

Chairperson's Report for Friends of NERAM Inc

2021-2022 AGM

On behalf of the Friends of NERAM Committee, I'm delighted to present the 2021/2022 report on our activities during this time. As you all know, we once again faced a change in our activities and events because of the Covid-19 pandemic and could not run our usual programme. However, the Friends Committee still had seven meetings and managed a restricted calendar of events.

Our 2021 AGM was on 2 May 2021 at which Julia McCosker was elected Chairperson. We are grateful to Julia for her expertise and leadership in the role, drawing on her years of experience in senior government roles. I took on the role of Acting Chair in September 2021. We are also grateful to Robyn McCarthy, who has so ably filled the important role of treasurer since the 2021 AGM. I am grateful to all members of the committee who use their considerable talents in pursuit of our objectives as stated by the Constitution: raising funds for the benefit of Friends and NERAM, liaising with the Director and Board, growing our membership, organising events and creating awareness and appreciation of the visual arts and associated activities.

As a committee we have discussed the historic and community significance of NERAM and our broader purpose of giving back to the community of the New England while encouraging learning and the acquisition of new skills all in a context of support, social connection and fun.

Current Committee members:

Debra Kelliher	Acting Chairperson
David Hallam	Deputy Chairperson
Lynne Walker	Secretary
Robyn McCarthy	Treasurer
Merran Pearson	Membership Secretary
Richard Purssey	Member
Trevor Edgar	Member
Deb McKern	Member

Financial:

Although our fundraising programme was restricted, our membership fees raised income of \$12,705.00. Catering and fundraising contributed \$24,325.20. Friends were able to give \$13,170.00 to support exhibitions and projects at NERAM and a further donation of \$9210.00 from membership fees. Our operating result for the year ended 31 December 2021 was a profit of \$6782.26, compared with the 2020 deficit of (\$7441)

I would also like to acknowledge the personal donation from Friends members Rose and Bruce McCarthy which enabled the refurbishment of the café and the subsequent opening of the Six Counties Restaurant.

Oars Awards

We did not give any Oars Awards in 2021, owing to our restricted activities due to the pandemic.

Membership

Thank you to our membership secretary Merran Pearson for her efficiency and energy. Current membership (including those with Life membership) stands at 300, on 25 February 2022. This is an increase in members from the 2021 number of 254.

Activities:

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic we cancelled NERAMble and the min-NERAMbles in 2021, as well as the High Tea and at-homes. Sincere thanks to all those Friends who had been willing to support these activities and coped with sudden changes of plan and the ambiguity of life under Covid.

The White Rhino Film Club has gone from strength to strength and membership has almost doubled from 60 members to 100 members. We began our year with social distancing in place and films shown in the Mazda Room at NERAM. We were able to shift venue to the refurbished Armidale Playhouse which allowed us to include more members. With John Wearne's warmth and knowledge ably supported by film buff Mike Gibson, we enjoyed a wonderful programme of films., Belinda Hungerford's expertise as projectionist ensured our films operated smoothly - our grateful thanks to Belinda and to Paul Gaddes who has kindly picked up this role. Thanks to the Armidale Dramatic and Musical Society for allowing us to hire the Playhouse at a very reasonable rent.

Friends of NERAM sponsored two workshops by Julie McCarthy (paper conservator) in 2021 and 3 are planned for 2022.

We made an application for a Black Summer Bushfire Recovery Grant anticipating a programme of artistic and cultural events to honour our Rural Fire Service and State Emergency Service volunteers. Although we were unsuccessful in our application, I am very grateful to Julia McCosker, Deb McKern and Robyn McCarthy for the time and effort they put into this application.

The Fundraising Committee once again played an essential role in catering for exhibition openings when we were allowed to gather once more and providing catering at every White Rhino film showing. This team works very hard, often in cramped conditions to nourish art lovers and their catering is always delicious, creative and fresh. The first of the openings where we were once again allowed to mingle was in September 2021 and it was a great joy to see the catering team again, full of smiles and energy.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the FON committee members who give their time, talent and enthusiasm so willingly. A very big thank you to the catering team who provide such service so willingly, in support of NERAM.

Rachael Parsons and her staff have consistently been obliging, caring and enthusiastic in working with us. Rachael attends all Friends Committee meetings where possible and is a wonderful collaborator. It is always a joy to hear of the creative and diverse ideas which power NERAM.

And grateful thanks to you as Friends members for your continued support of NERAM and your attendance at events and exhibitions. Your membership enables the institution of NERAM which acts as a gathering place for people, art, culture and connection. The New England is a richer place for NERAM.

Dr Debra Kelliher

Acting Chairperson

Friends of NERAM Inc