Mainstreet Australia Annual Report 2024–25

A year of growth, advocacy, connection and impact for Australia's main street community.

President's Message

Georgina Pikoulas, President, Mainstreet Australia

It has been an exceptional year for Mainstreet Australia - one marked by momentum, collaboration, and undeniable impact. As I reflect on 2024–25, what stands out most is the strength and resilience of our main street community. Across every state and territory, precinct managers, traders, councils, businesses, and partners have worked together to navigate challenges and unlock new opportunities. This year, our organisation has expanded its influence, strengthened its partnerships, and delivered more for our members than ever before.

From the highly successful Creating Tomorrow's Destinations National Conference to the launch of the Centre Managers Café Chats, the StreetShow activations, our growing Meet the Main Street Manager series and our renewed advocacy efforts on safety and community wellbeing - Mainstreet Australia has continued to champion the places that shape our daily lives.

Our partnership with American Express and the IDA Foundation again delivered tangible economic outcomes for small restaurants across Melbourne, Sydney and Auckland. We also deepened our role as a trusted precinct leader through policy research and our widely referenced Addressing Anti-Social Behaviour report, ensuring the voices of our members are heard clearly by government and decision-makers.

As we prepare for Mainstreet Australia's 30-year anniversary in 2026, our committee has already begun the important work of honouring our history while shaping the future of the movement. This milestone is not only a celebration - it's a reaffirmation of the power of local places, small businesses, and connected communities.

I am immensely grateful to our wonderful Committee of Management, our staff led by EO Liz Joldeski, partners, our sponsors, and above all, our members. Your passion, contribution, and belief in thriving main streets are what make this community so special. Thank you for your continued trust and support. Together, we will carry this momentum forward and ensure that main streets - the beating hearts of our cities, towns, and neighbourhoods - continue to grow for years to come.

Executive Officer's Message

Elizabeth Joldeski, Executive Officer & Treasurer

What an extraordinary year it has been for Mainstreet Australia. As Executive Officer, I have the privilege of seeing firsthand the dedication, innovation, and sheer heart that our members bring to their communities every single day. This report reflects that spirit - not just in what we achieved, but in how we achieved it: collaboratively, creatively, and with purpose. Throughout 2024–25, Mainstreet Australia delivered a record number of events, programs, training opportunities, advocacy initiatives, and member resources. Eighteen major deliverables across twelve months - produced by a lean organisation supported by an exceptionally committed volunteer committee - is something we can all be proud of.

Our work this year centred strongly on safety, economic resilience, and capability building. The insights received through our surveys and the lived experience of precinct managers highlighted how pressing issues like anti-social behaviour, changing consumer habits, and rising costs are impacting main streets. We responded with practical resources, strategic advocacy, direct engagement with police and government partners, and new learning formats to support centre managers and trader groups.

The Mainstreet Australia National Conference, our StreetShow activations, Night Shift Sessions, Meet the Main Street Manager interviews, and the launch of Café Chats all provided meaningful touchpoints for knowledge-sharing and connection. Our role as the on-the-ground partner for the American Express BISR grants continued to deliver real economic benefits to small businesses-

something that goes to the core of who we are as an organisation.

Thank you to our incredible members who contributed to surveys, participated in events, shared insights, and supported one another. Thank you to our Committee of Management and partners who continue to believe in our mission and help us grow our impact. As we look ahead to our 30-year anniversary in 2026, we stand at a pivotal moment - honouring our legacy while building a stronger, more connected, more resilient network of main street champions. I look forward to working with you as we continue shaping vibrant, thriving, people-centred places across Australia and New Zealand. Thank you for being part of this community, and for everything you do to support your main streets.

1. Our Committee of Management 2025

At our November 2024 AGM and Christmas Celebration, we introduced the 2025 Committee of Management.

Executive Committee

- President: Georgina Pikoulas – Wyndham City Council
- Vice President: Troy Stuchbree – Sydney Road Brunswick Association
- Secretary: Cinzia Crea – Brimbank City Council
- Executive Officer & Treasurer - Elizabeth Joldeski

General Committee: James McInerney, Joyce Watts, Amanda McEvoy, Stavros Zikou, Jeremy Hope, Patrick Moriarty.

With continued and excellent admin support provided by Isabelle Fisher (Digital/Comms) and Rosemary Hubbard (Bookkeeper).

2. Our Year at a Glance (Chronological) Events, Programs & Initiatives July 2024 – June 2025

- July 2024 – Announcement of Grant Awardees for AMEX Backing International Small Restaurants (BISR) 2024. 13 restaurants received AUD $21,500 grants. Delivered in partnership with American Express and the International Downtown Association. Value: International exposure for Mainstreet Australia as a trusted precinct partner and supporter of main street businesses.
- July 2024 – Apr 2025 Mainstreet Australia “Meet the Manager” Interviews (Ongoing Series) Featuring precinct leaders across Australia & NZ: Amanda Wellgreen (NZ Onehunga BID), Jeremy

Hope (Bridge Road), Simon McLuskey (St Albans), Amanda McEvoy (Launceston Central). Value: Professional development + shared learnings from leading precinct managers.

- August 2024 – Creating Tomorrow's Destinations: National Conference Malvern (3 Days). 200 delegates, 3 precinct walking tours, 5 keynotes, 3 panel discussions, 1 Branding Masterclass, networking, international guests. Hosted by City of Stonnington. Value: Flagship learning + industry leadership.
- September 2024 – Anti-Social Behaviour Survey (67 respondents). Major insights: 79% report increase in anti-social behaviour. Daily occurrences for 46%. High demand for resources, advocacy, and training. Value: Evidence base for advocacy; informed program planning.
- October 2024 – Addressing Anti-Social Behaviour Report Released. Comprehensive recommendations for police engagement, infrastructure, and collaboration. Shared widely with councils, traders, and state government. Value: Policy influence + safety leadership.
- October 2024 – Feb 2025 – Night Shift Sessions (Two Major Webinars) Featuring: PR Expert Jules Brooke, Retail Expert Martin Ginnane, Cinzia Crea, Jeremy Hope. Topics: Main street economic outlook for 2025, PR strategies for precincts, Consumer trends, Marketing + foot traffic. Value: High-quality national professional development.
- November 2024 – AGM & Christmas Celebration. Celebration of 2024 achievements. New 2025 Committee welcomed. Claude Ullin Award presented to Kerry Daly for 26 years of service.
- January–February 2025 – Partner Activation with City Nation Place. Members received a 20% discount on City Nation Place Australasia. Mainstreet Australia President Georgina Pikoulas spoke on PPPs in place shaping.
- February 2025 – Member Survey Released shaping 2025 planning. Member Priorities Survey Key needs: More advocacy, trends and case studies. More placemaking content. Resources for crime prevention, governance, digital marketing, and business attraction.
- March 2025 – Local Government News Roundup Podcast. Our Executive Officer Liz Joldeski featured on the LGNR podcast to discuss: Placemaking as community safety, role of traders in "eyes on the street", lighting, activation, design and partnership models. Value: Raising the national profile of Mainstreet Australia.
- March 2025 – Centre Managers Café Chats. This new networking format was hosted by Northcote Rise with Victoria Police in attendance. Topics included: Public drunkenness, graffiti, dealing with

difficult customers, anti-social behaviour trends. Value: New peer network, practical safety knowledge, stronger police-precinct links.

- April 2025 – StreetShow: Love Sydney Road (Merri-bek). Walking tour + precinct immersion. Practical, hyper-local recommendations for 600+ businesses. Attendance by Mayor, trader associations and 75 local Sydney road small business traders. Immediate business take-up of activation ideas. Value: Direct impact on local traders + strengthening Mainstreet Australia's role as precinct.
- April–May 2025 – Planning for Mainstreet Australia's 30-Year Anniversary (2026). Historic lunch with past Presidents. Identifying legacy projects & celebratory events. Beginning strategic storytelling and archival work.
- May–June 2025 – BISR 2025 (Melbourne, Sydney, Auckland). Call for new grant applications for the 2025 round, including additional new market – Auckland - following recommendation provided by Mainstreet. 20 grants available (AU + NZ). Continued partnership with IDA Foundation and Amex. Program now totals 140+ businesses supported and $1.8M delivered globally. Value: Direct economic benefit to hospitality & main streets.

3. Event + Activity Analysis (What We Delivered)

A significant increase in volume was delivered in 2024-25, a significant milestone for a lean organisation with a part-time EO and volunteer committee.

In numbers:

Category	**Result**
Major deliverables	18
National conference attendees	200+
Total engagement touchpoints (conference attendees, webinar attendees, video views)	540
BISR Grants Delivered 2024	13
Meet the Main Street Manager episodes	4
Member Surveys Conducted	3
Member EDMs Delivered	11 Monthly Newsletters (+ 20 other specific EDMS)
Policy reports released	1

Café Chats launched – trial member networking event	1
Walking tours delivered	3
StreetShows delivered	1
Night Shift Session Webinars	2
Keynotes/panels/workshops	10+

4. Strategic Refocus Delivers Strong Digital Marketing Results

In 2024-25, Mainstreet Australia strategically pivoted resources toward building a more engaged, targeted audience through enhanced email marketing systems and refined member management - delivering positive results.

Email Marketing Performance - 2024-25

Building on existing email infrastructure, 2024-25 saw the implementation of automated, integrated systems with proper audience segmentation and tagging capabilities. This transformation enables targeted communications based on location, member status, membership level, and industry, delivering measurably better results:

- 49.2% open rate – substantially above industry averages of 27-32%
- 6.2% click rate – demonstrating highly relevant, engaging content
- 17.2% decrease in unsubscribe rate – strong evidence that our more targeted, data-driven approach is resonating with members
- 98.3% delivery rate – excellent list hygiene and sender reputation

This investment in audience intelligence and segmentation has created a more direct, effective communication channel with our most engaged stakeholders, allowing us to deliver content that matches member preferences and needs.

Social Media Performance - 2024-25

While overall reach metrics reflect the broader challenges of organic social media in 2024-25 (including significant platform algorithm changes that have impacted organic reach across the sector), our community engagement tells a more nuanced story:

- Maintained steady community growth of 585 followers (current total: 4.7K), building on our established base

- LinkedIn continues as our strongest platform with 76,203 impressions and 408 new followers, reaching our core professional audience
- Instagram grew 14% (125 new followers), with 27.8K views demonstrating continued content resonance

Our engagement rate - measured by interactions relative to reach - actually improved, indicating our content is connecting more meaningfully with the audiences that matter most.

The Strategic Trade-off

This year's focus on building sophisticated email marketing infrastructure and member management systems positions Mainstreet Australia for sustained, targeted engagement. The investment in understanding our audience through enhanced data and contact management has already improved content relevance across all channels, as evidenced by decreased unsubscribe rates and strong email performance.

5. Themes Emerging Across the Year

a. Safety is the #1 concern

Across surveys, forums and events, precinct safety and anti-social behaviour remains the most pressing issue.

b. Demand for practical, precinct-focused training

Members want:

- case studies
- templates
- governance support
- marketing & activation tools

c. Growing need for national advocacy

Members look to Mainstreet Australia to:

- represent precincts to state and federal government
- push for police presence, safety investment, fair regulation

d. Mainstreet professionals want community + connection

New initiatives (Café Chats), and Meet the Main Street Manager, Conference tours. Night Shift Sessions all highlight a desire for shared learning.

6. Demonstrating Member Value in 2024–25

Economic Value

- $460,000+ in grants delivered through AMEX partnership
- Hundreds of businesses benefiting from StreetShows and training
- Stronger case for government investment through research & advocacy

Knowledge & Capability Value

- 20+ hours of professional development
- Access to high-quality speakers and specialists
- Practical safety frameworks + retail strategies

Advocacy & Representation

- National media appearances
- Major safety report influencing councils and state agencies
- Strong presence at City Nation Place Australasia

Community Building

- Hundreds of precinct professionals involved
- New peer networks trialled to test best way to reach and service members (Café Chats)
- Annual conference growth (200+ delegates)

7. Summary and what's next

2024–25 was a year defined by:

- Growth + National influence
- Action on safety
- Support for small business
- Activation and capacity building for precinct leaders
- Strong meaningful partnerships (Amex, IDA, CNP, Local Gov)

Mainstreet Australia delivered more events, more advocacy, more training and more direct economic outcomes than ever before - with clear value demonstrated for members and the wider main street community.

Our Focus Moving Forward:

- Strengthen our advocacy voice
- Expand safety tools and police partnerships
- Build national capability for precinct managers
- Deliver more resources, templates & case studies
- Grow our partnerships (Amex, CNP, councils, industry)
- Celebrate 30 years of Mainstreet Australia with impact