



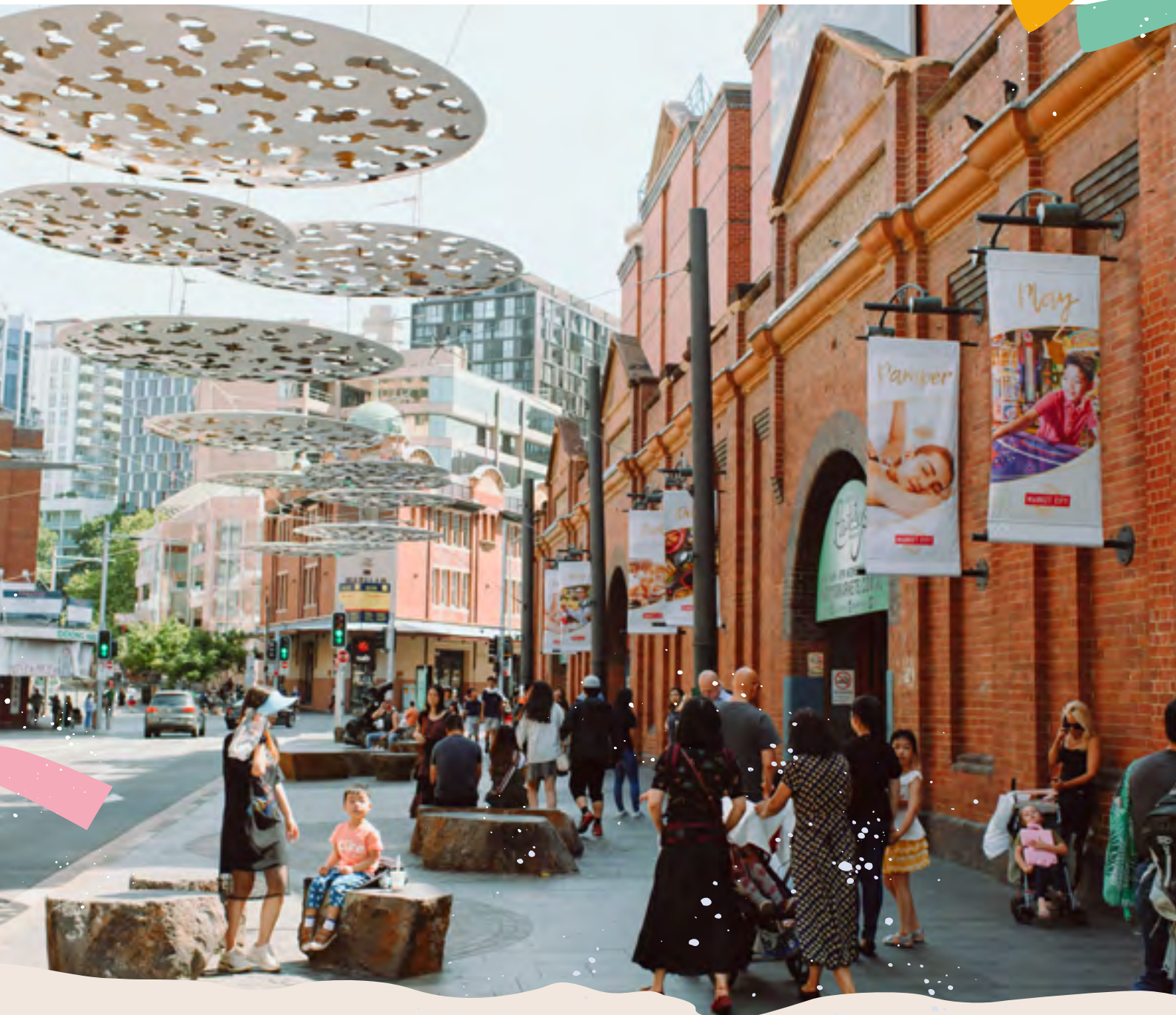
Committee
for
Sydney

ARUP

Commission into the Future of Sydney CBD

Learning, living and culture

Phase three summary



Welcome

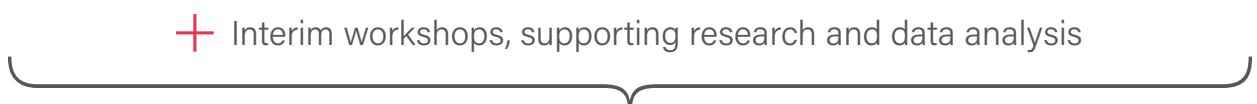
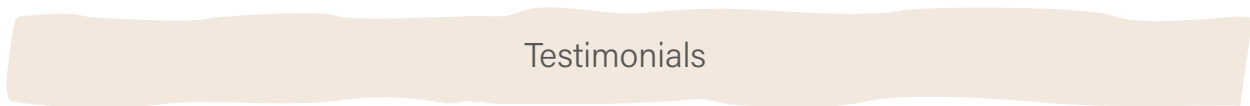
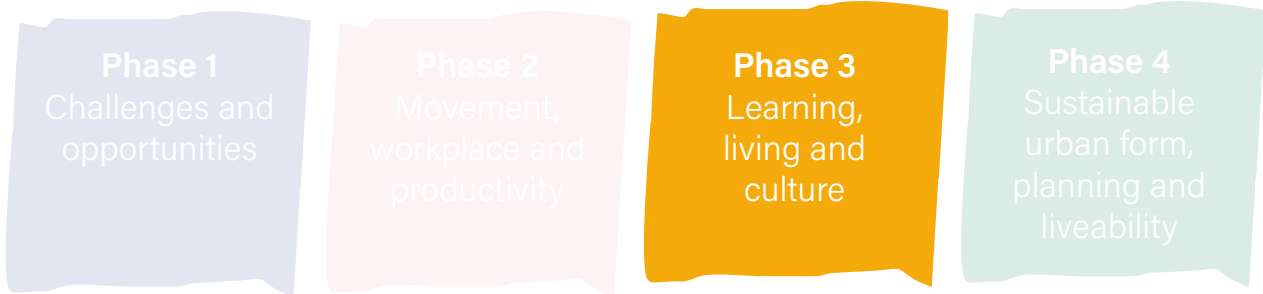
At this pivotal time for our city's future, the Committee for Sydney and Arup have brought together some of Sydney's leading thinkers to convene a Commission into the Future of Sydney CBD.

This report outlines findings and thoughts from phase three of the Commission, as identified by our Commissioners, testimonial response and research.

Acknowledgement of Country

The Commission acknowledges the Gadigal of the Eora Nation, the traditional custodians of Country on which the Sydney CBD stands.

We acknowledge and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.



To find out more about the Commission visit
sydney.org.au/FutureSydneyCBD

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About phase three

Building on earlier phases of the Commission, phase three focused on further exploring learning, living and culture in the Sydney CBD.

This summary chapter outlines the key findings and emerging ideas from this phase which includes insights from the third testimonial session, prior testimonial sessions, research and workshops.

We asked all our testifiers and workshop participants to provide insight into challenges they saw with Sydney CBD pre-COVID-19, trends they see impacting the long-term future of the CBD, and opportunities for learning, living and culture to become more deeply embedded in the CBD.

Testimonials and workshop

The third of five Commission hearings was held on 20 April 2021 and testimonial responses were given by:

Simon Kenway

Conductor

Opera Australia

Kerri Glasscock

CEO and Festival Director

Sydney Fringe Festival

Craig Allchin

Director

Ethos Urban

Dean Long

CEO

Accommodation
Association of Australia

A workshop session was held on 27 July 2021 to discuss Aboriginal history and culture in the CBD and ideas for the future CBD. We thank the following Gadigal community guests for their invaluable ideas, recommendations, and stories:

Ray Davison

Gadigal Elder

Cameron Davison

Gadigal Language
Knowledge-Holder

Binowee Bayles

Birri Gubba, Gungalu,
Wonnarua and
Bundjalung woman
born and raised on
Gadigal Country,
Gadigal Community
Representative

Akala Newman

Wiradjuri/ Gadigal
storyteller, singer and
songwriter.
Assistant Producer with
Moogahlin Performing Arts,
Artist Educator at Museum
of Contemporary Arts,
Intimacy Coordinator at Key
Intimate Scenes Australia
and Research Assistant
(TPS) at UNSW

Matilda Brown

D'harawal woman
Project and Community
Co-ordinator, Balarinji

What we heard and what we are thinking

Of the testimonials to date, those that spoke to learning, living and culture focused firmly on a future Sydney CBD that is mixed use, open and engaging.

Phase three continued to look at challenges and opportunities pre-COVID-19 and those that have emerged as a result of the pandemic that will impact the long-term future of the CBD.

From the testimonials, research and commissioner workshops held to date, key themes emerged for phase three. These themes generated more ideas that will be further explored as the Commission continues to work towards a series of recommendations for the future of Sydney CBD and supporting actions.

Read on to explore the insights from the third phase of the Commission into the Future of Sydney CBD.

Key themes

Education and students - a part of the CBD ecosystem

Balancing living, working and culture together in the CBD

Aboriginal culture

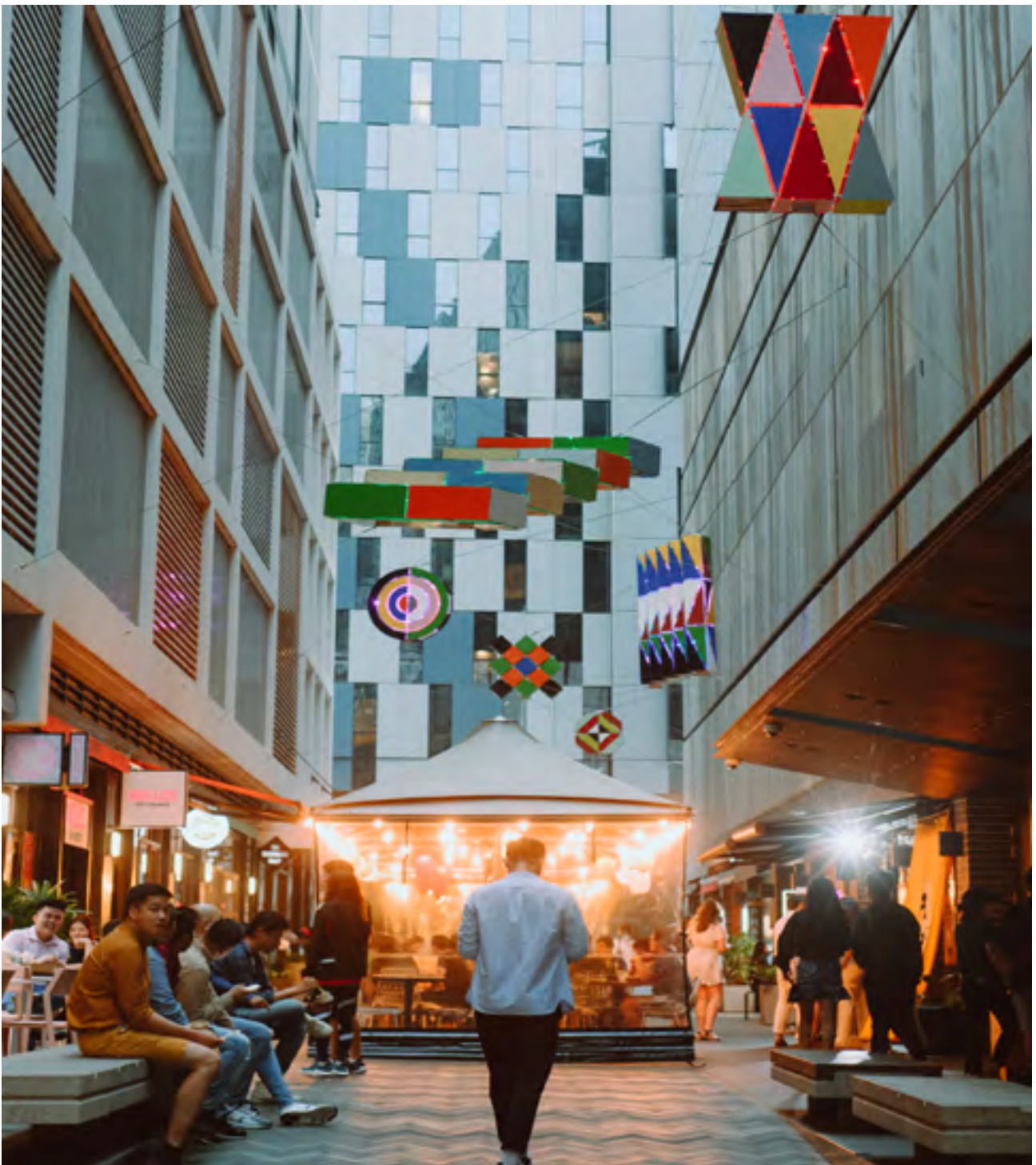
An open CBD with a permanent creative footprint

Accommodation as a catalyst for a vibrant CBD

Cities are complicated — we need to adapt policy settings to make them more flexible and responsive.

Cities aren't fixed, they evolve like an ecosystem and suffer if they become like a plantation monoculture.

Craig Allchin



1 Education and students - a part of the ecosystem

What is happening and what has changed?

Tertiary education

Before COVID-19, local tertiary students, international students, and their visitors were a fundamental to the CBD economy. Sydney competed globally as a destination for international students and had two of the top 120 global universities by 2020 rankings¹, located within 8km of the Sydney CBD (University of Sydney and University of New South Wales).

The CBD has a high percentage of students living in the CBD, with almost half of the population (46.9%) attending an educational institution². It also has a highly educated population with 39.8% of residents holding a tertiary education qualification.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the tertiary education system has been impacted by travel restrictions and changing delivery models. Pricing and financial models have also been questioned.

While not all universities are the same, both local and international students have been impacted in some ways by budget cuts, loss of teaching staff and discontinuation of subjects. Universities are having to rethink their offerings considering —budget constraints and how they deliver courses in a more permanent mixed mode, combining physical and digital infrastructure. These changes are impacting both the number of students migrating to study in Australia as well as directly impacting local and international students currently living and working in and around the CBD.

Tertiary education in numbers



169,700+

Total number of students at major universities within 8km of CBD in 2020. Includes 56,800+ international students.^{3, 4, 5}



3% lower

Overall students numbers reduced from 2019 to 2020 at the major universities within 8km of Sydney CBD. International students numbers dropped by 9% from 2019 to 2020.^{6, 7, 8}

1 Center for World University Rankings, 2020-2021 Rankings

2 Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016 Census QuickStats, Sydney-Haymarket-The Rocks, 2016

3 University of Sydney, Annual Report, 2020

4 UNSW, Annual Report, 2020

5 UTS, Annual Report, 2020

6 University of Sydney, Annual Report, 2019

7 UNSW, Annual Report, 2019

8 UTS, Annual Report, 2019



Secondary and primary education involvement

While tertiary education and students are fundamental to a thriving CBD, there is also room to assess the role, function, and engagement of the Sydney CBD with primary and secondary schools and students.

Within 5km of the CBD there are around 142 schools (primary, secondary, and combined) with six schools located in the CBD villages¹⁰. With many school students learning and living within a short distance of the CBD, there is a large opportunity to think about the way these students can connect with and engage with activities in the CBD.

The Commission heard about opportunities to diversify businesses and industry in the future CBD and to connect and engage more with schools and students.

This can help educate and expose students to different types of jobs and industries and would see industry be a part of learning and skills development from primary and secondary schools. Exposing students to a range of industries in the CBD and connecting them with businesses can help provide work experience and post graduation employment opportunities for secondary school students.



Primary and secondary education in numbers

21,900+

the approximate number of primary school full-time equivalent (FTE) enrolments for public schools within 5km of Sydney CBD.⁹

12,400+

the approximate number of secondary school full-time equivalent (FTE) enrolments for public schools within 5km of Sydney CBD.⁹

Within the CBD villages

There is one primary school, three secondary schools and two combined primary and secondary schools.¹⁰

Within 5km of the Sydney CBD

There are approximately 83 primary schools, 34 secondary schools and 25 combined primary and secondary schools.⁹

⁹ NSW Government, Department of Education, Full time equivalent (FTE) enrolments by individual NSW government schools, grade and calendar year (2010-2019), 2020

¹⁰ Australians Schools Directory, Sydney and Central Suburbs, 2021

What we are thinking about

The role of education in the future CBD

Education is a fundamental part of the social, cultural, economic and knowledge sharing fabric of the CBD.

There are vital links between the education sector, talent attraction and retention, world class research and economic growth in the CBD – this includes links with both secondary and tertiary education facilities and students.

It is crucial that we retain education institutions and students in the CBD to ensure Sydney CBD's growth. Government policy and funding support will be essential in creating the necessary deep collaboration between industry, business and education sectors.

Case study

Sydney

A key trend across the higher education sector is a greater emphasis on building partnerships with the private sector, through research, development and innovation programmes and activities designed to solve real-world problems, drive value creation and deliver commercial returns.

The University of Technology Sydney's faculty of Transdisciplinary Innovation has established private sector partnerships to align with their undergraduate degrees. Private industry has been brought on to set capstone projects for the students as well as offer internships as part of their university curriculum. This engagement with industry aims to establish a stronger connection between students completing their study or research, and organisations who can benefit from these students who are entering the workforce¹¹.

¹¹ UTS Transdisciplinary Innovation, 2021

So, we are thinking:

- *What role do all levels of education play in the future Sydney CBD?*
- *Where are there opportunities for deeper collaboration between industry and the education sector in the Sydney CBD to drive economic, social, and environmental success?*
- *How can industries in the CBD better leverage the proximity to world class education facilities and institutions – and vice versa?*
- *Where are there opportunities to embed more educational facilities and services in the CBD to support the knowledge economy, drive economic growth and grow talent?*
- *How can CBD stakeholders – Government, business and community – support the education sector to capitalise on Sydney CBD's global status?*



The future CBD offering for students

Feeling welcome, supported and safe are cited as key decision-making factors for parents of international students looking to move abroad.

The CBD offering to all local and international students, primary, secondary and tertiary, should consider how it can authentically make students feel welcome, supported and safe while also being a vibrant and stimulating ecosystem for them to grow, explore and create in.

There is opportunity to more deeply explore how culture and spirituality of the diverse cohort of students, both local and international, can be embedded in the Sydney CBD living, working, and studying experience.

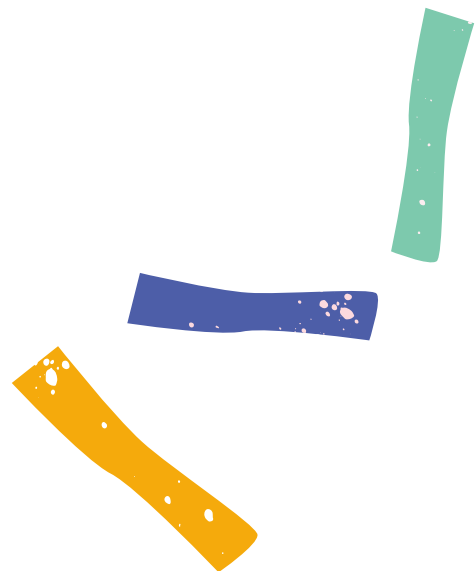


So, we are thinking:

- *How can the CBD more authentically make all students (primary, secondary, and tertiary) feel welcome, safe and supported?*
- *How can the CBD better connect all students with industries and businesses to grow skills, collaborate in world class facilities and drive economic prosperity?*
- *How can the CBD engage all students (primary, secondary, and tertiary) in a vibrant and open 24-hour experience?*
- *How can the education sector collaborate with partners to contribute to and support a year round culturally activated CBD for everyone, including students?*

Students are so important to the Sydney CBD economy — not just the night-time economy.

Attila Brungs (Testimony session 1)



2 Balancing living, working and culture together in the CBD

What is happening and what has changed?

Living and working in the CBD

The Sydney CBD has traditionally been a place of business with 27% of internal floor area classified as 'office space' compared to 10% 'residential'¹². The rest of the space is listed among other uses including: 18% 'common areas', 14% 'parking', 7% 'utilities', 7% 'visitor accommodation', 3 % 'restaurant/eating', 3 % 'entertainment/leisure', 2% 'shop/showrooms', 2% 'community' and the remaining as storage, other infrastructure and transport.¹².

Equity, diversity, inclusivity, sociability, and accessibility have all been topics of conversation throughout the Commission with a focus on the benefits that can come from a more cohesive mix of living, working and culture. This has been evident throughout COVID-19 with strong values placed on community and local neighbourhoods where people can now live, work, socialise and engage in arts and cultural experiences without leaving their suburb.



The more senior you are in New York, the farther you live from Manhattan. The more senior you are in Sydney, the closer you live to the CBD.

Susan Lloyd-Hurwitz (Testimony session 2)

Demographics

Sydney had an estimated population of 5.3 million in 2019 and is expected to grow to 6 million people by 2031, taking into consideration the impacts of COVID-19, migration, births, and deaths¹³.

Sydney CBD's population is highly educated and skilled, with a median age of 30. One quarter of the workforce comprises of professionals and service workers¹⁴.

The Sydney CBD was a rapidly growing and densely populated area pre COVID-19, demonstrated by an estimated population growth of 12% between 2016-2020¹⁵. It has a forecast population increase of over 60% projected in the next 20 years in the 'CBD and Harbour' Village and 39% in the 'Chinatown - CBD South' Village¹⁶.

The 2021 NSW intergenerational report foresees that the projected future population for the State will be older on average, and by 2061, one quarter of people living in NSW will be aged 65 or over (up from 17 per cent today)¹⁷. The median age in New South Wales is also expected to grow to 44 years (from 38 today) in the same time period¹⁷. An aging population across Australia has implications for government revenues and expenses and for our economy, including impacts on productivity and workforce participation¹⁷.

¹² City of Sydney, Floor space employment survey, 2017

¹³ Australian Government, Centre for Population, Population Statement, December 2020

¹⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016 Census QuickStats, Sydney-Haymarket-The Rocks, 2016

¹⁵ idCommunity, City of Sydney community profile, 2021

¹⁶ idCommunity, City of Sydney population forecast, 2021

¹⁷ NSW Government, 2021-22 NSW Intergenerational Report, 2021

Cultural diversity

The World Cities Culture report from 2018 highlights that culture creates an environment for all citizens to see a place for themselves in the city, to co-exist and collaborate¹⁸. It is critical that the barriers to entry are lowered to allow access to all people and ideas.

Sydney is a multicultural city, home to people with varied languages, traditions, religious and spiritual practices. Around 52% of Greater Sydney's population was born overseas¹⁹ and migration is a significant part of Sydney's story. Migration has contributed to both the culture of the city as well as its economic strength, where people of diverse backgrounds have created a more diverse ecosystem of skills, experience, and ideas in the city.

The CBD itself has an ethnically diverse population with 25% of residents having Chinese ancestry, with other common ancestries including Thai, English, Australian and Indonesian²⁰.

Sydney is also home to a large lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) community where the fringe of the CBD is the epicentre of LGBTIQ life, history and culture²¹.

Despite migration being impacted by COVID-19, the diversity of the cities existing population demonstrates a need for varied employment, education and cultural offerings across the CBD that cater to diverse cultural and community needs.

What links world cities to one another is trade, commerce and finance. What makes them different from one another is culture.

World Cities Culture Report 2018¹⁸



¹⁸ World Cities Culture Report, 2018

¹⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016 Census QuickStats: Greater Sydney, 2016

²⁰ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016 Census QuickStats, Sydney-Haymarket-The Rocks, 2016

²¹ City of Sydney, Our Diverse Communities, 2021

Housing

The median property price for houses and apartments in Sydney is the highest among capital cities in Australia — 49.8% higher than the national average²². From January to April 2021, Sydney dwelling values rose 9.3%. The median price of a 2-bedroom unit in Sydney CBD in 2021 is \$1.28million²³, 6% higher than the equivalent in Surry Hills (\$1.21 million²⁴) and more than double the equivalent in Parramatta (\$583,000)²⁵.

Housing benefits everyone — from individuals to households, communities, and the economy. Within Sydney's CBD, two thirds of households are comprised of couples without children and the overwhelming majority of housing stock is apartments or flats (97%)²⁶.

The transient population in a CBD, particularly with people of working age, drives high demand for rental tenure over ownership and other tenure types. This is also due to increasing property prices, which have nearly doubled in Greater Sydney between 2012 and 2017, resulting in 37% of all CBD residents experiencing housing stress (with rental payments which are greater than or equal to 30% of their household income)²⁶. Across NSW as a whole, that figure is only 13%²⁶.

In and around the CBD, there is a lack of affordable and well-designed housing, that meets the needs of the wider Sydney population. This has been a challenge for many Sydneysiders who work in and around the CBD as they cannot afford to live close to their jobs.

Before COVID-19, many people travelled long commutes between home and work in the CBD including essential workers, artists and creatives. With new ways of working and hybrid models trending, many people who work in traditional office-based roles can now do their job from anywhere. But there are many people who work in non-office-based jobs who are essential to the function of a great and vibrant CBD.

A study by UNSW City Futures Research Centre, *Strengthening Economic Cases for Housing Report (2019)*, suggests Sydney needs to have more affordable homes at reasonable distances from where people work if the government wants to boost productivity in the city²⁷. The study showed that housing has a substantial impact on the economy and that living closer to job markets also means increased job mobility and higher incomes over time. It showed that moving workers close to a wider range of jobs would lead to a \$17 billion boost to the NSW economy over 40 years²⁷.

The increase in housing stress, housing demand and cost of living in Sydney highlights the demand for well-designed and affordable housing (for all types of workers) in a CBD that is an engaging, welcoming and thriving place to live, work, socialise and study.

22 The Urban Developer, Sydney Housing Market Insights: June 2021, 2021

23 Domain, Suburb Profile Sydney 2000, 2021

24 Domain, Suburb Profile Surry Hills 2010, 2021

25 Domain, Suburb Profile Paramatta NSW 2150, 2021

26 Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016 Census QuickStats, Sydney-Haymarket-The Rocks, 2016

27 MacLennan, D, 2019. Strengthening economic cases for housing: the productivity gains from better housing outcomes. City Futures Research Centre UNSW Built Environment, UNSW, Sydney

In the past, affordable housing has been code for public sector accommodation. Think 'housing commission.' The only way to get past just talking about it will be public-private partnerships where State and Local Government provide the site for long term lease, and Super funds provide the capital. To achieve this, Super funds must make a profit for it to be in their members interests, otherwise affordable housing just remains a 'feel-good' policy statement.

Peter Collins



What we are thinking about

The diversity of residents, businesses and users

There has been strong discussion in the Commission around the benefits of an inclusive Sydney CBD that welcomes, supports and houses a diverse group of residents, users and businesses.

The Commission has cited world cities that attract people because of their balance of affordable residential, retail and arts and culture offerings and the benefits that diverse users and industries mixing together can have on creating vitality, liveliness, and vibrancy.

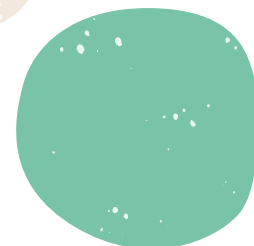
Having affordable and well-designed housing in the right place, at the right price points, can attract different residents to the CBD including artists, creatives, service industry workers and essential workers who are fundamental to the function of the CBD.

When you look at great cities around the world, they have an inclusive mix of residential, office, theatre and other amenities. There are opportunities to make Sydney an even more diverse and interesting CBD for everyone.

Michael Silman (Testimony session 2)

So, we are thinking:

- *Who should live and work in the future Sydney CBD?*
- *How can the local and state government work together to provide affordable, well designed housing for diverse groups of people that benefits the users, the economy, Sydney and NSW?*
- *How can we use this opportunity of low rents in the CBD to diversify the mix of residential and business tenants?*
- *How can build to rent (BTR), affordable and social housing be included and built in the CBD in a valuable, socially successful and sustainable way?*



Case study

Paris



Paris' Mayor, Anne Hidalgo, is focusing on 'hyper-proximity' and the '15-minute city' approach in the revitalisation of the city post COVID-19. A '15-minute city' is designed such that residents have easy access to all the core services and amenities they need to live, learn and thrive within walking and cycling distance. It shares ideas for making urban areas adapt to humans, not the other way around²⁸. This includes community-scale education and healthcare, essential retail like grocery shops and pharmacies, parks for recreation, working spaces, arts and culture. Equity and inclusivity are central to the idea where equal access to services, amenities and green space can actively reduce – and not risk compounding – social divides and inequalities²⁹.

The approach in Paris is focused on creating diversity of use in close proximity, cutting air pollution and hours lost to commuting to improve the quality of life for residents and achieve the plan to become carbon neutral by 2050. The city has fast tracked pedestrian and cycleways as part of a build out and Mayor Hidalgo's people-first plans include installing a cycle path on every street and bridge — enabled in part by turning over 70% of on-street car parking space to other uses³⁰. The plan also includes increasing office space and co-working hubs in neighbourhoods that lack them (to add more diversity of businesses), expanding the uses of infrastructure and buildings outside of standard hours, encouraging people to use their local shops and creating small parks in school playgrounds that would be open to local people outside of school hours to combat the city's lack of public green space³⁰.

²⁸ C40 Knowledge Hub, Carlos Moreno – The 15-minute City, October 2020

²⁹ C40 Knowledge Hub, 15 Minute Cities – How to create complete Neighbourhoods, May 2021

³⁰ Bloomberg CityLab (2020) Paris Mayor: It's time for a '15-Minute City', 18 February

Community and spirituality

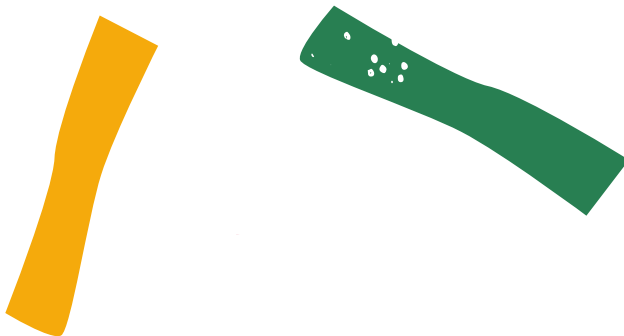
COVID-19 provided a moment for many people to re-assess their lives, work patterns, living locations, and values. The Commission heard about the value of community, and a strong desire for better connections to people, place and nature.

The Commission has spoken a lot about the benefits and outcomes of a city that is inclusive and accepting of all communities and how the diverse needs of communities need to be considered in the future planning of the CBD.

Spirituality in place is another theme that has emerged from the Commission as an area to consider how people's spirituality is supported, nurtured and seen in the CBD.

So, we are thinking:

- *How can the CBD better support and engage with the local and wider Sydney community through social, cultural, digital, and physical infrastructure?*
- *How can more people feel better connected with community in the CBD?*
- *How can the CBD more authentically connect community, people, place, and nature?*
- *How and where could the CBD be more spiritually, culturally, historically and inter-generationally significant for people within the community?*



Is it an outdated concept to drive an economic, social and environmental triple bottom line as the primary solution. Could the CBD formally add the dimensions of cultural and spiritual as a richer lens?

Ros Moriarty

We've gone from 'Hyperlocal' to 'New Global' and those two book ends are something we need to think about.

Susan Lloyd-Hurwitz (Testimony session 2)



TOWARDS AUSTRALIAN AND CHINESE FRIENDSHIP

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CHINESE GARDEN

Paddy's
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3 Aboriginal culture

What is happening and what has changed?

Protecting and preserving

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have lived on the land we now call Sydney for thousands of years and they contribute significantly to the richness of Sydney's story and place. NSW also has more Indigenous people than any other state in Australia³¹.

While Sydney has a rich Aboriginal culture, the city has a complex history. The Commission heard of the need for more authentic truth telling of Sydney's history as part of the city's healing, education and transitioning forward. The Commission heard about the need and importance of recognition, cultural awareness, and visibility to educate, inspire, and motivate citizens and visitors to the city.

The NSW Government Architect 'Connecting to Country Draft Framework' was published in 2020 and aims to better understand the value of Aboriginal knowledge in the design and planning of places³². The draft framework defines Country as "living, constantly changing, and evolving. Many ecosystems exist across different realms of Country including both living and non-living elements. Country has purpose, operating at multiple scales from the cosmic to the molecular and everything in between"³². The Framework also describes that "Aboriginal people have deep and personal relationships with Country and multiple ways of expressing that relationship and what it means. Consequently, there is no single way of defining the term"³².

The Commission heard from Ray Davison, Gadigal Elder, that we have a collective responsibility for Country and anyone who was born on Country, or lives on Country, is welcome on Country, and is responsible for it. Building strong relationships with Country is fundamental to embedding Aboriginal culture in Sydney and the CBD.

The NSW Government Architect 'Connecting with Country Draft Framework' describes cultural expression as taking many forms where many interpretations of Country are expressed through cultural practice³². Aboriginal culture includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, and customs acquired by membership in a social group³³. A prominent form of cultural expression for Aboriginal people is language, also "performance, ceremony, collection and preparation of food, song, dance, art, clothing, and tools"³².

The National Indigenous Australia Agency conveys that "strengthening leadership and culture is critical to ensuring sustainability of Indigenous organisations and communities for future generations"³⁴. The Commission also heard of the need to protect, preserve and provide catalysts to regenerate Aboriginal culture both in Sydney CBD and across Sydney. While there are existing cultural revitalisation efforts there are also existing challenges with education and passing on some cultural practices to the next generation of Aboriginal peoples. An example includes traditional rock carvings which require highly specialised skills to re-gouge according to protocol, as well as preserve.

³¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Profile on Indigenous Australians, 2019

³² NSW Government Architect, Draft Connecting With Country Framework, 2020

³³ What is Culture? A compilation of quotations, Helen Spencer-Oatley 2012, <http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/74260/>

³⁴ Australian Government, National Indigenous Australia Agency, Indigenous.gov.au, Culture and Capability, 2021

We all belong to Country. It's part of your culture and Country as well. It doesn't matter that your bloodline comes from overseas, you still retain that, but if you're born on Country here, then your parents and you walk amongst people that belong to Country. We need to continue educating so people can understand that they belong, and it's their responsibility as well to do the best they can for this Country. Part of that is truth telling.

Ray Davison, Gadigal Elder

Country is always under the concrete. There needs to be a visible, tangible presence in the CBD of Gadigal and re-engaging with community is an essential step in doing that. Visibility of culture helps create a sense of pride between Indigenous and non Indigenous people and it hands over that responsibility of reawakening culture to all.

Matilda Brown



Aboriginal dancers at the Homeground festival, Sydney, NSW © Nick Williamson/Alamy Stock Photo

Embedding First Nations culture in the CBD

The Commission has heard about the positive impacts of Aboriginal culture on our national, state, and local identity and how the cultural identity and a sense of belonging to Country and community for Aboriginal people is strongly linked to health and emotional wellbeing.

One of the strong messages from the Commission was the importance of programmes and practice that empower communities through positive employment, economic, health, wellbeing and education outcomes.

The Commission heard about the challenges of the norm of 'Eurocentric' education, government and planning models which have often created barriers for connecting with Australia's First Nations peoples and culture in Sydney. The Commission is exploring the process of building on initiatives and programmes already happening to further improve an expanding cultural awareness, support and encourage cultural expression, and embed Aboriginal living culture across the Sydney CBD.

This includes creating better co-design structures that enable Aboriginal people to tell and embed their stories of place and their living culture. By making these stories visible, we can consciously move forward and allow our history to move through time. This helps ground the understanding of place and better inform decisions moving forward for richer places.

So, we are thinking:

- *How and where can the Sydney CBD better represent the local and wider Aboriginal community?*
- *How and where can Aboriginal culture, language and contemporary stories be brought to the forefront and be embedded in the day to day of Sydney CBD?*
- *How can we enable Aboriginal thinking and culture to be embedded in the fabric of Sydney CBD?*
- *How can businesses, Government and individuals in Sydney CBD adopt the priorities of the Aboriginal community's aspirations in relation to the CBD, that empower the community and leads to positive economic, education, health and wellbeing outcomes?*
- *How can all stakeholders in the Sydney CBD better engage and co-design opportunities with the local and wider Sydney Aboriginal community through social, cultural and digital programming?*
- *How and where can the Aboriginal worldview, with its language, wisdom, cultural and social values, be incorporated into the day-to-day life of Sydney CBD?*

It's about how we can all connect with Country. How can we listen to Country? How can we heal Country? I ask, how can we educate people, how can we motivate people and how can we inspire people? We have domestic and international travellers and when borders open, how do we raise the awareness of our history prior to 1788?

Binowee Bayles

Case study

Wellington



The New Zealand capital has a rich and diverse culture, linking the history of Māori and European settlement into its story today. According to Māori tradition, Whatonga, a chief of the Kurahaupo waka was the first person to settle the lands at the tip of the North Island. The area was known as Te Upoko-o-te-Ika - 'the head of the fish'³⁵.

Wellington, along with many parts of the country, experienced disruption between Māori and European settlement. Today however, Māori culture is echoed in Wellington through design, landscape and infrastructure and experience.

Interventions in the natural landscape, urban design, public art and names of streets or landmarks are mechanisms in which these hidden layers of New Zealand's first settlers are being integrated into the city's public facade³⁶. For example, the Wellington City Council embeds Māori language in their governance, ward structure and communications and Māori-inspired designs can be found in the public realm on manhole covers and lamp posts across the city.

Māori history is preserved in Wellington's arts centres including the Te Papa Museum and within boutique art galleries, restaurants in Mount Victoria and Tarnaki street are dedicated to Māori food and walking, and canoe tours are initiated to inspire and educate the people on Māori culture and ethos³⁷.

Much of Wellington's harbour and quays are built on reclaimed land that surfaced after earthquakes. Waitangi Park is an integral harbourside public space that not only supports the sustainability of the existing stream but also incorporates Māori principles into its design. The Waharoa (traditional Māori entranceway) reminds visitors to Wellington of the Māori tribes' links to the land, as the Waitangi stream once fed a bigger wetland that was used to gather food, get fresh water and launch canoes³⁶.

Another way the city council is representing Māori culture in the capital is through the introduction of native plants into city parks and public spaces. Otari-Wilton's Bush is a botanical garden established to conserve native New Zealand plants, supporting the natural landscape, and also effectively integrating Māori culture and spirit throughout the landscape.

³⁵ Wellington City Council, History of Wellington, 2021

³⁶ The Culture Trip, How Maori Culture is Reflected in Wellington's Urban Design, 21 July 2020

³⁷ Wellington NZ, See and Do: Te Wharewaka O Pōneke Māori cultural experiences, 2021

4 An open CBD with a permanent creative footprint

What is happening and what has changed?

Bringing people back and restoring sociability 24 hours a day

The Commission has heard a strong desire to bring people back to the CBD, restore sociability and curate an open CBD — one that engages everyone in our community throughout the day. 24-hour, multi-generational and multi-cultural offerings, experiences, facilities, and amenities at different price points are needed to attract a diverse group of people into the CBD at all hours of the day.

Before COVID-19, Sydney's night-time economy generated more than \$3.64 billion in revenue each year, with more than 4,600 businesses employing more than 32,000 people³⁸. Since 2014, Sydney's night-time economy has been impacted by legislation that required 1.30am lockouts and 3am last drinks at bars, pubs and clubs across the Sydney CBD precinct. The 'lock out laws' were estimated to have cost the economy \$16 billion a year in lost revenue.

In 2020, NSW Government amended the 'lock out laws' in Sydney's CBD, removing 1:30am last entry for all licensed venues and extending 'last drinks' by 30 minutes at venues with "good records"³⁹. Restrictions were removed across NSW on serving drinks after midnight, bottle shop opening hours were extended and small bar patron capacity was increased.

While there have been changes to the 'lock out laws', these changes only cater to a select group of the wider Sydney community. The Commission heard about the need to change the narrative of experiences from just 'alcohol', 'drinking' and 'high end dining' to a range of services and offerings that meet the wide range and diverse needs of all CBD users.

Rising trends in local neighborhood entertainment and 'at home' online entertainment (including subscription services and home delivery) mean the CBD experience must compete more now to attract people in — both during the day and at night.

Currently there are challenges being faced in the service industries with lower numbers of workers coming into the CBD, fewer tourists, fewer foreign workers (due to no migration) and the local neighborhood and 'at home' competition (where people are choosing to spend more time). There are also challenges with excessive rental costs and the corporate appetite which has driven a lot of small businesses and the local trade away from the CBD.

The Commission has been considering what 24-hour offerings, experiences and facilities are needed in the future CBD that cater to the cross section of community and visitors alike, that support the new ways of working, facilitate sociability and attract people of all ages into the CBD. This includes venue opening hours, retail and hospitality choices and experiences, arts and creative experiences and events, public space for all and amenities for children and young adults.

When discussing the future of the CBD, the Commission acknowledges the current younger generation will be the future users of the CBD. Their needs and experience preferences in the future may be different from what exists now. Younger audiences are also used to having an experience in the palm of their hand and the CBD needs to compete with these 'immediate digital experiences' in order to attract a younger audience.

³⁸ City of Sydney, Night Time Economy, 2021

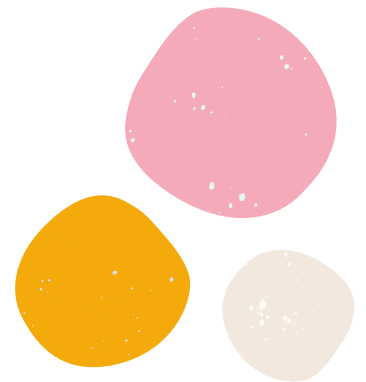
³⁹ City of Sydney, Sydney Lockout Laws Lifted (News), last updated 24 March 2021

We need to improve our understanding of the barriers that exist to people getting to the CBD from outside of the city. We need to overcome these barriers because the job is clear – we need to restore sociability to the city.

Tim Williams

In a flexible working world where 9-5 is no longer the normal, we will need amenities and facilities that support longer days and longer hours.

Michael Silman (Testimony session 2)



Core challenges for artists and creatives

The arts are fundamental to shaping our heritage and identity. They help create a sense of belonging and encourage the sharing of ideas and collaboration. The Commission heard that we need our artists and creatives to tell and shape Sydney's story, to gather us, to inspire us and to help create a more sustainable future.

The core creative workers were the first to be impacted by the effects of the pandemic and they remain one of the hardest hit cohorts in our community. In a report to the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, economist Professor Greg Clark notes, on the value of the cultural and creative industries, "In nearly all modern post-industrial economies, 'cultural occupations' and creative industries are growing as a share of total jobs and are making greater contributions of value to local and national economies. Creative and cultural activity is recognised as a driver of job creation, employment, entrepreneurship and productivity, and contributes positively to both design led industries and to place-making and management"⁴⁰.

The creative industry makes up 6.6 % of the total workforce in the City of Sydney area (a decrease by 1.5% since 2012) and 3.2% of the workforce in the CBD villages specifically, (representing 11,600 jobs)⁴¹.

A study by Australia Council for the Arts on diversity in the Australian arts and culture sector found that the sector does not yet reflect the diversity of Australian people⁴². The study also highlighted that many of the communities who are most engaged with Australia's arts and culture sector are also under-represented, under-resourced or under-compensated for their work.

For example, "arts and cultural engagement is seen embedded in the daily lives of First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse Australians. However, while core to the energy of the sector, First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse Australians are still often unable to access or shape its resources and decision-making"⁴². Other key findings from the study include the barriers artists with disabilities continue to face and the inequality between female and male artists⁴².

Taking this into consideration, there are fundamental challenges to overcome in supporting artists in our city and providing opportunities to truly represent the diversity of artists that accurately reflect our culture and who we are.

Artists and creatives have typically lived and worked on the fringe of the Sydney CBD and the outer suburbs due to high rental prices and lack of useable, affordable, and available space. The Commission heard that artists and creatives have been leaving the city, with coastal and regional towns becoming more attractive for creative spaces, rental prices, support, and lifestyle. This poses a huge risk to the ongoing vibrancy, cultural diversity, creativity, sociability, and attractiveness of the CBD.

While there are great existing initiatives and plans already in place from Create NSW, City of Sydney and Infrastructure NSW to incorporate creative spaces across the city, the challenge going forward is how Sydney and the CBD keep and nurture artists and creatives who bring social, economic and cultural benefits to the city.

⁴⁰ Culture, Value and Place 2018. A report for NSW Department of Planning and Environment
Prof Greg Clark CBE, Emily Moir, Dr Tim Moonen, Caitlin Morrissey, Jake Nunley

⁴¹ City of Sydney, Floor space employment survey, 2017

⁴² Australia Council for the Arts, Towards Equity: A research overview of diversity in Australia's arts and cultural sector, 2021

Creative space is limited and affordability is a major concern. Many local creatives have been forced out of our city for a good decade now, but certainly through the COVID-19 crisis they have exited in droves. This is great for regions but terrible for the CBD.

As we reimagine what the Sydney CBD stands for and is known for, wouldn't it be terrific if we could ensure that creativity was not just the domain of our outer suburbs and regions?

Kerri Glasscock

There is opportunity to create more involvement for artists in the CBD rather than on the periphery. It is time to invite them in. Having various arts and cultural people in the CBD helps make a sense of belonging there.

Simon Kenway



Protecting the arts

The Commission heard resoundingly that we need broader cross-sector support for the arts, creative and entertainment industry in the CBD – both for artists and creatives themselves and our cultural institutions and organisations.

Having the arts more embedded in the CBD can help foster collaboration, generation of ideas and community. It can attract people in, help ensure sociability in the CBD, provide people with cultural outlets and create a buzz of activity.

The arts help shape our views of the world and The Australia Council for the Arts talks about ensuring the sustainability of arts organisations as being vital to a creatively connected nation in their report of *Arts and Culture Governance*⁴³. They state that the arts and creative sectors were facing significant forces of change and evolution, even before COVID-19, and it is no longer possible to rely on traditional business models, modes of operation or engagement⁴³.

Sydney CBD is home to some of Australia and New South Wales' major arts and culture institutions including Sydney Opera House, Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA), Sydney Living Museums, The State Library, Australian Museum and Art Gallery of NSW (AGNSW). It is also home to some of the major performing arts organisations including Sydney Symphony Orchestra, The Australian Ballet, Sydney Dance Company, Bangarra Dance and Australian Chamber Orchestra.

There are a suite of existing and successful arts and culture institutions and the Commission acknowledges these institutions as well as the number of wonderful existing strategies by intuitions, local and state and Government already working towards integrating cultural infrastructure planning with land use and

precinct planning, increasing creative spaces through adaptive re-use, expansion and maintenance as some examples.

In 2018, Create NSW commissioned a study on the *Economic value of Arts, Screen and Culture to NSW*. The study by KPMG found that in 2016-2017, the combined sectors contributed approximately \$16.4 billion to the NSW gross state product (GSP) and involved the full-time employment (FTE) of over 118,000 workers⁴⁴. This is equivalent to around 3% of total NSW GSP and FTE in 2016-17⁴⁴. It was estimated that in total for every \$1 annual expended on arts, screen and cultural activities, the overall impact on the NSW economy is \$1.88⁴⁴.

Arts are fundamental to our economy and the value of arts and entertainment to the community have been evident during COVID-19 especially. A study by the Australia Council for the Arts, the COVID-19 Audience Outlook Monitor, highlights accelerated digital engagement with arts and culture during the pandemic. This ongoing tracking study indicates there will be continuing demand for online content alongside demand for live experiences, including an enduring market for premium digital content. The data suggests there will be a long-term role for digital distribution of arts and cultural content. There is also a role for greater investment in content discovery, digital marketing and development of business models to help support artists and organisations to get paid for works⁴⁵.

There are challenges to overcome in how we protect arts and entertainment in Sydney CBD and provide outlets for everyday interactions between artists, creatives, the community and the arts.

⁴³ Australia Council for the Arts, Arts and Culture Governance Report, 2020

⁴⁴ Create NSW, Economic Value of Arts, Screen and Culture to NSW report, 2018

⁴⁵ Patternmakers, WolfBrown, Australia Council for the Arts, COVID-19 Audience Outlook Monitor, 2020-2021

It is not just about attractiveness from a business perspective – we need to be a rich, attractive society. Arts and culture is essential to achieving this.

Amy Brown

There is a fundamental importance of using arts to create a sense of identity, belonging, togetherness and to understand who we are. We need a place that appreciates the art and proactivity. A place that values what the arts can bring.

Simon Kenway



Activation challenges

In the NSW Liquor Amendment (24-Hour Economy) Bill 2020, there was a variation approved that now allows smaller bars to diversify offering and allow live music, entertainment and arts and culture events⁴⁶. The approved City of Sydney amended planning proposal also includes an amendment 'allowing minimal impact small-scale cultural uses without development consent to take place in existing office, business, retail and community facilities subject to meeting certain criteria'⁴⁷. This is a major step in allowing more activation across existing spaces in the CBD.

In her testimony, Kerri Glasscock (CEO & Festival Director, Sydney Fringe Festival) spoke about government investment in the creation of major events which requires a huge proportion of the funding available for the sector.

While these large-scale events are fundamental to the city's activation, funding for existing and smaller activities is often more difficult to secure. Kerri suggests that this has resulted in a monopoly of a few 'landmark' events with no seed funding being made available to grow other events, and a sporadic event calendar across the year.

The Commission also heard that one of the existing challenges across the city is the lack of consolidated communication and promotion about what's happening, how to get there, opening times, events and initiatives. While there are advertising and media outlets that promote some of the events and initiatives, there is no free, single source of truth to find out all the things happening across Sydney and the CBD and how to connect transport, activities, hospitality and retail together – making it difficult for smaller initiatives to get support and stay open.



One challenge for Sydney is there is no consolidated space for people to find out what's going on. In an age of digital technology, there is no one source and you cannot find information or promotion of events even as a local.

Kerri Glasscock

⁴⁶ NSW Liquor and Gaming, 24-hour economy liquor reforms: what's changing, 2020

⁴⁷ City of Sydney, An open and creative city: planning for culture and the night-time economy, 2021

Aboriginal arts

In this phase of the Commission, the expression and embedding of Aboriginal culture through the arts in Sydney CBD was a prominent topic.

According to Australia Council for the Arts, "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts are a rich contribution to the world's culture, and to Australia's diverse contemporary culture and national identity...Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts include classical, traditional and contemporary practice, including all new forms of cultural expression"⁴⁸. Aboriginal artists, designers, creatives, and writers are fundamental to telling the story of Sydney and Australia. Their works are fundamental to cultural awareness, understanding and connection with Country.

COVID-19 created challenges for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and creatives where the cancellation of festivals, events, live performances and fairs have impacted artists' livelihoods, and their ability to support their families⁴⁹. There are other concerns that financial constraints could mean programming is more conservative in the future. The greatest long-term concerns relate to potential loss of life and cultural knowledge if communities lose Elders, negative impacts on young people, and the loss of income and art economies⁴⁹.

Research by the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) and the Telstra Foundation on the role of Indigenous festivals in Australia, highlighted the well-being impacts these festivals have, including cultural pride and self-esteem for some people, stemming from a sense of inclusion and cultural identity as well as economic impacts⁴⁸.

Through more supported cultural expression in our arts programming, built infrastructure and public realm, a deeper Aboriginal cultural awareness can be developed in Sydney. The NSW Government Architect 'Connecting with Country' Draft Framework emphasises that "cultural awareness must come first" and without an Aboriginal perspective, we cannot establish project plans and develop project life cycle processes⁵⁰.

Phase four will further explore relationships with Country and how with cultural awareness and expression, Aboriginal culture can be embedded in place and the built environment in Sydney CBD.

When we are thinking about how to facilitate the arts, we need to acknowledge that the arts are under stress and we need the money to do anything. It is about creating these free spaces to have the opportunity to do those things, have community engagement where everybody can be involved. Country is that catalogue of connection with kin and with language, and if we do not have those spaces first, how is that meant to happen?

Akala Newman



⁴⁸ Australia Council for the Arts, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts, 2021.

⁴⁹ Australia Council for the Arts, Impacts of Covid-19 On First Nations Arts And Culture (Briefing Paper) 2020.

⁵⁰ NSW Government Architect, Draft Connecting With Country Framework, 2020

What we are thinking about

The service industry

When looking at the future of Sydney CBD, an open hospitality, food and beverage scene with choices and experiences for all Sydneysiders and tourists to come and enjoy is desirable.

A lack of evening trade and variety has contributed to a downwards spiral of deactivation of the CBD after work-hours – which must be reversed. There is an affordability challenge that currently limits operation and longevity. The Commission also heard that some areas of the industry are also constrained by staff who live further away from the CBD where it is cheaper to live – impacting staff travel time, availability, and affordability.

To unlock opportunity the Commission is thinking about what the future model of 'success' looks like for 24-hour hospitality, food and beverage offerings.



So, we are thinking:

- *What policy, planning, investment, or strategy initiatives can better support the local hospitality industry grow and thrive in the CBD?*
- *What does the reframing of success look like when it comes to future CBD experiences and offerings?*
- *How should the CBD experience compete with the 'at home' and 'local neighborhood' experiences?*
- *What are the future audiences' needs and desires for CBD hospitality, food and beverage offerings and experiences?*
- *How can we attract more people to hospitality venues in the CBD through better transport solutions, more streamlined communication about what's on for different audiences and better information on how to get there?*
- *Where are there opportunities for more diverse 24-hour offerings and hospitality experiences across the CBD for people of all ages?*
- *How does the CBD support the hospitality industry to respond to a changing footfall pattern and a new demographic – and be open for all at all times?*
- *How can significant CBD property owners re-think their spaces, particularly at or near the ground plane, to encourage greater diversity of CBD experiences?*

We need to have increased access to Sydney CBD amenities and venues; they need to be open for longer and have reduced and diverse priced offerings. This will enhance the CBD as an entertainment district and a place for night life.

Craig Allchin



Supporting artists and creatives in the CBD

Arts and creativity are core to a vibrant, attractive, and engaging CBD. Losing artists and creatives from Greater Sydney is a huge risk to the CBD and impacts diversity, attraction of talent, sharing of ideas and the creation of things in our city.

Cities around the world are acknowledging the risk in losing their artists and international governments and the private sector are providing a suite of initiatives for artists to live, meet and create. These include rent-free housing, grants and projects that provide environments for artists to thrive while activating their cities and CBDs.



So, we are thinking:

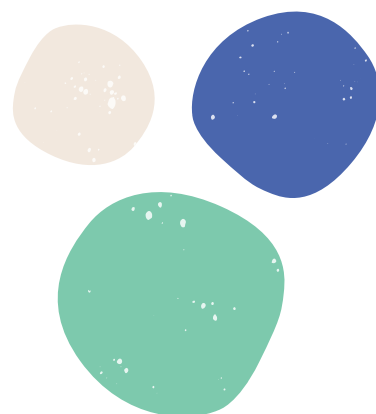
- *What strategies or policies could be implemented to better support, encourage and nurture artists and creatives in the CBD?*
- *What social, cultural, and/or physical infrastructure is needed to better support artists and creatives to stay, create, live and mix in the CBD?*
- *Where in the CBD can we create fit for purpose, affordable creative space for artists to make and present their work?*
- *Are there programs that could be created or endorsed that better help support our artists and creatives in the CBD through social, economic, environmental, cultural and spiritual means?*
- *How can the CBD support and create programs for artists to engage with community on city shaping projects?*

Losing people will create a drain of creative thinkers and creative knowledge.

Kerri Glasscock

We are at risk here. Arts and culture it is not a 'nice to have' or an 'add on.' There are the major institutions here in Sydney who are collectively 'homeless' and the mass exodus of creatives to the regions of the country is detrimental.

Ros Moriarty



Case study

London

Founded by artists Bridget Riley and Sedgley in 1968, SPACE is London's largest studios provider, supporting artists and building creative communities⁵¹. SPACE works with local authorities and developers to provide affordable workspace for artists. At the same time SPACE contributes to placemaking, adds social value and provide opportunities and skills development for communities.

Since 2007, Bold Tendencies in London, a not-for-profit organisation, have also supported artists to develop ideas and to realise site specific projects. Each summer they commission visual and performing art works, large-scale sculptures and events in a repurposed, abandoned Peckham car park in South London. The group partner with council and several businesses to produce a live programme of music, dance and opera⁵².



Cleveland

Playhouse Square, located in downtown Cleveland, Ohio, is the 'world's largest theater restoration project'⁵³.

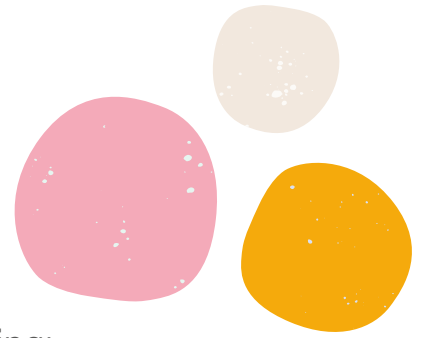
The Playhouse Square District, was established in 1998 to foster development in the theatre district — allocating resources for maintenance, safety, and a collective marketing strategy.

In 1999, it became the first performing arts centre with a Real Estate Services division — which generates approximately \$20 million in revenue. A Business Improvement District was also established, and was later adopted citywide and now operates as Downtown Cleveland Alliance — which lobbies for the wider precinct.

⁵¹ Space Studios, 2021

⁵² Bold Tendencies, 2021

⁵³ Playhouse Square, 2021



Accessible and affordable 24-hour arts, culture, and entertainment

The Commission heard there were challenges with access, openness, affordability, and activation throughout the year for the arts and entertainment in the CBD.

A CBD that caters for and encourages all parts of the community to participate in the arts across the day is one that can be vibrant, inclusive, and attractive.

A CBD that is also supportive, and encouraging of all forms of cultural expression through the arts, especially Aboriginal arts, can have great benefits to our identity as a community.

Building on great existing initiatives and encouraging new models of operation, activation and collaboration will be key to positive change.

We have a lot of shows in Sydney with a focus on 'glossy' and the Harbour, but we don't necessarily support and promote the small, unique, diverse voices and the things that have true substance. For me this is around pushing the story of our country's actual history and our Indigenous cultures. We have the longest living culture in the world and our festivals represent a tiny 'surface layer' of what we are about.

Kerri Glasscock

So, we are thinking:

- *How can we enable an inclusive CBD for all through the arts, culture and entertainment sector?*
- *How can the CBD encourage, nurture and support more arts, culture and entertainment activations across the day and throughout the year that caters for all Sydneysiders?*
- *How can we support and enable the creation of 24-hour arts and culture programs across the CBD?*
- *How do we foster deeper collaborations between Sydney's cultural anchors and the CBD?*
- *Can the CBD create a holistic approach to the arts, culture and entertainment offering so people know what's on, where it's on and how to get there?*
- *What are the future audiences' needs and desires for arts, culture and entertainment experiences in the CBD and how can we prepare for that now?*
- *Can the CBD support experimental models for activation and cross disciplinary programs that bring the arts to everyone in the CBD while also supporting artists and creatives?*
- *How can the Sydney CBD transform into a canvas for artists and the community to activate and tell their stories?*
- *Could companies be incentivized to open art collections to the public for free at nights and on weekends?*

Case study

Toronto

Artscape is a non-profit organisation based in Toronto⁵⁴. They collaborate with artists, urban developers and community leaders to develop real estate projects, programs and services, to empower artists and connect them to communities.

They engage in social enterprise in real estate development, property management, performance and event services; consulting and knowledge exchange, artistic programming and community animation; and creative entrepreneurship development⁵⁵.



Age friendly programs

To respond to the needs of an ageing population Amsterdam's Age Friendly Cultural City programme focuses specifically on cultural provision for the city's older residents⁵⁴.

Community led programs

Los Angeles, Cape Town and Austin have excellent community-led cultural mapping projects that acknowledge that citizens often experience culture differently to the way a city government understands it. These projects empower citizens to promote what they consider as their culture⁵⁴.

Access and inclusion programs

Some cities are working on questions of equity and access to the arts across the community by lowering barriers to entry. For example Kulturpass cards in Vienna give free access to major cultural institutions for groups living in precarious socio-economic conditions⁵⁴.

⁵⁴ World Cities Culture Report, 2018

⁵⁵ Artscape, 2021

Affordable and available infrastructure

There are a number of wonderful existing spaces for the arts in Sydney CBD and several major institutions that already call Sydney CBD home. While we look to build a stronger footprint for the arts, creative and entertainment sector in the CBD, we heard through the Commission that there is a need for more fit for purpose infrastructure across the sector — for small and large organisations to create, practice and present.

Clustering these spaces and connecting them with our public spaces can help bring the arts to more people in the CBD. Curated programming that connects the cultural anchors with our

There is a need for infrastructure, a need to utilise buildings to have presentation and creation spaces for creatives and a need to make these creative spaces available and affordable.

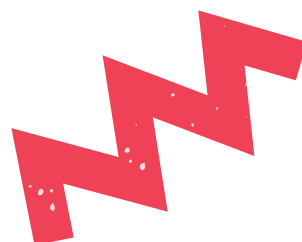
Kerri Glasscock

There is just not enough infrastructure! The CBD needs multipurpose halls and rehearsal studio space because there is just nothing really available. This would be a great opportunity to give some of the companies a local identity and to be able to create a cultural precinct.

Simon Kenway

So, we are thinking:

- *Where can the CBD house more permanent arts and culture facilities and infrastructure for creation, presentation and performance purposes?*
- *Where are there opportunities to re-purpose existing buildings for creative use, arts and cultural practice and presentations in the CBD?*
- *Are there opportunities to combine these re-purposed buildings with a mix of affordable accommodation and rent controlled, or capped rents for creatives and creative use?*
- *How do we ensure fit for purpose creative spaces are built and supported that allow our artists to thrive?*
- *How does the Sydney CBD provide world-class performance venues for world-class work to be created, performed and presented?*
- *How do we curate programming that connects our cultural anchors with public spaces across the CBD?*



Case study

Austin

The Cultural Arts Division in Austin (USA) manages the city's cultural arts programs and provides leadership for the economic development of Austin's creative economy. The division develops policies and permit processes that go beyond one size-fits-all solutions to better suit diverse creative forms that cultural spaces can take⁵⁶. They aim to ensure preservation and development of creative space as part of an ongoing effort to ensure all residents of Austin have access to space to take part in arts, culture, and creative expression.

Within this broad goal, the Division has become more involved in land use planning, code compliance, private-public partnership development and other types of relationships where partnerships have been developed to activate underutilised or vacant spaces for artistic and creative use⁵⁶.



Amsterdam

Amsterdam has invested intensively in cultural infrastructure over the last 15 years with more than 25 institutions built, rebuilt or refurbished. A large portion of this was financed via public-private partnerships.

As part of its Plan for the Arts (2017–2020), funding available for arts and culture has been increased by over 9%, to €90 million per year. In addition, €6 million have been allocated to fund innovation, experimentation and talent development⁵⁷.

Others

In Oslo, 700 parking spots for private cars have been eliminated throughout the city to create new public space for cultural and community activities⁵⁷.

'The Old Building Cultural Movement' in Taipei reclaims and re-purposes rundown public buildings into cultural assets, funded and administered by the private sector⁵⁷.

In Hong Kong, Rome and Moscow, mobile arts venues and libraries are used to bring culture closer to citizens in every corner of their cities, particularly those areas with traditionally lower engagement with arts and culture⁵⁷.



⁵⁶ Austin Texas Government, Cultural Arts

⁵⁷ World Cities Culture Report, 2018

Plug and play in the CBD

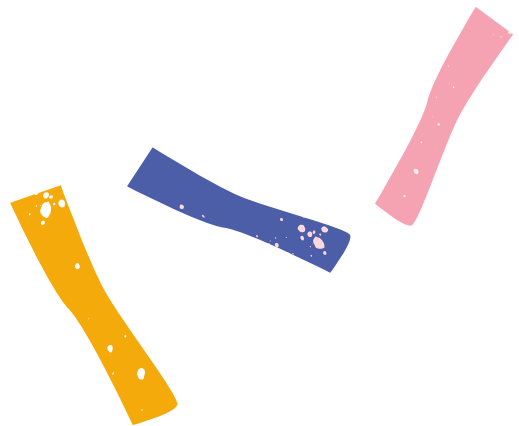
The Commission heard there were challenges in the CBD with activation of spaces, availability of public spaces and public infrastructure that can be used by smaller initiatives, artists, and creatives who potentially have less funding and financial support available.

For example having free plug in capability in public spaces, available lighting rigs or screens for use could help activate more parts of the CBD.



So, we are thinking:

- *What policy, planning, investment, and/or strategy initiatives are needed to support the development and implementation of more public and accessible plug and play infrastructure for artists and creatives to use across the CBD?*
- *With the Liquor Bill Amendment 2020, where are there opportunities for the CBD to support more activation within existing buildings?*
- *Could there be a consolidated map to show information about all the public infrastructure available across the CBD and where it's located?*
- *Could there be incentives for companies to build new, or share existing, infrastructure with artists and creatives to use in the CBD?*



There is a need for spaces which will reduce cost and provide high impact for artists and creatives. Surely now is the moment to invest in a better vision that has sustained impact and longevity. What if there was baseline infrastructure available across the CBD including inbuilt power supplies for things such as digital artworks and performances? What about universal event approvals across outdoor areas, plazas, laneways and dining areas?

Kerri Glasscock

A very important theme for our work is about re-animating the city and making sure that in a sense, every day, as many spaces as possible are performance spaces. We are going to need a lot of that to attract people back in.

Tim Williams

There are many corporate spaces within buildings that have great existing infrastructure which could be used for venues. Can we develop a model to open these spaces for more cultural events throughout the year as a way for people to come together? There are opportunities here to provide spaces to artists and creatives to use in partnership with businesses.

Ninotschka Titchkosky

Case study

Montreal

The Quartier des Spectacles is a 1km² cultural district in Montreal which houses over 30 performance halls, hosts 100+ shows a month and includes eight lively public spaces⁵⁸.

The Quartier des Spectacles Partnership was founded with 20 stakeholder members in 2003 – the task at hand was not to create a neighbourhood from scratch, but rather to identify the existing area, highlight its rich cultural assets and history and equip it with the infrastructure to accommodate outdoor events. The initial government investment of \$200 million and coordinated governance structure for the precinct has catalysed more than 60 mixed use developments (including a number of residential developments, public spaces and the Maison Symphonique de Montréal) and represents \$1.5 billion in construction investments, and \$449 million in tax revenue⁵⁸.

In the Quartier des Spectacles in Montreal the light posts have also been created to double as lighting and event trusses, with power and data distribution points behind signage. This provides easy access infrastructure for artists and creatives in the city to use and activate.



⁵⁸ Quartier Des Spectacles Montreal, 2021

5 Accommodation as a catalyst for a vibrant CBD

What is happening and what has changed?

Travel patterns and workers

The accommodation industry in the Sydney CBD has been affected by the extended international border closures and intermittent state border closures during lockdowns. While there have been great initiatives to use the hotels — including to house people experiencing homelessness in the early days of COVID-19, and to use them for hotel quarantine — overall usage has dropped from pre-COVID-19 numbers. This poses an opportunity for change and rethinking the role of accommodation in an open CBD for all.

Before COVID-19, 40% of visitors who used accommodation in the Sydney CBD were international travellers, the other 40% were commercial travellers and the remaining 20% were coming for leisure. With international travellers stopped and commercial travel significantly stalled, the leisure travelers are all that's left. This is evident in the activity seen on weekends in the CBD with travellers from the regions and interstate coming when state borders allow, but there is very limited tourist activity during the week.

The Commission heard great examples of accommodation connecting precincts to benefit local businesses, the arts, culture, hospitality, and retail industries. These great local and international examples showed how accommodation can be an anchor of activity across the day. Dean Long discussed the two best examples of accommodation activating their space in Australia as:

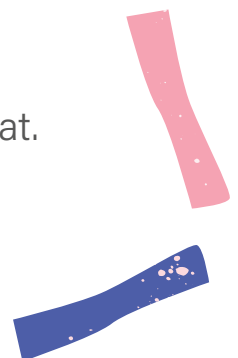
- The Sofitel on Collins Street in Melbourne – where there is always something on and their foyer is always full of art.
- The Fullerton Hotel at Martin Place in Sydney – which effectively blurs the line between the public space and the private space.

With less visitors coming to the CBD, now is an opportune time to look at potential changes that can be made to existing models and to explore opportunities for better collaboration between the accommodation industry, other parts of the CBD and other industries to open it up, 24-hours a day. This includes looking at opportunities to better blur the lines between public spaces and private space.

Accommodation has a unique ability to activate a space better than any other type of development. If you think of the great hotels, they actually act as an anchor to a precinct because they are activated through multiple times of the day.

We usually have a hard line though between the public and private space and we've got to find a better way to integrate that.

Dean Long



What we are thinking about

The value of accommodation

With the changed demand for accommodation at the moment, there is opportunity to evaluate where accommodation in the CBD can help support the goal for an open CBD.

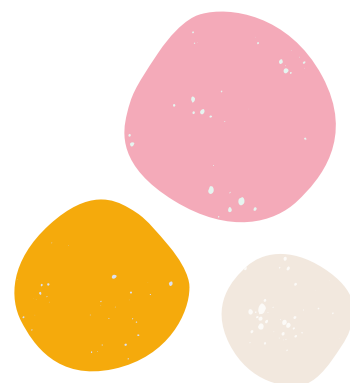
The Commission is interested in the idea of creating precincts around mixed use and determining how accommodation can be part of that mix to help activate and open up the CBD at all hours to more uses and all people.

At the same time, a city needs spaces for reflection, serenity and calmness. Accommodation can achieve a great blend of vibrancy and activity with spaces for reflection and quietness to meet the needs of a wide array of people.



So, we are thinking:

- *What is the future offering of hotels in Sydney CBD for everyone?*
- *What can we learn from how other hotels globally have adapted to being 'part' of the city, not just 'in' the city?*
- *Where are there opportunities for existing hotels and accommodation in the CBD to be better connected with local businesses, arts, culture and entertainment?*
- *Where are there opportunities in the CBD for some hotels and accommodation to be fully, or partially repurposed for other uses such as longer term rental and graduate employee housing – to bring youth and life back to our CBD, affordably?*
- *Where are there opportunities to turn Sydney CBD hotel foyers from private to public space and add porosity and activity to the street-scape?*
- *Can we bring the street to the hotels and vice versa, and use the attraction of hotels' ground planes to reactivate precincts and streets while also providing some spaces for reflection and quietness?*



Next steps

Phase four will explore, in more depth, 'The sustainable urban form, planning and liveability' of the Sydney CBD, the trends over time, 'what's next' and opportunities for the following:

**Precincts and
neighbourhoods**

**Sustainability,
liveability and
resilience**

**Public space,
green space and
recreation space**

**Sydney CBD's
relationship
with regions
and Greater
Sydney**

Smart cities

Following this, the Commission will take all findings from phase one to four to help shape executive recommendations and actions.



Acknowledgments

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To find out more about the Commission visit
sydney.org.au/FutureSydneyCBD

