

Burnie Arts Council Inc

President's Report 2022

Pause, Reflect, Do What We Do Best

This title follows on from last year's 'Unexpected, Challenging Changes,' referring to the Burnie City Council's restructuring of how they manage their cultural services, and 2020's 'Changed Forever' referring to the emergence of COVID 19. It has not been an easy couple of years.

After these disruptions, it is a relief to report that green shoots are emerging. As is our mission, Burnie Arts Council has kept a close watch on developments across the spectrum of activities. Participating and engaging – always. Scrutinising and questioning – as required. Plus championing and embracing the inspiring initiatives, projects and people who have made their mark through their creative pursuits in this fair city.

Cultural Centre Re-development

In January the architects XSquared were announced as the firm who would work on the draft architectural concept and design for the new Cultural Centre. A working group met fortnightly during the development phase, and the Arts Council passes on our thanks to community representatives Eleanor Austin and Tich Ferencz who were on the committee. Eleanor, in particular, met with our executive on two occasions and was faced with what could only be described as a 'barrage' of questions. We were grateful for her time and patience in responding.

Once the draft architectural plans were completed, they were shared with the community and feedback was invited during a consultation period from October 10 to November 7. We strongly encouraged people to respond – emphasising that this is our one shot at creating something wonderful for the city. We were pleased to hear that there were 10 000 views of the information. Burnie Arts Council submitted a lengthy feedback document, along with 54 other submissions. Based on the feedback, amendments were made, and the plans were unanimously endorsed at the December 2022 Ordinary Meeting of Council. We recommend reading the report and commend council on publishing all of the feedback. It is a welcome sign of increased transparency and goes some way toward alleviating the cynicism which has developed over recent years in relation to 'community consultation.'

With Braddon being a tight marginal seat, the federal election saw Labor representative Chris Lynch secure \$13 million dollars in additional funding for the upgrade. This takes the total budget to 20 million (\$5 million in original funding, plus 2 million from the council's own coffers).

Local Government Elections

This round of local government elections could not have been more critical. Our view was that the city had suffered due to the events of the past two years. All but one councillor put themselves forward for re-election, with 6 candidates in total throwing their hat in the ring for the role of Mayor (5 currently serving councillors and one new candidate). Given that the city was reeling from upheavals which had transpired under the watch of, essentially, this group of candidates, BAC considered it was a valid exercise to question those standing about the impact of the decisions of 2021, and how they will approach some of these issues if re-elected. What is advocacy if not an avenue to seek accountability? 7 out of the 8 councillors responded (then-Mayor Kons did not). The answers were published on the BAC Facebook page and website, garnering a lot of attention.

In a moment of kismet, it was during BAC's October meeting that the Mayoral poll was declared - Burnie had a new Mayor. We congratulate Teeny Brumby on securing a victory with a very healthy margin and can report that we have already had several very positive (though informal) engagements with the new incumbent. Note that, in total, 7 councillors who had previously served were re-elected. Alwyn Boyd was not re-elected, but we would like to take this opportunity to thank him for his many years of service to the Burnie community, and in particular his support of the arts.

Paper on Skin

Had a huge year in 2022. We managed to serpentine our way through the ever-present threat of COVID, managing to complete all planned events – and there were a lot! – without any C-related disruptions.

Entries – We saw a 30 increase on previous years, with a doubling of overseas entries. Final tally was 34 artworks involving 40 artists representing 12 countries.

The introduction of the inaugural **Paper off Skin**. An exhibition showcasing (garment inspired) paper art, but which did not need to be wearable. Eleven countries represented across a total of forty-seven artists. This exhibition was shown at RANT Arts in Devonport.

The gala was a spectacular ‘night-of-nights’ at the paranaple convention centre, where the works were showcased before an almost sell-out crowd.

Three workshops were held. The first ‘Books and Badges’ was with tutor Mahdi Chandler to fit in with the Paper off Skin exhibition. The second was held on the weekend following the gala and was facilitated by Victorian artist Mandy Gunn. The third was held at the Devonport Regional Gallery as a school holiday program with emerging local artist (and Paper on Skin finalist) Chloe Townsend.

The five-week exhibition was attended by approximately 3, 250 people – far exceeding our attendance projections.

As part of a promotional program supported by both the Devonport City Council and a Regional Arts Fund Cultural Tourism Accelerator Program, we had window displays of past works across the CBD of Devonport.

There was then a pause of a few months while we edited the films. A compilation ‘main’ film has been released, along with individual clips of each of the works, and an edited version of the Gala event. All are available to watch online through the Burnie Arts Council and Paper on Skin websites.

Two days before Christmas I was able to report to our stakeholder that after one month (involving a staggered release), the films had been viewed almost seven thousand times, with a geographic spread of viewers across over 40 countries. (At 8 weeks that number had almost doubled to thirteen and a half thousand).

Whilst these figures are impressive, the one yours truly is perhaps most proud of is the number of people on the ground from the N-W community who contributed their skills, time and energy to the suite of Paper on Skin activities. This numbered over 200.

Yes, there is still some chatter of a ‘zero-sum’ nature about Burnie’s ‘loss’ of Paper on Skin and Devonport’s ‘gain.’ It is refreshing to hear, however, that this now truly international event is being celebrated as shining example of what can be achieved in a regional area. To this end, the longitudinal study with Paper on Skin as a focus which was conducted by QUT via an ARC Research project concluded at the end of 2022. Their report can be read via the Burnie Arts Council website. It makes for some interesting reading.

Stringalong

Had another successful year in 2022. A total of 120 players from 6 schools were involved, with Burnie High and Burnie Primary School now participating. Helen Hurst is the current lead tutor, a cellist from Queensland and highly experienced teacher who travels from Smithton twice weekly to teach the secondaries at PHS and direct the Burnie Stringalong Orchestra.

Stringalong secured another three year’s funding through the Burnie City Council Community Grants program

The program was mentioned by Leonie Hiscutt MLC in a speech to her Legislative Council colleagues.

In October 2022, viola player with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, William Newberry, came to Burnie to run training sessions with the Burnie Stringalong Orchestra. The TSO fully sponsored this workshop.

Helen Denise Jones OAM Memorial Arts Bursary

Was this year awarded to theatre performer Sophie Harvey. Sophie has a strong background in musical theatre and has now relocated to Melbourne where she has commenced her tertiary studies in this field.

Viktor and the International Jazz Day Event

On the 30th April, our beloved Viktor celebrated his last international Jazz Day performance at the annual event held at the Burnie Town Hall. We have nothing but admiration for you, Viktor for the incredible contribution you have made not only to jazz in the region, but also to our rich cultural fabric overall.

In other green-shoots news:

Intersection Art Space

March saw the opening of a new gallery space in Burnie – Intersection. The high-profile Living Memory National Photographic Portrait Prize was the inaugural exhibition, which was supported by Ten Days on the Island and Burnie City Council.

This exhibition was followed-up with a solo show by Michael Muruste – ‘Steel and Water’, the ‘NatureNurture’ exhibition by Launceston-based artists Anna Van Stralen and Lex Palmer Bull. Spring saw the gallery opened again with ‘Connection’, an exhibition of works by esteemed printmaker Bruce Latimer. Hobart-based artists Ian Parry & Joshua Andree brought us back to our island roots with ‘Oceanicus.’ Concluding an impressive first year is the ‘Roundabout’ exhibition featuring 8 emerging artists.

We acknowledge and congratulate Burnie Arts Council member Scott Campbell who took up the role of Gallery Manager. Scott facilitated the majority of the exhibitions at Intersection, provided fabulous and well-attended openings, and organised interesting artists talks and further public programs. Intersection was also set-up to allow for public sales of artworks. Red dots happened - artists received revenue! Through the exhibitions program at Intersection, Burnie Regional Art Gallery has received a number of new donations to their collection.

Burnie Regional Museum

We congratulate the crew of Burnie Regional Museum volunteers who fought tirelessly to have the museum re-opened. Thanks to the tenacity of this crew (formally known as the Friends of the Burnie Regional Museum) the museum is now open three days per week, staffed by volunteers.

Burnie Regional Art Gallery

It was great to see BRAG re-open in June (as a gallery, not a vaccination centre) with Jam Factory artist Angela Valamanesh's: *About being here*. The *Burnie at Play* exhibition opened in December, and features objects mainly from the museum collection. After a couple of false starts with recruitment Laura Courto was appointed the new Museum and gallery curator.

Cruise Ships

Returned to our shores in November, providing a welcome opportunity for Burnie's volunteers to re-engage with a much-missed activity. The plaza between the BAFC and the museum was the designated cruise ship central location, with makers and local vendors invited to set up their wares. The new version of Burnie's Visitor Information Centre – an adapted shipping container - has created some controversy as a pale substitute for what used to exist in Burnie at Makers' Workshop. Despite this, reports from those involved are that the Burnie experience is still proving to be a positive one.

Friends of the Burnie Regional Art Gallery

We welcome Kerri Symington as the new President of Friends of BRAG, and thank Eleanor Austin for her tenure during a very challenging period.

Burnie City Eisteddfod

As always, the 2022 Burnie City Eisteddfod was a huge event – gaining some attention in the national media with Triple J hosts Lewis Hobba and Michael Hing winning third prize in their category and their experience of treading the boards in Burnie featuring on the ABCPlus TV show ‘Australia’s Best Competition Competition.’ Then President Jan Tolland appeared in the show. We must also acknowledge Jan’s incredible contribution to the Eisteddfod, retiring as President after contributing a total of 25 years of service. The new President is Sharon Nicholson.

Burnie Coastal Art Group

Our friends at the Burnie Coastal Art Group celebrated their 70th in July with a wonderful exhibition at Gallery 211 opened by the Honorable Roger Jaensch MP.

City of Burnie Brass Band

After an incredibly rocky few years, it appears a solution may have been found regarding the long running Band Rooms Saga. We wish them well and hope they may soon be settled in a new ‘fit-for-purpose’ home and be able to focus on what you do best – keeping alive the fabulous tradition of bands in towns!

Burnie Print Prize

We are pleased to see the return of this iconic Burnie competition and exhibition. The prize pool sits at a total of 22 000, including an acquisitive award of 16 000.

Performing arts

BMS wowed sell-out audiences with their high-energy production of Mama Mia, a musical they extatically brought to the stage after COVID delays. DoMaur productions kept up the pace with edgy productions of One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest and COSI.

Support

Burnie Arts Council Inc has also proudly provided support letters and references for

- Mt Gnomon farm
- Van Dieman’s Band
- Ten Days on the Island
- Slipstream Circus
- Women of the Moon
- Stringalong
- Burnie Arts and Function Centre, BCC
- Tim McCarthy

President’s Activity

Honourable Tony Burke round table

SILA conference

Meeting with Minister Elise Archer’s Arts Advisor

2023 BIG year BIG news

75 years young! There will be celebrations, including a alumni project and announcements about a \$50 000 donation for public art along the Burnie / Wynyard section of the coastal pathway

President Lyndal Thorne