EVENTS STRATEGY 2023 – 2026

Acknowledgement

Council respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of this land, the people of the Kulin Nations. We pay our respect to their Elders, past and present. We acknowledge and uphold their continuing relationship to this land.

Introduction

The City of Port Phillip municipality is historically recognised as Melbourne's playground; a natural gathering point due to its unique places, people and cultural heritage. The municipality, including its foreshore, open spaces and iconic venues, is highly sought after real estate for events.

Port Phillip's assets, both natural and built – along with its proximity to the CBD and renowned hospitality centres – make it one of Melbourne's innate event destinations. Council itself has a proud history of producing large scale, world class events with extraordinary levels of attendance, participation and engagement. This combined with the municipality's popularity as a destination lay the foundations for an events calendar that showcases a huge range of activities and celebrations, while welcoming diverse audiences and a dynamic community.

Through producing and hosting events, the City of Port Phillip can provide opportunity and support diversity and vibrancy for the community while continuing to build an identity for our spaces to foster local pride and sense of place. In addition, events attract and welcome visitors to the municipality, driving tourism and economic growth, as well as a celebration of our shared resources and culture.

This strategy sets out Council's vision for events in the municipality, and how they should contribute to the community and daily life in the City of Port Phillip. It is an update on previous events strategies and introduces a new era for the events calendar, with key initiatives including:

- A strong priority on curation of our events calendar
- A focus on economic development and visitation as a priority for events both internal and externally produced
- Clear pathway on measuring economic benefit from events and data collection
- Recognition of the impact of COVID on events and the community and a commitment to support that recovery

A Word About COVID-19

The restrictions that came about as a result of COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021 decimated the events industry, along with its critical partners in the live music, hospitality and tourism sectors.

While this strategy is looks ahead to the development of events within Port Phillip, it also acknowledges the crisis that the industry is emerging from and commits Council to playing a key role in the recovery of these critical areas that are so vital to our community and its vibrancy.

Vision

To build an annual events calendar that is bold, engaging, welcoming and unique to the City of Port Phillip; connected to our people, places, businesses and culture. Our events will drive economic development, visitation and support for the community while maintaining local character, liveability and amenity.

Defining Our Events

For the purposes of this strategy, an event is defined as a temporary organised sporting, recreational, cultural, commercial or social gathering of people, open to the general public.

Events are generated in three key ways:

- Council events: produced directly by the City of Port Phillip. These can be held on public or private space. Examples may include major events, library and gallery events, and civic or commemorative events
- Permitted events: produced independently, but permitted by Council as they are held on public space or in public buildings. Examples include events held in parks and gardens, in town halls or community facilities
- Independent events: events produced independently of Council and held in spaces and placed not managed by Council but in or near to the municipality. Examples include events in Albert Park (Parks Victoria area), in live music venues or creative spaces, on school grounds or within business' premises

Council recognises that all of these event types contribute to delivery of this Events Strategy and our community's experience of events in the municipality.

Why Events?

The City of Port Phillip aims to plan, attract and direct events to ensure our city is welcoming, healthy, safe and vibrant for all. It is commonly recognised and accepted that events bring a wealth of benefits to a community, from resident health and wellbeing to economic development for local business, tourism and visitation, cultural vibrancy and social engagement.

The vacuum created by the lack of events in 2020 and 2021 illustrated their value, as did the community's yearning to gather together during the times it was prohibited.

Recognising these benefits, the City of Port Phillip events calendar must also strike a balance between a number of complexities:

- High visitation and demand in summer but a winter downturn
- Varying needs, character and visitation of each neighbourhood
- Maintaining a diverse range of event types
- Commercial demand with community activity and residential amenity
- Fragile but popular foreshore with the potential for negative environmental impact

Prioritised benefits from the events calendar include:

Business support, economic development and strengthening of creative industries:

- Increase in visitation, profile and awareness of the area
- Increased patronage for local business and services
- Opportunity for business to broaden reach and attract new audiences
- Direct and indirect employment opportunities
- Opportunities to foster and promote local artists and creative industries, encouraging partnerships and collaborations

Social and cultural benefit:

- Opportunity for community strengthening, connection and social benefit
- Opportunity to increase engagement with, and pride in, the local area
- Increase interaction with local community, including local artists, community groups and facilities
- Increase in civic participation and contribution
- Increase usage and activity at key activity centres and open space, and opportunities to change behaviour or perceptions within key areas

At the same time, holding events within busy parts of our municipality may have an impact on everyday life and amenity, at event sites and in nearby surrounding areas. Specific impacts that will be monitored and mitigated include:

- Increased litter
- Parking availability
- Road closures
- Noise
- Antisocial behaviour
- Too many people within an area / overuse
- Environmental impact
- Loss of access to public space
- Property damage
- Loss of access to local shops or facilities
- Change to daily routine
- Competition for local business

Policy Outcomes

- Curate an events calendar that meets the needs of the community, showcases our places and spaces, and presents Port Phillip as a premier choice for event promoters and attendees
- Drive economic growth through an events calendar that increases visitation and tourism to the City and enhances its reputation as a destination, and quantify benefits through measurement
- Host an annual events calendar that is representative, inclusive and accessible for our diverse community, supporting community cohesion and wellbeing
- Actively create and support events and the events industry through the COVID recovery period, while prioritising COVID safety and public health at all times
- Support our local creative industries and communities through events: showcasing their work, providing partnership opportunities and activating strategically to meet needs and fill gaps
- Leverage and support Council's strategic vision and brand, seeking events that align with our direction and reflect the community's character and priorities and ensuring events are spread throughout the municipality
- Aim to positively influence behaviour within our public spaces and enhance participation and engagement
- Deliver and facilitate leading event practice that balances event impacts with residential amenity, including sustainable practice as a bayside municipality

How We'll Deliver:

1. Curate an events calendar that meets the needs of the community, showcases our places and spaces, and presents Port Phillip as a premier choice for event providers and attendees
    - 1.1 Curate the events calendar to ensure that community priorities are represented and attract events that provide a broad range of activity
    - 1.2 Grow our communication and promotional tools for events to ensure the community is informed and aware of local opportunities, including outdoor promotional assets
    - 1.3 Deliver Council-produced events that are aligned with this strategy and the Council Plan, including the St Kilda Festival and St Kilda Film Festival
    - 1.4 Consider event requirements in the development or maintenance of appropriate public space
    - 1.5 Seek to attract events that target our priority areas, as identified in this Strategy or as directed by Council
    - 1.6 Provide support for events that meet our priorities, ranging from funding opportunities and fee waivers to in-kind support through Council services
    - 1.7 Seek to produce or support new events to meet gaps where required
    - 1.8 Refine internal processes to provide a pro-events experience that is simple, transparent and timely
    - 1.9 Work with state government partners including the EPA, Parks Victoria, DELWP and Heritage Victoria to facilitate event applications and support operators where appropriate
    - 1.10 Welcome major events that contribute to branding of the municipality as a major events site, a home for iconic Victorian events
    - 1.11 Collaborate with state government, including Visit Victoria and Creative Victoria to attract events of state-wide significance and leverage from existing major events to benefit our community

2. Drive economic growth through an events calendar that increases visitation and tourism to the City and enhances its reputation as a destination, and quantify benefits through measurement
    - 2.1 Seek and support events with a broad reach that attract audiences from across Melbourne, as well as intrastate, interstate and internationally
    - 2.2 Seek to increase events within high streets and priority activation areas
    - 2.3 Establish strong communication with our business communities that maximises opportunity for them to collaborate, integrate and benefit from local events, and seeks ongoing feedback from them
    - 2.4 Gather reliable baseline data on economic benefit of event types and build an events calendar that maximises benefit for the local economy
    - 2.5 Prioritise economic growth in the delivery of Council-produced major events like the St Kilda Festival and St Kilda Film Festival
    - 2.6 Encourage local business to leverage from events in their neighbourhood
    - 2.7 Build the city's reputation as a destination for visitors by coordinating community participation in broader events, such as Halloween
    - 2.8 Assist and support CoPP businesses to integrate with and leverage from events, including itinerant trading, digital platforms for pick-up and delivery from event sites, and trader participation kits for select events

2.9 Support trader associations to maximise benefits from events, including through professional development and working directly with event providers

3. Host an annual events calendar that is representative, inclusive and accessible for our diverse community, supporting community cohesion and wellbeing

    3.1 Align the events calendar with broader City of Port Phillip direction including the Council Plan, Creative and Prosperous City Strategy 2023-2026, Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, Public Space Strategy, Sport and Recreation Strategy, Accessibility Action Plan, Reconciliation Action Plan and the First Peoples Arts Policy
    3.2 Identify opportunities for new internal events where gaps are not met through the market, our partners or stakeholders
    3.3 Evaluate the events calendar annually and consult stakeholders for feedback
    3.4 Ensure all Council-produced events meet expectations and deliver continuous improvement in these fields
    3.5 Work with internal and external stakeholders to host events that enable participation in active and recreational events to boost physical and mental health
    3.6 Advance gender equality in events by ensuring equality of engagement, attendance, safety and increased recognition of contributions by people of all genders, with key actions including:
        3.6.1 Increasing safety and women's perceptions of safety at events
        3.6.2 Gathering relevant data, then integrating gender diversity and inclusivity into selection and evaluation of events
        3.6.3 Providing guidance for external operators to ensure events are safe and inclusive for everyone

4. Actively create and support events and the events industry through the COVID recovery period, while prioritising COVID safety and public health at all times
    4.1 Respond to all relevant changes to public health settings and assist our event operators to do the same
    4.2 Provide support through Council services where aligned to broader direction, including fee waivers, promotional support, community engagement or operations support
    4.3 Prioritise events that will provide employment and engagement for the events industries and associated sectors, including creative industries, tourism and hospitality

5. Support our local creative industries and communities through events: showcasing their work, providing partnership opportunities and activating strategically to meet needs and fill gaps

    5.1 Align the events calendar with the new Creative and Prosperous City Strategy 2023-2026 once endorsed
    5.2 Promote local creative organisations and practitioners to event providers to seek collaboration and inclusion, and increase networks

5.3 Prioritise events that work with our local creative industries, including music, gaming and film, and ensure their inclusion in Council-produced events
5.4 Align event delivery with the Live Music Action Plan and the creation of live music precincts, and advocate for maximised opportunities for live music in public space

6. Leverage and support Council's strategic vision and brand, seeking events that align with our direction and reflect the community's character and priorities

    6.1 Tailor an events calendar that works with the character or our neighbourhoods: the right event for the right place
    6.2 Ensure alignment in Council's own major events including the St Kilda Festival and St Kilda Film Festival, and ensure ongoing review and assessment
    6.3 Align events to Council Plan priorities and provide incentives for those that can support its delivery

7. Aim to positively influence behaviour within our public spaces and enhance participation and engagement, and encourage visitation in colder seasons

    7.1 Activate areas which require support based on visitation, public behaviour, or perceptions of safety
    7.2 Trial holding events at key times of visitation and crowd peaks, such as Cup Day, Christmas Day, Boxing Day, New Year's Eve, New Year's Day and Australia Day, maintaining safety as a key priority
    7.3 Seek events that activate lesser used areas within the municipality, or areas prone to seasonal downturns, including attraction of events staged in winter and the shoulder months
    7.4 Explore events within the municipality that are not managed by Council
    7.5 Welcome events that encourage community participation, including sporting and recreation events

8. Deliver and facilitate leading event practice that balances event impacts with residential amenity, including sustainable practice as a bayside municipality

    8.1 Collaborate with internal and external partners to support sustainability and minimise environmental impact of events
    8.2 Work closely with regulatory agencies including the EPA, VCGLR and Victoria Police to maximise cooperation and minimise amenity impact
    8.3 Ensure ease of communication with event operators or with council, providing timely and transparent response

Our Priorities

Places and Spaces

The following places are identified as priorities for new events, in order to support economic and cultural recovery, influence usage, activation and community use, and spread activity throughout the municipality:

Port Melbourne, including Bay Street, JL Murphy Reserve and the whisky and beer precinct

Balaclava and St Kilda East, including Carlisle St, Alma Park and the William Street industrial zone

St Kilda, including Acland St, Fitzroy St and the foreshore, in winter or shoulder seasons

South Melbourne, including Clarendon and Coventry streets

Fishermans Bend

Council is also interested in activating the Station Pier precinct if opportunities eventuate in collaboration with the State Government

Event Types

The following event types are prioritised, in order to meet community demand, support our creative industries, deliver on the brand and character of the area and maximise benefit to local business:

Music events and festivals, particularly those aligned with delivery of live music precincts

Games and play based events and festivals

Film based events and production

Events and festivals that are based in our high streets

Markets

Food and beverage events

Event Times

Encourage visitation year-round, including events occurring in winter or the shoulder seasons

Actions

The following are identified as priority actions in order to address key outcomes in this Strategy and ensure the viability and practicality of delivering events in Port Phillip

- Targeted rounds of expressions of interest to support our priority areas and incentivise events aligned with our strategic direction, including through existing Council funding opportunities. Where this is not successful, procure events as part of our curated approach, and build events where the market does not meet demand

- Feedback opportunities formalised for business community as a year-round communications tool to assist in ongoing event evaluation, and increase access to what's-on information to maximise benefit and leverage opportunities

- Continue to build our communications and promotions tools, including outdoor promotional assets, around the events calendar to raise awareness and ensure all community members that want to participate have the knowledge and ability to do so

- Delegated approval process to officers that allows for timely response to event applications, with exceptions made in the following circumstances:
    - Proposed usage of more than two weeks of sites that have been identified as high sensitivity for the resident, business or visitor communities:
        - South Beach Reserve, St Kilda
        - Catani Gardens, St Kilda
        - Triangle Site Car Park, St Kilda – if greater than 50% occupation year round, or any occupation throughout summer
    - An event that would require a road closure over and above the pre-approved number in the Outdoor Events Policy
    - An event on any public space within the municipality that occupies the site for more than 1 continuous month
    - Events that are associated with national or international initiatives where widespread support would be required from Council, such as the Olympics or Commonwealth Games

  In circumstances where this is not the case, Officers will inform Councillors for initial response

- Identify and protect premium sites. Throughout summer, key sites in St Kilda are highly contested spaces, with demand from events as well as unstructured community use. These include South Beach Reserve, Catani Gardens and the Triangle Car Park.
  To ensure balance and protection for the community, additional criteria shall be applied to these sites to maximise benefit for all parties, as outlined in the Outdoor Events Policy.

- Trial and test new sites and new timings for events, to ensure opportunities are maximised and amenity protected

- Work with or partners including the EPA, DELWP, Heritage Victoria, Victoria Police and the VCGLR, encouraging support, timely and transparent processes and response, and collaborating to simplify process

How We'll Measure

Key evaluation and assessment tools will include:

- Annual evaluation report on the events calendar that will include:
    - Progress in priority areas identified in this Strategy
    - New and trialled events and significant calendar changes
    - Event quantity and geographic spread
    - Attendance rates
    - Economic benefit

    - Community and stakeholder feedback summaries

  The report will be a briefing noted by Councillors and included in the CEO Report

- Assessment of economic benefit of events calendar, conducted annually as part of major events EOI

- Formalised feedback opportunities for the local community and stakeholders, considered annually as part of the major events EOI