

RESPONSES FROM COUNCILLOR GIOVANNA SIMPSON RECEIVED 21<sup>ST</sup> SEPTEMBER

**How would you describe the impact on the city in the wake of the decisions announced in May 2021?**

The City came to a standstill in May 2021, when we had to make one of the toughest decisions, that we have ever had to make. I consider the heart of Burnie to be its Art culture. I am a lover of all forms of Art and having to close the Gallery stopped the heartbeat of Burnie. It impacted us greatly, but it was a decision that had to be made, in order to get Council back on track, as well as allowing us the opportunity to create something more amazing in what we currently call our 'Cultural Hub'.

To be announced in the newspaper so suddenly, was heartbreaking for us all, but more so for our Arts community. It is something we cannot take back, but we can learn from it. But in the wake of this, I am excited to be able to bring to Burnie, something amazing. It was a heartbreaking decision from all Councillors and was not one taken lightly. Unfortunately, it was a decision that had to be made. Could we have done it better? Absolutely YES!

**The 'spirit' of the city feels broken and trust in council is at an all-time low. What is your plan to rebuild community trust and civic pride?**

Over the last few years, Council has had to make some tough decisions, in order to get our city back to where it should be. We have had to 'fall' in order to 'rise'. And we are rising. Community trust is paramount and whilst the community has been sent shockwaves during this time, I am confident of the move forward that is before us. Soon we will welcome and incredible Cultural Hub. Soon, we will welcome Cruise Ships back to our shores and soon, our City will become whole again.

I have immense pride in my City for so many things. For the people, the businesses, the pure beauty that Burnie holds and the young people that today, are shaping our future. With UTAS Cradle Coast Campus, we have opened up a new gateway to educational excellence, which is giving our community so many more opportunities.

I guess my plan is a simple one...my plan is to continue to serve and work in Burnie through every avenue and whilst this may seem nothing new to what I currently do, I want to work hard to put the Arts, in all its forms, at the forefront. In my line of work, I watch young people grow, wether in performing arts, visual arts, singing, music and dancing. Arts captures the hearts and minds of young and old. It has the power to build mountains from the rubble. I have been working in the

Performing Arts business for over most of my life and I am an immense art lover, I welcome all art and I will continue to support arts in all its forms.

**Our reputation within the Tasmanian arts sector has taken a serious blow. What are your plans to salvage this, given the unveiling of the refurbished Arts and Function Centre (or whatever it will be called in the future), is unlikely to be completed until 2024?**

Whilst our Art Gallery and Makers Workshop closed, Arts has continued to thrive in the City. We welcomed the opening of the Intersection Art Gallery, a space that captured the essence of what we had lost. An incredible space that allowed us to have exhibitions beyond our wildest imaginations.

The design for the new Cultural Centre is something that dreams are made of and although as you mentioned, it will be a while prior to completion, this will be a building that Burnie will be proud of. It will again be the heartbeat of our City. It will be a gathering place for everyone in the community. Young and old and everything in between. I will be an advocate for this new design, although I believe that it will sell itself. The Council owes its City a gift and I believe that this is it. To take a positive out of such a negative event in our community, I would like to thank the Arts community for its passion and dedication, I would like to thank you for raising your voices, so that we could hear you. This is community spirit. Your reputation never lost itself, I believe that you gained even higher recognition for your passion and for your voices.

I must also at this point, say thank you to the amazing Coastal Art Gallery group, that have continued to have amazing exhibitions and community projects throughout this time.

**With the benefit of hindsight, what key decisions, or actions which flowed from those decisions, could have been handled differently?**

As a Council, I believe the closure of the Gallery, could have been handled better. I believe all Councillor's will feel the same way. It was a heartbreaking approach and a shock wave was sent through the Arts Community. Of this, there is no doubt.

Taking more time to sit with members and the arts community, prior to announcing closure, would have benefited our community more. It would have allowed you more time to understand our reasons for having to make that tough decision.

As mentioned prior, it was a decision that had to be made, of that there is no doubt, but we should have done it better and I think I can speak for most of us in saying that. You should have been given more time to understand, it was not handled well and I apologise for how this was done. It can never be taken back,

but we can learn. We will rebuild, we are rebuilding and it will be something we can all be proud of.