

# **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

## **SCAIP A.G.M.**

**23 March 2018**

I am pleased to report to the Association as President of the Board of Sunshine Coast Arts Industry Precinct Incorporated, trading as the Old Ambulance Station, my fourth report since I took up this position.

2017 was a year of consolidation and growth. It saw a key stalwart of this growth, Judy Phippen, stepping back from her duties as Secretary of the Board, having dedicated four years of her life to getting us to a stage where the changes we are undertaking have become thinkable and actionable. Judy's contribution cannot be underestimated, and the Long Table Dinner that marked her resignation from the Board was a truly joyous event, where the Board, tenants and the wider Old Ambo community celebrated her extraordinary input and the spirit in which she gave so much, so consistently and so selflessly. And it was particularly pleasing for us to see Judy's work recognised in the Sunshine Coast Council's Mayor's Australia Day awards in January this year. Judy, we thank you once more. We are also grateful for the assistance and advice given to us through this transition by Ann Ingamels, President of the Coalition of Community Boards.

We're privileged to enjoy the spirited and active service of a very engaged Board, with each Board member now taking on 'portfolios' of responsibility. We continue to enjoy the active participation of our dedicated Treasurer, Susana Waldron. Susana's contribution remains steadfast, generous and compassionate. Ludmila Doneman has contributed as Interim Secretary, as well as being responsible for our Long Table Dinners. (In November 2017 we celebrated three continuous years of these monthly events, with numbers varying from eight people to more than 50!). Robbie Murray continues her service to the Board, with particular responsibility for the Black Box space, John Waldron also continues, with responsibility for gallery spaces and visual arts. New Board members Robyn Cook and Ian McKenzie have also taken up portfolios responsible, respectively, for tenants and volunteers and also valuable and much-needed duties related to marketing and 'telling our story'. The Board is working as a functional and effective team, and we are actively taking steps to achieve a professionalisation of our staffing, contingent on the ongoing development of the Old Ambulance Station as a front-footed social enterprise.

It's in this space that one of the most remarkable advances has occurred in 2017, with the Old Ambulance Station committing financially to the ultimately successful bid for a Sunshine Coast consortium of ARIP, Advance Queensland's 'Advancing Regional Infrastructure Program'. With a seat on the Interim Steering Committee of this consortium, nicknamed #SCRIPT, we look forward to consolidating the Creative Industries as one of Council's five 'high value adding' regional industry clusters, along with Food and Agribusiness, Health and Wellbeing, Sustainability and Environment, and Smart Cities. We now have an active voice in regional activities relating to matters of job creation, talent attraction, improved productivity, new products, services and business models, supply chain linkages, partnerships and professional connections, and cross-sector innovation and

collaboration. This project is government driven and moves at government pace, however our participation is foundational if we wish to create value for our membership and wider community in what we do.

The most visible change to our facility has been the refurbishment of the Howard Street façade, achieved through the award of \$100,00 to the building's owners, Sunshine Coast Council, through the State government's Local Government Grants and Subsidies Program. Once more, this improvement has been supported by our local representative, Councillor Greg Rogerson, who remains a strong supporter of our efforts, and I take this occasion to once more warmly thank Greg for his keen interest and his ongoing efforts on our behalf. I would also like to thank Board Member John Waldron for his liaison with Council, architect Jo Case and the builders, and his oversight of the day to day execution of the upgrade. This has opened up the Old Ambo to the street and to our community, and incidentally added great value to one of our key spaces as a venue for exhibitions, events and workshops.

Less visible improvements have been made to the lighting and audio facility of the Black Box Theatre Space, with a portable audio rig also available to other spaces in the building. Those of us who use the facility regularly are also aware that heavy rain is no longer producing various Niagaras of falling water in key places.

Our tenants remain an important element of the Old Ambo's presence and activity in the community, and continuing tenants include Mr Beesley's Vintage Clothing, ElevenPM Studios and Soundtrails. The Hemptothecary business graduated from the Ambo to their own premises in Maleny, in much the same way as Wallea and Alex have also graduated to their own premises next door, Delicats Vegan Café. We are now home to the Jewellery Collective, Gemtechnical and the Puppetarium. 'The Monday Morning Group', a collective of women entrepreneurs, meets most Mondays in our Meeting Room, and the Spiral group regularly uses the Black Box for workshops and performances.

In 2017 we hosted three 'maker' residents: Lucy Yule, assisted by Kerry Chave (and their 'Trashy Artisan' workshops), Judith Rosenberg (and her print and book-making workshops) and Lara Stone (and her outstanding 'Wrapped in the Land' exhibition). This focus on the practice of 'makers' continues into 2018, and we look forward to reporting on developments this time, next year! We also hosted 15 events and activities related to Council's 'Horizon' Festival – workshops in the Black Box, and a raft of events related to 'Horizon Underground', as well as auspicing various activities in Nambour associated with the Festival. Black Box Theatre performances for 'Mania, Back to the Crossroad's, and the 'Nambour Variety Show' were all sold out and 'Mania' was the 7th most viewed festival event web page. Thanks here to Rebecca Dostal, whose contribution to the Old Ambo considerably exceeded her duties with Horizon, and whose presence continues to support and enliven our various spaces. The commitment to Horizon put a considerable strain on our organisation's resources and led to a careful rethinking of our pro bono service provision and also the formulation of a streamlined booking system for 2018 and beyond. Special thanks to Ian McKenzie for designing and executing this.

We hosted exhibitions including 'Behind the Heart', by ceramic artist Kari, 'Wrapped in the Land' (with Lara and colleagues, as mentioned), 'Nambour Making Futures', displaying QUT Master of Architecture student work, '50 Vessels', from the Suncoast Clayworkers, a Spiral Exhibition (as part of the Horizon Festival) and Michael Epworth's Bodja Chairs exhibition. Our galleries were closed during renovation works from 11 September into the new year.

Performances in the Black Box included a number of events umbrella-ed by the Black Box Theatre Collective, an association of professional theatre makers, and also hosted numerous rehearsals, events and musical performances. The Ambo was also privileged to be the studio for production of the first Nambour-based podcast, 'The Nambour Variety Show', a project of the Audio Ambo group led by Hamish Sewell.

I should also note that our meeting and office facilities were in regular use, usually at no cost to them, by a diverse variety of community organisations and groups, including the emergent Sunshine Coast Social Enterprise Group.

We are once more grateful to have received grant funding and support, which Susana details in her Treasurer's Report.

Throughout this often frenzied activity and the extraordinary demands it has created for what is still a volunteer worker base, we continue to develop strategically, and for our Board it has become a key concern to develop a culture of social enterprise to underpin the increasing professionalisation of our practice and our influence in our town and our region. In 2017 we began to offer open talks on this evolution in our practice, with an evening called 'Catching Up With Ourselves', and we look forward to further growth in the discourse on our practice as we continue this growth.

Once more I find myself a little overwhelmed in the recounting and review of an extraordinary year, and I remain privileged to serve this Association as it enters a new, bright and purposeful stage of development.