



PORT STEPHENS
COUNCIL

Placemaking Guidelines

Better places. Better spaces.

We're committed to making business growth easier to build thriving town centres and villages. This toolkit gives you all the information you need to connect your business with your community through placemaking.



GUUDJI YIIGU

(GOO-JEE IK-KOO)

We welcome you to Port Stephens – part of the Worimi Aboriginal Nation. Port Stephens Council acknowledges the Worimi people as traditional owners and custodians of the lands and waterways on which we all live, learn, work and play.

We value and respect the Worimi people and the legacy 60,000 years of Aboriginal Nation traditions and culture brings with it. As part of Council's culture of acceptance, diversification and harmony we walk alongside the Worimi people on a journey of listening and learning.

Together we will strive to make this a better place for all peoples. As guardians of these lands, we ask that you tread lightly to help preserve the biodiversity and respect those who came before as well as those who will follow.

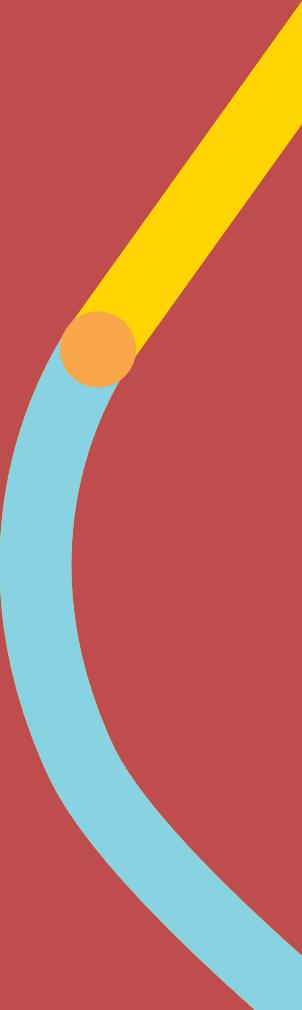




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A message from Mayor Leah Anderson

Our towns and villages are the heart of our community life. As our community continues to grow, we need to create public spaces that are inviting, adaptable, and meet the needs of everyone both now, and in the years to come.

I'm excited to deliver a new streamlined approach for approving and encouraging activity on our streets. This approach is focussed on creating an environment that allows Council and the community to collaborate to transform our town centres and public spaces into places for connection, celebration and vibrant community hubs – places people feel truly proud to call home.

Our streets and town centres are more than just roads to get from A to B. They're vibrant spots for festivals, live music, bustling markets, engaging artwork, pop-up dining, and those unexpected, joyful moments.

That's the kind of Port Stephens we're trying to build – one that's welcoming, creative, and full of energy. But we can't do it by ourselves. Great places need great businesses to make them shine.

We know that when our places are thriving, our local businesses do too. These days, having a successful business is about more than just what

you sell; it's about the experience you create. Every single interaction, from that first friendly hello to the last goodbye, shapes how people feel.

That's exactly why we've put together this guide. It's packed with simple, affordable ideas to help you connect your business with your community and your place – and the steps to follow to make it happen.

Whether it's sprucing up your shopfront, getting involved in a local event, or just rethinking how you chat with customers, even small changes can make a huge difference.

With your help, we're making Port Stephens a truly dynamic destination for everyone, locals and visitors alike, both now and for years to come.



Leah Anderson

Mayor of Port Stephens Council





Our Vision



Dynamic and vibrant town centres and villages

We're creating places that are practical, inviting and full of character. Our town centres and villages should feel welcoming and inspiring, with streetscapes that reflect the unique identity of each area, and encourage people to visit, stay, and return.

Our community



Pedestrian friendly town centres and villages

Our town centres and villages are for everyone. That means making our streets safe, enjoyable, and accessible for all. We're promoting healthy lifestyles and creating inclusive spaces where our community can gather and connect.

Our place



Economically viable town centres and villages

Well designed, people focused spaces support local business. By encouraging active street life, we create opportunities for economic growth and make it easier for local businesses to thrive.

Our environment



Town centres and villages with a point of difference

Each of our town centres and villages is unique and we are committed to respecting their histories, ensuring that the stories that shape their character are celebrated. From natural beauty to heritage features, we're enhancing the distinctive elements of each place to create memorable experiences for both locals and visitors alike.

Our council



Hilltop Play Space, City of Stirling

What is placemaking?

Placemaking is the process of creating quality public spaces where people want to live, work, play and learn. It's about shaping places together, led by the people who use them every day.

At its core, placemaking is about creating spaces that feel alive, connected and welcoming. It empowers local business and residents to take the lead in solving local challenges by making the changes they know are right for their area. It invites the community to reimagine and reinvent public spaces in ways that foster social connection, community pride, and a stronger sense of belonging.

Placemaking starts by understanding the unique identity and potential of a place, then working with the community to enhance its appeal, functionality and overall experience. It's about making places that people love and feel connected to.

Even simple changes like adding seating, shade, plants, public art or music can bring a space to life and encourage people to linger, connect and enjoy their surroundings.

How placemaking helps your business thrive

Placemaking isn't just about making our towns look good, it's a powerful tool for you as a local business. Here's some of the ways it can directly benefit you!



A stronger local economy

Well designed and active public places encourage people to spend more time and money at nearby shops, cafés and attractions. The positive impact ripples across the whole local economy.



More customers through your door

Inviting and exciting public spaces naturally attract more people. More foot traffic means more potential customers stopping by your business.



Boosts your business reputation

Businesses that contribute to vibrant, well-cared-for public spaces are often seen as community-minded and progressive. This enhances your brand and builds a positive local reputation.



Customers linger longer

When people feel comfortable and enjoy their surroundings, they stay longer – giving you more time to connect with customers and increase sales opportunities.



Increases property and business value

Businesses located near great public spaces often see increased demand, higher property values, and improved commercial performance over time. It's a smart investment in your future.



New chances for collaboration

Getting involved in placemaking projects with Council and other local businesses opens the door to new partnerships, shared events, and creative ideas that can benefit everyone.



Builds loyalty and community connection

When you're part of shaping meaningful local spaces, you deepen your connection with the community. This builds trust and encourages customers to return again and again.



How we're helping

We want to make it easy for you to get involved! We've introduced a new Placemaking Policy.

The purpose of this new policy is to:

- Make it easier for business to activate the footpaths by reducing red tape.
- Encourage the activation of the footway to improve town centre vibrancy and the local economy.

This policy makes it simpler than ever for local businesses to bring our footpaths and public spaces to life.

“

Placemaking isn't just about physical transformation. It's about creating emotional and social connections that help places, and the business within them, truly thrive.

Here are the 3 main types of activities the policy supports:



Business placemaking activities

Like outdoor dining, attractive displays and planters.



Community stalls

A great opportunity for our local charitable groups.



Street performers and buskers

Adding music and entertainment to our vibrant spaces.

We've made the registration process simple. There's just one easy form on our website for all activity types.





Things to consider

When you're thinking about bringing your shopfront to life and helping us create even better town centres, there are 4 key things to keep in mind for using the footpath outside your business.

Be inclusive

Our footpaths are for everyone! Always consider people with prams, wheelchairs, or vision impairments. Your setup must be safe, accessible, and welcoming to all members of the community

Work together

A vibrant town centre is built on collaboration. Before setting anything up, have a chat with nearby businesses. Explore ways to collaborate and create an even more vibrant and engaging street, or create a shared look and feel. For example, a clothing shop might benefit from a neighbouring café's outdoor dining, or working with other businesses you may create a line of planter boxes throughout the street. Just make sure your activities don't negatively impact other businesses, and always check in with your neighbours.

Take responsibility

You're the face of your business, and that includes the outside space. Stay on top of cleanliness, safety and presentation. Listen to customer feedback and if anything needs our attention, let us know via the [report, request and apply](#) page on our website.

Get your public liability insurance sorted

We encourage you to activate the footpath, but, before you do, make sure your public liability insurance covers the use of the footpath. Your policy must have a minimum of \$20 million, and name Port Stephens Council as an interested party. A Certificate of Currency will need to be submitted to Council every 12 months.

Ways you can use your footpath

Placemaking activities on footpaths are defined as anything directly connected to your business operating in the town centre. Typically, this means items placed right in front of your shop, but you can even extend along the footpath if your neighbours agree.

Adding outdoor furniture or temporary features like pot plants are fantastic ways to expand your business footprint and inject life into our town centres. You can create an inviting space for the community to engage with your products and gather for fun, social interactions, all while increasing your business's exposure.

Activities could include:

-  Outdoor dining tables and chairs
-  A-frames or sandwich boards
-  Tables, wheelbarrows, art, or display structures
-  Clothing racks or product displays
-  Plants in boxes or pots
-  Artistic displays

If you're interested in exploring any of these structures, please contact us at vibrantplaces@portstephens.nsw.gov.au and we'll connect you with the right team.



Activities not covered under this placemaking policy

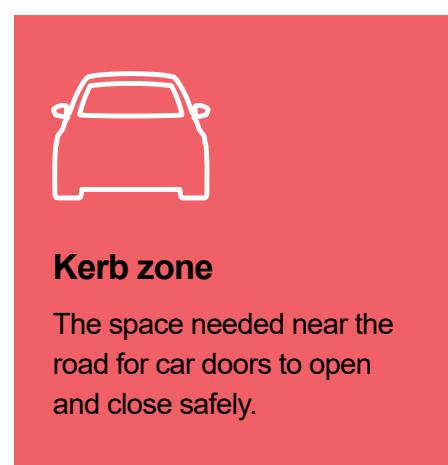
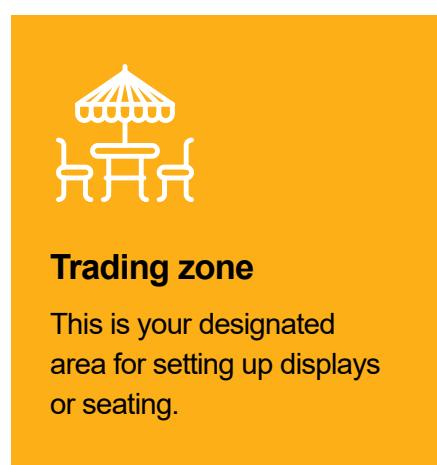
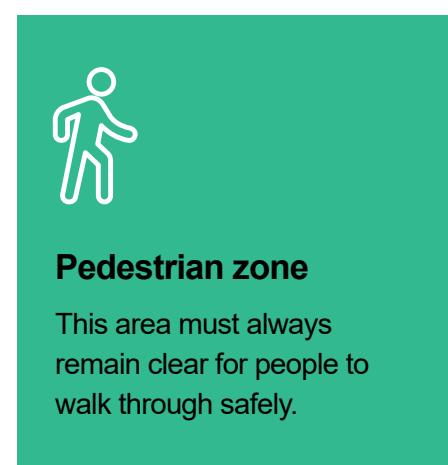
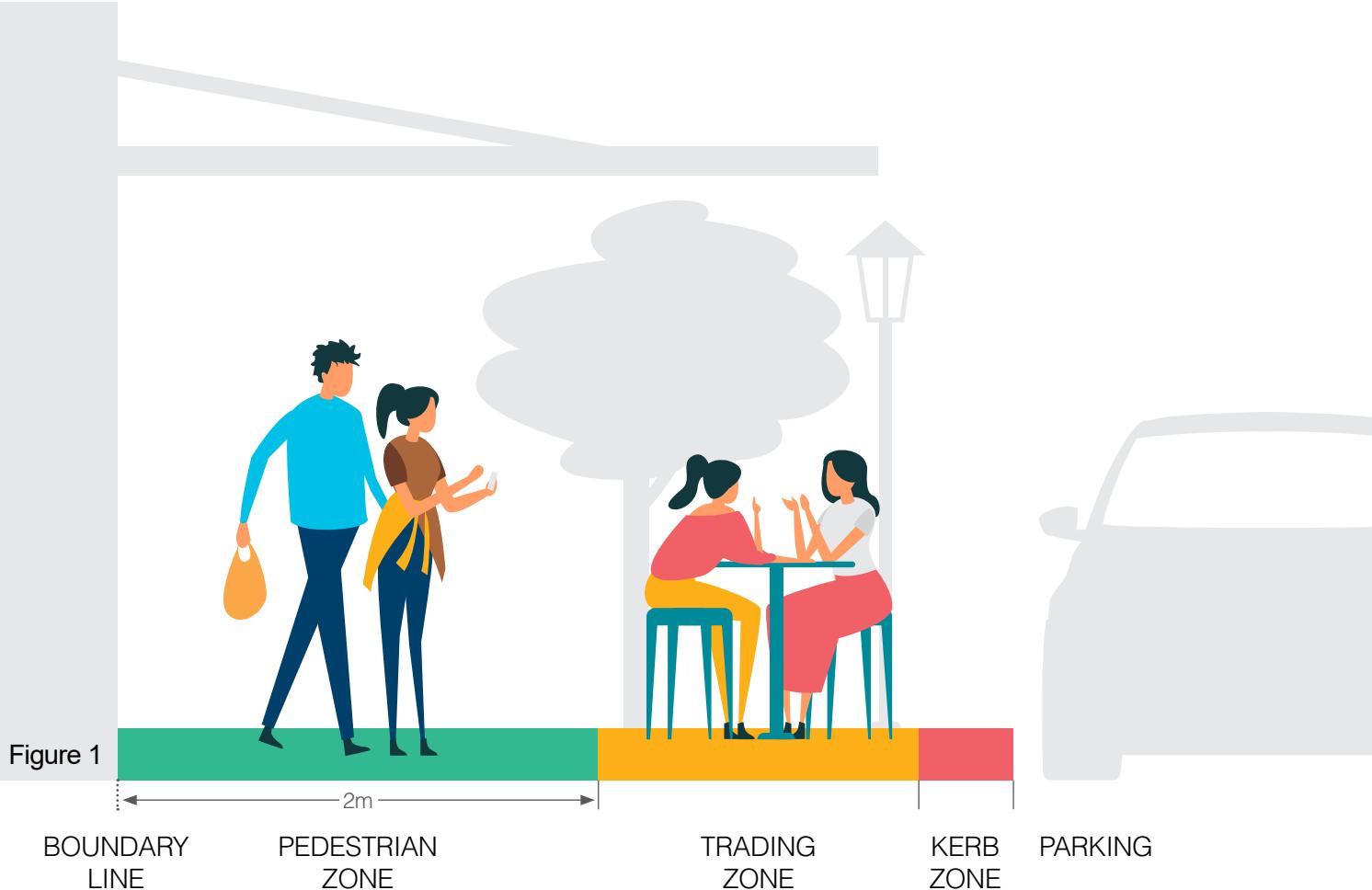
- Kiosks
- Rural roadside stalls
- Fixed sails or permanent shade structures
- Permanent structures, furniture, or fixtures that can't be easily removed



Note: Unless we've approved otherwise, all items must be removed at closing time, and your insurance must cover the activated area.

Requirements for using your footpath

For safety and accessibility, we divide the footpath into 3 key zones, as shown below.



Corner properties

These zones look a little different, as vehicle sight lines need to be considered.

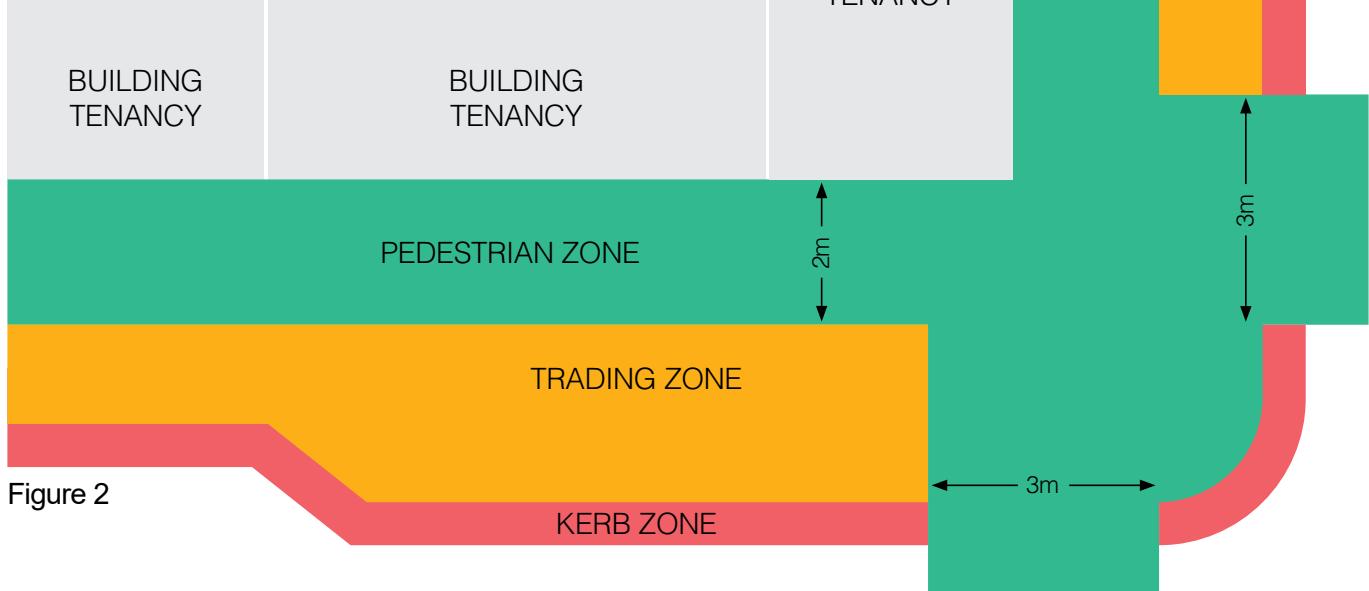


Figure 2

Using these zones as a guide for your setup will make sure your business activities enhance, not hinder, our public spaces.

However, we understand that this isn't always possible. Therefore, in some situations the zones may be set-up like Figure 3.

To assist the blind or people with vision impairment:

- Place solid structures (like sturdy furniture, planter boxes, or cafe barriers with a ground-level base) at either end of a display. These help guide people using white canes safely.
- Make sure all furniture and items are sturdy and won't fall over.
- Group items and position them close to the wall so they're easy for people using white canes to identify, helping to guide their cane away from the wall.

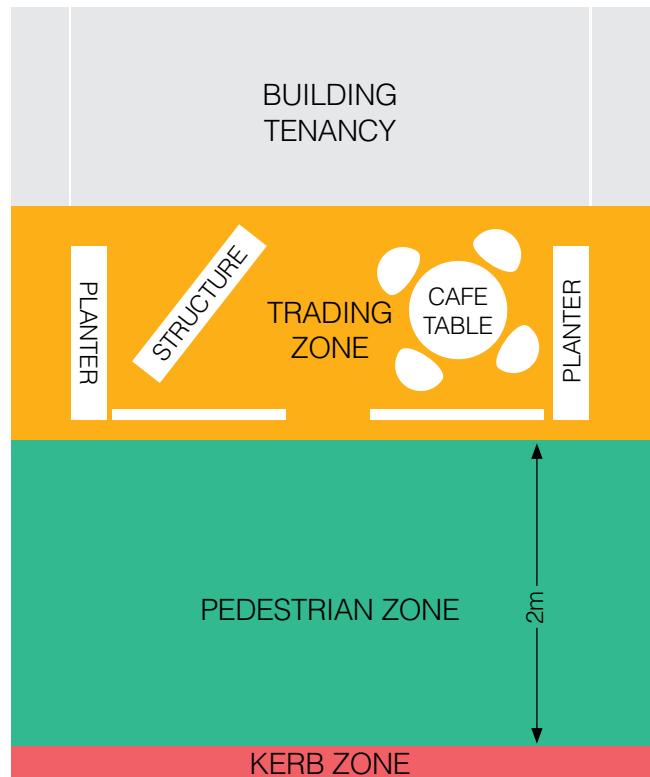


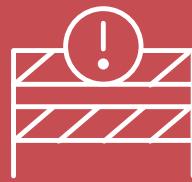
Figure 3

The key things to keep in mind when setting up your activities



Keep it clear for pedestrians and maintain clear zones

- Consider the access needs of all pedestrians, including those using wheelchairs, mobility scooters, prams, or strollers.
- If you are placing temporary structures please allow a minimum footpath width of two (2) metres in the pedestrian zone (refer Figure 1).
- Also, to allow reasonable access, including space for prams and wheelchairs to turn into a doorway:
 - Allow for half (0.5) a metre of clear space on either side of the business doorway.
 - Allow for half (0.5) a metre next clearance from adjoining properties or laneways.
- **Corner properties** must maintain a minimum **2-metre clearance** on each side of the intersecting corner (refer to our diagram for guidance) to allow for good visibility for drivers.



Don't block the way

Your items can't get in the way of:

- intersection sight lines
- access to public street furniture (like seating, bins, signs, or shelters)
- pedestrian crossings
- bus or taxi stops
- vehicle access
- stormwater flow.



Pack up daily

- All items need to be taken inside at the close of business each day.
- Items can't be permanently fixed unless you have specific approval from us, and you must remove items if asked to by a Council officer.



A-frames and sandwich board signs

- You're allowed only one standard-size A-Frame/ sandwich board sign per business (maximum 1.2 metres high and 0.6 metres wide).
- Keep roads or car parking spaces free of signs.
- Consider how cars park to prevent them from hitting your sign:
- In areas with parallel parking, signs must be at least 0.6 metres from the curb/street edge to allow car doors to open.
- In areas with rear-to-curb parking, signs must be at least 1 metre from the curb/street edge to allow for vehicle overhang.
- In speed zones over 60 km/h, any structures must be set back at least 2 metres.



Be ready for wind

- Make sure your structures are weighted or removed in high winds for safety.



Keep it tidy and safe

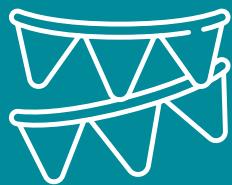
- All items you place on the footpath must be well-maintained, fit for their purpose, and look appealing in the area.



To assist the blind or people with vision impairment

- Try not to place furniture or items directly against the front wall of your business.
- If you do place items along the wall, they can stick out no more than 1 metre.
- Always arrange items consistently to create a predictable pathway (see Figure 3).

Here's some inspiration to get you started



We've compiled some ideas to help you enhance your business and its street presence. Think of the footpath right outside your shop as a valuable extension of your retail or business space! When it comes to signs, remember that **less is often more** – clear and concise messages really stand out. The goal is to give people something memorable, something that sticks with them long after they've walked by.



Your entrance

Make it obvious and welcoming

Your front door should be easy to spot, and it should invite people right in.

Your window display

Your first impression

Your window is like a billboard! Use it to grab attention and show passers-by what you offer.

Use the footpath

Extend your shop

That footpath is a prime spot to showcase what you sell and draw customers inside. Use it!

Encourage longer stays

More time, more sales

An interesting, vibrant town centre makes people want to linger. The longer they stay, the more opportunities you have for sales.

Visual communications

Clear and creative

Your sign should be simple, creative, and clearly show what you sell, especially for those who might not read English well. Think about displaying merchandise on the footpath too, to catch eyes and spark interest.

Create experiences

The small touches matter

It's those little extra efforts – the friendly hello, the unique display – that make people want to come back again and again.

Work together

Stronger together

When businesses team up, we can create an even better experience for everyone visiting our town centres. Let's make it happen!



Want more inspiration and examples?



Town Team Movement



Urban Spark Studio



Community Progress



Outdoor Design



The Urban Developer



PPS



Plan Wisely





Need funding to kick start your ideas?

Our Community Funding Program provides lots of funding opportunities to help bring your ideas to life.

The Vibrant Spaces Micro Fund can be used for shop-front improvements, small street activities, or art and beautification projects. But if it's something bigger that you have in mind, then our Vibrant Spaces Fund or Community Event Development Fund can be used for events, festivals and markets, festive season promotions, artistic and creative upgrades to the streetscape, or for repurposing existing commercial space.

You can find the funding options here:





Performers and community stalls

Street performers (buskers) are fantastic for bringing energy to our town centres! They really help create a lively atmosphere and activate our public spaces, while community stalls enable charity organisations and local community groups to sell goods, promote causes, and raise funds for not-for-profit organisations.

You'll often find buskers brightening up these popular spots:



Nelson Bay
Apex Park



Nelson Bay
Stockton St stage



Raymond Terrace
William St stage

We have some spots already set aside that are great for community stalls, including:

Nelson Bay Town Centre:

- Stockton Street stage area
- 97 Magnus Street (in front of the Post Office)

Raymond Terrace Town Centre:

- William Street Community stages



We've made it easier for street performers and community stalls to register their activity through our website, which also identifies the requirements for these activities to ensure that they don't adversely impact on businesses or interrupt other approved activities.





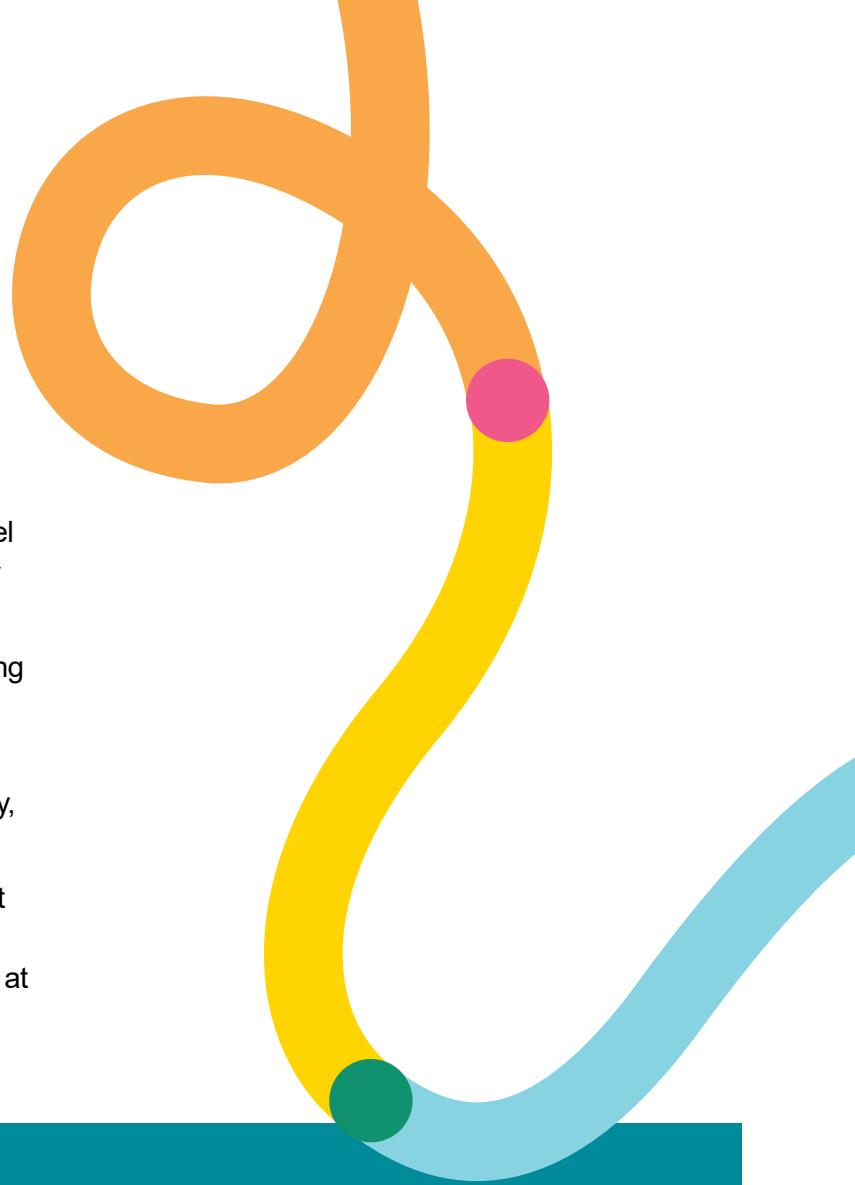


Ready to get started?

Once you've read through these guidelines and feel comfortable with what's needed from you and your business, you're ready to register!

- Visit our website and start your registration using our easy form at [insert link].
- Make sure you have all your documents, especially your insurance certificate of currency, ready to upload.

If you have any other questions or just want to chat about an idea, please don't hesitate to reach out to our Vibrant Places team on **4988 0255** or email us at vibrantplaces@portstephens.nsw.gov.au



What happens after you register?

Once your registration is approved and you're ready to go, one of our team will be in touch to introduce themselves as your main point of contact.

We've removed permits and stickers from the process to make it easier for business, but we'll conduct routine inspections to make sure businesses are meeting the guidelines. We'll just need you to send us your insurance cover each year.

It's important to stick to these guidelines. If there's a serious breach, your permission to activate the footpath will be revoked, and items must be removed immediately.

We want to work with you to keep our public spaces vibrant and safe for everyone!





