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Design Capital? Reasons why Melbourne should assume the title...

Melbourne is a global hub for design and has been for decades. Regularly voted as the world's most liveable city, Melbourne is a destination for art and design globally and living proof of the contribution that design thinking can make to our surroundings and to our lives.

The city has a reputation for investing in local innovation rather than imported talent from overseas. This is particularly so within the realm of architecture. The legacy of Peter Corrigan's provocative architecture and theatre design over the past 30 years has been realised through his commitment to education and a lifelong pursuit to draw out and celebrate the qualities of local architecture. Lyons has rapidly expanded from a small institutional practice into a highly respected global operation well known for its sophisticated, modulated environmental systems and as a design talent incubator.

We can see outstanding architectural design on every corner of the city but Victorians might not be aware that the original Olympic pool was designed here. So was the traffic light signal for the blind, the Montreal chair, and the cochlear implant.

Design is both a noun and a verb; it is a profession and a discipline; it is a way of thinking as well as a means of making.

Melbourne has long been interested in design as the business of making, but also design as the making of business. Few major companies approach innovation now without embracing design thinking, which promotes creativity through teamwork, communication through interaction, and embraces ambiguity as a means of designing solutions.

As a global design capital, Melbourne has cultivated a diverse and inclusive culture of designing. The seminal exhibition *Shifting Gear: Design, Innovation and the Australian Car* held at the National Gallery of Victoria in 2015 demonstrated the State's commitment to showcasing Australian design. It was the first time that an Australian art institution had exhibited high-performance vehicles as sophisticated objects of art and design.

Shifting Gear revealed the impact of collaboration between designers, engineers and manufacturers, telling a powerful story of risk and passion, technical innovation and creative inspiration, all grounded in global demand and specialist design knowledge.

Melbourne designers fight for the right to take risks within an increasingly risk-adverse climate. But there is also a spirit of civic generosity embedded within Melbourne's design community.

Designers seek opportunities to actively contribute to the social realm: they contribute to public space, housing affordability, open source platforms. They innovate in games technologies.

Our design schools attract talent from around the globe. Major design institutions work in partnership with Melbourne's cultural institutions; witness the bond between the State Library of Victoria and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

Think of the global reach of the Design Factory at Swinburne, which is deeply linked to a Design Factory Global Network; think of the equally powerful link between RMIT University and the design hubs in the USA, Europe and China.

What more proof does one need to badge Melbourne as design capital of Australia?

A recent KPMG report estimated that the Victorian arts, design and culture sector added \$6.1 billion direct value to the economy and employed the equivalent of 68,000 full-time workers.

On top of that, arts and cultural activity added another \$5.3 billion in value and another 42,000 jobs. Cultural tourism, with many visitors drawn by Melbourne's design prowess, was worth almost \$695 million to the economy.

With creativity seen as the key to new ideas, design is the tool for innovation that creates real world impact. Progressive and collaborative thinking is in demand across major industries, from education, health, agriculture and manufacturing.

This opens doors for Melbourne to contribute globally across artistic and non-artistic sectors, not-for-profit and community organisations, commercial business and cultural institutions. Design not only enhances the economy, but is leading it into the future.

Design makes business sense; business derives innovation from design thinking. Already a global hub for design, Melbourne has all the attributes of a national capital for design and should stake its claim.