

# GEEELONG DESIGN WEEK

## 2024 EVENT REPORT



# Summary

The fifth Geelong Design Week was held on 21 – 30 November 2024 and was a highly successful event with unprecedented attendance, impactful programming, and significant media coverage extending Geelong's leadership and reputation as a clever and creative city.

Remarkable attendance was recorded with 40,925 people, representing a 137% increase from the previous year. The largest program to date, the delivery of Geelong Design Week 2024 staged 86 events at 33 venues.

Geelong Design Week's exponential growth cements the City's status as a premier design engagement destination. The event fosters learning, development, networking and employment opportunities growing the regions creative ecosystem in tangible ways. Geelong Design Week fuels economic impact injecting \$1.4m into the economy in 2024 underscoring the events contribution to tourism, hospitality and services.

The event's engagement efforts were evident in the diverse audience representation, underscoring inclusivity across various spectra of diversity. Geelong Design Week's cultural impact was supported through deep First Nations engagement and collaboration, and the events continued role in highlighting cultural preservation and storytelling.

Geelong Design Week attendance continues to trend towards a younger audience harnessing millennials and Gen Z audiences' for the future. Families engaged in the 10 day event with highlights including Barwon Water's Poosum of Modern (f)Art, Deakin University's Radial Recycling and Geelong Gallery's Design + Play.

Notable speakers delivered a program of excellence focused on 'Design for Humanity' – examining the role design plays in everyday lives. The 2024 program aimed to cultivate a deeper understanding of how thoughtful design enhances experiences, solves complex problems, and contributes to a more sustainable society, impacting infrastructure, public places and environmental impact. Participants indicated that programs were impactful and resonated as a source of inspiration, information, enlightenment and education.

Public Art was a popular contributor with the Gordon Tech School projections at Shorts Place, Geelong Public Art Health Check (GPAC) and the incredible Light Letters by Back to Back Theatre attracted strong attendance. Increasing the breadth of content, international programming included a partnership between Deakin University and Nagoya (Tran2located), Geelong Tech School x Kortrijk Wonder Festival Projection, and the National Wool Museum's Geelong to Japan event.

Local talent shone through with exhibitions at Boom Gallery, the Project Space, Yarra St Windows Designer Showcase and our future designers were on show in the graduate exhibitions at The Gordon and Deakin University.

Challenged by a short lead time, an inaugural Guest Curator and Event Coordinator provided on-the-ground support to the City's team enabling the evident growth and diversification of the event.

Please enjoy the following report and we look forward to delivering Geelong Design Week again soon.





Geelong Design Week  
Information Hub.  
Photo by Ed Sloane

## Background

Geelong Design Week is a celebration of Geelong's global recognition as a UNESCO City of Design. It acknowledges Geelong's commitment to use design and creativity to build a more sustainable, resilient and inclusive future. Geelong has a proud history as a creative city and leader of design. Design is a driver of our economic and creative sectors and strengthens advances in research innovation and international co-operation.

The 2024 Geelong Design Week was the fifth iteration of the event. The event is an initiative of the City of Greater Geelong to engage community in high quality and inclusive programming that highlights local design talent and creative endeavour whilst attracting visitors from near and far.

This event was managed and delivered by the Creative City Unit at the City of Greater Geelong in collaboration with a Guest Curator, Dr Tonya Meyrick and contracted Event Coordinator, Alice Bergin.

For more information about our UNESCO Creative City of Design designation visit: [geelongcityofdesign.com.au](https://geelongcityofdesign.com.au)



Ten Years of Dowel  
Jones, National  
Wool Museum.  
Photo Pete James.

## 2024 Program

Guest Curator, Senior Lecturer, Screen and Design at Deakin University, Dr. Tonya Meyrick focused Geelong Design Week on the key areas of Geelong's UNESCO City of Design—the built and natural environment, education, materiality, sustainability, and the circular economy – while also highlighting high-quality design outcomes across the region.

86

events

33

locations

68

speakers

1,709

hours of content

132

businesses: partners,  
services or suppliers

68%

of businesses engaged  
from Greater Geelong

# Audience data

Geelong Design Week (GDW) 2024 shattered previous attendance records with an extraordinary 40,925 attendees across events compared to 17,288 in 2023. This figure signifies a remarkable surge of 137% following similar growth the previous year of 172%, affirming Geelong Design Week’s growing popularity and appeal.



## Place of residence

Among the attendees, an impressive 77% hailed from Geelong and its surrounding suburbs, underscoring the local community’s interest in design topics and need for events opening the conversation to design.

- 77%** from Geelong and surrounds
- 8%** from Regional Victoria
- 3%** from interstate
- 12%** from Melbourne

High-level estimates suggest Geelong Design Week 2024 injected \$1.4m direct and indirect revenue into the local economy. This represents a return on investment of 11:1, or, for every \$1 spent by the City of Greater Geelong, \$11 was injected into the local economy.



## Demographic

Geelong Design Week continues to appeal to an increasingly younger audience. In 2024, more young people attended the event than ever before with 16% under 30 years old and 37% under 39.

### Age groups

- 60+** 29% (up from 27% in 2023)
- 50–59** 15% (down from 20% in 2023)
- 40–49** 19% (equal to 2023)
- 30–39** 22% (up from 16% in 2023)
- Under 30** 16%
- Male / Female**
- 64%** Female
- 32%** Male
- 1%** Non-binary
- 2%** Unspecified



## Diversity and inclusion

In 2024, Geelong Design Week continued to attract a diverse audience testament to its inclusive and accessible spirit.

- 21%** Born overseas
- 7%** Mainly speak a language other than English at home
- 5%** LGBTQIA+
- 3%** Person with disability
- 2%** Carer of person with disability

## Experience

Overall, 96% of attendees rated their Geelong Design Week experience as “Excellent” or “Good” compared to 90% in 2023 (47% rated it as excellent in 2023 compared with 70% in 2024). This is an exceptional result demonstrating and reiterating positivity in the program content and delivery. Overall, GDW attendees were inspired; felt informed; were interested in the content delivered and felt enlightened and educated by the events they engaged with.

# Digital engagement



## Social media

Geelong Design Week 2024 social media campaign reached 227,682 organic users (an 86.7% increase on 2023). GDW posts received 27,000 likes, 465 comments and 854 shares demonstrating strong engagement from online audiences.

15.5% of attendees heard about Geelong Design Week 2024 through the website.



## Website

- Web users 5,000
- Web page views 20,000



## Email marketing

Email marketing increased significantly in 2024 reaching 300% more subscribers.

- Database 42,742
- Enews opens 23,622
- Number sent 20
- Average open rate 23.26%

# Marketing and event data



## Marketing

Word of mouth maintains its position as the main source of referral for Geelong Design Week indicating a growth in market presence. Social media and e-news also continue to rise as marketing sources which correlates with significant growth in the use of City of Greater Geelong and partner e-news communications. Website referrals continue to reduce year on year despite significant investment in this area.

- 41%** Word of mouth
- 27%** Social media
- 24%** Enews
- 15.5%** Website
- 11%** Repeat visitor
- 7%** Print advertising
- 10%** Other



## Events of interest

2024 program interest was significantly more varied than in 2023. Exhibitions drove the majority of visitation with live shows/talks, panel discussions, installations, workshops and guided tours all attracting significant interest.

- Exhibitions 67%**  
(up from 60% in 2023)
- Panel discussions 34%**  
(down from 59% in 2023)
- Live shows/speaker events/ presentations 42%**  
(down from 49% in 2023)
- Installations 34%**  
(up from 33% in 2023)
- Workshops 32%**  
(up from 31% in 2023)
- Guided tours 30%**
- Networking events 26%**
- Meet and greet experts 20%**  
(up from 17% in 2023)
- Immersive Experiences 16%**  
(up from 12% in 2023)



## Ticketing

2024 returned to trends seen in 2022, indicating most participants attended only one event (52%) compared to 32% in 2023. This may be due to the significant representation of new audiences (89%).

- 16** ticketed events (varying from \$5 to \$275) – 93% attendance
- 16** free registration events – 84% attendance
- 54** non-ticketed, free events – 81% attendance
- 34,075** (83% of attendees) attended a free event
- 12** events ran across 10 days
- 3** events ran for 4–5 days
- 8** events ran over 2–3 days
- 63** events ran on 1 day only

Design Institute  
Australia x Cultivated,  
City of Design Tour  
Photo Blue Tree Studios.



# Program highlights

Sell out events were plentiful in the 2024 Geelong Design Week program—Motel by Tim Ross + Kit Warhurst, Architect Tours by PMDL McGlashan Everist, Architect's Own Homes – John Wardle's own house in Anglesea, Design Institute of Australia's City of Design Tour, Design Films at the Pivotonian Cinema and Design for Nature and Biophilic Design events.

Attendees provided feedback across many events throughout the program with the following capturing some of the sentiment.

"Interesting to see the phenomenal design elements that are actually art."

**Helmut Lueckenhausen Floortalk at Geelong Gallery**

"Loved learning about the different techniques that make their art so interesting and unique."

**Louise Saxton talk with Jason Smith at Geelong Gallery**

"Very informative and lovely atmosphere in Mary Jane's beautiful garden and a beautiful homemade morning tea."

**Human by Nature: Understanding Biophilic Design**

"I haven't lived in Geelong for very long, so it was great to hear about the industrial heritage and greening of neighbourhoods."

**Reimagining Heritage in Geelong by Cam Hamilton, Hamilton Group**

"The Boom Gallery exhibition was a great experience, such a welcoming gallery, great pieces and a place I hadn't been before."

**Nice Nights x Boom Gallery's HomeMade exhibition**

"Learning about Wadawurrung culture and how it was thoughtfully built into the Nyaal Banyul Geelong Convention and Events Centre design was interesting."

**Nyaal Banyul—A Place of Baierr**

"This exhibition allowed me to appreciate how unique and beautiful each student's process is to build the final outputs."

**Process – School of Architecture and Built Environment, Deakin University**

"I loved seeing the work of Circle of Thread – their commitment, enthusiasm and clear joy in their project was so evident and so delightful. It's fantastic to have these collectives in our city."

**Circle of Thread Pop-Up**

"I was amazed at the designs put together using recycled materials."

**Radial Recycling: Co-Design and Reuse Through Creative Play**

"The Colour Plan installation wall was impressive!"

**The Future isn't Black and White**

"My 2 young kids loved the interactive stations of activities and the staff were super helpful and friendly!"

**The Pooseum of Modern (F)Art**

"I loved seeing the results of the Eden Oak renovation. It is wonderful to have such a design highlight and venue in Geelong."

**Eden Oak Revitalisation & Adaptive Reuse Talk, Australian Institute of Architects EmAGN Committee, in collaboration with Plus Architecture & Eden Oak**



Top LHS: Threads of Change  
– weaving sustainability  
into fashion. Photo: Pam  
Hutchinson

Top Centre: Pooseum of  
Modern (f)Art. Photo: Pete  
James Top RHS: Yarra Street  
Window

Gallery Design Showcase.  
Photo: Rebecca Hosking

Middle LHS: The Future isn't  
Black and White. Photo: Ed  
Sloane

Middle Centre: Speed Date  
with an Architect. Photo:  
Pam Hutchinson

Middle RHS: Talking Art –  
Louise Saxton and Jason  
Smith. Photo: Pete James

Bottom LHS: Learn Space  
– Design + Play. Photo: Ed  
Sloane.

Bottom Centre: Design  
for Nature. Photo: City of  
Greater Geelong

Bottom RHS: Eco Artland  
Open Studio + Preview  
Photo: Pam Hutchinson.



# Media coverage

Geelong Design Week 2024 generated **201 pieces of coverage** reaching over **10.5 million** people and delivering an estimated PR value exceeding **\$1.5 million**.

The campaign promoted Geelong's status as Australia's only UNESCO City of Design, positioning Geelong Design Week as a significant event in Australia's design calendar, emphasising the City's commitment to sustainable practices, First Nations design and local innovation.

The multi-phase strategy initially focussed on broad program announcements before pivoting to targeted event features and expert profiles. Collaborating with the team at the City of Greater Geelong, Communications Collective (CC) developed tailored story angles for different media sectors. Some of the key events harnessed for PR opportunities included the 'Eden Oak Revitalisation and Adaptive Reuse' talk, the 'Design Dialogues' talk, Indirect Object + Barwon Water's 'Do you want to build a fatberg?' activation, and the 'Circularity and the Future of Geelong' discussion. Key spokespeople utilised for profiling opportunities included the festival's Guest Curator, Dr Tonya Meyrick, Festival Director, Tracey-Lea Smith and City of Greater Geelong CEO Ali Wastie.

The campaign achieved coverage across strategically important media sectors — spanning sustainability publications (Green Magazine, Green Review), tourism

industry outlets (Travel Weekly), First Nations media (The Koori Mail), major broadsheet exposure (the Herald Sun online) and arts platforms (Arts Hub, Australian Arts Review, Vault).

International reach was secured through Dezeen (3 million readers), while broadcast coverage on ABC Radio Melbourne (625,000 listeners) and consistent coverage across design titles such as ArchitectureAU, Australian Design Review and InDesignLive ensured strong industry engagement.

Local editorial through the Geelong Advertiser, Times Group, Geelong Independent, 94.7FM The Pulse, and many partner communications including City News, Deakin University and Boom Gallery was driven by the City's Communications team.

## Selection of media, Geelong Design Week 2024.

### Geelong Design Week program launched

BY JAMES TAYLOR

THE City of Greater Geelong has revealed its biggest Geelong Design Week program, with more than 10 exhibitions, workshops, talks, tours and unique experiences.

From November 21 to November 20, Geelong Design Week 2024 will celebrate homegrown design excellence, innovation and creativity across our region, showcasing why we are Australia's only UNESCO Creative City of Design.

The annual event will bring Wadawurrung Traditional Owners, local designers, industry leaders, design enthusiasts, students, creatives and the broader community together to collaborate, network and inspire new ideas to solve design issues.

Program highlights include:

- The "Designing Djilang" walk delves into how Wadawurrung Traditional Owners have informed design outcomes around central Geelong.
- "MOTEL" live show with comedian and designer Tim Ross and musician Kei Warhurst, taking a look at the nostalgia of Aussie holidays.
- Peek inside the stunning homes of architects and their clients, and get inspired for your own home by signing up to "Architect's Homes - Building Tours" in Greater Geelong and along the Surf Coast.
- "Speed Date with an Architect" offers homeowners, renovators, and design enthusiasts one-on-one advice with an architect for up to 15 minutes.

"Do you want to build a fatberg?" will participants create a giant reproduction of flushable items and congealed fat that the sewerage system, and

"McKercher Event Walking Tour" on the renowned Geelong-based architecture practice's design projects including Carousel, Bands House and Costa Hall.

The expanded program features both in-person and online experiences with a range of free ticketed events.

Geelong Design Week 2023 attracted 11 attendees, up 172 per cent from the previous year, and saw attendees from outside the Geelong region inject \$1.6 million revenue alone into the local economy.

"Design is broader than we often think it is, it's on a day-to-day basis, from the buildings, product creation, fashion and games, to gardens, art, graphic design, advertising, and sustainability," City of Greater Geelong executive officer Ali Wastie said.

"Good design is accessible and inclusive in the community, regardless of age or ability."

"Geelong harnesses design to address a range of challenges, from social and economic issues to enhancing communication and innovative practices, fostering solutions that are both creative and impactful."

She said the program reflected Geelong's success and innovative spirit.

"Our program has a diverse range of events will interest community members of all ages, backgrounds, including families."

"This is a chance to learn more about our environment, discover unique natural in and Geelong's notable design heritage look at the future of technology, innovation and innovation."

"We can't wait to show off our design, to celebrate homegrown solutions and support growing design community."

Tickets are available at [www.geelongdesignweek.com.au](http://www.geelongdesignweek.com.au)

PHOTO: ALI WASTIE

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FEATURE

### SHARING HOPE

DR MARY-JANE WALKER IS SPREADING THE WORD ON HOW WE CAN ALL EMBRACE NATURE'S DESIGN PATTERNS TO IMPROVE OUR OWN LIVES, WRITES GRETA LANNEN



Scientist and artist Dr Mary-Jane Walker will soon host the School of Lost Arts to discuss biophilic design for Geelong Design Week. Photos: Alison Wynd

As a biologist, Dr Mary-Jane Walker can easily feel desperate about the plight of the natural world. Instead, she chooses to share hope and empowerment.

The Geelong scientist and artist is passionate about how people's connection to nature can not only benefit the planet but improve their health and wellbeing.

She is spreading the word on how we can all, very simply, embrace nature's design patterns to improve our own lives, and the life of the planet. Art and nature have been her two great loves, elements of Mary-Jane's life. She has a PhD in genetics and a creative arts degree. She worked at the London Design Centre, and was part of the team that set up the Innovation Centre, which united her love of science and design.

Mary-Jane's art practice is focused on connections with nature and how art can be used as a way to help people connect emotionally to their natural surroundings, climate change and loss of biodiversity.

**"SUSTAINABILITY IS WHAT WE DO FOR NATURE, BIOPHILIA IS WHAT NATURE DOES FOR US, WITHOUT ASKING FOR ANYTHING IN RETURN."**

"We have to live much more holistically with nature and help people understand that that's absolutely central to our survival. We only have one planet," she says. "We have to share the planet, we can't live without the natural world. We need it for a healthy ecosystem, for air, for water, for food, for medicine."

Mary-Jane and her family bought an 1854 property in Healesville in 2010, and have spent the past 14 years lovingly restoring the house and garden with both its past and a sustainable view of the future in mind.

The property's School of Lost Arts studio is a centre for workshops, events and teaching on creativity, art and sustainable living.

The property boasts its 1700-year-old tree, Mary-Jane says it's always a work in progress. It's in a great location, she says. "I think the house found us. We feel very lucky," she says.

Mary-Jane will open her studio and garden for Geelong Design Week, event known as Nature Understanding Biophilic Design.

ON 10 NOVEMBER

### Showcasing Geelong's design excellence

Geelong Design Week returns with its biggest program yet, featuring more than 10 exhibitions, workshops, talks, tours and unique experiences.

Running from November 21 to November 20, Geelong Design Week 2024 will celebrate homegrown design excellence, innovation and creativity across our region.

The event will showcase why Geelong is Australia's only UNESCO Creative City of Design, highlighting traditional Geelong, local designers, industry leaders, design enthusiasts, students, creatives and the broader community together to collaborate, network and inspire new ideas to solve design issues.

Program highlights include:

- The "Designing Djilang" walk delves into how Wadawurrung Traditional Owners have informed design outcomes around central Geelong.
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"Geelong harnesses design to address a range of challenges, from social and economic issues to enhancing communication and innovative practices, fostering solutions that are both creative and impactful."

Last year's work at events attracted more than 11,000 people, with visitors from all over the region, including more than 10,000 visitors to the main event.

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### 'Bored' has no dice in game design

WANTING TO design games that will leave people anything but bored and get players on board?

Geelong's Will Keach will be focusing on creating board games that are both fun and educational.

Keach, who runs the Geelong-based game design studio, will be sharing his expertise at the Geelong Design Week event.

Keach's studio has designed over 100 board games, including several that have been published by major publishers.

Keach's studio has also designed several board games that have been featured in major media outlets, including the ABC and the SBS.

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# Geelong Design Week details revealed

JAMES TAYLOR

THE City of Greater Geelong has teased some details about this year's edition of Geelong Design Week.

More than 60 events will be held between November 21 to November 30 that celebrate design excellence, innovation, creativity and community across the region.

This year's program is shaping up to be the biggest Geelong Design Week yet, featuring a diverse range of events, workshops, experiences, exhibitions and discussions that reflect how good design contributes to a more sustainable world.

Highlights include:

Do you want to build a fatberg? This hands-on activity will see participants create a giant reproduction fatberg – reflecting the masses of waste that block our sewerage system, made up of items that shouldn't be flushed or washed down the drain.

Eden Oak Tour & Mid-Century Adaptive Reuse Talk: An exclusive building tour of East Geelong's Eden Oak retreat and discussion around the challenges and opportunities in preserving mid-century architecture while adapting it for contemporary use.

Light Letters: Back to Back Theatre and visual arts excerpts from two

long Times

1 Eco Reef celebrates another design win

19, 2024 • 01:11 PM Geelong



Dr. Leo Reef from above. Photo: SUPPLIED

170N Springs' award-winning artificial reef has again been recognised for its innovative design, this time at the Victorian Marine and Coastal Awards.

Dr. Leo Reef this month took out the Excellence in Marine and Coastal Design or Development accolade at the annual awards, which celebrate the people and organisations contributing to the sustainable marine environment.

Geelong Times



More than 60 events will be held between November 21 to November 30 as part of Geelong Design Week. Photo: SUPPLIED

publications created by students at Nelson Park School around Geelong's northern suburbs, with a map to direct community members. The city's executive director of placemaking, Tennille Bradley encouraged community members of all ages and backgrounds to mark Geelong Design Week in their calendars.

"Geelong Design Week cover a range of topics of interest to many different interest groups, from sports, culture, Geelong wool trade with Japan

design and one-on-one conversations with architects," Ms Bradley said. "We are excited to be bringing businesses, designers, creatives, students and the community together to showcase design projects, stories and talents from across our region and beyond. "This festival embodies Geelong's vision for design and its evolution

## Showcasing Geelong's design excellence

Geelong Design Week returns with its biggest program yet, featuring more than 70 exhibitions, workshops, talks, tours and unique experiences.

Running of Geelong Design Week from November 21 to November 30, the week will celebrate design excellence, innovation and creativity across the region.

The event will showcase the City of Greater Geelong's Creative City of Design in Australia, bringing together Melbourne, Traditional Owners, local designers, industry leaders and more to celebrate, network and inspire.

City of Greater Geelong chief executive officer, Ali Nadeau said they're thrilled to unveil a program only reflecting Geelong's design excellence and innovative spirit.

"Our program has a diverse range of events that will showcase community members of all ages and backgrounds, including families.

"Design is broader than we often think and impacts us on a day-to-day basis, from housing and buildings, product creation, fashion, video games and recreation to gardens, art, public



Geelong Design Week will celebrate excellence, innovation and creativity across the region. Photo: GADW/010101

regardless of age or ability." The program will feature events both in-person and online, with a range of free and ticketed events.

Some of the program highlights include: "The Designing 'Bling' walk, taking into local Victorian, product creation, fashion, video games and recreation to gardens, art, public

"Mind first show with Tim Riss and mental kit workshop, taking in

Last year's week of events attracted more than 17,000 people, with visitors outside the region contributing more than \$4.6 million into the local economy.

"Geelong harnesses design to address a wide range of challenges, from social and environmental issues to enhancing opportunities and creating innovative products, leading visitors who are both inspired and inspired," Ms Nadeau said.

"This is a chance to have more about our environment, design culture and the state of technology, innovation.

"We can't wait to design, create, showcase, challenge and support design community."

For further program information, visit: [geelongdesignweek.com.au](http://geelongdesignweek.com.au) or contact: 03 5241 1000.

The 2024 program is the biggest yet, with more than 70 events across the region. Photo: SUPPLIED

Oliver creates a pair of glasses during Geelong Design Week's Learn Space - Design and Play activity. Photo: 443185\_13

## Fun for children this Design Week

Geelong kids can play and experiment with different materials, colours and shapes as Geelong Design Week returns for its fifth year. Geelong Gallery, at 55 Little Malpas Street, will host daily Learn Space - Design and Play sessions during Geelong Design Week, which runs from November 21 to 30.

Learning and audience engagement manager Elsieba Furest said the event would be an "interactive space for children and families". "We invite visitors of all ages to play and experiment with different materials, colours, and shapes to promote design and creative thinking," she said.

"Play is an important element in encouraging creative problem-solving, developing fine

motor skills, and engaging with hands-on building and making. "The space encourages creativity and build, without limitations. It lets their own ideas and experiences shine."

Geelong Design Week, a homegrown design event and creativity and shows Australia's UNESCO Creative City of Greater Geelong. "We're excited that this year's Geelong would be the biggest yet, impacting design has on a 'd' "Our program has diverse

latest community members of backgrounds, including families."

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Geelong Independent



Geelong Design Week welcomes more than 70 exhibitions, workshops, talks, tours and unique experiences to the region

Forte



Melbourne.

Home > Home > Geelong Design Week program revealed

407

## Massive Geelong Design Week program revealed

by Melbourne - October 30, 2024 0 0 Comments 0 0 Likes

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Melbourne.

GEELONG DESIGN WEEK

Dr. Tonya Meyrick, Guest Curator, Geelong Design Week 2024.

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Vision Australia Radio

# Event partner feedback

A total of 21 external partners responded to a post event survey although most questions were answered by an average of 10 respondents. Feedback is summarised under six key areas with individual comments extracted on occasion.

## What worked?

- 60%** Networking, capacity/skill building opportunities for creatives
- 60%** Good communication from GDW team
- 40%** Great atmosphere and event standard
- 30%** Program diversity
- 20%** Audience engagement
- 20%** Good venues
- 20%** Strong marketing and comms

## Recommendations

- Longer lead time, 50%
- More promotion , 20%
- Change event timing, 20%
- Greater variation in event times, 10%
- Improved accessibility, 10%
- Venue seed funding, 10%
- Provide an overarching theme, 10%
- Improved IT support, 10%

## What didn't work?

- 20%** Short promotional timeline
- 20%** Budget constraints
- 20%** Clunky administration
- 20%** IT Challenges
- 10%** Constrained venue size
- 10%** Marketing for venue location
- 10%** Parking

"The greatest strength [of Geelong Design Week] was the connections and relationships formed between the designers/makers. Added to this was an appreciation of the interconnectedness of the designer/makers. That each of them is not working in isolation but rather each of them helps to form a larger ecosystem of creatives within our region."



Audience at Threads of Change.  
Photo Pam Hutchinson.

# Areas of focus: 2023 key recommendations

| 2023 RECOMMENDATION                                                                                                                                        | 2024 ACTION                                                                                                           | OUTCOME FOR GEELONG DESIGN WEEK                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | FUTURE APPLICATION OR RECOMMENDATION                                                                                                                                                                                           |   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|
| Engage contractors to support the City of Greater Geelong team in event coordination and curatorial.                                                       | Guest Curator and Event Coordinator engaged designers.                                                                | Additional resourcing provided a positive investment with significantly larger and more geographically spread program, valuing the importance of our cultural and creative spaces and the significant role they play in showcasing why Geelong is a UNESCO City of Design. | Continue engagement of external support roles to maintain program growth and diversity.                                                                                                                                        | ✓ |
| Deeper engagement with more diverse communities.                                                                                                           | Consultation and significant engagement with the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation was conducted. | Significant program outcomes and positive participant feedback and education.                                                                                                                                                                                              | Continue engagement with the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation and hold conversations with other community cultural groups consistently over a 12-month period to continue to increase cultural diversity. | ✓ |
| Showcase local exemplar designers and design-thinking initiatives.                                                                                         | Sponsored Geelong Design Leaders Forum's Design Thinking for Community Leaders Workshop                               | Program featured 86 programs with a significant focus on local designers.                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Broaden featured designers beyond local to support regional and national audience reach.                                                                                                                                       | ✓ |
| Collaborate with local designers, artists and creatives to understand, build and showcase local ideas, innovation and talent and implement regular forums. | Collaborated with designers                                                                                           | Local design program highlights included The Circle of Threads and Radial Recycling.                                                                                                                                                                                       | Need to implement regular forums and/or events throughout the year to engage with the design sector.                                                                                                                           | ✓ |
| Increase global attractions and leverage international partnerships.                                                                                       | Open Call to UNESCO Cities of Design Network, and harnessed international connections.                                | UNESCO City of Design, Nagoya, and Deakin University (Tran2located), Geelong Tech School x Kortrijk Wonder Festival Projection and the National Wool Museum's Geelong to Japan events delivered.                                                                           | More work can be done to build and leverage international partnerships and global attractions.                                                                                                                                 | ✓ |

# Areas of focus: 2025 and beyond recommendations

Geelong Design Week has managed to grow at an exponential rate over the past four years. However, with increasing costs, constrained resources, and limited lead time, the growth and success of the event is threatened without significant review. Recommendations have been broken into two key areas; Governance and Planning, and Event resourcing and elevation.

## Governance and Planning recommendation

Recommendations to support strong planning and governance in alignment with UNESCO Sustainable Development Goals and the UNSECO Cities Network include:

1. **A five-year framework for the UNESCO Creative City of Design designation** to support the objectives and impact of the event as they relate to the City's UNESCO designation, the City's 2024–2034 Clever and Creative Strategy, and the 2021–2031 Arts and Culture Strategy.
2. **A five-year plan for Geelong Design Week** to ensure clarity of purpose, objectives, and sustainable event growth. The plan will also identify opportunities for partnership, best practice and improved links to the UNSECO Creative Cities Network.

## Planning recommendations

The implementation of a clear governance model will enable the City of Greater Geelong to determine the direction of Geelong Design Week. Clear opportunities that should be explored within the five-year plan include:

1. **Host Geelong Design Week as a Biennial event:** limited resources and a need for greater lead time (preparation and promotions) suggest benefits for GDW becoming a biennial event.
2. **Centralisation of Geelong Design Week:** while satellite venues should be maintained across the Greater Geelong region, the opportunity to utilise the Nyaal Banyul Convention Centre in October 2026 presents benefits in cost savings for venues, rationalisation and concentration of marketing assets, improved program flow to limit cross-over issues, and partnership benefits based on an attractive scale and a greater, more centralised audience.
3. **Introduction of a Regional Design Fair:** A Design Fair provides tangible opportunities for regional designers across Victoria to showcase, connect with industry and audiences, and explore new markets and collaborations.
4. **Consider alternative timing:** November is a challenging time of year to host a major event with competing priorities in partner organisations. Furthermore, the four-year Council election cycle impacts our employees workflows at this time of year.
5. **Review of ticketing model:** the implementation of a five-year plan will

assist the GDW team to explore and consider ticketing models with a balance of free, registration and ticketed events adding value and providing opportunity for increased investment in flagship events.

## Marketing and audience engagement recommendations

1. **Partnership opportunities:** a dedicated resource with intimate Geelong Design Week knowledge to explore and manage in-kind and financial partners across government and private enterprise.
2. **Marketing planning:** the implementation of a five-year plan will assist the GDW marketing team with clarity to ensure an improved focus on repeat visitation and visitors attending more than one event.
3. **Melbourne and Interstate visitation:** the implementation of a five-year plan will assist the GDW team to consider whether these audiences are a key priority or whether cultural, social and environmental impacts at a local level are the strategic objective.
4. **Leverage International networks:** the implementation of a five-year plan will allow GDW to elevate and include more global attractions, leveraging the many opportunities for partnership through the UNESCO Cities of Design network, generating programming and learning opportunities for audiences and the creative design sector.
5. **Improve and diversity:** a focused and considered engagement process is

recommended for diverse communities. Improved and ongoing consultation with the Wadwurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation and Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative is recommended to ensure First Nations people are not only included in the programming but also are represented in the audience.



Design Institute  
Australia & Cultivated  
City of Design Tour  
visiting Eden Oak.  
Photo Blue Tree Studios.

# Acknowledgements

Geelong Design Week was managed and delivered by the Arts and Cultural Development Unit at the City of Greater Geelong, led in collaboration with Tracey-Lea Smith, Coordinator Creative City; Dr Tonya Meyrick, Guest Curator; and Alice Bergin, Event Coordinator. Together, we embraced a highly collaborative and creative approach—bringing together strategic planning, curatorial insight, event expertise and high quality customer service to deliver a dynamic and engaging program that celebrated Geelong’s designation as a UNESCO City of Design. Our team worked closely throughout the planning and delivery stages, aligning vision, values, and logistics to ensure a thoughtful, inclusive, and high-impact Design Week experience for participants and audiences alike.

**Tracey-Lea Smith** – Coordinator Creative City, City of Greater Geelong

**Dr Tonya Meyrick** – Guest Curator

**Alice Bergin** – Event Coordinator

This report was compiled by

**Penny Whitehead** – Managing Director, PW Strategy

In the development of this report and to compile recommendations, the City of Greater Geelong employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative evaluation including attendance and participation, content and programming, stakeholder feedback, media coverage and public engagement, and financial evaluation.

- Architecture Without Borders Quebec (AWBQ)
- AsOne Coworking
- Australian Institute of Architects – EmAGN Vic
- Back to Back Theatre
- Ball & Doggett
- Barwon Heads Surf Life Saving Club
- Barwon Water
- Baum Cycles
- Bay City Events
- BEKL
- Bellarine AV
- Bishop & Reis
- Blink Dance Theatre
- BLT Jewellery
- Boom Gallery
- Bryan Micallef
- C. Kairouz Architects
- Cecilia Cabalquinto
- Centuria
- Cercle Lifestyle
- Christopher Delia
- Circle of Thread

- City of Greater Geelong
- Clac Clac Design
- Clever Digital
- Colin Tretcher
- Communications Collective
- Connor Overden-Shaw
- Conor Whitty
- Corey Graham
- Create Innovation
- Creative Geelong
- Creative Wannabe
- Cricket Saleh – Claude Kafka
- Cultivated
- Dark Matter Labs
- Deakin University
- Dell Nolan
- Dennis Ioannou
- Design Business Council
- Design Institute Australia
- Design Research Works
- Development Victoria
- DeZeen

- Dr Matt Dingle
- Dr Matthias Weiss
- Dr Tonya Meyrick
- Ed Sloane Photography
- Eden Oak
- Elise Motalli
- Elk Creative
- Engineered to Slide
- Fleetwood Print Group
- Flinders University
- Flower Bowl
- Forte
- Full Moon Screen Printing
- Geelong + Surf Coast Regional Practice Forum
- Geelong Arts Centre
- Geelong Design Leaders Forum
- Geelong Gallery
- Geelong Regional Libraries
- Geelong Sports Museum
- Geelong Window Cleaning
- Geelong Tech

- School
- Grant Finck
- Jacinta Kay
- Jade and May
- Kip & Co
- Les Interstices
- Little George Forge
- Make Mate
- Matt Harkness
- Merv Jennings Signs
- Milly Thomas
- Mitsui & Co. (Australia) Ltd.
- Morris Art Studio
- Multimedia Events Australia
- National Wool Museum
- Nicola Cerini
- Open House Melbourne
- PACE
- Pam Hutchinson Photography
- Partington
- Pete James Photography
- Peter Leigh
- Phillip Withers

- Pivotonian Cinema
- Platform Arts
- Plot Architecture
- Plus Architecture
- PMDL McGlashan Everist
- Ranch Pressing
- Rebecchi’s
- RECYC-QUÉBEC
- Reef Design Lab
- Regina Middleton
- Ross and Lyn George
- Ross Thompson Furniture
- Rut Gallery
- Sacred Heart College, Design Futures Lab
- Samantha Taylor
- Sequel Gallery
- Sharyn Masson
- Shelley Hannigan
- Shelley Jardine
- Signific Signs
- Spearhead Strategic Design and Innovation
- Spel Design
- Still Smiths

- Stonehouse + Irons Architecture
- Sundown Lighting
- The Frame Shop
- The Gordon
- The KO
- The School of Lost Arts
- Tim Ross
- Times News Group
- Total Outdoor Media
- Transition Barwon
- True South Film
- Two Birds Property Styling
- Two Lines Studio
- Vision Australia
- Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation
- Walter Walter
- Wathaurong Glass
- We Made
- WorkSafe
- Yan Huang – Yan Design Studio



Top LHS: Kip & Co, Jenny Kee + Ken Done Collaborations. Photo: Ed Sloane

Top Centre: Geelong Tech School x Kortrijk Wonder Festival Projection. Photo: Pam Hutchinson

Top RHS: MOTEL – Tim Ross and Kit Warhurst. Photo: Pam Hutchinson

Middle LHS: Design Dialogues with Dowel Jones at the National Wool Museum. Photo: Pete James

Middle Centre: Dell Eco Reef Exhibition. Photo: Pam Hutchinson

Middle RHS: Trans2located. Photo: Ed Sloane

Bottom LHS: Rutland Street Design Hub Open Door. Photo: Ed Sloane

Bottom Centre: Social Studies. Photo: Ed Sloane

Bottom RHS: Matter(s) of Time, Design Futures Lab Sacred Heart College. Photo Pam Hutchinson.



# GEELONG DESIGN WEEK

We Acknowledge the Wadawurrung People as the Traditional Owners of the Land, Waterways and Skies. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging. We Acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are part of our Greater Geelong community today.

## References

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City of Greater Geelong Media Coverage Report (Stream)

Geelong Design Week 2022 Event Report

Geelong Design Week 2023 Event Report

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