# DRIVING SOCIAL INNOVATION IN PLACE AND COMMUNITY

*2024 City North Activation Program*

**RMIT** UNIVERSITY | **City North Social Innovation Precinct**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

RMIT University acknowledges the Woi Wurrung and Boon Wurrung peoples of the Eastern Kulin Nations as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which the City North Social Innovation Precinct is being developed.

This area forms part of a rich cultural landscape where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have gathered for generations —sharing knowledge, caring for Country, and sustaining deep connections across communities. We recognise their enduring relationship with these lands, and their continuing role in caring for Country—land, waters, skies and all living systems.

Guided by RMIT's commitment to Responsible Practice—centered on truth-telling, reciprocity and respect—we seek to embed Indigenous knowledge, cultural understanding and inclusive design into the heart of this precinct. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging, and to the cultures, contributions and resilience of First Peoples.

# FOREWORD

## Tom Bentley

Cities grow and change through movement—of people, ideas, and connections. Many important innovations happen not in grand plans, but in the everyday spaces where people come together to experiment, collaborate, and work out what's possible.

RMIT's City North Social Innovation Precinct is one of those places—a living testbed where researchers, students, entrepreneurs and communities come together to take on urgent challenges, develop skills and partnerships, and create solutions.

Through our City North Activation program, more than 20 projects have kicked off since 2024, exploring challenges from food security and community wellbeing to clean tech adoption, caring for Country, cultural exchange and creative placemaking.

All the projects are collaborative, and reflect a commitment to shared action, in place, to help shape more inclusive and regenerative futures. This compendium shares information about those projects and the people who are working on them. It is both a record and an invitation—to keep making connections, deepening trust, and growing the common benefits of this work.

**Tom Bentley**
Vice President, Strategy and Community Impact,
RMIT University



"City North, Melbourne's most densely populated square kilometre, is being transformed through collaboration into a living lab for innovation and learning. The vision is to build on its history, creating opportunities for Victoria's diverse community and tackling critical challenges like social innovation, emerging technologies, and sustainable cities."

—Tom Bentley

# NEW MODELS OF INNOVATION

**This compendium offers a snapshot of the 2024 City North Activation Projects**—showcasing the creativity, collaboration and momentum already shaping the CNSIP's emergence as a living lab for inclusive, purpose-driven innovation.

Reader Instruction Note:

A colour-coded tab system is used throughout this compendium to highlight each project's contribution to the impact areas.

The challenges facing 21st-century cities—climate disruption, digital transformation, rising inequality, and social fragmentation—demand more than incremental solutions. They call for new models of collaboration: rooted in place, globally informed, and capable of driving systemic change.

RMIT's City North Social Innovation Precinct (CNSIP) represents such a model. Located in the heart of Melbourne, it is evolving as a catalytic ecosystem—connecting the university's knowledge and capabilities with the insight, energy and investment of government, industry, and community partners. It is a shared platform for co-creating real-world innovations that are scalable, purposeful, and place-based.

As outlined in **RMIT's 2023 submission to the Victorian Government**, the CNSIP is designed to become a world-class hub for civic innovation and social connection. It lays the foundation for long-term infrastructure, strategic partnerships, and the active translation of knowledge into practice.

## Enabling New Models of Collaboration and Innovation

The 2024 City North Activation Program was launched to bring this vision to life—supporting over 20 cross-disciplinary projects to tackle different social challenges and embed experimentation, collaboration and applied innovation into the daily life of the precinct.

In a survey of 2024 City North Activation Program project leads and teams, participants reported that the program significantly enhanced collaboration and partnerships and helped to establish new connections within RMIT and beyond, while also strengthening existing ones. The program successfully facilitated a mix of project lifecycles, with nearly half piloting new ideas, a quarter exploring opportunities and a quarter accelerating or amplifying existing work.

This compendium offers a snapshot of the projects launched to date—showcasing the creativity, collaboration, and momentum driving the CNSIP's emergence as a living lab for inclusive, purpose-driven innovation.

**Each project supports one or more of 5 key areas of social impact:**

Embedding cultural leadership and knowledge at the core of renewal.

Building global partnerships for shared learning and local impact.

Advancing circular design, renewables and regenerative development.

Using emerging tech to build adaptive, inclusive urban systems.

People-centred innovation for health equity and community resilience.

**INDIGENOUS RECOGNITION & CELEBRATION**

**INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION**

**CLEAN ECONOMY**

**FUTURE ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY**

**SOCIAL CARE & WELLBEING**

# THE ACTIVATION PROJECTS

# OUR STREET: REIMAGINING THE FUTURE OF CARDIGAN STREET THROUGH YOUNG EYES

*Community Engagement & Education Pilot*

**RMIT Area**
- College of Design & Social Context—School of Education

**Project Leads**
- Associate Prof. Tricia McLaughlin
- Dr Belinda Kennedy

**INDIGENOUS RECOGNITION & CELEBRATION**

**INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION**

**CLEAN ECONOMY**

**FUTURE ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY**

**SOCIAL CARE & WELLBEING**

"The community is benefitted because there is a bottle refund and solar panels, and a community herb garden where people can take herbs for their cooking instead of buying from the supermarket"

—Primary School Student

## Project Context & Rationale

Using Cardigan Street, a key thoroughfare within the CNSIP, the *Our Street* project offered an opportunity to engage local school children in envisioning what a more sustainable and inclusive urban space could look like with the aid of advanced VR design tools. The street is used by many groups—residents, workers and students—but there are limited opportunities for these groups to collectively shape the future of this shared environment. At the same time, young students in the area have little exposure to digital innovation and design capabilities —all of which are available at RMIT.

The *Our Street* project responded to this by bringing together previously unconnected groups through a creative design competition. Led by RMIT's School of Education academics and students and supported by RMIT's STEMM Digital Innovation Hub, pupils from Carlton Gardens Primary School reimagined the future of Cardigan Street, using cutting -edge virtual reality tools and creative 2D & 3D designs to develop their vision for a greener, more vibrant and inclusive streetscape.

## Collaboration & Stakeholders

The project engaged over 80 families from the Carlton North community, alongside local teachers and community leaders. The collaboration exemplified the power of cross-disciplinary teamwork, creating meaningful connections among students, families and educators while building towards a vibrant ecosystem around the precinct.

Using the CNSIP as a 'living lab' for collaborative problem-solving and imagining, *Our Street* showcased the potential of education, technology and community engagement in shaping future-focused urban solutions. The project strengthened relationships between local school communities, RMIT and the wider Carlton North community —reinforcing the importance of RMIT's civic role for convening and facilitating collective and inclusive social innovation.

**INDIGENOUS RECOGNITION & CELEBRATION**

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**CLEAN ECONOMY**

**FUTURE ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY**

**SOCIAL CARE & WELLBEING**

"The children and their families enjoyed being consulted and involved in designing their community. There was a sense of ownership of the precinct spaces. Through the school community, families became involved and used the project to further connect with each other at the exhibition, with over 100 people in attendance."

—Our Street Project Lead

## Key Activities & Deliverables

*Our Street* was a journey of imagination, creativity and connection. It began with the simple yet powerful idea of inviting the children of Carlton Gardens Primary School to reimagine their own neighbourhood, Cardigan Street.

The children's exploration took them far beyond the classroom. They learned about the history of Cardigan Street—its past, its Indigenous significance and its role in the community today. But they didn't just learn about it; they lived it. Walks along the street opened their eyes to the potential for change, as they imagined what could happen if traffic was closed off and the street became a space for people to come together.

RMIT's STEMM Digital Hub became a playground for the children's creativity. With VR goggles and digital tools at their fingertips, the kids were able to step into their designs and see their ideas come to life in 3D. It wasn't just about making models or posters; it was about envisioning the future of their community in a way that was interactive, innovative and grounded in their own experiences.

The children's designs reflected their thoughtful engagement with key themes like sustainability, wellbeing and First Peoples' perspectives. Parks, green spaces and play areas were common features in their visions, illustrating a strong desire for environments that promote health and connection. Another pleasant surprise was the children's ease with the technology—they took to the virtual reality tools at RMIT's Digital Hub with little guidance, showcasing their natural tech-savviness.

Families, teachers and local community leaders rallied behind the children, sharing ideas, offering support and celebrating their creativity. The children's designs grew into powerful reflections of their dreams for Cardigan Street—a place that could be sustainable, inclusive and reflective of its history.

When the time came to exhibit the children's ideas, it was a celebration of the entire process. Over 100 people gathered at RMIT's Building 94 within the CNSIP to admire the children's work on display. The exhibition was a testament to the power of community collaboration, creativity and the shared vision of what Cardigan Street and the CNSIP could be.



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## Outcomes & Impact

By activating Cardigan Street as a site of interdisciplinary engagement, the *Our Street* project reiterated the CNSIP's potential as a 'living lab' for bringing creativity, technology, learning and community together. The program sparked new connections between RMIT, local schools and the broader Carlton North community, laying the foundation for ongoing partnerships. Over 80 families, teachers, students and RMIT staff came together, demonstrating the benefits in creating spaces and opportunities that foster innovation, inclusivity and collaboration. The project's exhibition, attended by more than 100 community members and key stakeholders, highlighted the growing role the precinct has as a connector across education, industry and local needs.

Another of the project's most valuable outcomes was in creating real-world opportunities for RMIT's pre-service teaching students. They gained firsthand sector experience and possible future employment opportunities within local schools.

Through its multidisciplinary approach, the project showcased how bringing multiple voices and perspectives together in a thoughtfully curated way can result in strengthened community ties and contribute to building the vision of a more inclusive and sustainable CNSIP.

## Insights & What's Next

The *Our Street* project revealed some powerful insights, with families and participants embracing the chance to shape their community. Many shared how much they valued being involved in such a design process, which fostered a deep sense of ownership and connection to Cardigan Street and the CNSIP. The final exhibition showed just how much this project brought the community together, sparking new connections and excitement.

Looking to the future, there's already significant interest from other local schools eager to get involved. With RMIT's resources and facilities continuing to play a central role, *Our Street* has the potential to reach more families across the community and grow into a wider movement, offering new opportunities for collaboration and creativity.

**The project brought together:**

Over **80 families** in Carlton North precinct (approx 190 people).

Over **100 community members** at the final exhibition.

Pre-service education **RMIT students.**

**RMIT staff** from DSC and STEM colleges.

Teachers and students from **Carlton Gardens Primary School.**

**Melbourne City Councillor.**

**Victorian State Parliamentarian.**



Fresh Produce
Free for all

VEGGIE PATCH

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**CLEAN ECONOMY**

**FUTURE ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY**

**SOCIAL CARE & WELLBEING**

# ENHANCING CYBER RESILIENCE THROUGH SOUTH ASIAN STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Community Engagement & Education Pilot

**RMIT Area**

- College of Business & Law —Department of Information Systems & Business Analytics

**Project Leads**

- Academic Director, International & Engagement, Prof. Prem Chhetri
- Dr Akanksha Saini
- Dr Malka Halgamuge

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SOCIAL CARE & WELLBEING

"I loved the collaborative brainstorming session; it felt great to contribute ideas for a more secure community."

—Student Participant

"I feel more confident identifying and handling cyber threats after this workshop."

—Student Participant





## Project Context & Rationale

Cybersecurity threats, including romance fraud, phishing and misinformation, pose significant risks to South Asian communities, yet existing solutions often fail to address cultural barriers to digital resilience. This project aimed to bridge that gap by enhancing cyber resilience through culture-driven programs. By engaging South Asian students through workshops, competitions and interactive activities, participants created culturally relevant cybersecurity strategies, tailored to local languages and customs. The program fostered peer connections, hands-on experience with real-world cyber threats and collaboration with industry experts and community leaders, aligning with the CNSIP mission to drive innovation and inclusion.

## Collaboration & Stakeholders

The success of the project was built on the collaboration of various stakeholders, including RMIT STEM College, the Australia India Business Council (AIBC) and the Australian Multicultural Organisations Network (AMON). These key partners provided expertise and support throughout the project, contributing to its diverse and culturally informed approach. In particular, the *Bright Idea Competition* panel featured experts who brought unique cultural insights into cybersecurity, guiding students as they developed innovative solutions. The project also benefited from the involvement of local cultural associations and cyber experts, creating a rich ecosystem of knowledge exchange and fostering collaboration across industries, academia and the community. By engaging multiple sectors, the project ensured that the solutions developed were both practical and culturally appropriate.

## Key Activities & Deliverables

The project unfolded over multiple phases, each aimed at fostering engagement, collaboration and innovation. The *Student Engagement and Network Building* workshop was held at RMIT Activator within the CNSIP. This session brought together over 60 students from diverse South Asian backgrounds to explore cybersecurity challenges through culturally relevant discussions. Activities such as the *Cyber Bazaar* allowed participants to role-play various characters and navigate cyber threats, fostering critical thinking and collaboration. Additionally, the *Bright Idea Competition* showcased over 8 student-driven cybersecurity solutions, with a focus on culturally tailored approaches. Presentations covered topics such as romance scams, phishing and remittance fraud and were judged by a panel of cultural cyber experts. The competition provided an opportunity for students to apply their academic and cultural insights, refining their ideas for real-world impact.



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## Outcomes & Impact

The project had a significant impact on both participants and the broader community. Over 60 students from diverse South Asian countries engaged in the workshops, and the interactive activities fostered a deeper understanding of cybersecurity challenges specific to their communities. Post-event surveys indicated a notable improvement in participants' cybersecurity knowledge, with 87.6% of attendees rating their understanding as high (4 or 5) after the event. Additionally, 78% of participants reported gaining a deeper understanding of the unique challenges faced by South Asian communities in the digital space. The *Bright Idea Competition* further highlighted the project's impact, with participants presenting innovative solutions that were informed by cultural insights and tailored to address specific cybersecurity risks. The project's success in building cross-disciplinary networks and fostering local partnerships has laid the foundation for future collaborations within the precinct.

## Insights & What's Next

While the project achieved great success, it also provided valuable insights for future activities. One key lesson learned was the importance of culturally tailored cybersecurity education, as it helped bridge knowledge gaps and foster engagement. Participants' feedback highlighted the effectiveness of the '*Cyber Bazaar*' activity in making abstract cyber-security concepts more relatable by contextualising them in the students' cultural realities. Moving forward, the project's success suggests that similar programs could be expanded to other cultural communities, fostering a more inclusive and diverse approach to cybersecurity education. Additionally, the data collected from participants could inform future workshops and competitions, allowing organisers to further refine the curriculum and adapt it to emerging cybersecurity challenges. As the CNSIP continues to evolve, the project's approach to collaboration and inclusivity will serve as a model for future community-driven, innovation-focused programs.

> "The Cyber Bazaar activity was engaging and made me think about cultural factors in cybersecurity."
>
> —Student Participant

> "This event opened my eyes to the unique cybersecurity challenges faced by South Asian communities."
>
> —Student Participant

The winners of the BRIGHT Idea Competition

**Cyber Safe: empowering South Asian students in Australia**

This talented team proposed the *Cyber Awareness Initiative* —a mandatory RMIT cyber awareness module, as a much-needed educational tool designed to boost the digital safety and resilience of RMIT students. The module is built with interactive content that educates users on various cyber threats, featuring real-life cyber threat scenarios and actionable safety tips, making cybersecurity education engaging, relevant, and beneficial for all RMIT students.

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CLEAN ECONOMY

**FUTURE ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY**

**SOCIAL CARE & WELLBEING**

"The activation program made it possible to turn ideas into experiences shared with the local neighbourhood and communities that made social innovation tangible and real."

# STUDENT WELLBEING WEEK & PUBLIC ART TRAIL

*Community Engagement & Education Pilot*

**RMIT Area**
- Education Portfolio
  —Student Life Team

**Project Leads**
- Associate Director, Student Life, RMIT Students Group, Tim Burdeu

- Senior Advisor, Student Places and Creativity, Student Life, RMIT Students Group, Dr Lynda Roberts

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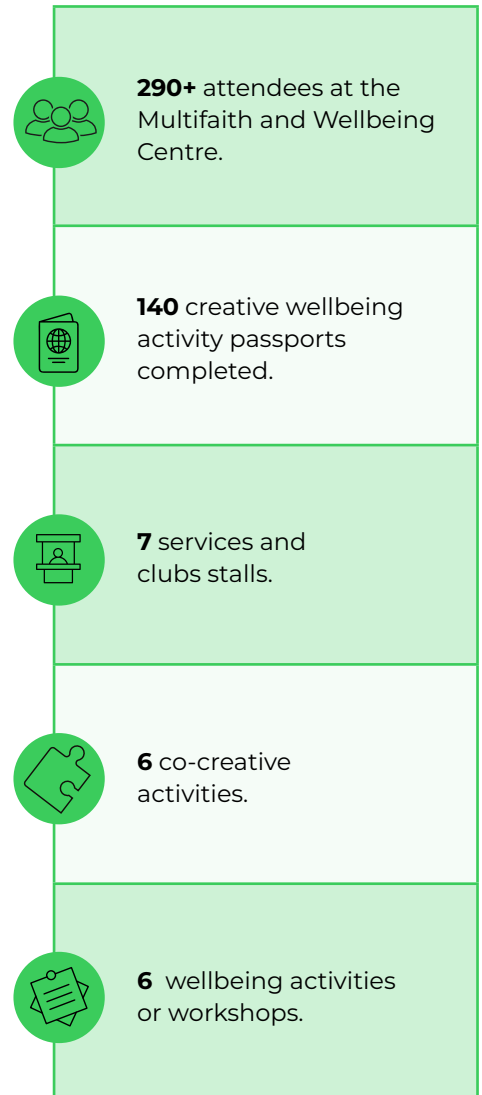
SOCIAL CARE & WELLBEING

## Project Context & Rationale

The rising demand for mental health support and social care within the university community, especially with students, calls for creative and engaging solutions. The *Student Wellbeing Week & Public Art Trail* project answers this need by fostering student wellbeing through art, mindfulness and community connection. Taking place within the CNSIP, the project unfolded in two parts. It began with RMIT's *Student Wellbeing Week* (16th–22nd September 2024) and featured a vibrant program of meditation, mindfulness sessions and student-created public artworks designed to promote emotional and mental health. These activities strengthened the role of RMIT's Multifaith & Wellbeing Centre (MWC) located within the CNSIP, positioning it as an accessible and inclusive hub for connection and support. Building on this momentum, the second stage (taking place across 2025) will introduce a temporary student-created public art trail across the CNSIP area, offering a platform for creative expression while foregrounding the importance of mental wellbeing and belonging. By blending social care, sustainability and participatory art, this project aligns with the CNSIP's Social Care & Wellbeing and Clean Economy impact areas, demonstrating the power of art in shaping a healthier, more connected precinct.

## Collaboration & Stakeholders

This project thrived due to the collaborative efforts of a diverse ecosystem of stakeholders. Students from RMIT's School of Art and the RMIT Creative community co-created and play-tested the artworks that formed the heart of the project. Various student clubs and societies were involved in the *Student Wellbeing Week*, with the RMIT University Student Union (RUSU) playing a key role by integrating wellbeing activities with their regular services, such as free breakfasts and health food options. RMIT's Health, Safety and Wellbeing teams curated across the event's offerings, ensuring that professional support services were well-represented. External partners like Medibank and Sacred Gem also contributed, enriching the experience with wellness resources. The combined efforts of these collaborators created an inclusive, supportive space where students could connect, relax and engage with creative, wellbeing-focused activities.

**Engagement figures from Student Wellbeing Week:**

- **290+** attendees at the Multifaith and Wellbeing Centre.
- **140** creative wellbeing activity passports completed.
- **7** services and clubs stalls.
- **6** co-creative activities.
- **6** wellbeing activities or workshops.

"[The] wayfinding event was done well. All of the people working the event were very engaging."

—Student Participant



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## Key Activities & Deliverables

The project included two stages, each with specific milestones and impactful outcomes. Stage 1—the *Student Wellbeing Week*, was a week-long celebration of mental health and creativity. It featured a wellbeing expo, mindfulness activities and student-created artworks that explored themes of personal and social care. Notable activities included guided meditations, sound healing sessions and participatory art such as *Affirmation Exchange* and *Life in Progress*. Sustainability was also woven into the project, with initiatives like the use of edible coffee cups and a pedal-powered smoothie blender, which reinforced the environmental theme.

Stage 2, the *Public Art Trail*, will see the project move in 2025 to activating outdoor spaces, showcasing student artworks that promote wellbeing and environmental care. The artworks are the product of RMIT School of Art's 'Public Art Projects' elective, bringing together student creativity and learnings alongside the long-term vision for the CNSIP.

## Outcomes & Impact

The project's impact has been both tangible and profound. Over 290 students attended the Wellbeing Week activities and feedback indicated a significant increase in awareness of the Multifaith & Wellbeing Centre's services. 84% of participants felt more informed about the resources available for their mental health, and 86% of attendees felt that the co-created artworks and activities supported their wellbeing and social connections. The project's participatory nature also proved successful, with 50% of the activities delivered by students themselves. Students particularly valued the opportunity to contribute to the creation of artworks that reflected their experiences, fostering a sense of ownership and community. The *Public Art Trail*, set to continue beyond 2025, promises to further engage students with ongoing opportunities to create, reflect and connect.

## Insights & What's Next

This project underscored the power of student-driven and co-created initiatives in promoting mental health and social connection. The high engagement and positive feedback highlighted the value of integrating creative expression with wellbeing practices. Future iterations of the *Public Art Trail* will continue to expand, activating additional outdoor spaces in CNSIP. The project team also plans to enhance sustainability efforts by incorporating more environmentally conscious materials and practices into the art installations. By building on the foundation of this successful program, the project will deepen its impact, creating an enduring cultural and emotional legacy within CNSIP that continues to support students well into the future.

"I loved the Affirmation Exchange and Clay Play. Day by Day is a very peaceful activity as well!! Overall great experience and so happy to experience it all."

—Student Participant



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# STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING PEER CLINIC: BUILDING REAL-WORLD SKILLS FOR STUDENT WELLBEING

*Community Engagement & Education Pilot*

**RMIT Area**

- College of Vocational Education—Social Care & Health Discipline Cluster

**Project Leads**

- Associate Director, Operations & Business Transformation, College of Vocational Education, Caitlin Crowley

- Program Manager —Community Services, Sarah Davidson

- Program Coordinator —Community Services, Fiona McLean

- Director of Social Care & Health, Melanie Reynolds

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"Reflecting on the wellness wheel was insightful, good to have a visual representation of where I feel I am at within each category. The booklet was well made, and the resources mentioned at the back were awesome, like hot tips and useful links. Thank you!"

—Student Participant

## Project Context & Rationale

As community need for mental health support services increases, RMIT is finding new ways to provide industry-relevant experience for students pursuing mental health qualifications. The Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Peer Clinic, better known as *Peer Connect*, was born out of this need. Designed to provide students in the Certificate IV in Mental Health and Mental Health Peer Work programs with the opportunity to complete their required 80 hours of placement, *Peer Connect* not only filled the shortage of available placements but also gave students a chance to develop practical, recovery-oriented skills in a real-world setting. Aligned with the CNSIP Social Care & Wellbeing impact theme, the project sought to address the need for educational experience as well as the larger issue of supporting the mental health and wellbeing of the broader RMIT community. This program highlighted RMIT's commitment to being at the forefront of education that empowers students, fosters connections and champions the wellbeing of all.

## Collaboration & Stakeholders

The journey of *Peer Connect* was one defined by collaboration and a shared vision. The project brought together a diverse network of students, academic staff and industry leaders—all united by a common goal: to provide meaningful support and training for the next generation of mental health professionals. 40 students participated, honing their skills under the guidance of esteemed partners such as Wellways, NEAMI and Orygen, who provided industry insights and expertise. RMIT's Wellbeing Team and Psychology and Counselling and Safer Community Services lent their support to ensure the program ran smoothly. Professional development sessions led by experts offered students technical skills and a deeper understanding of how to connect with others and share lived experiences. Through these connections, the *Peer Connect* program became more than just a student placement —it was an ecosystem of mutual learning and growth.

"Collaborating with like-minded people to provide a recovery service that was fun and engaging. I also really enjoyed talking with new people, forming new connections, and engaging in other activities."

—Student Participant

## Key Activities & Deliverables

In 2024, the *Peer Connect* space in RMIT's Building 56 buzzed with activity, each corner echoing with conversations, creativity and connection. The program offered an eclectic mix of sessions designed to engage and empower students. The Art & Adventure session unlocked creative expressions through activities like Dungeons & Dragons and scrapbooking, allowing students to explore personal growth in a relaxed, supportive environment. In the One-on-One/Walk & Talk sessions, students were offered a safe space to talk about mental health and life challenges —sometimes over coffee, other times while walking around the campus, allowing the natural rhythm of conversation to flow.

The Closer to Fine session, a powerful one-man show about lived experience, sparked deep reflection on the role of peer workers in supporting others through trauma. The *Peer Connect* Podcast became a platform for students to share stories, insights and challenges around mental health in higher education, addressing stigmas and opening up essential conversations. Meanwhile, the Mind Over Muscle sessions used physical activity as a tool to boost mood and mental clarity, showing students that mental health isn't just about talking—it's about feeling good in both body and mind.

At the heart of it all was the *Peer Connect* SharePoint, a dynamic online space where students could access resources, sign up for events, and track their journey. With over 1,700 visits to date, this central hub becomes a living document of the *Peer Connect* project, a place where the experiences and insights of everyone involved are captured and shared.

"I found the Walk and Talks and Arts and Crafts the best. I appreciated the chance to actually speak with participants during the Walk and Talks. After speaking with students who did their placements at other organisations, I feel lucky to have been at Peer Connect. They just shadowed others, while I felt like we actually became Peer Workers, speaking directly with participants."

—Student Participant

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## Outcomes & Impact

By the end of the program, *Peer Connect* had delivered over 36 impactful sessions, created a wealth of resources like activity workbooks and podcasts, and reached a diverse group of students. The physical space—once a student hub—had transformed into a vibrant mental health support centre, inviting students to pause, reflect and connect. The activities were intentionally designed to build community, foster inclusion and provide students with tangible tools for managing mental health challenges.

Feedback from participants painted a picture of a program that met students exactly where they were. Many shared that the informal, open environment made them feel comfortable discussing mental health—something that is often difficult to do in more formal settings. The space became a sanctuary where students could find support without fear of judgment. It was clear that *Peer Connect* had not just filled a gap—it had created a new space of connection, growth and healing.

## Insights & What's Next

As the final days of *Peer Connect* unfolded, it became evident that this was just the beginning. The feedback and reflections from both students and facilitators were invaluable in shaping the future of the program. Many suggested starting earlier in the academic year to increase access for a wider group of students, and others saw the potential for the program to grow beyond its initial reach. The Peer to Peer pilot program, which laid the foundation for *Peer Connect*, had already proven the model's success and with more industry partnerships, training and resources in place, the possibilities for expansion seem limitless.

Looking ahead, the vision for *Peer Connect* is clear: it will continue to grow, evolve and become a permanent fixture within the RMIT and the CNSIP. The goal is to offer year-round support, allowing more students to gain industry-relevant experience while providing essential mental health services to their peers. Additional professional development opportunities and industry collaborations will ensure the program's sustainability and long-term impact. The future of *Peer Connect* is bright and with the right investment and collaboration, it promises to be an ever-expanding network of support for students, empowering them to be leaders in mental health care for years to come.

"Learned that lived experience is a valuable resource in the mental health system, and I feel proud of my peers for their courage and strength."

—Student Participant

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SOCIAL CARE & WELLBEING

"A fantastic opportunity to collaborate and network with a diverse range of professionals, stakeholders and researchers."

# INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

*Community Engagement & Knowledge Exchange*

**RMIT Area**

- Policy, Strategy and Impact Portfolio—Office of Indigenous Education and Research Engagement (OIERE)

**Project Leads**

- Gheran Steel, Senior Manager, Planning and Transformation, Indigenous Education, Research and Engagement



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## Project Context and Rationale

The City North Social Innovation Precinct (CNSIP) sits on land of deep cultural significance to the Woi Wurrung and Boon Wurrung peoples of the Eastern Kulin Nations. For countless generations, this place has been a site of gathering, exchange and care for Country.

The Indigenous Engagement project is shaping CNSIP to grow as a place of respect, learning and shared purpose. Guided by Indigenous voices and knowledge systems, RMIT is creating an Indigenous Engagement Toolkit that will document the area's histories — both pre- and post-contact—capture contemporary cultural connections, and map the ethnographic, geographic and environmental knowledge of the precinct. This living resource will guide future design, activation and research, embedding Indigenous perspectives at the heart of the precinct's identity.

By anchoring the work in co-design and reciprocity, the project delivers on RMIT's Indigenous Strategic Commitments and advances the Responsible Practice Horizon, ensuring that CNSIP becomes a living, learning space where Indigenous knowledge and innovation inform the university's urban future.

## Collaboration and Stakeholders

The project is grounded in respectful engagement and co-design, working in partnership with:

- Traditional Owners: Woi Wurrung and Boon Wurrung.
- Local Indigenous stakeholders: Elders, knowledge holders and community representatives with enduring connection to the site.
- OIERE and PSI teams providing leadership and institutional alignment.
- Greenshoot Consulting: Specialists in conducting research, ethnographic analysis, and reporting in partnership with Indigenous communities.

Through consultations, yarning circles and collaborative workshops, the project draws on both historical knowledge and living cultural insight to inform the future of the precinct.

" If nothing in your culture, history, language or art is visible in the streets, parks and buildings where you live, how can you feel welcome there?"
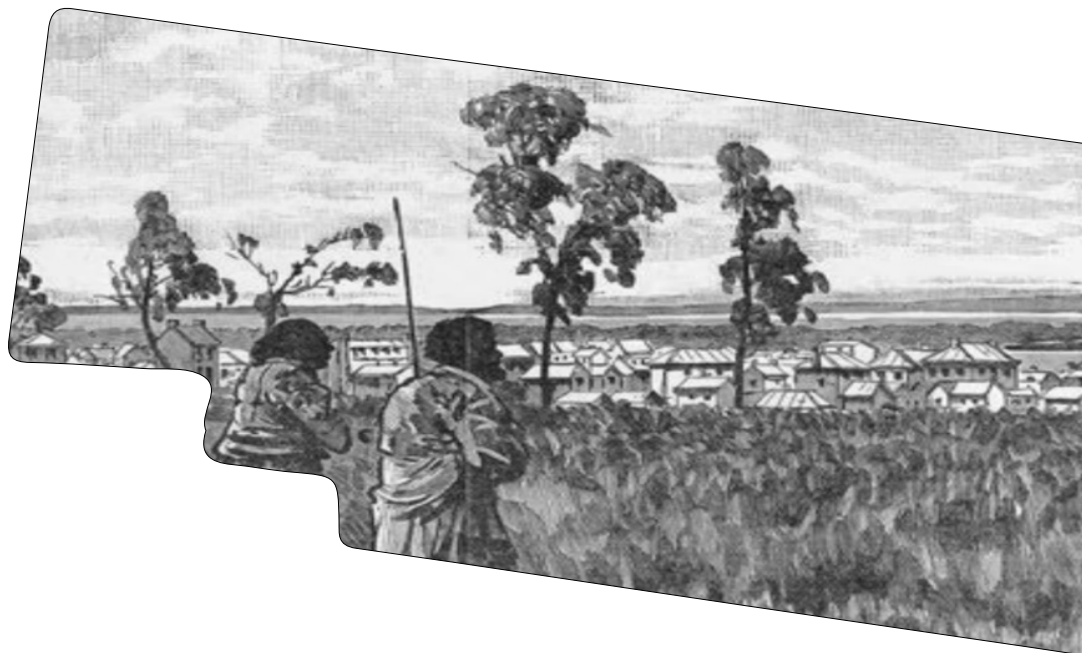
—Indigenous Place Making Council

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CLEAN ECONOMY

FUTURE ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY

SOCIAL CARE & WELLBEING

## Key Activities and Deliverables

### 1. Cultural Consultation and Engagement

- Facilitated sessions with Traditional Owners and Indigenous leaders.
- Collection of narratives of connection to land, waterways and community.

### 2. Indigenous Engagement Toolkit

- Compilation of historical, cultural and geographic insights.
- Desktop research drawing on archives, land records and oral histories.
- Guidance for culturally appropriate planning, art, events and installations.

### 3. Integration with CNSIP Planning

- Direct input into precinct design, activations and educational programming.
- A cultural foundation for cross-disciplinary projects and community events.

## Outcomes and Impact

- Culturally Informed Development: Ensures CNSIP design, research and events respect Indigenous heritage and embed living culture into the precinct's identity.
- Education and Awareness: Provides a resource for students, staff and partners, supporting curriculum design and on-Country learning opportunities.
- Community Connection: Strengthens relationships between RMIT, Traditional Owners and Indigenous stakeholders, modelling inclusive precinct development.
- Long-term Cultural Legacy: Establishes a living foundation for CNSIP to celebrate Indigenous history and contemporary contributions for generations to come.

## Insights and What's Next

- A Design Inspiration report will translate the compendium into visual and thematic references, informing wayfinding, public art and activation design.
- Selected elements will appear in upcoming CNSIP activations, inviting students, staff and the wider community to experience the precinct's Indigenous stories.
- The compendium has strong potential to evolve into a teaching and research resource, enriching RMIT's learning and teaching programs, Indigenous studies initiatives and cross-disciplinary projects.

By building this shared foundation of respect, knowledge and creativity, the Indigenous Engagement project ensures that the City North Social Innovation Precinct will be a place where Indigenous history, culture and innovation are visible, celebrated and enduring.

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# COLLABCONNECT: SOCIAL ENTERPRISE SYMPOSIUM, RESEARCH NETWORK AND POP-UPS

Community Engagement & Knowledge Exchange

**RMIT Area**
- College of Business & Law —School of Management
- College of Design & Social Context—School of Fashion & Textiles

**Project Leads**
- Dr Melissa Wheeler
- Dr Jon Hewitt

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"I had the great pleasure of receiving and trying out an eco-friendly and fair trade certified pair of sneakers today. In other words, Christmas came early! In the past I have looked around and sought to repair an old pair; they just need new soles. Unfortunately, I haven't YET found somewhere to repair sneakers' soles in Melbourne. So hearing Nick Savaidis at CollabConnect last week (co-run by RMIT University, Moral Fairground and others), I found the solution—a new pair at Etiko"

—CollabConnect Symposium Attendee

## Project Context & Rationale

Despite the growing presence of social enterprises, many struggle to gain visibility, secure partnerships and scale their impact due to limited access to networks, resources and collaboration opportunities. The social enterprise ecosystem lacks cohesive spaces for knowledge exchange and interdisciplinary connection, limiting opportunities for growth and systemic change.

*CollabConnect* was designed to bridge these gaps, fostering meaningful collaboration between social entrepreneurs, industry leaders, academics and students through a dynamic symposium and social enterprise pop-ups. The event strengthened connections, inspired action and provided a platform to explore new solutions for urgent social challenges.

The symposium not only shared insights on social impact but also showcased a diverse range of social enterprises, creating opportunities for partnerships and innovation. At its core, *CollabConnect* aligned with three key impact areas of the CNSIP: Social Care and Wellbeing, Clean Economy, and Indigenous Recognition and Celebration—highlighting the role of social enterprises in shaping a sustainable, inclusive future.



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## Collaboration & Stakeholders

The *CollabConnect* project was a result of collaboration between RMIT's Schools of Management and Fashion & Textiles, with further support from the RMIT Design and Creative Practice Enabling Impact Platform (EIP). These partners worked alongside a variety of stakeholders, including Moral Fairground—a key advocate for ethical business practices to deliver the project. The symposium brought together 25 expert speakers and panellists from academia, industry and social enterprises, including representatives from Social Traders and Social Enterprise Network Victoria (SENVIC), all contributing their knowledge on driving impactful social change.

The social enterprises featured in the pop-ups that took place as part of the symposium, included Community Projects Worldwide, Etiko, Palestine Fair Trade Australia Inc., Karuna Dawn, 71bay, TreeKid and Project Two Mile. These partnerships not only enriched the event but also provided valuable insight into how social enterprises can influence change. Moreover, the symposium included diverse voices, including indigenous and refugee community representation, through its speakers and the enterprise showcases.

## Key Activities & Deliverables

The *CollabConnect* event unfolded across several impactful milestones. Taking place in the RMIT Activator space within the CNSIP, the symposium attracted around 100 attendees, bringing experts from across Melbourne and beyond to share their knowledge on sustainable social change; while the pop-up shops provided an interactive experience showcasing a range of social enterprises. In addition, an evening networking event facilitated deeper connections between attendees, fostering future collaboration opportunities.

The event's ethical focus extended to the procurement of goods and services for the event, with social enterprises such as Treekid providing ethical lanyards and caterers STREAT providing meals. Humanitix, an ethical ticketing platform, ensured that ticket sales contributed to charitable donations, raising $1,216, which was split between Doctors Without Borders and the Fair-Trade Association of Australia and New Zealand.



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"...You can see one of my three key points on the slide in the background of this photo—all about collaboration:

1. Collaboration is counter-cultural (for those of us who grew up immersed in Western liberal democracies)

2. Collaboration is hard work

3. Collaboration is liberation..."

—CollabConnect Symposium Presenter

## Outcomes & Impact

*CollabConnect* created a unique opportunity for students, researchers, and industry professionals to engage with the social enterprise ecosystem. The symposium and networking event sparked fresh collaborations and ideas, and attendees left with practical insights to apply to future social impact projects.

The event's success was also reflected in its impact on RMIT's ongoing programs. With support from the CNSIP, the EIP Network: Social Enterprise Researcher Network was pre-launched and plans are in place to submit an application for ongoing funding in 2025. The program also successfully cultivated relationships across industry partners and peak bodies, laying a strong foundation for future collaborations. Additionally, the Moral Fairground partnership provided a vital platform to showcase ethical business practices, and post-event, participants shared insights and reflections on LinkedIn.

Furthermore, the event fostered a strong sense of inclusivity, with a focus on supporting migrant and refugee communities. Social enterprises featured at the pop-up not only supported these communities through their operations but also featured first-generation migrants among their own staff.

## Insights & What's Next

Looking ahead, *CollabConnect* has laid the groundwork for continued growth. The symposium's success has highlighted the demand for future iterations of the event, with attendees expressing a desire for an annual gathering to continue accelerating social change. Plans for the Social Enterprise Researcher Network will further contribute to the creation of a robust ecosystem supporting social entrepreneurs.

One of the key insights from this event was the importance of cross-university and cross-sector collaboration to overcome political and organisational challenges. This learning is being captured in an upcoming research case study that will explore grassroots approaches to overcoming these barriers.

Future funding is already being pursued, with planned applications for ARC Linkage Grants and VicHealth Impact Research Grants to further the work started by *CollabConnect*. Additionally, the insights gained from the symposium are being used to design a social enterprise course within RMIT's Fashion and Textiles (Sustainable Innovation) program, in collaboration with key industry experts.



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"Had we not participated in the City North Activation program, we would not have achieved the impact from our project in the way we have."

# PV RECYCLING COLLABORATIVE WORKSPACE AND SHOWROOM

*Industry Engagement & Knowledge Exchange*

**RMIT Area**
- STEM College
  —School of Engineering

**Project Leads**
- Dr Ylias Sabri
- Dr Stephen Kennedy
- Dr James Bond

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## Project Context & Rationale

The *PV Recycling Collaborative Workspace and Showroom* project was designed to tackle a growing global challenge: how to manage solar panel waste. As solar technology advances, the first generation of panels is reaching the end of its life, leading to challenges around what to do with these outdated panels and the significant waste created. The project aimed to highlight RMIT's cutting-edge expertise and research into recycling solar panel components, and ways of integrating them into a more circular model. The project's core goals were to showcase innovative recycling techniques taking place, foster collaboration among international and local knowledge partners, and create a platform for ongoing applied research in this field to continue.

Located within the CNSIP, the project was directly aligned with the precinct's impact focus areas of Clean Economy and Future Engineering & Technology. By activating Building 78 on Cardigan Street, right in the heart of the CNSIP, the showroom was transformed into a curated exhibition space that demonstrated tangible solutions for managing end-of-life solar panels.

The project aligned to a special research and industry meeting that RMIT hosted within the CNSIP during the exhibition period, further fostering connections and collaboration with international partners from the UK, USA, Spain and India. This collaborative approach positioned RMIT as a leader in PV sustainability, offering practical, scalable recycling methods for solar panels—solutions that are essential for the urban environment's transition to a low-carbon future.

## Collaboration & Stakeholders

The *PV Recycling Collaborative Workspace and Showroom* was supported through strong international connections, including collaborations with institutions like King's College London (UK), New York University (USA), EDIPAE (Spain) and the National Physics Laboratory (India): facilitated by the International Clean Innovation Research Network (ICIRN). Locally, partnerships with companies like HP Energy and Universal Vortex Industries in Melbourne and Blue Tribe Company in Newcastle, brought crucial resources and insights to the project.

RMIT's collaboration with company PVC Separations from Ballarat further enriched the exhibit, showcasing their research into solar panel component separation alongside RMIT's research and innovations. Additional support came from RMIT's Property Services Group, whose expertise in space utilisation and curation ensured smooth project delivery. These diverse partnerships not only provided the necessary technical expertise but also created a platform for interdisciplinary collaboration that bridged academic research and industry practices.
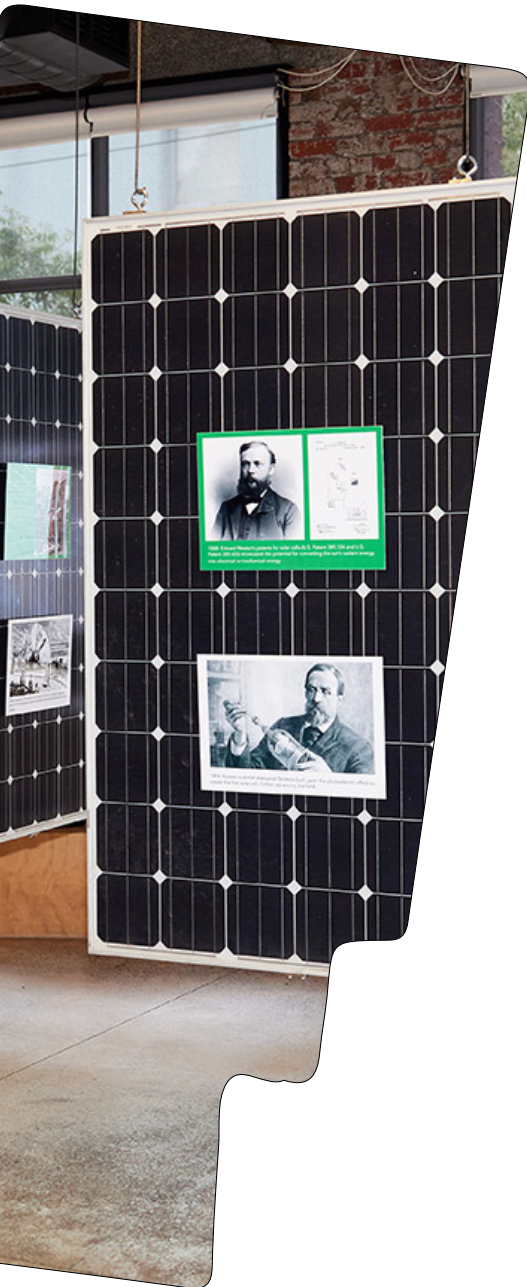
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## Key Activities & Deliverables

The journey from concept to execution was marked by numerous milestones. The project idea stemmed from a successful collaboration between RMIT and EDIPAE in Spain, where a similar space had been launched. With support from the City North Activation Program, RMIT replicated this initiative within the CNSIP by establishing a temporary collaborative space and showroom in Building 78.

Open to the public on October 23rd of 2024, the showroom welcomed over 100 attendees. The event, along with the subsequent RMIT *City North Fest: Shared Future Showcase*, gave the project an opportunity to engage with broader audiences—spanning both technical and non-technical fields, as well as offering further future collaborations with other CNSIP Activation Program projects.

The PV Recycling project culminated in a highly successful ICIRN all-partner meeting, where stakeholders from around the world gathered to discuss the future of solar panel recycling. This roundtable allowed for a valuable exchange of ideas between global researchers and industry leaders.

## Outcomes & Impact

The transformation of a site within the CNSIP into a collaborative workspace and showroom offered a powerful, real-world demonstration of sustainability in action. This activation illustrated how research can be translated into practical solutions for global challenges at the local level.

The showroom became a central platform for exploring circular economy principles, particularly through its focus on solar panel recycling. It enabled transdisciplinary collaboration—bringing together expertise from engineering, environmental science, and economics to tackle the complex issues surrounding solar panel waste.

The initiative also fostered international engagement, extending its impact beyond local networks and reinforcing RMIT's global leadership in sustainable innovation. By addressing the immediate challenge of solar panel recycling, the project contributed to broader ambitions for a Clean Economy and the future of engineering and technology.

Importantly, the project engaged a diverse range of stakeholders —researchers, policymakers, industry leaders, and community partners —amplifying its impact and laying the foundation for ongoing collaboration across sectors.
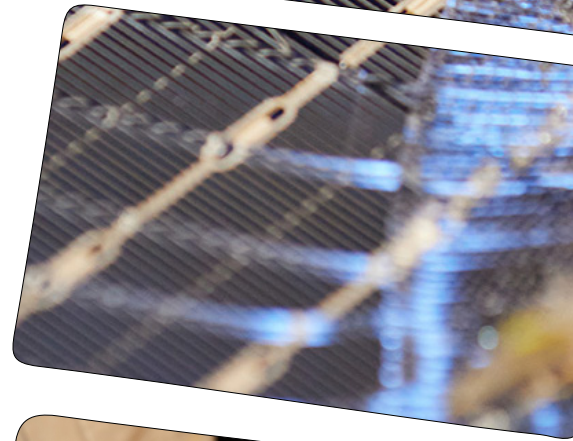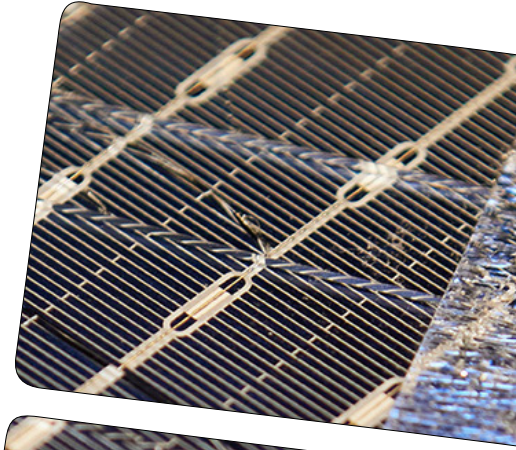
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"The project highlighted the value of international collaboration in driving innovation and the importance of engaging diverse audiences to amplify the impact of research. Practical insights were gained in navigating logistical challenges, activating urban spaces, and fostering partnerships across academia and industry."

PV Recycling Collaborative Workspace and Showroom Project Lead

## Insights & What's Next

Reflecting on the *PV Recycling Collaborative Workspace and Showroom*, several key insights emerged that will guide future iterations of the project. The value of international collaboration became evident, with partnerships spanning multiple continents to share knowledge and expertise. Moreover, the project highlighted the importance of engaging a diverse audience—from researchers to industry leaders to students —creating meaningful, cross-disciplinary conversations that drive innovation.

Looking ahead, the project has the potential to scale and expand. In 2025, plans include extending the duration of the project to incorporate roundtable discussions, public lectures, and potentially undergraduate engagement in solar recycling research. Additionally, the project could look to broaden its scope to include other sustainable technologies being developed at RMIT.

For continued success, the project will focus on securing funding through ongoing partnerships with government and industry, while also streamlining logistical processes through earlier engagement with RMIT departments. Future iterations will build on the lessons learned, integrating solar panel recycling into RMIT's broader sustainability goals—and beyond.



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# WORKER CONSULTATION AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO FAIR, SAFE AND HEALTHY WORKPLACES

Industry Engagement & Knowledge Exchange

**RMIT Area**

- College of Business & Law—Social Impact

**Project Leads**

- Academic Director, Engagement for Social Impact, College of Business & Law, Prof. Johanna Macneil

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SOCIAL CARE & WELLBEING

"I made progress on my personal capacity to navigate the union through WHS, (and also picked up some ideas on how to talk about frames of reference with our people)."

—Worker Consultation Workshop Participant

## Project Context & Rationale

Despite legal requirements for worker consultation, gaps persist in how policies are implemented, often leaving workers without a meaningful voice in decisions that affect their safety, wellbeing and rights. The *Worker Consultation and its Contribution to Fair, Safe and Healthy Workplaces* workshop was designed to enhance worker consultation mechanisms to ensure safer, fairer and healthier work environments across diverse sectors. The project's primary objective was to foster collaboration between government agencies, employers, unions and academics to address the gaps in worker consultation practices and improve outcomes for workers.

This workshop was a crucial step towards aligning the vision of the Fair Work Ombudsman (FWO) and Safe Work Australia (SWA) with RMIT University's expertise in industrial relations, work health and safety (WHS) and psychosocial safety. Through a collective approach, the workshop explored how different perspectives—academic, policy and practitioner—could unite to create a better framework for consultation in the workplace. By addressing gaps in consultation, the project aimed to contribute to the development of a fairer and safer working environment, aligning with the broader goals of the CNSIP, particularly in the area of Social Care & Wellbeing.



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## Collaboration & Stakeholders

The Worker Consultation and its Contribution to Fair, Safe & Healthy Workplaces workshop highlighted the power of cross-sector collaboration. The project brought together a diverse group of stakeholders, including Anna Booth (Fair Work Ombudsman), Marie Boland (CEO, SWA), and academic leaders such as Professor Johanna Macneil (RMIT University), Professor Maureen Dollard (University of South Australia), and Richard Johnstone (Honorary Professorial Fellow, The University of Melbourne). Practitioners who presented included Tracey Browne (AiG), Andrea Fox (WHS QLD), and Liam O'Brien (ACTU).

Their collective expertise allowed for the identification of challenges and blind spots in current worker consultation processes. Bringing together such a wide range of voices created a foundation for future research and collaborative projects, strengthening the broader ecosystem of impact that is the CNSIP's mission.

## Activities & Deliverables

The workshop itself was a dynamic event designed to engage stakeholders through academic presentations, practical discussions and collaborative ideation. Over 80 people attended the workshop and participated in-depth sessions on the nature of worker consultation from multiple angles—industrial relations, WHS and psychosocial safety. Notable sessions focused on evidence of consultation's impact on worker wellbeing and fairness in the workplace. The facilitated discussions allowed practitioners to share real-world challenges and brainstorm ways to improve consultation processes. The deliverables for this event included detailed academic papers, participant feedback summaries and a range of follow-up resources to inform ongoing projects. These resources are now being used to guide future research and collaboration, laying the groundwork for programs aimed at improving worker consultation practices and aligning them with broader social and economic goals.

## Outcomes & Impact

The impact of the workshop reverberated beyond the event itself, catalysing future programs that align with the CNSIP's objectives and approach. The immediate outcome was the establishment of a collaborative network between regulators, unions, academics and employers, with a shared commitment to improving worker consultation. The workshop also laid the foundation for future projects aligned to the UN Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs). This includes worker wellbeing (SDG 8), decent work (SDG 10) and institutional strength (SDG 16). Participant feedback reinforced the potential for this collaboration to evolve into more extensive educational and research projects. This engagement contributed directly to shaping the precinct's activation strategy, ensuring that the efforts being made within these spaces are inclusive, innovative and impactful.

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## Insights & What's Next

Reflecting on the workshop, several key insights emerged that will guide future efforts. One significant takeaway was the importance of maintaining diverse stakeholder engagement across sectors, ensuring that voices from government, academia and industry are continuously integrated into the conversation around improving worker consultation. The event also revealed the need for tailored educational resources and training programs that bridge the gap between theory and practice. Moving forward, opportunities for collaborative research and funded projects will further explore the impact of consultation in different industries and its role in improving workplace safety and fairness.

Future directions include a webinar series on best practices for worker consultation, the development of educational modules for workplace training, and the creation of PhD internships to deepen the research on worker consultation's role in ensuring fair and safe work environments. By building on these foundations, the project will continue to contribute to the CNSIP's vision of fostering innovation and collaboration that addresses complex societal challenges.



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"These opportunities have enabled my project to reach a wider audience, establish connections both within and beyond RMIT and gather valuable feedback to improve and further promote it."

# CODESIGNING NEW MODELS OF COMMUNITY-UNIVERSITY COLLABORATION FOR COMMUNITY CONNECTION, BELONGING, AND HEALTH AND WELLBEING

*Exploratory Research & Community Engagement*

**RMIT Area**

- College of Design & Social Context—School of Global, Urban & Social Studies (GUSS)

**Project Leads**

- Dean, School of Global, Urban and Social Studies (GUSS), Prof. Katherine Johnson

- Associate Prof. Ronnie Egan,

- Prof. Robyn Martin

- Director, ThirdStory, Dr Perrie Ballantyne

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**Exploring partnership models that are informed by the following principles:**

1. Shared purpose.
2. Reciprocity and mutuality.
3. Knowledge exchange and mutual capability development.
4. Rebalanced power with greater community input and agency.
5. Independence—the 'partnership' has its own independent purpose, conditions and journey.

**Headline workshop question:**

How could we better respond to identify community needs?

## Project Context & Rationale

Universities have huge potential to drive social change and create impact through meaningful partnerships with communities, as well as with human and community services, government, philanthropy and business. However, partnerships are too often limited in their potential, typically involving short-term projects rather than longer-term commitments and not always reflecting principles of reciprocity and mutuality.

This project, has investigated how universities can nurture and develop mutual and reciprocal partnerships that support community connection, belonging and health and wellbeing. Led by academics from RMIT's Social Work and Human Services Cluster, it explored what universities might do differently to unlock the potential of community partnerships for social change and impact.

Through three targeted workshops, the project engaged a range of community stakeholders in shaping new ways of working together. These workshops aimed to be more than just discussion—instead, they were spaces for reflection and collaborative thinking, where fresh ideas and bold concepts for the CNSIP could emerge.

## Collaboration & Stakeholders

Strong partnerships with diverse local communities and social and community services are already core to teaching and research at RMIT, particularly in Social Work and Human Services and the School of Global, Urban and Social Studies. But what more might be possible if the ideas, knowledge and leadership from the wider community shaped design and decision-making?

This project elevated lived expertise and sought out community-driven solutions. 'Community' in this project included people and groups who experience systemic marginalisation and exclusion, and people with lived and living experience of social challenges and harms. It also included international students who often live and work in the CBD and precinct, and NGOs and service providers working in and around the area.

The stakeholder groups participated in dedicated creative workshops where they shared their own realities and priorities, reflected on partnership experiences, and identified ideas for ambitious collaboration in the precinct that they would want to work on with RMIT.
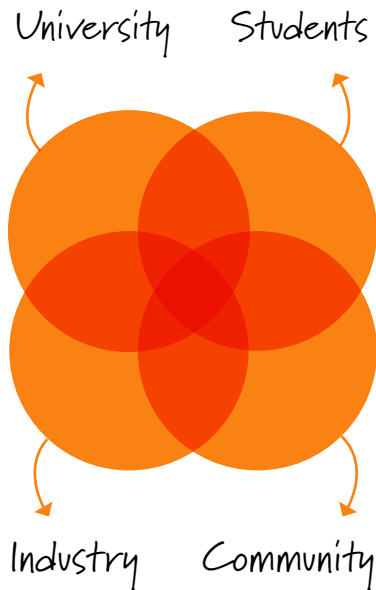
University    Students

Industry    Community

## Key Activities & Deliverables

Change begins with curiosity and imagination—the willingness to look beyond the familiar and entertain new possibilities. This project started with a horizon scan to explore different kinds of university-community partnerships from around the world. These leading-edge case studies served as inspiration to everyone involved in the co-design workshops, and informed a draft set of principles for partnership working for testing and refinement.

Three creative workshops were run where participants engaged in focused discussions, reflecting on new ideas and successful models, and began mapping out what support, structures and relationships would be needed to bring these ideas to life.

The insights from these sessions were then developed into a dynamic visual resource designed to spark investment, guide prototyping of new programs, and inform longer-term strategies, translating insights into actionable elements for the CNSIP's aspirations.

## Outcomes & Impact

As well as a framework for collaborative partnerships, the project identified a range of specific ideas that could be prototyped as part of precinct development.

These included:

- A Centre for Lived Expertise that is a dedicated place for leading, growing and integrating this form of knowledge into service provision, research, design and policy-making;
- A Community Clinic (that majors in creative and social health solutions);
- A 24/7 Student Community Centre for social connection and belonging; and
- A platform for facilitating placements/internships and workforce development programs to improve student career outcomes.

Across all of the workshops and individual ideas, what emerged was a vision for the precinct as a hub of innovation in connection, belonging, health and wellbeing that develops and specialises in community-based and community-driven responses, and connects university and community partnerships in new and more powerful ways.

## Insights & Next Steps

The project is the first step in a longer journey towards embedding community-university partnerships into the DNA of the CNSIP. As this work continues, it will shape the future of collaboration within RMIT and contribute to a broader shift in how universities engage with the world around them. The CNSIP has the potential to become a global leader in this space—a precinct where universities and communities actively co-create a better future together.

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# FOOD SECURITY FOR OUR STUDENTS FEEDS OUR FUTURE

## Exploratory Research & Community Engagement

**RMIT Area**

- Education Portfolio
  —Student Life Team

**Project Leads**

- Associate Director, Student Life, RMIT Students Group, Tim Burdeu

- Senior Coordinator, Student Food Security Program, Dr Helen Addison-Smith

- Manager, Students as Partners, Student Life, RMIT Students Group, Anna McLeod

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## Project Context & Rationale

Food insecurity is a growing crisis. Over 52% of the RMIT student community report lacking consistent access to nutritious food. This stark reality not only affects students' health but also undermines their ability to learn and thrive academically. Many students have reported that hunger impacts their concentration, attendance, and overall wellbeing, leading to increased anxiety, stress and even weight loss. This urgent problem is compounded by a broader cost-of-living crisis and a fragmented food support system. Many universities have responded with strategic programs such as low-cost cafeterias and food security officers. Through the work of this project, RMIT is developing actionable strategies to address food insecurity and weave together existing programs with new opportunities that focus on food relief, social connectivity and food literacy education. By activating key spaces within the CNSIP, this project aims to create an inclusive environment that not only alleviates hunger but also fosters a sense of community and belonging.

## Collaboration & Stakeholders

The success of this program has hinged on a collaborative ecosystem involving diverse stakeholders. Collaboration has been central, leveraging the expertise and passion of RMIT University Student Union (RUSU), the Just Food Collective and community organisations. Strategic partnerships have also been formed with external experts and peer institutions, whose best practices have informed the project's approach. A broad engagement strategy connected 469 students and 129 staff members across four campuses through workshops, focus groups and co-design sessions. This collective effort illustrates the power of collaboration and inclusivity as guiding principles, crucial for creating meaningful, sustainable change.

## Key Activities & Deliverables

The project journeyed through a comprehensive, iterative process of discovery, ideation and strategic planning. It began by mapping RMIT's food security ecosystem, and identifying gaps in existing services and opportunities for improvement. The team conducted a national benchmarking study, comparing RMIT's food environment with other universities to identify best practices. Workshops focused on access, belonging and food insights allowed for an in-depth understanding of student experiences, while external service 'safaris' provided firsthand observations of effective food security interventions. The project also engaged in extensive stakeholder consultations, gathering vital insights from students, staff and external experts. Based on these learnings, the team crafted a strategic action plan, outlining key recommendations for uplifting existing food programs, enhancing infrastructure and piloting a dedicated Food Hub at RMIT's City and Bundoora campuses.
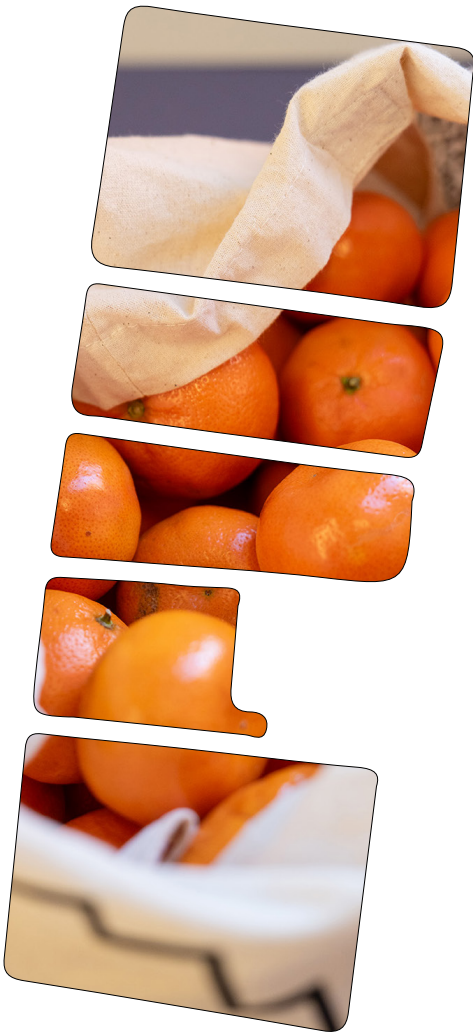
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## Outcomes & Impact

The project has arguably sparked a growing movement towards sustainable food security at RMIT. By engaging hundreds of students and staff, the program has deepened the university's understanding of the severity of food insecurity on campus. It has also illuminated the barriers students face, such as the inability to focus due to hunger and the difficult choice between attending classes or affording meals. Tangible outcomes include enhanced food services and improved infrastructure, such as the expansion of the RUSU Free Breakfast and Lunch programs. Beyond immediate relief, the program has laid the groundwork for long-term policy changes and integration with RMIT's sustainability goals. By creating more inclusive spaces and fostering community connections, the project has shown that addressing food security is fundamental to supporting student success and wellbeing.

## Insights & What's Next

The journey to address student food insecurity revealed important lessons about the complexity of food environments in tertiary education. One key insight was that food security extends beyond relief—it requires strategic, long-term planning and systemic change. The importance of consistent infrastructure and staffing was highlighted as critical for sustaining impactful food services. Moreover, the project underscored the value of co-designing solutions with students to foster a sense of belonging and ownership. Moving forward, the focus will shift towards establishing food security as a core component of student life at RMIT.

In 2025, the project will work iteratively with RUSU to enhance existing services and create a comprehensive Food Security Strategic Plan. By 2027, the aim is to make food security 'business as usual', integrated with RMIT's sustainability and built environment goals. This program stands as a testament to the power of collaboration, innovation, and strategic thinking in tackling one of the most pressing issues facing students today.

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"Personally and professionally, the activation initiative allowed me to implement a project and manage it from beginning to end. Something that I would not have been able to do otherwise."

# RSA DESIGN FOR LIFE MISSION: URBAN COOL

*Knowledge Exchange & Community Engagement*

**RMIT Area**
- RMIT Europe

**Project Leads**
- Prof. Wendy Steele
- Prof. Laurene Vaughan
- Prof. Marta Fernandez

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## Project Context & Rationale

Innovation precincts are connected to global contexts. This project links the CNSIP to an international network of innovation precincts and educators actively addressing societal challenges such as urban heat and climate vulnerability. Urban heat, driven by dense infrastructure and limited greenery, is a growing concern for cities worldwide, threatening both vulnerable populations and the environment.

The partnership with the Royal Society of the Arts (RSA) in the UK and Arup via the *Bright Sparks Mission—Urban Cool* project aims to harness collective energy and expertise from around the world to enable the transformation of cities into green havens that shape cooler, thriving urban ecosystems and support both people and the planet.

By drawing from disciplines such as arts, architecture, policy, and digital technology, the project works with educators and innovation precincts to empower communities to take climate action. *Urban Cool*, as a mission, envisions cities as living ecosystems—teeming with life, offering green spaces, and implementing nature-inspired strategies such as biomimicry, heat-reflective materials, and renewable energy solutions. Cities such as Barcelona and Singapore offer inspiration, but lasting change depends on collaboration—empowering communities to take action together.

## Collaboration & Stakeholders

The success of *Urban Cool* lies in its ability to unite stakeholders from across different sectors and fields around the globe. The RSA Spark platform is the central hub, engaging a diverse ecosystem of learners, organisations, and communities. By tapping into the expertise of urban designers, scientists, business leaders, community activists, and cultural influencers, the project creates a rich collaborative network aimed at fostering innovation and sustainable practices.

Key partners in this project are RSA and RMIT, both pivotal in shaping the mission's direction alongside the broader involvement of local businesses, community leaders, and environmental advocates. Their collective work supports the goal of engaging residents and businesses in the movement to cool urban environments.

By building this broad coalition, *Urban Cool* offers opportunities for active participation and education focused on ways that cities can grow sustainably, ensuring that local expertise, cultural relevance and global collaboration shape the future.

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CLEAN ECONOMY

FUTURE ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY

SOCIAL CARE & WELLBEING

## Key Activities & Deliverables

In early 2025, the RSA Spark platform will open its doors to the public, offering workshops and learning journeys to support users in exploring the mission's goals. The live platform offers new content, missions, and learning modules that guide participants on their journey toward urban sustainability. This platform will become a central tool for driving awareness, education and action on urban cooling. From March to the end of May 2025, a series of five interactive workshops will guide learners and entrepreneurs through a process of discovery and purpose articulation, engaging different perspectives and views pertaining to the *Urban Cool* mission, envisioning the desired future state, understanding how to test and measure impact and exploring opportunities for enterprise.
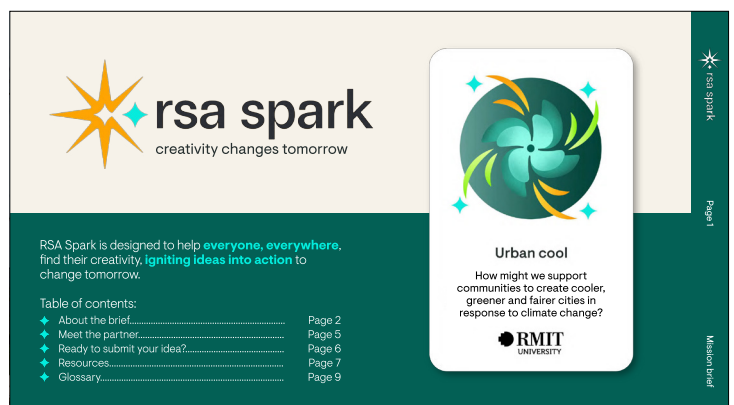
## Outcomes & Impact

As the project continues to develop, its primary outcome will be the activation of spaces and the engagement of diverse groups. This will include workshops, educational modules and practical projects that bring residents and businesses together to actively engage in cooling programs. The mission also provides a space for the exploration of applied research, especially in the integration of green technologies and nature-inspired designs in urban settings. The project uniquely connects the CNSIP to an international innovation ecosystem, and it is expected that the work done under this mission will provide valuable opportunities for co-designing and shaping future learning about urban cooling strategies across cities globally, including those deployed throughout the CNSIP.

## Insights & What's Next

As the project moves forward into 2025, the educational teams from around the world have been formed and will submit their designs for assessment around how best to encourage educational and training engagement with urban cooling programs, providing insights that can guide future missions.

The RSA Spark platform is the central hub, engaging a diverse ecosystem of learners, organisations and communities.

### rsa spark
creativity changes tomorrow

RSA Spark is designed to help **everyone, everywhere,** find their creativity, **igniting ideas into action** to change tomorrow.

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**Urban cool**
How might we support communities to create cooler, greener and fairer cities in response to climate change?

RMIT UNIVERSITY

rsa spark
Page 1
Mission brief

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# CARDIGAN STREET FUTURE-FOCUSED ACTIVATION

*Creative Placemaking & Community Engagement*

**RMIT Area**
- International & Engagement Portfolio—Public Engagement Group

**Project Leads**
- Manager, Cultural Partnerships & Engagement, Ali Barker

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## Project Context & Rationale

Urban spaces can often feel static, disconnected from the communities they're meant to serve. In October 2024, Cardigan Street in the CNSIP came alive, inviting participants to envisage an alternative and inspiring urban site. *The Cardigan Street Future-Focused Activation: City North Fest* wasn't just an event—it was a bold experiment in reimagining public space. Timed to coincide with the Melbourne Fringe Festival and Melbourne International Games Week, the event transformed the street into a vibrant playground, sparking ideas and conversations about the future of urban living.

Throughout the day, the street pulsed with energy. Around every corner, performances, installations, and interactive activities blurred the lines between art, technology and community. RMIT's Future Play Lab invited participants to step into the year 2050 through a climate-themed live-action role-playing (LARP) experience, challenging them to envision what we might need in and for our future cities. Local artists and cultural partners showcased diverse expressions. From experimental fashion and sustainable food to immersive films and robotic interaction, each activation explored the challenges and possibilities of tomorrow.

*City North Fest* was more than just a day of entertainment. Attended by students, residents, industry professionals and passers-by, it encouraged connections. Conversations sparked in the street carried on long after the event, weaving new threads of collaboration and community engagement. The festival did more than activate a physical space; it ignited imaginations, laying the groundwork for ongoing and practical dialogue about innovation, sustainability and the evolving identity of the city. Through this celebration, the CNSIP can further define itself—not just as a place to visit, but as a community to belong to.

"Amazing to see the street shut down for people's use—would love to see more of that."

—Festival Participant





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## Collaboration & Stakeholders

The success of the CNSIP *City North Fest* went far beyond the event itself, building on strong collaborations that can influence future programming in the precinct. External partners, including Melbourne Fringe Festival, Melbourne International Games Week, and the Environmental Film Festival, helped to broaden the event's reach and ensure its cultural significance. These partnerships provided a platform for ongoing engagement with the local arts and cultural industries, bringing diverse voices and perspectives together.

RMIT's network of multi-disciplinary partners, including the Fight Food Waste Collaborative Research Centre, the Centre of Digital Ecosystems (CODE) and representatives from various courses played pivotal roles in delivering *City North Fest's* broad range of activities. Their continued collaboration will shape future iterations of similar events and projects across the precinct, ensuring a lasting impact on the community and contributing to the growth of the CNSIP ecosystem.

## Key Activities & Deliverables

While *City North Fest* resulted in a vibrant day of activities, its impact extended well beyond the initial celebration. The transformation of Cardigan Street into a car-free zone with Zomes, a parklet and greening initiatives set the stage for potential future renewals of the area. Although inclement weather briefly interrupted the outdoor activities, the flexibility of the planning team allowed for a smooth transition of the event indoors, ensuring that the day's momentum continued unabated.

Throughout the day, participants engaged with a variety of future-focused activations, including the Future Play Lab's speculative role-play, performances by local performers like The Hopefuls and Crate Women and hands-on workshops around sustainable fashion, food, and urban design. These activities were designed to spark dialogue and imagination, encouraging visitors to think critically about the future of the CNSIP and its environment.

*City North Fest* also provided an ongoing platform for student engagement, offering placements, volunteer opportunities, and creative showcases that highlighted RMIT's commitment to experiential learning, student engagement, and community involvement.

> "Melbourne Fringe were thrilled to support RMIT's City North Precinct Cardigan Street activation, in partnership with Melbourne International Games Week on Saturday 5 October. Melbourne Fringe enjoyed the opportunity to provide connection with artists from recent Fringe festivals to support RMIT's engagement with, and additions to, arts and cultural activity already enlivening the northern precinct of the Melbourne city."

—Simon Abrahams, Creative Director and CEO, Melbourne Fringe

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## Outcomes & Impact

*City North Fest* has the potential to become a significant milestone event in the cultural activation of the CNSIP. Beyond the high number of pre-event registrations and the strong turnout on the day, the festival had a lasting impact on participants, local businesses, and the broader community. Notably, 45% of attendees were not affiliated with RMIT, demonstrating the event's appeal to a diverse audience outside the university's immediate sphere.

Through the event, the CNSIP succeeded in its role of strengthening community ties, with 78% of survey respondents reporting a strong connection to the local community, and a similar percentage acknowledging the festival's positive contribution to the cultural fabric of the area. *City North Fest*'s engagement with arts and cultural industries—both within and beyond the university—further ensures that its influence will continue. Public programming, including the Future Film competition, saw students gain invaluable recognition for their creative works, furthering their aspirations and connecting them to future opportunities in the cultural sector.

## Insights & What's Next

While the immediate success of *City North Fest* was evident, its long-term impact lies in the lessons learned and the potential for growth in future iterations. Feedback highlighted the need for more accessible event signage and clearer communication about activity locations, ensuring that future events would be even more inclusive and user-friendly. Additionally, the weather challenges underscored the importance of designing outdoor spaces with weather resilience in mind, providing flexibility for future activations.

The experience of *City North Fest* has set the stage for further iterations within the CNSIP, encouraging partnerships and projects that explore future aspects of urban living and cultural collaboration. The festival's success in fostering community engagement, showcasing RMIT's research, and connecting students with real-world applications suggests that *City North Fest* will continue to play an important role in the evolving cultural landscape of the precinct.

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"The key highlight for me was the number of valuable connections made with industry and government that will certainly aid future research and teaching endeavours."

# PLAY THE FUTURE: REWORLDING CARDIGAN COMMONS 2050

*Creative Placemaking, Tactical Urbanism & Applied Research*

**RMIT Area**
- College of Design & Social Context—School of Design

**Project Leads**
- Director of RMIT Future Play Lab, Associate Prof. Troy Innocent

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SOCIAL CARE & WELLBEING

"I encountered today, not just within the street but also in the neighbouring buildings, the theme of repurposing and multipurposing. <u>This experience is giving me permission to imagine how we might use things differently.</u> Some things that other people would consider trash we were using as structural elements or as protection from the elements."

—Live Action Role Play Participant

## Project Context & Rationale

In an era where the future feels uncertain and the pressing challenges of climate change and societal tensions seem insurmountable, the *Play the Future: Reworlding Cardigan Commons 2050* project was designed to spark new ways of thinking about the future—specifically, how we can live, work, and interact in our urban environments. Using the CNSIP as a living lab for this new thinking, the *Reworlding: Cardigan Commons* built on the principles of urban play and participatory design. It invited the people of Melbourne to engage in an imaginative experiment: a role-playing game set in a solarpunk future, focusing on resilience, community and environmental sustainability.

By closing a section of Cardigan Street to traffic and transforming it into a vibrant, playable space, the project sought to reimagine how cities can respond to climate change and social challenges.

Drawing inspiration from a 1985 street party that transformed Swanston Street, the project invited the community to step into the future with a hands-on experience that combined elements of live-action role play, climate action, and urban regeneration.

Through this playful experiment, participants could explore potential futures and rethink their relationships with each other, the land, and the climate.

## Collaboration & Stakeholders

The success of *Reworlding: Cardigan Commons* was made possible through the collaboration of a diverse and dynamic group of partners and stakeholders who brought together expertise from multiple disciplines.

At the heart of the project were key collaborators from across RMIT, Regen Melbourne, and the City of Melbourne, with support from industry experts in urban design, gaming and environmental sustainability. Notable contributors to its development included N'arweet Professor Carolyn Briggs (Boonwurrung), RMIT's School of Design, and Professor Chris Speed from RMIT's Regenerative Futures Institute, whose combined knowledge and vision helped bring this experimental activation to life; alongside participating RMIT students and other industry, government and community members.

Throughout the project, all collaborators worked to ensure that the activation wasn't just wasn't just a one-off event but part of a broader and ongoing conversation around urban resilience and climate action.



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## Key Activities & Deliverables

*Reworlding* unfolded through a series of events, each building on the other to create a cohesive narrative of urban reimagination. Beginning with the development of a climate action game, the project's design team explored how future Melbourne (Naarm) could look in 2050, weaving in concepts of social innovation, regenerative futures and urban resilience. These designs were paired with a modular urban installation that transformed Cardigan Street into a temporary civic square as part of the CNSIP's *City North Fest*. The timing of this activity was deliberately aligned to take place during the 2024 Melbourne International Games Week and Melbourne Fringe Festival, allowing for cross-promotion and awareness.

Activities also included the placement of a themed parklet and a small-scale urban greening installation. The parklet, located outside RMIT's Building 94, became a physical manifestation of the project's themes, providing a space for people to gather, converse and connect with the ideas at the heart of *Reworlding*. The overall installation, coupled with the two-day street closure for the event, created a living laboratory within the CNSIP where participants could immerse themselves in playful, yet impactful explorations around how to live in harmony with the changing world. In total, five project events were brought together from across the CNSIP program, engaging over 500 people with hands-on activities and playful interaction.

## Outcomes & Impact

The activation of the CNSIP's Cardigan Street through *Reworlding* had a profound impact, not only on those who participated but also on the broader community. The transformation of a section of this street into a playful, open space acted as a catalyst for engagement, drawing together a diverse group of individuals who might not have otherwise interacted. It fostered connections between local residents, university students, industry experts and passers-by, all of whom were invited to join in the co-creation of this imaginative urban future.

The project's impact extended beyond the immediate success of the event itself. It provided an important case study for the role of urban play in addressing key challenges such as climate change and social resilience. By experimenting with playful, speculative design techniques, the project explored how future communities might adapt to environmental changes and work together to build resilient, sustainable cities. The project also highlighted the value of collaboration, not only across sectors but also between different communities, showing how diverse perspectives can lead to richer, more innovative solutions to urban problems.

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## Insights & What's Next

Reflecting on the success of *Rewording: Cardigan Commons,* several key insights emerged that will help guide future efforts in urban play and regenerative design. One of the most significant was the power of urban play to spark collaboration and social cohesion. By creating a space where people from various backgrounds could experiment and engage in imaginative play, the project demonstrated how urban spaces can become platforms for social innovation and community building. Participants discovered that the process of co-creation —through play and collaboration—can lead to real-world impact.

Looking ahead, the project's success sets the stage for future public-facing projects for Future Play Lab and similar programs. Plans are already underway to expand on the work done during the *City North Fest* and to bring more diverse, community-driven play experiences to Cardigan Street and beyond. Future collaborations with industry partners such as Regen Melbourne and local government bodies will help ensure that these urban play programs continue to grow, offering opportunities for engagement, experimentation and the co-creation of regenerative urban futures. As the project continues to evolve, it will help shape the future of Melbourne as a city that values creativity, inclusivity and collective action in the face of climate challenges.

Future Play Lab website:

CLICK HERE

Future Play Lab instagram:

CLICK HERE

"[Through the game], I'm understanding the importance of community and the importance of real conversations or playful conversations with other people; rather than just assuming what people are thinking or what they know or what their motivations or intentions are. Actually talking to people and really connecting and really asking what does this mean to you or how do you envision things? And that's really easy to skip in our world because there's so much media or social media that's tailored to us that it's so easy to stay in your own bubble, even if you're in public spaces now. This kind of experience breaks that open a bit again and that seems like an essential feature of building a good future."

—Live Action Role Play Participant

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# ECOQUEST MELBOURNE: LOCALISING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS THROUGH GAMIFICATION

*Community Engagement & Education Prototyping*

**RMIT Area**
- College of Design & Social Context—Master of Communication Design Course

**Project Leads**
- RMIT Masters of Communication Design graduating student, Vera Wang

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"It gave me new ideas on how to make small changes in my daily life."

—Game Participant

## Project Context & Rationale

In a world grappling with environmental degradation and social inequality, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a universal framework for action. But how do we connect these global ambitions to the everyday lives of local Melburnians? One response emerged through *EcoQuest Melbourne*; an innovative tabletop game designed to bring sustainability to life in place through the CNSIP. *EcoQuest Melbourne* re-imagines the SDGs through an Australian lens, using local species, urban sustainability themes and cultural knowledge to create a relatable and immersive learning experience.

In the EcoQuest game, participants—students, staff and community members—navigate a simulated ecosystem, balancing resources, fostering collaboration and confronting the trade-offs inherent in building a sustainable future. The project aimed to engage diverse groups in understanding three of the CNSIP's key action areas:

- Social Care & Wellbeing, encouraging cooperation and empathy through collaborative gameplay;
- Clean Economy, illustrating strategies for resource efficiency, renewable energy use and waste reduction; and
- Future Engineering & Technology, inspiring innovation through scenarios featuring smart cities, green technology and circular economy models.

By localising global goals within Melbourne's unique ecological and social context, *EcoQuest Melbourne* demonstrates how education and community engagement can transform abstract concepts into tangible, actionable approaches.

## Collaboration & Stakeholders

Primarily led by RMIT Master of Communication Design graduating student Vera Wang as part of her studies, and supported by her lecturers Dr Noel Waite and Dr Miek Dunbar, *EcoQuest Melbourne* was enriched by contributions from a diverse group of collaborators. RMIT research collective Future Play Lab, through its *Reworlding Cardigan Commons* Project, supported the program by providing a welcoming space to trial the prototype. The game was also included as part of the CNSIP's *City North Fest* which allowed other RMIT, partner and community members to playtest the game—and share their experiences. This inclusive approach underscored the value of bringing diverse perspectives together to advance sustainability education and consider new ways of thinking and acting.

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## Key Activities & Deliverables

The journey of *EcoQuest Melbourne* began with a bold question: How can we make the SDGs resonate with a local audience? From there, Vera Wang embarked on a creative and iterative process, reimagining the global goals by integrating Australian flora, fauna, and urban sustainability themes. This localisation effort aimed to make the SDGs more relevant and engaging for Melburnians, bridging the gap between global aspirations and local realities. The game's development focused on designing core mechanics that encourage players to consider resource allocation, cooperative decision-making and ways to balance ecological and social indicators. Early prototypes were tested with RMIT students and staff, refining the gameplay for maximum impact. The high-fidelity version—complete with a board, cards, rulebook and teaching materials—made its public debut at the *City North Fest*. The game was also presented at the CNSIP *Shared Futures Series Showcase*, sparking conversations among academics and environmental advocates about its potential as a tool for sustainability education. Through these interactions, the project not only created a unique learning experience but also activated spaces across the CNSIP, further reinforcing the precinct's role as a hub for innovation and engagement.

## Outcomes & Impact

*EcoQuest Melbourne* brought sustainability to life through an interactive, character-driven game that engaged participants with the UN SDGs. Students, educators, sustainability advocates and the community were all encouraged to share their experiences and insights in play-testing the game. Its fun design, actionable insights and local relevance earned praise, with one participant noting, *'It gave me new ideas on how to make small changes in my daily life',* and another sharing, *'Good to know that there are some sustainable initiatives happening locally'.* The game's impact was measurable: 85% of participants surveyed felt engaged by its design and gameplay, 80% reported learning something new about the UN SDGs and 70% left feeling inspired to take personal action for sustainability. By transforming education into an engaging, hands-on experience, *EcoQuest Melbourne* empowers players to see themselves as agents of change, fostering a sense of agency and commitment towards sustainable practices. This project highlights the power of gamification to inspire both individual and collective efforts for a cleaner, greener future.

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## Insights & What's Next

The success of *EcoQuest Melbourne* revealed both the impact of using gamification methods to inform and inspire and its potential to support further innovation and sharing. Participant feedback offered clear direction for the project's evolution and further underscored the demand for such interactive, localised learning experiences and the benefits they can bring.

Looking ahead, next steps for the project include designing a large-scale floor version of the game to activate public spaces and engage larger groups in immersive, collaborative gameplay, as well as developing a digital version to expand accessibility and reach a broader audience. Continuous improvement will remain a priority, with regular updates informed by new sustainability research and community input to ensure the game's ongoing relevance and impact. As it moves forward, *EcoQuest Melbourne* aims to continue to inspiring action on the SDGs, demonstrating the value of experiential gameplay in building knowledge, insight, and real-world momentum.

**Data from participant survey:**

**85%** — 85% felt engaged through the visual design and gameplay experience.

**80%** — 80% of participants reported learning something new about the SDGs.

**70%** — 70% felt inspired to take personal actions for sustainability.



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"I'm deeply grateful for this experience, especially as a recent graduate. It not only gave me valuable opportunities to grow and develop my project but also served as a bridge connecting me to potential future career opportunities."

# STORYING CITY NORTH: FROM INK TO ALGORITHMS

*Knowledge Exchange & Creative Practice*

**RMIT Area**

- College of Design & Social Context—School of Media & Communication

**Project Leads**

- Dr Rose Michael
- Dr Emilie Collyer
- Jenny Hedley
- Assoc. Prof. Tracy O'Shaughnessy

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## Project Context & Rationale

*Storying City North* brought human creativity and artificial intelligence (AI) together to explore the hidden histories and speculative futures of the CNSIP. The project aimed to unearth some of Melbourne's lesser-known stories—particularly those connected to the developing CNSIP—and investigate how AI technologies could be used to reimagine place-based storytelling and future perspectives.

The project supported the future-focused objectives and ambition of the CNSIP, experimenting through a combination of human creativity and expertise as well as AI innovation, engaging diverse academic and community stakeholders, and developing creative content that resonates with the precinct's emphasis on innovation and social change.

## Collaboration & Stakeholders

*Storying City North* demonstrated collaboration across all levels, drawing together a diverse network of academic, artistic and technological contributors. Academics from RMIT's School of Media & Communications and colleagues at University of Melbourne led the activation, contributing their applied research practice and expertise; while RMIT's Bowen Street Press helped produce 'Composite City' publication, which included contributions from the School of Art academics, HDR students, and End Food Waste researchers. The project's interdisciplinary nature was reflected in its team of artist-researchers.

## Key Activities & Deliverables

The project unfolded in two parts, each contributing immediate outcomes and setting the stage for future research.

The first was the launch of 'Composite City', a publication co-authored by six interdisciplinary writers covering some of the hidden stories within Melbourne's history. Taking place as part of the CNSIP's *City North Fest*, this included an interactive panel conversation where the writers discussed the methods, sources and stories behind the publication, allowing the public to learn more about the narratives taken and their collaborative process.

A second activity was a generative storytelling hackathon, where some of the 'Composite City' authors, alongside other creatives and academics—and guided by AI prompt editors, explored the limits and possibilities of AI-assisted collaborative writing in real-time. The event not only tested the creative potential of AI but also produced materials that are available for future research on the intersection of AI, creative practice and non-fiction site-specific storytelling.

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## Outcomes & Impact

The *Storying City North* project has had a positive impact on both the CNSIP activation efforts and the broader creative research community. By activating key RMIT sites in the CNSIP (including the RUSU Hub in Building 78) for the book launch of 'Composite City' and underutilised Media Portal spaces for the Hackathon) the project created opportunities for public engagement. The Hackathon also brought together a cross-disciplinary group of researchers, including intervarsity colleagues, cross-program and degree students, and diverse AI technologies, to consider and create an ongoing platform for collaborative, speculative storytelling.

The outputs generated during the project, along with the insights on the strengths and limitations of generative AI, will contribute into future research in publishing and creative practice. The innovative use of AI in storytelling also directly aligns with the CNSIP's goals of fostering future-focused, technology-driven approaches to urban development. The conversations generated during the event, particularly around the ethical implications of AI in relation to human creativity, have sparked critical discussions that are already influencing future collaborations.

The project also helped amplify the precinct's role as a space for innovation and experimentation, engaging with emerging technologies in ways that directly address the CNSIP's impact themes.

The project's impact extends beyond its immediate outputs. The research conducted during the Hackathon has led to funding from the University of Melbourne's Faculty of Arts for further fieldwork and data collection. It will inform papers to be presented at the 'National Institute of Professional Editors' and 'Australian Publishers' Association' conferences. These scholarly contributions will further influence future funding applications, including an upcoming ARC Discovery Grant proposal.

## Insights & What's Next

The *Storying City North Project* has provided valuable insights into the challenges of integrating AI into writing and publishing projects. One of the key findings was gaining a clearer understanding of the limitations of generative AI, specifically its inability to engage in non-fiction research and writing, or to produce constrained poetic forms. The project however, also highlighted where AI can play a role in real-time co-located synchronous situated speculations, offering new avenues for creative exploration and collaboration.

Moving forward, the project team plans to continue exploring AI's role in creative writing processes and practices, with a focus on refining AI-human collaboration and pushing the boundaries of what these technologies can achieve in terms of narrative creation and particularly, editing for production and publication.

In addition, one of the co-conveners of the project's second phase is running an RMIT undergraduate course on digital writing at in Semester 1 2025, further solidifying the project's influence on the academic and professional development of its participants.

Digital Divinations' website:

**CLICK HERE**

Arcade Almanac 2024:
Composite City | Arcade Publications

**CLICK HERE**

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# THE 'WE CARE' INITIATIVE: REIMAGINING CIVIC HEALTH THROUGH CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT

Community Engagement & Creative Practice

**RMIT Area**

- College of Design & Social Context—School of Global, Urban & Social Studies, and Centre for Urban Research

**Project Leads**

- Vice Chancellor's Senior Research Fellow (VCRF), Dr Sarah Barns

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### Project Context & Rationale

Imagine walking through a city where health and wellbeing are not just policies but the very fabric of the urban experience. A city designed not just with data, but with stories. *We Care* emerged from this vision: an experiment in blending digital storytelling, data collaboration and community engagement to explore how precincts could be reimagined as places of care.

The project began with a question: *What might a precinct created as a platform for the common good actually be?* The CNSIP is already laying the groundwork for innovation across urban challenges, from food security to cultural understanding, but *We Care* sought to extend on this, using creative engagement to unlock new ways of thinking, collaborating and creating a precinct in which civic health is prioritised.

Data, the foundation upon which many new innovation precincts are imagined, can't inspire transformational civics. The care factor lies elsewhere: in creating agency towards shared narratives of collective change.

"We Care

"We need to slow down our life to embrace what's going on in nature."

EVAN

"We weren't just collecting data. We were creating a shared language of care—one that blends technology, storytelling, and community voices to shape the future of urban wellbeing."

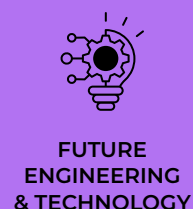—Dr. Sarah Barns, Project Lead

We Care

"I want to see more infrastructure for wildlife care."

TARECQ

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"We Care was about turning precincts into platforms for collective imagination. When people feel heard, they feel invested. And that's how cities truly come to life."

—Stephen Johnston, Project Collaborator

## Collaboration & Stakeholders

Collaboration was key to the *We Care* project. RMIT's Centre for Urban Research (CUR) led the initiative, bringing together a mix of partners—including representatives from the University of Liverpool's Civic Health Innovation Lab (CHIL), creative practitioners, industry leaders, and community voices. Together, they formed a network of expertise in civic AI, regenerative design, and digital storytelling.

Workshops were held involving artists, researchers and urban planners. Local health advocates shared their insights, while independent creators captured the emotional layers of city life. AECOM, Frontiers SI and Hatch contributed industry perspectives and self-employed artists were also supported to contribute, ensuring diverse voices were at the table. This was more than just a research project. It was a collective act of imagining—where every participant's perspective helped shape the vision of a healthier, more inclusive precinct.

## Key Activities & Deliverables

A precinct is more than buildings and streets. It is a living, breathing ecosystem of experiences, shaped by how people move, feel and connect. *We Care* invited participants to step outside conventional urban design thinking and explore the CNSIP through a different lens.

The journey began with silence. Guided by an artist-researcher, participants embarked on a Body/Place tour, walking the precinct with heightened sensory awareness. Without words, they tuned into the rhythms of the space—the feel of the pavement underfoot, the rustle of leaves in the breeze, the way sunlight painted the buildings in shifting tones. The city was not just static infrastructure; it was alive.

From there, storytelling took centre stage. Through speculative exercises, participants imagined the precinct's future, spinning narratives that envisioned urban spaces infused with care. Some imagined a Deep Time Precinct, where Indigenous understandings of time and Country shaped the very architecture. Others dreamed of a Connected Regional Ecosystem, where digital democracy tools linked urban and rural communities in shared decision-making. There was even a vision for Animal-Conscious Urbanism, where the city embraced wildlife and pets as citizens in their own right.

These were more than abstract ideas. They became tangible narratives, captured through video stories and digital portraits that chronicled the process. The project also tested collaborative AI-driven frameworks, exploring how stories could provide the frameworks from which data indicators could be shaped—not just to measure civic health, but to inspire it.





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"Walking the precinct in silence was a moment of real connection. For the first time, I wasn't just moving through the city—I was experiencing it."

—We Care Workshop Participant

## Outcomes & Impact

Throughout *We Care*, the combination of storytelling, data, and collaborative design opened new pathways for thinking about precincts—not just as spaces, but as experiential places for care. In so doing, the project also imagined a way of working with hybrid digital-physical spaces, not as spaces to be objectified by data points, but enlivened through experiential interactions, both physical and digital.

Participants saw how storytelling could be a tool for shaping policy, and how creativity could transform the way communities interact with data. A 'mirrored sandbox' approach emerged, blending real-world storytelling with digital civic AI models, creating a bridge between personal narratives and collective action.

The project also uncovered new ways to activate spaces. Digital storytelling assets were developed, ready for future CNSIP-related exhibitions and events. The idea of nighttime projections on CNSIP buildings was identified as an immersive way to bring stories to life in public spaces.

The format inspired new collaborations and new insights. New partnerships were forged, as participants were inspired to think and act differently towards their own places of care. Technologists told us they were inspired by the creativity; artists said their eyes were opened about the role of the university in relation to place. Perhaps most importantly, *We Care* showed that when people feel heard, they feel invested, and the city becomes theirs.

"I'd never thought about urban design through the lens of storytelling before. But now, I can't unsee it—cities are built on the stories we tell about them."

—We Care Workshop Participant



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## Insights & What's Next

Opportunities to advance the We Care project within the CNSIP's activation and creative engagement efforts include:

### Exhibition of Video Stories linked to public engagement methods:

Using existing screens around RMIT's campus & the CNSIP; or through short term activations using STORYBOX methods to link sentiment and engagement tools in public spaces. Using temporary digital cubes and/or totems, STORYBOX creates digital engagement programs for museums, cultural institutions and educational precincts, incorporating 'Ambient Commons' activity monitoring tools and engagement methodologies.

### Precinct Storytelling:

Workshop concepts for the future precinct could be developed through a curated program built around one of the core project themes. The idea of a 'Deep Time Precinct' creates a canvas through which to explore ideas about time and experience in the city. Ideas from neuro-architecture could also be explored, focusing on sensory experience in and around the precinct.

### Participatory Civic AI:

Extending concepts of Civic AI into longer term partner collaborations, including workshops and data collaborations. This could facilitate further learning and engagement focused on the role of Civic AI as an enabler of defined data sharing around shared missions developed with precinct partners. Further exploratory work is required.

"The idea of a Deep Time Precinct really resonated with me. What if cities were designed not just for the present, but for the stories of generations to come?"

—Workshop Participant

We Care

"I love the idea of 'common unity'. The idea of bringing communities together through a sense of common purpose and common outcome, while also respecting different identities and encouraging connection."

JONATHAN

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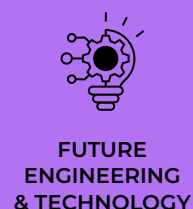
"The key highlight was the awareness we were able to raise with the activity which resulted in our industry partners/ government bodies and universities engaging with each other and discussing future collaborative works. The project has resulted in us being connected to multiple other industries and government bodies."

# REVITALISING CARDIGAN STREET: TACTICAL URBANISM FOR A GREENER AND MORE SOCIALLY INSPIRING PUBLIC SPACE

*Tactical Urbanism & Applied Research*

**RMIT Area**
- College of Design & Social Context—School of Global, Urban & Social Studies

**Project Leads**
- Dr Mittul Vahanvati

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"[I] would like to see opportunities for student creativity and talent to be better celebrated on the street, i.e. being given the opportunity to design art or murals for the blank walls that face the street."

—Student Participant



## Project Context & Rationale

Cardigan Street in the CNSIP is undergoing a significant transformation, guided by a long-term vision for a sustainable and socially inclusive urban environment. The *Revitalising Cardigan Street* project centred on testing the potential of tactical urbanism —a method of creating temporary interventions to test and refine urban design ideas based on real user experiences.

Through its activation, the project aimed to address a critical gap in public space use: how to make urban spaces more engaging, sustainable, and community driven. The project focused on ways to foster social care and wellbeing through urban design while also contributing to urban sustainability and the clean economy.

The project team, in partnership with local industry, explored ways to also involve the community in shaping Cardigan Street's future by making the street more people-friendly and environmentally conscious.

## Collaboration & Stakeholders

At the heart of the project was a collaborative ecosystem, where academia, industry and local communities came together. The lead team from RMIT's Sustainability and Urban Planning (SUP) program within the School of Global, Urban and Social Studies (GUSS), partnered with Giant Grass Pty Ltd, whose innovative bamboo Zome shade structures were used not only to enhance Cardigan Street's aesthetic but also to provide sustainable, flexible spaces for gathering.

Additionally, MGS Architects contributed expert insight through guest lectures to SUP's urban planning students involved in the Project. Interdisciplinary collaboration within RMIT was also key, with academics from urban studies, urban design and urban planning working together to shape the design and data collection. Collaborations with event partners—RMIT's Future Play Lab and RMIT Culture and City North Activation Team enriched the project's data collection efforts, giving the project team a deeper understanding of how users interact with public spaces.

## Key Activities & Deliverables

The temporary transformation of Cardigan Street through tactical urbanism was a dynamic, participatory process. Informed by the envisioned future of Cardigan Street, two Zome-shaped shade structures were installed in the centre of Cardigan Street. These shade structures offered new spaces for social interaction and study during the CNSIP *City North Fest* on 4th & 5th October 2024. Native trees were installed along the street contributing to urban biodiversity and a greener public space. Urban design students also exhibited posters of their creative visions for the future of Cardigan Street, sparking conversation and feedback from attendees. To capture authentic user experiences, 15 video

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interviews were conducted during the activation period, alongside 8 interviews from the non-activated phase. The time-lapse videos taken throughout the event provided valuable data on human behaviour, revealing patterns of use for the space and areas of potential improvement. These activities fed into a larger research program, with findings to be published in a peer-reviewed journal and a documentary currently in development.

## Outcomes & Impact

The activation of Cardigan Street as part of *City North Fest* demonstrated the powerful potential of temporary urban interventions in reshaping public spaces. Community members, including students, local residents and business owners, expressed strong support for suggested street changes, particularly the shade structures and greenery. Support for these changes during the tactical urbanism intervention revealed the importance of creating spaces that feel inviting at a human scale, where people can linger, study and socialise. Feedback also highlighted a desire for more seating options, flexible spaces and opportunities for creative expression, such as murals or public art. From an environmental perspective, the introduction of trees and green spaces was highly appreciated, with many attendees suggesting the addition of more greenery in the future. The data collected during this activation provides valuable insights into how the tactical intervention of an envisioned urban design can enhance social interactions, environmental sustainability and overall community wellbeing, in the long-term.

## Insights & What's Next

This project has provided invaluable lessons for the next iteration of Cardigan Street's transformation. One key takeaway is the importance of extending the tactical urbanism activation period to allow for a deeper, more authentic user experience. Future activations should also explore further car access restrictions, and incorporate features such as a water fountain or additional greenery in the street's centre to encourage more people to move away from the edges, and onto the street. In terms of design, the success of the Zomes suggests that more varied shade structures could be introduced to cater to different needs: from group spaces to quiet, intimate spots.

Moving forward, data collection efforts will be expanded to better understand the demographic makeup of street users, helping to refine the design for a more inclusive and balanced public space.

This project has set the stage for future iterations, that focus on converting Cardigan Street from being a thoroughfare, a destination, as well as a thriving, sustainable urban environment that brings people together.

"[People] wanted more seating, particularly more flexible seating options, and places to hang out outside with friends, or to study, that are free and not inside the library or a cafe."

—Student Interview Participant



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# VOICE-BASED DETECTION SYSTEM TO PREDICT RISK OF TYPE 2 DIABETES

Applied Research, Knowledge Leadership & Technology Prototyping

**RMIT Area**
- STEM College—School of Health & Biomedical Sciences

**Project Leads**
- Distinguished Prof Barbora de Courten OAM
- Dr Chiao Xin (Chelsea) Lim

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## Project Context & Rationale

Type 2 Diabetes (T2D) is a silent epidemic affecting millions globally. In Australia alone, it costs the economy approximately $17.6 billion annually[1]. One of the most alarming challenges in diabetes care is the late detection of the disease, often 5–7 years after the onset of symptoms; which can lead to severe complications like blindness, kidney failure and amputations[2]. However, a breakthrough is on the horizon. The *Voice-Based Detection System* project aims to revolutionise the diagnostic process by detecting early signs of diabetes through subtle, undetectable acoustic changes in the voice, driven by advanced artificial intelligence (AI) and deep learning algorithms. By recognising patterns in vocal changes, the system promises a non-invasive, cost-effective tool for early diagnosis, enabling healthcare professionals to act sooner, prevent complications, and ultimately save lives.

Aligned with key CNSIP impact areas—Social Care & Wellbeing, Future Engineering & Technology, and International Collaboration—this project embodies the intersection of technology and health. It offers an innovative approach to addressing the healthcare challenges associated with T2D, while reinforcing RMIT's leadership in MedTech and the Digital Health fields. By capitalising on the vast potential of voice analysis, this project positions RMIT at the forefront of a transformative movement in early disease detection.

## Collaboration & Stakeholders

This project thrives on collaboration across diverse sectors, leveraging partnerships that span continents. At its core, the program engages with RMIT's international networks, including the RACE Hub, the RMIT AWS Cloud Supercomputing Hub and RMIT Europe. Key contributors from RMIT, such as Dr. Craig Richmond and Dr. María Gabriela Irrazabal, are laying the groundwork for future funding through European collaboration, further deepening the project's global reach.

The project also collaborates with DDM Health, an award-winning UK-based provider of digital health solutions, marking a significant cross-border partnership in the MedTech space. Arjun Panesar, CEO of DDM Health, brings invaluable expertise and access to resources, facilitating the development of sophisticated AI algorithms for T2D detection. Additionally, the project works with Parkside Specialists, a metabolic clinic hub in Melbourne which is key to data collection and testing. Dr. Kevin Lee, an endocrinologist at Parkside, ensures the integration of clinical insights into the development of this innovative health tool. These collaborations are not only enhancing the project's success but are also building a global ecosystem of shared knowledge and innovation.

## Activities & Deliverables

The journey of this project began with a deep dive into existing literature, followed by ethics approval and the design of sophisticated AI models for voice data analysis. One of the project's first milestones involved acquiring continuous glucose meters, which enables the linking of voice data with real-time glucose readings—an essential element in understanding how vocal patterns correlate with T2D progression.

[1] Diabetes Australia, Diabetes in Australia, https://www.diabetesaustralia.com.au/about-diabetes/diabetes-in-australia/

[2] Porta M, Curletto G, Cipullo D, Rigault de la Longrais R, Trento M, Passera P, Taulaigo AV, Di Miceli S, Cenci A, D



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## Hearing the Signs: Detecting T2D Through Voice

Cutting-edge research suggests Type 2 Diabetes (T2D) leaves subtle traces in the voice. From pitch shifts to speech tempo, these vocal cues could unlock a new, non-invasive way to detect the disease.

**Pitch & Frequency:** Metabolic and respiratory changes alter tone.

**Formant Frequencies:** Vocal tract shifts reflect muscle tone variations.

**Harmonics-to-Noise Ratio (HNR):** Neuropathy may disrupt vocal fold vibrations.

**Tempo:** Speech rate changes signal fatigue or cognitive effects.

**Variability:** Inconsistent voice energy may reveal underlying issues.

*A future where T2D is detected with a simple voice recording may be closer than we think!*

The team has begun data collection, with a focus on voice recordings and health markers from participants with T2D.

In 2025–2026, the project will scale up, incorporating two new population groups: individuals who are overweight or obese, and healthy individuals; all contributing to the development of a robust, accurate diagnostic system. This expansion promises valuable pilot data that could lead to further research funding in the range of $0.4M to $10M. The integration of voice-based diagnostics into healthcare services could soon offer a simple, rapid tool for identifying those at risk of T2D. This advancement has the potential to transform how diabetes is diagnosed and managed globally.

### Outcomes & Impact

This project has the potential to significantly impact the future of diabetes care. By using voice as a diagnostic tool, it offers a unique, non-invasive alternative to conventional blood tests, which are often costly and inconvenient. The integration of AI with voice analysis not only enables early detection of T2D, but also promotes personalised, preventative healthcare. This shift towards early intervention is crucial in managing the rising healthcare costs associated with chronic diseases like diabetes.

The project's success thus far has demonstrated its potential to make a global impact. Funding from the CNSIP enabled the acquisition of critical resources, such as glucose meters, which were pivotal in linking voice data with health markers. A large in-kind contribution from DDM Health will further support the development of AI algorithms and software for T2D diagnosis. Beyond the health implications, this project has also positioned RMIT as a leader in the global MedTech and Digital Health sectors, with a lasting model for cross-industry collaboration and innovation.

### Insights & What's Next

Reflecting on the journey so far, the project has highlighted the immense potential for scaling AI-driven health interventions to meet the growing demands of global healthcare systems. The team has learned the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration, bringing together experts from AI, health sciences, and clinical practice to create a solution that is both scientifically rigorous and clinically relevant.

Looking ahead, the next phase of the project will expand its scope by recruiting participants from new population groups, including those who are overweight or obese as well as healthy individuals. This will provide the necessary data to refine the diagnostic model and enhance its accuracy. With plans to scale up the study and secure additional funding, the project is poised to revolutionise T2D detection, offering a transformative solution with the potential to change the face of global healthcare. As the project moves forward, the lessons learned will not only influence the next phase of this program but also shape future endeavours in the field of digital health, creating lasting positive impacts on the global healthcare landscape.

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"

"Two of our social enterprises who participated in the pop-up shop figured out a way they could solve a resourcing problem together and will now pair up to help each other."

# INNOVATIVE FRONTIERS: UNLOCKING THE FUTURE OF URBAN DESIGN AND CONNECTIVITY WITH AI AND AR

Technology Prototyping & Knowledge Leadership

**RMIT Area**
- STEM College—STEMM Digital Innovation Hub

**Project Leads**
- Director, STEMM Digital Innovation Hub, Prof. James Harland
- Director, AWS Cloud Supercomputing Hub, Dr Robert Shen
- Dr Ian Peake

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"Pepper is visually very appealing, and was in great demand for selfies and other informal interactions. In addition, the formal duties as MC were very impactful, with two external speakers commenting very favourably about Pepper, with one even going so far as to say (totally unprompted) that ...you guys are really putting the Technology into RMIT!"

—Innovative Frontiers Project Lead
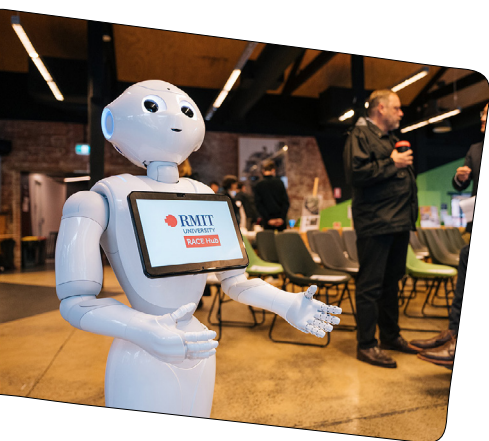


## Project Context & Rationale

The *Innovative Frontiers* project aims to transform the CNSIP by integrating cutting-edge technologies, including Augmented Reality (AR) and Artificial Intelligence (AI). By launching three key sub-projects —'ARchitect', 'ConversAI' and 'RoboGuide'—the project sought to consider an immersive, accessible and future-focused precinct. It leveraged AR to enhance design possibilities within the CNSIP, utilised AI-powered chatbots to improve real-time communication and introduced Softbank's Pepper robots to assist users and foster inclusivity. By focusing on innovative technologies, the project aimed to bridge the gap between design, user engagement and technology, contributing to the precinct's mission of addressing urban challenges and promoting sustainability.

The rationale for this project is grounded in the need for technological solutions that can enhance user experience, inform decision-making and create a more connected and inclusive community within the CNSIP. The integration of AR and AI into the urban environment can not only enhance public engagement but also provide an avenue for learning and collaboration, particularly for the RMIT community.

## Collaboration & Stakeholders

Collaboration has been a key element of this project. The project team worked closely with Softbank, which provided the Pepper robot, and Amazon Web Services (AWS), which offered cloud computing services. These collaborations have expanded the project's capabilities, with Softbank's involvement bringing international insight and technology to the precinct. The integration of Pepper as an AI-powered concierge has proven to be an exciting development, with the robot serving as both an engaging user experience tool and a means to enhance accessibility within the CNSIP.

Moreover, AWS's in-principle support and cloud computing resources enabled the team to develop scalable and robust technological solutions. The collaboration with other RMIT groups involved in the CNSIP projects has furthered the potential for future synergies and knowledge sharing.

## Key Activities & Deliverables

Throughout the project, the team has focused on delivering three sub-projects that bring innovation to the CNSIP. The 'ARchitect' sub-project developed two key deliverables: a virtual reality tool for designing the CNSIP, and an immersive drone-like experience showcasing the potential of air taxi services. The team also successfully launched 'ConversAI', an AI-powered chatbot for the precinct, and 'RoboGuide', which introduced the Pepper robot as an AI-powered concierge.

The team successfully showcased the Pepper robot at events like the *City North Showcase* and the *STEM College Learning & Teaching Showcase*. The interaction with Pepper proved to be a highlight for many visitors, sparking conversations around AI and robotics in public spaces.

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Pepper Robot at
City North Showcase:

**CLICK HERE**

YouTube video of simulation
footage of City North air taxi demo:

**CLICK HERE**

YouTube video of simulation
footage of City North area:

**CLICK HERE**



## Outcomes and Impact

The impact of the project can be measured both in terms of technological advancements, and the way these innovations have transformed user experience within the CNSIP. The AR tools, including the VR apps, allowed users to visualise potential futures for the precinct and sparked discussions about urban design, technology and community engagement. The deployment of Pepper as an AI-powered concierge has also provided valuable insights into the public's interaction with robots in everyday spaces, with the robot becoming a beloved figure in the precinct and at various public events.

In terms of outcomes, the project has raised awareness about the potential of AI and AR in urban settings, contributing to the broader mission of the CNSIP to inspire innovation and address critical urban challenges. Additionally, the project has provided RMIT with an exciting platform for collaboration and hands-on learning, aligning with the precinct's goals around promoting STEM education and future-focused solutions.

## Insights & What's Next

Looking ahead, the *Innovative Frontiers* project has highlighted the immense potential of combining AR, AI and robotics in urban spaces. The team is exploring ways to expand the use of these technologies within the precinct, including integrating data from various sensors and exploring opportunities for creating a digital twin of the CNSIP. The success of the Pepper robot has shown the potential for AI to become an integral part of future public-facing services, and there are discussions underway about extending its use for events and exhibitions in the future.

The future of this project lies in further enhancing user engagement with these technologies, refining the virtual experiences offered by 'ARchitect' and expanding the use of AI-driven solutions across the precinct. As the project evolves, the team is keen to continue collaborating with key stakeholders, and furthering the CNSIP's mission to create an inclusive, innovative and future-ready urban space.



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# SIMULATING CLEAN ECONOMY TRANSFORMATIONS AT A PRECINCT SCALE

*Technology Prototyping & Knowledge Leadership*

**RMIT Area**

- College of Design & Social Context—School of Property, Construction & Project Management

**Project Leads**

- Dr Akvan Gajanayake

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## Project Context & Rationale

The CNSIP program has set out to address the pressing challenges of sustainability, particularly within the clean economy sector. In an effort to create meaningful impact, this project aimed to gauge the appetite for clean economy solutions within the precinct by engaging businesses, students and staff. A comprehensive survey of 300 participants, along with interviews and focus group discussions with 30 individuals, provided key insights into how clean energy interventions could be introduced. The results revealed a strong demand for visible actions that could inspire participation, particularly through the use of technology and social media. Convenience was identified as a key driver for encouraging sustainable behaviours, while tech-driven engagement strategies were found to have a significant impact on participation rates.

Building on these insights, the project sought to develop a web-based tool designed to explore energy requirements, simulate renewable energy interventions, and evaluate the environmental and cost implications of various solutions. With a focus on practical applications, the goal was to enable stakeholders to experiment with potential clean economy solutions tailored to specific precinct locations, thereby advancing the CNSIP's commitment to sustainable urban transformation.

## Collaboration & Stakeholders

The project brought together researchers from RMIT's School of Property Construction & Project Management (PCPM), Property Services Group, STEM College, and School of Architecture & Urban Design to analyse data and conduct place-based simulations. The project also collaborated with an RMIT Activator start-up 'Beta Launch', to develop a web-based system that decision makers can use to visualise and estimate financial and environmental impacts of implementing specific solutions.

## Activities & Deliverables

At its core, this project was about developing tools for simulating clean energy transformations within the precinct. The initial phase focused on identifying three key locations within the CNSIP—Little Cardigan St behind Building 55, O'Grady Place and the vicinity of Building 47. These locations were selected as potential sites for simulating sustainable interventions. It also involved conducting renewable energy modelling for Building 47, where various clean economy solutions were tested for their feasibility.

The project focused on designing and implementing intervention strategies for five physical elements across the precinct, which would integrate clean economy principles. A Proof of Concept (PoC) was developed and launched, allowing stakeholders to interact with the web-based tool, visualise potential interventions, and understand their environmental impact in real time. Validation of the PoC occurred through the *City North Showcase* and focus group sessions involving RMIT researchers, RMIT's Property Services Group and external experts. This validated the tool's potential for scaling and further refinement.
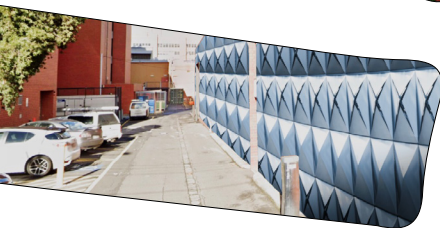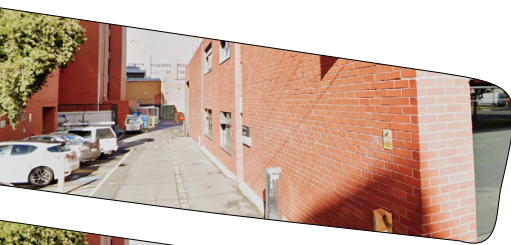
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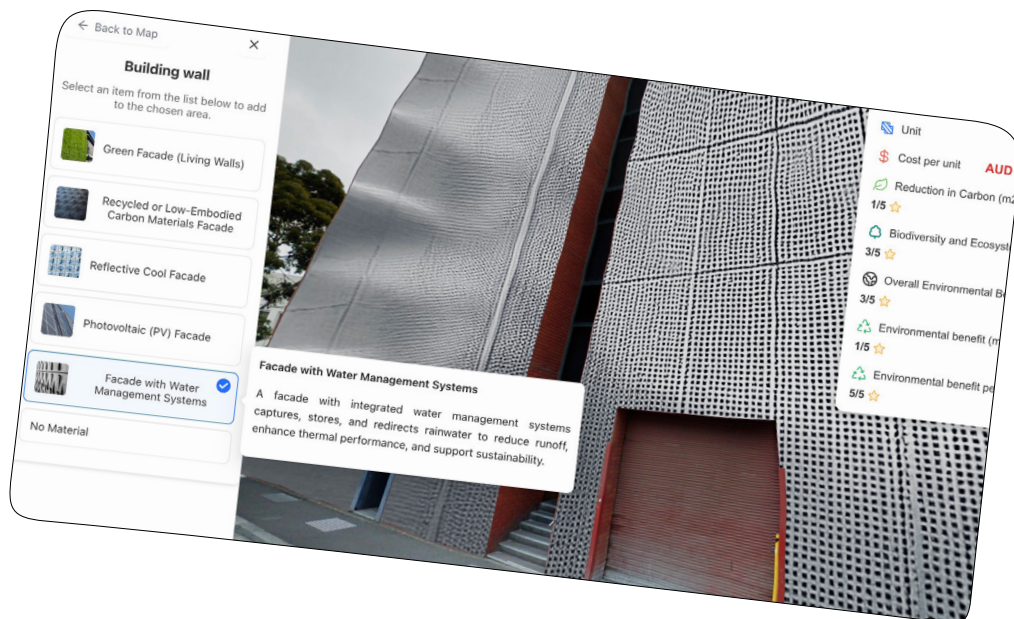& WELLBEING

Proof of concept website:

## Outcomes & Impact

The project made significant strides in its objective to explore how clean economy solutions could be integrated into the CNSIP. While specific outcomes are not yet detailed, the development of the web-based tool itself marks a major achievement. By enabling users to simulate clean energy interventions tailored to the precinct, the tool serves as both an educational and decision-making resource. It encourages stakeholders to experiment with place-based sustainable solutions that can lead to tangible improvements in sustainability.

The project also contributed to the CNSIP's broader mission to transform urban spaces into living labs for innovative, sustainable solutions. By demonstrating the impact of clean economy on everyday life, the project further solidified the precinct's commitment to becoming a model for future-oriented, sustainable urban development.

## Insights & What's Next

Looking ahead, the next steps for the project involve rolling out the web tool to internal stakeholders and further analysing the preferences and intervention choices of different groups. This will help assess the viability of expanding the tool's simulations to the entire precinct, providing an even broader scope for clean economy transformations.

The lessons learned from this initial phase underscore the importance of collaborative engagement and the role of technology in driving sustainability. By harnessing the power of simulation tools and leveraging the collective input of community members, the project has laid the groundwork for a more sustainable, energy-efficient future for the CNSIP. The ultimate goal is to extend these findings and solutions to other areas within the precinct, ensuring that clean economy principles become integrated into the long-term vision for it's urban transformation.



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"The project has resulted in us working on a multi-million -dollar project proposal to the Australian government's Quad Energy Fund on solar panel recycling."

# DIGITAL SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: REVOLUTIONISING ASSET MANAGEMENT FOR A SUSTAINABLE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Technology Prototyping & Knowledge Leadership

**RMIT Area**
- STEM College—School of Engineering, Department of Civil & Infrastructure Engineering

**Project Leads**
- Dr Nilmini Weerasinghe
- Dr Ruwini Edirisinghe
- Prof. Sujeeva Setunge

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## Project Context & Rationale

The building and construction sector is responsible for 40% of global $CO_2$ emissions and a large proportion of waste sent to landfills, making the need for sustainability innovations urgent. Asset managers often struggle with decision-making due to a lack of detailed information on a building's materials, condition and lifecycle history, particularly in ageing structures. Addressing this gap is critical to improving sustainability and efficiency in the built environment.

The *Digital Sustainability Index* (DSI) project is developing a cutting-edge decision-making tool that allows asset managers to evaluate buildings and their components through the lenses of sustainability, structural integrity and serviceability. By creating a comprehensive 3D model of buildings, enriched with critical data via 3D laser scanning and point cloud technology, the project provides valuable insights for informed asset management.

The DSI project leverages a digital platform to assess buildings comprehensively, offering sustainable solutions that enhance asset management throughout a building's lifecycle. By focusing on the renewal phase at the precinct level, the project supports the circular economy and promotes sustainable asset management practices.

## Collaboration & Stakeholders

The DSI project is the result of strong collaborations across academia, industry and RMIT's internal departments. Key partners include CAMS (Central Asset Management System), developed by RMIT researchers and McDonald Consultancy, who are commercialising the software. These partnerships are critical to obtaining current data for the buildings within the precinct and refining the project's outcomes.

Locally, RMIT's Property Services Group (PSG) provided access to critical building data needed to evaluate the building sustainability, including architectural drawings, building condition data, and energy generation figures. By collaborating with RMIT's Civil and Infrastructure Engineering and Property Construction & Project Management schools, the project has been integrated into RMIT's 'Digital Transformation for Sustainable Construction' course (OENG1254). This multidisciplinary approach has helped build a comprehensive tool that will be useful not only to asset managers but also to RMIT's students and future engineers, providing hands-on experience in sustainability and asset management practices.
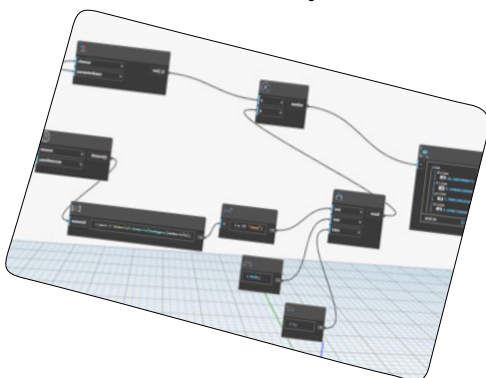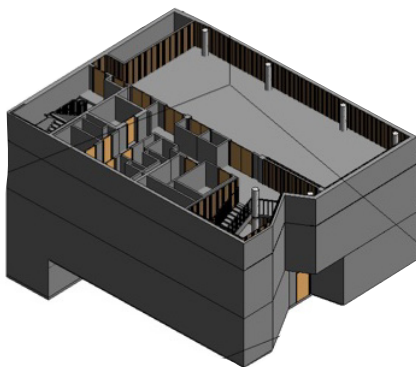
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## Key Activities & Deliverables

The journey to develop a cutting-edge decision-making tool unfolds in carefully planned stages. In 2024, the team honed the DSI's attributes, defining key decision criteria to assess building elements during the renewal stage. A major milestone was the creation of a detailed 3D model of Building 47 within the CNSIP using 3D laser scanning and 'Autodesk Revit', seamlessly integrating material information into the Building Information Modelling (BIM) platform. With this foundation in place, the team calculated the DSI for both the current and future states of the precinct, laying the groundwork for a sustainable procurement guide to inform upcoming renovations.

## Outcomes & Impact

The DSI project has advanced sustainable asset management by using 3D models from point cloud scanning, integrated into Revit and CAMS, to evaluate building sustainability, structural integrity and serviceability throughout their lifecycle. By incorporating environmental product declarations and sustainability criteria, the platform enables RMIT and building practitioners to better understand building performance from both structural and environmental perspectives.

Aligned with the CNSIP mission, this tool acts as a bridge for engineers, architects, and environmental scientists to address sustainability challenges. The tool also promises wider industry applications by scaling to other precincts or urban developments, supporting circular economy principles.

## Insights & What's Next

The DSI project highlights the crucial role of digital technologies and interdisciplinary collaboration in tackling complex sustainability challenges.

Looking ahead, the project has great expansion potential, with plans to integrate virtual reality and AI-driven decision-making, and scale assessment criteria for waste and energy during demolition. Integrating BIM with CAMS will extend the tool's functionalities, serving as both an educational resource, and enabling real-time monitoring and predictive analytics for building sustainability.

The focus will shift to deeper collaboration with RMIT's PSG to refine the model further, and collaboration with more industry partners to enhance the prototype and adapt it for diverse building types and sustainability goals. Additional material properties will be integrated, carbon calculations for individual building components will be conducted and a digital report generation script will be developed to streamline data analysis. A sustainable procurement framework, emphasising low-carbon alternatives, will also take shape—ensuring future renovations align with ambitious sustainability goals and drive  lasting impact.

By equipping decision-makers with clear, data-driven insights, the DSI empowers more sustainable choices at every stage of a building's lifecycle—supporting a future where digital innovation and environmental responsibility go hand in hand.

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# ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

## Technology Prototyping & Knowledge Leadership

**RMIT Area**

- College of Design & Social Context—School of Property, Construction & Project Management (PCPM)

**Project Leads**

- Associate Dean, Research & Innovation, School of Property, Construction & Project Management (PCPM), Prof. Priya Rajagopalan

- Dr. Shilpi Tewari

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## Project Context & Rationale

The air we breathe, the sounds that shape our streets, and the microclimates that define our urban experience are constantly changing, yet they often remain invisible. Without real-time insights, community, businesses, and city planners are left reacting to environmental issues rather than anticipating them.

This *Environmental Management System* project aims to bridge that gap, embedding environmental intelligence into the CNSIP. By deploying a network of sensors to track air quality, noise pollution and microclimate trends, the project transforms raw data into a powerful tool for shaping a healthier, more sustainable urban environment. Anchored in Melbourne's broader environmental monitoring efforts —from the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) air quality station at Carlton Gardens, to the Bureau of Meteorology's Olympic Park weather station—this project enhances local intelligence at the precinct level. By providing hyper-local, real-time insights, the project ensures that environmental data isn't just collected—it becomes a catalyst for smarter decision-making across the community.
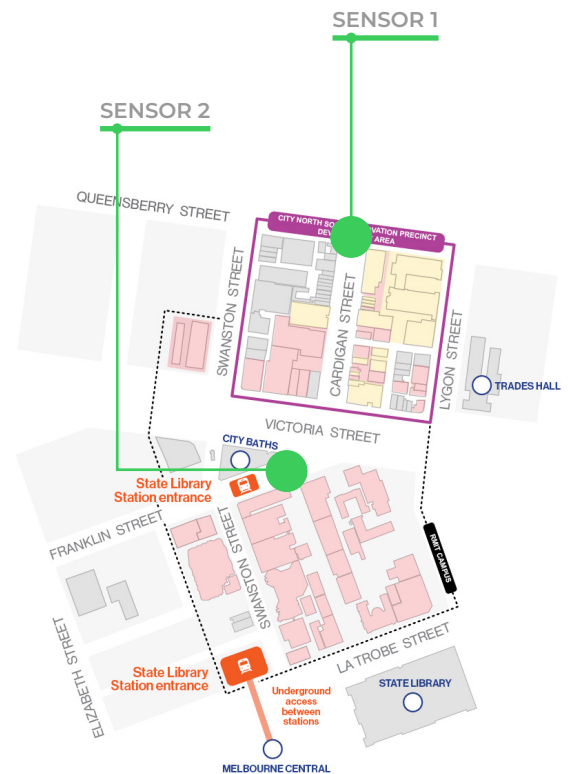
## Collaboration & Stakeholders

Delivering real-time environmental intelligence requires the expertise of multiple partners, each contributing to different layers of the project's design, and long-term success. RMIT's Property Services Group plays a critical role in identifying locations for sensor deployment, ensuring they align with building regulations and infrastructure capabilities. The university's Information Technology Service team designs the digital framework that allows the sensors to collect, store and process real-time data, while the RMIT School of Property, Construction and Project Management research team ensures that the scientific methodologies and environmental monitoring techniques meet the highest standards.

Collaboration extends beyond the university, with the City of Melbourne and local businesses offering insights into how environmental data can shape public space improvements and commercial activities. Students and researchers at RMIT gain a valuable opportunity to interact with the technology; using live environmental data in their work, while the local Carlton community benefits from increased transparency, and accessibility to critical urban health information. These partnerships ensure that the project is not just an academic exercise but a truly integrated city-wide program that enhances both policy development and daily life.

## Key Activities & Deliverables

Imagine walking through the CNSIP and seeing, in real time, how air quality changes with traffic, how temperature pockets form between buildings, or noise levels fluctuate throughout the day. This is the vision for the first phase of the project—a future where environmental data is seamlessly integrated into urban life.

The journey began with an Environmental Management Proposal, outlining real-time monitoring to transform how we understand our surroundings. The plan includes high-performance sensors

SENSOR 1

SENSOR 2

QUEENSBERRY STREET

SWANSTON STREET

CARDIGAN STREET

LYGON STREET

CITY NORTH SOUTHBANK INNOVATION PRECINCT DEVELOPMENT AREA

TRADES HALL

VICTORIA STREET

CITY BATHS

State Library Station entrance

FRANKLIN STREET

SWANSTON STREET

RMIT CAMPUS

ELIZABETH STREET

State Library Station entrance

Underground access between stations

LA TROBE STREET

STATE LIBRARY

MELBOURNE CENTRAL

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across the precinct, tracking air pollutants, noise, and microclimate variations, and feeding data into a central platform. Beyond passive observation, predictive analytics could anticipate environmental changes, helping planners and communities act proactively.

The project suggests ways to make data tangible and accessible, such as interactive displays in RMIT buildings and a mobile platform to guide travel and gathering decisions. With the groundwork laid, a new way of engaging with the urban environment emerges —where the city actively participates in its own sustainability.

## Outcomes & Impact

By making environmental conditions visible and actionable, the project provides tangible benefits across multiple sectors. Live air quality data enables local businesses to make informed outdoor seating decisions, helps event planners adjust conditions, and allows residents to better manage daily activities. It also offers valuable insights for RMIT's Property Services Group and city planners —aiding in the design and maintenance of spaces focused on environmental health.

Beyond practical applications, the project fosters a culture of research and innovation, providing academics and students access to a real-world dataset that supports teaching, experimentation, and advances in urban sustainability. Crucially, the project directly enhances public health, protecting those who live, work, and play in the CNSIP from pollution and extreme urban heat. In a time of growing environmental challenges, anticipating rather than reacting is vital. By embedding environmental intelligence into the city's fabric, the project positions the CNSIP as a leading example of urban resilience.
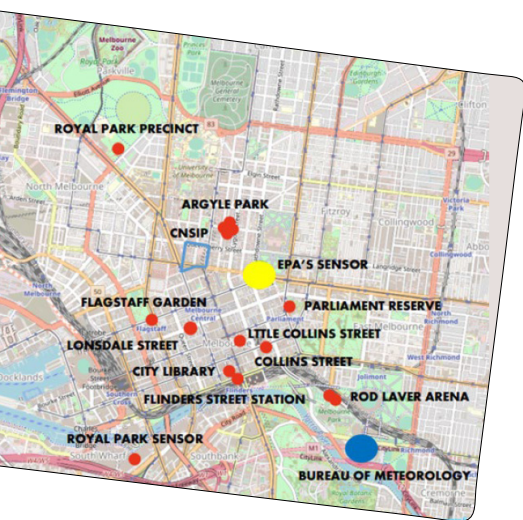
## Insights & What's Next

The first phase of this *Environment Management System Project* revealed several valuable insights. A critical lesson was the importance of precise sensor calibration. Aligning the sensors with EPA standards ensured data accuracy, highlighting the need for meticulous attention to detail. This precision will underpin a reliable system that provides meaningful insights into air quality and microclimate conditions.

Another key takeaway was the challenge of making complex environmental data accessible and engaging for diverse users. While real-time data collection is crucial, its true impact depends on presentation and understanding. The project underscored the need for interactive platforms, like mobile apps and display screens, to resonate with the local community, RMIT staff, and businesses, encouraging active participation.

Moving forward, adaptability in environmental monitoring is essential —as urban environments are dynamic. The monitoring system must evolve with the precinct to meet changing community needs. Opportunities exist to expand the sensor network, increasing reach and impact. The focus will also shift towards refining data visualisation techniques to ensure they are intuitive and engaging. With the integration of predictive capabilities, the project will not only monitor but also anticipate and proactively respond to environmental changes.



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"It was thrilling to be able to gather together a diverse team of researchers."

2024 City North Activation Program—Projects Teams Survey Insights

# FUTURE PROTOTYPES: DEMONSTRATING RMIT'S INNOVATION IN THE URBAN FABRIC

*Technology Prototyping & Knowledge Leadership*

**RMIT Area**

- College of Design & Social Context—School of Architecture & Urban Design

**Project Leads**

- Director, RMIT Architecture Tectonic Formation Lab, Prof. Roland Snooks

- Associate Dean, Research & Innovation, School of Architecture & Urban Design, Dr Leanne Zilka

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## Project Context & Rationale

Cities face mounting challenges in sustainable development, from material waste in construction to the inefficiencies of traditional building techniques. As urban populations grow, the need for innovative, resource-efficient solutions becomes ever more urgent. The *Future Prototypes* project transforms the CNSIP into a dynamic testing ground, where architecture, engineering and computation merge to explore the possibilities of advanced fabrication.

This program comprises two pioneering sub-projects: one focusing on large-scale 3D-printed architectural structures and another developing bio-integrated knitted canopies for urban shading. Both projects aim to prototype and demonstrate cutting-edge research in real-world conditions, reinforcing RMIT's commitment to innovation. By leveraging the built fabric of the precinct, the program enables hands-on experimentation with emerging materials and techniques, fostering an ecosystem where theory meets application. The program directly contributes to the Future Engineering & Technology impact area, focusing on digital fabrication, automation and sustainable manufacturing practices to revolutionise how buildings are designed and constructed.

## Collaboration & Stakeholders

*Future Prototypes* is led by an interdisciplinary team of experts in architectural design, material science and advanced manufacturing. The project thrives on collaboration, drawing on the expertise of RMIT Civil Engineering, The Ace Lab and industry leaders such as Bollinger + Grohmann and CSIRO. The team is pioneering computationally designed 3D-printed facades using Wire Arc Additive Manufacturing (WAAM), while also integrating bio-fibres and advanced knitting technology to develop sustainable urban shade canopies. This network of specialists works together to push the boundaries of fabrication and computational design, developing new techniques that bridge the gap between research and real-world application. Industry partnerships ensure that the insights gained not only enrich academic discourse but also feed directly into commercial and professional practice, reinforcing Melbourne's role as a hub for architectural and engineering innovation.

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## Key Activities & Deliverables

The project unfolds in two primary phases: design and prototyping, followed by fabrication and installation. The team is using generative AI and robotic WAAM printing to develop complex metal facade structures tailored to real-world urban challenges, while also employing whole-garment knitting technology to create lightweight, plant-integrated textile canopies that provide shading solutions for heat-affected urban spaces. These innovative designs undergo rigorous prototyping to test their structural integrity and material efficiency. The fabrication phase scales up these prototypes into demonstrator projects, validating research insights in a live environment. By mid–2025, the installation of both the 3D-printed facade and the bio-integrated knitted canopy will bring these innovations to life, providing a tangible showcase of RMIT's pioneering work in architectural computation and sustainable urban design. This project is not just about producing structures —it's about redefining how we design and build for a sustainable urban future.

## Outcomes & Impact

*Future Prototypes* demonstrates how digital manufacturing and bio-integrated design can shape sustainable cities. The research in robotic 3D printing enables the construction of intricate, resource-efficient structures with minimal material waste, while bio-integrated canopies contribute to climate resilience by supporting plant life and reducing urban heat. Together, these demonstrator installations act as beacons for sustainable urban design, enhancing public engagement and showcasing RMIT's leadership in architectural innovation. More than just academic exercises, these projects foster skill development in automation, robotics and AI-driven design—critical areas for the future workforce. They also contribute to Melbourne's broader urban transformation, providing industry and the public with a firsthand look at the future of built environments.



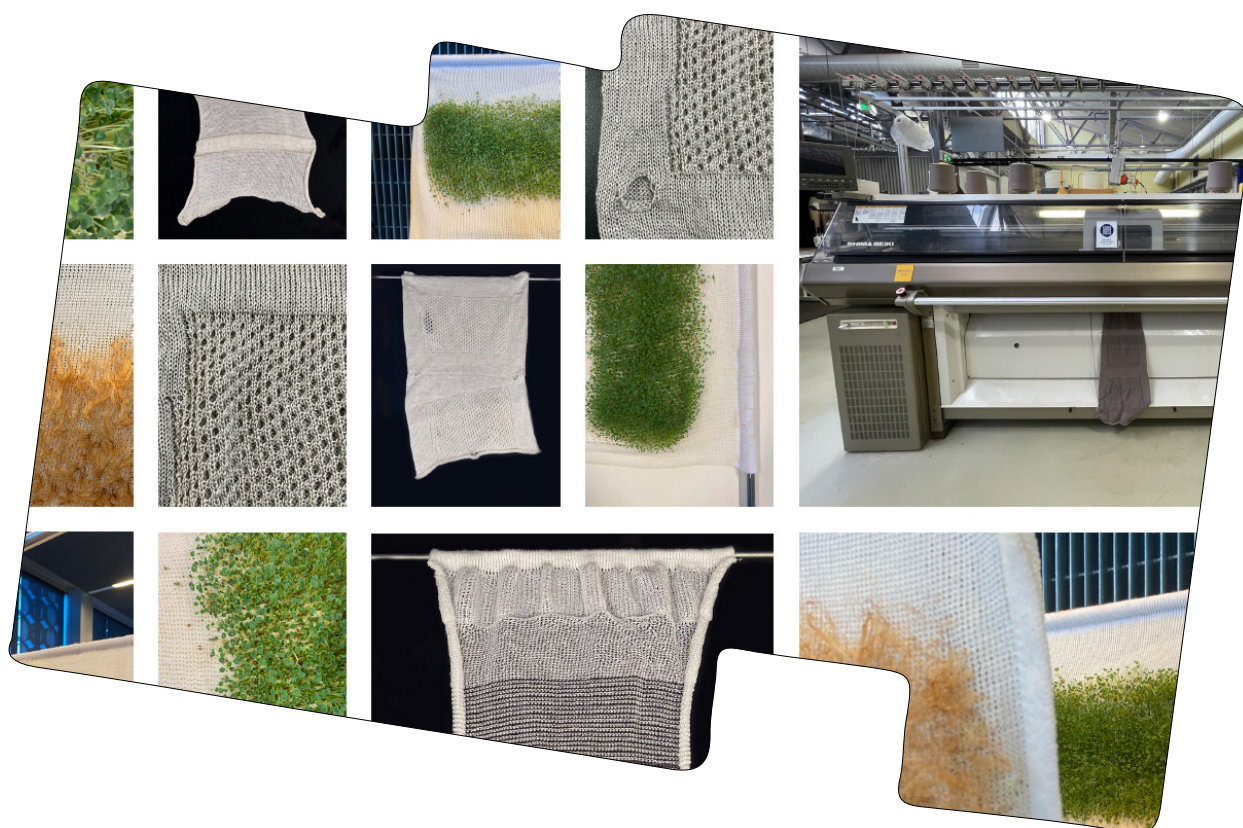| INDIGENOUS RECOGNITION & CELEBRATION | INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION | CLEAN ECONOMY | FUTURE ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY | SOCIAL CARE & WELLBEING |

## Insights & What's Next

As *Future Prototypes* moves from concept to reality, it highlights the value of iterative design and real-world testing. The project underscores the necessity of interdisciplinary collaboration and the power of prototyping as a tool for refining complex urban solutions. Moving forward, the project aims to evolve beyond these initial demonstrators into an ongoing series of experimental projects within the precinct. The team will continue refining 3D-printed architectural elements and exploring new material applications while expanding the urban shade concept to broader city-wide applications. By continually testing, refining, and showcasing advanced architectural fabrication, RMIT is establishing the CNSIP as a global leader in applied research and urban sustainability. The *Future Prototypes* project is not just about envisioning the future —it's about building it, one prototype at a time.



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"

"It allowed us to prototype
design ideas via tactical urbanism
and to dive into the reality
of implementing design ideas."

2024 City North Activation Program—Projects Teams Survey Insights

# 2025 AND BEYOND

*Creating the conditions for collective impact*

The City North Activation Program is designed to make a lasting, inclusive impact, benefiting individuals from all backgrounds, both within the district and beyond. At its core, the program brings together diverse sectors to create solutions that are relevant, accessible, and transformative for everyone. The projects within the program are built to support those at the heart of the precinct while also ensuring the benefits can extend to local businesses and community organisations. By co-designing and implementing practical solutions, the program empowers groups to tackle urban challenges directly, while fostering collaboration that transcends boundaries and reaches broader communities, locally and globally. Looking ahead, the City North Activation program will continue to reshape how we think about civic partnership, community engagement, and the role of universities in driving social and economic progress in the years to come.

In 2025, the call to collective action continues via the City North Activation Challenge: a bold 'place-based' program to tackle complex social, economic and environmental challenges using the ecosystem, networks and environments of the precinct as a dynamic living lab for testing potential solutions.

The Challenge invites proposals from the RMIT community for exploring, co-creating and testing applied innovation solutions and ideas to tackle complex issues and challenges in the areas of Social Care & Wellbeing, Smart & Sustainable Cities, and Trust & Community Cohesion.

For more information on the 2025 City North Activation Challenge, contact the City North Activation Team at **city.north@rmit.edu.au**.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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**Images:**

Images featured in this compendium have been provided by the project teams and are credited to their original owners.

Project 3 (*Student Wellbeing Week & Public Art Trail*) images were captured by Ashish Narwade.

Other images taken at CNSIP Activation Events were captured by Kit Edwards.

The 2024 City North Activation Program project teams acknowledge
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Nathan Gage & Monika Planinic & Emily Cinar Carlton Gardens Primary School; Prof. James Harland & Dr Ian Peake (RMIT STEM College); Dr. Kathy Littlewood & Prof. Mandi Berry (RMIT School of Education), Anthony Storey, Isabelle Martinez, Shae Attard, Pierre Van Osselaer, (RMIT Masters of Teaching (Primary) Students, & David Dungan (RMIT Tutor).

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**3** **Student Wellbeing Week & Public Art Trail**

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**4** **Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Peer Clinic**

Building real-world skills for student wellbeing: RMIT students, Melbourne Cricket Education Academy students, Wellways Helpline, NEAMI, Orygen, RMIT SC&H Staff and Admin, RMIT Wellbeing team, RMIT Psychology and Counselling team, RMIT Safer Community, Planning and resources, RMIT Property Services Group, RMIT Chaplaincy and the 2023/2024 Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work Pilot Group, Bernice Beaucaine (RMIT Lecturer), Mark Eastwood (Coordinator, Wellways Helpline), Cailin Thompson (Coordinator, Wellways Helpline), and Cordelia Attenborough (Orygen).

**5** **Indigenous Engagement ToolKit**

A special acknowledgement to the Boonwurrung and Woiwurrung language groups, the traditional owners of the lands on which RMIT conducts its business, and area on which the City North Precinct is located. Sovereignty was never ceded.

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**7** **PV Recycling Collaborative Workspace and Showroom**

DJ Projects, Outlook Communications, The Ballarat Solar Company and Cellar Connection.

| 8 | **Worker Consultation and its Contribution to Fair, Safe and Healthy Workplaces** |
|---|---|
| | Safe Work Australia, the Fair Work Ombudsman, Dr Eugene Schofield-Georgeson (UTS), Dr Rachael Potter (UniSA), Dr Jacqueline Meredith (Swinburne University of Technology), Nadia Mecoli (Director, RMIT Strategy Office). |

| 9 | **Codesigning New Models of Community-University Collaboration for Community Connection, Belonging, and Health and Wellbeing** |
|---|---|
| | RMIT students Amarveer Rehal, Bianca Bosco, Chris Ryan Joseph Dominic, Elvin William, Kawal Kaur, Mandeep Sharma, Manisa Koveerakiti, Michelle Chen, Sanyam Poonia, Sara Al Lawati, Tony Smith, Zahid Bharti. Partners with lived expertise, Abbie Cations (Peninsula Health), Afer Berdilek (Caroline Chisholm Society), Aimee Chiller (Jesuit Social Services), Amy Howell (Centre Self Collective), Catena De Pasquale (Baptcare), Donna Teekins (Alvila College), Fiona S (DIVRS), Fiona Wiseman (Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre), Hannah Barker (Good Shepherd), Jane Bakos (Sacred Heart Mission), Jean Cameron (Workforce Innovation Development Institute), Lisa Sammut (Salvation Army), Rebecca Williams (St Josephs), Scott Withy (Western Health), Selba Luka (Afri-Auscare), Tally Daphu, Yiota Giannoulis, Mrinalini Deswal, Belinda Johnson and Georgina Lewis. |

| 10 | **Food Security for our Students Feeds our Future** |
|---|---|
| | Project consultation contributors: RMIT University Student Union, Dr. Kelly Donati (Vice Chancellor's Research Fellow), Student Life Team at University of Melbourne, RMIT students and staff that supported the project, Community Food Relief Organisations: The Big Umbrella Foundation, Just Food Collective and Alex Makes Meals. |

| 11 | **RSA Design for Life Mission | Urban Cool** |
|---|---|
| | Royal Society of the Arts and Arup as key partners and innovation collaborators |

| 12 | **Cardigan Street Future-Focused Activation** |
|---|---|
| | Environmental Films Australia, Melbourne Fringe Festival, Centre of Digital Ecosystems, Melbourne International Games Week, Visible Older Women, The Hopefuls, Head First Acrobats, The Rubbish Collective, Helen Addison-Smith, Arcade Publications, Bethany MacDonald, Yandell Walton, Ewan Hicks and Eva Hilton. |

| 13 | **Play the Future | Reworlding Cardigan Commons 2050** |
|---|---|
| | Dr Troy Innocent, Carlo Tolentino, Ben Kolaitis, Nina Sharpe (Regen Melbourne), Quentin Stevens, Ha Thai, Steph Ochona, Uyen Nguyen, Matthew Riley, Fynn Michlin, Nam Tran, Kit Edwards, RMIT PlaceLab, RMIT Future Play Lab (**futureplaylab.io**, **@future.play.lab**). |

| 14 | **EcoQuest Melbourne | Localising the Sustainable Development Goals through Gamification** |
|---|---|
| | Dr. Noel Waite, Dr. Michael Dunbar, Dr. Troy Innocent, Kate Henderson (City of Melbourne), RMIT students and *City North Fest* participants. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **15** | **Storying City North \| From Ink to Algorithms**<br><br>Dr Katherine Day, Ms Sharon Mullins, Dr. Helen Addison-Smith, Prof. Lisa French (Dean School of Media & Comms), Dr. Victoria Kenworthy, Ben Sheppard, Prof. Jessica L Wilkinson, Beau Windon, Bowen Street Press students and The RMIT Culture team. |
| **16** | **The 'We Care' initiative \| Reimagining Civic Health through Creative Engagement**<br><br>A/Prof. Stephen Johnston (Fordcastle), Aaron Noyes, Gigi Fong, Dr. Gretel Taylor and Prof. Iain Buchan (University of Liverpool). |
| **17** | **Revitalising Cardigan Street through Tactical Urbanism for a Greener and more Socially inspiring Public Space**<br><br>Prof. Andrew Butt (Associate Dean, SUP) and Dr Troy Innocent. |
| **18** | **Voice-Based Detection System to Predict Risk of Type 2 Diabetes**<br><br>Mr. Arjun Panesar (CEO, DDM Health) |
| **19** | **Innovative Frontiers \| Unlocking the Future of Urban Design and Connectivity with AI and AR**<br><br>Softbank, AWS, Bohan Cheng, Maximus Dionyssopoulos, Sam Griffiths, Ravindu Gurunge, Michael Hadi, Peter Hong, Bowen Li, Rylan Pease, Hin Long You, Prof. Angela Carbone (Associate Deputy Vice-Chancellor Learning, Teaching & Quality in the STEM College). |
| **20** | **Simulating Clean Economy Transformations at a Precinct Scale**<br><br>Mahsa Khanpoor Siahdarka, Syed Ali, Prof. Usha Iyer-Raniga, RMIT Property Services Group, Beta Launch. |
| **21** | **Digital Sustainability Index \| Revolutionising Asset Management for a Sustainable Built Environment**<br><br>Bawantha Rathnayake, Sajith Wettewa, Ping Chai, Lahiru Thilakarathne, Dr. Jianhu Shen, and CAMS. |
| **22** | **Environmental Management System**<br><br>City of Melbourne. |
| **23** | **Future Prototypes \| Demonstrating RMIT's innovation in the Urban Fabric**<br><br>Dr Jenny Underwood, Peter Lim Tensys, Dr Xin Wang, Dr Kate Sala, RMIT Property Services Group, RMIT School of Fashion and Textile Design, RMIT School of Architecture and Urban Design, RMIT Workshops, Post Carbon Research Centre, A/Prof. Jonathan Tran (RMIT Civil Engineering), Alex Lyne (The Ace Lab), Sascha Bohnenberger (Bollinger + Grohmann), Vu Nguyen (CSIRO), and Nick Birbilis (Maple Glass Printing). |

# THE AFTERWORD

The projects featured in this compendium are only the beginning. They offer a glimpse into the energy, creativity, and collective effort already shaping the CNSIP into a thriving center for civic innovation.

**But this is just the start.**

As partnerships deepen and community participation expands, new stories, collaborations, and opportunities will continue to emerge—each one building on the momentum already underway.

We hope the work and stories shared here spark new connections, conversations, and ideas about what's possible when people come together to shape a better, more inclusive future—right where they live.

**Thank you**

For more information on RMIT's vision for City North Social Innovation Precinct, including partnership, collaboration and co-location opportunities please email: city.north@rmit.edu.au