

# ADVANCING A CREATIVE INDUSTRIES PRECINCT FOR SYDNEY

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# ADVANCING A CREATIVE INDUSTRIES PRECINCT FOR SYDNEY

Tech Central has always been about creativity and invention. A hive of colour, commerce and community with enduring links to fashion, design and creative industries.

While Tech Central will draw from the new innovations of technology, we have an ambition for it to be a creative hub of the city, too. A place to be inspired by the traditional fashion and design industries that have sustained the area for generations, enhanced by Sydney's global reputation for quality, invention and design.

The University of Technology Sydney (UTS), Powerhouse Museum, Australian Fashion Council (AFC) and TAFE NSW have formed a Steering Committee to lead a thriving creative precinct to complement Tech Central. This work is also supported by the Greater Cities Commission (GCC).

A successful creative industries precinct in Tech Central is within reach because the area already has a key advantage: the existing presence of creative industries. The process of sustaining the creativity of the precinct is not to change the current state but to support and enhance it. This is critical to Tech Central's ambitions of being the collision of creativity and tech. One cannot thrive without the other.

Our first step has been to establish a baseline understanding of the creative industries within Tech Central. Our Baseline Report, of which this provides an overview, explores the strategic context of Tech Central for creative industries and an understanding of industry activity today.

With this information, we can start to see the kind of impact our ambition could have on the sole traders, start-ups, scale ups, and small and large enterprise that are already a vital component of Tech Central, and how we can help them to become leaders in technology and innovation—driving economic participation and growth across this critical sector.

**We invite you to join us throughout this exciting collaboration.**

## DEFINITIONS

**Creative industries**—used throughout the report this refers to fashion, architecture, landscape architecture, interior design, film, media, animation, visual design, graphic design, brand design and design strategy.



TECH  
CENTRAL

POWERHOUSE

AUSTRALIAN  
FASHION COUNCIL

TAFE

UTS

UNIVERSITY  
OF SYDNEY

*Creative Cluster*

# A CREATIVE INDUSTRIES PRECINCT IN THE HEART OF TECH CENTRAL

Leveraging creative industries and key institutions provides the ideal catalyst to build a creative industries precinct that will enhance capabilities in developing world class technology, innovation and sustainable practice across all creative sectors.

## Tech Central is a natural home for a creative industries precinct.

- With a mandate to connect the brightest minds to solve society's great challenges and create the technologies that will power the future using creativity and technology
- Creative industries represent almost 3,000 businesses within Tech Central. They are the connector to a strong clustering of creative and manufacturing businesses in adjacent areas represented by almost 10,000 businesses, particularly along the corridor to Sydney Airport
- Home to significant anchor institutions supporting research, technology, entrepreneurship, vocational training and workforce development and leadership for the creative industries
- The opportunity to accelerate key NSW Government priorities as an innovation state and leader in sustainability — leveraging arts and creativity to drive innovation and support job growth in a new circular and zero-carbon economy.

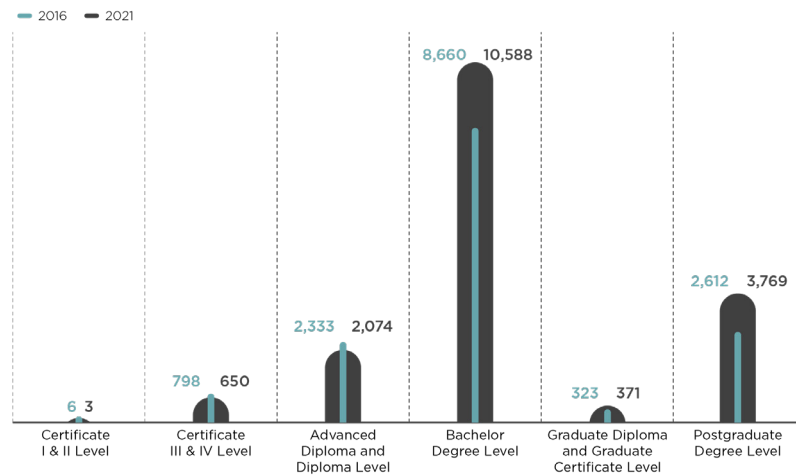
The area defined as Tech Central has deep roots of activity relating to creative, fashion and design industries who have been operating in place since manufacturing commenced in the area from the 1800s, the early rag trade of the 1900s to the diverse creative landscape today where new industries are finding a place to provide professional services.

Like many industries, creative industries are facing disruption through technology and the need for a skilled workforce to sustain it. Fashion and textiles in particular have a serious challenge of transforming an industry to one that is environmentally sustainable and viable. This challenge is one completely aligned to the vision of Tech Central creating innovation led by technology.

The precinct will recognise the existing strength of the creative industries in the area and the contributions they can make to an innovation ecosystem driven by technology.

# CREATIVE INDUSTRIES AT TECH CENTRAL TODAY

## CREATIVE INDUSTRIES WORKERS HIGHEST LEVEL OF QUALIFICATION



*“The real benefit of these spaces is having a reason for people to come together without an agenda. A place to be curious, to seek relationships not transactions.” — Architecture Firm*

## INDUSTRY

Creative industries represent 2,682 businesses within Tech Central. There is a diverse and rapidly changing creative industries sector in and around the precinct. The most notable trends across 2011 to 2021 were a rise in architectural services, advertising services, and other specialised design services, and a decline in clothing retailing and manufacturing, and digital services.

Total floor space used by creative industries dropped from 47,568m<sup>2</sup> in 2012 to 27,252m<sup>2</sup> in 2017. Despite the decline in floorspace occupied, the workforce continued to rise within Tech Central, demonstrating that how industries are working is already changing. Using digital tools to design a garment, building or movie scene now all require less space and more technology.

## WORKFORCE

There has been an overall increase in creative industry workers by 6% within Tech Central between 2011 to 2021. By comparison, Brisbane CBD experienced a 1% increase in workforce participation over the same period even with a similar pattern of business activity across creative industries.

By gender, the creative industries workforce are 54% female and 46% male. Most creative industry workers are between 20 and 39 years of age.

The workforce is sustained largely by a local population. Around 25% of the workforce live in the precinct; 12% commute from the Inner West Local Government Area (LGA), 5% each from Randwick LGA and Northern Beaches LGA.

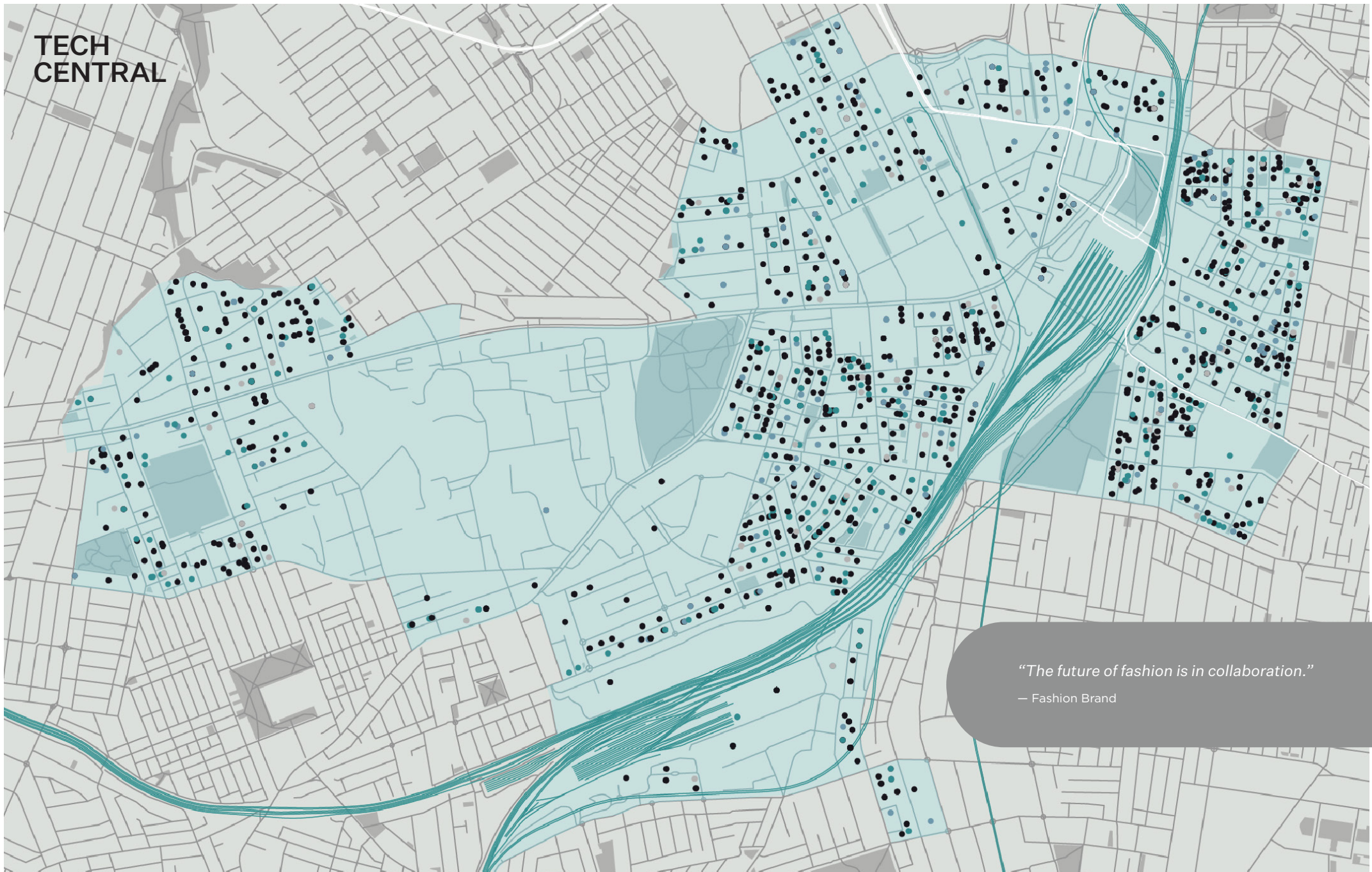
## STUDENTS

At key institutions, the current number of students enrolled in creative education:

- 3,170 in both Design and Architecture studies at UTS
- 3,268 students in Architecture and Design at the University of Sydney
- 5,820 students in vocational courses in Sydney at TAFE NSW



# TECH CENTRAL



*“The future of fashion is in collaboration.”*  
— Fashion Brand



## PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Including:

- Advertising Services
- Architectural Services
- Other Specialist Design Services
- Professional Photographic Services

## MANUFACTURING

Including:

- Clothing manufacturing
- Cut and Sewn Textile Product
- Footwear Manufacturing
- Jewellery and silverware
- Leather tanning, fur dressing and leather product
- Other Ceramic Products
- Textile Finishing and Other Textile Products
- Wooden Furniture and Upholstered Seat

## RETAIL

Including:

- Clothing and Footwear Retailing
- Manchester and Other Textile Goods Retailing

## DIGITAL SERVICES

Including:

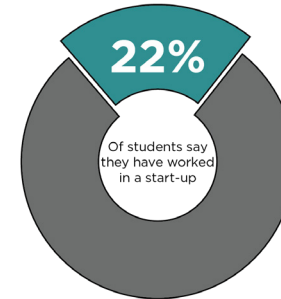
- Motion Picture and Video Production businesses
- Post-Production Services and Other Motion Picture and Video Activities businesses

## CREATIVE INDUSTRIES TOTAL WORKERS

	2011	2016	2021
<b>Professional Services</b>	10,133	13,050	15,991
<b>Manufacturing</b>	922	557	418
<b>Retail</b>	3,560	4,896	3,373
<b>Digital</b>	2,528	1,087	960

## WHAT WE HEARD FROM INDUSTRY AND STUDENTS

We invited stakeholders from across the creative industries to participate in providing their feedback about how they work and what they were planning for their future growth particularly focused on technology needs. These discussions found:

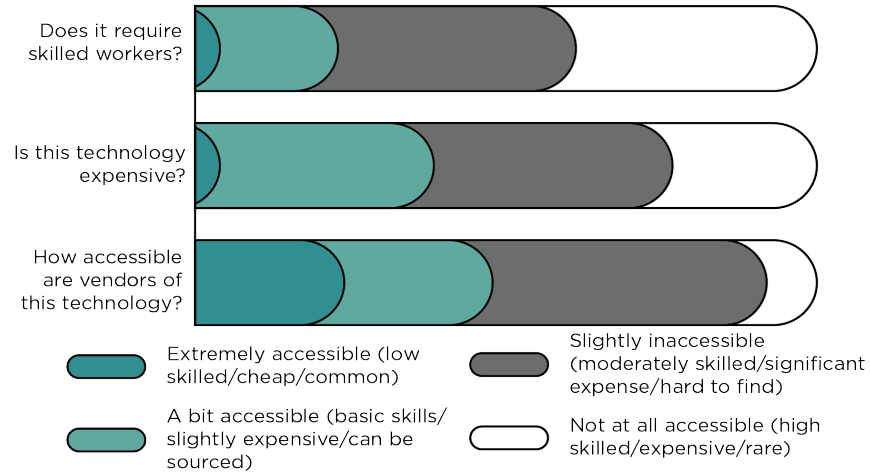


- Investing in a pipeline of vocational and higher degree graduates is critical to support the industry and retain a company's competitive edge. This can be at significant expense beyond the available investment to sole and small business.
- Investment in skills and training needs to be a priority alongside the aspirations to make technology the core of the creative industries and address risks to the robustness of the industry.
- Technology needs to enable skills growth and security in this industry, not contribute to the loss of them.
- Shared spaces present an opportunity to leverage economies of scale to access equipment and practitioners skilled in technology they would not otherwise be able to access and use in their work.
- There is an appetite for more collaboration and a culture of design critique, a desire to access spaces for experimentation and showcasing, while balancing commercial competitiveness.

Through our student survey, an overwhelming 92% of students saw benefit in workforce participation within Tech Central, stating that accessibility and transport links, city culture, and innovation precincts are the reasons why working in this area is a preferable option.



## INDUSTRY ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY



*“To have a part of the city dedicated to a crossover of technology and creativity would be stimulating... close to public transport hubs and several tertiary institutions ... for current uni students, graduates and start-up employees alike.” – Current Student*

## NEXT MOVES FOR THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES IN TECH CENTRAL

Now is the time for Australia’s premier creative industries precinct to move into its next iteration, supporting the NSW Government’s vision for Tech Central and leveraging the key institutions—AFC, UTS, TAFE NSW and the Powerhouse Museum—who will lead the strong collaboration that will enable creative industries to further flourish and innovate.

There is a symbiotic relationship between the creative and technology sectors delivering innovation. Yet the commercial behaviours of successful tech businesses can have the unintended consequence of displacing creatives. As the key tenants of Tech Central, we have the resources, connections and commitment to help transform our neighbourhoods into a tech enabled, resourced and innovative ecosystem. A place that pays due respect to the role the creative industries already provide in the local, state, and national economy and the social and cultural livelihoods of communities—and ensures their presence and contributions are retained and expanded.

We need government to be an active stakeholder, a committed partner with a shared ambition and bias towards action. There is an opportunity for the NSW Government to nurture and grow creative industries through a dedicated precinct approach.

Our *Baseline Report* has identified the **key enablers of skills, space, sustainability and technology** as critical to support the diverse creative industries that are operating within Tech Central, those that we want to attract and those based beyond our precinct.

We invite the NSW State Government to partner with us, key institutions of Tech Central, to **develop a precinct-wide Creative Industries Support Plan to ensure creative industries maintain a significant presence within the area.** We anticipate this plan, which seeks to address the key enablers of **skills, space, sustainability** and **technology**, will involve the development of multiple pilot programs and initiatives that can be trialled within Tech Central and other creative industry precincts across NSW.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENABLE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES SUPPORT PLAN

The following recommendations are designed to leverage existing strengths and launch new activities to sustain and support this vital sector. Some recommendations are connected with existing initiatives introduced by key institutions, while others connect with new or existing government programs. All recommendations align with at least one of the identified key enablers of skills, space, sustainability and technology.

### KEY ENABLERS

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Skills



Space



Sustainability



Technology

1. Use Tech Central’s mandate of supporting the tech ecosystem within the most inclusive, sustainable and creative innovation district in the world by **ensuring creative industries and their needs are a priority for the leadership of Tech Central.**



2. Build upon existing relationships with First Nations creative businesses and groups to **ensure First Nations creative industry businesses are part of developing the precinct.** Ensure they are invested in and represented in Tech Central priorities.



3. Establish a specific creative industries’ focused steering committee and allocate funding to promote knowledge transfer within the precinct by convening industry interactions through workshops, networking and broader knowledge exchange. This will facilitate new connections between existing businesses and emerging talent, including entrepreneurs.



*Ensure these activities are aligned with broader Tech Central governance and plans.*

4. Support training programs to develop sustainability best practice through technology and innovation, and address current and future skills needs, such as funding for fashion industry **short courses via the Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Fashion + Textiles.**



5. Establish the **AFC FashTech Lab as an ongoing training program** within the precinct. This six-month program, originally funded by City of Sydney and supported by SMEs@UTS, teaches brands to use 3D design technology to create a new workflow that can reduce overheads, costs, textile waste and carbon emissions.



6. **Deliver programs, in collaboration with universities and TAFE NSW, to enable access to sole traders and SMEs** in creative industries to uplift technology skills, purchase new equipment or access shared equipment.



7. **Develop a discrete pool of funding from the NSW Environment Protection Agency’s waste levy** to seed the development of programs to facilitate the transition to a circular clothing economy by 2030 and Net Zero by 2050, including the **National Clothing Product Stewardship Scheme** and research from the **Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Fashion + Textiles.**



8. Establish **incentives for specialised equipment and skilled technicians** to support the right-shoring of advanced local manufacturing and the transition to a circular manufacturing economy.



9. Funding to **develop the ‘headquarters’ for the tech transformation of the fashion and textile industry.** In collaboration with UTS, TAFE NSW and the AFC, these headquarters would house the development of learning programs and credentials to train, re-skill and upskill the fashion and textile industry workforce (existing and upcoming) for jobs of the future including modern manufacturing, digital design and marketing, e-commerce, circular economy and more.

10. Develop a shared government/industry program to **produce an online database** of specialised skills within creative industries of Tech Central that can strengthen supply chain relationships, and enhance knowledge transfer and technology sourcing, such as **agtechfinder.**



11. Extend **Tech Central Scale Up Accommodation Rebate** available to tech industry to all creative industries to reduce potential distortions that will be created in the precinct if provided to a single sector.



12. **Augment land use planning schemes** to support tech and creatives locating in Tech Central through height and floor space ratio bonuses, schemes such as this have demonstrated success in maintaining heritage through the **City of Sydney's heritage floor space scheme**.



13. **Utilise the public spaces within Tech Central** such as the Goods Line as a design space for creative industries to experiment and showcase future focused technologies. Use innovation challenges, such as **East London Fashion Hub 'Design Futures'** and dedicated events showcasing innovation in design to build investment, markets and global reputation for local creative industry.



14. Ensure government is committed to and delivers the Greater Cities Commission's **Objective 23 to ensure industrial land and urban services land is planned, retained and managed** to ensure the supply of creative and industrial spaces is preserved within Tech Central.



15. **Learn from, and support, existing programs** such as the **Powerhouse Creative Industries Residency Program** and the forthcoming **Haymarket Creative** collaborative arts hub.



16. Offer **full support for the proposed** Powerhouse **Ultimo** Renewal project as a key enabler of creative industries in the Tech Central precinct.



## OUR COMMITMENT

We envision a place where **sustainable creative industry practices are enhanced** by the latest technological innovations. **A precinct filled with physical spaces** for likeminded start-ups, scale ups, businesses, brands and people to congregate and share ideas. A place that champions access to technology, skills and workforce development, and paves the way for the jobs of the creative industries' futures. And most importantly, **a place that breaks down silos:** between creativity and technology, between industry and academy, and between the diverse branches of the creative industry sector.

The Steering Committee is committed to building a thriving, collaborative, and sustainable creative tech hub in Tech Central—we hope you'll join us in making this vision a reality.





AUSTRALEAN  
FASHION COUNCIL



**UTS** UNIVERSITY  
OF TECHNOLOGY  
SYDNEY



NSW  
GOVERNMENT

**TAFE** NSW



NSW  
GOVERNMENT

POWERHOUSE

Greater Cities  
Commission

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