Federation Square Review 2020

Key findings and future directions
August 2020
Acknowledgement of Country

On the edge of Birrarung, the land on which Federation Square sits has been a sacred meeting and gathering place for the First Peoples of Victoria, dating back many thousands of years.

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the place we now call Federation Square, and their ongoing connection to this land and waters. We pay our respects to their Elders – past, present and future – and honour their histories and culture.
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Message from the Minister

Our much loved and widely valued Federation Square was facing major decisions about its future in March this year, when much of the consultation for this report was completed.

At the heart of this was the need for far-reaching reform and a renewed focus on quality civic and cultural activity. These things that were important a few months ago, have never been more so in this new world where adaptation and innovation will be critical to ensuring we come back stronger than ever.

Federation Square can play a part in the civic, cultural, design, and now economic revival of Melbourne and Victoria. Making sure the Square is recognised and governed as a key cultural and creative entity, joining our other cultural icons, is a good start - and I welcome Federation Square into the Victorian Government’s Creative Industries portfolio.

The Victorian Government and the Board and Management of Federation Square welcome this report as a roadmap for reform of the Square’s civic and cultural activities, governance, and engagement with the people of Melbourne and Victoria.

Our journey of reform and renewal is only commencing as we seek to remake Federation Square in this COVID-safe and post-COVID world.

As we start to reconnect as a community and rebuild our cultural and visitor economy, the Square’s central role in the life of Melbourne will be vital.

I’d like to thank Jill Garner and Tim Eddy for overseeing the Review, the Fed Square Pty Ltd (FSPL) team and many other stakeholders for collaborating with us, and all the community members who shared their views.

Thanks to you we have a clear new direction for Federation Square and I look forward to working together to ensure it continues to be embraced and enjoyed by Victorians for many more years to come.

Martin Foley MP
Minister for Creative Industries
Message from the Review Co-Chairs

I was pleased to lead Stream One of the Federation Square Review, tasked to consider the public purpose and built form of the place.

In considering the public purpose, our work included in-depth consultation with community, tenants and stakeholders to establish a long-term vision focused on the user experience and site-wide curation.

In looking at the built form, a panel of experts helped guide our research and contributed to a set of design principles and strategies that both acknowledge the heritage status of the place and inform future enhancement.

We also identified the need to commit to structures and processes of good design governance.

We encourage the Victorian Government and FSPL to implement the Review’s recommendations in full, taking on board both near and long-term reform and vision, to ensure Federation Square continues to thrive as Melbourne’s civic and cultural centre.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the Stream One Advisory Panel for their invaluable contribution and support. Thanks must also go to our engaged community, inventive stakeholders and Tim Eddy (Stream Two Lead) for their collaboration.

Jill Garner
Victorian Government Architect and Stream One Lead

Federation Square is a Melbourne institution – a premier venue for arts, culture and public events and home to major cultural institutions such as the Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia, the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) and the Koorie Heritage Trust.

Federation Square is currently governed as a public non-financial corporation (Fed Square Pty Ltd) and has operated this way since it was established.

To ensure Federation Square continues to grow in a socially, environmentally and commercially sustainable manner, I was tasked with leading the financial and governance review.

This included reviewing and assessing the governance and operating arrangements, and how they could be better improved to deliver on a shared community-informed vision for the precinct, in a financially sustainable manner.

I believe the recommendations laid out in the Review will help the Victorian Government and FSPL deliver on this new vision for Federation Square and thrive as a civic and cultural hub for years to come.

I’d like to thank all those who assisted in this stream of the Review, including FSPL, key stakeholders, Jill Garner and the Victorian Government.

Tim Eddy
Stream Two Lead
Background and Introduction
About Federation Square

On the edge of Birrarung (the Yarra River), the land on which Federation Square sits has been a sacred meeting and gathering place for the First Peoples of Victoria, dating back tens of thousands of years.

Since opening in 2002, Federation Square has become one of Melbourne’s most iconic landmarks. In the heart of the city, it is a focal point for cultural and community activity and events.

Federation Square welcomes nearly 10 million people each year, and is home to well-loved cultural tenants and facilities including:

- **Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI)** Australia’s national museum of film, video games, digital culture and art, and one of the most successful museums of its kind in the world
- **National Gallery of Victoria’s Ian Potter Centre (NGV Australia)** the first major gallery dedicated exclusively to Australian art
- **Koorie Heritage Trust (KHT)** an Aboriginal led and managed organisation that supports, promotes and celebrates the living culture of the First Peoples of south-east Australia
- **SBS** the Melbourne studios and offices of Australia’s national multicultural and multilingual public broadcaster
- **Deakin Edge** a stunning glass theatre space used for performances, seminars, public forums and corporate functions

The Federation Square site is a complex one. Many would be unaware that the Square sits on a bridge structure that spans live railway lines; the plaza is on a slope to enable technical facilities to be stored underneath, and cooling in the Atrium is provided by a vast network of heat exchange tunnels under the surface known as ‘the labyrinth’.

In 1999, Fed Square Pty Ltd (FSPL) was established to oversee the development and management of Federation Square. FSPL’s core objective is to deliver the outcomes outlined in its Civic and Cultural Charter in a socially, environmentally and commercially sustainable manner. The same management structure remains largely in place today.

In the two decades since, Melbourne and its population have changed significantly. The built environment and the city centre continue to undergo extensive change to keep pace with the state’s growing diverse population, and popularity as a magnetic visitor destination.

Federation Square must now look to how it can continue to attract, engage and excite people and play its role in Victoria’s social and economic recovery from coronavirus (COVID-19). This report provides a pathway for this to occur.
About the Review

In April 2019, the Victorian Government launched a comprehensive Review of Federation Square overseen by a dedicated project team established within the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR).

Review governance

The first stream of the Review, focused on public purpose and built form, was led by Jill Garner, the Victorian Government Architect. The second stream, encompassing a financial base review and governance review, was led by Tim Eddy.

Overall the Review examined the core purpose of Federation Square and how the built environment, governance and operational arrangements could be strengthened to meet community and stakeholder expectations and the demands of a complex community asset.

The key drivers and objectives of the Review are outlined below:

1. The Review was necessary

Federation Square is a much-loved icon in Melbourne and is well known around the world, yet as it approaches the end of its second decade, it is under increasing financial pressure to meet significant asset maintenance and renewal costs.

The governance and business model established in 1999 requires that the ongoing funding for services, operations and asset management are to be principally self-funded. As a result, over time FSPL has increasingly prioritised commercial activities over community, cultural or artistic activities.

To enable Federation Square to remain a contemporary institution and continue to flourish, the Review has identified recommendations for:

• A community-informed vision that defines Federation Square’s core civic and cultural purpose and will guide the structural changes required to position FSPL for success
• Design principles and strategies that acknowledge the heritage status of the place and enhance the built environment
• Improvements to governance arrangements
• A more sustainable business and operating model
2. Community and stakeholder views informed the Review findings

The Review was greatly assisted by extensive community and stakeholder input and this is instrumental in shaping and guiding Federation Square’s future. Ideas and aspirations from the community, stakeholders and industry professionals have underpinned the Review.

The Review’s two-stage consultation process allowed over 1,800 community members and stakeholders to offer their views on amenities, events and programming, as well as the Square and surrounds as an important public space. Many organisations, community groups, agencies and businesses directly involved with Federation Square were involved in the consultation – with one overarching sentiment becoming apparent: Federation Square needs to reassert its status as Melbourne’s civic and cultural centre.

Participants included:

Traditional Owners

Managing entity: Fed Square Pty Ltd (FSPL)

Tenants (cultural institutions): The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia, Australian Centre for the Moving Image, Koorie Heritage Trust, SBS

Tenants (food and beverage)

Victorian Government: Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning; Parks Victoria; Heritage Victoria; Creative Victoria

Transport bodies: Yarra Trams, Melbourne Metro

Local government: City of Melbourne

Tourism stakeholders: Visit Victoria, Victoria Tourism Industry Council

Festivals and events: Melbourne International Comedy Festival, Melbourne Fringe Festival, Melbourne International Arts Festival (now Rising), Melbourne International Film Festival, Events.com

Community: Our City Our Square, National Trust (Victoria), Royal Historical Society of Victoria, Melbourne Heritage Action, Professional Historians Association (Victoria/Tasmania), Melbourne’s diverse architectural and design community, adjacent precinct owners and the general public, including youth and tertiary students

Visitors: Victorian, Australian and international visitors
Reform areas at a glance

The Review has recommended the following major reform areas and proposed a series of actions to deliver the necessary changes to Federation Square.*

Reform Area 1: Adopt a new community-informed vision and objectives for Federation Square

The community and stakeholders want Federation Square to reassert its status as Melbourne’s civic and cultural centre and realign and rebalance its civic, cultural and commercial programming, and visitor experience. Their feedback has been synthesised into a vision and objectives for Federation Square outlined in this report.

Reform Area 2: Ensure the built environment supports the vision

Design principles and strategies have been developed to ensure future built form initiatives acknowledge the heritage status, and support the new vision and objectives for Federation Square to remove boundaries and enliven the destination.

Reform Area 3: Implement effective governance arrangements

The Review identified a need to strengthen Federation Square’s governance arrangements to meet its civic and cultural objectives. Key actions have been recommended to align government stewardship with other iconic civic and cultural institutions within the creative industries portfolio, bolster the Board’s capacity and strengthen accountability and oversight practices.

*Note: The Review also explored a wide range of cost saving and revenue raising measures to improve Federation Square’s financial sustainability. However, with the subsequent disruptions caused by coronavirus (COVID-19), these initiatives will be deferred while further review and modelling is undertaken to consider COVID-19’s impacts and the recovery phase.
Key Findings
1. Community and stakeholder views on Federation Square were strongly aligned

Extensive engagement with the general community, visitors, industry stakeholders, retailers and agencies demonstrated a high level of alignment on many key areas for the Review to consider.

The Review heard that the future role and purpose of Federation Square needs to be more strategic and civic-minded. Stakeholders called for a business and management model of Federation Square that ensures community and cultural activities are front and centre.

A strengthened focus on First Peoples culture, art, heritage and continuing connection to the site must be core to Federation Square’s future.

Cultural tenants like ACMI, NGV and the Koorie Heritage Trust are widely seen as key to Federation Square’s success however greater coordination of programming, activities and events is essential. Better connection with the city, arts and sports precincts, gardens and Yarra River - as well as a refreshed retail and hospitality offering that uniquely reflects Melbourne - are other vital parts of a renewed visitor experience.

2. The Federation Square public realm is unique and complex

The Review found that Federation Square is generally considered a work of ‘urban art’ through its unique architecture and design.

Originally inspired by the idea of ‘Federation’ – bringing disparate parts together to form a coherent whole – Federation Square is an unusual public space.

The Review identified that the design for Federation Square was only partially delivered - the original design ambition extended beyond the current site boundary to better engage adjacent places, including the river.

“Federation Square was an amazing opportunity to create a precinct that was totally integrated with day-to-day life. The architectural consequence, to us, was issues of non-hierarchical arrangement, multiplicity, permeability, overlaps and synergies.”

Donald Bates, 2019

“Our process … allowed us to recognise that the city has another ordering system, the laneways, alleys and passageways. … all we were doing was giving visibility to something that was already present in the morphological structure of the city. … we were marrying our intervention to something contextual.”

Donald Bates, 2009

The Review also found that Federation Square and its adjacent places have a complex governance environment with multiple landowners, land managers and planning authorities.

By adopting a new set of precinct-wide design principles, strategies and processes, the Review suggests Federation Square can accommodate change while respecting the historical, aesthetic, technological and social values of the site.
3. The Federation Square business model needs a refresh

Much like its unique architecture, Federation Square is distinct among public assets in its diverse levels of utilisation and complexity of spaces and functions. As such, it requires ongoing operating and capital investment to ensure it can meet the high standard required to sustain its public appeal and remain recognised nationally and internationally as a leading public place.

The FSPL operating model relies primarily on self-generated revenue to cover its operating and capital expenditure while its Civic and Cultural Charter ensures its core services centre around the delivery of civic and cultural outcomes. However, in recent years FSPL has faced greater financial pressure to meet substantial asset maintenance and renewal costs.

The Review also found that the governance arrangements of Federation Square could be strengthened to better align and support Federation Square’s civic and cultural objectives. This includes ensuring the Board is supported with the appropriate capacity and skills in civic, cultural and design expertise, and better aligning its business practices with public sector governance principles.

4. An opportunity for reform

The Review found that with a more collaborative approach to programming with its tenants and surrounding arts and sports precincts, a long-term view of built-form priorities and opportunities, and with appropriate changes to its governance and business model, Federation Square’s visitor experience, built-environment and capabilities can be enhanced to meet community and stakeholder expectations in a sustainable way.

The Review identified three overarching challenges, inextricably linked to each other:
Actions to enhance Federation Square’s public value

The Review undertook a detailed and comprehensive due diligence process and engaged leading subject matter experts in arts, culture, urban design, architecture, heritage, governance and financial modelling to explore ways to position Federation Square for success.

Underpinned by the stakeholder and community input, this work culminated in the nine key actions across three reform areas that follow to ensure Federation Square can sustainably deliver strong social, cultural and economic value to Victoria:

Reform area 1:
A new community-informed vision and new objectives

a. Adopt a new vision that prioritises civic and cultural impact
b. Adopt a new approach to programming and visitor experience that aligns with this vision

Reform area 2:
Ensure the built environment supports the vision

a. Adopt design principles and strategies that acknowledge the heritage status of the place and guide future built-form opportunities
b. Explore opportunities to improve user experience and connectivity
c. Strategically coordinate and integrate with adjacent precincts
d. Strengthen design governance processes

Reform area 3:
Implement effective governance arrangements

a. Amend the constitution and charter
b. Strengthen board capacity, including expanding skills and establishing additional subcommittees
c. Transfer portfolio responsibility to the Minister for Creative Industries
Reform 1: A new community-informed vision and objectives

Actions

1A: A new vision and objectives that prioritise civic and cultural impact

The community and stakeholders frequently expressed a desire for Federation Square to reassert its status as Melbourne’s civic and cultural centre.

“The Federation Square review needs to (i) put the visitor first; (ii) define what Federation Square stands for; then (iii) consider the business model to perform its role.”

Review stakeholder, 2019

Role and purpose of Federation Square

The Review heard a consistent call for a strong, defined purpose outlined in an aspirational vision statement for Federation Square reflecting our shared understanding of Federation Square’s role as Melbourne’s most iconic destination, and driving greater partnership between tenants, stakeholders and FSPL.

Federation Square was frequently described to the Review as an iconic meeting place, a central hub near a transport interchange and the heart of the city. It was regularly described as well-located on the arts-commerce-garden spine of Melbourne. In the future it needs to be more strategically aligned and civic-minded. The Review received many calls to retain the Square’s core public function and cement its place for cultural and important events while also offering strong connections to its surrounds.

Federation Square is seen as a place to share and celebrate First Peoples culture - the historical importance of the site as a meeting place for First Peoples, as well as a continuing connection to the land, should be acknowledged and honoured.

“Federation Square should be Melbourne’s heart and the community gathering point to share and celebrate our diversity and creativity.”

Community member, October 2019
Prioritising public impact

Cultural tenants were described as key to Federation Square’s success. They were seen to provide meeting spaces and drive visitor interest and should be core to Federation Square’s future. Frequently, community members reflected on the importance of Federation Square as a place to gather, meet, commemorate and celebrate in the city.

Many stakeholders reported that Federation Square’s vibrancy is decreasing while the commercial atmosphere is increasing. Stakeholders saw this as a risk to the long-term value of Federation Square as a genuine community asset and a place for everyone. It is important to the community that the commercial offerings be curated carefully to ensure they contribute to Federation Square’s civic and cultural focus. In particular, Federation Square’s hospitality offering could better reflect Victoria’s amazing food experiences, cultural diversity and provide a range of different price points to suit a more diverse customer mix.

“Federation Square should be a place where you can experience the finest Victoria has to offer – a rolling program of world-class food and wine and a gateway to other Victorian experiences and places.”

Tourism stakeholder, November 2019

New Federation Square Vision

Participants consistently stated the vision should position Federation Square as a destination rather than a passthrough or transitory location in the city. The vision should also set the goal posts for designing the best governance and administrative model to deliver it.

Informed by the community, the following new vision has been articulated for Federation Square:

Federation Square is a globally iconic destination and Melbourne’s gathering place, where visitors are immersed in unique cultural experiences and architecture that celebrate Victoria’s rich heritage and identity.

The Review outlines three new overarching objectives for Federation Square:

1. Collectively celebrate the cultures and histories of the Traditional Owners and First Peoples of Victoria and their continuing connection to this land and waters
2. Create and deliver exemplary and captivating visitor experiences, including civic and cultural programming and retail and hospitality offers
3. Protect and enhance the Square’s unique architecture
1B: Adopt a new approach to programming and visitor experience to align with the vision

A new approach will be adopted for all programming and visitor experiences to better align with the new vision for Federation Square. The community and stakeholders emphasised the need for Federation Square to realign and rebalance its civic, cultural and commercial programming and visitor experience.

The Review heard a strong desire among many stakeholders for a joined-up and integrated program within the Square. This approach should draw on the strengths and capacity of the Federation Square tenants, the City of Melbourne and the adjacent arts and sports precincts.

The Review recommends the new approach to programming will require the following:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Approach</th>
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<tr>
<td>Position Federation Square as a destination</td>
<td>• Curate the precinct by designing visitor experiences that encourage dwell time and spend in the precinct</td>
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<td>• Support innovative retail and quality food offerings that complement the visitor experience</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Integrate Federation Square’s visitor experience and journey with Birrarung Marr, the arts and sporting precincts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deliver exemplary and captivating visitor experiences</td>
<td>• Establish a Programming and Activation Board Subcommittee to guide the delivery of high quality civic and cultural programming</td>
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<td>• Deliver collaborative programming with cultural and other tenants and adjacent service providers</td>
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<td>• Provide a culturally immersive First Peoples experience that is unique to Federation Square, developed with Traditional Owners and First Peoples communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engage with community and stakeholders</td>
<td>• Develop a Community and Stakeholder Engagement Plan to inform the curation of visitor and community experiences</td>
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<td>• This plan will guide future engagement processes, relationship nurturing and decision-making</td>
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“The clarity of purpose and a business plan to match will make the site stronger and confident.”

Community member, 2019
Reform 2: Ensure the built environment supports the vision

The Review has recommended a long-term design vision for Federation Square. FSPL will be encouraged to investigate, develop and implement identified opportunities to enhance the built form and visitor experience.

Federation Square was included on the Victorian Heritage Register in 2019 for its historical, aesthetic, technological and social significance to Victoria. It was the first 21st century building in Australia to be heritage listed and requires particular expertise in contemporary heritage and civic architecture.

In order to ensure that FSPL is able to appropriately maintain its asset base to the high standard required for a contemporary heritage and public asset, a long-term built-form vision and strategy is needed.

Actions

2A: Adopt new design principles and strategies to guide future built-form opportunities

The Review found that after almost 20 years, much about Federation Square, and its design, continues to stimulate discussion, debate and interest and the place is considered unique and worthy of protection.

The Review highlighted a strong desire to better link Federation Square to Melbourne’s green spaces, gardens and landscapes, including the Yarra River, and sought better integration with the wider precinct.

Overall, public comfort and lack of visible amenities were seen as shortcomings of the site. The big screen remains popular, however the Review heard that it could be better coordinated with the Square’s events and programs.

The Review distilled and synthesised observations from community and stakeholders into five key themes: Identity, Culture and Celebration, Discovery and Destination, Connection and Journey, and Unfinished Business.

The themes aspire to celebrate the essential character of Federation Square and its unique architecture. They also encourage bolder, stronger connections with the history of the place, the celebration of First Peoples culture and continuing connection to the land, and experiences to be found in surrounding precincts.

The Review saw a need for the underlying values of Federation Square’s Civic and Cultural Charter to be respected. Therefore, all principles and strategies require a long-term view to re-establish the central role of Federation Square in the public life of Victoria and to deliver on the renewed vision and objectives that have emerged from the community and stakeholder engagement.

Federation Square requires careful stewardship to carry it forward as an exciting and inviting place for locals and visitors. The Review identified the need for better design governance processes to allow more informed, cohesive and holistic decision-making.
Informed by community and stakeholder insights, and an extensive review by the Office of The Victorian Government Architect and the Stream One Advisory Panel, two overarching design principles and eight design strategies were proposed.

The Review recommended that all future changes should be measured and managed using these principles and strategies.

To remove boundaries and connect precincts
1. Adopt clear processes for design change and approvals
2. Connect with precincts beyond the site boundary
3. Embrace the Yarra River
4. Embed information exchange

To enliven the destination
5. Celebrate First Peoples culture and continuing connection to the land
6. Reinvigorate the public realm
7. Prioritise pedestrians
8. Realise unfinished design ambitions

2B: Explore built-form opportunities to improve user experience and connectivity

The eight design strategies have been developed to ensure the built environment supports the new vision for Federation Square.

The strategies provide guidance on protecting Federation Square's public value and long-term sustainability and bring together the aspirations and requirements of the Civic and Cultural Charter with the need for the Square to better connect and respond to its evolving context.

They will underpin any future initiatives for change to the operations of Federation Square and to the built environment in and around the Square.

To remove boundaries and connect precincts:

Design Strategy 1: Adopt clear processes for design change and approvals
- The success of any new proposal in this setting must aspire to match the quality of the original design so that it is respected and enhanced.
- A process of design governance is recommended to establish procedures to identify responsibility for and inform design care across the site and extended precinct.
Design Strategy 2: Connect with precincts beyond the site boundary

- Integrate Federation Square with the surrounding city and the adjacent arts, sports and entertainment precincts and nearby gardens and landscapes.
- Dissolve site and territory boundaries and integrate through strategically curated experiences and improved physical connections.

Design Strategy 3: Embrace the Yarra River

- Celebrate the history of Birrarung (the river) to acknowledge First Peoples knowledge, practices and cultural principles of place and caring for the environment.
- Enhance visual, physical and cultural links to Birrarung, the centrepiece of Melbourne.

Design Strategy 4: Embed information exchange

- Embed leading digital infrastructure for whole-of-site and events information exchange.
- Take full advantage of digital mediums and onsite staff presence to establish a portal to the stories and histories of the place, the architecture and the offerings of greater Melbourne and Victoria.

To enliven the destination:

Design Strategy 5: Celebrate First Peoples culture and continuing connection to the land

- Celebrate the Aboriginal heritage and culture of the land and waters of the place and Victoria more broadly.
- Guided by Traditional Owners and First Peoples, explore how design can draw out ongoing connections to place, cultural practice and the significance of the site.

Design Strategy 6: Reinvigorate the public realm

- The success of the public open space of the Square relies on the activities and spaces that exist within and around it.
- Capitalise on the synergies between the Square’s tenants to enliven and enhance the open spaces through a holistic orchestration of activities, events and the ground plane.
- Reinforce the Flinders Street and Russell Street interfaces as civic tree-lined streets that are active, pedestrian focussed and connect to the city’s green spaces and urban character.

Design Strategy 7: Prioritise pedestrians

- Enhance the pedestrian connectivity of Federation Square to its surrounds within an enhanced key public transport interchange.
- Highlight pedestrian paths to destinations beyond the site, including parks and gardens.

Design Strategy 8: Realise unfinished design ambitions

- As conceived, the design for Federation Square was only partially delivered, the original design reached beyond the site boundary to embrace the river. An understanding and celebration of the original vision and ambitions for the Square provide a catalyst for renewal and an extended precinct approach.
**2C: Better coordinate with adjacent precincts**

Improved management and coordination of adjacent precincts will better connect Federation Square with Birrarung Marr and the sports and arts precincts. This will enable long-term, coordinated planning of programming, events and built-form opportunities, simplify leasing and licensing arrangements for tenancies and provide an integrated landscape experience from Federation Square to Birrarung Marr and River Terrace/Princess Walk.

Any key design considerations for Federation Square will be shared through further consultation with stakeholders and the community.

**2D: Strengthen design governance processes**

Since 2019, Federation Square has been listed on the Victorian Heritage Register. It is located within an important and complex land ownership and planning environment. Therefore, expertise in contemporary heritage and civic architecture to strengthen design governance is necessary.

The Review has recommended a Design Advisory Panel be established to provide impartial expert built-form advice and recommendations to the FSPL Board.

There are strong synergies between the proposed vision and design principles for Federation Square and other portfolio objectives for the broader precinct. They include the Yarra River 50-Year Community Vision for the inner-city which similarly acknowledges the importance of this location as an iconic ‘meeting place’ for ‘connection, celebration and recreation’.

Accordingly, it is recommended that an inter-departmental Precinct Working Group be established with representatives from FSPL, relevant departments and authorities (e.g. Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and Department of Transport) to ensure state infrastructure and planning activities are coordinated to achieve cross-portfolio outcomes.

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“Federation Square needs to better integrate with and connect between the Yarra, Hosier Lane, Riverside Walk, Flinders St Station and Southbank.”

Government stakeholder, November 2019

“Within the heritage boundary and across the precinct, opportunity exists to tune the experience through sensitive and considered layers of intervention that build on the original design ambition.”

Design community advocate, November 2019
Reform 3: Implement effective governance arrangements

The Review heard frequently from stakeholders of the aspiration for Federation Square to become Melbourne’s civic and cultural centre, underpinned by strong public service delivery, governance and stewardship.

The Review considered existing ownership and best practice governance and financial arrangements to better deliver on a shared vision for Federation Square. Three key actions have been recommended to strengthen governance arrangements.

“`The FSPL Board need better skills in events planning, hospitality, arts promotion, heritage, marketing and customer trends, and include a community voice.”`

Industry stakeholder, November 2019

**Actions**

**3A: Amend FSPL’s Constitution and Charter**
Amend the current constitution and charter to align with the new vision and objectives and with best practice public sector governance principles.

**3B: Strengthen the Board’s capacity**
Expand the Board’s skills and establish subcommittees and advisory panels including First Peoples representation and external expertise in events, arts, culture, design and architecture to support FSPL in delivering Federation Square’s civic and cultural objectives.

Improve partnerships and increase collaboration with cultural and commercial tenants and the adjacent sports and arts precincts.

**3C: Transfer portfolio responsibility for Federation Square to the Minister for Creative Industries**
This will ensure strong portfolio alignment and stewardship over the civic and cultural purpose of Federation Square and the flagship cultural institutions that contribute to its unique identity and offering.
Financial sustainability, COVID-19 impact and immediate investment

The Review undertook a detailed examination of the current underlying cost and revenue structures and identified opportunities to improve FSPL’s long-term financial sustainability, including optimising operating efficiency and diversifying FSPL’s revenue streams.

However, since the conclusion of the Review, Federation Square and its tenants, like other tourism, events, cultural and retail businesses, have been significantly affected by coronavirus (COVID-19). The effectiveness and success of any cost-saving and revenue strategies are dependent on the immediate impacts of COVID-19 and its lasting effects on the community and economy.

As an immediate measure, the Victorian Government will invest $20 million in important asset maintenance and renewal works at Federation Square. This will allow FSPL to use the downtime resulting from COVID-19 to enhance its visitor experience and amenity, in line with recommendations from the Review. Works will include new wayfinding and lighting, enhancement of event facilities, including increased accessibility, and upgrades to food and beverage facilities and cultural venues. This funding is part of the Victorian Government’s Building Works stimulus package.
Where to from here

The Victorian Government has endorsed these reforms and will work with FSPL to implement concrete, practical and timely actions that honour the new vision and approach to programming and visitor experience.

This includes repositioning Federation Square in the creative industries portfolio, reporting to the Minister for Creative Industries and working closely with Creative Victoria.

Further work and modelling will be undertaken to understand the financial impacts of coronavirus (COVID-19) to inform the further development and implementation of revenue and cost-savings strategies.

It is expected these actions, collectively, can enable FSPL to deliver strong civic and cultural outcomes in a sustainable manner and secure Federation Square’s place at the heart of Melbourne.

Thank you

The Review team would like to thank the community and stakeholders for their interest, ideas and ongoing support for the Review – your insights and contributions have been invaluable in developing recommendations for the future of Federation Square.