



Minutes

Gorman Arts Centres Resident Advisory Group

Meeting #G-23-001-G

Date: 04 May 2023 **Venue:** Gorman Arts Centre Main Hall
Start time: 10:08 am **End time:** 11:36 am
Meeting Chair: Carly Davenport Acker

Residents attending:

Andrew Sikorski
Ben Drysdale (Rebus Theatre)
Dr Cathy Adamek (Ausdance ACT)
Helen Wojtas (Canberra Youth Theatre)
Hugh Withycombe (via MS Teams)
Kimmo Vennonen (Via MS Teams)
Lucy Alexander
Luke Rogers (Canberra Youth Theatre)
Yamille Tafur

Arts Capital board/staff attending:

Andreo Esguerra, A+G Marketing and Partnerships Manager
Carly Davenport Acker, Arts Capital, A+G Director
Elizabeth Curry, A+G Venues and Operations Manager
Isabelle Sheppard, A+G Business Administration Assistant
Jenni Curry, A+G Partnerships and Communications Liaison
Lauren Honcope, Arts Capital Board Chair
Sia Ahmed, A+G Programs Manager

Apologies:

Paul Summerfield
Stuart McMillen
Adelin Chin, A+G Business Mentor



Agenda Item

Item 1 Welcomes, apologies, introductions, and Acknowledgement of Country

Carly Davenport Acker (CDA) began the meeting by welcoming everyone, stating apologies and acknowledging the Traditional Owners, the Ngunnawal and Ngambri Peoples in an Acknowledgement of Country

Item 2 Arts Capital Operational Updates

CDA informed the group of various updates within Arts Capital's operations and provided a summary of the recent AGM, acknowledging the valued hard work contributed by A+G Governance and Major Projects Manager, Lachlan Johnson. Arts Capital has welcomed three new Board Members and has farewelled two long-standing Board Members. She said that two more members are being sought: a First Nations Governance professional and a fundraiser. She said more information on members and the talents they bring, will be forthcoming through marketing team and that Arts Capital is looking to increase intellectual exchange/ social/ connection events. Internally, the Arts Capital and A+G team have also welcomed two new staff members as well as introduced three existing staff members who are now managers. CDA introduced the new Arts Capital Board Chair Lauren Honcope (LH).

LH introduced herself to the group, stating she has been involved with Gorman Arts Centre since her arrival in Canberra in 1978. Acknowledging her affection for the locations as arts centres and sharing her passion for her artform, dance, of which she is well known for her involvement in Canberra.

CDA shared that there will be a range of professional development and training opportunities accessibility later in the year, such as First Nations community engagement/cultural competencies, and inclusion and accessibility training sessions for residents. A+G will announce further details within the next month and work with residents to coordinate/integrate with Resident's training aims and ensure availability to attend. It was acknowledged by Cathy Adamek (CA) and Luke Rogers (LR) that a centralised approach is appreciated and important that ACL's offering can align with all organisations. CDA committed to realising this across the year.

Moving on, Sia Ahmed (SA) reflected on the previous year in regard to programming. Sharing that A+G provided a little over 20K of in-kind support for resident programming and events. Reflecting on the positive partnerships and



collaborations that arose from 2022, emphasising the value of continuing these conversations into the future.

Andrew Sikorski (AS) and Hugh Withycombe (HW) joined the meeting.

Passing over the Andreo Esguerra (AE), AE introduced himself noting that he has begun with A+G this year as the Marketing and Partnerships Manager. AE shared with the group a summary of the 2022 Annual Report, highlighting that despite the continuous pandemic challenges Arts Capital positively reported a \$67K loss after budgeting for a loss around 100K. Alongside this, Arts Capital were also able to generate \$1.70 back for every \$1 of artsACT Key Arts Organisation Funding, as well as providing a total of almost 99K in-kind support to artists and arts organisations programming and events throughout 2022.

Lucy Alexander (LA) left the meeting.

Item 3 Resident Portal

Moving on, AE shared with the group and reintroduced one the recent initiatives that has arisen from Resident feedback, the online Resident Portal. The portal is one of the ways Arts Capital is aiming to streamline Resident communications and make integral information more accessible. Passing to Jenni Curry (JC) who began by asking the group if they were aware of the portal before presented a brief tour of the site and explaining how to access the information. In relation to a suggestion raised by LR, the portal will be updated to reflect the 2023 Resident Advisory Group information and details, as well as acknowledging venue availability information is a valuable addition in future designs.

LR raised that one of the uses of the portal would be greatly beneficial as a resource sharing platform. The group agreed that a platform to discuss, share and upload their own documents, templates and more would contribute to valuable community building between A+G and Residents. CDA noted the portal link needed to be more visible.

AE emphasised that this portal is able to be changed and any feedback is encouraged and welcomed, the intention of this site is to be as beneficial for Residents as possible, catered to Residents and the information they would like to see. Feedback can be provided by emailing enquiry@ainslieandgorman.com.au.

Item 4 Future Vision: Resident Advisory Groups

AE passed to CDA to introduce the next item. CDA shared that A+G would like to open the conversation to Residents regarding future



approaches/designs/facilitation of the Resident Advisory Group and how they can be improved. Isabelle Sheppard (IS) emphasised the responsibility of A+G to ensure the Resident Advisory Groups evolve alongside the wants and needs of Residents. The group was asked to share any ideas regarding the meetings, any improvements to the design, the nature of them and if any aspects were working well.

The group engaged in discussion surrounding mental health, wellbeing and the challenges facing those within the arts sector. LR raised the benefit within future meetings carving out time for Residents to engage in these meaningful discussions. The group agreed that it would be greatly beneficial to ensure time is scheduled to participate in conversations regarding health and wellbeing, checking in, asking what challenges Residents are facing, what support can be provided and more. Agreeing that these conversations contribute to strong and supportive community building. It was noted that an informal, shared discussion in the format of a workshop (in a circle) is a welcome approach/purpose of these gatherings.

Item 5 Gorman Centenary and Cultural Heritage of the Arts Community

Before moving to the last item CDA noted that ACL has no further updates nor confirmation regarding pending capital works project. The project is owned/controlled by artsACT, and ACL is an equal, resident stakeholder. It yet to be value managed (costed) which will surely change the proposed plans. She described that ACL is having to consider three massive bodies of work at once due to the impacts; these include reform of ACL systems in the past 9.5 months, looking ahead to guess/estimate the 'pending disruption impact' and then having to consider the future operational costings post late 2024/25 – with potential plans unconfirmed. She said that when more information about the plans is made visible, the future operational processes will become clearer and that all residents will learn this info at once. There must be communication equity. She asked for everyone to be patient until government communicates their priorities.

Moving onto the last agenda item, CDA passed the conversation to the group, explaining this item has been raised to her by Residents. CDA asked the group if they had thoughts on the concept of place and their definition of cultural heritage regarding Gorman Arts Centre.

The group discussed various factors that contribute to a sense of place and the cultural heritage of the Centre. There was agreement that the long-standing arts and community activities, as well as the values and meaning of the activities that



have taken place at the Centre is a significant contributing factor in its cultural heritage. Furthermore, it was noted that the intersection between the heritage of the building is intertwined with its cultural heritage although the concepts have different meanings for different people. The group acknowledged that it is a nuanced and complicated concept, that contributed to meaningful and positive discussion. Especially regarding the history of the land and that the activities taken place prior to colonisation and the building of the Centre is integral to its cultural heritage.

HW contributed to the agenda item, raising that some Residents were invited to hold a meeting in relation to this topic in the previous few weeks. Specifically in the context of the proposed centenary renovations plans for A Block. Noting that there was concern that the proposed plans for an accessible theatre space, and subsequent displacement of QL2 Dance and their activities to the Ralph Wilson Theatre may have the potential to erase the history and cultural heritage of A Block.

LR and CA stated that their organisations, Canberra Youth Theatre and Ausdance ACT did not attend as they were not invited to the above-mentioned meeting.

LH acknowledged there is much discomfort and anxiety surrounding the potential renovation plans and artsACT's definition of heritage. Stating that in her capacity and role as the Board chair of Arts Capital, she will contact the Board of QL2 Dance as well as invite all other Boards to connect with her as Chair ACL -in order to enquire if a formal comment wished to be made in relation to this agenda item.

Noting the time CDA asked if there were any other items Residents wish to raise, and with no further items, thanked the group for their time, suggestions and contributions.

Meeting ended at 11:36am.

Appendix:

It is noted that Kimmo Vennonen and Hugh Withycombe attended virtually via Microsoft Teams. Due to technical difficulties, it was difficult for both Residents to contribute and be involved in the meeting. We do not have the technology/capacity to make this work well in a large, collective environment – apologies. The feedback on improving hybrid meeting technology has been taken on and is appreciated in order to improve the accessibility and experience for virtual attendance in future meetings.