

Friends of NERAM Chairman's Report for 2019/20

I hereby submit my report as chairman of the Friends of NERAM committee.

It has been a year of change for the committee with 4 members resigning due to other commitments and new members stepping up to take on the challenge. We acknowledge the great contributions made by Ady Hallam, Kim Taylor, Helen Templeton and Sally Hardaker.

We welcomed our new committee members, Merran Pearson, Genevieve Noone and Vernon Crew and the enthusiasm they bring to the roles. Merran has taken on the new role as Membership and Public Officer to ease the load on the Secretary. Genevieve is our new Treasurer and brings a wealth of experience to the role. Vern has joined David in attempting to balance the gender representation on the committee.

The committee met 10 times in 2019 / 20 with no meetings in December or March.

Position	Name	Meetings attended (10 meetings held)	Total Years on Committee
Chair	Carol Mackerras	8	5 years; 3 as Chair
Vice Chair	Sarah Johnstone	10	1 year
Secretary	Ady Hallam	7; 3 as secretary; resigned Oct 2019	5 1/2 years; 4 1/2 as secretary
Membership Public officer	Merran Pearson	Joined Sept 2019 4	
Treasurer	Kim Taylor	4; resigned Sept 2019	3 1/2
Treasurer	Genevieve Noone	Joined Oct 2019 4	
Committee member	Ro Randall	7	13 years; 7 as secretary
Committee member	Lucinda Wright	9	10 years
Committee member	Helen Templeton	3 resigned September 2019	6 1/2
Committee member	Sally Hardaker	1 resigned May	4
Committee member	David Hallam	8	5
Committee member	Vernon Crew	Joined Sept 2019 2	

Reflections on the year:

It's hard to imagine a more challenging year. The severity and relentlessness of the drought followed by unprecedented bushfires took a toll on everyone and everything. At the height of the fires, smoke forced the closure of the museum and a re-scheduling of a committee meeting.

Due to the severe weather the mini-ramble was cancelled and replaced by a very successful high tea. Our annual Christmas function was a lunch held at Peterson's, and while the company, food and surroundings were lovely, the air quality, due to the smoke, was terrible.

The rain which has fallen since Christmas, has caused the most wondrous turn-around both in the landscape and in the mood of the community.

In all of this chaos, the museum continues to be an oasis of calm and inspiration.

Fundraising:

Despite the natural disasters, the Friends committee has continued to enthusiastically raise funds to support the museum.

The annual NERAMble was held in April in Emily Brett's beautiful garden, 'Benalla'. In the midst of the dry weather, Emily worked tirelessly to keep the water on her garden and presented a truly beautiful site for the event. The weather was perfect and it was a busy weekend in Armidale with several other events competing for visitors. Numbers were down by 12% from the previous year but the net income for the weekend was up by 10% due to higher sales. The stalls all did very well including one organised by Emily's very entrepreneurial children with their own lolly, jelly and cupcake stall.

As well as NERAMble the Friends were involved with bars and/or catering for:

- 9 exhibition openings
- Packsaddle opening
- UNESAP opening
- 2 concerts
- 1 wake
- Winter Blooming event
- UNE Alumni ATC
- High Tea
- Rotary dinner
- Black Gully festival

Expenditure:

In support of NERAM, the Friends donated \$10,000 from our membership fees. In addition, in the last 12 months, the Friends donated \$5,000 towards the refurbishment of the NERAM shop, \$8,000 for the NERAM After Dark events and \$10,000 to support exhibitions. The \$4,000 in funds raised from the High Tea have been used to adopt the *Still Life* by Ernest Buckmaster, for restoration.

In support of the work done by Friends, it was decided to purchase a Square card reading device to facilitate card payments at events. The cost of the device was covered by the increased sales in the first weekend of use as it coincided with the Black Gully Festival.

Acknowledgements:

None of this would be possible without the work and dedication of the Fundraising committee and the band of volunteers that make up the Royal Court of Catering. On behalf of all the Friends, many, many thanks.

We are very fortunate to have such a professional, innovative and dedicated staff at NERAM. Our thanks to Rachael, Belinda, Jenny, Leah, May and Bill for finding the time to work with us, help us when needed and keep everything running smoothly and to Fahi and Emily for the essential work they do keeping the gallery open on weekends. We look forward to working with Alexis Rickards in her new role as Education Officer as opportunities arise.

Finally, a big thank you to all the members who have served on the committee in the past 12 months for their contribution to the Friends. This contribution is often unseen and un-acknowledged but essential to the running of the organisation.

Carol Mackerras
Chairman, Friends of NERAM