

Yarra Council MPDF Report

Precinct-based placemaking
and business development
project



Yarra City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and true sovereigns of the land now known as Yarra. We also acknowledge the significant contributions made by other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to life in Yarra. We pay our respects to Elders from all nations and to their Elders past, present and future.

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Partnership**



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Executive Summary

Yarra's local economy has been greatly impacted by COVID-19 and Victoria's Stage 3 and 4 lockdowns. A key response to this supported by Council, has been greater investment in place-based activation that drives local activity by attracting local and non-local visitors to the city.

These initiatives which often take the form of a combination of food and dining activities, street and place activation, destination marketing campaigns and entertainment and cultural activities have proven successful in generating interest and excitement across Yarra's precincts and boosting the local food, retail and night-time economy sectors.

Thanks to an investment via the Metropolitan Partnership Development Fund (MPDF), Yarra set out to deliver a series of localised initiatives, co-designed with local business groups, that built on the work undertaken by Council already, to provide a pipeline of activities and events that enliven Yarra's local precincts and activity centres and stimulates the local economy.

Yarra officers worked with local businesses, community representatives and pulled on existing research and previous experience, to deliver four short-term, co-designed place-based activation and destination marketing initiatives across the municipality.

Following engagement with stakeholders, to ensure that the activations were responsive to the localised area, the plan was to deliver these activations between November 2021 to May 2022 across three separate precincts.

Both the decision on the locations and the projects was determined by a Project Working Group (PWG). The group unanimously supported three precincts based on the three locations having higher than average vacancy rates, low or no investment within the precinct from other initiatives, being geographically spread out across the municipality, being identified as priority precincts by the Partnership, or a combination of all four.

- Nicholson Street, Fitzroy North - A digital marketing campaign to highlight the makers and creators of the street, and engage the local residential community to shop and rediscover local.
- Brunswick Street, Fitzroy/Collingwood –
 - (a) Running a series of live music and entertainment across four weekends to create a great vibe and ambient sound for all those shopping and dining in the precinct.
 - (b) A large-scale event in partnership with Yarra's Youth Services team that will draw young people back to the area, and stimulate the economy.
- Swan Street, Richmond – Live stream DJs from prominent hospitality venues, reinforcing Swan Street as a premier entertainment precinct, as well as promoting the precinct online to those who might still be too apprehensive to visit the street due to COVID concerns.

The overall outcome of the four projects was that they were a resounding success and were delivered at a high level, attracting high engagement and visitation, providing the local area with a much-needed economic stimulus. Not only did they all meet the MPDF program objective of *“responding to social and economic impacts of COVID-19 and contribute to on-the-ground place-based solutions that respond to the impacts of COVID-19”*, but the delivered on all specific program objectives.

The activations demonstrated the vital role of physical activations alongside digital presence and online marketing, to increase knowledge of precincts and places.

Additionally, by promoting the unique identity, people and assets of places, and integrating the importance of storytelling, activations such as these can leave a legacy well past their completion date.

Yarra demonstrated that it can deliver highly targeted and engaging activations that both stimulate the economy and also build capacity, and would support the provision of additional funding for future place-based activities.



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Introduction

Yarra is widely recognised for its appeal as a destination location for the arts, hospitality, shopping, music, nightlife, and events and is celebrated for its culture and diversity.

As a result, Yarra relies heavily on its retail, food and dining and night-time economy sectors with a significantly larger number of hospitality businesses located across the municipality than in other comparative Local Government Areas (LGAs).

Yarra has over 1100 hospitality businesses which is more than four times as many as councils like City of Darebin (250) and City of Banyule (260) and more than twice as many as neighbouring Stonnington City Council with its popular Chapel and High Streets.

In addition, over 16,000 jobs or 20 per cent of Yarra's pre-COVID employment is in the retail, accommodation, and food service sectors.

COVID has had a significant and long-lasting impact on Yarra's retail and service precincts, as consumer attitudes are still adjusting back to face to face transactions, and where tourist visitation to the streets is still a lot lower than pre covid levels.

Because of these factors, intervention from Council to stimulate the precincts and assist local traders by drawing people back to the local area, to reengage and become familiar with what makes Yarra's streets so special, was required.

The Partnership Priority of responding to social and economic impacts of COVID-19 and contribute to on-the-ground place-based solutions that respond to the impacts of COVID-19, aligned perfectly for this project proposal, along with other Partnership priority areas which were identified in 2020 seeking to:

- Boost short term investments in the local economy to stimulate economic activity across Yarra's precincts and activity centres.
- Increase activation, destination marketing and place-making while allowing for flexibility to cater to local differences and encourage innovative and creative thinking in relation to how to attract customers and visitors to the area.
- Involve business and community stakeholders in local economic recovery response measures and build stronger partnerships between State and local government which empower localised solutions, creativity and delivery.

2.1 Objectives

The project set out to deliver three short-term, co-designed initiatives across the municipality between September 2021 and June 2022.

The initiatives were to include food and dining activities, street and place activation, destination marketing campaigns and entertainment and cultural activities and cater to a diverse community.

The focus was to attract local and non-local visitors to the precinct or area as a way of increasing economic activity and boosting Yarra's retail, food and night-time economy sectors.

The project would be delivered within Council's existing governance and procurement framework and draw on Council's considerable experience delivering events, place-activation and destination marketing within the community.



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2.2 Deliverables

Yarra officers were to work with local business groups and stakeholders to deliver three short-term, co-designed place-based activation and destination marketing initiatives across the municipality. These were to take place across three separate precincts which were to be determined by the Project Working Group (PWG) after engagement with local stakeholders.

The type of activation that was to occur in each of the precincts needed to be co-designed with local business groups to encourage creativity and innovation and broad support for the project. Specifically, the nature of the activation and scope of the initiative needed to respond to the street type, community and business demographics as well as time of year or season but would look to include food and dining activities, street and place activation, destination marketing campaigns and entertainment and cultural activities as well as cater to a diverse community.

Importantly, in determining the specific locations, the PWG will consider the merit of ideas put forward through engagement with local stakeholders and consider locations which have been significantly impacted by COVID-19 such as Brunswick Street, areas with high retail vacancy rates and those areas or precincts which have not received funding under similar place activation or destination marketing grant programs.

The initiatives were to take place between September 2021 and April 2022, needed to respond to the key objectives outlined above, and most importantly needed to be carried out in a co-designed manor so that community had buy in to the projects.

Council was to promote and market all three initiatives through its various marketing channels including, EDMs, social media, printed materials and on street ambassadors.

Project outcomes:

In the context of supporting economic and social recovery of local communities including local businesses and creative industries this project had the following outcomes:

- develop precinct-based place-making and business development activities
- promote creative industries in the municipality
- facilitate marketing and business development.

3 Project Delivery

To make these activations and place-based activities successful, we knew that we needed to work in partnership with local business groups and stakeholders to ensure that the nature of the activation and scope of the initiative responded to the street type, community, and business demographics as well as time of year or season.

Key milestones were established to help ensure that the projects were kept on track, and so ensure all stakeholders had visibility of the program. These are outlined below:

Action	Delivery Date
Project initiation and commencement and project working group identified	1 July 2021
Precinct locations identified	30 July 2021
Projects to be supported, approved by working group	30 Aug 2021
Monthly reporting on progress	By end of month, commencing September 30, 2021
Projects to commence	From October 1 2021
Projects to conclude	By April 30 2022

To this end, the first key milestone to meet was the need to establish a Project Working Group (PWG) who would help shape and inform the project, whose membership is outlined in the below table.

Name and title	Organisation/Department
Simon Osborne	Yarra City Council, Economic Development Coordinator
Siu Chan	Yarra City Council, Arts and Culture Unit Manager
Inner Metropolitan Partnership rep (various)	Inner Metropolitan Partnership
Rupert North	Yarra City Council, Youth Services Coordinator
Peter Moran	Yarra City Council, Manager Infrastructure, Traffic and Civil Engineering
Shini Pararajasingham Robyn Madley	Local business operators/traders & Business Advisory Group Members

Step 2 – Locations Identified

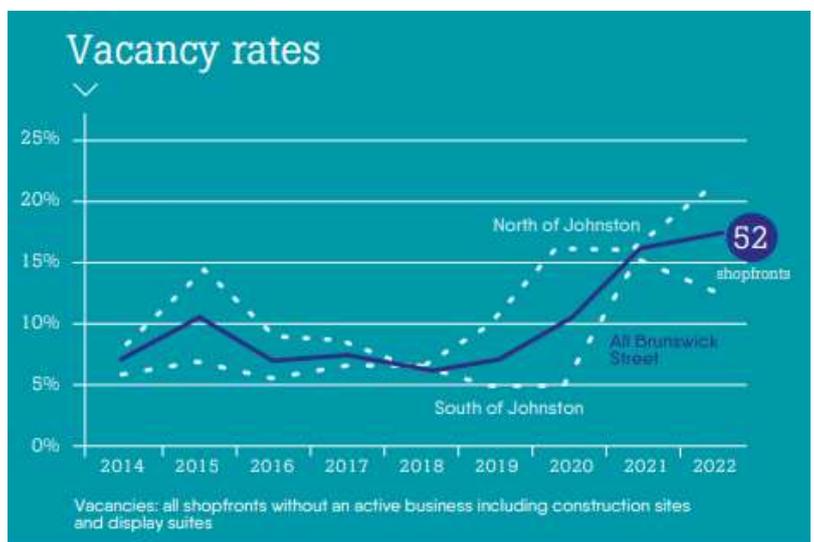
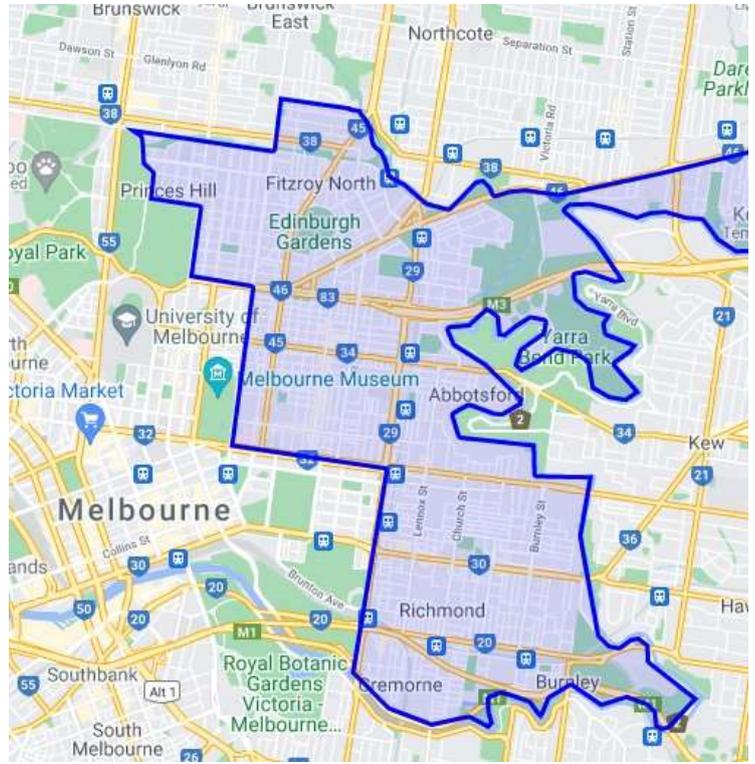
Once the PWG was established in August 2021, Yarra’s Economic Development team presented to the group providing data and statistics to help identify what 3 precincts would be selected for the program.

Importantly, in determining the specific locations, the PWG considered the merit of ideas put forward through engagement with local stakeholders and consider locations which have been significantly impacted by COVID-19 (such as Brunswick Street, areas with high retail vacancy rates and those areas or precincts which have not received funding under similar place activation or destination marketing grant programs such as Nicholson and Swan Streets.

The group unanimously supported three precincts based on the three areas having high vacancy rates, low or no investment within the precinct from other initiatives, being geographically spread out across the municipality, being identified as priority precincts by the Partnership, or a combination of the above.

The three locations selected were

- Nicholson Street, Fitzroy North
- Brunswick Street, Fitzroy/Collingwood
- Swan Street, Richmond



Step 2 – The Projects

It was decided by the PWG that the projects should be initially scoped and costed by Yarra’s internal units, led by Economic Development to create a short list that projects and initiatives that were within budget, and could be delivered by April 2022.

Following some on-ground trader engagement carried out by Economic Development officers, which consisted of in person meetings with key businesses and community, and in conjunction with Yarra’s Arts and Culture team, a short list of projects were put together and presented back to the PWG in mid-August 2021. The list comprised of projects that were both ‘shovel ready’ having already gained support from the area or the target audience, as well as new initiatives that were a direct response to the new COVID19 conditions.

The PWG was supportive of all projects presented, but key feedback provided by the group ultimately led to the following projects being selected:

Nicholson Street, Fitzroy North - A digital marketing campaign to highlight the makers and creators of the street, and engage the local residential community to shop and rediscover local.

Brunswick Street, Fitzroy/Collingwood –

- (a) Running a series of live music and entertainment across four weekends to create a great vibe and ambient sound for all those shopping and dining in the precinct.
- (b) A large-scale event in partnership with Yarra’s Youth Services team that will draw young people back to the area, and stimulate the economy.

Swan Street, Richmond – Live stream DJs from prominent hospitality venues, reinforcing Swan Street as a premier entertainment precinct, as well as promoting the precinct online to those who might still be too apprehensive to visit the street due to COVID concerns.



Proposed Projects

Nicholson Street - \$20,000
Summer Digital campaign

- Precinct does not have a strong identity so its proposed to build on previous branding work
- Concept: Digital 'B2B recommendation'
- Video + Photography + suite of digital and outdoor assets to support campaign
- Campaign would run from early Nov – Feb
- Is COVID safe, reduced risk
- Concept similar to 'People of Gertrude St' which was incredibly successful
- Can implement immediately

THREADING THROUGH OUR 'EVERYDAY VILLAGE WAY'

We're proposing a 'tag-team' or 'pass-along' concept for a multi-channel campaign that highlights a local business & the people behind it - and then also links to another business within Nicholson Village. This is to encourage a sense of community and collaboration between the precinct businesses and encourage visitors to engage with multiple offerings throughout the village to increase time spent in the area as well as shopper spend in the stores.



Everyday Nicholson

The first project for the group was Nicholson Streets digital marketing and branding campaign – Everyday Nicholson.

A local design and creative agency Grozco Lab was engaged to help deliver this project in partnership with Yarra. Yarra officers pitched the project to all of the Nicholson Street traders by visiting in person, and soon we had our first 8 businesses sign up to be part of the campaign.

A photographer was engaged to take a series of photos, while Grozco Lab conducted interviews with the traders to highlight the business, what they love about the precinct, and to provide a bit of personal insight into the person behind the counter.

A website (<https://www.everydaynicholson.com.au/>) and Instagram page were created (www.instagram.com/everydaynicholson/) both of which were beautifully curated and presented Nicholson Street as a true destination worth visiting.

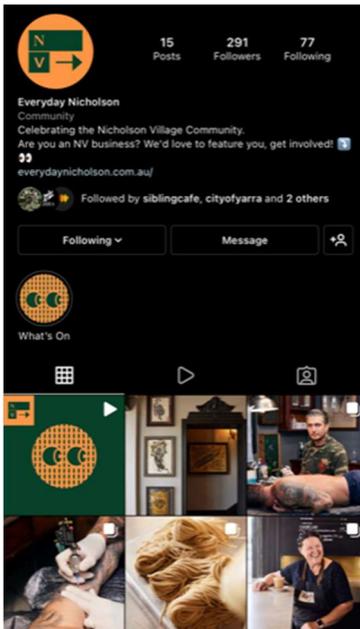
The campaign was also supported with print collateral, where posters and postcards were put up shops within the precinct.

The campaign was delayed in starting (originally scheduled for Nov 2021), however did not launch until February 2022 but has run right up to the end of April 2022.

The online engagement metrics were in line with similar destination marketing campaigns Yarra has run, however the feedback from traders has been extremely positive with Maria from Maria's Pasta stating *"this is exactly what the (Nicholson) Street needed – the branding now gives us a unified identity to which we can collectively promote"*, while comments on the social posts echo the sentiment *"Great collaboration! We have some great small businesses – and community – in Nicholson Village. Always love to see more."*

Our Everyday Village Way

Nicholson Village is perfect for a daily stroll, stop-off and shop. A tight-knit and welcoming community of family and independently-run businesses make up the strip, offering everything from fresh pasta to cocktails, tattoos to bike repairs, wellbeing to wedding cakes. There really is something for everyone's everyday.



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Brunswick Street – See Northside

Brunswick Street is one of Melbourne's best known live music and entertainment areas, but due to COVID and restrictions on venues, many hospitality businesses hadn't booked entertainment for over 18 months.

This project proposed to pay local artists who would normally perform at any number of the Brunswick St venues, to perform on the street, bringing back the sorely missed vibe and energy to the precinct leading into Christmas.

In partnership with Yarra's Arts and Culture team who assisted in the curation of the artists, Yarra's Compliance team in assisting with permits for the performers, and Brandworks who was the projects creative agency, 'See Northside' was launched in November 2021.

Running from 26 Nov - 18 December 2022, a massive 50 artists performed on Brunswick Street on across Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

The program was promoted via Council's communication channels, outdoor media including footpath decals and street posters, as well as all artists who were part of the program.

Additionally, Broadsheet picked up on the project and promoted it via its digital channels, providing significant media coverage.

Excerpts of the attached feedback from artists, those visiting the precinct and from local community surrounding the activation included

- "This is really fun we should do this more often", "We should have music in the streets all the time... It'd be like Brazil"
- "It feels like Paris. Love this. It would be great to have more music down the street"
- "Residents in apartments across the road came out and listen and cheered. Artists were very happy to be part of this".



SEE NORTHSIDE

BRUNSWICK STREET FITZROY

Brunswick Street – Local Swerve

The second part of the Brunswick Street activation was a one-day event, delivered in partnership with councils Youth Services team, and local businesses. Local Swerve was targeted at young people, encouraging them back to the local area which would directly stimulate the local economy.

The event was co-designed by youth, for youth, and provided work experience opportunities for 8 young people to work on the project, including a number who reside in the Collingwood and Fitzroy housing estates. Local Swerve was promoted as a free, all-ages, community event with live music, roller disco, arcade games, a pop-up barbershop, food trucks and plenty of entertainment.

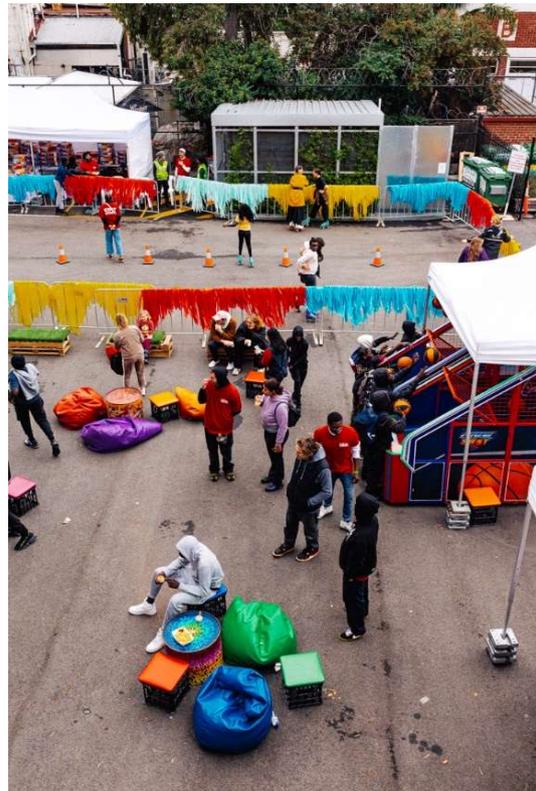
Unfortunately, the initial proposed location for the event was found to be unavailable, so the PWG approved the venue to switch location to Collingwood Yards, located on Johnson Street, but only 800m from Brunswick, keeping the event in the general area.

The event was promoted again through all of Yarra Councils corporate channels, via Youth Services social media channels, outdoor media (rock posters and footpath decals) and via PBC community radio.

On Saturday 7 May, the event was successfully delivered at Collingwood Yards forecourt, attracting over 400 young people and their families, recorded by security on the gates.

Attendees reported that the day was a great success, echoed by the CEO of Collingwood Yards, and Mayor of Yarra who stated – *'brilliant work! So many happy people in one place (even when it rained!). Such a great atmosphere. Congratulations!'*

Written feedback received by the Youth Services team by some of those who attended the event stated that; *'I loved Swerve – I liked performing on stage'*, and *'I liked the roller skating and basketball machine'*. In terms of the event having a direct positive economic impact, the organising committee engaged local suppliers, food vendors and service providers wherever possible, resulting in the majority of the \$30,000 investment going directly to supporting local business and employment.



Swan Street – Scratch Sessions

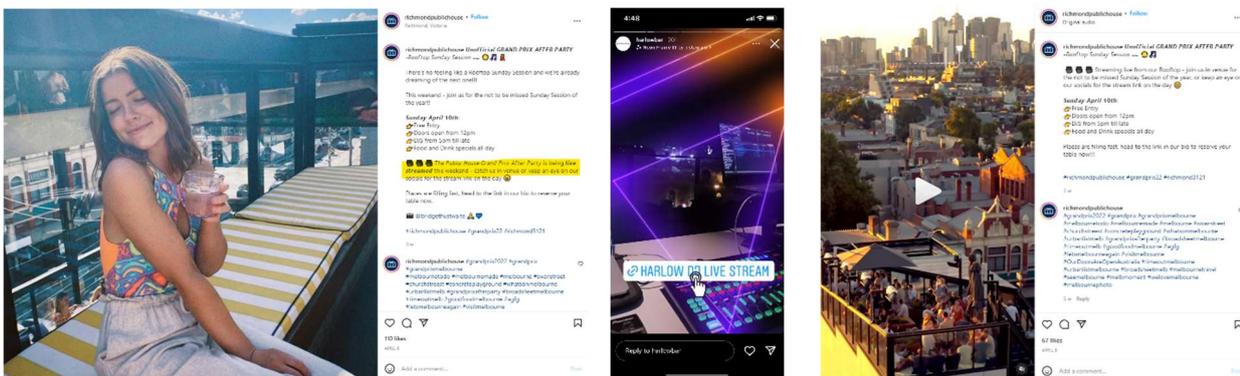
The third and final activation Scratch Sessions, involved live streaming DJs from prominent hospitality venues around the Swan Street precinct, reinforcing Swan Street as a premier entertainment precinct, as well as promoting the precinct online to those who either couldn't attend in person, or who might still be too apprehensive to visit the street due to COVID concerns.

The venues selected for the activation included Harlow, Public House, Precinct Hotel and Fargo & Co – all of which have large followings and online reach.

The DJ programming was co-designed with the venue operators to ensure that the acts that were selected, suited the crowd the venue attracts.

Elk Media was engaged to be the technical delivery partner and worked closely with Yarra's Economic Development team and the venues to ensure the streams were high quality.

There were 4 DJ sessions that took place on the 9th, 10th, 16th and 30th of April, and each of them were promoted via the venues who were hosting the events (via social media), by the DJs themselves, and by Yarra's event pages.



The streams were live via Reddit, Instagram/Facebook and Youtube to increase the reach of each of the events

Scratch Sessions - Engagement Stats					
Venue	Date	In person attendance	Online Views	Unique Viewers	
Fargo & Co	9-Apr	250	75	68	
Public House	10-Apr	400	109	89	
Harlow	16-Apr	400	140	91	
Precinct Hote	30-Apr	350	290	232	

During the first two live streams there were some obstacles that were discovered, including issues with keeping the wifi connection on, and the low speed of the internet resulting in a lower quality stream. This is reflected in the lower numbers that viewed the stream online, however these issues were resolved in the remaining sessions, and the viewership numbers improved.

Feedback from venues, attendees and those involved with running the project were pleased with the results, as it provided an additional incentive to attend the venue, promoted the venue to a wider audience, and showcased what Swan Street is all about.

- Fargo & Co, Saturday 9 April (recording issues meant video isn't available)
- Public House, Sunday 10 April [Watch the stream](#)
- Harlow, Saturday 16 April [Watch the stream part 1](#) [Watch the stream part 2](#)
- Precinct Hotel, Saturday 30 April [Watch the stream](#)

Outcomes and Recommendations

The overall outcome of the four projects was that they were a resounding success, and that they not only met the MPDF program objective of “responding to social and economic impacts of COVID-19 and contribute to on-the-ground place-based solutions that respond to the impacts of COVID-19”, but they delivered on all specific program objectives.

Not only were all the events and campaigns delivered on budget and on time, but they demonstrated the vital role of physical activations alongside digital presence and online marketing, to increase knowledge of precincts and places.

Additionally, by promoting the unique identity, people and assets of places, and integrating the importance of storytelling, activations such as these can leave a lasting legacy well past their completion date.

For example, Nicolson Street now has a brand identity thanks to Everyday Nicholson, which has reengaged residents and community to the precinct, and has attracted new visitors to the area.

Brunswick Streets ‘See Northside’ live music activation supported over 50 artists who could not perform indoors due to COVID restrictions, provided essential support to the traders leading into Christmas, and provided hundreds of shoppers with atmosphere and vitality that the precinct had been missing for almost 18 months. Following its success Yarra is now looking to implement See Northside year on year.

The importance of a co-design approach and providing the time and space for this to be culturally safe and inclusive space also cannot be understated.

The Local Swerve event engaged a young, diverse cohort who took ownership on how the event should be constructed, utilising local food and beverage traders, entertainment providers and weaved in strong cultural activities and cater to the diversity of the community.

The funding also provided leadership opportunities for young people by giving them the opportunity to both have hands on experience and peer learning including budgeting, design, and event management.

Finally, Swan Streets *Scratch Sessions* helped struggling hospitality and entertainment venues by providing a novel way to promote not only their venue, but the precinct. Although this activation was the most challenging due to the technical components, it still delivered on the objective of ‘attracting local and non-local visitors to the precinct or area as a way of increasing economic activity and boosting Yarra’s retail, food and night-time economy sectors’, and will be utilised in future Yarra programs.

The collaborative approach that Yarra took regarding these place making initiatives by including multiple internal stakeholders in the PWG such as engineers, youth, events, arts, and economic development ensured that all activations were well considered, and we could leverage off of existing relationships to deliver successfully. Utilising established governance structures throughout the project made sure that information sharing, and reporting allowed for all stakeholders to feel both informed and included in the delivery of each activity.

Yarra has demonstrated that we can deliver highly targeted and engaging activations that both stimulate the economy and also build capacity and would support the provision of additional funding for future place-based activities.



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