past planners. Precinct-level and culturally aware planning considers both Aboriginal and European perspectives.

Advocacy, Communication and Leadership

Across all areas, success hinges on collaboration, open-mindedness, and rejecting one-size-fits-all solutions. Decision-making involves listening to communities, engaging professionals across disciplines, and grounding heritage practice in sustainability, inclusivity, and social impact. Leadership is shown through doing—trailing ideas, digital innovation, and public advocacy—demonstrating how heritage can support climate action and resilient city-making.

Accessibility and Education

Accessibility is approached through demonstration and inclusive design, with adaptive strategies embedded early in planning. There’s a strong commitment to educating owners, custodians, and professionals—on the value of heritage, on policy changes, and on how climate, equity, and social housing intersect with heritage outcomes.

Adaptive Reuse and Embodied Carbon

Adaptive reuse is central—reframing heritage as an asset that can host new uses and tell layered stories, while reducing demolition waste and embodied carbon. There’s strong emphasis on education, advocacy, and showcasing best-practice reuse to influence both public perception and client decisions. Peer review, cross-disciplinary collaboration, and engagement with developers are key to ensuring significance and sustainability are balanced. A circular economy approach is encouraged, supported by resources, mentoring, and sector-wide advocacy, including through ASBEC’s focus on climate-resilient, liveable cities.

2.4.2 Heritage societies and resident groups

The following summary reflects 25 responses to the prompt framed around the theme of climate and biodiversity “*Adapting to changing needs – what factors should the Strategy consider when navigating difficult decisions?*”

Importantly, participants would like to see heritage decisions prioritising emotional connection, community input, and social outcomes—not just statutory planning frameworks (44%). The Strategy should consider broader concerns such as food security, climate change, accessibility, and public well-being, embedding flexibility, kindness, and innovation into heritage practice.

Whilst this question was linked to climate and diversity theme, many (32%) indicated local governments should be supported to fund programs, reverse damaging planning amendments, and enforce greater responsibility for owners of neglected or vacant heritage buildings.

This group answered more broadly, identifying that the Strategy needs to incorporate taking a holistic and forward-looking approach when navigating complex heritage decisions (16%). Suggestions include strengthening planning controls—particularly around demolition and neglect—while ensuring early and informed engagement with peak bodies, developers, and interest groups who influence change.

Central to this groups feedback, was that inclusionary measures need to be taken—addressing language, cultural, and physical access barriers, and involving new and emerging communities in defining what heritage means to them (8%). One person indicated reconciliation with First Peoples, and the protection of living habitats and biodiversity, should be integrated into a vision that sees heritage as dynamic and evolving. Some participants indicated the Strategy must embrace change responsibly, enabling heritage to remain relevant, resilient, and deeply connected to place and people (8%).

2.5 Stewardship

Both peak bodies and heritage societies and resident groups were asked to share their knowledge by responding to the question: *What are the roles of community groups, local government, state government, business, and peak bodies in the stewardship and promotion of heritage?*

Whilst there was some overlap in their knowledge and perspective of the various roles and responsibilities, there were some differences identified. Peak bodies see themselves as top-down expert leaders, while residents frame them more as supporters of local action and community enablers. With regard to local government, peak bodies focus more on top-down education and policy enforcement, while resident groups emphasise bottom-up listening, representation, and enabling local identity. As well, resident groups asserted greater authority and leadership over heritage narratives, while peak bodies frame them as important contributors within a shared ecosystem.

The following summarises their interpretation of the different roles and responsibilities.

2.5.1 Peak bodies

Peak Bodies

Peak bodies believe they are themselves expected to be active, engaged, and transparent champions of heritage. They act as role models who not only advocate but also provide platforms for others to be heard. Where necessary, they may take on statutory representation roles. Their core responsibilities include providing research, rigour, and expert intelligence in their respective areas of heritage. Meaningful and ongoing community consultation is a critical part of their function, ensuring that heritage decisions are informed, inclusive, and community-driven.

Business

Peak bodies indicated Businesses are encouraged to respect heritage and align their operations with its values. Their engagement should reflect the four pillars of sustainability: environmental, economic, cultural, and social. They play an important role in heritage support through sponsorship and philanthropy, and by identifying appropriate contemporary uses for heritage places that retain cultural significance while enabling economic activity.

Community Groups

Peak bodies recognised community groups are deeply involved in the protection, education, and sharing of heritage. They indicated community group work fosters a strong sense of belonging and active involvement. These groups contribute through collecting, preserving, celebrating, and advocating for heritage, while also creating connections and providing safe, empowering spaces. Through their activities, they help integrate heritage into everyday community life and creative expression.

Local Government

Peak bodies indicated local governments have a key role in engaging the wider community, especially those who may not initially value or understand heritage. They are responsible for educating the public and addressing misconceptions. They must also implement state and federal legal heritage requirements and serve as a conduit between local concerns and state-level governance.

State Government

Peak bodies identified state governments are responsible for maintaining their own heritage assets and identifying funding opportunities for others. They should actively promote the positive use of heritage places and ensure that public officials are knowledgeable and value heritage. Their responsibilities also include ensuring that diverse voices are heard in heritage-making, protecting traditional skills and trades, and providing a strong legislative and policy framework that supports community stewardship and long-term engagement.

Federal Government

Peak bodies believe the federal government is to provide leadership by demonstrating the value of local heritage and its broader community benefits. This includes maintaining and improving the National Heritage List and ensuring heritage protection is supported across political lines. Their role includes setting a national strategic framework for heritage, fulfilling international obligations, and taking greater responsibility for the protection and promotion of World Heritage places.

General Public

Peak bodies felt the general public should be supported to listen to and include diverse voices in heritage conversations, acknowledging widespread misconceptions. They need clear and accessible opportunities to care for and engage with identified heritage, particularly intangible heritage. With the right support, the public can act as strong advocates for heritage in their communities.

2.5.2 Heritage societies and resident groups**Peak Bodies**

Heritage societies and resident groups indicated they believe peak bodies should fund community groups that are engaged in stewardship, storytelling, events, governance, and prioritising funding. They serve as independent resident expert advisors and participate in working committees. Their role is embedded in the planning and management of heritage processes. The National Trust acts as a watchdog, ensuring it is heard and facilitates communication between government and community groups. Heritage consultancies provide educational resources, support fundraising, assist the general public in understanding policy, and help preserve traditional trades. Overall, peak bodies support and promote awareness of heritage.

Business

Heritage societies and resident groups identified the role of business is to contribute through sponsorship and by creating value around heritage for both people and businesses. They should also support the preservation of traditional trades.

Community Groups

Heritage societies and resident groups indicated they themselves are the voice of heritage. It's their responsibility to tell stories, engage in localised stewardship, and take on advocacy roles. They contribute to debate and discussion, and identify what is important to their communities.

State Government

Heritage societies and resident groups believe the state government is responsible for funding, including paying for local heritage and providing funding for local heritage initiatives. They indicated the state government provides leadership by demonstrating the value of local heritage to the community and its benefits and a Minister for Heritage should be part of this leadership structure. The state also plays an educational role through a heritage curriculum. It should fund representative consultation with the general public, listen to local government authorities rather than overruling them, and remain accountable.

General Public

Heritage societies and resident groups indicated the general public contributes by giving back and participating. They demonstrate what is important to them and help inform and drive heritage, particularly through heritage groups and their involvement includes being engaged, respectful, spreading the word, being curious, sharing, and getting others involved.

Federal Government

No responses were provided.

Local Government

Heritage societies and resident groups believe the role of local government is to support the hearing of community voices through consultation and collaboration. Local government are responsible for implementing and reviewing the heritage strategy and represent both renters and ratepayers, and take on roles in listening, role modelling, and acting as a conduit between community and higher levels of government. Heritage societies and resident groups indicated the role of local government is to help set the mood for people who use spaces and contribute to setting the cultural agenda, whilst also providing robust and practical statutory frameworks.

2.5.3 Heritage Network

In addition, heritage societies and resident groups outlined ways the CoM could better engage with local communities and grassroots organisations.

While they identified a level of existing engagement, such as contacting heritage groups for events and planning processes, participant identified a need for deeper, more structured and inclusive

collaboration. Suggestions include establishing a transparent and diverse heritage engagement framework, offering seed funding, and providing digital access to resources (including multilingual content) to reach a wider audience.

Trust-building is a critical component—respondents believed it could be achieved through (new) co-designed processes, consistent and structured communication, and empowering community groups (whether incorporated or not) to have a meaningful role in planning. Heritage societies and resident groups indicated information sessions, advocacy training for underrepresented voices, and clarity around how and when community input is valued would make engagement more equitable and effective.

Participants saw a 'heritage network' (collective of heritage groups) as having the potential to act as both a connector between groups and amplifier for community voices, bringing together local groups, the CoM, and other stakeholders in a structured, inclusive way. Suggested features include clear and neutral governance, dedicated coordination (a go-to person or institution), and support for in-person and digital interactions.

Participants identified, the network should offer peer-led programs, include secure long-term investment to support the group's activities, transparency with funding information (for development projects), and one respondent identified 'audits' as a mode to guide improvement. They indicated the network should be welcoming and accessible—and incorporate shared tools, IT assistance, and even free coffee—creating an ecosystem that fosters connection across communities and generations.

2.6 Broader discussions

The following is a summary of the key challenges identified and strategies to address them over a five-year period, based on 21 responses from peak bodies and 14 responses from resident and heritage societies. The challenges are numbered but do not represent a hierarchy of ideas.

2.6.1 Peak bodies

1. Challenge:

The meaning and relevance of heritage is outdated and often tied to colonial, built-form narratives, limiting its relevance to a contemporary, diverse, and climate-aware society.

Participants emphasised the need to redefine heritage to reflect living, cultural, environmental, and pre-colonial values. Current frameworks too narrowly prioritise architecture and settler histories, failing to engage with First Nations voices, ecological systems, and contemporary community identities.

To shift toward a more inclusive and contemporary heritage lens, participants proposed strategies such as:

- Embedding truth-telling and consistent First Nations consultation across all heritage decisions
- Revisiting and revising heritage criteria to include intangible, ecological, and multi-species values
- Framing heritage as "living" and connected to Country, identity, wellbeing, and biodiversity
- Developing communications that position heritage as dynamic, not just historical
- Decentering the human and recognising urban environments as habitat for all life

2. Challenge:

Heritage is misunderstood, poorly communicated, and seen as a barrier to progress—undermining public support and informed decision-making.

Participants pointed to widespread confusion and negative perceptions around heritage, with language that alienates the community and contributes to polarised debates. There is a lack of clear, accessible narratives that show how heritage benefits society, especially during times of housing and climate crisis.

To improve understanding and engagement, participants proposed strategies such as:

- Delivering broad-based education campaigns and a dedicated heritage communications strategy (it was not clear on which entity would need to run the campaign)
- Reframing heritage as a tool for sustainability, identity, and social connection—not opposition to development
- Engaging peak bodies, educators, and creative industries to co-develop narratives and experiences
- Using immersive experiences and storytelling to deepen public connection to heritage values
- Developing guides and resources to support community and business participation in heritage

3. Challenge:

Heritage practice and policy are fragmented and fail to respond to pressing urban issues such as housing, climate change, and equity.

Current heritage protections are often reactive, misused for non-heritage objectives, or disconnected from broader city priorities. At the same time, the sector is under pressure from development, diminishing skills in heritage trades, and a lack of economic recognition.

To create a more resilient and integrated heritage system, participants proposed strategies such as:

- Strengthening the policy framework to ensure clear, purpose-driven heritage protections
- Clarifying the economic case for adaptive reuse and long-term environmental benefits
- Developing heritage-specific sustainability benchmarks and frameworks
- Supporting skills development in heritage trades and traditional crafts
- Creating balanced decision-making tools to weigh competing values transparently
- Collaborating with housing and planning to explore typologies that balance density with character

4. Challenge:

Heritage systems are burdened by red tape, inflexible regulation, and outdated approaches that limit creativity, activation, and innovation.

Participants criticised both bureaucracy and heritage groups for being overly rigid, obstructive, and disconnected from contemporary needs. Cost and regulatory burden make it difficult to maintain or adapt heritage places in meaningful ways.

To modernise heritage practice, participants proposed strategies such as:

- Streamlining heritage approval processes while maintaining core protections
- Encouraging flexible and creative adaptation of heritage buildings
- Providing funding to support innovation, activation, and sustainable reuse
- Developing collaborative models between local and state governments
- Fostering shared stewardship and inclusive decision-making across sectors

2.6.2 Heritage societies and resident groups**1. Challenge:**

Heritage is undervalued in planning decisions and vulnerable to developer interests and weak state policy.

Participants expressed concern that heritage is often deprioritised in favour of housing and commercial development. Recent planning amendments have undermined protections, and discretionary regulations allow developers too much flexibility. Heritage Victoria is seen as underfunded and obstructive, with inadequate resourcing to uphold heritage values.

To reinforce heritage's role in planning, participants proposed strategies such as:

- Rescinding recent planning scheme amendments that weaken heritage protections
- Introducing firm, non-discretionary planning controls
- Elevating heritage as a primary principle in city strategy and decision-making
- Increasing funding and authority for Heritage Victoria and local heritage societies
- Embedding knowledge of heritage values into all development and planning processes

2. Challenge:

A lack of public understanding and connection to heritage—especially among younger and underrepresented communities—limits its relevance and support.

Heritage is still perceived by many as elitist, outdated, or only concerned with “old dusty buildings.” This disconnect, particularly among younger generations and minority groups, weakens community buy-in and intergenerational stewardship.

To build relevance and engagement, participants proposed strategies such as:

- Expanding public education and awareness campaigns
- Creating targeted, inclusive engagement with young people and diverse communities
- Using accessible signage, digital tools, and storytelling to bring heritage to life
- Linking the past to the future by interpreting heritage through creative, contemporary lenses
- Supporting representative consultation practices that reflect the city’s diversity

3. Challenge:

Exclusionary consultation and decision-making processes reduce community trust and limit meaningful engagement—particularly among marginalised and working-class communities. Many participants noted that current consultation practices often overlook those without the time, resources, or access to participate in traditional engagement formats. There was also concern that recent changes to planning policies disregard long-standing community contributions and weaken the role of heritage in decision-making.

To rebuild trust and ensure broader participation, participants proposed strategies such as:

- Implementing more representative and inclusive consultation processes
- Creating low-barrier opportunities for feedback and participation
- Recognising and valuing community-led knowledge and previous contributions
- Strengthening the role of heritage societies and local groups in early planning decisions
- Ensuring that marginalised voices are meaningfully included in shaping future strategies

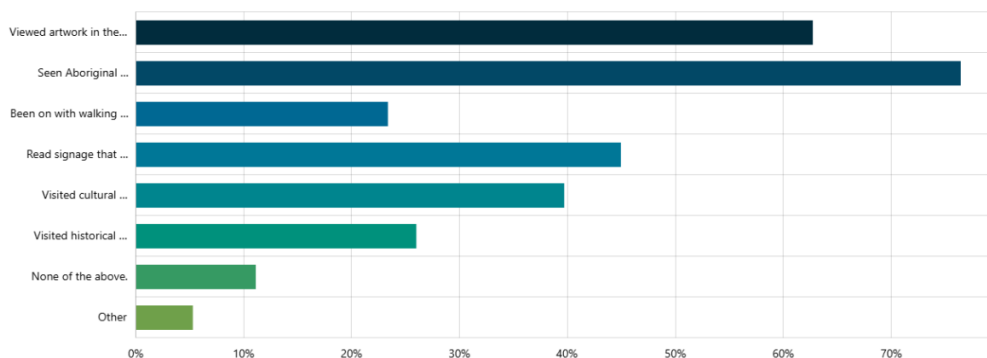
3 Participate Melbourne Survey

3.1 Primary questions

The following section summarises responses to the Participate Melbourne survey, grouped by the primary questions in sequential order (Q3 – Q10). There were 341 contributions.

3.1.1 (Q3)

How have you experienced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander connections, heritage and stories in the city?



Many respondents have engaged with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage in Melbourne in meaningful and varied ways. A significant number have experienced heritage through public artwork, such as the *Birrarung Wilam* sculpture at Birrarung Marr (213), and through place names and signage featuring Aboriginal language—for example, *Wurundjeri Way* or the *Wominjeka* sign at The Tan (261). Others reported reading interpretive signage that explains Aboriginal connections to place (153), visiting cultural centres like the Koorie Heritage Trust or Bunjilaka (135), and attending historical sites such as Speaker’s Corner at Birrarung Marr (89).

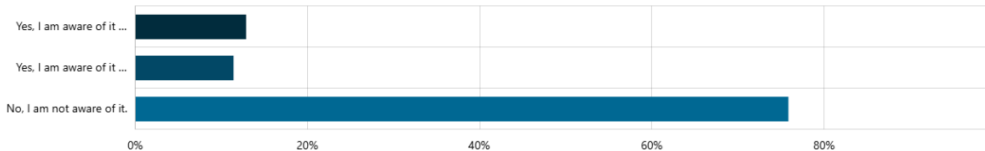
A smaller number have participated in walking tours or listened directly to Aboriginal voices sharing stories in the city (79).

Seventeen people provided free text answers, with 5 respondents describing personal experiences, including visits to Camp Sovereignty—especially for Invasion Day dawn ceremonies—as well as

academic engagement through study, reading, and viewing early colonial artworks depicting Aboriginal presence (3). Some respondents (4) have learned from Elders and formal and informal education, experiencing inclusive approaches to how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage is recognised and communicated.

3.1.2 (Q4)

Have you previously heard of or used the Mapping Aboriginal Melbourne Tool?

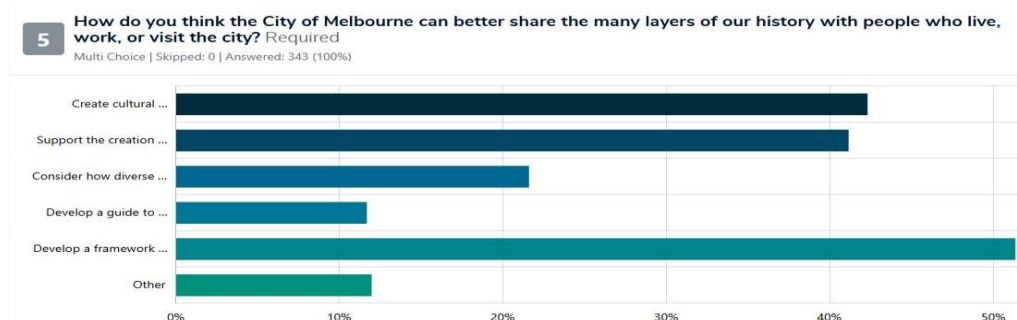


Awareness and usage of the Mapping Aboriginal Melbourne Tool is relatively low, with over three-quarters of respondents unaware of it. This indicates a significant opportunity for increased promotion, education, and integration of the tool into heritage engagement strategies.

- No, I am not aware of it – 76% (260 respondents)
- Yes, I am aware of it but have not used it – 13% (43 respondents)
- Yes, I am aware of it and have used it – 11% (38 respondents)

3.1.3 (Q5)

How do you think the City of Melbourne can better share the many layers of our history with people who live, work, or visit the city?



Participants strongly supported immersive, inclusive, and community-led approaches to sharing Melbourne’s layered histories. Of 612 responses, the top priorities were: developing a community-guided framework to link history with future city design (175), creating cultural precincts to celebrate Melbourne’s multicultural stories (144), and supporting immersive events or installations that bring meaning to place (140). Renaming or co-naming places to reflect diverse histories (73) and improving interpretation through signage (39) were also noted.

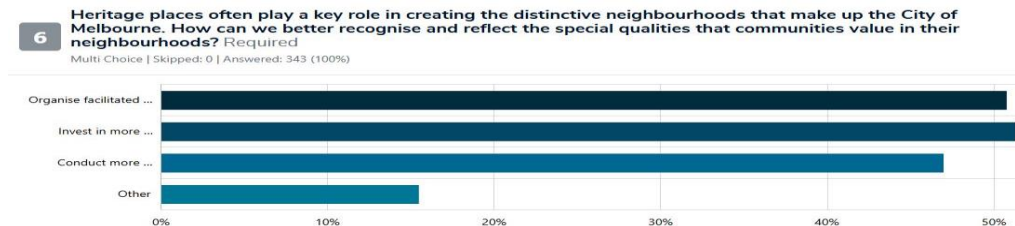
In open-text responses, 41 people respondents also expressed a desire for broader representation in heritage storytelling. Suggestions included celebrating Jewish, Arab, Greek, Italian, LGBTQIA+, and working-class histories, alongside deeper and more balanced First Nations visibility (6). Community involvement emerged as a clear priority—respondents called for co-designed interpretation, public participation in naming and storytelling decisions, and creative activations like walking tours and soundscapes. However, some noted a greater need to protect heritage buildings themselves.

Some participants (5) called for stronger protection of heritage sites—including halting demolition, restoring historic features, and enabling adaptive reuse. There was strong advocacy for preserving both built and intangible heritage, paired with digital tools such as audio tours, QR codes, and interactive storytelling to make history accessible and engaging.

Overall, the qualitative feedback signals strong public appetite for a heritage approach that is protective, but grounded in diverse lived experience. The CoM has an opportunity to build trust, broaden engagement, and present heritage as a shared, living asset for all.

3.1.4 (Q6)

Heritage places often play a key role in creating the distinctive neighbourhoods that make up the City of Melbourne. How can we better recognise and reflect the special qualities that communities value in their neighbourhoods?

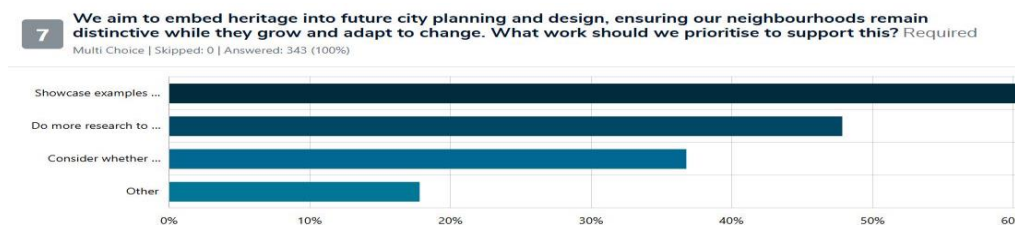


Community feedback revealed strong support for deeper community engagement and research to better reflect what people value in their neighbourhoods. The most popular suggestions included investing in more research into post-war and modern movement heritage (176 votes), facilitating local conversations about what heritage means to residents (172), and exploring under-represented histories such as those of multicultural communities (159). Participants also voiced support for community-driven cultural activity, like that seen at Camp Sovereignty, and for recognising places that no longer have physical remains but still hold historical and cultural significance. Together, these responses highlight a desire for a more inclusive and place-based approach to identifying and celebrating heritage—one that responds to local stories, emotional connections, and intangible heritage values.

Open-text responses (53) raised important themes around authenticity, maintenance, and the over- or under-representation of different heritage types. Many called for stronger protection of well-loved historic buildings, better interpretation of diverse histories, and new developments that honour architectural heritage through quality design. Others challenged the current use of heritage overlays, calling for more balance between conservation and city growth—particularly housing. Some criticised what they perceived as tokenism or a lack of community voice in decision-making. Across the responses, there was a shared interest in celebrating what makes each neighbourhood unique, ensuring decisions are grounded in community values, and using tools like education, storytelling, and design to bring the city’s layered history to life.

3.1.5 (Q7)

We aim to embed heritage into future city planning and design, ensuring our neighbourhoods remain distinctive while they grow and adapt to change. What work should we prioritise to support this?



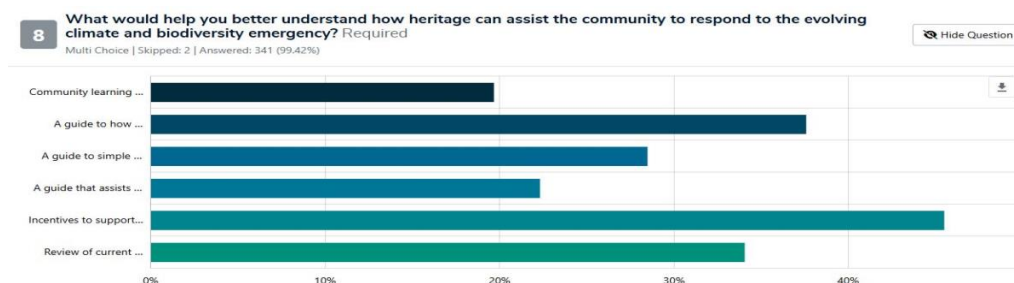
Community responses strongly supported showcasing adaptive reuse as a key way to integrate heritage into Melbourne’s future city planning. The most selected priority (206) was to highlight examples where heritage buildings have been made more environmentally sustainable or feature innovative design. Respondents saw this as a powerful way to demonstrate that heritage and progress are not in conflict. Others (163) called for more research into the social and economic benefits of heritage, suggesting that stronger evidence would help make the case for conservation in

a city facing development pressure. A further 125 respondents supported developing clearer guidance on when the redevelopment of heritage places may serve a public good—pointing to the need for transparency and criteria-based decision-making.

Open-ended comments (61), some respondents revealed deep frustration with the continued loss of heritage places—particularly through “facadism” and overdevelopment—and a desire for stronger, enforceable protections. Some respondents argued that more research was unnecessary, calling instead for immediate action to preserve what’s left. Others emphasised the need to go beyond protecting exteriors, urging the CoM to consider the ‘full fabric, interiors, and character of heritage places’. Respondents also highlighted a need to better integrate heritage into public-facing planning processes and streetscapes, suggesting that Melbourne can be a global leader in design if it invests in beauty, sustainability, and adaptive reuse grounded in local identity.

3.1.6 (Q8)

What would help you better understand how heritage can assist the community to respond to the evolving climate and biodiversity emergency?

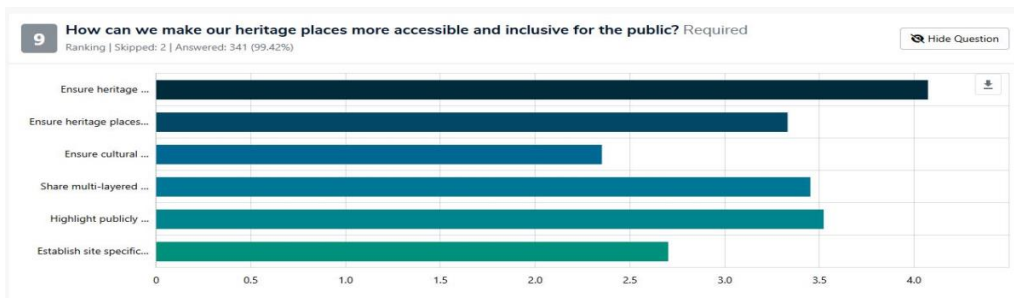


When asked what would help them better understand how heritage can assist in responding to the climate and biodiversity emergency, community members emphasised the need for practical, accessible guidance. The most supported priority (155) was the introduction of incentives to support the retrofit and adaptive reuse of large commercial and residential buildings—highlighting strong public appetite for systemic solutions that align heritage conservation with sustainability goals. Similarly, 128 respondents called for clear guides outlining how heritage homes, apartments, and commercial buildings can be adapted to operate more sustainably. This suggests widespread interest in making the city’s older building stock more energy-efficient and climate-responsive, without compromising their historical value.

Several other suggestions were also strongly supported, reflecting a desire for both action and education. A guide to improvements that can be made to heritage places without a planning permit received support from 97 people, pointing to a need for clarity and reduced red tape at the household level. There were 116 respondents that backed a review of current policies to enable upgrades like solar panels and double glazing, showing that people are ready for a shift in regulations that better balance conservation with climate resilience. A further 76 supported a guide to increasing Indigenous plantings at heritage sites, and 67 wanted community learning opportunities to share sustainability knowledge.

3.1.7 (Q9)

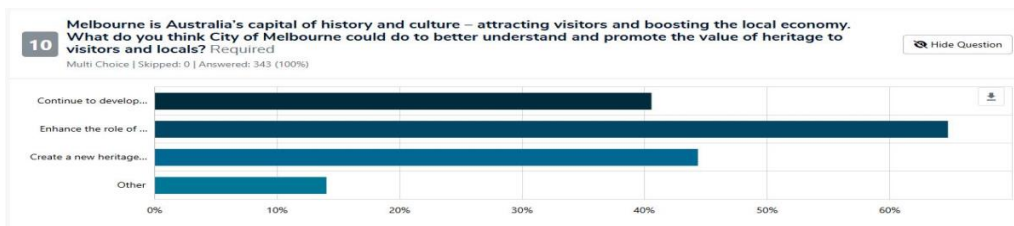
How can we make our heritage places more accessible and inclusive for the public?



Participants were required to rank their responses in order of preference, with 37% of respondents indicating “Ensure heritage places have regular ‘open days’ and regular opening hours dedicated to experiencing heritage” as their top preference. This was followed closely by “Ensure heritage places are as physically accessible as possible” (22%) and “Share multi-layered histories of places, including untold stories” (19%) and “Highlight publicly accessible heritage places in the CoM via an online portal” (19%).

3.1.8 (Q10)

Melbourne is Australia's capital of history and culture - attracting visitors and boosting the local economy. What do you think City of Melbourne could do to better understand and promote the value of heritage to visitors and locals?



Respondents see significant potential for the CoM to better promote the value of heritage to both visitors and locals—particularly through events and interpretation. The most supported idea (220) was to enhance the role of heritage in CoM’s events and experiences, suggesting a strong public appetite for connecting history to everyday cultural life. Additionally, 151 people backed the development of a new heritage interpretation strategy, highlighting interest in shaping more engaging, accessible ways to understand and interact with Melbourne’s layered stories. Another 137 respondents called for improvements to the Mapping Aboriginal Melbourne tool, signalling support for better digital engagement with First Nations heritage.

Beyond the survey options, people offered many creative suggestions, including free heritage walking tours, greater use of empty historic buildings, and more active promotion via social media and self-guided tour apps. Some called for better upkeep of heritage buildings, improved integration of arts and storytelling, and celebration of Melbourne’s multicultural and gold rush history. Others urged stronger protection of at-risk sites and more authentic and meaningful recognition of Aboriginal heritage. Together, the data and comments show a city that values its past—but also wants that past to be experienced dynamically, inclusively, and visibly in public life.

3.1.9 (Q11)

Additional feedback

A total of 135 additional comments were provided by respondents, responding to Q11 of the Participate Melbourne survey.

3.2 Analysis by Demographic Data

The Participate Melbourne Survey required participants complete demographic data. Responses to Questions 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 were analysed in relation to two demographic segments:

- **Exposure vs No Exposure:** Participants were asked “How have you learned about or explored the Draft Strategy so far?” (Q1). 50% of respondents indicated they had not directly engaged with the Draft Strategy (No Exposure). Analysis was undertaken to compare responses from those who had been exposed to the Draft Strategy (“Exposure”) with those who had not (“No Exposure”).
- **“I am a Resident” vs Not “I am a Resident” (Resident vs Not Resident):** Participants were asked “Which of the following best describes your connection to this CoM project?” (Q12). Survey responses were analysed to compare participants who identified as Residents of the CoM (Resident) and those who selected other categories (Not Resident).

A 95% Confidence Interval was used to compare the data.¹

3.2.1 Exposure vs No Exposure

Participants were asked “How have you learned about or explored the Draft Heritage Strategy so far?” (Q1) and 50% of respondents indicated they had not directly engaged with the Draft Strategy (No Exposure). Comparing responses from those who had been exposed to the Draft Strategy (“Exposure”) with those who had not (“No Exposure”) revealed significant differences in their engagement with, and perspectives on, heritage in the CoM.

Participants with Exposure reported notably higher levels of engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage, the Mapping Aboriginal Melbourne Tool (31% vs 16%) and a deeper interest in the layered complexity of heritage. The group with No Exposure expressed a desire for more accessible, entry-level opportunities to engage with heritage. Both groups demonstrated interest in more community engaged approaches (Q5, Q6 + Q8).

When asked how the city could better share its layered histories (Q5), 56% of the No Exposure group preferred the development of a community-informed framework for influencing future design and development—as a clear first preference, suggesting a desire for strategic, structured community engaged approaches. The Exposure group’s top three responses were evenly tied. They included the development of a community-informed framework and leaned more toward deeper, experiential forms of engagement, consistent with their responses in Q3 and Q9.

In response to Q6, the Exposure group showed an even spread across all proposed strategies, indicating openness to a range of methods. The No Exposure group, by contrast, focused more on facilitated local discussions and research into post-war heritage. In Q8, the Exposure group (23%) expressed greater interest than the No Exposure group (16%) in community learning opportunities focused on sustainability in heritage buildings.

Significant differences emerged around making heritage places more accessible and inclusive (Q9). Although ensuring “heritage places have regular ‘open days’ and regular opening hours dedicated to experiencing heritage” emerged as the clear first preference across both groups, the Exposure group prioritised sharing multi-layered histories (22% vs 12%), while the No Exposure group favoured the creation of a practical online portal to highlight heritage places (22% vs 13%). This reflects the deeper engagement preference of the Exposure group compared to the more informational approach of the No Exposure group in responses to Q3 and Q5.

Notably, both groups—regardless of their prior exposure—strongly supported “enhancing the role of heritage in CoM’s events and experiences.” This response to Q10 (“What do you think City of Melbourne could do to better understand and promote the value of heritage to visitors and locals?”) indicates that participants view events and experiences as both an accessible entry point and an opportunity for deeper learning.

¹ A 95% Confidence Interval is a standard statistical approach used to understand the margin of error within survey results. As a survey does not include the entire population, a particular sample chosen introduces variation in the results. The Confidence Interval and related statistical tests help determine if differences seen within the survey are a result of random variation or are present in the population. If differences are within the Confidence Interval, there is no evidence for meaningful difference. Differences outside the Confidence Interval are considered “statistically significant”, this means there is more confidence in a genuine difference in the entire population.

This comparative analysis suggests the need for a multi-tiered approach to heritage engagement in the city: accessible, introductory materials for those who are curious but less familiar, alongside more immersive and in-depth opportunities for those who are already engaged and seeking deeper involvement.

3.2.2 “I am a Resident” vs Not “I am a Resident” (Resident vs Not Resident)

Survey responses were analysed by participants who identified as Residents of the CoM (Resident) and those who selected other categories (Not Residents). Resident and Not Residents Groups differed across Questions 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8.

Questions relating to embedding heritage in city planning (Q7), improving accessibility and inclusivity (Q9), and promoting heritage to locals and visitors (Q10) showed no statistically significant differences between the two groups.

The Resident group were more likely to have experienced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage in the city through public artworks (65% vs 59%). Not Residents, however, were more likely to have read signage, visited cultural centres and historical sites, suggesting they may actively seek out these experiences when engaging with the city. Awareness of the Mapping Aboriginal Melbourne Tool was notably higher among Not Residents (31%) compared to Residents (18%), pointing to an opportunity to better promote this resource to those living within the municipality.

Residents expressed stronger interest in facilitated community discussions to explore what heritage qualities people value in their local area (54% vs 46%). In terms of the climate and biodiversity emergency. Residents prioritised community learning opportunities about sustainable upgrades to heritage buildings (23% vs 15%). Not Residents showed stronger interest in practical tools and incentives, such as sustainability guides (43% vs 33%) and retrofit support for large-scale buildings (50% vs 42%).

Overall, Residents appear to favour more localised, discussion-based and community-driven approaches, while Not Residents tend to support research, structured tools, and targeted resources. These findings suggest a need to tailor heritage engagement strategies according to different audience interests and motivations.

4 Written submissions

Nine additional submissions were received in response to the Draft Strategy. Each presented distinct perspectives and concerns. The following is a summary of these submissions.

Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) – Victoria Chapter

AILA welcomed the CoM’s ambition to broaden the definition of heritage but raised concerns that *landscape heritage* remains underrepresented in the draft. They emphasised that landscapes—from natural geological formations and Aboriginal Country to colonial parks and contemporary public spaces—hold cultural, social, and ecological value and should be explicitly recognised as a core heritage category. AILA advocated for integrating landscape within a cultural framework aligned with international best practice (e.g. UNESCO’s Historic Urban Landscape approach). The submission called for greater inclusion of Traditional Owners and landscape architects in policy-making, a cultural landscape audit, and integration of climate resilience with heritage protection. The strategy, they argued, must also address contemporary and intangible landscape values such as community gardens and protest sites, which traditional heritage practices often overlook.

Individual Submission Focused on Queen Victoria Market (QVM)

This submission was critical of the consultation process, describing the survey as vague and insufficient for addressing serious heritage issues. Drawing from over a decade of advocacy for Queen Victoria Market, the respondent highlighted the market’s national and cultural significance, including its Indigenous and colonial history. They criticised perceived Council prioritisation of commercial development over heritage protection and called for stronger, non-discretionary protections for heritage sites like QVM. Suggestions included improved public education, accessibility, and recognition of QVM’s central role in Melbourne’s identity and food security. The submission urged that heritage values should shape city planning, not be sidelined by developer interests.

Independent Submission on the Old Melbourne Cemetery and Light Pollution

This highly detailed and research-heavy submission argued against the proposed QVM Southern Development Project due to its impact on the Old Melbourne Cemetery (OMC), a site with significant Aboriginal burial grounds. It raised concerns about the destruction of Aboriginal cultural heritage through increased light pollution, disruption of Dreamtime storytelling traditions, and disrespect to ancestral remains. The author proposed transforming the OMC into a sacred Aboriginal memorial space and called for cancellation of planned high-rise buildings that would obstruct night sky visibility. The submission included detailed commentary on the cultural, historical, ecological, and health impacts of artificial light, connecting these to Indigenous astronomy and broader critiques of urban densification and development policy. It warned of potential legal and cultural liabilities for the project's proponents and urged recognition of the OMC as a major Aboriginal sacred site.

Individual Submission

One detailed submission was received in June 2025, broadly supporting the Draft Strategy's people-centred, city-wide, and all-of-council approach. However, it strongly argued that the Strategy lacks clarity, resourcing, and implementation pathways. The submission identified a major gap: the absence of oversight and planning for Council-managed heritage-listed places such as Queen Victoria Market, Carlton Gardens, and Royal Park. It called for the integration of two core areas—planning tools (like overlays) and strategic cultural heritage management of council-owned assets—into the Strategy. It also recommended the appointment of a senior heritage leadership role and employment of qualified staff to oversee heritage values in master plans, works, and events.

The submission further urged Council to reinstate and act on a 2020 resolution to improve heritage management practices and highlighted recent failures, including the lack of a QVM master plan and misuse of World Heritage sites during commercial events. It criticised the public consultation process for its built-form bias and limited engagement with active community heritage groups. While supportive of the people-centred approach, the submission recommended clearer definition, stronger academic grounding, and inclusion of leading heritage scholarship. Overall, it called for the Strategy to be strengthened with concrete commitments, cross-council integration, and properly resourced implementation.

Submission from the National Trust of Victoria

The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) commended the Draft Strategy as a forward-thinking and well-structured document that sets a new benchmark for local heritage planning. While expressing strong support—particularly for the Strategy's five priorities (Aboriginal Heritage, Powerful Experiences, Distinctive Places, Climate and Biodiversity Emergency, and Stewardship)—the Trust offered targeted recommendations to strengthen it further. These included clarifying the value of heritage custodianship, reframing language around adaptive reuse, enhancing references to the National Trust and Melbourne's street tree canopy, and ensuring nuanced approaches to planting around heritage buildings. The submission also encouraged deeper partnership between the CoM and the Trust and highlighted the importance of enforceable protections, visible recognition of First Peoples' heritage, and clear, incentive-based support for sustainable heritage outcomes.

Customer Query

The respondent, who indicated that had over a decade of experience in heritage, expressed strong scepticism toward the Draft Strategy, viewing it as grandiose and disconnected from real-world heritage protection. They criticised the consultation process as disingenuous and urged the CoM to engage honestly and genuinely listen to community input.

Individual Submission

The respondent shared reflections following a Draft Strategy Workshop, suggesting that the CoM more explicitly link its existing partnerships and programs—such as Open House Melbourne and collaborations with cultural institutions—to the celebration and protection of intangible heritage. Inspired by a Radio National program on museums and meaning, they recommended deeper collaboration with institutions already engaging in this space and acknowledged that many of the Draft Strategy's proposed actions already align with this goal. They encouraged clearer articulation of how these efforts contribute to intangible heritage outcomes.

Submission from Melbourne Heritage Action

Melbourne Heritage Action welcomed elements of the Draft Strategy, including its focus on Aboriginal heritage, community engagement, and the sustainability benefits of heritage preservation. However, the group raised concerns that the Draft Strategy excludes any commitment to new heritage studies or updates to the Heritage Policy—potentially delaying critical protections for a decade. They recommended three key actions within the life of the Draft Strategy: (1) undertaking studies to protect heritage elements beyond buildings, such as interiors, public art, signs, and street furniture; (2) strengthening the Heritage Policy to discourage facadism and retain more than just external walls; and (3) introducing a heritage-specific Floor Area Uplift incentive to encourage fuller retention and restoration of heritage buildings in the CBD. These changes aim to better preserve cultural narratives, embodied carbon, and meaningful public heritage assets before they are lost.

Individual Submission

The contributor appreciates their involvement in the Draft Strategy and requests a meeting to strengthen how "people" are represented. They highlight the need to better recognise non-Indigenous heritage, include advocates as a stakeholder group, and acknowledge that custodians of Melbourne's heritage may live beyond the city's boundaries. They emphasise that heritage is about inheritance and lived experience, and tangible places gain meaning through their connection to communities. The Strategy should more clearly define who custodians are, include the diverse migrant histories that have shaped Melbourne over 230 years, and actively engage with multicultural organisations and community museums. Greater inclusivity of all cultural custodians is seen as central to the Strategy's success.