

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

SCAIP A.G.M.

16 March 2017

I'm pleased to present the 2017 President's Report, my third since I took up this position. Reviewing the previous two reports is a breathtaking activity – to see the progress we have made in such a short time is extraordinary. I think we can agree that the organisation has now found its feet; as mentioned last year, we have moved from a tactical strategy of activating and animating the space to a more considered strategic approach to medium and long term development, governed by the Business Plan we have built for the years 2017-2020.

This comes with its challenges, and I foresee another stage of challenge as we find the funding (and make the money ourselves) to professionalise our workforce. All that we have achieved so far has been achieved through the effort and commitment of a burgeoning raft of volunteers, and I make mention here, with great appreciation, of Judy Phippen's continuing commitment to day to day operations (as well as her efforts in successful grant writing), Susana Waldron's untiring and even-handed efforts to manage our finances, and Robbie Murray's assistance in so many places across the whole organisation. Judy as Secretary and Susana as Treasurer comprise the Board's Executive, along with myself, and as a Board we have developed a system managed by the Executive for swift decision-making between formal Board meetings. We also make use of a closed Facebook group for Board communications, and there is now a Facebook presence for the Board and Tenants combined. We are in the process of developing a policy and procedures system which will see transparent protocols for a range of activities across the business.

We completed 2016 fully tenanted for the first time, and the end of the year and the beginning of this one saw some changes as shorter-term tenants Barking Owl Media, NDEM Golf and Business Coaching, Pins Curls and Petticoats and Café Coolihawk moved out. Long term resident Sevgen also moved out. Existing tenants Mr Beesley, Spiral, ElevenPM Studios and Soundtrails, are now joined by newcomers The Jewellery Collective and Hempothecary. A small group of women entrepreneurs is also meeting regularly on Mondays to further the business ideas inspired and cultivated with Edgware Creative Entrepreneurship early in the year. Judy continues to manage Work for the Dole volunteers, who are engaged both operationally and creatively, and Robbie has taken responsibility for the organisation and administration of our volunteer workforce overall.

We successfully applied for a range of grants in 2016, including, from Sunshine Coast Council, \$15,000 for maintenance, \$3,000 under the Community Development program and \$10,000 from the Regional Arts Development Fund (where 2017 and 2018 'follow on' funding proceeds from the initial grant in 2016). There are also several 'live' applications, the outcomes of which we haven't yet seen. Funding partners in projects have included: Bendigo Bank, Nambour RSL, Zonta, and Quota.

Our Board is actively engaged with the Council Activation Plan and Nambour Alliance (our local Chamber of Commerce) in their effort to build a new image of Nambour as a 'hip' place to live and invest.

We have sponsored or otherwise supported several worthy not for profit activities through the year, including the Million Stars Against Violence project, and Toy Making for Refugee Children, and we have furthered strategic collaborations with the Nambour Community Centre, the On-Track disability cooperative, and Council's Drawn Together graffiti management program. Collaborations are building with St John's College, Nambour State College, and the Sunshine Coast Creative Alliance, our regional arts peak.

The Drawn Together Project, coordinated by Susana Waldron and Wallea Eaglehawk assisted by community and Ambo volunteers, successfully framed and delivered this project on the back of a pilot project last year. This project generated eight new murals around Nambour and it has been well received, to the extent where further follow-on development is likely in the future. We also became the first regional hub for the Brisbane-based Street Art Festival. Drawn Together is a good example of the kind of project which our emerging business centre, Ambo Enterprise, will encourage in future, a project which simultaneously created social and cultural value in our town and generated employment and valuable industry experience for local artists and managers.

The Black Box Theatre remains the home of the Spiral organisation and its component groups, and has also become the focus for an emerging group of theatre workers called the Black Box Theatre Collective. This group includes performance-focused creatives from all parts of the region, and is developing a business case for inclusion in the Ambo Enterprise portfolio. Theatre bookings for 2017 look healthy and we expect this facility to be used more frequently in 2017 and beyond, greatly enhanced by upgrades to kitchen, bathroom, staging, storage and audio facilities, some of which were provided through funding by the Gambling Community Benefit Fund.

2016 also saw the emergence of an exciting project initiated by one of our tenants, Hamish Sewell of Soundtrails. 'Audio Ambo' is a collective of musicians, artists and audio producers working on digital audio storytelling projects such as podcasts, radio broadcasts and geo-locational sound stories. Audio Ambo will develop to a point where it's making effective use of the Black Box, exhibition space, and the 11pm Recording Studio, helped along with equipment which the Old Ambo has sourced.

In 2016 we continued what has become a treasured and valuable tradition: The Old Ambo Long Table Dinners, organised by Board member Ludmila Doneman. These are open-invitation events held on the 16th of every month (regardless of the day of the week) where people engaged with or interest in the Old Ambo are invited to come along, with a contribution of food to share and something to drink, to meet and exchange with kindred spirits. There is usually no set agenda for these events, and a very simple running routine which seeks to give people the opportunity to meet as many other attendees as possible. We often take this opportunity to inform and promote various Ambo activities or highlight the businesses, projects and practices of attendees.

This year we made a major commitment to a pitch to Arts Queensland for four-year operational funding, and for the purpose of this developed and refined a new key document, as already mentioned: our Strategic Plan for 2017-2020. While our application was ultimately unsuccessful, this

process has greatly assisted in subsequent efforts requiring consistent reference to guiding principles and strategies for development and operations.

Notably, this document and the conceptual foundation upon which it's built, has located us in a place where we can now grow our 'Ambo Enterprise' activities in 2017 and beyond. Ambo Enterprise is the umbrella title for business activities inspired by our practice as a social enterprise.

At the centre of our Strategic Plan sits a Value Proposition, which reads:

For the creative community of the Sunshine Coast and surrounding regions, who seek meaningful creative and professional engagement in the life of our community, SCAIP Inc (trading as The Old Ambulance Station) is a creative social enterprise which sustains itself financially, engages its community and deploys creativity as a generic value in the growth of social capital, regional innovation and employment.

If we are to progress from a model of provision based on the deployment of grant and philanthropic funding, towards a model of financial self-sufficiency, we have to develop new business centres and most importantly grow our own familiarity and expertise with the business of business. This will involve new connections and networks in the external environment and the development of commercial capacity in the internal environment. We've made a substantial start on this through our involvement as a paid-up member of the regional consortium bidding currently for substantial State government funding for a Sunshine Coast Regional Innovation Hub. This in itself creates a foundation for a wide variety of project work, partnerships, joint ventures and standalone projects developed by leveraging our presence in this group, which includes Sunshine Coast and Noosa Councils, Innovation Noosa, Suncity, Spark Bureau, Sunshine Coast Creative Alliance, the Sunshine Coast Innovation Centre and various members of Sunshine Coast Council's four 'high value industry clusters'. An early strategic gain in this space actually stems from the latter point: our presence in this project has encouraged the Council to include a fifth 'high value industry cluster' on the Coast, namely Creative Industries.

As a support activity for this engagement we are currently approaching Arts Queensland for part funding of a Sunshine Coast Regional Social Enterprise Hub, which we will develop as a standalone business centre of Ambo Enterprise, and at the same time a 'sub hub' of the broader Regional Innovation Hub project. This locates us as the go-to organisation for provision of professional development, events, workshops, seminars and other offerings across the region and across industry sectors beyond the arts and creative industries, with a focus on creative entrepreneurship.

An early Ambo Enterprise pilot project, the Nambour Makerspace, was trialled in the first half of 2016 and while it did not attract the necessary constituency and formulate a business case, the experience provided us with valuable learnings. This includes the concept of framing the Old Ambo as a *makerspace* across the board – that is, a concept where each and every activity – at least within Ambo Enterprise – is characterised as the activity of *makers*. Importantly, we are building strong ties with the Social Enterprise discipline stream of QUT's Design Lab, as we saw in our sponsorship of CASE, their weekend event for women entrepreneurs in March. This locates us as a site for research

and publication efforts on the subject of creative social enterprise, and we look forward to nurturing this relationship. The Ambo Enterprise effort is led by Board member John Waldron and myself.

In 2016 we were a major contributor, organiser and facilitator of the Council-initiated regional Horizon Festival, and anecdotal reports indicate that the Nambour iteration of the Festival was among one of its most effective and popular events. It was particularly humanised and enlivened by displays and performances given by members of the Spiral and Sunshine Troupe groups who are resident in the Black Box. With very little financial or other support, our volunteers, led ably by Judy, Robbie and Susana, worked incredibly hard to provide the support to which we'd committed. While undoubtedly useful in the development of our local and regional profile, this effort put great pressure on the whole Ambo infrastructure, and we extracted valuable experience from this. On another front, and importantly, the Horizon project also enabled a pilot for *makerspace* development, with the engagement of the company Blue Sky View with Spiral participants to design and prototype furniture using simple wood turning and 3D printing.

To serve the forthcoming Horizon Festival we have applied to Council for funding for a part time project officer position based at the Ambo whose job will be to 'connect the dots' among the various local entities and projects involved in the event, including C Square, Queen Street businesses, Lind Theatre, TAFE, NCC, Bison Bar, Spiral and Sunshine Troupe, Nambour Variety Show and the Black Box Theatre Collective.

In 2017 our intention is to identify one of our office spaces as an admin and support base for our volunteers, as well as the Horizon project, Ambo Enterprise, and a part time placement of the Regional Innovation Coordinator attached to the Regional Innovation Hub. This will also provide the operational heart of our Creative Entrepreneurship Hub.

It is worth repeating that Sunshine Coast Regional Council has estimated the in-kind value of Old Ambulance services to the community at \$1M p.a. (an estimation from the Team Leader of Cultural Programs with SCC recorded in a letter from Division 10 councillor Cr Greg Rogerson). We are already, and are becoming even more so, a valuable asset to the cultural and economic life of our region, and importantly we are being seen as such. This is signalled by continuing cash support from Bendigo Bank, a relationship we greatly value and look forward to nurturing and growing.

In Board matters, this year we farewell four Board members – John Burke, Cath MacAdam, Pete Townson and Terri Waller, and we are grateful for their contribution. We acknowledge the time spent at the Ambo by Terri and the Sevgen organisation, who are now spreading their wings more widely across the region. Thank you to Pete for his ongoing support in audio and tech matters related to the Black Box, Cath for her contributions to marketing and promotions, and John for his contribution.

Marketing has become a core issue for the Ambo; with so much activity taking place it's imperative that we find and execute practical and focused messaging. We need to tell our story, in the right words and pictures, to the right people, for the right purpose. I'm very pleased that two very capable volunteers have emerged to help in this effort, and in these early days they are already advising us on the shape of it. We're looking forward to a great working relationship with Ian McKenzie and

Tracie Sanim. Look out soon for a revamped website and a consistent pattern of social media engagement reinforcing Ambo Enterprise, tenants activities and hired and sponsored events.

Again, we acknowledge and thank Sunshine Coast Regional Council for their support of the Old Ambulance Station through provision of a low-cost lease, funding support through various grants programs, and most recently a cash contribution towards our substantial application for works to our main building. This will see Council and Commonwealth government funds expended on a 'facelift' for the Howard Street frontage of our main building, opening up the building to the street and promoting greater and easier access to our spaces.

Finally, let me list the strategic imperatives identified and incorporated in our Business Plan, which I think will increasingly come into play in 2017 and beyond.

1. Ensuring transparency in agreed policies and procedures
2. Encouraging collaboration across tenants, community groups, and local business
3. Being seen to be planning and operating in an entrepreneurial and 'businesslike' manner
4. Continuing our diversification beyond cultural and creative industries and in particular investigating the potential of the health and education sectors
5. Continuing to develop in-house entrepreneurial skill sets as a core element of Ambo Enterprise
6. Developing the concept of the whole of the Ambo as a makerspace

Finally, on a personal note, the year was a challenging time for my health, and I'd like to warmly thank those members of the Board and the wider Ambo community who showed great compassion and generosity in their support for me.

Michael Doneman
12 March 2017