

24 July 2021

Mayor and Councillors  
Burnie City Council  
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(A hard copy has been posted)

Dear Mayor and Councillors,

Herewith is the response of the membership of the Burnie Historical Society (84 members) to your call for feedback on the Draft Report on the Burnie Cultural Centre dated 24 June 2021. This response was adopted at our AGM on Thursday night, 22 July.

Yours faithfully



Brian Rollins  
Secretary  
Burnie Historical Society Inc  
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1. **The Principle.** The BHS fully agrees that the principle of cost-saving and co-location is sound and responsible. While construction can hopefully be funded by grants, the ongoing running costs must be met by Council – ie us, the ratepayers, and need to be reduced to an acceptable level.
2. **The Concept.** The 64 page Draft Report goes to great length in an attempt to explain and sell a concept. However it is so nebulous we are quite unable to tell whether it carries a hint of boronia or bitter lemon. Glorious motherhood statements abound within the report, but they would have been just as relevant to Council's now abandoned Makers' Workshop. How could we not be sceptical of this concept?
3. **The Ultimate Reality.** We cannot accept a concept when we have no idea on the degree of disruption and degradation of the current facilities – the BRAG and the BRM. If and when the concept is advanced to basic architectural sketch drawings, with the arts and heritage community's involvement, Council will have a better chance of obtaining our approval, or possibly our rejection.
4. **Consultation.** Council saw fit to exclude members of the arts and heritage communities from any form of general discussion prior to making irreversible decisions that affect us and the community generally. The result of this, and the demise of the not very old Makers' Workshop, leaves us with a distinct lack of faith, trust and confidence in Council to have a sound vision and follow it. We will not quietly accept any further attempt to separate us from ongoing consultation and involvement in the process of concept design of the arts/heritage/combined display spaces.
5. **Volunteering.** People volunteer because of a genuine desire to serve and give back to their community, and they will only do so when they feel supported. If the management of the bodies they generously serve disregard or devalue them, volunteers will seek to serve elsewhere and in other ways. Recapturing that loyalty is an utterly wasteful and unnecessary exercise. Council should not therefore be surprised if this support diminishes or vanishes. On this basis alone the proposed Cultural Centre may sink or swim given the staff cutbacks!
6. **Tourism and volunteers.** We agree with the stated objectives of the new facility – to increase and broaden local participation. However the hordes of cruise ship tourists that, until only recently, traipsed the town's streets and boardwalk to Makers' are just as welcome at the new facility. There is absolutely no reason why it cannot become the new local hub of visitation for locals and tourists alike. Burnie positively hummed when cruise ships visited; it was VIBRANT. Why would we not want to take

advantage of such business and social opportunities? Anecdotal evidence abounds of highly favourable tourist interactions with the 'friendly natives'. The digital world is NO REPLACEMENT for good old fashioned human interaction between locals and visitors. Visitors will not remember ANY interaction with the screen of their smart phone. The friendliness of dedicated volunteers will live longer in the memories of visitors than the locations they attended. Council does our community a disservice by turning its back on so many happy and motivated volunteers.

7. **Special Advisory Committees.** We do not support discontinuation of the advisory committees; more than ever their role is necessary. They may transition from their current form and possibly merge if or when the concept is realised, but stay they must and their involvement continue. They will have an important part to play with guidance for the chosen architects. By proposing to discontinue the volunteer advisory committees, Council is again disrespecting the relevance of the arts/heritage component of the community. By the very nature of our passion and interest we wish to be involved and consulted on an ongoing basis. Attempting to remove us from the advisory process will only backfire on Council.
8. **Courthouse acquisition.** We support Council's attempts to obtain this site, clear it and convert it to an attractive parkland approach to the Civic Plaza and BAFC. However we feel it would then be appropriate for Joseph Law's old Burnie Inn to be relocated from Burnie Park onto this precinct where its part in Burnie's earliest heritage can be used to advantage.
9. **Museum.** Most of our members remember the time a couple of decades or so ago when one alderman attempted to push the museum into privatisation. We also have an indelible memory of Council's attempts to close the museum a dozen or so years ago when Makers' came into being. Had vocal community opposition to the closure not persuaded Council to rethink this position, much of Burnie's heritage may have been scattered to the four winds. We will not countenance any repeat of these measures. The museum and its component parts are owned by the Burnie Council on behalf of its community. This community expects Council to engage with it. For instance, we are told the Federation Streetscape will remain exactly where it is; end of story. How can we accept this stipulation without understanding how the streetscape will remain a vital, vibrant and functional component of the overall complex? Little wonder we are not yet sold on this concept. If the heritage community is not fully supportive of Council's plans, how will Council garner the support of the volunteers it apparently intends to rely upon with minimal staff involvement and oversight?
10. **Family History Society rooms.** The Burnie Branch of the Family History Society is in need of new meeting rooms. Is there a possibility of them using part of the current floor space of the museum on the basis of a negotiated licence?
11. **Art Gallery.** While the Art Gallery may not have experienced the same past traumas as the Museum we do not wish to see any degradation of what the dedicated and passionate arts community have strived to build. It is probably necessary to retain a separate tangible gallery for dedicated exhibition space, with more specialised lighting and air-conditioning. The same is true of the museum. We reserve our judgement until we have a clearer plan before us.
12. **The new 'Long Room'.** This may be perfectly functional and appealingly set up with a combination of moveable and static displays from both the gallery and museum. However given Council's past performance of plundering components of the museum for Makers' it remains to be seen how effective the end result might be. If the Federation Streetscape is to remain where it is (so we are told), it deserves at least a contemporary digital display which in part alerts visitors to its presence only 50 metres away across the Plaza. We accept the main entrance to the facility is planned from the southern end directly onto the Plaza, but disability access may still be required from the western side of the building where considerable money has been spent upgrading access in recent years. Attention will also need to be paid to not congesting the entrance/s with displays which encourage patrons to stand around rather than moving through.
13. **Conclusion.** The character of Burnie's cultural life will likely be determined by the outcome of this 'concept'. If operational costs can constructively be reduced, very well and good. In the General Manager's 'Cultural Centre consultation presentation' the last point of the last slide states "Uniquely Burnie". We, the long term and proud residents of Burnie, know exactly what is 'uniquely Burnie'. We do not intend to see this vision become "Burnie on the Back Foot". Diminution of our proudly held and fought for facilities will not be accepted.