



Case Study



convergent

Australia's Iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground Achieves Record Results with the Help of Evolv and Convergent

Melbourne Cricket Ground

CAPACITY: 100,024

SECURITY OPERATOR: Melbourne Cricket Club

OPENED: 1853

ENTRANCES: 8, 7 Guest Entrances, 1 Staff Entrance

LOCATION: Yarra Park, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

WEBSITE: <https://www.mcg.org.au/>

Solution Snapshot

Goals

- Reduce security queues at entrances.
- Scale to support ingress surges when gates first open and at last-minute rush.
- Deploy security screening technology that could withstand harsh weather elements.
- Leverage analytics for staffing and operational decisions and planning.
- Provide team with flexible, mobile security technology that could be moved between entrances at the park.

Solution

People

- Convergent team trained and certified on Evolv Express® and Insights to provide a wide array of local support as needed.
- Evolv Solutions Engineer and Convergent Security Technician worked with the MCC team to configure the placement of each Evolv Express system.
- Evolv and Convergent teams provided onsite support for the deployment.
- Convergent is present onsite for all large events.
- Convergent and Evolv deliver ongoing 24/7 support.

Technology

- 18 Evolv Express dual-lane systems
- 1 Evolv Express single-lane systems
- Evolv Insights®

Process

- MCC worked with Evolv and Convergent to set up six-month POC to test Evolv system at Gate 2.
- MCC security team completed training via the Evolv Academy before Express systems arrived on site.
- Convergent and Evolv teams provided additional training to MCC security team during system setup, configuration, and activation.
- Convergent and Evolv teams worked with MCC security team to configure and deploy 19 Evolv Express systems.
- Evolv Customer Success Manager and Convergent Project Manager trained MCC on Evolv Insights.
- Evolv and Convergent were present for the first weeks of POC and the first week of usage with a scaled deployment.

Outcomes



Screened 1.9 million fans in the first 6 months of use across Australian Rules Football, rugby, soccer, and concerts.



Screened a record 288,000 people for three consecutive nights of Taylor Swift concerts.



Minimized the risk of security guard fatigue with consistent security screening, helping mitigate the risk of threats.



Screened 46,000 AFL Fans in 35 minutes.



Leveraged the portability and flexibility of Evolv systems for increased operational efficiency.



Improved operational security screening efficiency using Evolv Insights Data.



Elicited positive response from the MCC security team charged with operating the Express.



Reduced security queues in the park.



Iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground

The Melbourne Cricket Club (MCC) was founded in 1838 and is one of the oldest sports clubs in the world.

The MCC is responsible for the management and development of the Melbourne Cricket Ground and retains rights to approximately a quarter of the stadium's seating for its members. The MCC commissioned and built the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG), opening the iconic venue in 1853.

Having hosted the 1956 Summer Olympics, the 2006 Commonwealth Games, and two Cricket World Cups, among other notable events, the MCG possesses one of the most storied histories of any stadium in the southern hemisphere with two museums where fans can experience this history.

The MCG, which has gone through numerous renovations, boasts a total capacity in excess of 100,000 which makes it the largest stadium in the southern hemisphere. The MCG is primarily responsible for hosting Cricket and Australian Football games and is the home ground for Melbourne Stars Cricket Club men's and women's teams, 8 different Australian Rules Football (AFL) teams, and is regarded as one of the homes of Test Cricket, as well as hosting soccer and rugby games. The MCG has had the privilege of hosting multiple ANZAC Day matches, AFL Grand Finals, State of Origin Games, World Cup Qualifiers, and multiple iconic

Ashes Test matches between Australia and England. The MCG is the stadium of choice for world-renowned artists such as Taylor Swift, Ed Sheeran, David Bowie, Madonna, The Rolling Stones, and Paul McCartney, to name a few. It is the uncontested beating heart of Australian sports and entertainment.

"We did a lot of testing of the system ourselves. We had our numerous people walk through the system.... We probably tried to get prohibited items through it 80 or 90 times, and it detected these items, which varied in shape, size, and type, every time."

– Josh Eltringham, General Manager, Venue & Event Services, MCG



Safety and Experience Go Hand in Hand

For the MCG, which is managed by the MCC, safety and experience are top priorities.

"We talk about safety and security as being the number one priority and this goes hand in hand with the overall visitor experience," relates Josh Eltringham, the General Manager of Venue and Event Services at MCG. "If someone doesn't feel safe when they come to MCG, then they will not have a good experience. That is why our number one priority is the safety and security of people visiting the venue. We have layers of security in place, from roaming security guards and law enforcement to security screening and security cameras and an anti-social text message line."

The MCC has over 155,000 members and 181,000 on the waiting list. Approximately 23,000 seats at MCG are reserved for MCC members and their guests. MCC members receive early entry to the venue and a number of seats in the Members' Reserve are first-come, first-served. The remainder of the seats are general admission. As a result of this policy and for historical cultural importance, for certain marquee events, members will line up beforehand to ensure they get a good seat, and getting in quickly matters to them. "We have some people in line for two or three days and camp out in tents," Eltringham says. "When the gates open, there is a huge rush to get into the stadium and secure a seat."

"Experience and safety are equally important. If someone doesn't feel safe when they come to MCG, then they will not have a good experience. That is why our number one priority is the safety and security of people visiting the venue."

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Challenges of Manual Security Screening

For many years, MCG relied on manual bag searches and handheld wands.

"We found the efficiency of this screening approach waned over time," Eltringham says. "This was particularly true when gates opened and lines of fans rushed to push through screening, or on occasions when fans waited until the last minute to enter the stadium." This is something that Rey Sumaru, the General Manager of IT and Innovation MCC, confirms. "We had people upset because they were unable to get into the stadium quickly and easily," Sumaru states.

Throughout the years, the demographic attending games and events at MCG has progressed. "Fans consume sporting events differently," Sumaru says. "They expect us to embrace technological innovation. Everything we do revolves around our fans. For security screening, we want to make it seamless for people to enter and enjoy the game or event." Darren Horne, the MCC's Executive Manager of Security and Precinct at MCG, concurs with Sumaru on the importance of innovation at MCG. "We're constantly reviewing and looking for ways to improve our security environment," he says.

"The Evolv and Convergent teams were onsite a week prior to the Taylor Swift concerts. Having them there to help set up the systems and to train our staff made a huge difference."

– Rey Sumaru, General Manager, IT and Innovation, MCC



Discovering Evolv at SoFi Stadium

With these issues as a backdrop but no alternative security screening solution identified, Eltringham happened upon the Evolv Express on a visit to SoFi Stadium in Inglewood, California, the home for the NFL's Los Angeles Rams and Los Angeles Chargers.

"I was looking at a guide and trying to work out where the security screening was," he remembers. "I saw these people just walking through, and I thought, 'What is this technology? I've never seen anything like it before.'" He began peppering the security staff managing what turned out to be an Evolv Express system.

Otto Benedict, the SVP of Facility and Campus Operations at SoFi Stadium and Hollywood Park, who had overseen the rollout of Evolv technology at SoFi Stadium, was nearby and the two of them struck up a lengthy conversation on how the system works. By the end of their discussion, Eltringham knew other members of the MCG team needed to see the Evolv deployment at SoFi Stadium.

Setting Up a Comprehensive POC

Upon Eltringham's return, the MCG team had other team members visit the US and experience Evolv for themselves, with extremely positive feedback.

"When we came back, we knew that we wanted to set up a POC," Sumaru says. The MCG and MCC teams initially reached out to Evolv directly when they began to research and investigate the technology. Shortly thereafter, Evolv Partner in Oceania, Convergent, was brought into the discussions.

Kicking off in Spring 2023, the POC was comprehensive and lasted about six months. "We set up an Evolv Express system at Gate 2, where members enter and we see a lot of traffic," Eltringham says. "We did a lot of testing of the system ourselves. We even looked at the Evolv Insights analytics to determine if it provided us with the level of data we were seeking."

For Testing, controlled scenarios were constructed to prove detection performance, the process was quite detailed. "We kept all the test pieces concealed, and the security operator in the Flow Control position did not know who had the test weapon," recalls Dean Ponton, Convergent's embedded technician at MCG. "The Evolv system alarmed on every one of them and displayed its location on the person's body or bag in this controlled scenario."

Eltringham's experience was similar. "We also did a lot of testing with the system," he states. "We probably tried to push prohibited items through it 80 or 90 times, and it detected those items, which varied in shape, size, and type, every time."

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– Dean Ponton, Security Technician, Convergent



Reasons for Selecting Evolv Technology

Evolv was not the only technology the MCG and MCC teams considered.

"We have a very big brand, particularly in Australia, and we vet everything we introduce to our customers here very carefully," Eltringham says. "We spoke to a number of other providers as part of our due diligence. Ultimately, we determined that Evolv was the superior product on the market. We also appreciated the transparency in the conversations with Evolv and Convergent. They not only told us what the technology could do but what it couldn't do. This was really important to us. Plus, the support from Evolv and Convergent, even during the POC, was absolutely fantastic."

The Evolv customer community was also a positive for Eltringham. "We also found the interactions with different Evolv customers quite helpful," he says. "Evolv and Convergent facilitated those introductions to the Evolv community, and several were very gracious with their time and sharing information and ideas."

Horne emphasizes consistency: "Evolv provides the same level of security screening for the first person through the system as the last." In addition, because of its approach to screening with both primary and secondary checks, Sumaru reflects, "This innovative experience is precisely what our new fan demographic wants."

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– Darren Horne, Executive Manager, Security and Precinct, MCC

The Biggest Concert of that Year—Taylor Swift

Once a decision was made to roll the Evolv Express systems out across all the entrances at MCG, the Convergent, Evolv, MCC, and MCG teams identified late December 2023 for deployment.

In advance, the security staff from MCC was registered for training in Evolv's learning management system Evolv Academy. MCC and Convergent wanted security staff who would manage the Evolv Express systems to complete online training before the systems arrived onsite at MCG.

Dean Ponton, a Security Technician at Convergent, describes that Convergent's involvement in the onboarding was extensive. "We had a Convergent representative onsite throughout the entire onboarding process," notes Mark Raiola, the MCG Project Manager at Convergent. "I was onsite when the pallets with the Evolv Express systems arrived," recalls Ponton. "The security operators from MCC were able to become efficient in setting up, tearing down, and storing the systems, working in the Flow Control and Threat Resolution positions, tagging objects that cause nuisance alarms on the Evolv tablets."

Prior to the deployment, Evolv also tapped one of Evolv's partners, Iventis, to help the MCG team understand what to expect. "Before we got the systems onsite, we were able to deliver interactive 2D and 3D imaging of exactly how the Express would look at each entrance so that the team didn't just have to imagine it—they could see it, edit it, and adjust whatever they needed." Bailey continues, "This was a key factor in maximizing efficiency and optimizing our time installing and testing the systems on site. It also brought a sense of comfort to the MCG and Convergent teams involved, knowing what to expect."

A Boxing Day deployment laid the groundwork for successful onboarding and prepared the team for the

three consecutive nights of the Taylor Swift's Eras tour concerts in February. A total of 18 Evolv Express dual-lane systems were delivered for use at public entrances at MCG in December, with an additional Evolv Express single-lane system designated for the staff entrance at the stadium. This was facilitated by Evolv staff, led by Adam Hahn, Staff Technical Solutions Engineer, and Convergent colleagues. "The rollout was successful due to the collaboration and true partnership approach between MCC, Convergent and Evolv. They made it a real pleasure to work with them and I even found a new love of cricket!"

With the record-breaking concert just weeks away, the MCG utilized several smaller events to tune the placement of the systems at each gate, test different sensitivity settings, and ensure the security staff were comfortable performing their roles. "We rolled out the Express during the cricket season," Eltringham says. "A couple of nights here and there just to get staff familiar with the system. We even reached out to other venues that had hosted concerts for the Taylor Swift Era tour. We asked them about staffing, nuisance alarm rates, and the sensitivity settings they used. It was very helpful."

Meanwhile, training continued for the security team, with Convergent leading the charge and ensuring everything was ready to go for the Eras Tour. "The Evolv and Convergent teams were on site a week prior to the Taylor Swift concerts," Horne says. "Having them there to help set up the systems, to train our staff, and to be here for all three days of the Eras Tour just in case something happened made a huge difference."

"We spoke to a number of other providers as part of our due diligence. Ultimately, we determined that Evolv was the superior product on the market. We also appreciated the transparency in the conversations with Evolv. This was really important to us."

– Josh Eltringham, General Manager, Venue & Event Services, MCC

The Convergent and Evolv Technology Partnership

Convergent, a global leader in security and AV technology integration, plays a pivotal role as a key partner of Evolv Technology not only in Oceania but also in other international markets. Their collaboration has significantly enhanced the security landscape at MCG and continues to benefit other customers across Oceania and the wider region.

Convergent at MCG

With extensive expertise in integrating advanced security and AV systems, including CCTV, access control, and other relevant technologies, Convergent brings a wealth of knowledge to the partnership. At the MCG, Convergent is responsible for managing these systems, ensuring they operate seamlessly alongside Evolv's state-of-the-art weapons detection solutions. Convergent's commitment to providing comprehensive managed services means they not only install and maintain these systems but also offer ongoing support and training to MCC staff, guaranteeing the highest standards of security are consistently met.

The Convergent and Evolv Partnership

The partnership between Convergent and Evolv Technology stands out from traditional vendor-integrator relationships. Convergent's local presence and technical expertise complement Evolv's innovative security solutions, creating a unique synergy that benefits clients like MCG. This collaboration ensures streamlined processes, enhanced support, and a seamless integration of cutting-edge technology. Lance Heather, the Sales Manager for Victoria at Convergent, highlights the collaborative approach of Evolv: "Evolv has been with us at MCG through the whole process—training, system configuration, onboarding, ongoing management, and so forth. It is an excellent partnership."

Nathan Bailey, International Sales Director at Evolv Technology, adds, "Transparency is at the forefront of what we're about as a company. It is very important that every venue and every prospective customer understands the capabilities and limitations of our technology. Our partnership with Convergent ensures venues like MCG get fabulous support and service."

The Convergent and the Evolv Deployment at MCG

The deployment of Evolv systems at MCG showcases the strength of the Convergent-Evolv partnership. Convergent's

involvement was extensive, from the initial setup to the ongoing support. The team played a crucial role in training MCC staff, emphasizing a hands-on approach while ensuring Convergent colleagues were onsite during key events. This included the 2023 Boxing Day cricket match when the Evolv Express systems went live across all MCG gates. "We had over 60,000 fans attend the first match and had no issues with the Evolv systems," says Mark Raiola, Convergent's Project Manager for the MCG deployment. "The successful deployment during the Boxing Day was a testament to the support provided by both Convergent and Evolv teams, with staff from Evolv flying in from the US and UK to ensure a smooth rollout."

A Partnership Focused on the Future

The benefits of the Convergent-Evolv partnership extend beyond MCG. As Nick Robertson, the General Manager of Victoria at Convergent, points out, the organisation aims to be the market leader in Oceania with Evolv. "With Convergent's nationwide presence and its proven track record of successful deployments, this partnership has the potential to enable the adoption of Evolv's technology at other venues across the country," he explains. "This expansion would bring the same level of enhanced security, improved patron experience, and quick response to any issues that MCG has experienced."

The Convergent-Evolv partnership represents a new standard in security technology integration, offering a comprehensive solution that combines cutting-edge technology with local expertise and support. As the partnership continues to grow and evolve, it is poised to revolutionize the security landscape not only at iconic venues like MCG but also at other locations throughout Oceania.

Contact Convergent

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Information documentation, see:**

convergent.com/terms



288,000 Fans Screened in 30 Days: New Records Set

For the smaller events leading up to the Taylor Swift concerts on February 16–18, not all the Evolv systems were needed.

But for the Taylor Swift concerts, every system was deployed for the first time. The three shows at MCG set new records, becoming the highest-selling concert series by a female artist with an attendance of 96,000 at each event or 288,000 fans over the three nights.

Eltringham said he was impressed with the way queues moved despite the big crowds. “About five minutes before we opened the gates at 4:30, we had queues winding around Yarra Park—probably around 30,000 people. We opened the gates, and everyone passed through security and got into the park very quickly. We’ve never seen anything like it before.”

Getting the word out about the Evolv deployment was important in making this transition to the Express. “It was a big change to go from manual bag checks and wandering to the Express,” Eltringham reflects. “We were very vocal and open about the change, and we got some great publicity in local newspapers and news channels. This helped prepare Taylor Swift fans for the security screening changes.”

“The data from Evolv Insights provides us with high-level insights so we know how many, and where to position security staff.”

– Darren Horne, Executive Manager, Security and Precincts, MCC

A Data-Driven Business Becomes More Effective with Evolv Insights®

Staff experiences with operating and learning the system.

"We are an innovative business that bases decisions on data," Eltringham explains. "We never had access to the data insights we get with Evolv before."

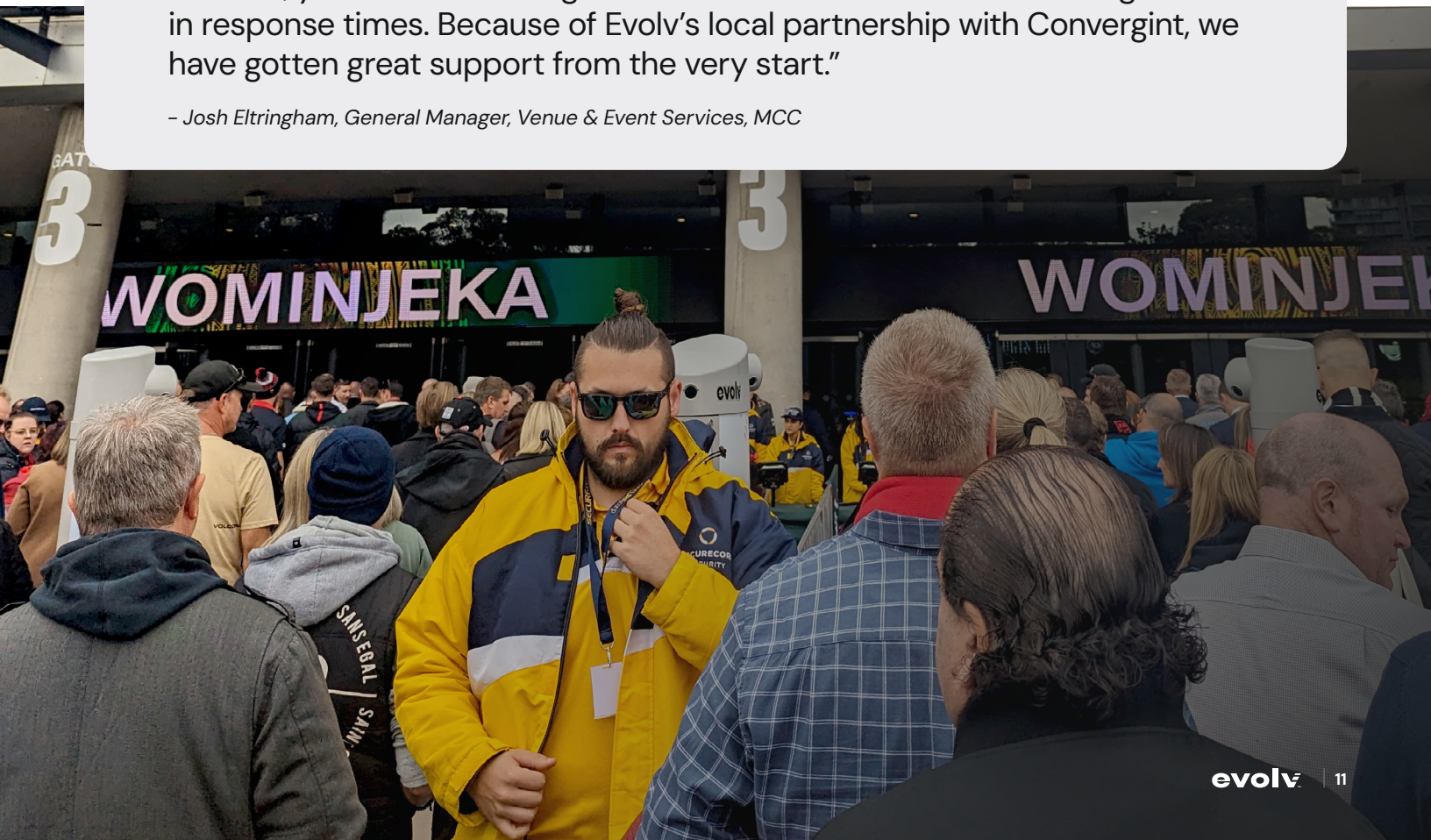
"We use the analytics for the deployment and allocation of security operators, the number of systems needed at each gate, what time to open up the gates, among other things," Eltringham says. "We can tell how many people need to be screened; how long our secondary screen takes. The arrival pattern data is really useful. In the past, we had a rough idea when people would arrive before the start of an event, but it was a guess. With Evolv, we know in five-minute increments how many people come through each gate."

Sumaru is just as enthusiastic about the data as Eltringham. "Knowing how many guests are coming through each gate and when, how many are setting off alarms, and the objects that caused those alarms is essential for safe and more efficient entry into the venue."

Horne concurs with both Eltringham and Sumaru: "The data from Evolv Insights provides us with high-level insights so we know how many and where to position security staff."

"The support from Evolv and Convergent has been nothing but fabulous. Sometimes when you purchase technology, especially from overseas vendors, you have a challenge around time zones and there is a degradation in response times. Because of Evolv's local partnership with Convergent, we have gotten great support from the very start."

– Josh Eltringham, General Manager, Venue & Event Services, MCC





Consistent, Free-Flowing Security Screening

One of the aspects of Evolv that MCC likes is the consistency in security screening.

"With Evolv, everyone, whether they are the first to go through security screening or the last, gets the same level of screening," Eltringham says.

This also includes MCG staff. "We typically have several thousand staff working at each event and now have one single-lane Express system set up at our employee entrance," Eltringham adds. "Our staff have responded very positively and welcomes the enhanced security."

Different Country, Different Threats

As the types of threats in Australia are different than those in the U.S., Bailey notes that the Evolv and Convergent teams worked closely with the MCC team to configure the Evolv system for optimal effectiveness in detecting the threats that are most predominant in Australia.

Regardless of threat type or level, both Evolv and the MCC team agree that security needs a layered approach. Eltringham sees the Express deployment as a critical layer in MCG's larger security ecosystem.

Reducing Security Queues and Soft Targets

Eltringham notes that queues outside MCG create risks in themselves.

The speed of screening fans is something Eltringham notes is still hard for him to fathom. "For round one of our Australian Football League (AFL) season, we typically get 80,000 to 90,000 fans show up on a Thursday night," he describes. "This year, we saw 46,000 fans get into the stadium in 35 minutes—far faster than ever has been done in the past. We have not made any compromises on security, and it is a vastly superior experience to what we had before. It is pretty special."

Positive Response From MCC Security Team

As the MCC team tags objects that set off nuisance alarms, Eltringham observes that the accuracy of detection has improved since deployment.

"We want people, if they aren't carrying a prohibited item, to walk through without setting off any alarms," he explains. "Because of the AI capabilities in Evolv and the new enhanced capabilities, we have already seen the accuracy improve."

The feedback from the MCC security team following the deployment has been positive. "The security team loves Evolv," Eltringham continues. "The team really like the Evolv tablets and how easy they are to use. Evolv gives them a sense of ownership and their engagement has been really, really good." Bailey has gotten similar feedback: "The third-party security provider for MCC has told me that they would never go back to solely relying on manual wandering again. Evolv makes their lives a lot more pleasant and helps them do their job in a different and more efficient way."



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Evolv Technology

Fan Experience is Key

The response from fans mirrors that of the MCC security staff.

"We get a lot of people who come through and they think they weren't screened or tell us they need to get their bag checked," Eltringham observes. "They can't believe they were screened when we tell them and instruct them to keep on walking into the stadium. When you hear those types of comments, it makes your job all that much worthwhile and we know we're having a positive impact on their experience."

Eltringham shared a personal anecdote that accentuates this experience. "I had a friend attend a cricket match earlier this year, and I asked him after the match what he thought of our new Evolv security screening system. He told me it was really good but told me it 'wasn't working' when he passed through it. This gave me a really good laugh, because it was working; the experience was so seamless he didn't realize he had gone through screening."

Sumaru emphasizes that this "seamlessness" is precisely what MCC wants to deliver to its fans. "Unless you're carrying a prohibited item, we want you to walk through the Evolv Express Lane, get your ticket, and walk to our new turnstiles without stopping," he relates. "The feedback from fans is that it is a seamless experience." Due to the prevalence of social media, this is now being reflected there. "We get a lot of feedback on social media," Sumaru conveys.

"Previously, the platforms would 'light up' when there was a queue outside the gates and the ball was about to bounce. That is no longer the case."

When Ponton attends events, he has a chance to sit beside customers. "Without prompting, they tell me how much smoother it is to get into the stadium," he says. "They really like the new experience."

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Evolv Technology





MCG is a Trailblazer

MCG's iconic brand is critical and one of the reasons the MCC team spent so much time testing the Express in POC was that very reason: They wanted to ensure the technology was fully vetted and met their aggressive security and customer experience requirements.

Both Evolv and Convergent were up to the challenge. "The support from Evolv and Convergent has been nothing but fabulous," Eltringham sums up. "Sometimes when you purchase technology, especially from overseas vendors, you have a challenge around time zones and there is a degradation in response times. Because of Evolv's local partnership with Convergent, we have received great support from the very start."

Eltringham stresses how MCG wants to be a leader in the stadium space—not just in Australia but in the world. "We've implemented a wide range of ideas, and security screening is simply the latest one," he says. "Since we rolled out Evolv, I've had countless calls with other venue operators wanting to understand more about how it works—the pros and the cons. We are very proud to be the most iconic stadium in the country, the biggest stadium in the country, the one with the most events, the one with the most people coming through the gates. We have the responsibility to push the envelope around technology and to embrace technology that helps transform customer experience."

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Contact us to learn more.

evolv.com

info@evolvtechnology.com +1 781.374.8100