AUSTRALIAN PLACEMAKING SUMMIT

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Conference Agenda

Day 1 - 13th May 2026

🕐 **07:45 - 08:45**
REGISTRATION

🕐 **08:45 - 08:50**
WELCOME TO COUNTRY

🕐 **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**

Against Placelessness: Identity is decided earlier than we think

As cities accelerate growth, the risk isn't density. It's placelessness.

Too many new precincts are functional, compliant and well-designed, yet still feel like nowhere. In response, identity is often treated as a surface exercise, expressed through architecture, branding or activation. By that point, the outcome is largely set.

Identity isn't delivered at the end. It's determined at the beginning, much earlier in the masterplanning process, through the decisions that shape how a place will be experienced and felt.

Get this right and places become memorable, differentiated and worth returning to. Get it wrong and no amount of design, branding or activation can fix it.

Places that feel like somewhere don't just attract people. They drive attachment, repeat use and ultimately outperform those that don't.

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**

Your guide to creating well-loved places with arts & culture

Arts & culture permeates every aspect of our life – from the places in which we live and work, to our ideas and beliefs, and our wellbeing. It pulses through our streets, our parklands, our hospitals, our nightclubs, and more. It forges profound ties between people and places.

In this session, you will learn about:

- How to create well-loved places that matter
- How to work with diverse experts to create imaginative place-based outcomes – including activists, horticulturalists, park rangers, choreographers, Aboriginal elders and more.
- How to amplify co-designed places with socially engaged artists

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

🕐 **16:35 - 17:05**

Indigenous Placemaking

At the Australian Placemaking Summit, we are in the business of creating better places, but how can Connecting to Country help us in our task towards achieving that goal? We at Murawin believe that designing for all types of environments, from rural to semi-rural, and from remote to cities, can be all improved by Connecting to Country, but we also understand that designers may feel that understanding how to connect to Country is outside of their skill set. Murawin have developed our own Country-centric methodology for approaching Place Making we call Barri Marruma, which means Place making in the Dhunghutti language of Northern NSW. When Murawin follow the Barri Marruma approach it ensures that Country, community & Indigenous knowledge inform all our projects & guide us through all our intercultural collaborations in the place making arena. We would like to take you on a short journey today where we can explain some of these concepts and how we can work together effectively to achieve great outcomes for all and where Indigenous voices are heard, valued and respected.

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

🕐 **17:05 - 17:10**
MC CLOSES

🕐 **17:10 - 18:10**
NETWORKING & DRINKS

🕐 **18:30 - 19:45**
GUIDED WALK
NIGHT PLAY: ILLUMINATING BELONGING - HOSTED BY ARUP AND CITY PEOPLE
FOR MORE INFO AND TO RSVP, CLICK HERE.

Day 2 - 14th May 2026

🕐 **08:45 - 09:15**
REGISTRATION

🕐 **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**

Between Love and Loneliness: Placemaking as Urban Health Infrastructure

I went to an urban health conference. They were talking about us. 350 health professionals from 60 countries, and the word they kept coming back to was placemaking. The built environment shapes up to 90% of our health outcomes. Not hospitals. Not clinics. The streets we walk, the spaces we gather in, the neighbourhoods we design. Markets, community gardens, nature play, activated streets and non-commercial third spaces are not soft extras. They are the social fabric that determines whether communities connect or withdraw. In between love and loneliness sits a bench, a crossing, a street tree, a gathering space. The everyday architecture of belonging. This session reframes every design decision as a health decision and challenges us to stop treating placemaking as supplementary and start recognising it as the most affordable, most impactful health intervention a city can make.

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 Delightful Density: Building Thriving Residential Precincts Through Placemaking and Community** As cities continue to densify, the question is no longer simply how many homes we can build, but what kind of life those homes make possible over time. Developers, designers, and often place strategists invest heavily in the physical fabric of a precinct, the architecture, the landscaping and the playgrounds. But what genuinely builds community after completion? Drawing on the story of the Little BIG House at the Flour Mill of Summer Hill, this session explores a model of community building that is genuinely resident-led. Little BIG Foundation took over the reins from the precinct's original placemaking strategists Reactivate Consulting, and now has one of the most active community hubs in Sydney. Sarah Mathews, Little BIG House and Andrew Coward, Reactivate Consulting and will explore what "happy high density" actually requires and how genuine community infrastructure (not just amenity) transforms how residents relate to where they live as well as The Little BIG model: peer-led programming, place activation, and the evidence behind it. This is a session for anyone who believes great places aren't built — they're grown. And that the people who live there are the most powerful placemaking asset of all. Andrew Coward, Co-Founder/ Director - Reactivate Consulting, Chair - ULI Australia Sydney District Council
Sarah Mathews, CEO, Little Big Foundation

🕐 **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

🕐 **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

This presentation explores how light and public art can transform night?time environments in 24?hour precincts. By integrating experience?led design with safety principles, spaces become more legible, calm and inviting supporting wellbeing, belonging and participation, particularly for women, girls and gender?diverse people. When safety enables comfort, people stay and places come alive.

Rebecca Cadorin, Senior Designer, Arup

🕐 **15:00 - 15:30**

People Are Asking More of Public Space - Are We Delivering?

As our cities face rising cost-of-living pressures, social isolation and struggling retail centres, public space is under increasing pressure to perform. Drawing on behavioural data studies from Sydney, Melbourne and Perth, this session reveals the changing patterns of use that are challenging how we plan, design and manage public space.

Obelia Tait, Director, Inhabit Place

🕐 **16:00 - 16:20**

Give Place a Seat at the Table

Every public domain project comes with a familiar cast: the engineer, the landscape architect, the traffic specialist, the lighting designer. Each brings deep expertise, each works within their lane. But who in that room is responsible for *place*?

The placemaking industry has a blind spot. We champion vibrant, people-centred outcomes, yet we continue to structure our projects defined by scope rather than place. When discipline-based silos define how a project is organised, place becomes nobody's job.

This session argues that placemaking is not a phase or a deliverable – it is a rigorous approach for managing the complexity of place across every stage of a project. Using Fourfold Studio's real-life case studies, we will demonstrate what it looks like when place is treated not as a subject but as a methodology, a research, strategy and action framework that keeps human experience at the centre of every decision.

The question is not whether your project needs a placemaker. It is whether place has a voice at every table where decisions are being made.

Harriet McKindlay, Associate Director, Fourfold Studio

🕐 **16:20 - 16:40**

Kensington Street Precinct - Part of the Chippendale Collective: A case study

- How we created a precinct that delivers a memorable guest experience greater than the sum of its individual businesses that make up the precinct.
- How we then coordinated an offering to an external client as part of the bidding process, and how we then took the client from bid to delivery - to deliver a welcoming party for 4500 guests within the Kensington Street Precinct.

Dan Smith-Light, Director of Operations, Kensington Street Chippendale

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Agenda is subject to change
*Speakers to be confirmed

An Event by:

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