

VMA LAUNCHES MAKE: RECONNECTING CREATIVE WITH MODERN PRINT

The Visual Media Association (VMA) today announced the launch of MAKE, a new industry-led initiative bringing leading Australian creatives directly into the modern print environment to explore technology, materials and production capability and build stronger connections between the creative community and Australia's print industry.

Led by the VMA and proudly supported by Platinum Partner FUJIFILM Business Innovation Australia (FUJIFILM BI) and Gold Partner Spicers Australia (Spicers), MAKE brings together the three critical elements behind exceptional printed work: creative, print and paper. Bringing these three together, MAKE will create an environment where designers can work directly with print technology, technical expertise and materials to explore what is possible across the latest print technologies with an open source of papers to test and push their creative and industry technologies. MAKE was launched in Melbourne on 11 September 2026, bringing together leading design studios, agencies and independent creatives, including Ortolan, Seesaw Studio, Clear Design, Canyon Brand, Georgie Wilson and Rae Simpson, with the widely acclaimed Andrew Ashton joining the initiative as Creative Advisor.

Held at Yamagen in Melbourne, the launch opened a different conversation between creatives and industry: what could designers create if they had open access to modern print technology, press time, technical expertise and the full breadth of Spicers Australia's specialty papers and substrates? How can we make? How do we make?

These questions sit at the heart of MAKE.

While paper merchants and the design community have long worked closely together, the VMA believes a disconnect has developed between designers and the extraordinary capability of modern print manufacturing. New digital technologies, embellishments, substrates, colours, textures, finishing techniques and shorter-run capabilities have transformed what can be produced, yet much of that innovation is not necessarily visible to the creative community at the point an idea is being conceived.

MAKE aims to change that by putting designers alongside printers, technology specialists and paper experts and giving them permission to experiment.

VMA Chief Executive Officer, Kellie Northwood, said the initiative reflects the fundamental role of the paper and print industry, bringing creative visions to life.

"Our industry takes an idea and makes it real. That is ultimately what we do. The opportunity with MAKE is to connect our members and the incredible capability of modern print with some of Australia's best creative minds and ask: what can we make together?" commented Northwood.

"For too long there has been a missing connection. Designers understand paper, printers understand technology, however, we need those two conversations happening together. If creatives do not know what a modern press can achieve, they cannot design for it. Equally,

innovation in print becomes far more powerful when you put it into the hands of people whose job is to imagine.”

The participating creatives will be given access to press time and technical expertise to test, explore and push ideas throughout FUJIFILM BI showrooms across the country and have access to the extensive Spicers paper portfolio. Rather than working to a prescribed design brief or finished product, MAKE encourages experimentation, testing previous concepts, challenging production conventions and exploring ideas that may not otherwise make it beyond the creative studio.

Steve Fisher, General Manager, Graphic Communications, FUJIFILM BI Australia, said connecting creatives directly with print technology creates an opportunity to demonstrate innovation through application rather than simply talking about capability.

“FUJIFILM BI continues to invest heavily in pioneering what is possible in print. MAKE gives us a terrific opportunity to work in partnership with the VMA and connect the three critical ingredients of successful print, the creative idea, the paper and the technology that brings it to life,” commented Fisher.

“There is something very powerful about giving creative people access to the technology and saying, *‘Come and explore what this can do.’* That collaboration can challenge all of us to think differently about print and ultimately create work that demonstrates its value in new ways.”

Sharon Dowsey of Spicers said the program would also allow creatives to explore the relationship between emerging digital print capability and specialty papers.

“Working with the Visual Media Association and FUJIFILM BI gives us an opportunity to bring together designers, printers, and paper specialists to showcase the best our industry has to offer. By combining our experience and expertise, MAKE can demonstrate the value of collaboration, share new ideas, and highlight emerging technologies and materials that reinforce the ongoing importance of print and paper in today's communications landscape.

We're proud to work alongside our industry partners and the creative community to drive innovation and support the growth of our industry, and we look forward to seeing MAKE come together,” said Dowsey.

MAKE is the fourth major industry partnership secured through the VMA, reinforcing an approach that brings commercial partners together with industry to fund practical initiatives that create new opportunities, research, engagement and demand for print.

Northwood said the partnership model was becoming an important engine for industry development.

“Our partners allow us to make projects like this real. We simply could not deliver the breadth of programs we are now building without their support,” said Northwood.

“What matters is what that support creates. When our partners invest with the VMA, we turn that investment into industry activity, bringing new audiences into print, commissioning research, developing talent, showcasing technology and creating reasons for brands and

creatives to invest more in print media. That investment flows through the entire industry. MAKE is another example of what becomes possible when we connect the right people, remove the traditional silos and work together to grow the market.”

The initial MAKE experimentation phase will see creatives and industry working together to test and develop concepts, with VMA ultimately bringing the work together through a series of publications and an industry gallery event showcasing the participating studios, projects and possibilities created.

MAKE. Paper, Print + Creative experimenting together.

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ABOUT VISUAL MEDIA ASSOCIATION

The Visual Media Association (VMA) is the recognised peak industry body for the paper, print, mail, publishing, packaging, graphic design, distribution, and media technology industries across Australia.

Operating for over 144 years, the VMA is a registered organisation with direct signatory to the nine (9) Awards across our industry and membership. VMA offers an end-to-end industry association solution that is relevant in all that it undertakes: advocating the relevance of the established media – print – that we all belong to; developing global partnerships and translating to regional requirements; awarding excellence; investing in products; and arming our industry with sales tools, sustainability collateral, industrial relations representation and more.

The VMA is the largest print industry body, committed to building a stronger united leadership to deliver the goals of our members. United we lead strong advocacy, government advisory, skills and training programs, protection, and promotion of our industry channels and more to ensure our members’ businesses operate within a future-proofed strategy for success.

For more information contact: hello@visualmediaassociation.org.au.