

Hundreds flock to opening of Queensland's biggest Apple store in Brisbane's CBD

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Hundreds flock to the opening of Qld's biggest Apple store

THE Church of Apple has finally thrown open its doors to the faithful in Brisbane's CBD, and worshippers of the famous fruit have flocked to get the first bite.

About 500 fans lined up for the opening of the newest Apple Store this morning, the fourth in Queensland and largest in the Sunshine State, with some waiting 15 hours to get a look at the electronic giant's new digs in the refurbished MacArthur Chambers.

In the hour before opening, spirits were high amongst the pilgrims on the footpath, while inside the hallowed grounds of the store ecstatic staff cheered and chanted, revving themselves up to welcome the waiting congregation.

First in line and slightly fatigued by a night staring at the store's stubborn brass doors, Andris Trieb said he had passed an enjoyable 15 hours bantering with fellow Apple aficionados as they camped out for the grand opening.

"We were just talking all night," said Mr Trieb, who estimated he managed 30 minutes of sleep on the hard concrete steps.

"It's like camping, and because we share the same interests we've got a lot of conversation starters."

Second in line, Gary Allen, had travelled all the way from California for the event, his 38th time at an Apple Store grand opening.

He said he'd been to similar heritage building refurbishments by Apple in London, Paris, Amsterdam and Berlin, and Brisbane's MacArthur Chambers store ranked among the best.



Gary Allen, Andris Trieb and John McGregor at the opening of Apple's flagship Brisbane CBD store at the historic MacArthur Chambers building.

"Apple learns each time it does one of these restorations, and I can tell this one has got to be among the top ten of the heritage stores they've rebuilt," he said.

As the 10am opening time drew near, cheering from within the store intensified, drawing curious looks and raised eyebrows from passers-by yet to be converted to the faith.

When told some had camped overnight for a first glimpse of the store, one sceptical unbeliever who appeared stumped by the fanfare commented it was "a bit sad".

Not so for the crowd, or the employees, who were both working themselves into near-frenzy levels of excitement as the clock ticked on.

About 9.50am the doors finally opened and the store's hundred-odd employees flooded out to greet the waiting crowd, cheering wildly and high-fiving those in line, and disorienting one unfortunate elderly gent caught up in the mayhem.

Minutes later, the doors finally opened to welcome the patient public into the shiny new store, with the staff dispensing more applause, high fives and free t-shirts as a reward for their followers' marathon wait.

Finally inside the store, many Apple fans appeared exhilarated and stunned by the surreal, rock star greeting, sporting heavenly, transcendent smiles as they drifted from iPod to iPod.

"It was crazy," said young Apple convert Harrison Greeves, 13, who had been camped out with sister Mackenzie since 3.30am.

Harrison, who was 15th in line, said he got "like 50" high fives from Apple employees as he entered the store, and filmed the whole thing on one of his two iPhones.

"It was just really good to experience it as one of the first people, it's a really memorable thing," he said.

The siblings, who had waited 13 hours between them for a first peek at the new store, bought a small iPhone cable, then left.

Yesterday store leader Jonny Walker said the building, which acted as General Douglas MacArthur's regional headquarters in World War II, had been lovingly restored with original materials.

"We are so proud of this store at Apple, it's got a stunning space now and we're really extremely proud to call it our home," he said.

"When we took over the store a lot of the original historic elements were missing or in disrepair. What we've done is we've painstakingly restored it to its original glory."



Apple fans queue outside for the opening of Apple's flagship Brisbane CBD store at the historic MacArthur Chambers building

The store, which will feature more products on the floor than any other Apple Store in Australia, features a blend of MacArthur Chambers' elegant, heritage-style architecture with the sleek, ultra-modern aesthetic the company is famous for.

"We wanted to keep a lot of the historic elements but we wanted to bring in a lot of what we do these days in all the stores," said Mr Walker.

Original elements of the building, including its brass doors and mezzanine handrail have been retained, and each stone of the entrance mosaic was individually polished and put back in place, complemented by the addition of new Carrara marble.

Although initial plans included Apple's trademark feature staircase, this was not included in the final building, with the mezzanine remaining closed to customers.

Around 100 local staff, speaking a dozen different languages, have been employed to cater to the company's customers.

Apple joins other premium brands that have flocked to the Edward St strip, with Louis Vuitton, Tiffany & Co and Gucci already calling it home, and jewellers Cartier and Bulgari also set to open in the near future.

The Chambers, which was home to Dymocks Booksellers before becoming a discount book store, has doors opening into MacArthur Central and Queen St, with Mr Walker saying the company was excited to join other retailers in the centre of town.

"Brisbane's Queen Street Mall is at the heart of the retail sector," said Mr Walker.

"I could not be more excited leading this store to make sure our customers have the best experience at 10am today."

Source: <http://www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/hundreds-flock-to-opening-of-queenslands-biggest-apple-store-in-brisbanes-cbd/story-fnihsrf2-1226803921618>