



“A place you never wanted to visit to one you never want to leave.”

The vision for the revitalisation of the Perth Cultural Centre was to create a place where people of all ages and backgrounds could interact, to attract new groups of people - particularly families and children - into the city and encourage Western Australians to rediscover the cultural heart of Perth.

Four years and \$35 million in the making, has this been achieved?

The Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority provide the following overview of how the development of the Perth Cultural Centre has impacted the vitality of the city.

Rediscovering the cultural heart of Perth

Perth's regeneration is about creating a network of exciting destinations and places throughout the city and across the metropolitan area. Considerable investment by both the public and private sectors in recent years has attracted unique small bars and restaurants to the CBD, exciting new retail and cultural experiences and a calendar of events that are encouraging people to rediscover our city.

One leading example of this urban regeneration is the Perth Cultural Centre. Home to the State's most significant cultural and learning institutions, this precinct has undergone significant transformation to become one of Perth's premier events destinations and a favourite meeting place. The Western Australian Government - through the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority and the Department of Culture and the Arts - has invested more than \$35million over the past four years into the precinct to address the area's negative reputation as a place synonymous with antisocial behaviour.

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What was unique about this project was the approach to planning and design. The Perth Cultural Centre precinct had all the “building blocks” of a great place - the museum, art gallery, independent theatre groups and other wonderful cultural institutions. What was missing was activity in the open areas. Planning and design started with the users of the space to ensure the result was a place that people wanted to visit, and were encouraged to stay a while.

Prior to commencing the first stage of revitalisation works in 2009, a series of open community forums were held to ask people passing through the area to share their views on the space. Consideration was given to how the resident cultural institutions were using - and could use - the open spaces, durability of surfaces and materials, comfort level of the public amenity - lighting, safety and seating - and flexibility of the spaces.

The first stage of revitalisation works were completed in July 2010 and included a community garden, native wetland, improved signage, seating and increased shade as well as two new retail pods. Built on the roof of a neglected car park, the Urban Orchard is a highly successful, working community garden that produces organic fruit, vegetables and herbs and is a leading example of environmental excellence in urban design and development. It is the perfect spot for city workers and residents to eat lunch and meet up with friends.

Formerly a chlorinated water feature, the Wetland is now a fresh water ecology and home to plant and animal species once common throughout Perth, including native fish, frogs and invertebrates. The existing steps provide seating for audiences or passers-by looking for a peaceful spot to relax. It also serves as an outdoor classroom for school groups and those looking to learn about the ecosystem, and has been the stage for many performances including the inaugural Perth International Jazz Festival and the annual ARTBAR concert series.

Located on the western edge of the Perth Cultural Centre, the award-winning William Street precinct is home to an increasingly eclectic mix of creative businesses, boutiques and cafes that build on and enhance the unique identity, history and reputation of Northbridge. The revitalisation of William Street was an important component of the first stage of works and has achieved exceptional results in terms of heritage conservation and place activation.

A second stage of improvements completed in 2011 has increased the diversity and scale of events in the precinct ranging from Sunday morning movie screenings on the Cultural Centre Screen, to digital projections on building facades and the increasingly popular summer festival season. In front of the WA Museum, a new nature-inspired children's play space is proving popular with families visiting the city and many young school students.

Prior to regeneration, the Perth Cultural Centre was dark, uninviting and considered by most to be unsafe, especially at night. Today, people of all ages are finding reasons to re-engage with the space, primarily through events, community planting days, public art, and a host of popular music and arts festivals including Fringe World and the Perth International Arts Festival and special events such as the People's Space for CHOGM in 2011.

Research shows that thousands of people move through the Perth Cultural Centre each month - many to access the various institutions, others passing through from the city and an increasing number to rediscover the revitalised precinct. The MRA is currently developing a place plan to address longer term improvement strategies for the precinct and will continue to work with other State Government agencies and private partners in creating a place that is 'alive' and focused on the users of the space.