AUSTRALIAN PLACEMAKING SUMMIT

13-14 May 2026
Sydney Masonic Centre,
Sydney, NSW

placemakingsummit.com.au

Conference Agenda

Day 1 - 13th May 2026

07:50 - 08:50
REGISTRATION

08:50 - 09:00
MC OPENS

09:00 - 09:30

Speed Networking

This speed networking session will allow delegates to introduce themselves and swap business cards with other conference attendees.

09:30 - 09:50

Keynote Address by Placemaking NSW

- Developing, managing and caring for high quality public places
- Placemaking NSW creates, manages and cares for Sydney's harbourside precincts including The Rocks, Barangaroo and Darling Harbour, Luna Park and waterfront areas in Pyrmont

Annie Tennant, Director - Design and Place, Placemaking NSW

09:50 - 10:15

Sydney 2070: Towards a Greener, Better, Urban Future

Philip Vivian, Managing Director, BATESSMART

10:15 - 10:40

Melbourne Arts Precinct Transformation

- Largest cultural infrastructure project in Australian history
- The Melbourne Arts Precinct Transformation will provide a major rejuvenation to the city and Southbank, delivering The Fox: NGV Contemporary – a new gallery dedicated to contemporary art and design, significant upgrades to Arts Centre Melbourne's Theatres Building, and a new 18,000 square metre urban garden for people to enjoy
- Placemaking journey

Katrina Sedgwick OAM, CEO & Director, Melbourne Arts Precinct Corporation

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10:40 - 11:00

Creating better places with local communities

Professionals in governments and businesses are often stretched to breaking point. How can they be more effective by collaborating with and enabling action by local businesses and residents?

This presentation will share some key lessons learned by Town Team Movement and the global placemaking movement, including:

- Breaking out of negative 'place spirals'
- Finding and supporting local changemakers
- The four modes of doing: To / For/ With and By
- Moving from "No, because …" to "Yes, if …"
- Reinvigorating volunteering
- Proven tactics for building and maintaining momentum, including quick wins, microgrants and community organising

Dean Cracknell, Co-Founder, Town Team Movement, Creator, Placemaking Education

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11:00 - 11:30
TEA BREAK

11:30 - 12:00

The Vital Role of Public Domain in Creating Great Places

Featuring case studies:

- Central Park Public Domain
- Sydney Olympic Park Masterplan 2050
- Commonwealth Park Vision 2025, located in Canberra's Parliamentary triangle and revitalising a 40 hectare 9-klans featuring a permanent home for Floriade, upgrade to the Regatta Point National exhibition Centre, a new City Aquatic centre adjacent the new light rail stop, enhanced pedestrian connections to Civic and a new city outdoor performance space with adjoining event facilities.
- Leagues Club Park Gosford
- Sydney Park
- Sydney University Campus Activation 2024 a playful post Covid rework and overlay of two public spaces for returning students

Mike Horne, Founder and Director, Turf Design Studio

12:00 - 12:45

Panel Discussion
24 Hour Economy – Creating Global Night-Time Destinations

- New ways to make cities vibrant and inclusive at all hours
- Tackling challenges in the 24-hour economy
- Incorporating Indigenous narratives to enrich the cultural tapestry of precincts
- Libraries after dark program

Andrew Coward, Co-Founder/ Director - Reactivate Consulting, Chair - ULI Australia Sydney District Council
Heleana Genaus, District Coordinator, Newtown Enmore Precinct
Lorraine Lock, Precinct Manager, Hollywood Quarter
Michael Rodrigues, 24-Hour Economy Commissioner NSW, Department of Creative Industries, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport

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12:45 - 13:15

The city as a story you walk through: Rethinking how we design identity in places
We don't remember places because of what they're called, but we remember the story they reveal as we move through them. This talk challenges the habit of treating identity as a late-stage precinct-wide identity or brand exercise, instead showing how local DNA, heritage, art, viewpoints and journeys can define the narrative structure of a masterplan. Tom Oliver Payne outlines how these elements can shape street alignments, public spaces, character zones and the wider spatial logic of a precinct from day one.

Tom Oliver Payne, Partner & Place Strategy Director, Hoyne

13:15 - 14:15
LUNCH BREAK

14:15 - 14:40

Placemaking Under Pressure: Creating Vibrant, Safe Places through Protective Placemaking

Will people feel safe here? That question now defines the future of our public places. Rising social tensions, climate impacts, and global threats have made safety both a design problem and a trust problem. Yet the more we fortify our cities, the less safe they feel. Drawing on three years of research with practitioners and communities, this session introduces Protective Placemaking, a framework for calibrating security needs with user experience. It shows how designers and government authorities can shape vibrant public places that are both safe and welcoming through embedding safety in both design principles and place outcomes

Codee Ludbey, Managing Director and Co-Founder, CORE42

14:40 - 15:05

Broadmeadow Place Strategy

Broadmeadow is a vibrant destination and loveable place with highly-connected and distinct neighbourhoods that balance the needs of a dynamic community and growing Newcastle.

- Newcastle context and projected growth
- Development of the Broadmeadow Place Strategy
- Key learnings: Collaboration, Housing, Infrastructure, Resilience, Community Engagement, Aboriginal Engagement

Sara Kelly, Senior Strategic Planner, City of Newcastle

15:05 - 15:35

Panel Discussion
Digital Placemaking and the Built Environment

- Adding value to public spaces through digital placemaking
- Creative use of technology to transform environments

Dr Sarah Barns, Co-Founder, Studio ESEM
Stephen Minning, Founder & CEO, PAM

15:35 - 16:05
TEA BREAK

16:05 - 16:35

Who isn't in the room? Uncovering the hidden sages of the public domain through arts and cultural accelerators

The true key to achieving vibrant, people-centred places, is the engagement of public domain specialists who deeply understand the specifics of a place–its communities,histories and physical character. Activists, horticulturalists, park rangers,c horeographers, Aboriginal elders, artists and other sages of the public domain - can make your projects better. They can challenge assumptions ,bring different lenses to interpretation and create truly imaginative, place-based outcomes. Informed by City People's experiences as practicing artists working in the public domain ,our arts and culture accelerators are a structured way of bringing diverse experts over a short period of time to learn, inspire and create rigorous projects ready for execution. Learn about how accelerators with unsung public domain specialists can translate lofty place visions into concrete, executable steps towards a unique place identity.

Dr Michael Cohen, Director, City People
Dylan Goh, Producer, City People

16:35 - 16:55

Indigenous Placemaking

- Indigenous Placemaking and the Built Environment
- Urban design, public art and architecture by, for and in collaboration with Aboriginal people
- Contribution of aboriginal artists to cities' urban fabric

Aunty Donna Ingram, Senior Community & Cultural Services Consultant, Murawin
Dr Annie Burgess, Senior Consultant, Murawin

16:55 - 17:00
MC CLOSES

17:00 - 18:00
NETWORKING & DRINKS

Day 2 - 14th May 2026

08:45 - 09:15
REGISTRATION

09:15 - 09:20
MC OPENS

09:20 - 09:50

Speed Networking

Introduce yourself, swap business cards, and form new and lasting business connections during a series of one-on-one exchanges with fellow conference delegates.

09:50 - 10:20

Placemaking as Urban Health Infrastructure

Paris Kirby, Senior Placemaking Specialist - Auckland Urban Development Office, Auckland Council

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10:20 - 10:45

Creating People-Centred Places in the AI Age

AI is revolutionising how we create human-centred places – providing fast, affordable insights into what people truly want, democratising feedback and injecting voices into design at an unprecedented scale. Frost* is utilising AI-powered research on major projects out of its studios in Australia and the UK, including place visioning for London's South Kensington precinct, and public infrastructure and housing projects in Sydney. However, technology alone isn't enough. Combining this speed with the critical empathy and insight gained through workshops and face-to-face engagement is key. This dual approach unlocks the 'p factor': leveraging human psychology to give places a distinct personality that is magnetic, appealing, and delivers lasting returns.

Cat Burgess, Head, Frost*Place

10:45 - 11:05

How Road Safety is important in Placemaking, drawing on:

- Town Teams Safer Speeds Better Places toolkit, which PJA has a small part to create
- The Local Street Design Guide PJA are preparing from Main Roads WA, which focuses on creating safer community streets
- Street Alive projects PJA have been involved in – which reimagines local streets and local places using road safety engineering principles as a core aim for project acceptance and deliver

Tim Judd, Director, PJA

11:05 - 11:35
TEA BREAK

11:35 - 12:10

Panel Discussion
Placemaking and Property Development

- Creative Placemaking in the Real Estate Industry
- Analysing social and economic impacts of placemaking in real estate

Cat Burgess, Head, Frost*Place

12:10 - 12:30

Retrofitting Suburbia: Creating villages in our suburbs

Frank's presentation will seek to take the audience through the journey involved in gaining the necessary buy-in and support of various stakeholders and highlight the role that local government plays in supporting local activity centres to transform and absorb population growth.

Retrofitting Suburbia seeks to ‘sweat the asset’ and get more out of our streetscapes and public spaces and encourage projects that deliver placemaking and complete street outcomes. Particularly, with the community and public engagement at heart to contribute to developing robust and effective strategic planning work to achieve positive and collaborative outcomes.

Frank's presentation will talk through the strategies he has developed to embed and implement Placemaking initiatives in planning. Most recently, these include the Liveable City Strategy 2040, Vibrant Villages Action Plan and Placemaking Policy 2021.

Frank Vassilacos, Director Planning, Environment and Strategy, Nillumbik Shire Council

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12:30 - 13:00

Panel Discussion
Landscape Design and its key Role in Urban Placemaking

- What makes a great place?
- The role of landscaping in the placemaking process
- Designing for the public realm
- Creating meaningful experiences for people in public spaces

Anika Hoffman, Associate Director - Landscape Architecture, GroupGSA
Hamish Dounan, Director, CONTEXT
Sacha Coles, Global Design Director, Aspect Studios
Stephen Burton, Design Director, POMO

13:00 - 14:00
LUNCH BREAK

14:00 - 14:30

Operating Global Parramatta’s Gathering Place

- A practical insight into running one of Australia’s largest civic places: from setting the vision, delivering the strategy, managing the operations, activating, and evaluating the success of the Parramatta Square precinct, the gathering heart of a global city.

Chris Patfield, Place Manager - Parramatta Square Precinct, City of Parramatta
Jackson Morphett-Field, Team Leader City Activation and Community Events, City of Parramatta

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14:30 - 15:00
Illuminating Belonging: Experience?Led Placemaking After Dark

Light, art and safety in 24?hour urban precincts.

After dark, experience defines place. How spaces feel at night welcoming or hostile, legible or disorienting shapes safety, wellbeing and participation in the urban realm. In 24?hour precincts, design must support belonging as much as function.

This presentation explores experience?led placemaking after dark, demonstrating how light and art can transform night?time environments from spaces people endure into places they choose to inhabit. Through creative, layered lighting and public art integrated with technical, safety?led design, night?time spaces become more legible, calm and inviting particularly for women, girls and gender?diverse people.

By combining environmental psychology, CPTED principles and public?life analysis, safety becomes a catalyst for vibrancy rather than a constraint. When people feel safe, they stay—when they stay, places come alive.

Rebecca Cadorin, Senior Designer, Arup

15:00 - 15:30

Waterfront Placemaking

- Creating an active waterfront destination
- Waterfront regeneration and successful placemaking

15:30 - 16:00
TEA BREAK

16:00 - 16:20

Perspectives from Western Australia: Placemaking in the City of Fremantle

- Redevelopment and transformation of Fremantle Walyalup’s Inner Harbour precinct

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16:20 - 17:00

Workshop/Masterclass

17:00 - 17:05
MC CLOSES

Agenda is subject to change
*Speakers to be confirmed

An Event by:

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