

1. 'NEW' VISION – The Burnie community lives and breathes its identity as a City of Makers. This identity was developed after extensive and rigorous community consultation. The investment by the community in what became our 'branding' happened because it was authentic and unique. It worked. No-one needed selling on it. Visitors were impressed and inspired by it. Envious, in fact. Volunteers contributed 1000's of hours towards building this image because they loved their city, its culture, and all that it represents. There was a feeling of a shared vision, bought to life by a rich array of cohesive and complimentary activities.

No-one is denying that, from time to time, these things need re-examining or refreshing. In a practical sense, *everyone knew* the Burnie Arts and Function Centre was long overdue for refurbishment. When and why, we ask, did *this* practical imperative morph into the need for a 'new' vision? One which has been presented to us, via the Hirst report. This method of community engagement is about as far from best practice as you can get. Social researchers who have made contact with our group inform us that top-down approaches are doomed to fail.

Any renewal of community vision must start at a grass roots level. It requires time and investment. Councillors, your plan for a new vision is already failing. The community are resisting not because we don't want change, but because we have no affiliation with the need for *this* change. Until now, there has been no opportunity to participate in the process.

2. ERASURE OF VALUED INPUT – Apart from the cover, the Hirst report is devoid of images of Burnie, Burnie artists, or activities in Burnie's cultural venues. The lack of acknowledgement of what this city has in terms of human and cultural capital is shocking. People have been so upset by this lack of respect that they have had to stop reading the report.

There is quite a bit of rhetoric about inclusivity and accessibility. This is welcome. It should be clearly acknowledged, however, that successive Managers, Directors and support staff at these facilities have had a deep passion to extend the offerings which their venues could provide to include a broader range of demographic groups. Rolling budget cuts and staff reductions severely curtailed their ability to make any significant progress in this area, or even sufficiently promote and develop the venues. We do not believe the report allows for sufficient budget and human resources to ensure this as a workable aspect of the new centre.

3. 'CO-DESIGN / CO-CREATION' MODEL- The business model outlined in the report relies on a mix of paid staff and '...participation from a wide spectrum of community members willing to donate their time, skills and expertise to creating an exceptional arts and culture offering. (p. 41). This assumes considerable buy-in from the community. The cohort council will need to fulfil these roles are currently feeling belittled, disrespected, and ignored. Considerable attention will be required to rebuild the relationship council has with its pool of volunteers. There is also talk of 'CO-CREATION' (p. 28). This has engendered much cynicism. A similar process was intended with the rolling displays at Makers' Workshop. After the first was installed, there was no change – ever – to the display. Is Co-Creation a process of community engagement and participation? Again, we do not believe that council has demonstrated that

there will be sufficient budget and human resources to ensure this as a workable aspect of the new centre.

4. COMMUNITY & RELATIONSHIPS are at the heart of many of the concepts underpinning the new centre. Yet the report shows little evidence of understanding what is required for the volunteer and community component to work. In the best of circumstances this requires strategy, time, training and investment. Where is the budget for this? Does council not realise that – right under your noses – what was happening in the venues *was* co-design and co-creation? It might not have had a fancy name, but your staff knew their community. They knew their clients. They know their collections. They welcomed visitors with passion and knowledge. They are now gone – at a financial cost of \$1.3 million dollars. The intangible cost of losing that body of corporate and community knowledge is probably much greater. It is wasteful and inefficient to have clear felled that ecosystem and – now – to have to rebuild that from scratch.

5. BUDGET – The \$5 million budget to undertake this refurb/rebuild appears to us inadequate. During the various information sessions the GM acknowledged this, saying a) council is likely to seek additional funding and, b) it could be a staged development. With regards to a) this approach concerns us. Council have taken a number of drastic actions already – all on the assumption that the \$5 million dollars will be granted. Are we now expected to maintain confidence in the process on the basis of ‘fingers crossed’ appeals to our State and Federal politicians? We met with one the day after the first information session. They were surprised by the remark and thought it was quite presumptuous. A staged development? Please spare us the prospect of an ongoing construction site. The arts community have been disrupted enough by what has transpired so far. An inability to wrap this project within a reasonable time frame will reflect badly on Burnie’s ability to return to full operational capacity and extend the usage limitations for all users.

6. OPERATIONAL COSTS - FINANCES: We question the estimated reduction in expenses from \$1.8 million to \$670 000 via the creation of a unified facility.

Firstly, Revenue. The ‘Year 1’ projected revenue is \$444, 500. This appears an optimistic start to the operation. Our questions are: A) when does year 1 start? B) The new Cultural Centre is an untested model, is there a more detailed business plan coming which underpins this figure? C) Are potential ongoing COVID contingencies factored in? If this revenue target is not reached, the projected savings are reduced commensurately.

Expenses: Our concern is that expenses are missing and/or underestimated. We would advise councillors to question/seek more detail about the following line items.

Expense	Amount	Comment
IT	\$3000	This seems extraordinarily low for the entire facility, especially as it is mandatory to use Tas Communications as the provider. They are not especially competitive with their pricing.
Collections Expenses/Temporary Exhibitions expenses	\$125 000 combined	Is this the entire budget for the operations of (what we now know as) BRM and BRAG? According to the April minutes (p 185), each of these venues has a current cost of around 500 000. Efficiencies of scale can be achieved via

		combining some services across the three venues, but this seems an extraordinary reduction. How can this not result in a diminishment of what is offered? Where is the acquisition budget? Our understanding is that the Burnie Print Prize was run from that budget. Is there separate funding allocated for this prestigious event?
Building Maintenance	\$20 000	What does this include? Is it consumables or general maintenance? What of other regular contracted services? \$20 000 is not sufficient to cover all of these.
Staffing	\$585 416	This seems to only include the wages of the NEW staff members. Where is the allocation of wages for the existing staff members? There is a pool of funding for casual staff, but that is a modest figure considering the call-outs required – many of which will take place during out of normal hours office hours, hence with increased loading.
Cleaning	\$15 000	Not enough for a wage if consumables are also factored in. Where is the wage allocation for the cleaner?
Gas and Electricity	\$60 000 combined	Sufficient for the scale of the new operation? What if a new heating/cooling system is required for the 'Long Room'. Our understanding is that the systems in place at the moment have no more capacity. Has the increased expense of a new system been factored in?
Subscriptions, Publications and Membership	\$2 500	Does this include the IT/office-type subscriptions, those which are essential to the running of the BAFC? I.e. ticketing, software? Again, a very low figure.
Depreciation	??	This is not included in the operational costs at all. Perhaps it does not need to be. Our question is: <i>Is depreciation included in the 1.8 million?</i> If it is, then there must be a proportional inclusion in the promised 'acceptable loss' figure.

It would be extremely helpful if a table was made available which provided an itemised comparison of what items are included in the 1.8 million, and what is included in the \$670 000. Without further clarification of the true costs of running the centre, the argument for 'change [to] the way it [council] delivers a number of services to the community' (Media Release, Burnie City Council, 3rd May, 2021) is not valid.

7. BURNIE REGIONAL MUSEUM - has permanent exhibitions and collections of national and state significance. The report states that the Federation St streetscape '...does not fit with the concept proposed for the Cultural Centre' p22. What presence will the museum have in the unified facility? Will it retain its status as an independent entity or, as the report says on page 50, become a 'legacy institution...' That this phrase is used under the subheading of BRAND AND MARKETING indicates that the pursuit of '...visual imagery ...new identity...' will

take precedence over the preservation and maintenance of a valued institution. This is deeply concerning and offensive to all who have contributed their time *and* donated to the museum collection. It is noted that there may be an option for the museum to be ‘...operated as an attraction in its own right,’ (p 22). Is the expectation that this will also be a role for volunteers? See points 3 and 4.

8. BURNIE REGIONAL ART GALLERY - BURNIE REGIONAL ART GALLERY (BRAG) – for a regional gallery, BRAG’s national reputation in the visual arts sector punches way above its weight. BRAG has been successful in attracting major exhibitions and has been an incubator for local flagships such as the Burnie Print Prize and Design Eye Creative *paper on skin*. It has been a hub for public programs and community activities across multiple artistic genres. As with the BRM, BRAG is also bundled into the description on page 50, a ‘...legacy institution.’ It is *vital* that BRAG’s reputation is preserved and continues to grow under the new model. Within the new facility we would mandate that: a) floor space equivalent to the current gallery be maintained (allowing for exhibitions of scale to continue); b) the flow of touring exhibitions and local shows continue; c) qualified staff are engaged and are reflective of this quality institution d) the collection is cared for both by way of appropriate temperature and humidity control and expert curatorship. Please note there are also grave concerns about the risk to the collection during the refurbishment.
9. PERIOD OF CLOSURE - Burnie’s key tourism destinations Makers Workshop, BRAG, BRM, Creative Paper Tasmania and the Visitor Information Centre will ALL be closed (some permanently) for a significant amount of time. These are the places which define Burnie, establish our ‘point of difference’ and are living proof that we are the ‘City of Makers’. Construction under ‘normal’ conditions usually involves delays and cost blowouts. Thanks to COVID, the building industry is under enormous pressure in Tasmania – with shortages of labour and supply issues.

Marketing materials (paid for by council) and feature articles about Burnie’s attractions will float around physically and online for months/years to come. How many ‘CLOSED’ sign experiences will be clocked up, shared on social media and written about in the travel blogs before the new centre reopens? How many events and exhibitions will be lost to neighbouring regions? Where is the modelling about the long-term impact on Burnie’s visitation rates in the report?

10. DUPLICATED VISION - The community have been presented with this vision before. Makers’ Workshop was designed to be Burnie’s cultural icon, working in harmony with BRAG, BAFC and BRM. It was the place which showcased Burnie’s makers, told our story, and provided a destination rich with place-based offerings for visitors and locals alike. Council decided it was too expensive and in 2013 handed the facility to UTAS under a peppercorn lease arrangement. It is now a shell of a building, with an unknown future. At the time of the handover to UTAS the community raised numerous red flags. We were patronised and pacified – told all would be well.

A few reminders, by way of example. A) In 2013 the community said ‘tourism and hospitality are not UTAS’s core business, they won’t invest in these (very important) components of the facility for the long haul. Fast forward to 2021 – UTAS tells assembled makers that ‘...tourism and hospitality are not UTAS’s core business. B) In 2013 the community said ‘how can we be

sure that council will make the savings they think they will? The basis for offloading MW was that it was an 'unsustainable cost' at just under \$500 000 per annum'. Fast forward to 2021 and council withdraws all operations from MW due to the per annum cost being just over \$500 000. C) In 2013 the community said the messy ownership and management arrangements will cause problems for users and the facility overall. Fast forward to 2021 and, after months of confusing the public with chopping and changing opening hours (with each party blaming the other), the centre effectively closes. D) In 2013 the community said 'parking is a serious problem'. Fast forward to 2021 and, eerm... look at the site!

Councillors, this is a fitting point to end on. We are engaged, informed citizens who care deeply about Burnie's future. What has transpired with Makers' Workshop is a salutary lesson – one you need to pay heed to. The considered opinions of your community cannot be ignored again. We do not want to be called back in to repair a sinking ship in a few years' time. Once more there are red flags. Ignore them you may, but we fear the city will suffer as a result.

As always, we welcome the opportunity to work with you to continue shaping and developing Burnie's rich arts, culture and heritage landscape. It's simple. The community needs to be a part of the process.