



# CREATIVE STONNINGTON

Arts & Culture Strategy 2023-26



## Acknowledgement of Traditional Custodians

The City of Stonnington acknowledges that the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong peoples of the East Kulin Nations are the Traditional Custodians of this land who have strived to retain their identity and cultures through more than two hundred years of dispossession and colonisation.

We recognise and accept our responsibility to learn from and promote the intrinsic value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, heritage and contemporary aspirations to the wider community; understanding that this enriches Australia's heritage and our community.

We acknowledge the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to live according to their own values and customs in our diverse community, subject to Australian law.

We respect the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong peoples' special relationship to the land and recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sacred sites and significant places. We extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and we acknowledge their living connection to Country; a relationship with the land and all living things extending back tens of thousands of years.

Council recognises the valuable contributions to Victoria made by all the people of the East Kulin Nations and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and will work together towards a future of mutual respect and harmony.

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**A CREATIVE  
STONNINGTON IS**

A VIBRANT,  
IMAGINATIVE  
AND INCLUSIVE  
CITY OF CULTURE,  
WHERE PEOPLE  
ARE INSPIRED, INFORMED  
AND CONNECTED  
THROUGH CREATIVE  
EXPRESSION AND  
SHARED EXPERIENCE.



## **A MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR**

**The City of Stonnington's Arts and Culture Strategy: *Creative Stonnington* provides a pathway for the city's creative future, and a clear direction for our arts and cultural infrastructure, programs and partnerships over the next three years.**

Stonnington already has a strong foundation as a culturally vibrant city filled with opportunities to create, experience and learn about art in its many forms.

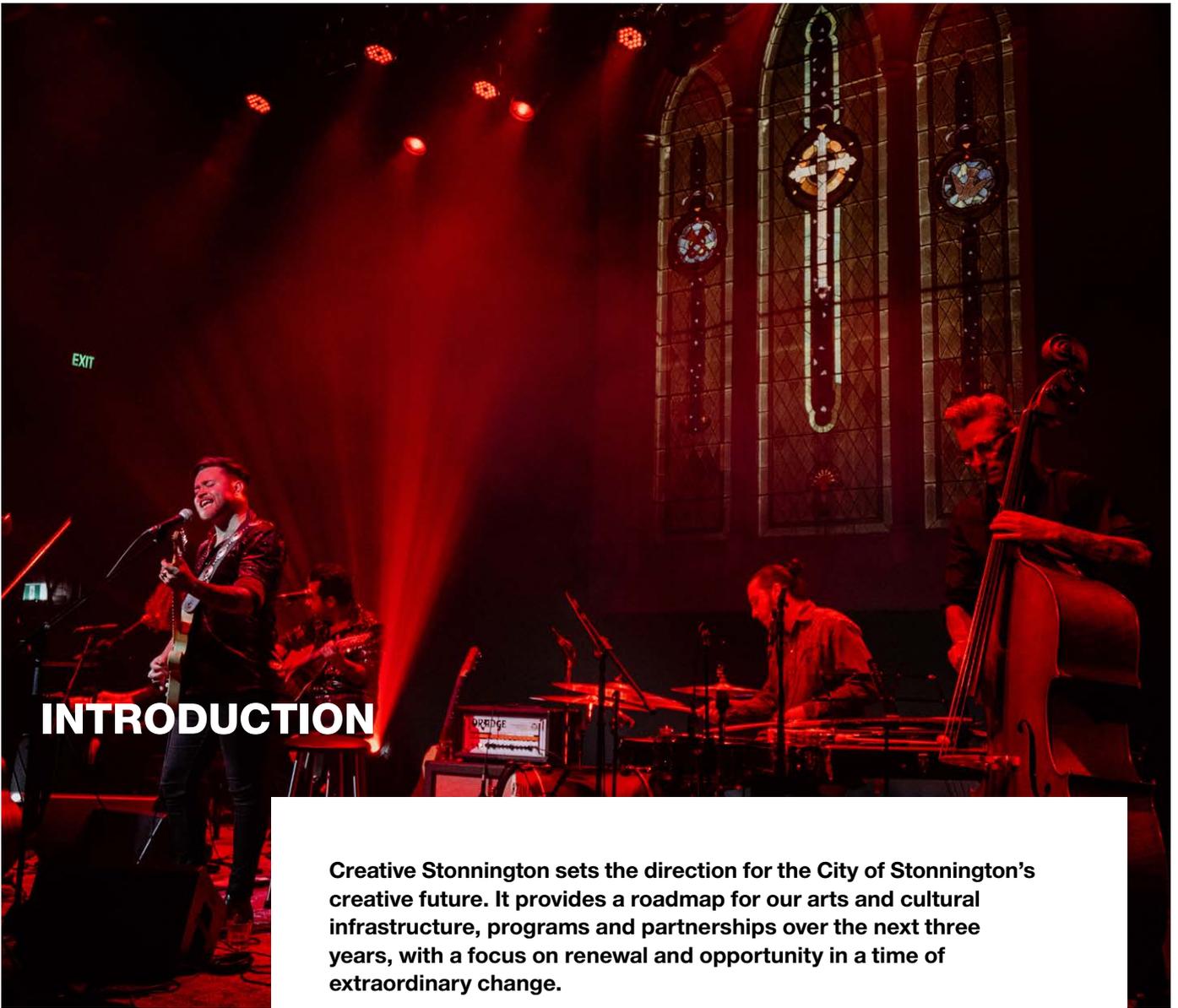
However, recognising that creative industries and the workers within them have faced and continue to face complex challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Strategy focuses on resilience, renewal and revitalisation and outlines how we will build on our strengths and continue to grow as a thriving creative city.

We are firmly committed to the success and development of arts and culture in our city, and know that strong creative enterprises make for attractive, sustainable and liveable cities of wellbeing and innovation.

This Strategy has been developed based on extensive community and industry engagement. We are firmly committed to the success and development of arts and culture in our city, and know that strong creative enterprises make for attractive, sustainable and liveable cities of wellbeing and innovation.

**Jami Klisaris**  
Mayor

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jami Klisaris". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

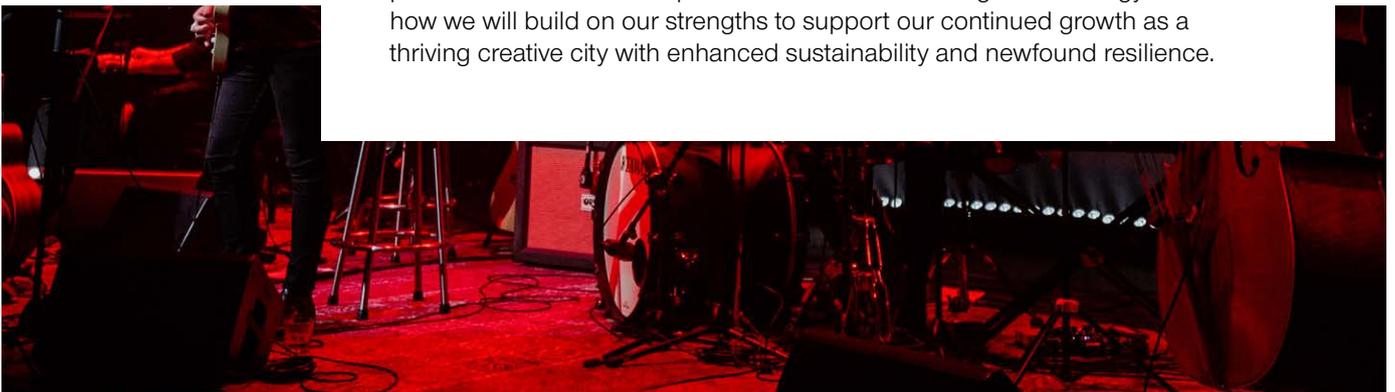


# INTRODUCTION

**Creative Stonnington sets the direction for the City of Stonnington's creative future. It provides a roadmap for our arts and cultural infrastructure, programs and partnerships over the next three years, with a focus on renewal and opportunity in a time of extraordinary change.**

This strategy is grounded in recognition of the immense contribution of arts and culture to social wellbeing and economic prosperity. The cultural life of our city, experienced through art, events and public spaces, make it a safe, welcoming, imaginative and enjoyable place to live, work in and visit. A thriving creative sector generates jobs and attracts talent, supports businesses and is a catalyst for cultural tourism.

The City of Stonnington has a strong foundation as a culturally vibrant city filled with opportunities to create, experience and learn about art in its many forms. Even so, creative industries and the workers within them continue to face complex challenges and vulnerabilities emanating from the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent rise in the cost of living. This strategy outlines how we will build on our strengths to support our continued growth as a thriving creative city with enhanced sustainability and newfound resilience.



# HOW THIS STRATEGY WAS DEVELOPED

Creative Stonnington was developed through consultation and engagement with our community, audiences and industry representatives. Research into sector trends, innovation and best practice, along with review of Council data and documents, state policy, and community demographics has complemented engagement activities. This process enabled us to examine the current state of arts and culture in Stonnington, assess our strengths and define opportunities for the future.

The Cultural Development Network (CDN) was engaged to support the development of this strategy utilising their planning framework, which has been deliberately designed to support local governments to undertake effective arts and cultural planning and evaluation.

## Framework for Cultural Development Planning

Based on extensive research and practice experience, CDN has developed a planning framework designed to support more effective practice in cultural development planning, and in so doing, enable better outcomes for communities. The framework recommends a planning process that is integrated with the rest of Council's planning activity. It is underpinned by six key principles:



Based on values  
Aligned with our community vision



Directed toward goals  
Contributes to our future aspirations



Informed by evidence  
Based on research and best practice



Underpinned by a theory of change  
There is a reason for what we do



Focused on outcomes  
Makes an impact



Responsive to evaluation  
Linked to measures of success

# STRATEGY ON A PAGE

## VISION

A vibrant, imaginative and inclusive city of culture, where people are inspired, informed and connected through creative expression and shared experience.

### **PRIORITY** **01:** COMMUNITIES CONNECTED THROUGH CREATIVITY

#### **Connection and wellbeing**

Communities are cohesive and thriving.

#### **Equity and access**

Communities can participate equally and appreciate social differences.

#### **Agency and voice**

Communities feel valued and empowered to shape practice.

### **PRIORITY** **02:** VIBRANT PLACES THAT ATTRACT DISCOVERY

#### **Exciting experiences**

Our city is filled with creative things to see and do.

#### **Attractive places**

Our city looks and feels safe and inviting.

#### **Renowned destination**

Our city entices people to stay and explore.

### **PRIORITY** **03:** DYNAMIC CULTURAL AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

#### **Space and opportunity**

Creative practitioners can make, collaborate, exhibit and perform here.

#### **Recognition and promotion**

Creative practitioners' work is celebrated and shared with wider audiences.

#### **Networks and resources**

Creative practitioners are working together and feel supported.

## SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS STRATEGY WILL MEAN THAT, BY 2026:

- › We are making the best use of our resources and working with partners to deliver exceptional creative programs.
- › Our creative programs exemplify best practice in accessibility and environmental sustainability.
- › Prahran Town Hall is on track to become a premium creative, cultural and community centred facility at the heart of the Prahran creative precinct.
- › We are well connected with local creative practitioners and organisations and are working together to support creative initiatives to thrive here.
- › We have a robust evaluation framework in place which ensures our programs are informed by community and industry voice.



## Outcomes Schema

CDN has developed a schema of measurable outcomes to enable impacts of cultural engagement, including arts participation, to be measured. This assists organisations to understand how effective they are being in achieving their objectives. Creative Stonnington will utilise the following measures from CDN's Outcomes Schema to measure impact. These will be integrated into our engagement and evaluation tools with baseline results established in the initial phase of implementation. For further detail see Monitoring and Evaluation (page 33).

CULTURAL	ECONOMIC	SOCIAL	ENVIRONMENTAL	GOVERNANCE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Creativity stimulated</li> <li>› Aesthetic enrichment experienced</li> <li>› Diversity of cultural expression appreciated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Professional practice capability increased</li> <li>› Employment-enhancing skill development facilitated</li> <li>› Local economy supported</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Wellbeing (physical and/or mental) improved</li> <li>› Sense of safety and security increased</li> <li>› Social differences bridged</li> <li>› Feeling valued experienced</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Positive sense of place (built and/or natural environment) enhanced</li> <li>› Motivation for environmental stewardship increased</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Access to beneficial networks and other resources increased</li> <li>› Agency and voice enabled</li> <li>› Sense of civic pride enhanced</li> </ul>

# BACKGROUND

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## What is arts and culture?

The term arts and culture refers to a broad and evolving span of artistic outcomes that encompass the performing and visual arts, music, literature, design and screen industries.

People experience arts and culture in many ways; through watching, exploring, making, creating, playing and participating. It may be interactive or experiential. It may feel intimate and personal or grand and collective. It may be seasonal, temporary or permanent. It can be found in galleries, museums, libraries, theatres, studios, streets and laneways, open spaces, and in unexpected and surprising locations.

## Why do we invest in arts and culture?

We know that strong creative enterprises give rise to liveable cities of wellbeing, innovation, connection and economic growth; that's why we are firmly committed to the success and development of arts and culture in our city.

### SOCIAL BENEFIT

Arts and cultural experiences can have a deep emotional impact on individuals; art can inform, inspire and challenge thinking. Events and creative places provide an opportunity for people to come together, connect with each other and feel a greater sense of belonging and social cohesion.

### CULTURAL BENEFIT

Art is an outlet to express culture, ideas and experience. It connects people with different perspectives, stories and traditions. Attractive events, open spaces and infrastructure reinforce the character of a city, and generate a positive sense of place and civic pride.

### ECONOMIC BENEFIT

Creative industries employ a vast and diverse workforce and indirectly support employment in other industries such as infrastructure and education. Arts and cultural activities attract audiences and encourage visitation which has flow on benefits to surrounding businesses.

Local governments complement the work of state and federal governments by investing in, supporting and promoting arts and cultural activities. In 2019/20, local government investment across Australia was \$1.84 billion, or 16 per cent of the total national investment of \$11.6 billion by all governments.<sup>1</sup> That same year, Victoria's creative industries added \$31.6 billion in gross value to the state economy.

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1. Australian Bureau of Statistics 2020

**‘In an environment of increasing polarisation and heightened global attention on injustice, racism and inequality, the arts provide opportunities to navigate multiple viewpoints, helping rebuild trust in our institutions and in each other. They enable a plurality of voices to be heard, including those who feel they are being left behind by rapid social change; helping us understand and live with our fellow citizens and guarding against social divisions and threats. At this point in time and as we look to the future, our artists have a significant role in helping Australians navigate rapid economic, social and cultural change and in building the health of our civil society.’**

– *Creating Our Future: Results of the National Arts Participation Survey 2020, Australia Council for the Arts*

## **Our role**

Council’s role in arts and culture is broad and significant – we are a facilitator, presenter, producer, employer, promoter, advocate and financial supporter.

- › **We build and maintain cultural infrastructure** including Chapel Off Chapel and Prahran Square along with several smaller community facilities. Prahran Town Hall will also be redeveloped as a premier creative, cultural and community hub.
- › **We present a dynamic suite of events** including pop-up activations, performances, community events and signature festivals produced in-house or in partnership.
- › **We issue permits** to enable the delivery of community events and filming in public spaces.
- › **We fund projects and events** presented in our city that are developed by artists and creative organisations and provide affordable access to Council owned assets.
- › **We acquire, commission and exhibit visual art** in civic buildings and public spaces.
- › **We partner with arts and cultural organisations** as well as educational institutions and local businesses to expand and enhance the suite of cultural experiences within our city.
- › **We promote creative opportunities** in our city and attract audiences.
- › **We amplify voices** of our community and local practitioners to other levels of government.





## COVID-19 and beyond

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed systemic vulnerabilities and created complex challenges for creative industries and the people central to them – the artists, creative thinkers, volunteers, participants, players, producers, creative enthusiasts and audiences. Though the industry evolved rapidly in many ways to sustain itself, concerted effort is required to build greater sustainability and resilience for creative industries.

Creative industries tend to have high proportions of sole traders and gig workers, many of whom are under-employed or supplement their income with work in other industries. The nature of arts and culture is also such that it depends on physical interaction to make and perform and for people to gather as audiences. These factors made the impacts of the pandemic particularly severe and the sector's workforce continues to recover from these far-reaching effects.

**‘Creative industries sectors were among the first and hardest hit by the pandemic and among the last to fully return... As a result of the pandemic one in four workers in Victoria’s arts and recreation sector lost their job, with young and female workers disproportionately affected.’**

– *Creative State 2025, Creative Victoria*



Audiences are incrementally returning however changes to audience behaviour have persisted across Victoria, with lingering uncertainty driving last minute ticket sales and reduced attendance at many events. Overall, 44 per cent of performing arts attendees are attending less often than they used to and, rising inflation has put pressure on household budgets, with audiences attending slightly fewer events and spending less.<sup>2</sup>

As we recover from the lingering impacts of the pandemic and rising inflationary pressures, the resurgence of the creative industries will fuel the economy, rebuild public confidence and create opportunities for social connection. The opportunity to experience connection, comfort, entertainment and humanity through art and culture has never been more necessary.

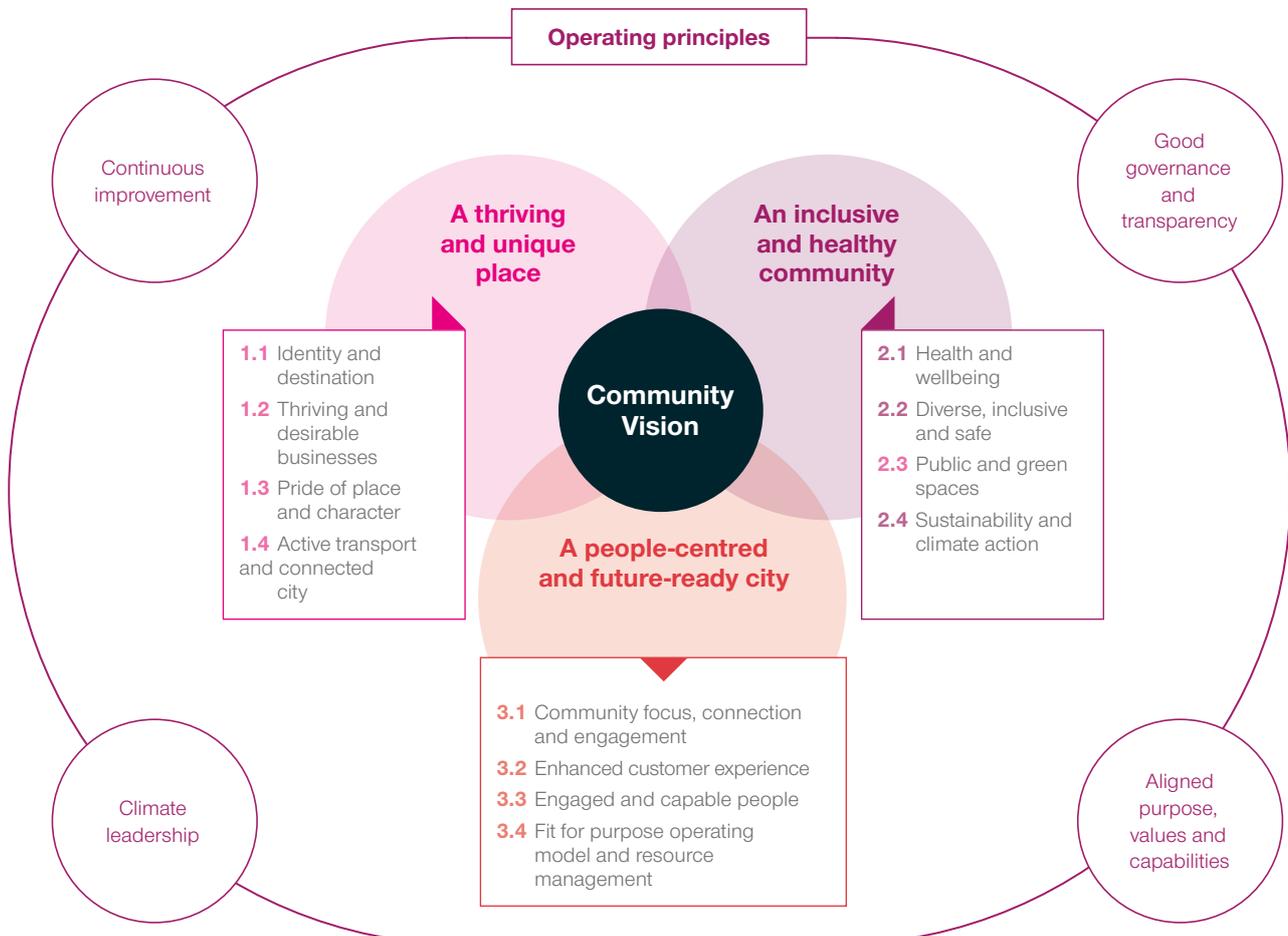
2. Creative Victoria, Audience Outlook Monitor, 2023

# STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Creative Stonnington is our principal strategy for arts and cultural development in the City of Stonnington. This strategy has been developed based on community and industry engagement insights, research, best practice frameworks, and guiding directions of Future Stonnington, our Community Vision 2040 and Council Plan 2021-25.

**The strategy sits within a broader strategic landscape and is interlinked with other strategic documents across Council, including:**

- › Place-Led Economic Development Strategy 2023-27 (Draft)
- › Libraries 2030 Strategic Framework (Draft)
- › Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-25
- › Reconciliation Action Plan 2022-24
- › Inclusion Plan 2019–22
- › Climate Emergency Action Plan 2021-24
- › Sustainable Environment Strategy 2018–23
- › Smart City Strategic Framework 2022



## Community Vision 2040

Our Community Vision reflects the many conversations we've had with our community about the future they want for our city:

*'Our community is a safe, inclusive and creative city that celebrates and embraces its vibrancy of cultures. Walking the tree-lined streets, we pay respect to the influence of the Nation's First Peoples, past and living, on a modern, sustainable and interconnected way of life that supports the good health and wellbeing of all. Welcome to Stonnington 2040.'*

The inclusion of creativity so prominently within the vision demonstrates the importance our community places on arts and culture. Creative Stonnington demonstrates Council's equal desire and commitment to developing a creative city.

## Council Plan 2021-25

Our Council Plan is focused on three strategic directions which represent our broad aspirations in achieving the community's vision. The priorities of Creative Stonnington are directly aligned with the directions of the Council Plan 2021-25 with a shared focus on three domains: people, place and city.

### DIRECTION 1: A thriving and unique place

- 1.1 Identity and destination
- 1.2 Thriving and desirable businesses

Creative Stonnington will enhance our city's unique identity through arts, culture and events and help make Stonnington a place people want to live in and visit. A cultural hub at Prahran Town Hall will further support the establishment and success of creative enterprises and reinvigorate the Chapel Street precinct as an iconic destination.

### DIRECTION 2: An inclusive and healthy community

- 2.1 Health and wellbeing
- 2.2 Diverse, inclusive and safe

Creative Stonnington will leverage arts and cultural programs to support community involvement and connections, celebrate diversity and strive for equitable access. A focus on connection and wellbeing is particularly important as we recover from and move forward with COVID-19.

### DIRECTION 3: A people-centred and future ready city

- 3.1 Community focus, connection and engagement

Creative Stonnington will strengthen our connection with and support of creative industries. We will engage more with local practitioners and audiences to drive program evaluation and improvement and build strong partnerships which enhance the experiences on offer to our community.

## Creative State 2025

This strategy also considers Creative State, the Victorian Government's integrated strategy for creative industries. Creative State outlines priorities for action and future investment including job opportunities and pathways; innovative creative products and experiences; industry stability and growth; equitable access to the creative industries; and new audiences and markets.



# OUR CITY

## Community profile

### DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

**Residents:**

106,278

**Density:**

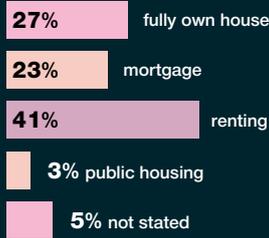
4,146 persons per square km

**Median age:** 35

**Household income:**

\$1,942 median per week

### HOME OWNERSHIP



### HOUSEHOLDS

Average household size = 2.03



19%  
couples with children



25%  
couples without children



6%  
one-parent families



8%  
older couples without children



37%  
single-person households



75%  
medium and high-density housing

### FUN FACTS



31%  
aged 20-34



23%  
speak a language other than English at home



16%  
of people volunteer



83%  
of homes have an internet connection (2016)



37%  
do not own a car



4%  
need assistance due to disability



The City of Stonnington is in Melbourne's inner south-east, alongside the Yarra River, nearby some of Melbourne's most prominent cultural institutions. Stonnington includes the suburbs of Armadale, Kooyong, Malvern, Malvern East, Prahran, Toorak and parts of Glen Iris, South Yarra and Windsor. The city is made up of numerous residential neighbourhoods and recognised precincts, each with their own distinctive mix of arts and creative industries.

The estimated resident population in 2021 was 106,278 and is projected to grow by approximately 25.81 per cent by 2036 to approximately 143,000 residents.

Our community is wonderfully diverse with residents from 120 countries who speak 90 different languages; one of the largest LGBTIQ+ communities in Victoria and more than 4,000 people who need assistance due to disability.

We have a rich First Nations history and recognise the valuable contributions made by all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our community.

Our creative programs reach beyond municipal borders. Our audiences, hirers, patrons, attendees and onlookers come from many places and walks of life. When we talk about our community, we also consider the people who come here to work or enjoy what our city has to offer.

The City of Stonnington has a significant visitor economy, driven largely by international visitors to Australia. Prior to the pandemic, international overnight tourism was estimated to provide half the visitor spending in the City of Stonnington, compared with around 30% of visitor spending in wider Victoria.<sup>3</sup>

3. Karl Flowers, Decisive Consulting Pty Ltd for the City of Stonnington, 2020

## Creative profile

Performing arts is a key strength of the arts and cultural activity presented within our city. In addition to the array of arts and cultural events presented throughout the municipality in our parks, urban spaces and venues, there are several thriving and longstanding community arts organisations that provide opportunities for artistic expression, are supported by dedicated and talented volunteers and enrich the creative landscape. Stonnington hosts an array of performing arts training organisations throughout the municipality and is home to one of Melbourne's key arts and educational precincts focusing on the creative industries and includes the National Institute of Circus Arts.

In 2020/21, over 1,100 people were employed in creative and performing arts activities in the City of Stonnington, representing 1.6 per cent of total employment. This number is substantial compared to Greater Melbourne (0.6 per cent) or wider Victoria (0.5 per cent).<sup>4</sup> This is an emerging employment sector for Stonnington, growing by close to 700 local workers since 2015/16. Australasian Performing Right Association (APRA) membership grew 36 per cent (6 per cent more than the national growth rate) between 2017 and 2022 with 837 APRA writers now in our city.<sup>5</sup>

Even though Stonnington is home to large numbers of creative practitioners, many need to travel to creative hubs in municipalities further afield to access opportunities to develop or present their works. There is an opportunity to address this market gap with a cultural hub in

our city. Prahran, once the engine room of Melbourne's creative sub-cultures, is the natural home for a hub of this kind. Prahran's thriving nightlife culture of music and experimental art was once a breeding ground for multiple artistic genres and creative movements.

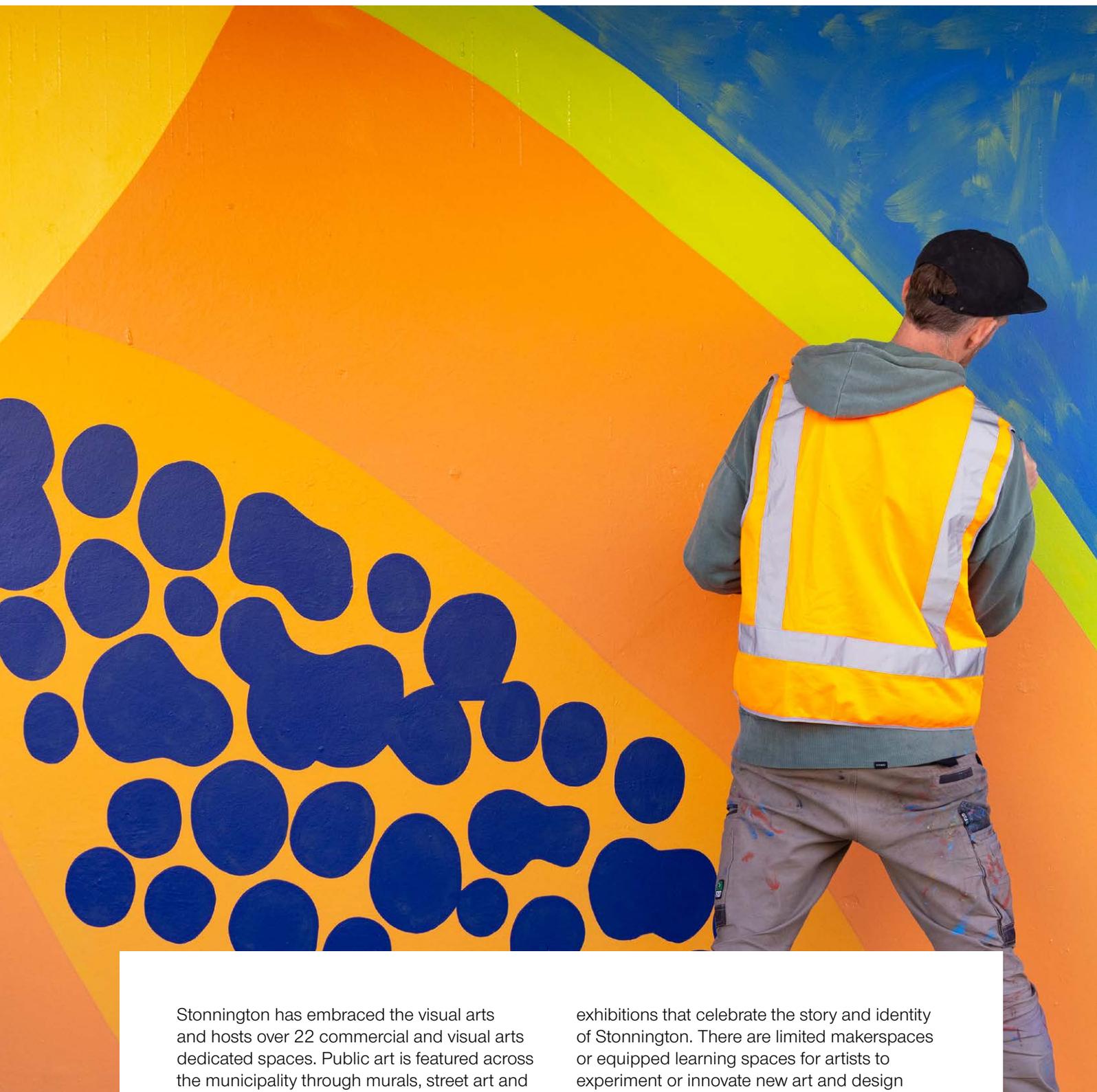
A recent study by Music Victoria identifies Stonnington as one of the leading music precincts with a range of venues from small, intimate bars, cafes and hotels to larger performance spaces such as community halls, outdoor spaces, clubs and band rooms. Prahran was once a driving force in live music from the 1970s until the early 2000s across rock, jazz, rave and dance. A slowdown occurred with the closure of dedicated live music venues or their transformation into bars and restaurants. In 2019, Stonnington retained some of this legacy through 48 live music venues which attracted 928,520 attendees across 11,649 gigs. In that year, the live music industry generated 300,800 employment hours for casual live music performers/staff, \$9.1 million in box office revenue and a further \$52.3 million in ancillary (non-ticket) spending by attendees.

Despite an enviable creative history and a strong commitment to performing arts and music, there are few dedicated live music and performance spaces remaining in the municipality. Performers in Stonnington identified the lack of small and medium sized venues, including rehearsal spaces, as the most significant infrastructure gap in their local areas.

4. Economy id, 2021

5. Live Music in Stonnington 2019-2021



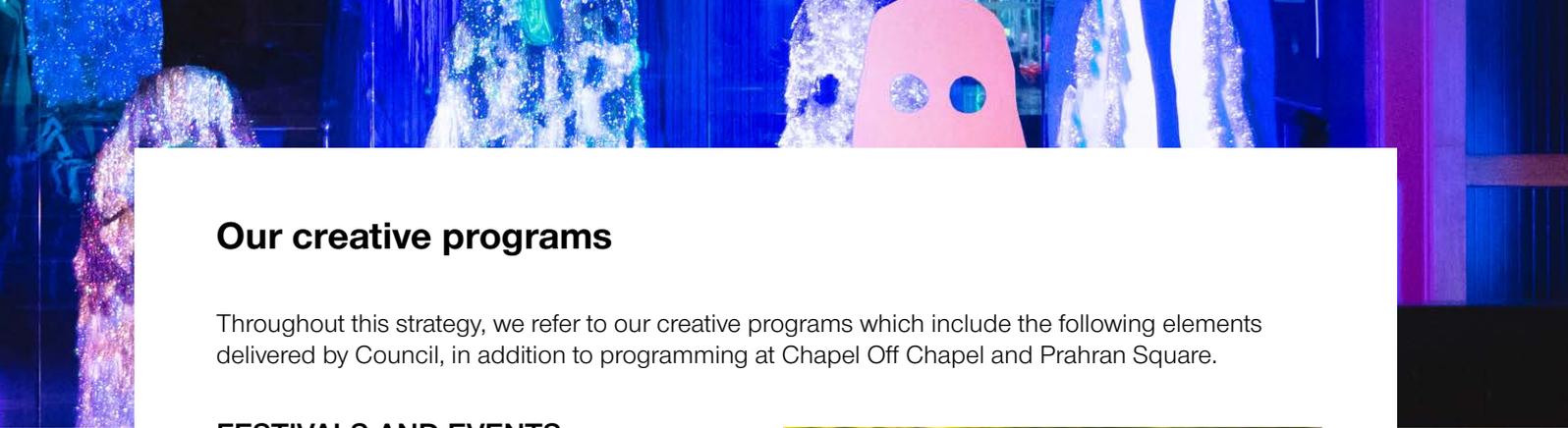


Stonnington has embraced the visual arts and hosts over 22 commercial and visual arts dedicated spaces. Public art is featured across the municipality through murals, street art and sculptural form commissioned by galleries, precinct associations, local creatives as well as the City of Stonnington. This has led to an exciting and varied array of artworks by both emerging and established artists as well as community groups that enhance our public spaces.

In contrast the supported art spaces for emerging and established artists living within Stonnington are in short supply. There are few studios, artist-run collectives or galleries that offer opportunities for survey or thematic

exhibitions that celebrate the story and identity of Stonnington. There are limited makerspaces or equipped learning spaces for artists to experiment or innovate new art and design works or to utilise short term. This includes fit for purpose space to display and house Council's contemporary art collection which is housed across municipal spaces such as libraries, offices and information centres.

Through the implementation of this strategy, we hope to build a stronger base for both emerging and established artists and makers as well as gain a better understanding of the profile of our local creative practitioners and enable more creators to live and work in our city.



## Our creative programs

Throughout this strategy, we refer to our creative programs which include the following elements delivered by Council, in addition to programming at Chapel Off Chapel and Prahran Square.

### FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

Our signature program of free and ticketed arts and cultural events and festivals extend across the municipality, engaging a diverse audience and offering high calibre experiences across a range of artforms. From the renowned classical and iconic contemporary music concerts in our picturesque parks, to the well-loved children's and winter arts festivals, these long-standing events are highly valued for attracting visitation and fostering cohesion and inclusivity in local neighbourhoods. Alongside our growing cultural partnerships, our annual series bring creative experiences to our city attracting up to 70,000 attendees each year and feature within Melbourne's cultural calendar.



### VISUAL ARTS

Our visual arts program supports artists and galleries in the municipality and beyond by commissioning public art and murals, as well as the delivery of temporary exhibitions. The city maintains a growing collection of over 120 contemporary artworks displayed across our civic and cultural centres and partners with arts and government organisations to ensure creative outcomes in infrastructure projects. Our visual arts program reaches across neighbourhoods and precincts to enrich the cultural life within our community.

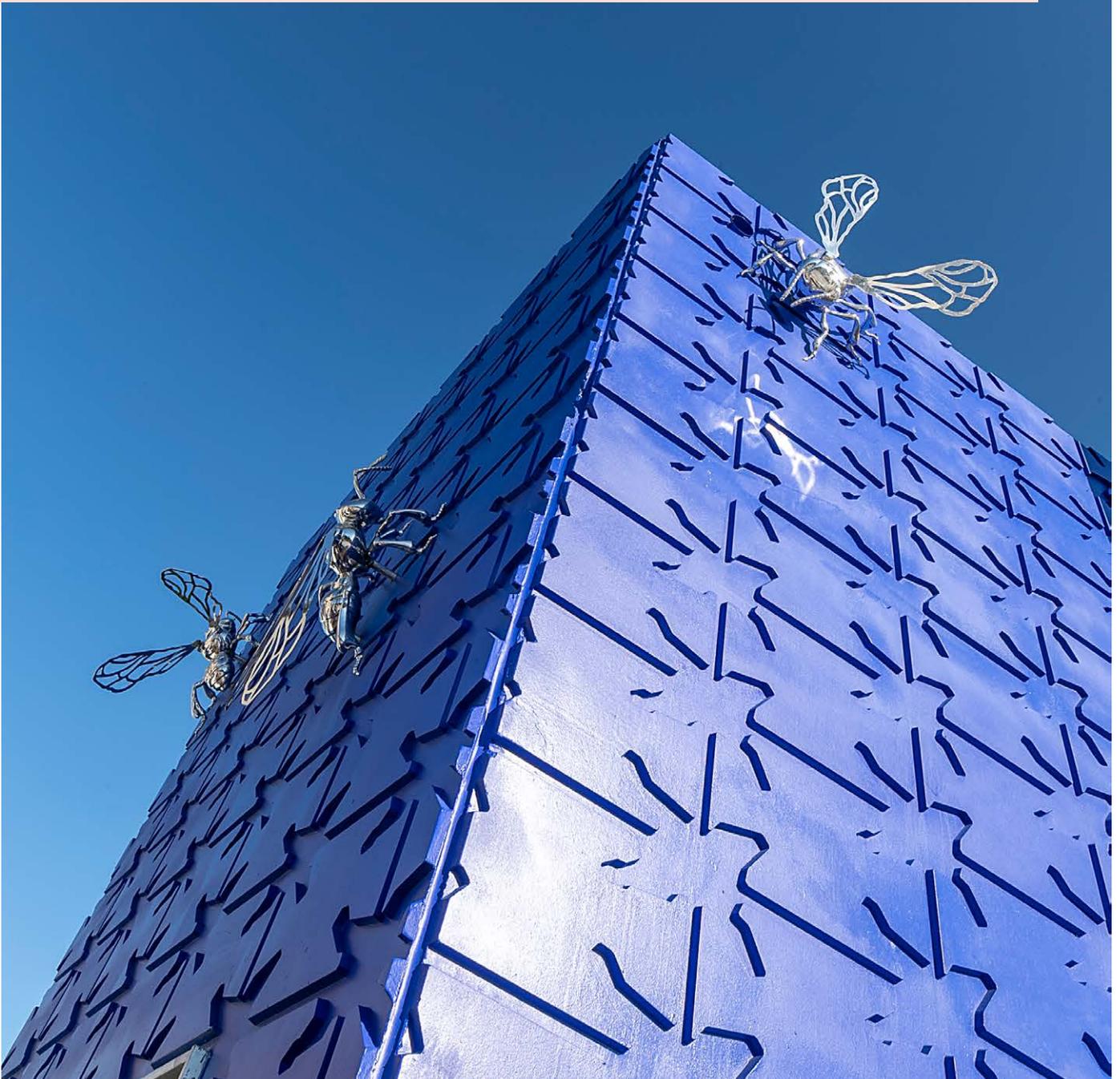
### ARTS AND CULTURAL GRANTS

Our annual Arts and Cultural Grants program supports between 20 and 30 creative, innovative, dynamic and contemporary projects annually that enhance the cultural, community and economic outcomes of our city. We offer artists and organisations support to present high-quality, arts-based projects that reflect the diverse communities of our municipality and provide accessible opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to participate in the arts. The grants program brings new artistic and cultural programs and events across a variety of art forms to our community and supports artists to develop and execute new, sustainable and financially viable ideas.



**‘I believe visual arts to be the heartbeat of Stonnington, without the artists in a community there is no colour, no laughter, no light.’**

*– Andy Dinan, Arts Consultant and Director, MARS Gallery*



## Prahran creative precinct

Prahran has always been the creative heart of our city, home to Chapel Off Chapel, Prahran Square, Melbourne Polytechnic's arts education campus, the National Institute of Circus Arts and several independent arts and creative businesses and services. Prahran is a recognised creative neighbourhood for its notable assets, places and spaces which provide opportunities for arts and cultural activities and events. Creative people and enterprises have shaped the character and vibrancy of Prahran for decades. However, there is work to be done to enable the neighbourhood to regain its position as a hot spot for Melbourne's creative and cultural industries. The local sector needs access to spaces for development and presentation to thrive.

### CHAPEL OFF CHAPEL

Chapel Off Chapel is the City of Stonnington's iconic performing arts venue. Established in 1995, the heritage listed site attracts over 40,000 visitors a year, drawn by a diverse and vibrant range of live music, theatre, comedy, cabaret, music theatre, live podcasts and dance showcased across 100 seasons and events each year from local, national and international hirers, artists and companies.

Located in the heart of Prahran, Chapel Off Chapel provides the city with a cultural pulse, a place for the community to gather and enjoy experiences in an accessible and welcoming space. Chapel Off Chapel's culture, history and reputation for excellence has established it as a major creative hub, attracting cultural partnerships and providing economic stimulus for local business, as well as investment in the creative sector.



### PRAHRAN SQUARE

Launched in December 2019, Prahran Square is a 10,000 square metre urban parkland above a 500-bay underground carpark, transforming the old Cato street car park into a dynamic and inviting public space. Prahran Square is an interconnected hub of health and wellbeing, growth and connection for its locals, businesses and visitors alike.

Prahran Square is a pillar of Prahran's creative and cultural precinct, celebrating community, arts and culture, by playing host to an array of events, live performances and artistic showcases. Its mission is to be an innovative and inclusive public place, providing open space and a dynamic mix of community and cultural experiences that celebrate the rich diversity of Prahran and the interconnected Chapel Street precinct.

**‘Chapel Off Chapel is a rare gift for residents and performers alike. There is no other venue like it in Melbourne and whether I’m on the stage or in the audience it is always a memorable and welcoming experience. I think we are truly blessed to have it on our doorstep.’**

*– Rhonda Burchmore OAM*



## SPOTLIGHT: Establishing a cultural hub at Prahran Town Hall

To achieve the aspirations of Creative Stonnington, the City of Stonnington has committed to pursuing a vision to transform the Prahran Town Hall into a cultural hub housing artists and creative organisations developing and presenting works. This will amplify the neighbourhood's creative and cultural industries and provide exciting new opportunities for the community.

A comprehensive business case for this creative vision will be undertaken over the forthcoming period. During this time and prior to redevelopment, the City of Stonnington will undertake remediation works and reactivate Prahran Town Hall with a focus on creative and community outcomes, and a pop-up library.

The Prahran Town Hall is a key City of Stonnington asset located in the heart of Prahran's business, retail, dining and creative precinct. The vision aims to transform the site into a thriving creative town square, where artistic and cultural works are designed and produced alongside a community gathering place. The renewed facility is to become a vibrant creative epicentre for practitioners, community and visitors where experiences are presented to the public and will attract people from across the city.

The local community can congregate, connect, and be inspired by cultural activity and programs that are accessible to all. The Prahran Town Hall is to become a place of civic pride that delivers cultural and social benefits as well as economic prosperity by increased day and night-time visitation across the whole precinct.



The cultural hub aims to include a variety of spaces to produce a high level of activity and traffic in and around the facility. Elements to explore are:

- › A mid-sized performance space focusing on contemporary music, comedy, and festivals.
- › A theatre development space to complement the activities of Chapel Off Chapel.
- › Flexible presentation spaces for visual and experimental arts.
- › Leasable office spaces for arts organisations.
- › Artist studio spaces to accommodate visual artists, writers, musicians or performers.
- › Multipurpose maker spaces for uses such as workshops, classes or recording.
- › Community hangout spaces as a place for gathering.
- › A library with creatively-focused collections, spaces and programs.



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# ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

## ABOUT

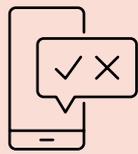
To discover what is most important to the community for creative arts and culture, we ran an extensive community engagement program with creative organisations and practitioners that live, work and present in Stonnington.

Valuable insights were drawn from surveys, interviews and focus groups as well as existing Council plans and data, and initial insights were tested with the community through a further survey.

## HOW WE ENGAGED

- › Online surveys
- › Interviews
- › Targeted focus groups

## ENGAGEMENT PARTICIPATION



56

Surveys completed



10+

Interviews conducted



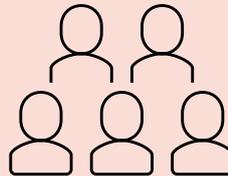
22

People attended targeted focus groups

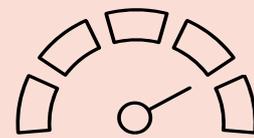
## ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS



Review of consultation data from recent community engagement initiatives for the draft *Place-Led Economic Development Strategy 2023-27*, the draft *Libraries 2030 Strategic Framework* and *Future Stonnington* comprising the *Council Plan 2021-25* and *Community Vision 2040*.



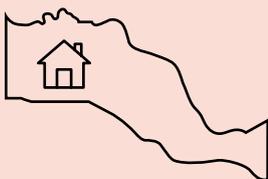
Review of 2018–2022 post-event customer survey data from signature events such as Roola Boola, Glow Winter Arts Festival, Sunset Sounds, Stonnington Jazz and Pets in the Park.



unsatisfied highly satisfied

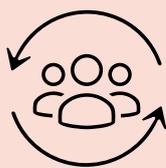
Over 6 years, between 2018 to 2023, a total of **4,707** survey respondents indicated they were **satisfied** or **highly satisfied** with City of Stonnington's events.

## SURVEY PARTICIPANTS



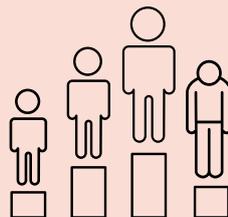
60%

Live in Stonnington



24%

Regular visitors



35–44 age group

Greatest number of responses



66%

Responses received were from women

## WHAT WE LEARNED



### Priority No.1

Deliver high quality, innovative experiences that ensure access, diversity and inclusion.



84%

Would like to be a more active participant in Stonnington's arts and cultural activities.



55%

Think the strategy should include goals to offer more opportunities for our creative sector through access to spaces, greater promotion, creative grants, and partnerships.



94%

Indicated that events are **very** or **extremely important**.

## FURTHER LEARNINGS

- › Festivals and events are highly valued by our community.
- › The diversity of arts and culture in Stonnington is appreciated.
- › The community wants a safe environment, with access to everything locally.
- › Prahran Square is valued as a community and cultural destination.
- › Council is seen as proactive and supportive of the arts, culture and creative industries.
- › Chapel Off Chapel is considered one of Victoria's leading performing arts venues.
- › There is a need for studio/rehearsal spaces and arts-based professional development.
- › Greater promotion of arts and cultural experiences and opportunities is needed.

## KEY THEMES ARISING FROM RESEARCH AND CONSULTATION

*Opportunities*  
**DIVERSITY VALUE**  
 Prahran Square  
*Sustainability*  
 SAFETY *Chapel Off Chapel* Experiences LOCAL  
**ACCESSIBLE** LEADER  
*Supportive* PROACTIVITY  
**CREATIVE**

**USING THE DATA** Information collected from this round of community consultation will help to shape and inform the Draft 2023-26 Arts and Culture Strategy. Members of the Stonnington community will be engaged in a second round of community consultation to gain feedback on the draft plan.

# PRIORITY 01:

## COMMUNITIES CONNECTED THROUGH CREATIVITY

### Focus areas

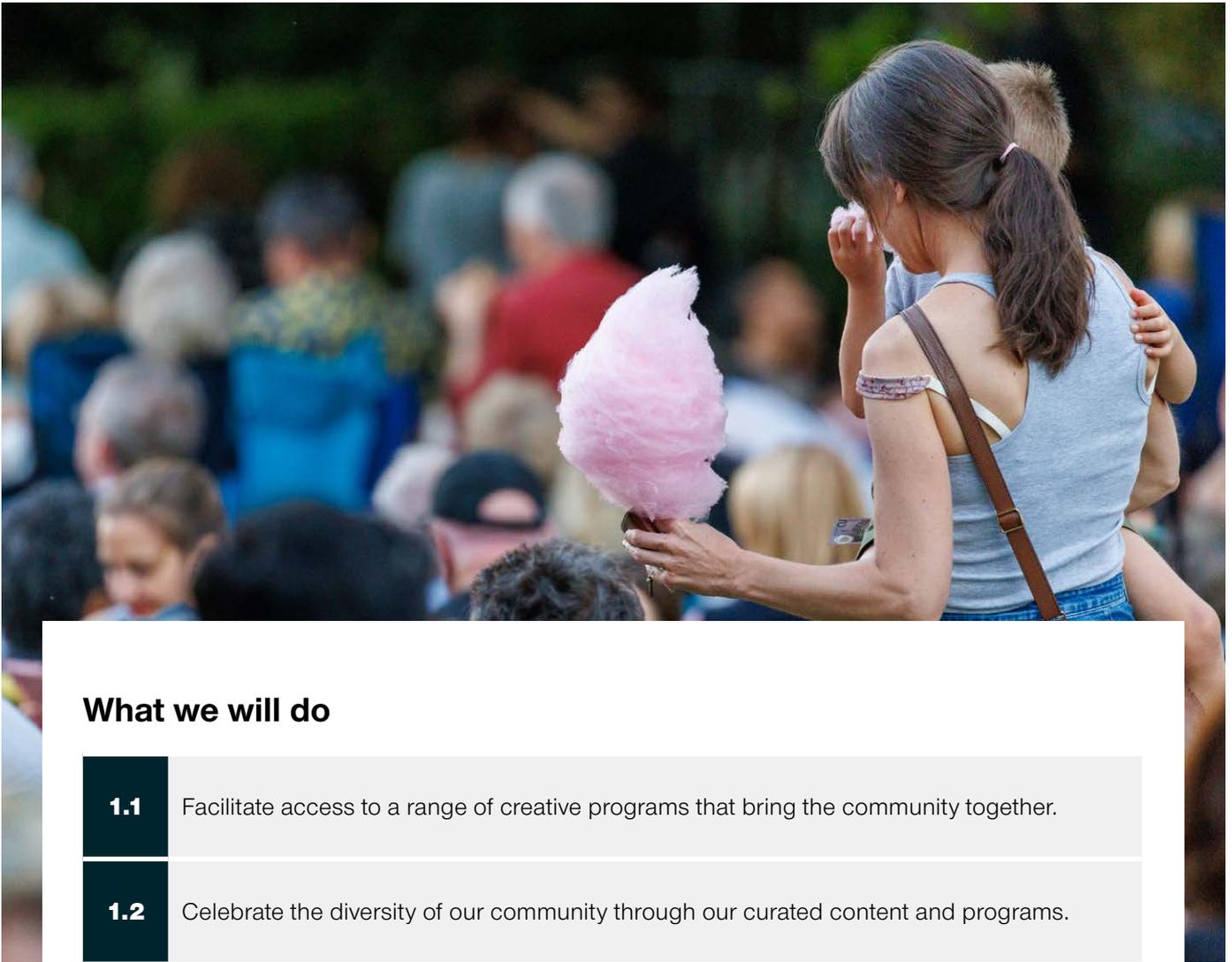
**CONNECTION  
AND WELLBEING**

**EQUITY  
AND ACCESS**

**AGENCY  
AND VOICE**

### What we know

- › The value of arts and culture for individual wellbeing and social cohesion is well known and evidenced.
- › Cultural experiences can help to build understanding and appreciation of social differences.
- › Bringing people together and prioritising cohesion and wellbeing is particularly important as we recover from and move forward with COVID-19.
- › We leverage our creative programs to showcase and celebrate the knowledge, experience and cultures of different groups including First Nations peoples, people from culturally diverse backgrounds, people with a disability, and LGBTIQ+ communities.
- › Accessibility and inclusion are key priorities in all aspects of our creative programs to ensure everyone can participate easily and equitably.
- › Environmental action is important to our community. We are identified through our green spaces, where many of our most celebrated events take place.
- › We listen to our community and ensure their voices are reflected in our programs.
- › Transparent, evidence-based planning and evaluation will build trust in our processes.



## What we will do

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| <b>1.1</b> | Facilitate access to a range of creative programs that bring the community together.  |
| <b>1.2</b> | Celebrate the diversity of our community through our curated content and programs.  |
| <b>1.3</b> | Embed access and inclusion across our creative programs including delivery, communications and infrastructure.  |
| <b>1.4</b> | Support Council's commitment to transition to net zero emissions by 2030 through our creative programs.   |
| <b>1.5</b> | Implement a monitoring and evaluation framework to build a stronger understanding of our audiences, evidence our impact and drive continuous improvement. |

## Outcomes we want to see

- › Communities are cohesive and thriving.
- › Communities can participate equally and appreciate social differences.
- › Communities feel valued and empowered to shape practice.

# PRIORITY 02:

## VIBRANT PLACES THAT ATTRACT DISCOVERY

### Focus areas

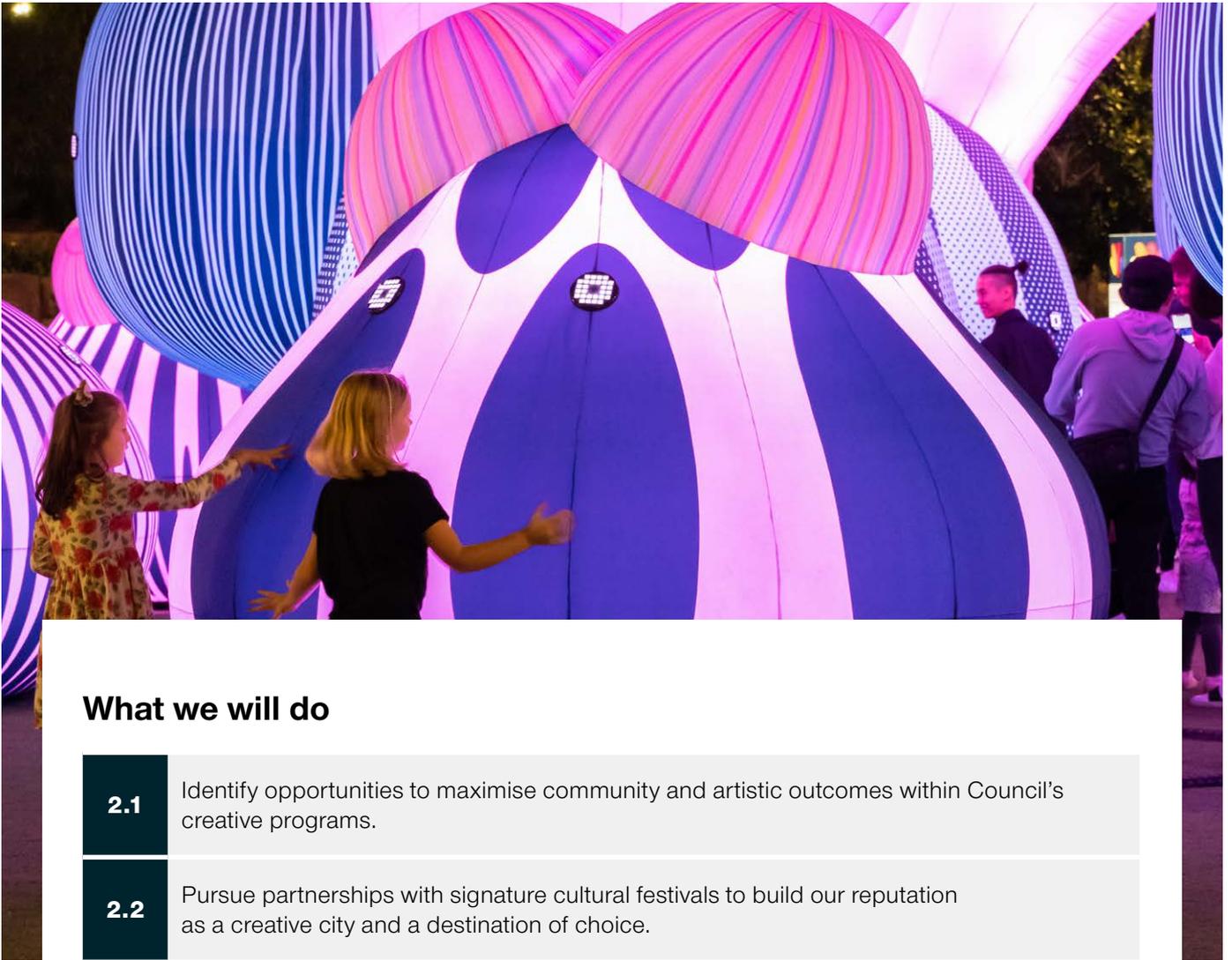
**EXCITING  
EXPERIENCES**

**ATTRACTIVE  
PLACES**

**RENOWNED  
DESTINATION**

### What we know

- › We have a phenomenal range of precincts, assets and spaces with the potential to attract a hugely diverse set of audiences.
- › Cultural activity can celebrate what residents and visitors love about a place; what makes it unique, interesting and enjoyable.
- › Stonnington's unique heritage and neighbourhood character is strengthened through arts activity.
- › We leverage public art and promote positive activity to make places safer and more inviting.
- › Our public art and mural programs integrate with the environment and connect to the local area.
- › Audiences at Chapel Off Chapel spend an estimated \$1.55 million annually in the local area.
- › Cultural activity supports the local economy through precinct activation, visitor attraction and direct employment.
- › Stonnington has established partnerships within Melbourne's cultural calendar, such as Midsumma and Melbourne Fringe.
- › Bold and bespoke programs brand Stonnington as a creative place where people want to be and will go out of their way to visit.
- › The Prahran Town Hall redevelopment project presents an exciting opportunity for a contemporary arts, cultural and community facility which will help revitalise the Chapel Street area and become the epicentre of the existing creative precinct.
- › The lead up to the Prahran Town Hall redevelopment presents an opportunity to test and measure the impact of arts and cultural activity to enliven the Prahran creative precinct.



## What we will do

**2.1**

Identify opportunities to maximise community and artistic outcomes within Council's creative programs.

**2.2**

Pursue partnerships with signature cultural festivals to build our reputation as a creative city and a destination of choice.

**2.3**

Offer high quality creative experiences in the public realm, precincts and open spaces.

**2.4**

Encourage the inclusion of public art and consideration of creative use in public infrastructure, open space and streetscape projects.

**2.5**

Redevelop the Prahran Town Hall as a creative hub and anchor destination.

**2.6**

Promote the diverse arts and culture opportunities within our city.

## Outcomes we want to see

- › Our city is filled with creative things to see and do.
- › Our city looks and feels safe and inviting.
- › Our city entices people to stay and explore.

# PRIORITY 03:

## DYNAMIC CULTURAL AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

### Focus areas

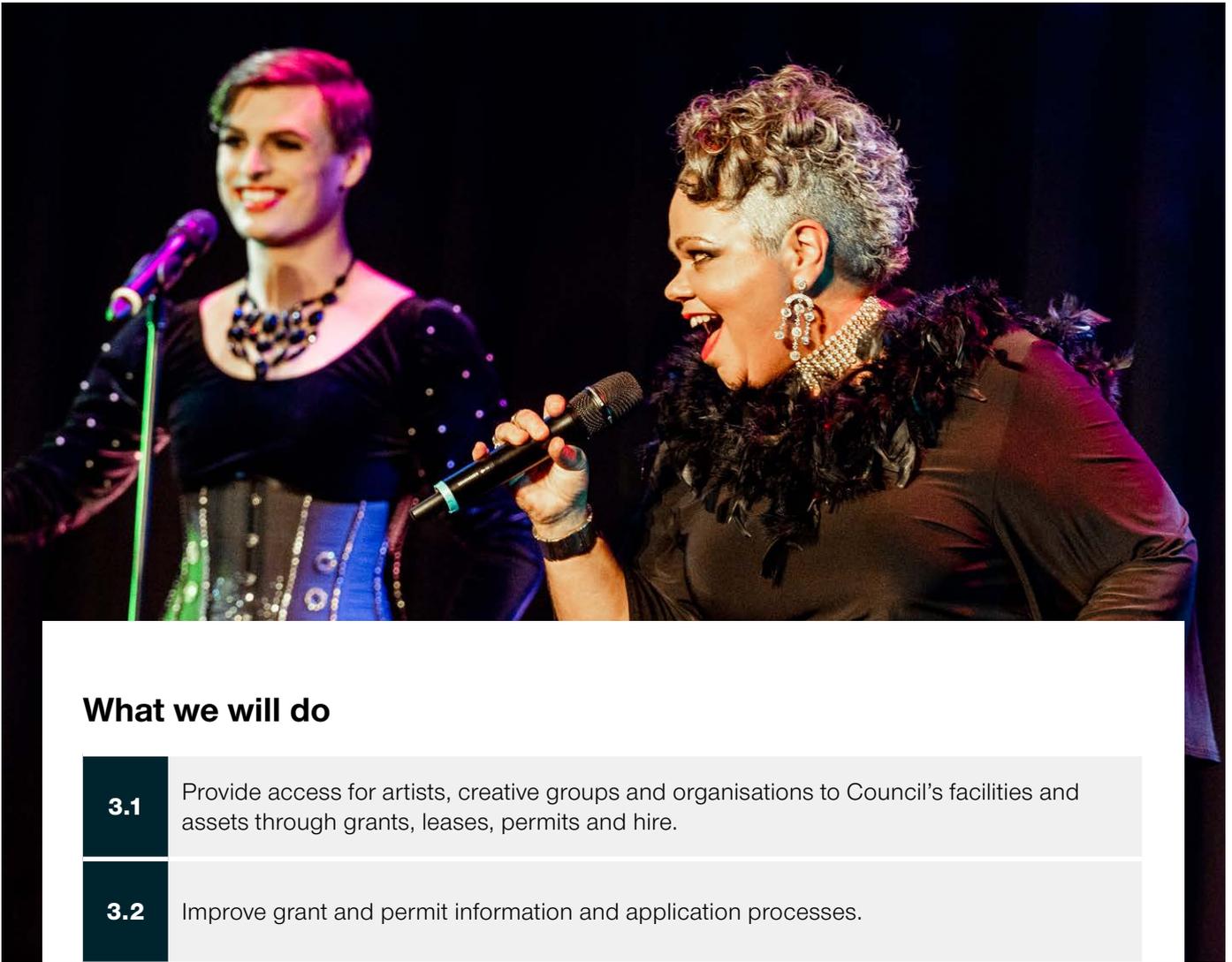
**SPACE AND OPPORTUNITY**

**RECOGNITION AND PROMOTION**

**NETWORKS AND RESOURCES**

### What we know

- › Council plays an important role in supporting artists and cultural businesses to grow and succeed by contributing to their professional practice.
- › As leaders we model best practice in risk management, environmental sustainability, and other domains.
- › Our local creative practitioners and organisations have said they would value greater networking and connection with each other, and more opportunities to promote their work.
- › Chapel Off Chapel presents over 400 performances across 130 productions annually on average, generating over \$1 million for independent producers and venue hirers.
- › A stronger understanding of our local creative community would provide insight into evolving needs and expectations.
- › By establishing partnerships with creative organisations we can deliver more diverse and higher quality cultural experiences that create community and economic benefits.
- › Arts education organisations within Stonnington are great assets to our city. They provide training for current and future generations of artists and arts workers and build capacity for emerging artists as well as the creative industry more broadly.



## What we will do

- |            |  |
|------------|--|
| <b>3.1</b> | Provide access for artists, creative groups and organisations to Council's facilities and assets through grants, leases, permits and hire. |
| <b>3.2</b> | Improve grant and permit information and application processes.  |
| <b>3.3</b> | Promote local practitioners and arts organisations.  |
| <b>3.4</b> | Provide creative industry networking opportunities to encourage collaborative, cross-discipline connection and ideas exchange.             |
| <b>3.5</b> | Work alongside education providers to facilitate training in art and theatre production.   |
| <b>3.6</b> | Explore new funding and partnership opportunities to support Council's creative programs and infrastructure.                               |

## Outcomes we want to see

- › Creative practitioners can make, collaborate, exhibit and perform here.
- › Creative practitioners' work is celebrated and shared with wider audiences.
- › Creative practitioners are working together and feel supported.

# MONITORING AND EVALUATION

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Creative Stonnington 2023-26 sets the direction for our arts and cultural program development over the next three years. An Implementation Plan has been developed to outline the action we will take in line with the commitments made in this strategy, including timeframes, areas of responsibility and success measures.

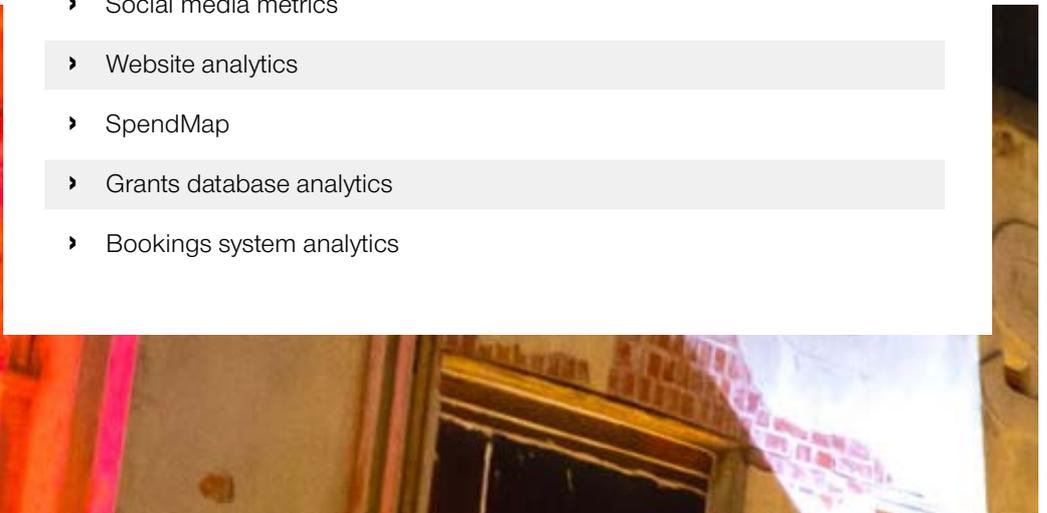
The Implementation Plan will be monitored and adjusted as required in response to any emerging opportunities, needs or circumstance. An annual progress report will be published outlining achievements against the actions listed in the Implementation Plan. Key achievements will also be highlighted through Council's Annual Report.

## Assessing impact over time

Evaluation is undertaken consistently as part of normal work processes with findings used to inform program planning and support continuous improvement. In the initial phase of implementation, enhancements will be made to these evaluation practices through the development of a new monitoring and evaluation framework. This will likely involve both the alteration of existing evaluation tools and the development of some new ones. A framework which leverages the Cultural Development Network's schema of measurable outcomes (refer page 8) will enable insight into not just the quality and appeal of our programs, but their impact on the people engaging with them.

Examples of existing evaluation data sources include:

- › Audience surveys
- › Business surveys
- › Industry surveys and focus groups
- › Ticket sales
- › People counters
- › Social media metrics
- › Website analytics
- › SpendMap
- › Grants database analytics
- › Bookings system analytics







City of  
**STONNINGTON**

**Stonnington City Centre**

311 Glenferrie Road, Malvern

**Stonnington Services and Visitor Hub**

Chatham Street, Prahran Square, Prahran

**Open**

Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 5pm

**T** 8290 1333 **F** 9521 2255

PO Box 58, Malvern Victoria 3144

[council@stonnington.vic.gov.au](mailto:council@stonnington.vic.gov.au)

**Stonnington Waste Transfer Station**

43 Weir Street, Malvern

Sunday to Friday, 10am to 3.30pm

Saturday, 9am to 3pm

**[stonnington.vic.gov.au](http://stonnington.vic.gov.au)**