

**Management report to Council****Agenda item 6.1****Shopfront vacancies – progress and future direction****Council****Presenter:** Andrew Wear, Director Economic Development and International**18 April 2023****Purpose and Background**

1. The purpose of this report is to present the final outcomes of the Shopfront Activation Program (the Program) and to seek endorsement from Council for the adoption of initiatives designed to address the shopfront vacancies.
2. On 2 March 2021, the Future Melbourne Committee endorsed the activation of retail precincts and vacant shopfronts across the City of Melbourne through programs that formed part of the Melbourne City Recovery Fund. On 8 November 2022, Council reconfirmed its commitment to the Economic Development Strategy target of reducing shopfront vacancies to less than five per cent by the end of 2023.
3. Commencing in September 2021, the Program was one of several initiatives delivered by the City of Melbourne to increase vibrancy and drive visitation in areas most impacted by vacant shopfronts. Other initiatives include the Uptown Project, Urban Blooms, Flash Forward, Music in the City, Find my Footy, Pop-up Libraries and the Creative Decal Program.
4. Shopfront vacancies peaked at 31 per cent in November 2021. The current vacancy rate across the municipality is 15 per cent.

**Key issues**

5. The Program concluded on 31 March 2023 with a total of 67 shopfront activations delivered. This is one of the most intensive and successful shopfront activation programs that management has been able to identify anywhere in Australia or the world. Testament to the quality of the Program, 38 activations were extended beyond their original tenancy agreements.
6. Successful applicants who secured an opportunity to test, start or grow their business included creatives, entrepreneurs, independent retailers and social enterprises. There were 39 activations in the CBD, 19 in Docklands and nine in Lygon Street. Attachment 2 provides brief profiles of all activations.
7. The majority of activations were retail (48) along with 13 creative enterprises. As of 31 March 2023 there were 29 activations still operating (eight in the CBD, 16 in Docklands and five in Lygon Street). Attachment 3 provides key program highlights and activation success stories in each area.
8. The Program received overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants and property representatives with 91 per cent of participants agreeing that the Program was valuable to their business. Attachment 4 includes key findings from a feedback survey conducted with participants and property representatives.
9. The city's economic outlook is trending in a positive direction, but while the new rhythm emerging in the city is seeing an increase in visitation and spend, challenges remain for small businesses – particularly retail – driven by ongoing pandemic-related supply chain issues and the sharp rise in inflation.
10. Consideration of the city's economic outlook and insights gained during delivery of the Program have informed management's proposed approach to address ongoing shopfront vacancies. Making it easier for businesses to navigate the marketplace will improve opportunities for potential tenants and speed up the process to fill vacant properties. Proposed initiatives include:
  - 10.1.1. Provision of existing and new businesses with more accessible, in-depth and relevant economic insights and data that enables them to make more informed decisions about how to operate in the city. This would involve building on the Melbourne Economy Snapshot by developing its offer further.
  - 10.1.2. Utilisation of the Business Concierge Service to:
    - 10.1.2.1. provide better and more streamlined support services for attracting smaller boutique and independent retailers
    - 10.1.2.2. develop closer relationships with commercial real estate agencies with a retail focus in order to facilitate connections and speed up the tenancy process.

- 10.1.3. Exploration of the potential to establish a grant program that provides direct support to new and current small businesses seeking to establish or grow in the municipality. These businesses will add value at the city's shopfront level.

### **Recommendation from management**

11. That Council:
  - 11.1. Notes the success of the Shopfront Activation Program in activating vacant shopfronts in the CBD, Docklands and Lygon Street, Carlton and contributing to reducing the city's shopfront vacancy rate.
  - 11.2. Requests that management:
    - 11.2.1. aligns the Business Concierge Service to provide better and more streamlined support services for attracting retailers and also develop closer relationships with commercial real estate agencies
    - 11.2.2. continues to develop the Melbourne Economic Snapshot to expand its offer by providing businesses with greater insights and data on how the city is functioning
    - 11.2.3. explores the establishment of a grant program for 2023–24, providing direct support to businesses that operate at shopfront level
    - 11.2.4. in May 2024 provide a report to Council with an update on shopfront vacancy initiatives and support.

### **Attachments:**

1. Supporting Attachment (Page 3 of 17)
2. Activation Profiles (Page 4 of 17)
3. Key program highlights (Page 11 of 17)
4. Feedback survey results (Page 16 of 17)

## Supporting Attachment

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### Legal

1. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

### Finance

2. The future approaches proposed in this report, in particular a web portal and grants program, are subject to budget approval processes. The estimated cost of delivering these is \$500,000.
3. Other associated initiatives are expected to be absorbed from existing budget allocation. It is expected most of those approaches can be delivered within existing branch resources and in collaboration with other work areas.

### Conflict of interest

4. 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.

### Health and Safety

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

### Stakeholder consultation

6. Consultation was undertaken throughout the Program with the three appointed expert agencies and with each of the relevant precinct associations. Each agency conducted workshops and regular group meetings with key stakeholders in their areas including the precinct associations, property managers and real estate agencies. Potential businesses enquiring to the City of Melbourne about the Program were provided with support and information through the project team and business concierge.
7. An online survey was conducted with activation businesses and participating property owners to obtain feedback on their involvement in the Program. Attachment 4 provides a summary of the survey results.
8. Management will continue to maintain the close relationships built through the Program with key stakeholders to deliver the proposed approaches to address shopfront vacancies.

### Relation to Council policy







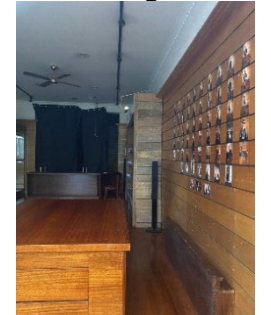



9. The contents of this report are consistent with both the 2021–25 Council Plan ('Economy of the Future' and its focus on economic recovery) and Council's economic development strategy: Melbourne's Thriving Economic Future 2031.

### Environmental sustainability

10. There is no significant impact on environmental sustainability arising from this report.

Activation Profiles

Central Business District

Central Business District				
<p><b>Informale</b></p>  <p><b>186 Little Collins Street</b>  <b>Duration: 24 weeks</b>          Coming from a small showroom in Melbourne's Nicholas Building, the designer of a small independent label which is an ecommerce-focused menswear label, had always wanted to grow their online presence and eventually move into physical retail.</p>	<p><b>Millinery Collective</b></p>  <p><b>199-201 Little Collins Street</b>  <b>Duration: 16 weeks</b>          Opened their store to test their proposal of three individual designers making and showcasing their merchandise in store.</p>	<p><b>Anxiety Shop</b></p>  <p><b>89 Bourke Street</b>  <b>Duration: 16 weeks</b>          A social enterprise run by a long-time advocate of mental health awareness through education and community connection. The space was welcoming and quiet in terms of its afterhours reading sessions and meetings.</p>	<p><b>This is not a Toy Store</b></p>  <p><b>265 Little Collins Street</b>  <b>Duration: 54 weeks</b>          A collective of artists manufacturing their art toys and marketed to adult collectors and culture lovers. The business started off with 25 artistic suppliers to the store and grew to almost 100 during their 12 month tenancy.</p>	<p><b>SIX</b></p>  <p><b>195 Little Collins Street</b>  <b>Duration: 28 weeks</b>          Melbourne's iconic design duo Denise Sprynsky and Peter Boyd opened a space to showcase their clothing as part of Melbourne Spring Fashion Week 2021 and stayed for six months, using the store for appointments and events.</p>
<p><b>LIVIN</b></p>  <p><b>148 Little Collins Street</b>  <b>Duration: 20 weeks</b>          An organisation that is a 100% not for profit that is focused on breaking down the stigma around mental health issues.</p>	<p><b>The Plagiarist</b></p>  <p><b>206 Little Bourke Street</b>  <b>Duration: 12 weeks</b>          An independent project inspired by classic silhouettes, diasporic and third cultures, reinterpreting designs featuring a local Melbourne menswear designer.</p>	<p><b>Yesign</b></p>  <p><b>259 Little Collins Street</b>  <b>Duration: 20 weeks</b>          Incredible art paired with delicious handmade chocolate. This young Melbourne based couple worked from home and selling online prior to opening their store to sell direct to customers. Offering including tastings and chocolate painting classes.</p>	<p><b>LASTLY</b></p>  <p><b>15 Howey Place</b>  <b>Duration: 26 weeks</b>          An avant-garde fashion boutique specialising in Japanese and European darkwear labels. Their carefully selected collections focus on gender-neutral high quality artisanal garments intended to be worn in everyday life.</p>	<p><b>Eklectic Sewing Centre</b></p>  <p><b>22 Howey Place</b>  <b>Duration: 24 weeks</b>          Well-known in Melbourne's fashion scene - reliable and trusted fashion designers and manufacturers, specialising in both women's MTM and RTW garments.</p>

**Podcast NOW**



**209 Little Collins Street**  
**Duration: 54 weeks**

Recognising emerging media as a business tool, educational resource and source of inspiration, this was a podcast studio available to visitors to engage audiences across entertainment, and infotainment along with an art gallery which also nurtured many artists.

**Edie Black**



**12 Howey Place**  
**Duration: 24 weeks**

An artist, alchemist and atelier designing unique and unusual silver, stone set jewellery and cuffs all hand made by her. Her work in iron, low carbon steel and gold is an exercise in questioning notions of fragility, strength, beauty and value.

**MR. CUFF**



**6-8 Howey Place**  
**Duration: 60 weeks**

A trained tailor from the school of Fashion and Textiles at RMIT, this bespoke tailor is passionate about designing and tailoring for the individual in a contemporary way. As a specialist craftsman he enjoys making something really unique for his clients that's going to make them feel special

**The Metaverse Store**



**318 Little Collins Street**  
**Duration: 22 weeks**

One of the first in Australia, featuring NFT virtual products sourced from local artists in real life product displays. This radical retail experience blending art, fashion, technology and sustainability will introduce visitors to the concept of the Metaverse and its potential in the new avatar economy.

**Hats for Spring Racing**



**G7, 234 Collins Street**  
**Duration: 9 weeks**

Hats for Spring Racing group are a collaboration of seven Australian professional milliners along with other Australian and International designers are also invited to contribute their hats to the range, to enable every client to find the very best headpiece for the Spring Racing Carnival in Melbourne.

**Curvy Design Shop**



**G6B, 234 Collins Street**  
**Duration: 16 weeks**

This boutique-style store of independent designers was a highly enjoyable shopping experience is for women who wear size 14+.

**TOKA Exchange**



**Shop 31, 200 Bourke Street**  
**Duration: 8 weeks**

A hobby and collectable store focusing on anime gifts, model kit, gunpla, robot, action figure candy toys and MORE! Store created a profile to sell their individually designed games.

**Allora Capes**



**UG8, 100 Queen Street**  
**Duration: 16 weeks**

Specialising in beautifully made, tailored pieces for women. Allora is designed and made with a passion for detail, quality and style. At the heart of every design is longevity. To ensure each piece will perform just as it does the first day it's worn with each piece being made locally.

**Kulture Garage**



**267 Little Collins Street**  
**Duration: 9 weeks**

Celebration of African art and craftsmanship, acquiring products directly from artisans in Africa, thus participating in more equitable and fair-trade practices and are proud being ethical and culturally conscious.

**G'day Kitty**



**253 Elizabeth Street**  
**Duration: 14 weeks**

A giftware store with a focus on Australian artisans who love cats and represent them in their work. G'day Kitty have had great success running pop-ups and wanted to showcase their existing base of makers in a CBD location.



**Shop 5, 115 Swanston Street**  
**Duration: 8 weeks**  
An evolving collaborative space aimed to be continuously reinvented by its users, a cyclical reinvention of private interests in the public sphere. A multifaceted project exploring public culture, where the exhibitions speak to the social, cultural and political contexts that define our public lives.



**30 Hardware Lane**  
**Duration: 16 weeks**  
Bringing the joy of chocolate to everyone with their Melbourne made, 100% Belgian vegan mylk chocolate product in their first shop. They offer tastings for customers and seek to offer a vibrant, fun experience for a lot of dietaries requirements e.g. gluten free, dairy free and friendly and sell hampers for Christmas.



**Driver Lane**  
**Duration: 8 weeks**  
Australian-made womenswear label launched in March 2013. They manufacture locally in Melbourne with ethically accredited manufacturers and have amassed a loyal following for its range of women's clothing in sizes 12-26 that's aimed at the belief every woman has the right to find fashion that reflects her personality.



**44 Lonsdale Street**  
**Duration: 8 weeks**  
Chlo Studio is a young brand that produces unique graphics and ethical products. The designer, Elaine has a graphic design background and her team are experienced in production. Products include cat curious t-shirts, cards and gifts.



**391 Bourke Street**  
**Duration: 8 weeks**  
Giving women the confidence to wear their bra, this is two time global award-winning brand creating lingerie and fashion that solves enormous issues around lingerie, fashion, and layering. They sell the first ever bra system that allows women to change the colour of their bra.



**Shop 4, 495 Collins Street**  
**Duration: 12 weeks**  
A Melbourne based artist documenting our recovery from the pandemic - selling a part of Melbourne's history in the form of art for customers to hang on their walls.



**Shop 3, 495 Collins Street**  
**Duration: 12 weeks**  
A Melbourne based label who specialise in Merino wool clothing using 100% Australian Merino wool. Specialising in premium men's and women's tops, t-shirts, jumpers and accessories like merino socks, beanies and scarves.



**8 Royal Arcade**  
**Duration: 8 weeks**  
Established in 2015, with a high-end, sustainable approach to creating beautiful pieces for everyday modern women. Creating a brand with sustainability and ethical manufacture at its core.



**174 Swanston Street**  
**Duration: 17 weeks**  
With a mission to create products that change the world, do no harm to the environment, nourish and support the people and animals that dwell on our planet. It wants to inspire people to consume less, to do more, BEE MORE.



**22 Howey Place**  
**Duration: 17 weeks**  
An independent label based in Melbourne, focussing on creating contemporary menswear with a clear casual Australian sensibility. Creating pieces that last and designed to wear with you on adventures near and far.

**ICHPIG**



**15 Howey Place**

**Duration: 16 weeks**

Ethical and sustainable Australian made garments. Independently from start to finish approach to research, design, and manufacturing. This is to inspire uniquely independent ways of thinking and doing. Their entire garment range is designed and manufactured in Australia.

**EMERGE\_Melbourne**



**163 Bourke Street**

**Duration: 8 weeks**

A collaborative activation space to provide an opportunity for local Melbourne based artists, start-up retail brands and musicians to showcase their work, share experience, cross promote and learn from local & global creative industry leaders.

**Babushkas**



**14 Howey Place**

**Duration: 8 weeks**

Babushkas is an import and retail business, specializing in Russian and Eastern European handcrafted products. Established by Rikki Meyer and Richard Seager in 1991 with the opening of their store in the heritage listed Royal Arcade, in Melbourne, Australia.

**Madeleine Joy Dawes**



**Shop 5, 218-240 Little Collins Street**

**Duration: 12 weeks**

An artist utilizing a system whereby the ruled grid becomes the vessel for a lexicon of hand-drawn symbols, the principal theme in her work is employing iterative mark making as a temporal site to record measured and psychological time.

**Laurent Gallery**



**Shop 1EA, 16 Southern Cross Lane**

**Duration: 8 weeks**

Titane Laurent is a painter, sculptor, author of Godstuff and iconoclast. Originally from Belgium, Laurent has exhibited and won awards across the globe, from Perth to Mauritius, to Japan, to New York and more recently to Melbourne, where she now calls home.

**Christmas Wrapping Shop 2022**



**G6B, 234 Collins Street**

**Duration: 16 weeks**

A collaboration between the Collins Street Precinct Group and the Shopfront Activation Program, enabling a space for Collins Street Precinct shoppers to have their gifts wrapped during the Christmas shopping period.

**Christmas Wrapping Shop 2021**



**239 Bourke Street**

**Duration: 8 weeks**

A collaboration between the Christmas in the City campaign and the Shopfront Activation Program, enabling a large space for city shoppers to have their gifts wrapped during the Christmas shopping period.

**Only in the City**



**Hotel Causeway, Howey Place**

**Duration: 8 Weeks**

A collaboration incorporating the building owner, Experience Melbourne and the Shopfront Activation Program to enable a vibrancy in a popular Melbourne laneway.

**Only in the City**



**300 Collins Street**

**Duration: 8 weeks**

A window decal is a collaboration incorporating the building owner, Experience Melbourne and the Shopfront Activation Program to create vibrancy on a high profile Melbourne street corner.

**ELK**



**404 Lygon Street**  
**Duration: 63 weeks**

Founded on a belief in creativity, innovative design and an authentic approach where people are at the heart of every decision. Their Co-Founders, passion for local design and independent, ethically sourced fashion has created a brand of enduring value.

**Pop-Up Library - Biblioteca**



**185-187 Lygon Street**  
**Duration: 30 weeks**

Feed your mind at this beautiful and bountiful pop-up library in this traditional style Lygon Street shopfront. Centred around the local history and culture of Lygon Street with books specialising in Italian arts, culture and cuisine.

**Viral Ventures-Karen's Diner**



**398-400 Lygon Street**  
**Duration: 63 weeks**

Hospitality with a difference is from a team of event producers creating novel and exciting events appealing to a wide audience. Driven by delivering fun across the globe in the form of bars, events and experiences.

**Van Der Kooij**



**91 Grattan Street**  
**Duration: 48 weeks**

A local women's fashion label established to combine the two foundations of sustainability and design. Van Der Kooij are looking to change the fast-fashion narrative with an emphasis on being both fashion-forward and environmentally conscious.

**Aaron Fluck**



**99 Grattan Street**  
**Duration: 16 weeks**

A subversive, expressive collection exploring the beauty and severity of the Australian land, nature and life. A unique design talent, weaving cultural commentary through influence from nature, creating high fashion via conscious, sustainable processes.

**Joseph & James**



**239 Lygon Street**  
**Duration: 12 weeks**

A high-end menswear label founded by proud Gooreng Gooreng and South Sea Islander and designer, Juanita Page, and her husband, Ashford. The design aesthetic marries streetwear silhouettes with sartorial precision, showcasing custom-developed fabrics, considered colour palate & unique detailing.

**Athletikan**



**241 Lygon Street**  
**Duration: 6 weeks**

An Australian sneaker brand founded in 2017 and offering vibrant designs for both training & casual wear. Has since worked with some of the best athletes and entertainers across the globe. The brand's fanatical base has been the pillar of the brand's success.

**Chiron Entertainment**



**159 Pelham Street**  
**Duration: 10 weeks**

A friendly and fun little studio that strives to cater for all photography and video needs. The space is available for product photography, fashion, boudoir as well as music recording. There is also affiliated photographers associated with the studio available.

**Benjamin Ross**



**132-136 Lygon Street**  
**Duration: 8 weeks**

An artist specializing in Murals and Digital art, he has worked around the world putting his Byron Bay Vibes into each design. Growing up along the coast, he implements his love for surf and summer.



**DOCKLANDS**

**WØRKS**



**Shop 01, 889 Collins Street**  
**Duration: 47 weeks**

A boutique personal care brand that meets the needs of modern consumers by formulating organic, plant-based and biodegradable products that outperform their synthetic counterparts.

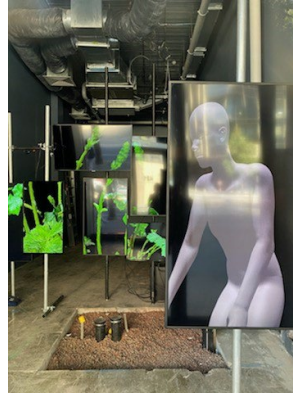
**La Guapa Outerwear**



**Shop 6 & 7, 888 Collins Street**  
**Duration: 47 weeks**

A sustainable and ethical outerwear brand and fashion label that supports local manufacturers and prioritises the education of customers on the negative effects of fast fashion and the importance of going slow.

**Yandell Walton**



**426 Docklands Drive**  
**Duration: 8 weeks**

A Melbourne-based artist whose work encompasses projection, installation, and interactive digital media. MOVE ME is a site-specific installation presenting a figure and plant moving synergy, created using photogrammetry technology.

**The MBassy Dance**



**Shop 1, 915 Collins Wharf, 915 Collins Street**  
**Duration: 24 weeks**

Minx and their team have used their space to offer Urban and Latin dance classes, workshops and events. They have literally brought life to the streets of Docklands through a series of free pop-up dance classes offered as part of CoM Summer series.

**Jem Bray Art**



**Tenancy SC - G23/24, Docklands Drive, Docklands**  
**Duration: 19 weeks**

Heavy focus on exploring new media concepts intersecting art & technology, Jem's goal is to engage, challenge and explore artistic understanding all the while exploring a corruptible sense of reality.

**Two Can Productions**



**Cafe 69, 990 La Trobe Street**  
**Duration: 33 weeks**

A couple of guys with cameras - Orion and Torben - make brand, event and wedding videos. This creative duo offer fun photo shoots, video and editing. They're on a mission to elevate brands and engage consumers.

**Saint Kaloro**



**SCG 17 Wharf Street, 440 Docklands Drive**  
**Duration: 10 weeks**

A community driven studio and event space. Brands and artists can hire the studio, and create unique and tailored content through our different sets, backdrops, equipment and accessories.

**Your Locals**



**SW G12 -13 Star Crescent, 440 Docklands Drive**  
**Duration: 10 weeks**

A gorgeous, professional space that allows small businesses to sell in shopping centres and run by the vendors themselves. So everyday a passionate maker is behind the counter.

**Ashen Oak**



**NC G05 Start Crescent, 440 Docklands Drive**  
**Duration: 10 weeks**

A brand derived from the modern street & sports styles of Melbourne, Australia. The lifestyle brand produces high-quality premium street-sports wear, inspired by international and local trends.

**Kindred Cameras**



**454 Docklands Drive**  
**Activated for 7 weeks**

Photography & video, education & events. Kindred classes are designed to be accessible, to suit all skill levels, and focus on a pick-and-choose style of educational experience.

**Lucas Guilbert**



**Escala, 381 Docklands Drive**  
**Duration: 8 weeks**  
Lucas is a sculptor of wood and uses his space as a studio-gallery. His attention focuses on the natural forms and ecological paradigms that transcend locality and culture.

**Brett Ashby**



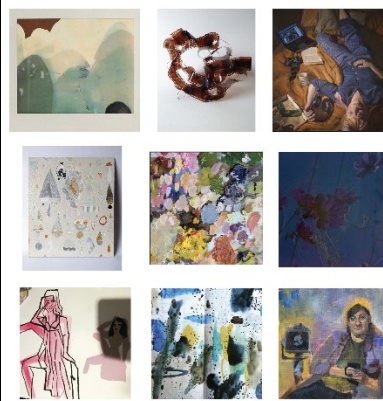
**Escala, 381 Docklands Drive**  
**Duration: 8 weeks**  
Brett Ashby is a multidisciplinary artist, performer, presenter & author. His boundless chameleon artistry across mixed media visual art, performative public art, and sound has framed Ashby as an prodigious figure in the experimental art world.

**Skunk Control**



**NE G12 Waterfront Way**  
**Duration: 7 weeks**  
Creating visually engaging works and immersive experiences that provide audiences with a sense of wonderment and opportunities to make discoveries.

**Spontaneous Assembly**



**2G 439-441 Docklands Drive**  
**Duration: 12 Weeks**  
A vibrant and energetic collection of creative practitioners whose practice spans almost every corner of visual and creative arts. The Collective provides passers-by the opportunity to observe and witness the creative process in real time.

**Collider Space**



**426 Docklands Drive, Docklands**  
**Duration: 36 weeks**  
An experimental window activation that gives Collide Public Art Initiative a place to play with a wide range of new, industry-leading methods. The tech can range from holographic screens to some of the latest architecture materials and printing technologies.

**OzGrav**



**2, 889 Collins Street**  
**Duration: 32 weeks**  
The mission of the ARC Centre of Excellence for Gravitational Wave Discovery (OzGrav) is capitalising on the historic first detections of gravitational waves to understand the extreme physics of black holes and warped spacetime and inspiring the next generation.

**Collide Public Art**



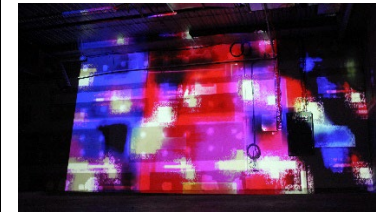
**1-4, 883 Collins Street**  
**Duration: 32 weeks**  
A public art initiative at the intersection of art and architecture. Collide research, design and facilitate artworks in public places, which can include temporary works, residency-based research, exhibitions & events.

**Chris Bowes**



**3, 889 Collins Street**  
**Duration: 32 weeks**  
A photographer, artist and educator whose projection Feedback is a generative artwork created by a webcam watching the screen on which the webcam video feed is displayed.

**Paul Fletcher**



**10 Marmion Place Docklands**  
**Activated for 8 weeks**  
A creative involved for many years in abstract animation, visual music and experimental music from making hand-made instruments, to site specific installations and projections and live cinema.

## Key program highlights

The Shopfront Activation Program (the Program) delivered 67 activations across the three focus areas – the CBD, Docklands and Lygon Street, Carlton.

The types of activations delivered were in the following business categories:

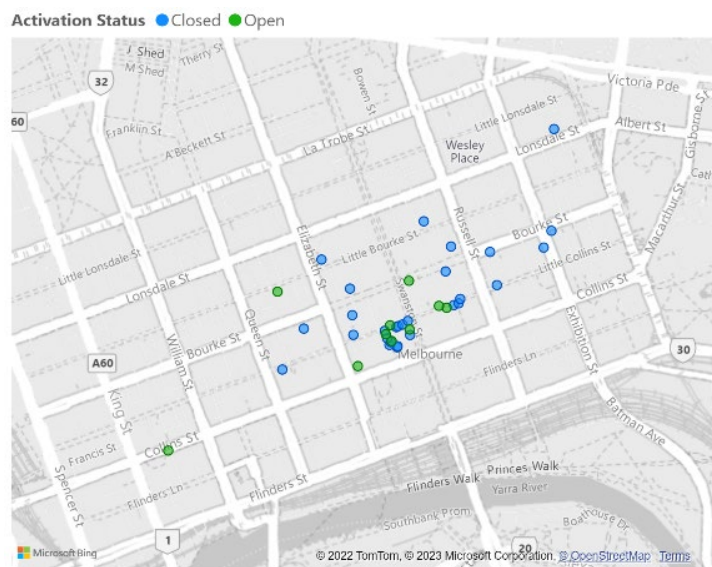
- 48 x Retail
- 13 x Creative enterprises
- 1 x hospitality
- 2 x Christmas wrapping stores (one each in 2021 and 2022)
- 1 x Pop-up Library
- 2 x Only in the City window installations

Key Facts:

- 38 activations extended their shopfronts beyond their original tenancy agreements
- Average number of weeks to negotiate a space = 8 weeks
- Average duration of activations = 20 weeks (~5months)
  - CBD = average 17 weeks
  - Docklands = average 21 weeks
  - Lygon Street = average 28 weeks
- Total floor space activated = 6,852m<sup>2</sup>
- Average per activation = 102m<sup>2</sup>

## Central Business District (CBD)

Ginnane & Associates was appointed for this focus area and delivered 39 activations with 37 internal occupations and 2 external window installations. The total footprint of the space activated was 3,059sqm, which averages 87.67sqm per activation. After activating 24 shopfronts in the first 24 months to August 2022, the Program's extension allowed the additional delivery of a further 15 activations.



## Benefits of the Program in the CBD

- New/online only businesses able to experience bricks and mortar, *placing the business in front of the customer*
- 13 shopfronts activated in the Program have since been leased with new businesses.
- One participant, Mr Cuff has signed a long term lease in Howey Place while two participants have signed long-term leases in other locations within municipality.
- Flow-on impacts in local area including increased visitation and spending activity, for example new businesses opening in Howey Place after activations brought new life and vibrancy to the laneway.
- Once key property owner/agent connections were on board with the program, case studies were provided to showcase successful activations
- Enabling small businesses the opportunity to focus on their business without the worry of rent

## Success stories



### **Informale – 186 Little Collins Street, Melbourne**

The first activation in the CBD, coming from a small showroom in Melbourne’s Nicholas Building to their first physical retail store. Informale design ethically crafted menswear, handmade and in Melbourne. They were able to activate their Little Collins Street store for almost six months.

*“We’re excited to have a taste of local street level retail and find out whether Informale appealed to the average Melburnian. After serving more than 200 happy new customers during the activation over five and a half months, we are now absolutely confident that our small independent label does appeal to the broader menswear market” - Steve Calder – Founder & Co-Owner, Informale*

### **MR. CUFF – 6-8 Howey Place, Melbourne**

One of the first activations in Howey Place as part of a resurgence, opening up with four other unique and creative activations in this historic laneway and has since become a great advocate for all traders in Howey. MR. CUFF is a bespoke tailor who is passionate about using old-fashioned techniques to be able to dress an individual in a contemporary way. MR. CUFF hosted the Howey Place launch, Handmade in Howey to coincide with Shop the City. Jarrad Cuff has signed a lease until the end of 2023 with the intention to make his store more permanent and hopefully expand one day.



### **Beekeeper Parade – 174 Swanston Street, Melbourne**

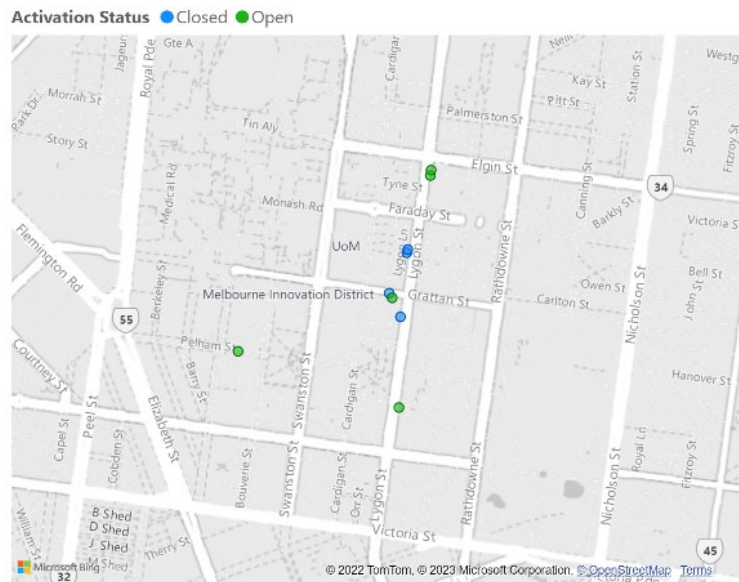
A social enterprise activation has taken up prime location in Swanston Street and opened in time to participate in the Black Friday sales. Beekeeper Parade sells backpacks, handbags, souvenirs and other products made using upcycled textiles which enables them to participate in a more sustainable business model with profits going to schools in Cambodia. The shopfront has been a great success and has negotiated a rolling monthly lease.

*“Having the opportunity to be in Melbourne’s CBD during Nov/Dec as a popup was a big draw card because it would expose me to new customers, raising brand awareness, as well as giving local customers an opportunity to come in and visit us in person” - Koky Saly – Founder, Beekeeper Parade*



## Lygon Street

The Place Agency was appointed for this focus area and delivered 9 activations with 8 internal occupations and 1 external window installation. The total footprint of the spaces activated was 1,262sqm, which averages 157.75sqm per activation. There are currently still 5 open with ELK and Karen’s Diner signing long-term leases and others negotiating terms. Many spaces initially offered to the Program were leased before an activation occupied them, attributed in large part to the positive sentiment from the Program’s investment. This generated a faster recovery and brought down the vacancy rate more starkly than other areas of the municipality.



**Benefits of the Program in Lygon Street**

- New/online only businesses able to experience bricks and mortar, placing the business in front of the customer
- Transition to long-term leases for two activations
- Flow on impacts in local area
- Providing opportunities to grow a small business, open doors they never would have, test if their brand is ready for a shop
- ELK signing a long-term lease, Viral Ventures (Karen's Diner) extending their agreement twice
- Attracting a micro economy of fashion brands to Lygon Street

**Success stories**



**ELK – 404 Lygon Street, Carlton**

The first activation on Lygon Street was an ELK pop-up store showcasing their vibrant and colourful womenswear designs to test the appeal within the Lygon Street area. The connection between property owner and program came about from the call-to-action letter sent to property owners from the Lord Mayor. After their initial three month activation, ELK have now signed a long-term lease agreement and will add their Lygon Street store to the ever-expanding list of stores.

**Van Der Kooij – 91 Grattan Street, Carlton**

Sustainability and design are the two foundations that Van Der Kooij operates under which has enhanced the high-end fashion offering in Lygon Street. Van Der Kooij signed onto the program, enhancing the micro-fashion curation of the area with three-month consecutive agreements over one year and are continuing with a month-by-month arrangement.

*“It has been a really great opportunity to access a new platform that has allowed for a type of connection that has been lost through COVID. It has helped cultivate a deeper connection with our clients by being able to offer an intimate, in-store experience” - Natasha Veenhuizen – Founder, Director & Head Designer, Van Der Kooij.*





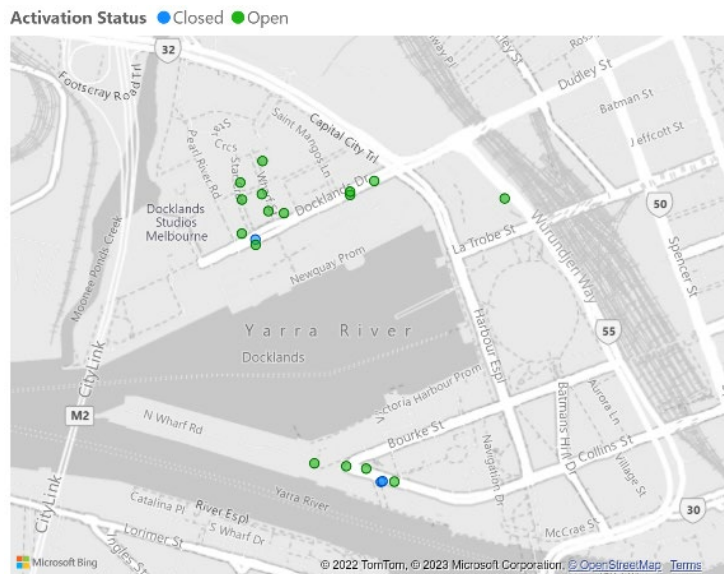
**JOSEPH & JAMES – 239 Lygon Street, Carlton**

JOSEPH & JAMES is a ready to wear menswear label based in Melbourne where the brand was established with the ambition to inject a level of sophistication into streetwear. The activation was an opportunity to physically showcase their brand and products to consumers in a well fitted out space. The experience provided the brand with a boost in brand awareness, an ability to see customers interact in-person with their products and hear direct feedback in real time.

*“The program gave us more legitimacy and consumer-trust and it was successful in giving our business a boost in awareness and provided an invaluable experience that we have been able to learn from and will build upon” - Ashford Page – Co-founder, JOSEPH & JAMES*

**Docklands**

Renew Australia was appointed to this focus area and delivered 19 activations with 12 internal occupations and 7 external window installations and projections. The total footprint of the spaces activated was 2,532sqm, which averages 133.25sqm per activation. There are unique challenges with Docklands and whilst initially slow, the Program gained momentum, particularly from August 2022 to January 2023 with over half opening during this period. As of April 3 2023, eight tenants are still operating and in negotiations with their respective landlords on possible transitions to longer-term leases.



**Benefits of the Program**

- New/online only businesses able to experience bricks and mortar, *placing the business in front of the customer*
- Flow on impacts in local area
- Establishment of new businesses and ideas in the precinct
- Tangible experience and exposure to communities, other businesses and new ideas through a bricks and mortar location
- Program investment into cold shell properties enables ease of access for future tenants

## Success stories

### **WØRKS – Shop 1, 889 Collins Street, Docklands**

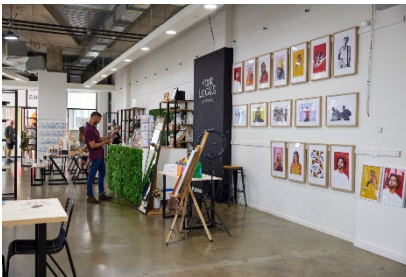
The first activation for the Docklands area is in the Victoria Harbour side and is the first business to ever operate in this space. WØRKS with Danish and Australian founders, bridges the gap between renowned Scandinavian design and locally sourced raw materials. Their hand, body and home care products are made ethically in Melbourne and designed authentically in Århus, Denmark.

*“Streamlining all processes and procedures in our business, from packing and distribution for wholesale and preparation for trade shows, to having a central place to run our office/host meeting and gaining invaluable skills in visual merchandising our brand and retailing our products.” - Suze Raymond – Co-Founder, WØRKS*



### **Your Locals – G12-13 Star Crescent, The District Docklands, Docklands**

Your Locals is a collective of artistic makers sharing one space to sell their locally and ethically made products. The activation situated in The District Docklands is a unique gift store filled with funky air fresheners, funny cards, candles, key chains, crystals, soaps, earrings and much more. The store is run by the vendors selling in the space and receive 100% of their profits. Workshops are being trialed here in the large space which is also available for kids to explore whilst their parents are busy shopping.



### **Kindred Camera – 454 Docklands Drive, Docklands**

Kindred Cameras was created as a way to share the photographic knowledge with the Melbourne creative community. The space enables various artistic streams, including photography studio spaces, gallery space, co-working space and more. Classes are designed to suit those of all skill levels and focus on a pick-and-choose style of educational experience. This activation is offering a place to create amazing images and connect with like-minded people with a passion for creativity.

*“This program is potentially life-changing. Although I’m only just in the beginning of it with Kindred Cameras, I would never have been able to pull something like this off on my own. I’m excited about the future and how this could change my own career path, as well as create a space to help out emerging image makers.” - Chris Bowes – Photographer, Kindred Cameras*



## Feedback survey results

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The Program conducted feedback surveys with two key audiences:

- Participants who were successful in securing a space for their activation
- Property owners who provided spaces for activations

Number of responses:

- 44 activation participants
- 8 property owners

### Key findings from survey of activation participants

Responses were overwhelmingly positive with the most common benefits to participants of their involvement in the Program being:

- Opportunity to showcase business to a wider variety of customers and tourists,
- Test and trial online business via bricks and mortar and learn from experience,
- Visibility and exposure to greater number of customers.

Other positive feedback included:

- 90 per cent of participants said they'd participate in the program again if given an opportunity
- 88 per cent of participants felt the property they used fulfilled their business needs
- 77 per cent of participants believed the Program allowed them to expand their business
- 88 per cent of participants believe the Program exposed their business to a new client base
- 91 per cent of participants agreed that the Program was valuable to their business
- 88 per cent of participants agreed that the program met their expectations

75% of property respondents would participate in the program again whilst 25% of property respondents would prefer a longer term tenant.

### Sentiment from participants:

"It was highly effective for us. And we are extremely happy with everyone we dealt with during the duration of the program" *Steve Calder, Informale*

"It was an overall wonderful experience" *Anna Reeves, Metaverse*

"Absolutely, it was fantastic and I am extremely grateful" *Elaine Lockwood, Chlo Studio*

"The shopfront activation program makes art accessible to the public. I can only see benefits of having more opportunities to exhibit in different locations" *Kristan Oud, Oud Art*

"Numerous opportunities and collaborations resulted from the space, across creatives, from local businesses, sales, creative projects and commercial collaborations" *Rachela Aristotite, EmergeMelbourne*

"The benefits of having a physical presence is valuable to building our brand and reaching more customers, and having the ability for customers to touch and try on our clothing is important" *Ashford Page, JOSEPH & JAMES*

"Access to a low cost commercial premises" *Suze Raymond, WORKS*

"Overall the experience has been positive and helped our business to become more established" *Zaida Rodriguez, LaGuapa Outerwear*

"The program gave me a chance to share my work with the public, something that is difficult to do from the confines of a traditional gallery space" *Chris Bowes (Artist)*

### Sentiment from property owners:

"A win-win for landlords who participated and for budding businesses" *Gary Loo-239 Bourke Street*

"Good opportunity for income for the landlords" *Steven Lee, 91 Grattan Street*



“A great initiative to encourage startups to showcase and succeed in their products and wares... I would welcome another year of activation program, not only for Landlords but also for retailers and the emergence of new retailers will be a great help and advert for the City of Melbourne” *Thiyaga Sabaratnam, LendLease*

“It was a great program which connected an enthusiastic retailer who really appreciated the tenancy and provided a great retail amenity for our customers. It was a win-win for the retailer and for ISPT” *Jon Barkla, 44 Lonsdale Street*

“Covers a period of time at the end of the year where we had little chance of gaining a longer term tenant and filled that period over Xmas / New Year” *Rogan Sedger*

### **Benefits of occupying a shopfront within the City of Melbourne**

There were a few common themes from participants on the benefits of occupying a shopfront in the City of Melbourne:

- Exposure
- Branding
- Connecting with new customers
- Affordability/low cost

### **Participant sentiment on the benefits of their activation to their business:**

“Exposure to City clientele, a destination for existing customers, a home base for our brand. More revenue for the business” *Steve Calder, Informale*

“New exposure. CBD demographic. Good trial to test the market with low cost. Connection and network” *Danyoung Chen, Yesign*

“I think this was an invaluable experience for us and the precinct we were in, been Little Collins Street. We had visitors from all over the world, who remarked at 'discovering' our future concept store, as part of the delight of being in Melbourne” *Anna Reeves, Metaverse*

“The City location allowed us to access a wide client base including both Melbourne and Interstate visitors” *Margaret Watson, Hats for Spring Racing*

“The business had great exposure, I was able to meet and talk to customers and having a store mean people didn't have to know of you in order to come in and have a look” *Elaine Lockwood, Chlo Studio*

“Foot traffic helps drive sales in art. Tourists likewise. The added bonus is to work and exhibit in a beautiful heritage listed building”. *Kristan Oud, Oud Art*

“An opportunity to showcase my work in an area that I wouldn't been able to afford normally. The fact that I could reached a target of business people that would not go normally to an art gallery” *Titane Laurent, Laurent Gallery*

“Exposure to a variety of customers, locals, tourists etc and a cross section of demographics. The centrality allowed for all to easily come to the location through access to transportation, where suburban locations tend to be more 'locals' orientated” *Rachela Aristotite, EmergeMelbourne*

“Provides a physical presence for our products, enabling us to gather in-person insights into our customers and visitors, increases brand awareness, and increases our legitimacy as a brand from a consumer's perspective” *Ashford Page, JOSEPH & JAMES*

“Brand awareness and having a space to create and host the workshops impacted positively our business” *Zaida Rodriguez, LaGuapa Outerwear*

“Allowed me to show artworks to the public with minimal costs to me (the artist). Allowed me to test some new interactive artworks” *Chris Bowes (Artist)*

“The benefits are increased exposure and customer outreach” *Jeremy Bray, Jem Bray*