



# **Abbotsford Convent Foundation**

**Business Plan  
2017/18 – 21/22**

*Tunnel Vision*  
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## Background

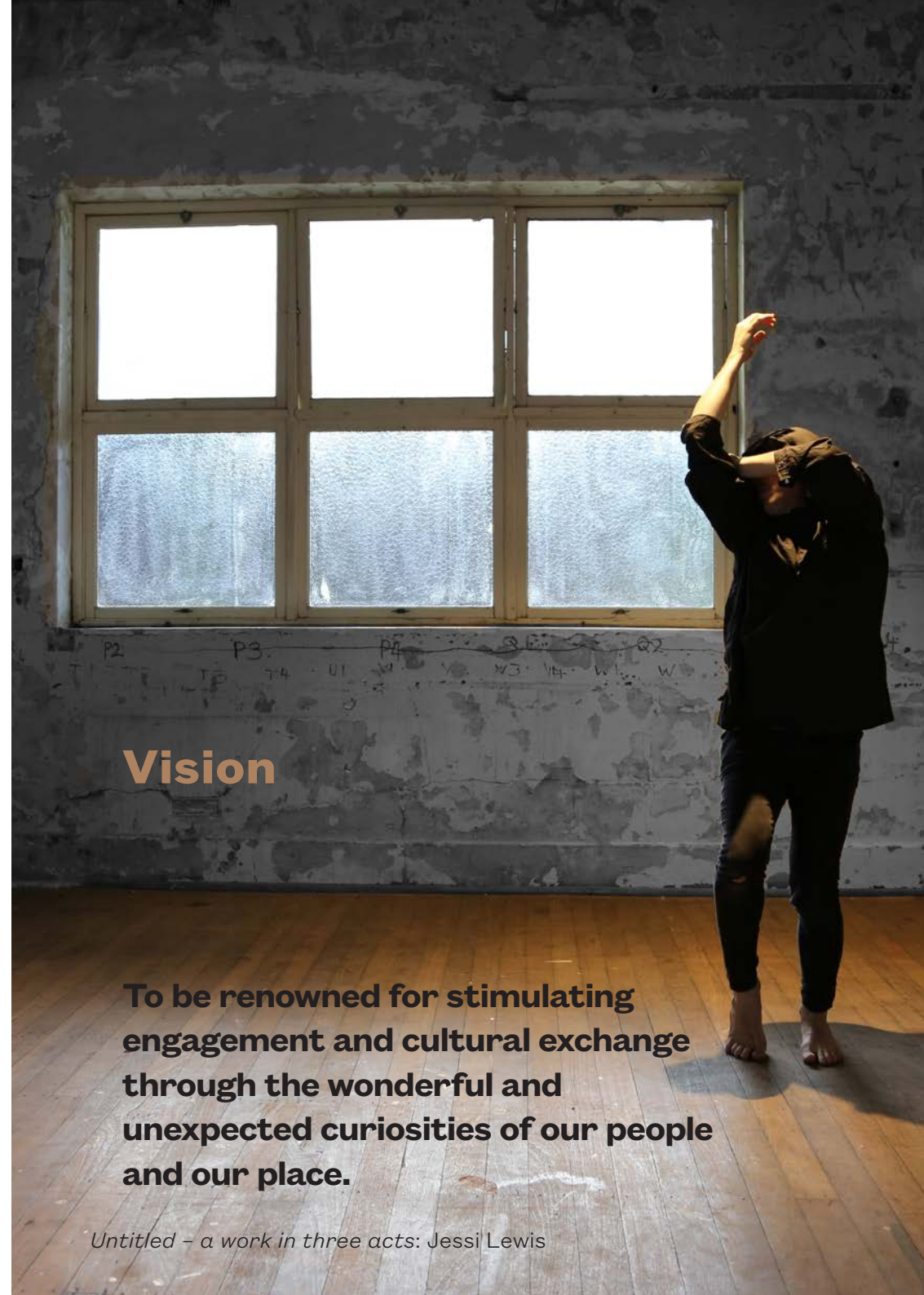
In April 2016, the Abbotsford Convent Foundation (ACF) Board established the strategic direction for the organisation as:

*An entrepreneurial, financially independent, nationally recognised, creative catalyst and a welcoming, open and inclusive place that maximises cultural impact through complementary cultural and commercial activities.*

This has guided the development of the ACF's 17/18 – 21/22 Business Plan.

This Business Plan details our priorities, our market, what we will do and the results we are seeking in the short and medium term.

Our actions and desired results are supported by operational plans, including targets against which our performance and achievement of our objectives will be measured.



## Vision

**To be renowned for stimulating engagement and cultural exchange through the wonderful and unexpected curiosities of our people and our place.**

*Untitled – a work in three acts: Jessi Lewis*





## Purpose

**To transform people's lives through diverse cultural experiences and the striking landscape of our place.**





## Values

## Values

### **EMPOWERMENT**

We offer a program experience and landscape that helps people live well. Our community is engaged, and feels ownership of and responsibility for the Convent.

### **DISTINCTIVENESS**

We make our place the home of arts and cultural innovation, often at the engine room of independent practice, which we share with our clients, audiences and visitors through unique and distinctive programs.

### **RESILIENCE**

We constantly seek to be a strong organisation. We adopt an entrepreneurial approach that is consolidated through continually improved systems, renewed and new partnerships and a commitment to providing excellence in our overall client and visitor experience.

### **RELATIONSHIPS**

We nurture, renew and inspire our partners, communities, visitors and audiences through the depth and breadth of our engagement opportunities.

### **LIVING LEGACY**

We acknowledge the past. At the same time, we look to the future. We seek to understand the needs of our communities and continually evolve our site, programs and experiences to stimulate new conversations and stay at the forefront of contemporary practice.

### **DISCOVERY**

We share our point of view and invite participation to stimulate emotional responses and transformational ideas about our place and the world around us.

### **POTENTIAL**

We encourage our team to contribute by bringing their passions and expertise to the table, empowering them to reach their individual and collective potential.



## Strategic Priorities

**The ACF's strategic priorities are congruent with our values. They are the roadmap that has been developed to lead us to our vision. The ACF Board has four main aims for this next phase of our custodianship.**

## Strategic Priorities

### ACTIVATION

The Abbotsford Convent will be a catalyst for cultural development, animated by creative and entrepreneurial people. It will be a place that encourages cultural engagement in a broad civic and social sense, as well as fostering excellence in the fine and applied arts.

### PLACE

The Convent will be a place that inspires, supports and reflects a vibrant mix of cultural and community activities while conserving and enhancing the heritage assets of the Convent and ensuring maximum access and amenity for all visitors.

### VIABILITY

The ACF will achieve financial independence through uses that generate income and extend the scope and quality of outcomes relating to the place and its activation.

### GOVERNANCE

The ACF will make decisions and perform our role in a manner that reflects our core values and that encourages accountability, operational efficiency and responsiveness to needs as they arise.



## Context



# Context

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The ACF is a not-for-profit Company Limited by Guarantee responsible for the management and stewardship of the Abbotsford Convent precinct, and the diverse assets and activities to which the precinct is home. This nationally and internationally unique precinct, located in the City of Yarra, is a celebration of the nexus of heritage, arts, culture, community development, learning, wellbeing and social and cultural enterprise.

Now 13 years old, the ACF is moving into a new phase of its history. In its first years, the priority was to 'prove the model' by 'surviving,' followed by a period of achieving a base level of financial sustainability. Now that this goal has been achieved, the next phase in the Convent's trajectory is focussed on restoring and activating the whole site (currently only 60 per cent of the Convent's buildings, grounds and gardens can be used).

In this new phase, the ACF will operate in a more integrated and connected way, driving organisational and community outcomes through using our assets with more ambition, while remaining true to our social purpose and the expectations of our community and partners. The ACF Board is committed to achieving continual improvement in the quality and impact of the ACF's assets and activities.

The ACF receives no recurrent government funding, and our custodianship of the precinct is dependent on running a self-sustaining organisation. Significant expenditure items such as repairs and maintenance, security, staff salaries, public programs, insurance and gardening are funded from income generated by the ACF.

# Context

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Abbotsford Convent is a unique social and cultural enterprise success story, built on a partnership between the community, the philanthropic sector, the corporate sector and, to some extent, the three levels of government.

The ACF Board and team's task is to steer the ACF in a way which is congruent with our values and our partnerships, which maintains and grows our independent financial sustainability and which delivers on our ambition.

In line with the ACF's vision and approach to resourcing through partnerships, we received government investment of \$2.681M from the National Stronger Regions Fund (NSRF) for the restoration of the 3200 sq. m Sacred Heart building – a dilapidated historic building on the Convent site that awaits restoration and is therefore currently out of bounds.

The NSRF support is matched by the generous \$2M donation from the Dara Foundation, and funds that the ACF has contributed from its financial reserves. With the building at serious risk of ruin if not secured soon, Sacred Heart has been a top priority for the ACF for some time. The Sacred Heart redevelopment is the biggest capital works program at the Convent since the original restorations a decade ago. Oversight of the Sacred Heart project is a key and immediate priority for the Board.

In addition, the Commonwealth Government is assessing the entire Abbotsford Convent precinct for inclusion on the National Heritage List (NHL). The two-year-long assessment process commenced in 2016, and the ACF is confident that we will be placed on the prestigious NHL in the future.



# Context

## THE NEXT 5 YEARS: 2017/18 – 2021/22

With a new strategic direction, a new CEO, an impressive history of development, upcoming restoration projects, and a vision to artistically, creatively and culturally activate the Convent, the next five years will see the biggest transformation for the Abbotsford Convent since it reopened its doors over a decade ago.

As the ACF moves into this new period of development, and when refurbishment is completed with more than 90 per cent of the site's built form restored (and, to some extent, activated for the first time), the ACF is moving into a new era of sophistication, both in terms of the business that it does, and the people, skills and resources it needs to do this.

In line with the Convent's strategic plan priorities of activation, place, viability and governance, the ACF will work to position the Convent as a leading and professional arts, cultural and learning precinct, whilst ensuring that it remains accessible, honouring its grass roots and community-driven model.

Over the next five years and beyond, the ACF aims to position the Convent as an iconic Melbourne visitor destination celebrated and recognised for its:

- Distinctive arts, cultural and curatorial direction, offering and community
- Stunning grounds and gardens, offering a unique inner-urban retreat
- Impressive heritage-listed buildings which, whilst remaining architecturally preserved and protected, are being re-imagined for multi-arts, cultural and learning practitioners, professionals, purposes and audiences

# Context

## THE NEXT 5 YEARS: 2017/18 – 2021/22

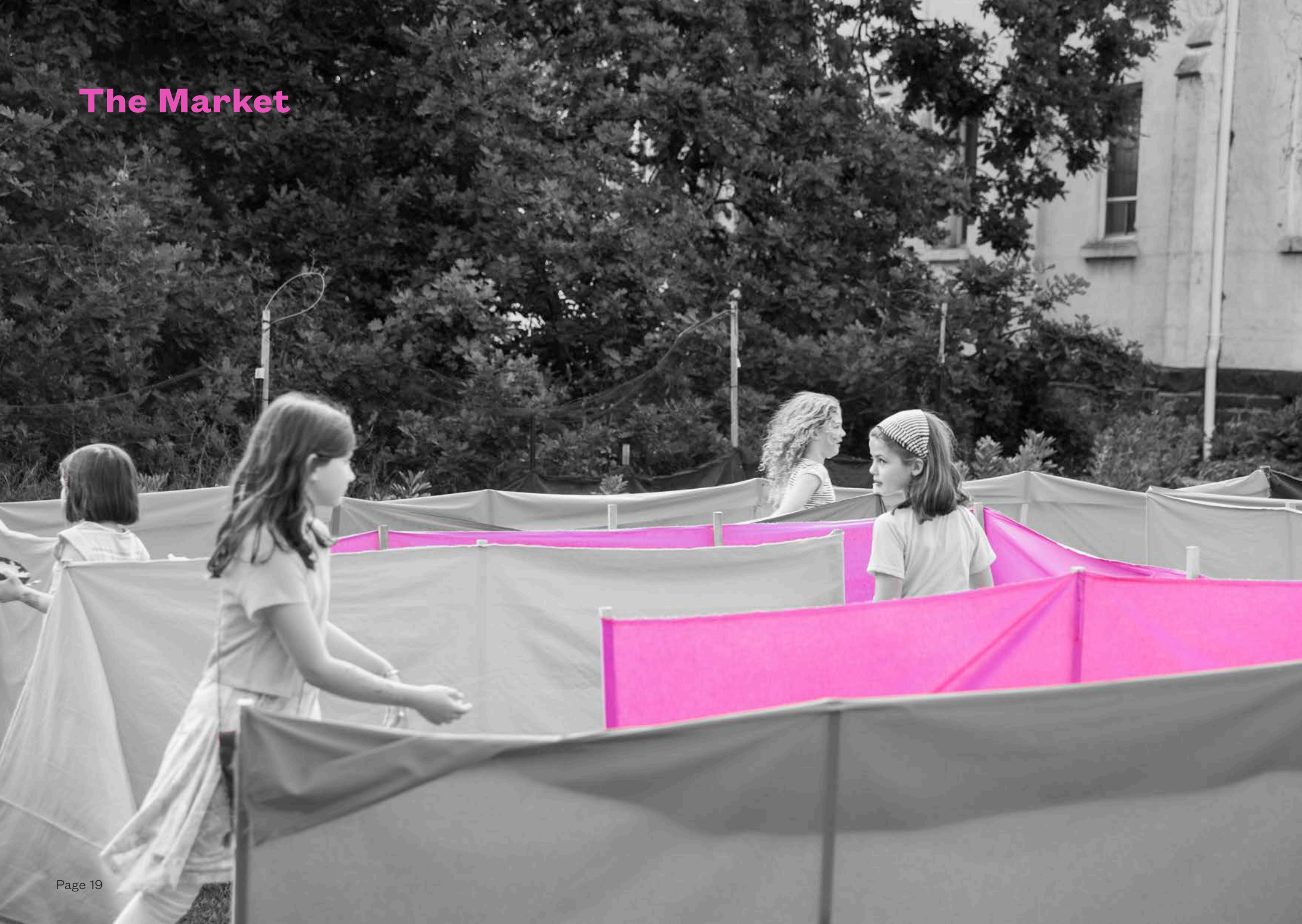
- Artistically and culturally diverse in-residence community of arts and cultural workers, organisations and practitioners
- Unique mix of wellbeing services and practices
- A unique range of hospitality offerings contributing to community amenity
- Mix of galleries, offering risk-taking and edgy contemporary art, and showcasing the work of in-residence artists
- Social and cultural history, with an emphasis on sharing and respecting the stories of the Wurundjeri people as the land's traditional owners, and the women and children who ran, worked at, and lived on the site during the Convent's Sisters of the Good Shepherd era.

In order to become an iconic and competitive destination, the ACF will need to generate diverse and sustained income to invest more than ever in its people, processes, systems, public programs, services and facilities.

The ACF team will strive to deliver a new level of customer service, underpinning the overall desired visitor, tenant and client experience; one that leaves all who visit and connect with the Convent remembering and recommending their visit and experience to others.

This in turn will establish the Convent's reputation as an iconic Melbourne arts, cultural, learning and wellbeing destination, offering the unique experience that only the Abbotsford Convent can.

# The Market





# The Market

## CONTEXT

On a top line level, many of the Convent's core target markets remain the same as they did when the Convent re-opened its doors to the public in 2004.

In line with its original remit as an arts, cultural and learning precinct, the Convent continues to target: arts and cultural organisations, practitioners and workers for tenancy and programing, venue hire and events; corporates for venue hire, volunteering, partnerships and giving; public, philanthropic and corporate donors along with trusts and foundations for financial support and giving; and audiences and visitors for public programs, markets, events, exhibitions and workshops.

However, as the organisation's scale and offering evolves, so too does its need to become more sophisticated in defining, targeting and engaging with its markets. In an increasingly competitive environment, the Convent will need to hone its offering, and communicate and market its unique selling proposition in order to remain competitive, viable and relevant.

This business plan has identified opportunities in market research and intelligence, which will inform marketing plans for the organisation's key business units of venue hire and tenancy in particular. Gaining target market insights via establishing robust surveying, focus groups and research in year one of this business plan has been identified as a priority.

# The Market

## KEY TARGET MARKETS

While in-depth research will be undertaken in 2017 – 2018, the following are identified as the Convent's key target markets:

- Our local community and our audiences and visitors
- Arts and cultural industry
- Tenant community
- Venue hirers
- Wellbeing clients
- Volunteers
- Donors and funders
- Partners and sponsors
- Government.

A man with a beard, wearing a dark hoodie, is seen from the side, working on a white metal frame structure. He is holding a cable or wire. In the background, there is a window with a white frame, and the wall appears to be made of dark, textured material. The scene is dimly lit, with light coming from the window.

## **Business Plan – Summary of Delivery**

### **Strategic Priority 1: Activation**



# Business Plan – Summary of Delivery

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: ACTIVATION

The Abbotsford Convent will be a catalyst for cultural development, animated by creative and entrepreneurial people. It will be a place that encourages cultural engagement in a broad civic and social sense, as well as fostering excellence in the fine and applied arts.

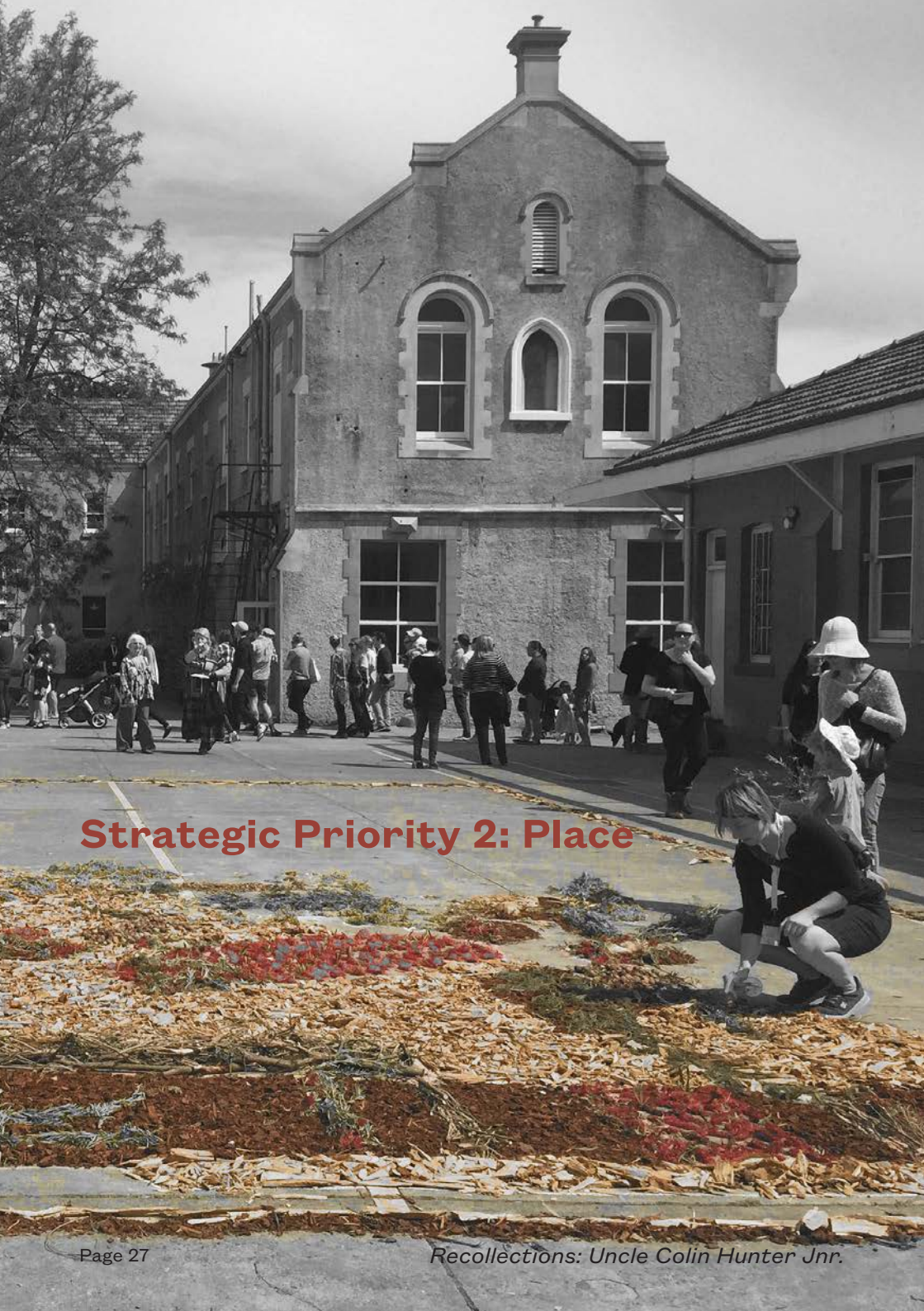
### Results:

- The ACF will develop a dynamic and vibrant curatorial vision which guides its own programming, and informs decisions regarding events held by external programmers at the Convent. This programming will increase opportunities for tenants, artists, visitors and our other communities to engage with the ACF and our spaces, both indoor and out, day and night.
- The ACF will create and present the work of our tenant community, adding to our artistic and community engagement, and reputational and financial success. Programs will embrace and reflect cultural, social and artistic diversity. We will develop a reputation as a national and international leader for residencies and laboratories which produce exciting audience engagement and outcomes.
- Drawing on the Convent's unique point of difference, and by continually developing the site indoors and out for new activations and programming, we will: increase our program and venue hire offering; better integrate all business units; and deliver work that delights and engages audiences.

# Business Plan – Summary of Delivery

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: ACTIVATION

- We will facilitate and encourage the tenants' development, and foster collaborations with locals, nationals and internationals via residencies. Our programming and residencies will attract diverse art forms, artists and cultural leaders, building the Convent's reputation as an engine room of artist development.
- Wherever our visitors connect with us – onsite and/or online – we will ensure they can easily engage with us, find what they need, and be part of our conversation. We will embed diversity of cultural expression in all that we do, with a focus on celebrating the cultural and artistic work of our First People.



## Strategic Priority 2: Place

# Business Plan – Summary of Delivery

## STRATEGY PRIORITY 2: PLACE

The Abbotsford Convent will be a place that inspires, supports and reflects a vibrant mix of cultural and community activities. We will conserve and enhance the heritage assets of the Convent, while ensuring maximum access and amenity for all visitors. Our aim is to have an updated Conservation Management Plan and a new strategic Site Planning Framework in place by 2020.

### Results:

- We will advocate to local and state government for a safe entry to the Convent via the Johnson Street access.
- The ACF will be responsive to market needs and offer maximum usage and satisfaction based on: enacting and continually reviewing the facility Management Plan; market research and competitor analysis; and client and tenant feedback and needs.
- The Conservation Management Plan, Site Planning Framework and Master Plan that will be in place by 2020 will drive continual regeneration, restoration and renewal of the Convent in a way that is cost efficient, supports site activation aspirations and is operationally deliverable.





## Strategic Priority 3: Viability

# Business Plan – Summary of Delivery

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: VIABILITY

The ACF will achieve financial independence through uses that generate income and extend the scope and quality of outcomes relating to the place and its activation.

### Results:

- The ACF is entrepreneurial and will focus on: building its reserves to ensure its sustainability; maintaining a strong occupancy rate for its studios, with a mix of dynamic, high calibre and multi-arts tenants; and increasing venue hire business. This activity will be underpinned by strong, research-led marketing activity, positioning the Convent as an iconic destination.
- We will deliver growing, significant and rewarding philanthropic partnerships through our development program, focusing on the restoration and maintenance of our site, alongside our arts and cultural programming.
- We will deliver mutually beneficial corporate and public volunteer programs which attract volunteers onsite daily, delivering positive impacts for our operations, with a focus on gardens and public programs.
- We will undertake regular advocacy to build partnerships with all levels of government to increase the community outcomes which the Convent generates, and to reinforce the Convent's status as a national icon.





## Strategic Priority 4: Governance

## Business Plan – Summary of Delivery

### STRATEGY PRIORITY 4: GOVERNANCE

The ACF will make decisions and perform our role in a manner that reflects our core values and that encourages accountability, operational efficiency and responsiveness to needs as they arise.

#### Results:

- We will update our financial management system by the end of 2017, and implement a process that enables efficacious financial management and reporting.
- Our structure, systems and processes will make us more effective and able to meet new requirements. We will strive for greater focus, purpose and excellence, attracting, empowering and retaining skilled people to deliver on the Convent's vision and mission.



## Board and Governance



## Board and Governance

The Convent is owned by the Abbotsford Convent Foundation (ACF), a not for profit company limited by guarantee under the Corporations Act and registered with the ACNC. The Foundation is primarily responsible for ensuring that the site operates in accordance with the conditions contained in the principal site documentation. These include:

- The original Development and Operation Agreement (Deed) between the State of Victoria and the ACF and the subsequent amendments
- The Abbotsford Convent Master Plan (30 September 2005)
- The Conservation Master Plan.

The ACF is administered by an honorary Board of Directors and is bound by the Deed to ensure that the precinct is administered in a financially sustainable manner. As part of the Deed, the ACF is required to submit a detailed five year plan to the State Government to provide that assurance.

The first five-year Business Plan was written in 2005 to guide the ACF's early priorities, and was subsequently updated in 2009.

By 2011, every element of the previous Plans had been achieved or exceeded. The expectations contained within the subsequent Business Plan (2012 – 2017) were similarly exceeded.

### The ACF Board

The Board currently has twelve directors. There are four Board Committees that oversee the key aspects of the project. The Committees comprise a combination of ACF Board members and honorary external people who provide specialist skills and experience.

## Board and Governance

### The ACF Board Committees

The ACF Board Committees are:

- **Audit & Risk Committee:** to oversee the identification and management of risk
- **Finance & Capital Works Committee:** to oversee the financial operations and the building and maintenance programs of the site
- **Governance Committee:** to oversee the financial operations and the building and maintenance programs for the site
- **Fundraising Committee:** to oversee Board operation and legal compliance.

In addition, the Design Architecture Landscape and Gardening (DALAG) Committee addresses the various architectural and design elements of the site, and the Strategic Initiatives Taskforce (SIT) addresses key strategic matters as required. The nature and composition of the various governance committees will change over time in accordance with the needs of Management and the Board.

### The Abbotsford Convent Foundation Arts Trust

The Board also administers the Abbotsford Convent Foundation Arts Trust. The Trust was established to enable the Convent to pursue its artistic and cultural enterprises. The Arts Trust has tax deduction status and donations over \$2 are tax deductible.



# Organisational Structure

## Organisational Structure

In order to become an iconic destination which promotes and leverages its competitive edge as a multi-use precinct, over the course of the next five years, the ACF will need to invest more than ever in its processes, systems, public programs, services and facilities, and, critically, its people.

Over the next five years, the ACF team will deliver a new level of customer service, underpinning the overall desired visitor, tenant and client experience, and a new level of public programming. Both will require highly-skilled people to deliver this ambitious new chapter in the ACF's history.

The ACF will also strive to be a workplace of choice for highly skilled, professional staff, who bring their expertise and passion to the Convent, and whose values align to those of the ACF. We will increase our commitment to the management and professional development of our team.

The ACF organisation and management structure comprises five groups reporting into the CEO / COO. The CEO reports to the ACF Board.

The five groups are: Public Programs and Community Development; Operations; Venues and Leasing; Marketing and Communications; and Fundraising and Development.

The ACF Organisational Structure (May 2017), outlined as follows, will be regularly reviewed in accordance with the aims of the business plan moving forward.

# Organisational Structure

## ORGANISATIONAL CHART

