



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

SCAIP A.G.M.

16 April 2019

This is my fifth annual report as President of SCAIP Incorporated, trading as The Old Ambulance Station, and I am very pleased to make the claim that the Ambo has reached the stage of (to use commercial jargon) a Minimum Viable Product. From the outset of the current management regime and its Strategic Plan 2017-2020 we have framed this organisation and facility as a social enterprise, that is, a Not For Profit which is also a Profit For Purpose. The key effort has been to maintain and optimise business as usual – the provision of spaces for exhibitions, performances, office work and meetings – and simultaneously grow the facility's potential as an independent enterprise. This strategy has succeeded and, while it still requires substantial volunteer commitments, and especially the commitment of a dedicated Board, there are several signs that our strategy is bearing fruit.

The most obvious physical example of this is our new Howard Street façade, achieved through Federal funding brokered by our Sunshine Coast Council landlords. This gives us a glimpse of what our home will become, as we follow the current trajectory – a bright, smart and attractive facility that acknowledges its roots in a working class rural town and also in the creative industries. After two hot summer months of dust and noise, the renovation has opened us to our street and neighbourhood in a new, exciting way. Thanks to John Waldron in particular for liaison and oversight.

Business Development

There are four key indicators of our emerging potential. I refer to a project, a new Ambo-owned business, the beginning of the professionalisation of our staff, and two key strategic relationships.

Before I list these, I want to make special mention of the value of our monthly Long Table Dinners. In 2018 we hosted 10 of these potluck events. The dinners attract an average attendance of 25 people, with a consistent and significant component, each time, of around 25% newcomers to the Ambo. The dinners often feature brief presentations from the artists exhibiting in the spaces surrounding it. In its fourth year, the Long Table Dinner has become a key regular touch-point with our constituency, and an accessible, friendly entryway to the Ambo for our community. Thanks to organiser and host, Board Member Ludmila Doneman, who hatched the idea and continues as an important public face for what we do. I should mention that following this meeting we will host our 44th Long Table Dinner, featuring a talk by Nambour artist Ken Munsie.

In a similar vein, in 2019 we were featured as a destination in the Sunshine Coast Open House program, which was well attended by newcomers to the Ambo, and we aim to repeat that exercise this year.

1. Thrive

Without reference (or deference) to government policy and with recourse to only minor sponsorship support, the Ambo planned and delivered this highly effective and very well received two-day creative health event. Overseen by Board member John Waldron, *Thrive* was comprised of seminars, talks and themed exhibitions, *Pieces of Me* and *Beyond Sight*. Importantly, the event was well documented and evaluated. Here's what one attendee reflected:

Brilliant event. Timing and size punchy and effective. Great line-up of speakers with enough diversity to cross pollinate ideas and connections between the content and the arts practice! Bravo! it made me feel excited, enthused, happier and like I was a part of something special. we seem to be succeeding in the Creative Health area where other parts of the country (Melbourne) are resistant to change and are going backwards.

Congratulations to John and everyone who helped make this a success. It was inspiring in and of itself, but pointed in a practical way to a viable future for the Ambo, namely, 'creative health', a niche that brings together creative industries and health/wellbeing practice and practitioners.

2. Ambo Media Makers

This year we will officially launch our first Ambo-owned and operated business, which took form during 2018 under the guidance of Board Member Robyn Cook, ably assisted by her son Matt. Formal business planning for the new enterprise began in November.

Robyn and Matt were successful in receiving a \$10,000 grant for the Ambo from Sunshine Coast Council. This enabled the purchase of good quality video and audio equipment, and the Media Makers are now installed in their own studio, which is shared with tenant ElevenPM. Media Makers is already trading, and we have confidence in its capacity to make money and make meaning as it grows.

3. Staffing

We are still some distance from a totally professional staff, however our business achievements and positive cash flow has enabled us to offer Robyn Cook and Ian McKenzie some (very) modest remuneration to attend the facility regularly and consistently, keeping our doors open and our offerings accessible. Both of them are doing extraordinary jobs, not only maintaining but building our business. Our continuing challenge is identifying and maintaining a consistent, high-quality volunteer base, and we continue to work on growing this important part of our organisation.

4. Strategic Relationships

We understand that while we are proudly Nambour based, we also have a responsibility and the potential to serve our wider region. This has seen us represented in significant strategic activities throughout the year, including SCRIPT (the Advancing Regional Innovation Program), the Sunshine Coast Social Enterprise Network, Create Noosa and the Peregian Digital Hub, and the recent Re-Imagine Nambour research

project. Special thanks here to Robyn Cook for consistently going 'above and beyond' to represent us in such forums.

Two important strategic partnerships emerged during the year. The first of these involves a partnership with the Sunshine Coast's Horizon Festival (as distinct from a role as venue-for-hire and volunteer brokerage). In 2019 the Ambo will be a key feature of the Festival. The second is an emerging partnership with Comlink Ltd, a state wide organisation headquartered on the Sunshine Coast and a key collaborator in our development of the 'creative health' focus flagged by the success of our Thrive event.

Financials

It is of course Treasurer Susana's duty to report on our financial situation, but it's noteworthy in the context of this report to mention three facts:

Compared to 2018 we note:

1. Our overall income grew 10%;
2. Our (self) generated income grew 41%; and
3. Government grant income as a percentage of total income declined from 54% to 41%. A key financial goal in the 2017-2020 Strategic Plan is to reduce this further to 30% by 2020.

Volunteers and Board Portfolios

We continue to fly on the smell of an oily rag, but there is great joy and a palpable sense of achievement in this. Board members continue to take responsibility for specific 'portfolios', with Susana Waldron responsible for finances, Robyn Cook looking after volunteers and the fledgling Ambo Media Makers (as well as a host of activities related to her regular attendance in the space), Ian McKenzie taking on secretarial duties after the resignation of short-serving Board member Dave Knobel and elsewhere caring for 'telling the Ambo story', marketing across an array of media and helping Susana with finances, Ludmila Doneman and the Long Table Dinners, Robbie Murray in the Black Box, and John Waldron as resident curator and exhibitions planner, and my role engaged with strategic planning and development, and help with Drinks and Disruption, our occasional public talks on matters of interest and relevance. It is inspiring and affirming to be part of such a lively, smart and progressive group of people: this is a very impressive and highly effective team.

Volunteer numbers in 2018 were stable and supportive with all our days open to the public covered, however in 2019 volunteers are less plentiful. Robyn has organised four volunteer morning teas with an average of 10 people attending each one, and the project continues! Special thanks to Ardleigh Cleveland for her efforts.

Various small working groups ebbed and flowed through the year as the need arose. This included a group of women in early stage business development and a group of home-school teenagers.

Venues

1. The Black Box

The Black Box theatre venue has shown increasing use for short term hires for performances and also workshops and events. Highlights in 2018 including sold-out seasons for *The Bookbinder*, a travelling show brought to the Coast by the Horizon Festival, and the world premiere of the local production *A Girls Guide to World War*. In *The Bookbinder* we successfully trialled a profit-share arrangement with the performance

company and Horizon. Both of these productions showed imaginative innovation in the design, lighting and performative potential of the space.

2. Galleries

Both Gallery One and Gallery Two have been more frequently used for exhibitions, and are increasingly showing higher quality work. In the period since the completion of our Howard Street renovation, we have hosted 15 exhibitions, and showcased approximately 106 local and national artists. A highlight of the year was the world premiere of Russell Thompson's extraordinary interactive sculpture *Transdimensional*.

Marketing and Media

As our business grows, so too does the marketing effort to support it. Under Ian's guidance, in 2018 we added the ticketing platform Eventbrite to our Facebook marketing, and continue to deploy an email newsletter, a website and social media channels. In 2019 and beyond these will include Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn accounts. We currently enjoy 2,017 Facebook likes, 480 newsletter subscribers and an average of 286 visits to our website per month.

Tenancies

Our ongoing tenants include the Spiral consortium, Jewellery Collective, Create New Buzz, Soundtrails, Creative Alliance Ltd and ElevenPM Studios. Mr Beesley Vintage Clothes has moved on to the boisterous hurly-burly of upper Howard Street, and we're deeply thankful to Vicki for her support and assistance over the years of her presence at the Old Ambo. Vicki often provided the first heads-up when one wall of water or another threatened us, and frequently helped out with matters of locks and alarms. We'll miss her in more ways than one. We also saw the departure of Rebecca Dostal's Puppatorium.

Special Thanks

We appreciate and thank Sunshine Coast Council for their ongoing support, especially in this past year of substantial renovation, and we look forward to engaging more effectively at a strategic level, specifically in relation to Council's Nambour Working Group and its new Social Policy.

I want to make particular mention of our long-serving Treasurer, Susana Waldron, who has conscientiously and even-handedly guided the sometimes tangled web of our finances, most recently with the assistance of Board member Ian McKenzie and now with the added bonus of an actual book keeper. Without money we can do nothing of note, and Susana has provided prudent financial control of finances geared particularly to the vagaries and uncertainties of our enterprise. Thank you Susana!

We have substantial ambitions for the future, ultimately involving a complete renovation of our main spaces, and we have every confidence that this, like our incremental improvements over the past five years, will be achieved. I am proud to be part of this effort, I am proud of my colleagues at Team Ambo, I am proud to be a Nambour boy influencing the future of my home town, and I am proud of everything we have come to stand for – lively, informed, responsible and innovative social-cultural and economic change.

Michael Doneman
President