

## BURNIE ARTS COUNCIL

President's Report 2021

### “Unexpected, Challenging Changes”

The year began with celebrations! On Australia Day we received the *Community Event of the Year* with the COVID version of *Paper on Skin* and all its extensions followed by Lyndal named as the *Citizen of the Year!* Both great achievements and appropriate recognition, as well as being significant focus for Burnie Arts Council in the greater public sphere.

Our first activity was “**Front and Centre**” see Lyndal's Addendum.

#### “Next Gen”

It was becoming very obvious that some measures had to be taken to increase our membership in younger age-groups. Consultation with several arts practitioners resulted in this moniker with the first meeting taking place at 8.00am in the headquarters (at that time) of Business Northwest. Rigorous debate resulted in the concept of a *Genius Junk* project. A RAF application was submitted and planning commenced for an October event. Highly regarded and experienced teacher David Turner (assisted by son, Nick) was employed to work with local primary school and Parklands High students to create a “Junk Orchestra” for performance at Havenview Community Reserve on Sunday October 10<sup>th</sup>. It also commissioned 2 artworks on wheelie bins, collaboration with National Resource Management and artist Emma Magnusson-Reid to work with community members and create significant displays to strengthen the recycling message. It was a very successful day generously supported by Alison Luck and the Havenview Community. It also included an element of film-making with Nick Higgins, “Chalky Grey” and PHS Indigenous students. Thanks to Scott Campbell and Victoria Hall, both members, who gave great support. It was during this period that Alex McKenzie accepted the role of our Patron strengthening the “Next Gen” label.

**Paper on Skin (POS)** see Lyndal's addendum.

#### **Burnie City Council: The Bombshell**

Whilst we had previously expressed concern over several Council staff resignations none of us had anticipated the catastrophic action that took place on May 3<sup>rd</sup>. Mayor Steve Kons circulated a dispatch outlining drastic measures Council had voted on to reduce its overall debt – most of these related to our hitherto vibrant community arts and event programmes and came as an absolute bombshell. Loud voices of protest immediately emerged and BAC organised a community meeting the following Saturday afternoon. Over 50 people attended Cafe Europa to voice concerns, express fears, anger and dissatisfaction at the decisions. Under the “Next Gen” mission Vice-President Lyndal steered the ensuing vociferous *Burnie Bounce Back Committee* (BBB) formed to challenge the significant decisions: Closure of the Art Gallery, Makers' Workshop, Museum, Visitors' Centre and Creative Paper. It also included the dismissal of key staff to support these operations as well as Events, Marketing and Management. It was a significant blow to our activities and experienced friends. Loud opposition came from us, Friends of BRAG and BBB through newspaper articles, media interviews and intense questioning at BCC monthly meetings. Council responded with a series of meetings promote the Hirst Consultants Report' indicating its way forward. More anger and disquiet ensued and firstly Bel Lynch (Manager of Corporate affairs) and subsequently Mark Viner (Executive Manager, Burnie Arts and Function Centre) were appointed to manage this discontent which still carries hurt and disappointment at the complete disregard for community consultation.

The Redevelopment continues to be a “work in progress” but with the absence of our A Class Regional Gallery moniker and managed closures of the major venue commencing July 2022, our troubled waters are set to continue until 2023. Many considerable wounds are still open and will take considerable time to heal.

**Community Grant Process.** In October it was announced that a new system of distributing money to community organisations was commencing. In order to make the allocation of Council's financial

resources more transparent and equitable for all organisations a *Smarty Grants* programme was installed. This involved comprehensive individual application processes with the closing date for registering Friday January 14<sup>th</sup>. Our BAC supported Stringalong Programme submitted an application for a three-year grant to retain its varied programmes. As yet the results of this are unknown.

### **HJB Bursary**

Awarded each year in Helen's Memory \$1000 is awarded to a promising young person involved in arts practice of any genre. This year's winner (from five applicants) was student photographer Tara Palmer who was excited to use the money towards a new camera. Jo Shugg, Del Polden and Lix Speers were the judges.

### **TDOTI (Ten Days on the Island)**

Currently in a planning phase, significant staff changes were announced. Experienced and highly regarded Jane Hayley retired from the Executive Officer's position. Vernon Guest has moved up into this role, Stephanie Finn is Executive Officer and newly appointed Sally Richardson (ex WA) is Executive Producer. We thank Jane for her constant support, significant advice and great humour.

### **TSO**

To compensate for lack of live music a partnership between Metro Cinema and Burnie Rotary provided several well attended online performances through the wonders of modern technology. Several smaller ensembles also held live community workshops for Strings and Brass with local players which were hugely successful. A partnership with the Van Diemen's Band is a very welcome addition to our classical music scene.

### **Artlands Conference, Launceston**

Lyndal gave a presentation here based on the experience of *Paper on Skin* intending to highlight the role of the event and arts practice in Burnie. Following the BCC May developments her message was altered to better reflect the current situation! (newly appointed Mark Viner was in attendance)

### **Community Events Bounced Back**

Burnie City Eisteddfod, Burnie Musical Society *Let the People Sing*, Hellyer Choir *Concert and Messiah*, Burnie Concert Band *African Harmony* and Domaur Productions *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. This latter production has been nominated for an Errol Award to be announced shortly. All managed to adhere to strict COVID regulations.

### **Members continue to drive and support ongoing musical activities**

**Viktor** (whom we now know is Burnie's Senior Citizen of the Year) maintains his role as the Coast's Jazz Man but also our commentator on life in general. His unique outlook continues to challenge our philosophies as well as entertain us. The journey of the **Stringalong Programme** is outlined on a separate sheet.

**In conclusion** I thank our regular meeting attendees - Marlene Jensen, Scott Campbell, Con Rhee, Victoria Hall and the occasional councillors.

Heather Wild joined the **Executive** as our new Treasurer and this was an added activity to rebranding her business! The volume of work has been substantial for Vice-President Lyndal with her many projects and subsequently Secretary Pam. A very sincere thank you to everyone.

**Vale Neil**. We were all saddened when husband and father Neil Thorne died in the Spring and pay tribute to him for his passion and vision and support for the arts in our community. It is significant that his legacy will carry on with a new \$1000 Award included in the prizes for Paper off Skin 2022.

**Thank you Everyone for your interest and support throughout this incredibly challenging year.**

*(I acknowledge the support of Burnie Arts and Function Centre for the provision of a meeting space following the closure of the Burnie Regional Art Gallery)*

***This report was generously printed by the office of Anita Dow MP***

For BAC President's Report – VP Addendum:

**Front and Centre:**

Feb/Mar 2021

A professional development and profile building program (RAF grant) which saw 5 North-West artists given the opportunity to be tutored by Grant Wells (photography), Scott Campbell (professional practice) and Amanda May (display and design).

The culmination was the installation of 5 window displays in the Burnie CBD (partnering with Business North-West) which were unveiled on the opening day of Ten Days on the Island in March.

There have been very strong outcomes from this program. For example, in the proceeding 12 months, across the participants, there have been 4 exhibition openings (three solo) and one has a dedicated exhibition space at the Cradle Mountain Wilderness Gallery.

**Paper on Skin**

Throughout 2021 the core team devoted considerable effort and research to the company set up. This was (finally) achieved on 15th Nov with the registration of Genre Productions Tasmania Ltd (trading as Paper on Skin).

The close connection with the Burnie Arts Council is maintained as two of the directors of the company (Lyndal Thorne & Pam Thorne) are members of the BAC Executive Committee.

Paper on Skin were successful in their application for Organisational Funding from Arts Tasmania. This is a significant achievement, with the provision of 126 000 towards the 2022 events and activities.

The results are already in evidence. The call out for entries saw a 30% increase in applications, with interest from around the world. Pre-selection has now taken place, with a final field of 37 works (43 artists in total) and 13 countries represented.

The funding has enabled the launch of a new competition and exhibition – Paper off Skin. This will showcase paper art (garment-linked in some way) but the works do not need to be wearable.

Due to the closure and lack of clarity around re-opening of venues in Burnie, all key events will be taking place in Devonport this year.

Lyndal Thorne Feb 2022