

DRIVING SOCIAL INNOVATION IN PLACE AND COMMUNITY

2025 City North Activation Program

BIOCULTURAL URBAN REALMS IN CITY NORTH

Biocultural Urban Realms in City North

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Project Summary

The *Biocultural Realms Project* established a solution to the RMIT City North Activation Challenge concerned with strengthening climate resilience in urban communities by exploring Indigenous ecological knowledge, emerging technologies and regenerative practices.

Working in partnership with Guardians of Earth, the Project established a Biocultural Realm within RMIT's City North Social Innovation Precinct, piloting regenerative education, urban greening and alternative economic approaches with local communities. This work led to the development of Biocultural Units (BCUs), a form of value exchange that incentivises and supports community-led regenerative action.

Drawing on learnings from City North, the model has now been extended to RMIT's Brunswick, Bundoora and Saigon South campuses, as well as Collingwood College.

The Project also developed a Multispecies Governance Framework (MGF) to guide community decision-making, supporting new ways for communities to generate, share and apply knowledge in place.

Key Project Activities, Milestones & Deliverables

The Project delivered its objectives through three integrated phases:

Phase 1 focused on mapping and strengthening biocultural health and climate resilience across the City North Social Innovation Precinct.

Phase 2 introduced Biocultural Units (BCUs) as a form of value exchange to incentivise regenerative action, alongside education activities informed by Indigenous knowledge and interdisciplinary perspectives.

Phase 3 analysed ecological outcomes and levels of community participation.

Key deliverables included the establishment of five Biocultural Realms across City North, RMIT campuses and Collingwood College, and the generation of 11 BCUs with an estimated value of \$62,600 AUD. The Project also delivered five major activations with Guardians of Earth, alongside an Indigenous garden, a regenerative education program at Collingwood College and a MGF.



"RMIT's City North Innovation Precinct has created one of the world's most active urban Nature Realms"

Project Leads, Biocultural Urban Realms Project



Project Impact

The Project won GoE's Global University BioQuest competition, recognising its contribution to restoring the human–nature relationship through biodiversity discovery and place-based storytelling. As a result, RMIT's City North Social Innovation Precinct is now one of the world's most active urban Nature Realms, ranked in the top 19% of more than 700 globally.

Building on learnings from City North, the Project has established an extended network of Realms across RMIT Bundoora, Brunswick and Saigon, as well as Collingwood College. This expansion demonstrates how the model can scale through collaboration and reciprocal exchange, with contributors generating BCUs that support reinvestment into local regeneration projects.

The Project has also enabled local residents to access biodiversity visualisations and contribute ongoing sightings, stories and observations, supporting more active participation in place-based environmental stewardship.

Future Planning

Ongoing partnerships with Guardians of Earth, local schools and multiple RMIT campuses provide a foundation for continued growth in 2026. Future strategy will also be informed by the Wurundjeri Whole of Country Plan (2025 to 2035).

The City North Precinct and Realm will continue as a test bed for biocultural value creation, place-based knowledge sharing, multispecies governance and community led regeneration. Plans are underway to formalise and test the MGF to guide community decision-making and the ethical reinvestment of Biocultural Units. An overview of the framework will be shared through a forthcoming policy brief with Local Government Areas across Victoria and international partners.

A planting day at Collingwood College will support school-wide activation of local Realms and reinvestment into regenerative projects. Additional partnerships are being developed with local schools, Melbourne's Chamber of Commerce, the Queen Victoria Market and Museums Victoria.

A partnership with RMIT's Regenerative Futures Institute will further expand research, engagement and education across RMIT Realms. Several courses will integrate the Realms into teaching in 2026, including a bush tucker garden at Bundoora, with further opportunities in development at Brunswick and Saigon South.



The Project has achieved tangible benefits for local communities by introducing new ways for people to build and mobilise evidence of regenerative actions and cultural knowledge sharing in local places.

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Biocultural Urban Realms in City North

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For more information on the City North Social Innovation Precinct,
including partnership, collaboration and co-location opportunities, visit:

