



Award for Public Space and Cultural Heritage Advocacy At Fed Square

In early 2018, I co-founded [Citizens for Melbourne](#) and we launched the '[Our City, Our Square - for Fed Square, not Apple Square](#)' campaign. Our team has been awarded [The Bates Smart Award for Architecture in Media \(Advocacy Award\)](#), Victorian Architecture Awards, Australian Institute of Architects, 2020.

The [ambition for the Our City, Our Square campaign](#) was to prevent the blatant corporatisation of Fed Square and to safeguard Fed Square as Melbourne's leading public space. Citizens for Melbourne continues to advocate for quality public spaces across Melbourne.

In addition to contributing to the advocacy material produced during the campaign, I wrote a number of pieces based on my skills in heritage conservation and urban history:

- *The Age:*
<http://heritage.city/2017/12/20/apple-is-exploiting-the-power-of-its-brand-to-claim-an-important-part-of-our-city/>
- *Herald Sun:*
<http://heritage.city/2018/02/19/apple-store-has-no-place-in-the-peoples-square/>
- *The Conversation:* <http://heritage.city/2018/08/10/heritage-fed-square/>
- Heritage Council of Victoria Submission:
<http://heritage.city/2018/12/14/federation-square-heritage-council-submission/>
- *The Conversation / The Age:*
<http://heritage.city/2019/08/27/how-can-a-place-be-heritage-listed-after-17-years-what-it-means-for-melbournes-fed-square/>



Reflecting the broader sentiment among Melburnians that Fed Square is a valued public space, the campaign gained sizeable traction. More than 100,000 people signed petitions, made public submissions, donated funds, sent off emails, shared social media posts, and generally engaged. It was an exhilarating two years of talking with many people who value public space.

Our organisation and campaign always saw ourselves as networking organisations and people to create a unified voice for Fed Square and public space. We also believed it was important to utilise innovative and creative advocacy techniques which would cut through the spin and noise.

The issue generated widespread international, national, metropolitan and local media coverage. This often revolved around 'mini-actions', including [plastering broadsheets around the city](#) and launching a satiric [\\$30m buy-back Fed Square crowdfunding opportunity](#). Some people thought the crowdfunding was serious - and fair enough too!

Led by the National Trust, [a state heritage listing for Fed Square happened in 2019](#), the first major international example of a designation for twenty-first-century architecture. A listing was [contested at various points](#), especially by Fed Square management. I was initially rebuffed by some prominent heritage people that Fed Square wasn't directly a cultural heritage issue!

But Fed Square had [clearly become a historic place for Melbourne](#) over the last two decades. The case against the state criteria was strong and clearly articulated by the [National Trust](#), the [Royal Historical Society of Victoria](#) and the hundreds of members of the community who made submissions. The campaign consistently facilitated record numbers of submissions to authorities.

The community campaign was ultimately successful. [Apple pulled its plan in 2019](#). The [government ministers](#) responsible have been demoted or left politics. There is [new leadership of Fed Square](#). [A \(delayed\) state government review](#) is [exploring options](#) around the future of Fed Square - mindful of the strong public interest in ensuring our public space remains so. Citizens for Melbourne will be watching these developments closely.

Meanwhile, I maintain an interest in Fed Square. I contributed to the [Conservation Management Plan \(CMP\) prepared by Lovell Chen](#). I'm also actively researching Fed Square, with a forthcoming article on its creation between 1994 and 2002 (details to come), and ongoing international collaborations around the future relationship between public space and cultural heritage.

Recognition of everyone's efforts is rewarding. However, my highlight of the campaign has been observing the strong engagement by the community in Fed Square as public space and cultural heritage. That is ultimately what made the Our City, Our Square campaign successful and makes me optimistic about the future of our city and its public realm.

