

2025 BHAC PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Welcome everyone to the Barwon Heads Arts council's 2024/25 Annual General Meeting. My name is Caroline Woods, and I am the current President of the Barwon Heads Arts Council.

Firstly, let us acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet tonight the Wadawurrung people, paying respect to their elders past present and emerging.

This last year has been another huge year for our creative community, Arts Council Committee, volunteers, members, and supporters. The Barwon Heads Arts Council continues to focus on our two main activities - the Arts Hub and our major event the Bellarine Arts Trail.

1. ARTS HUB

On average the arts hub was activated 100 hours a month during 2024. So, although the doors are closed most of the time, a lot is happening behind them.

84% of usage was from community and artists and the remaining 16% was business use.

I'd like to go through a few of the highlights over the past year:

- **EXHIBITIONS** – Another successful year for our Art Exhibition program. A huge thank to one of our committee members Viva Partos who has been instrumental in volunteering her time to build and manage this program. Exhibitors over the last 12 months included Seascapes, Taste of the Trail, Anita Beaney, Tussock Five, Helen Edwards, Everlasting Seascapes and Look Deeper – Craig Watson.
- **REGULAR USERS** – A big thank you to our regular users at the hub. During the past year our regular hirers have included Dorothy Johnston's writer's group, Cassy Twomeys drawing group, The Arts Hub Gardening Group, The Fine Music Society and Chorale, Sally Wilson's children's choir, Craig Watson, Monique Harpur and Anita Beaney's Arts Hub photography group, Sally Wilson's singing group, Deb Fishers painting classes and open access studio nights, the Sunday Printmakers set up by Vicki & Patsy, Chrissy and Marilyn's Moti Clothing, Dallas Cronwright, Bec Leppinus's Pilates, Molly's Yoga, Bendigo Bank, Barwon Coast, Barwon Heads Golf Club and Heads & Tails. Thank you so much because our regular hirers ensure that this arts hub is financially sustainable. We will continue to focus on building the number of regular users to the hub.

Although we do not have regular funding through the City of Geelong unlike other COGG buildings. The hub is now financially sustainable through the support of our regular hirers, exhibition program and memberships. We have a great relationship with our partners and supporters, and we do hope to build this over time to continue to expand the offerings for our creative community.

- **THE GRAND PIANO** - In August 2024, \$25,000 was raised by 120 music lovers through a major fundraiser, raffle sales and donations to purchase the reimaged and refurbished Yamaha G5. The piano was manufactured in Japan in 1970 and spent its first decade in South Africa, loved and played by a family who then emigrated to Australia. The piano was rebuilt and reimaged by local piano maker/technician Toby Mitchell.

Thank you to Grand Piano Raffle donors Ruth & Peter McMullin, Sophia Legoe and Kip & Co.

Over 400 volunteer hours contributed to raising the \$20,000 needed to purchase the piano and the remainder has been put away in a maintenance fund. We are incredibly grateful to the fundraising team, Ocean Grove based opera singer Sally Wilson, concert pianist Mark Kruger as well as Sophia Legoe and Vicki Strachan. An incredible effort.

This piano is a huge community asset. Practice sessions, concerts and singing groups have already started at the hub and it is adding another dimension to what the hub has to offer.

- **STRATEGIC UPLIFT PROGRAM** – Late last year, we were fortunate enough to be selected by the City of Greater Geelong to participate in Regional Arts Victoria’s Strategic Uplift Program. Each region from the G21, selected one creative organization and we represented Greater Geelong region. These sessions have helped us with the development of our 3-year strategic plan that has been adopted by the Committee and is on display tonight. This plan will be uploaded to our website soon.
- **LEASE** – We have just signed a 3-year lease with The City of Greater Geelong to continue managing the Hub. We feel confident now that with ongoing support from our members, exhibition commissions and regular hirers, we are now in a financially and operationally sustainable position to sign this lease.
- **EQUIPMENT PURCHASES** – Some of the purchasers this year included more hanging systems for the gallery and meeting rooms for exhibitors. An Ipad for our volunteers to access our booking calendar, an Urn for our regular hirers and drop sheets for the Makers Shed to protect the tables.

1. BELLARINE ARTS TRAIL 2024

In November 2024 we rolled out another successful Bellarine Arts Trail. Last year for the first time we established a stand-alone management committee, supported by the Barwon Heads Arts Council. We created town representatives from each of the 4 towns - Barwon Heads, Ocean Grove, Point Lonsdale and Queenscliffe. The event was coordinated by committee members Libby Darcy and Vicki Strachan. A huge thank you to everyone on that

committee who contributed to BAT 24 including the numerous volunteers involved, particularly over the weekend of the trail and The Taste of the Trail exhibition.

The event attracted over 90 artists, 45 venues and an estimated 15,000 visits to artist studios, galleries, and group venues. It has been estimated there was more than \$140,000 worth of sales over the trail weekend and Taste of the Trail Exhibition.

Preparation for this year's event is well under way and is being led by Louise Kennedy who has stepped in as our new BAT Co-Ordinator, supported by an enthusiastic and committed committee.

We are particularly grateful to our major sponsor the Bendigo Bank. We also acknowledge the Borough of Queenscliff, and the Queenscliff Community Market for their support of the 2024 event.

THE YEAR AHEAD

After 3 years of operating, we have learnt a huge amount on our journey, and this will no doubt continue. We have 3 years of extensive data; we are financially sustainable; and we continue to work on our processes and systems. We have also successfully trialed an Administration role which is financially sustainable at about 8 hours a week. This has made a huge difference in elevating the administration burden on the volunteer committee.

This year we have been encouraged to apply for an Infrastructure Grant from COGG through their Community Grant Round. If this is successful, this will allow us to keep building on equipping the hub. Our grant application is already underway, and we are applying for funds to support the Makers Shed and the main space for both exhibitions and music performances.

We encourage regular users who can manage the space by themselves. Our role is to manage and facilitate the use of the space by our creative community. We have over 120 artists as members, and we celebrate you. This place is for you to gather, create and connect. We are not resourced at this point to program, so it is up to our creative and wider community to program and promote their own events.

Our focus now is to create a financially sustainable community hub model that future proof's the hub for the community. What we see as important is building community use and opportunity, at the same time as sustaining volunteer commitment and balancing the books.

THANK YOU

I would like to thank the following people

- Libby Darcy for facilitating our Strategic Planning days and putting together our Strategic Plan for the next 3 years. Libby is stepping of the committee this year, but will still be around assisting us with our Strategic Planning going forward? We thank Libby for her generosity and wise input and we feel we would not be where we are without her.
- Neal Frisch for his caretaker role at the hub. It has been a busy year with birds nesting in the roof of the Makers Shed and battling with the garden. Your work is very much appreciated.
- To Erena and Vicki and their work and contribution to the Administration role at the hub managing bookings and hirers.
- Norm next door at the Senior Citz. A wonderful neighbor for the hub.
- Matt White for painting the exhibition space recently, it looks fantastic.
- Jenny & Phillip Bade for the donation of 3 Crepe Myrtle planted at the front of the hub will be a fantastic asset. Thank you also for watering them during summer.
- The newly formed BAT Committee for 24 & 25, especially Louise Kennedy who has literally hit the ground running and is doing a fantastic job.
- Thank you to our local politicians for your support - Libby Coker, Alison Marchant and Councilor Elise Wilkinson.
- Thank you to the committee for supporting me in this role over the past 12 months and for the work we have done as a team.
- I'd like to finish on a bittersweet note. Our BAT founder and long time BHAC Committee member of 12 years, Kaz Shirley has decided to step back from the committee this year and focus on her own art. We thank Kaz for her massive contribution to the Barwon Heads Arts Council, particularly her vision and work to create the Bellarine Arts Trail. This event is now considered a major event on the Bellarine. Kaz will still volunteer with us, and we will still see her around the Arts Hub. Thank you Kaz.