

Social enterprise connects artists with empty commercial buildings



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In the UK we recently saw [empty commercial properties offered to charities](#) for free while permanent tenants are found. Similarly, an Australian social enterprise — [Renew Australia](#) — is connecting artists and community projects with workspaces in vacant city-center buildings until they are needed again for commercial use.

Renew Australia was founded by Marcus Westbury, who had a vision to transform underutilized spaces into opportunities for creative groups. He launched a pilot scheme in Newcastle where many empty buildings in the central business district were becoming derelict or vandalized. Westbury found that property owners were reluctant to take on long-term tenants in case they inhibited resale or redevelopment plans. However, the Renew Newcastle programme successfully found creative individuals willing to be temporary tenants, who cleaned-up buildings and revitalized the area. Now the program has been rolled-out nationally. In the video below, Westbury explains the concept in more detail:

Renew Australia provides property owners with tenants to care for their buildings and artists with space to work on their projects, while benefiting local communities and businesses by re-energizing derelict areas. Inspiration for a town near you?

Website: www.renewaustralia.org
Contact: holly@renewaustralia.org

Spotted by: Sam Molloy