



Minutes

Gorman Arts Centres Resident Advisory Group

Meeting #G-23-003-G

Date: 23 November 2023 **Venue:** Gorman Arts Centre C Block Theatre
Start time: 10:07 am **End time:** 11:55 am
Meeting Chair: Lauren Honcope, Arts Capital Board Chair

Residents Attending:

Cassandra Dove
Deborah Di Centa, AusdanceACT
Hugh Withycombe
Kimmo Vennonen
Lucy Alexander
Luke Rogers, Canberra Youth Theatre
Natalie Wade, QL2 Dance
Robin Davidson, Rebus Theatre
Stuart McMillen

Arts Capital Board/Staff Attending:

Andreo Esguerra, Marketing and Partnerships Manager
Carly Davenport Acker, CEO Arts Capital / Director A+G
Isabelle Sheppard, Business Administration Assistant
Lachlan Johnson, Business Manager
Lauren Honcope, Board Chair
Mauro Aviles, Facilities Manager
Pedro Ribas, Chief Financial Officer
Rebecca Worth, Digital Stories Coordinator
Sia Ahmed, Creative Experiences Manager
Leslie Pan, Board Member

Apologies:

Bryn Evans
Phoebe Porter
Ruth Osborne, QL2 Dance

Agenda Item

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

Carly Davenport Acker (CDA) began the meeting by welcoming the group and introducing Board Chair Lauren Honcope (LH) as the meeting Chair. LH acknowledged the Traditional Owners, the Ngunnawal Peoples in an Acknowledgement of Country before passing to Isabelle Sheppard (IS) who stated the apologies.

AC Board Member Leslie Pan (LP), Sia Ahmed (SA) & Natalie Wade (NW) joined the meeting.

Item 2 Previous Meeting Minutes & Action Items

LH reviewed and provided updates on the action items for the previous Advisory Group meeting, encouraging Residents to raise any questions regarding them.

Future training and professional development opportunities for Residents are in progress, a survey to gather insight and feedback has been sent out to all Residents. Participation in the survey is gratefully appreciated to ensure opportunities are as beneficial as possible.

Rebecca Worth (RW) raised that enhancements to the Resident portal for improved visibility are ongoing and encouraged the group to please provide all feedback so it can continually be improved. In relation to a suggestion raised in previous meetings, RW stated that an option for file/resource sharing is unfortunately unable to be implemented in the Resident Portal due to technical restrictions and staff capacity to monitor (this was expressed earlier this year). The group discussed short-term and long-term possible solutions to this, Kimmo Vennonen (KV) suggested the possibility of a wiki for Resident communication, moderated by Residents. In response, Robin Davidson (RD) stated that there was already a Resident moderated Facebook page that could be used for this purpose.

ACTION: Residents to re-visit Facebook page and/or explore an alternate informal digital communication channel/resident organised.

Moving onto the role of the Advisory Groups and communication between the Arts Capital Board and Residents. Hugh Withycombe (HW) emphasised the importance of meetings to be a two-way communication between the Board and Residents to ask and relay applicable feedback on strategic related topics. LH noted this, stating she will provide a strategically directed agenda item for the next meeting, designed for feedback from Residents. LH acknowledged that there is a need to improve communication between Residents and the Board, stating that there remains ongoing discussion surrounding the distribution of applicable information from Board meetings to Residents.



ACTION: LH to resend her email address to Residents who let staff know they would like to contact her directly.

ACTION: LH to add strategic focussed item to next meeting agenda for feedback on.

CDA described her invitation to artsACT to attend the Gorman RAG or facilitate a dedicated renovation project update for all before the end of 2023. artsACT declined and responded that they will aim to host an information meeting in February 2024. The group discussed and shared frustrations in relation to the lack of information provided by artsACT in their renovations-related communications to Residents. Concerns were raised that artsACT do not relay concern for the cultural heritage of the Centre and the impact the renovations are having on the cultural heritage. Noting the time, LH suggested a possible separate dedicated meeting to discuss the importance of Cultural Heritage and renovations.

ACTION: hold a separate meeting relating to discussion of Cultural Heritage.

Start McMillen (SM) joined the meeting

LH passed over to Lachlan Johnson (LJ) to discuss the progress of a car parking policy. LJ informed the group that a policy is in the process of being drafted for both Centres. The possibility of using the vacant Elder Street Car Park to offer parking for Residents is also being investigated. RD asked if there was a possibility of artsACT intervening to provide subsidised access to paid parking for Residents, acknowledging their use of the Car Park. LH stated there is a possibility of raising this suggestion to artsACT.

Item 3 Arts Capital Operational Updates

Finances and Restructure

Noting the time, LH passed to CDA to provide an operational update to the group. CDA reflected upon a challenging 2023, with varied internal and external contributing factors. CDA gratefully acknowledged and commended Arts Capital staff for their resilience throughout the process of forced redundancies and necessary restructuring. She noted that as AC was defined as a 'large business' with over #15 staff a formal restructure process was the only option. This occurred in September and October with staff of #18 reduced to #12. She noted that in this month (November) Wise Workplace had facilitated a team workshop to acknowledge this challenging time and define a sustainable operations plan moving forward.

CDA acknowledged the tough financial challenges post COVID and a range of external pressures which had impacted AC's income generation levels. She noted the Annual Reports 2021, 2022 documenting a deficit each year and that 2023 will also post a deficit – however the restructuring is path to recovery in 2024.



Gorman Arts Centre

She noted for those who can read budgets that AC's Annual Reports; the past five years note a rising increase percentage of staff per year which assumed an annual level of income to support the salary costs but in fact the income needed was not achievable for reasons outside AC's control. She described that Ainslie was doing well, on par as other years, however Gorman has been hit by several organisations having left – due to pending renovations uncertainty (since 2021), a loss of venue hire levels particularly in late 2022 to mid-2023, and lack of security of month-to-month license as generated by artsACT to AC since 2020/21. She acknowledged ACT Territory Zoning also presents financial impacts/loss, e.g. closure request of Ainslie car-park revenue (May 2023).

CDA noted that she thinks the smaller AC team will be positive and more integrated and efficient. The organisation had relied on a much smaller team in the past (prior 2020).

CDA acknowledged that so many arts organisations are in distress with CPI increases/post COVID reality. She referenced MONA FOMA's funding challenges/public communication to cease exhibitions/festivals shows, in order to renew for 2025 onwards. That AC will have a similar approach of retaining core service provision to residents however other reductions need to occur to survive the renovation period. Our strategic plan (2024-27) 'Reset to Regenerate Strategy' will be released in the early new year. However, AC needs artsACT's renovation plan/schedule to address our future planning properly.

Leslie Pan (LP) noted the lack of control AC has because of the reality that artsACT controls the Gorman renovations, amongst other impacts to AC's management, which is an unprecedented situation.

CDA thanked the hard work of Pedro Ribas (promoted to CFO), LJ (Business Manager) and board member LP (senior auditor/accountant) and Phil Van Zomeren from GingerBooks – a team that has revolutionised AC's internal financial systems in recent months. The combined result ensures 2024 to be more viable. However, the pending renovations present continued risks to AC's income generation.

CDA shared printed copy of the new team structure and spoke to management team/roles, naming the team with brief description to changes e.g push to venue hire model and need to reduce creative programming activities due to funding cuts Oct 31 2022.

CDA also acknowledged and thanked Residents for their perseverance in the face of the uncertainty and minimal level of communication provided by artsACT regarding renovations.



The group relayed their concern with the date, stating that it is too close to the proposed renovation start date of April 2024 and impacts Residents' abilities to plan their activities and will impose on their practice and programs planned. CDA fully agreed, understanding that renovations directly threaten the viability of artistic practice and income generation for all within the Centres.

The group discussed writing a Resident-led and focused letter to Tara Cheyne, cosigned by as many residents as possible and by Arts Capital as fellow stakeholder. The intention of the letter would be to urgently request an update prior to the end of year, regarding the impact of renovations upon Residents. The group agreed to set up a Resident internal contact document in order to communicate for this letter and in general, RW supported this, noting that Arts Capital cannot publicly post Resident's emails due to privacy reasons.

Leslie Pan left the meeting.

[Renovation impact conversation continued] HW queried AC as to whether predecessor CEO (Joseph Falsone's) "...commitment to financially support the residents through the renovation disruption period using received job keeper funds" still stands? LH and CDA stated that this was not known, heard of before. (Deficits posted previous two years)

CDA noted need for a visible Disruption Plan from artsACT.

Moving on, Mauro Aviles (MA) and LJ provided updates in the Facilities and Administration teams. MA informed the group that the Gorman Arts Centre Emergency and Evacuation Manual has been completed and sent to Residents. The manual encompasses a large and varied amount of information, RW stated that the Marketing Team is working with MA to issue a summary of the most integral information to Residents as well as make it available on the Resident Portal. LJ shared with the group that the Administration Team is working hard to complete a draft Car Parking Policy and Venue Hire Policy by the end of the year and is eager to gather insight and feedback on these documents.

ACTION: add emergency and evacuation manual summary to the Resident Portal.

Item 4 Open Conversation – Resident's creative/ professional exchange

In reference to future Resident Advisory Group Meetings, LH asked the group to reflect and provide feedback on the structure of these meetings. In order to structure them in the most beneficial way for Residents. The group discussed the benefit of holding



smaller, shorter meetings, led by a Resident for the Residents collective. In order to mitigate having a backlog of discussion items in the Advisory Group Meetings and promote an efficient feedback loop between Residents and Arts Capital. HW suggested a positive change to the meetings is for Resident's to volunteer as Chair and with that, work collaboratively with Arts Capital to develop the agendas going forward. LH supported this and acknowledged that she will also work on adding a standing agenda item focussing on gathering advice from Residents into future meeting agendas.

ACTION: Residents to volunteer as meeting Chair and work with Arts Capital to develop future Advisory Group Meeting agendas.

ACTION: add 'Advice from Resident Advisory Group' standing agenda item to future Board meeting agendas. [noting future need for Residents to self-organise a meeting prior RAG, to define Items]

Noting the time, CDA asked the group for any additional items for discussion. With no further items, CDA thanked the group for the contributions and time, ending the meeting with a statement that we are stronger together. She emphasised the strength within the A+G community that will continue into 2024.

It was noted that RAG meeting should be longer e.g. 1.5hr

Meeting concluded 11:55 am



Summary of Action Items

#	Meeting	Action Item	Owner	Status
1	#G-23-001-G	Organise and facilitate training opportunities in coordination with Resident's interests and aims.	Arts Capital	In Progress
2	#G-23-001-G	Investigate resource-sharing possibilities within the Resident Portal.	Arts Capital	In Progress
3	#G-23-001-G	Invite Boards of Resident Organisations to connect regarding Cultural Heritage concerns.	Lauren Honcope	Completed
4	G-23-002-G	Distribute training opportunity survey to Residents.	Arts Capital	Completed
5	G-23-002-G	Arts Capital Board meetings to consider ongoing agenda item re: Resident needs and concerns.	Arts Capital Board	In Progress
6	G-23-002-G	Arts Capital Board to consider publishing applicable information/minutes from Board meetings.	Arts Capital Board	In Progress
7	G-23-002-G	Arts Capital to provide Lauren's email upon request to Residents.	Lauren Honcope	Completed
8	G-23-002-G	Investigate the creation of an informal Gorman Car Parking policy.	Arts Capital	Completed
9	G-23-002-G	Investigate bundling of service offerings.	Arts Capital	In Progress
10	G-23-003-G	Request feedback from Residents re: draft Car Park and Venue Hire Policies	Arts Capital	New
11	G-23-003-G	Add agenda items re: strategic focused item for Resident feedback on and 'Advice from Resident Advisory Group'	Arts Capital	New
12	G-23-003-G	Invite Residents to chair and develop Advisory Group agenda for future meetings	Arts Capital/ Residents	New
13	G-23-003-G	Add Emergency and Evacuation Manual summary to Resident Portal	Arts Capital	New
14	G-23-003-G	Hold a separate meeting to discuss Cultural Heritage concerns in relation to renovations	Arts Capital	New