

## **NAROOMA SCHOOL OF ARTS PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2023**

This report covers Narooma School of Arts' last financial year which is the 2023 calendar year.

Our organisation's responsibilities are to hold, manage and enhance the whole School of Arts' site on behalf of our community. The Kinema (Memorial Hall) is our current major asset so we are glad of a new three-year lease with Jade Griffiths (with a two-year option to renew).

For 12 years now we have been working hard to enhance the site with an adjoining Arts Centre to meet needs identified by our community.

2023 was a hard year requiring many changes of thinking...

When we went to tender in late 2022 with our original design for the Centre, the quotes far exceeded our available funds and were way beyond even our quantity surveyor's expectations. Our Public Works Project Manager asked us to 'de-scope' the design and the NSW Government invited us to lodge a request for additional funding to meet the shortfall. We succeeded in getting an additional \$2.7m but this was still not sufficient to cover the increased costs to build the initial design.

We could not de-scope our plans any more and still maintain the desired functionality, so we had no alternative but go back to the drawing board and come up with a whole new design.

Despite being disheartened, fatigued and even starting to doubt our ability to succeed with the project, our committee members and technical advisors, all volunteers, bounced back to meet the challenge.

Next we approached four architects for concept plans within our new budget. From these, we selected TAKT Studio for Architecture from Congo as our Principal Design Consultant. Their design is simpler than our previous one, all on the one level (apart from parking and some storage) and they have given great consideration to the site's position in Narooma, recognising what's so special about it. They designed with the Narooma landscape, the function, and the community in mind and prioritised having a low environmental footprint.

TAKT's original design has since been modified to meet our current budget and, according to our new Quantity Surveyor, should come within budget. The current design has a large Gallery, two studios with a retractable wall to make one larger space with a wooden floor, a kitchen attached, and a roadside café at the entrance.

TAKT is now preparing a whole new Development Application which should be lodged soon, once we receive a Traffic Report to help clarify car parking spaces required. We have pushed Council for a speedy response, but who knows.

Something that happened last year to our benefit was the replacement of our Public Works Project Manager with two more efficient, productive people who helped move things along for us. (Having Public Works as our Project Manager was a condition of the grant). Unfortunately these two have moved on and we are only just getting acquainted with their replacements.

Dealing with Council has also been frustrating but a meeting early this year between Council's General Manager, the Director of Infrastructure and the Acting Director of Planning should result in Council finally addressing the significant issues with the their batter retaining wall encroachment on School of Arts land.

We are still on plan time-wise and hope to complete construction of Narooma Arts Centre by the end of 2025.

I would like to acknowledge the hard work and ongoing commitment of the NACC Project Subcommittee throughout the year, especially our volunteer technical advisors architect Rob Hawkins and engineer Russell Burke. We could not do this without them and we thank them for the hours of work they continually put in.

**Our main achievements in 2024 also include:**

- A revised Constitution. Changes include:
  - Removing the 'Friends' and 'Youth' categories so all members can now vote.
  - With the committee, we can now have an additional two members (making a maximum of 10), but the majority of committee members must still reside within 35km of Narooma.
  - The Gallery and Studios Subcommittee has worked hard keeping the Gallery active and inviting with a series of exhibitions, workshops, youth groups and artists' talks in the Studios. It was great to see an exhibition by Narooma High Art students, and local photography and drawing groups hopefully becoming a yearly event. These have provided interest for the community and helped keep Narooma School of Arts 'alive' in people's minds, as well as bringing in much needed income.

None of this would happen without the hard work of our Marketing and Communications team led by Barb McConchie who practically does

a full time job keeping our website and social media up to date, dynamic and inviting. Thank you so much Barb, Ann, Petti, Laurelle and Kate.

- A Strategic Plan for Narooma School of Arts has also been developed. Many thanks to everyone responsible for that. (Ann, Barb , Petti, Bob & Laurelle)
- We hosted Music Nights at the Kinema, thanks to all Petti McInnes' hard work and her team.

Thanks also to Bob Aston for keeping us all tuned in, switched on and on track, and to Laurelle Pacey for her overall administration and the many many hours she volunteers.

### **Looking ahead**

We will strive to keep the community's passion, enthusiasm and hunger alive for the School of Arts' precinct.

I don't need to remind you that the management committee's task of managing the School of Arts' property on behalf of our whole community is a huge job. It takes dedication, passion, hard work and a strong community spirit.

I said last year, and I am sure by now we have proved to you, that we will not give up. We will bring the Narooma Arts Centre to Narooma as promised.

The committee during 2023 has been Vice President Bob Aston, Secretary Laurelle Pacey, Treasurer David Rae, and committee members Ann Espinoza, Barb McConchie, Peter Jeffery and Petti McInnes, all of whom have brought much needed skills to our team. I thank them all for the hard work, initiative and determination.

Thanks go especially to David Rae (as treasurer) and Peter Jeffery for their contributions as committee members. We are so grateful for the help they have given us. (They have not stood for re-election.)

While seven people have nominated for the committee before the 2<sup>nd</sup> April, including two new committee members, we still need up to three more people to take up positions on the management committee.

We have many other jobs that need people to share the load....

As always, our team also includes all School of Arts members who have contributed their enthusiasm and drive to our activities. And that means...YOU!. Thank you everyone.

Jenni Bourke, President