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Media Release

VIVID Sydney biggest on record

Wednesday, 21 June 2023

Vivid Sydney, Australia's biggest festival hit its biggest attendance record in history boasting a crowd of more than 3.28 million.

The preliminary figures demonstrate another booming year for Vivid with the record participants enjoying Light, Music, Ideas and Food programs over 23 nights.

Vivid Sydney has always been a festival about bringing people together, and this year was no exception.

Vivid Sydney's 2023 drone shows Written in the Stars proved to be hugely popular with more than 500,000 people viewing the seven shows.

This year the number of free shows increased from one show, with 600 drones in 2022, to six scheduled and one surprise final night show in 2023 featuring more than 1000 drones.

Vivid Sydney 2023 highlights included:

- Seven Written in the Stars Drone Shows - the largest drone show in the Southern Hemisphere - which boosted festival attendance on the traditionally quieter mid-week and Sunday nights.
- The longest ever free Vivid Light Walk at 8.5km's with 57 mesmerising light installations and 3D projections from Circular Quay to Central Station.
- The spectacular Sydney Opera House Lighting of the Sails: Life Enlivened showcasing the work of esteemed late Australian artist John Olsen AO OBE.
- A sold-out In Conversation event with The White Lotus creator and star Mike White and Jennifer Coolidge at the ICC Sydney attended by 7366.
- More than 1200 attendees for Vivid Music's A Bend in the River, A Tribute to Archie Roach AC at Sydney Town Hall.
- Vivid Music's free Tumbalong Nights in Darling Harbour included performances by Yothu Yindi, a celebration of Triple J Unearthed, Dan Sultan and more.

Key facts:

- Restaurants, cafes and bars have enjoyed a surge in patronage. Last year 701,000 people ate meals across the festival and this year that number is up to 745,000.
- The sold-out 'Vivid Residence' event showcased one of the world's best chefs, Daniel Humm of Eleven Madison Park, in a takeover at Aria Restaurant right on Sydney Harbour. Vivid Fire Kitchen at The Cutaway, a smoke and fire themed food adventure featured a line-up of street food vendors, restaurants and original dining concepts in Barangaroo attracting 190,000 people.
- Vivid Sydney also delivered strong returns for Harbour City businesses in Cockle Bay, Darling Harbour, King Street Wharf, Barangaroo, Walsh Bay, The Rocks, East Circular Quay, West

Circular Quay and the CBD over the 23 nights. Restaurants across the festival footprint reported 81 per cent of attendees purchasing food and beverages - more diners than any Vivid Sydney festival to date.

- Hotels in the CBD also reported increased occupancy during the festival, with occupancy rates up 12 per cent overall compared to last year's festival, lifting occupancy to 78 per cent across the CBD and 90 per cent on Friday and Saturday nights.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Jobs and Tourism, John Graham

"The preliminary Vivid Sydney attendance figures this year are extraordinary. Australia's largest festival has grown by around 30 per cent. That's an increase comparable to the population of the Gold Coast.

"Over the past three weeks the city has felt vibrant and electric. The program this year went from strength to strength. The new Vivid Food program was a huge success. The music program featured some iconic artists, including an important tribute to Archie Roach AC. The drone show captivated audiences young and old. And of course, the immortalising of John Olsen's work on the Sydney Opera House Sails was a timely tribute, a meeting of two Australian icons.

"Sydneyiders and visitors relished the chance to enjoy our night-time economy and we showcased Sydney, at its finest, to the world.

"These figures show how popular Vivid Sydney is, how it captures imaginations and shares with visitors and Sydneyiders alike the best talent from our creative, entertainment and hospitality industries."

Quotes attributable to Vivid Sydney Festival Director, Gill Minervini:

"After COVID-19, we proudly raised the bar in 2022 growing the festival's attendance by seven per cent. This year we surpassed those figures. I'm still pinching myself.

"It's hard to comprehend the magnitude of the increase in turnout. We're extremely proud and very grateful to all our artists, performers, musicians, speakers and chefs. Without them, our program would not be anywhere near as successful.

"Vivid Food has been the standout in 2023. More than 190,000 people checked out Vivid Fire Kitchen which is just incredible, with many of our Vivid Food events receiving rave reviews, selling out or achieving very high attendance."

Quotes attributable to Tourism Accommodation Australia CEO and interim Accommodation Association CEO, Michael Johnson

"The growing success of Vivid Sydney year upon year is a credit to the NSW Government, Destination NSW, the events team, and all in involved. The impact it has on the city of Sydney is unparalleled and to see our hotels at times reaching 90 per cent occupancy during Winter is a remarkable achievement.

"The implementation of new activations such as additional drone shows, and the new Vivid Food Pillar allowed our stunning city to shine brighter than ever before.

"Vivid Sydney is a magnificent event as it not only draws millions of people to the city but encourages them to spend the night in one of our many incredible hotels.

"I would like to extend my thanks and congratulations to all who made this event possible. Your creativity, innovation and vision continues to light up the night sky."

Quotes attributable to Tim Olsen:

"Vivid Sydney is a bright stage light that fixes upon, highlights and showcases our creative industries like nothing else in Australia.

"For three weeks millions enjoy the many hours of hard work, dedication and incredible creativity that are undertaken to make this festival possible.

“The inclusion of the late John Olsen, before he passed, was uncanny timing and it displayed the deeper respect for our seminal artists, especially those that did not normally work in such contemporary mediums.”

“It is fantastic to see Vivid Sydney grow from strength to strength and a continued focus on our artists, musicians, chefs and thought leaders.”

Quotes attributable to Lennox Hastie, Owner and Chef Firedoor and Gildas:

“It was such a pleasure to be involved in the Vivid Sydney 2023 program with the inaugural Vivid Fire Kitchen.

“Our city really comes alive during these weeks, and it was a privilege to share a little slice of what we do at Firedoor and Gildas.”

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