

WELCOME
COTMA
CONFERENCE
BRISBANE 2025



DRIVING ENGAGEMENT

Creating Meaningful Connections...

Presented by Jen Garcia
Head
Queensland Museum Rail Workshops

AGENDA

1. **Understanding Engagement**
2. **Global Excellence**
3. **Our Story – QM Rail Workshops**
4. **Renewal Project – Impact**
5. **Looking Ahead**

**RAILWAY
PARK**



**QUEENSLAND
MUSEUM**
RAIL WORKSHOPS



PLATFORM
MUSEUM ENTRY
CAFÉ
POWERHOUSE
DINING HALL

WELCOME

WHAT IS ENGAGEMENT?

TRADITIONAL MODEL

1. Passive Observation
2. One-way communication
3. Focus on Objects
4. Success = Visitor Numbers

- Encouraging **visitor participation** through exhibits, programs, or digital platforms
- Fostering **community involvement** and partnerships
- Promoting **learning, curiosity, and dialogue**
- Making collections and stories **relevant and accessible** to diverse audiences
- Ultimately, museum engagement is about building relationships that go beyond just viewing objects, it's about making people feel involved, inspired, and valued.

True Engagement creates advocates who return, recommend and champion your institution.

We are in the business of creating memories!

ENGAGEMENT MODEL

1. Active Participation
2. Two-way dialogue – Visitor led
3. Focus on Experiences
4. Success = meaningful lifelong connections

THE MUSEUM EVOLUTION

A Timeless Exploration

Our Heritage:

- Collections-Focused
- Expert driven Narratives
- Formal Atmosphere
- Limited Accessibility
- Static Displays



New Horizons:

- Visitor-focused – Visitor-led
- Multiple Perspectives
- Welcoming environment
- Universal Access
- Interactive Experiences



WHY ENGAGEMENT MATTERS?

The Business Case for CONNECTION

- 💰 **Economic Sustainability** Revenue generation through admissions, retail, events, and commercial hire
- 💛 **Social Impact** Community pride, education, cultural identity, and regional development
- 🎯 **Organisational Resilience** Relevance, advocacy, and long-term sustainability in changing times
- 📢 **Organic Marketing** Word-of-mouth, social sharing, and visitor loyalty worth \$\$\$ in media value

Why Museums Matter

To ensure the knowledge, stories, and collections museums preserve are not only safeguarded for future generations but actively experienced today...so people everywhere can understand the past, shape the present, and inspire the future.

Museum Best Practice

VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON

Friday Lates: Reimagining the Museum After Hours

The Innovation:

- Monthly themed evening events
- Live performances, DJ sets, workshops
- Bar service and social atmosphere
- Exhibition-linked programming

The Impact:

- 5,200 visitors in single event (2024 record)
- Diversified younger audience (18-35 demographic)
- New revenue streams from evening programming
- Strong social media buzz and brand reinforcement



Museum Best Practice

MUSEUM OF NEW ZEALAND TE PAPA TONGAREWA

Community Co-Creation & Interactive Experiences

A Museum Built on Partnership

Te Papa embodies biculturalism and community voices, making visitors co-creators rather than passive observers.

Engagement Philosophy:

Bicultural governance & narrative (Māori partnership)

Hands-on, multi-sensory exhibits

Community-led exhibitions

Free admission for all New Zealanders

Interactive technology integration

Results:

34 million+ visitors since 1998 opening

1.1 million+ annual visitors

#1 tourist attraction in New Zealand (TripAdvisor)

Model for inclusive museums globally



Museum Best Practice

SCIENCE MUSEUM, LONDON

Hands-On Learning & Schools Engagement Strategy:

Wonderlab: Interactive gallery with live demonstrations

Schools program: Curriculum-aligned workshops

Maker spaces: Hands-on STEM activities

IMAX theatre: Immersive experiences

Commercial events and venue hire

Impact:

3 million+ annual visitors

Strong schools visitation pipeline

Commercial revenue growth from premium experiences

STEM inspiration for young people

Key Learning: Experience Design = Revenue By investing in high-quality interactive experiences, the Science Museum created offerings worth paying for while maintaining free general admission.



KEY LEARNINGS FROM GLOBAL LEADERS

Principles we can apply

Visitor-Centric Design Design from the visitor's perspective. Ask "What will make someone's experience better?"

Multi-Sensory Experiences Engage all senses - touch, sound, smell, movement. Passive observation is the enemy of engagement.

Programming Diversity Different audiences, different times, different offerings. One-size-fits-all is one-size-fits-none.

Community Partnership Co-create with your community. They're not just audience, they're collaborators and advocates.

Strategic Use of Technology Technology serves the story, not the other way around. Use it to enhance, not replace, human connection.

Create Unmissable Moments Blockbuster events and once-in-a-lifetime experiences drive visitation and media attention.

New thinking...

These aren't theoretical principles - they're proven strategies from world-leading institutions. The beauty is they're scalable. We don't need the V&A's budget to apply visitor-centric thinking. We don't need Te Papa's size to create community partnerships. What we need is commitment to putting engagement first in every decision we make.

OUR JOURNEY...

Rail Workshops Success Story:

2017: 77,064 visitors (traditional approach)

2025: 100,818 visitors (First time over 100K in 15+ years)

New ideas attracting new audiences:

Street Art Jam: Gen Z visitors discovering heritage through contemporary culture

First Nations Integration: Artwork of Dylan Sarra tilt train + Commission of Torres Strait Islander artist
Torey-Jay Mordey mural

Visit Duration: 1.5 hours → 3+ hours (deeper engagement)

The Truth:

We've proven engagement amplifies rather than compromises our integrity as a museum.



UNDERSTANDING OUR AUDIENCES

Who Visits & Why

Current Visitor Profile

- Local families (Ipswich region)
- Southeast Queensland visitors
- School groups
- Heritage / Rail enthusiasts
- Interstate/international tourists
- Lifelong learners

Visitor Motivations

- A lovely place to spend time
- Family day out experiences
- Educational enrichment for children
- Nostalgia & heritage connection
- Event participation – commercial hire
- Programming & Engagement

Visitor Barriers

- Awareness - "I didn't know you existed"
- Value perception - **"Is it worth the trip as nothing has changed?"**
- Accessibility concerns

Internal Barriers

- Limited Budgets and human resources
- Resistance to change



Visitor data confirms our direction

What Nearly 1,000 Visitors Told Us Over 12 Months:

Top 2 Reasons for Visiting:

**"It's a nice place
to spend time"**
(destination
experience)

**"To be
entertained"**
(not just
educated)

How They Found Us:

**#1 Discovery
Channel:**
Word of Mouth
(organic advocacy)

Our own visitors are confirming that entertainment level thinking isn't selling our soul as a museum or betraying our mission...it's fulfilling their expectations and creating advocates who spread our story.

THE RENEWAL PROJECT



RAILWAY PARK





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World Science Festival Brisbane Community Days & RoboWars

8,257 attendances

Saturday 22 and Sunday 23 March 2025





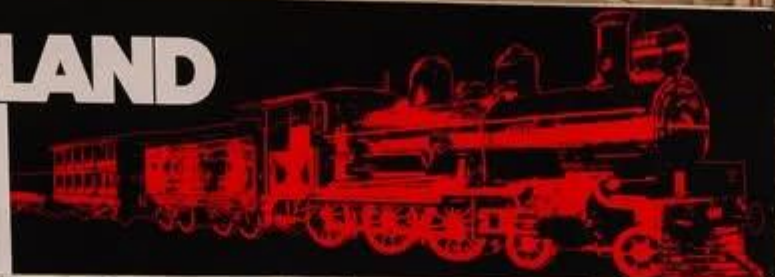
Day Out With Thomas: The Bubble Tour

Queensland Museum Rail Workshops
27 December 2024 – 26 January 2025

- **24,936** visitors, 17.20% increase on 2023-24
- **3233** Members 9.26% increase on 2023 - 2024

QUEENSLAND MUSEUM

RAIL WORKSHOPS



QUEENSLAND MUSEUM

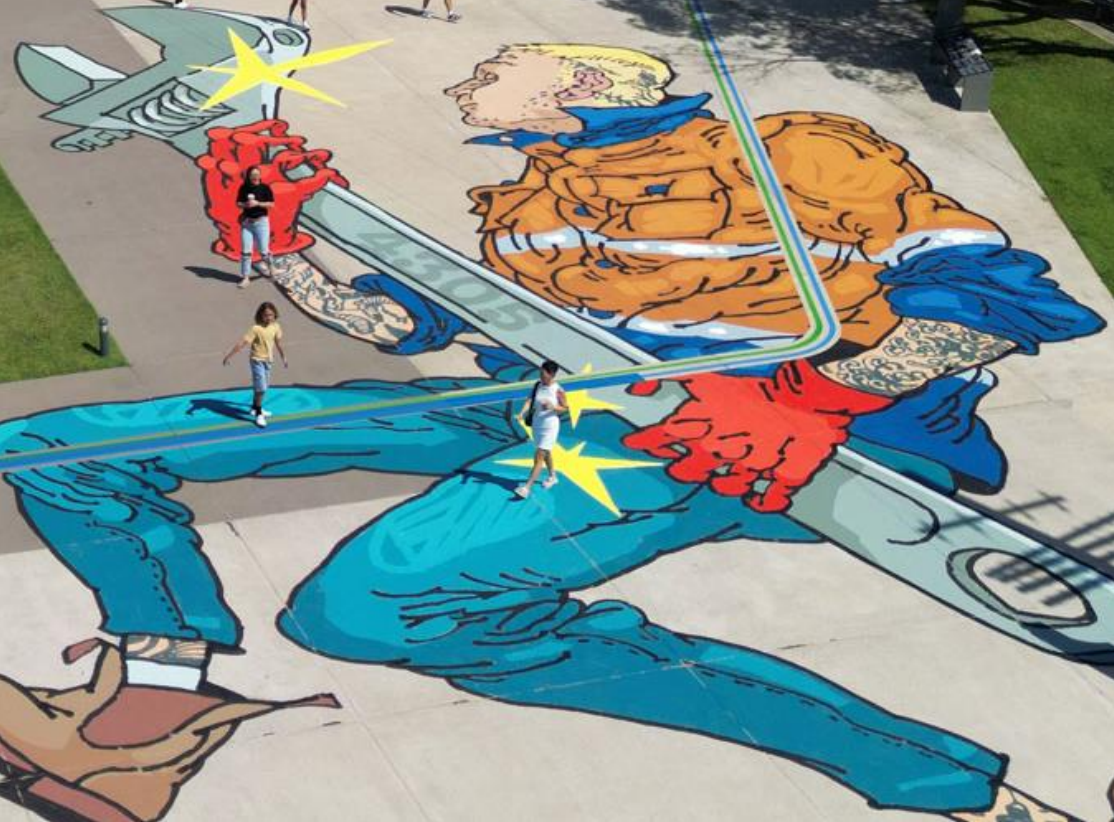
RAIL WORKSHOPS

CELEBRATING THE BIRTHPLACE
OF RAIL IN QUEENSLAND

QUEENSLAND
MUSEUM
RAIL WORKSHOPS



TAKE A TRIP
THROUGH THE
WORKSHOPS OF
RAIL INNOVATION











A few ideas to take away...

- Augmented Reality AR Time Travel Tours

Concept: Use AR through a mobile app or smart glasses to overlay historic scenes or characters onto real trams or stops.

- Adopt-a-TRAM Community Story Telling Project

Concept: Invite community members to “adopt” a specific tram and contribute stories, photos, or family connections to it.

- Immersive Audio Journeys

Concept: Create downloadable or app-based audio tours where visitors listen to dramatized tram journeys — complete with soundscapes, conductor dialogue, and historical moments

- Hands-on Tram Simulator or Gamified Exhibit

Concept: Let visitors operate a digital or mechanical tram simulator — driving through historic streetscapes, making decisions (e.g., timing, passen

- Green Transport Futures Workshop / Exhibit

Concept: Connect historical tram transport to today’s climate issues — show how trams were (and are) part of the clean energy solution.

KEY TAKEAWAYS...

Engagement isn't soft - it's strategic. Engaged visitors stay longer, spend more, return more frequently, and bring others. They become members, donors, and advocates. For every dollar we invest in engagement, we see returns in revenue, reputation, and regional impact. This isn't just good practice - it's good business. When we achieved our 100,000-visitor milestone, we also saw increased commercial revenue, stronger community partnerships, and significant economic impact for Ipswich.

Engagement is about creating emotional, intellectual and physical connections. It's the difference between someone who visits once and forgets, versus someone who becomes a repeat visitor, a member, brings friends and tells everyone about their experience.

Engagement is every touch point of the visitor experience, from the pre-visit - your website, marketing and advertising, to getting the visitor through your front door - signage and wayfinding, to exhibition and collection display, and all that we do in between in sharing our stories through events and public programming.

We are in the business of creating memories.

A museum is a unique ecosystem where every role—from conservation and curation to visitor services and facilities—plays a vital part in safeguarding our heritage. Together, we ensure that history is not only preserved and protected, but also brought to life for the enjoyment and inspiration of all.



THANK YOU!

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