



Chairperson's Report for Friends of NERAM Inc

2026 AGM

On behalf of the Friends of NERAM Management Committee, I'm delighted to present the 2025 report on our activities during this time. The Friends' Management Committee had ten meetings in 2025.

Our 2025 AGM was on Sunday 30 March, held at the Mazda Gallery. Our objectives as stated by the Constitution are:

- 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 are committed to NERAM as a significant place of learning in the creative arts and as an iconic institution in the New England.

Current Management Committee members:

Debra Kelliher	Chairperson
David Rose	Deputy Chairperson
Lynne Walker	Secretary
Adam Edwards	Treasurer
Merran Pearson	Membership Secretary
Kaelem Burgess	Member
Kerry Dunne	Member (resigned July, 2025)
Martha Saw	Temporary Member, Chair Fundraising Sub-committee.



Financials

Full financial details can be found in the accompanying financial statement.

Oars Awards

We presented two Oars Awards in 2025, to Merran Pearson and Glenda Kupczyk Romanczuk. We were delighted to honour both these loyal and longstanding members of FON. In recognition of Packsaddle's 40th anniversary in 2025, they were also Packsaddlers.

Membership

We began 2025 with 295 members. Current membership (including those with Life membership) stands at 283, as at 31 January 2026.

Activities

Friends of NERAM conducted a range of fundraising activities throughout the year.

Friends of NERAM ran an En Plein Air painting workshop in March, 2025. Isabelle Devos lead the workshop which was rather compromised by torrential rain, leading us to have participants working under canvas behind NERAM rather than at Blue Hole. Deputy Chair David Rose ably managed this initiative. A second En Plein Air workshop was cancelled as the teacher was unavailable.

Two At Home Events were held at Heather and Edward Cowie's home, the second by popular demand. These were delightful occasions with attendees enjoying both art and music at the home of this talented couple.

An Artisans' Trail took place in November, with participants enjoying the delicate watercolours of Julia Hardman, the fine ceramics of Rick and Suzanne



Hatch, the expressive landscapes of Rowen Matthews and Kerry Gulliver, and the reclaimed metal sculptures of Miles Harper over a weekend, visiting artists' studios and workshops.

NERAM held a terrific number and range of exhibitions in 2025, all supported by the Friends of NERAM Fundraising Sub-Committee. In April, the Adopt An Artwork exhibition celebrated ten years of the program and it was clear that Friends of NERAM had made a significant contribution. NERAM's Adopt An Artwork program has seen over 100 art works restored to excellent condition. In 2025, Friends of NERAM contributed \$8750 to restore a beautiful Elioth Gruner work, *From the Dorrigo Road, Bellingen*, in memory of Trevor Edgar. Many individuals who are Friends of NERAM also contribute generously to the Adopt An Artwork program.

Friends of NERAM assisted the sponsorship of the *Echoes of the Earth: Tribal and Desert Art* exhibition in November, with a gift of \$10,000. This exhibition was highly unusual, bringing together work from indigenous artists in both Australia and India.

The Fundraising Sub-Committee catered for twelve exhibition openings in 2025 plus the White Rhino Film Club showings. We are grateful to the members of this hardworking committee as well as those Friends who provide extra assistance at events. Chair Martha Saw oversaw the Fundraising Sub-Committee and generously stepped onto the Friends of NERAM Committee temporarily to assist us. We acknowledge Martha's continuing energy and diligence, as well as the hard work of Co-Chair Prue Melville who stepped down from this role in 2025.

The White Rhino Film Club Sub-Committee offered a full program of films at the Armidale Playhouse, with monthly showings plus a Film Festival in



October. Chair John Wearne, assisted by Mike Gibson, offer notes to the films, Wendy Wearne and Lynne Walker assist with management, and Paul Gaddes manages the technology. The subscriptions to the White Rhino Film Club sold out soon after being offered and the Club remains very popular. Funds from the October Film Festival went towards the restoration of the Elioth Gruner painting in memory of Trevor Edgar, a keen White Rhino member.

The Friends of NERAM Management Committee attended the NERAM Board meeting in August, in order to meet our obligations under our Constitution and for the ACNC.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the FON Management Committee members who give their time, talent, ideas and enthusiasm so willingly. Merran Pearson will be stepping down from the Committee and we acknowledge her dedication and consistent industry in the important role of membership secretary. We thank David Rose for investigating a soon to be instigated membership system, using Mailchimp. A very big thank you once again to the two Sub-Committees - Fundraising and White Rhino Film Club.

We acknowledge NERAM Director Rachael Parsons, Finance and Admin Officer Leah Gilbey, Registrar & Collections Manager Jennifer Taylor, Communications Officer Rochelle Tubb (since resigned), Education Officer Anne Blair-Hickman, Gallery Technician and Curatorial Assistant Phoebe Hilliard, Front of House Coordinator Emily Simson and gallery assistants Merran Pearson and Emily Blair-Hickman for their continued professionalism and enthusiasm as staff of NERAM. They all go beyond the boundaries of their roles in their desire for excellence and passion for art.



And thank you to all Friends' members for your continued support of NERAM and your attendance at events and exhibitions. Your membership supports NERAM which makes a huge contribution to the arts in New England.

D A Kelliher

Dr Debra Kelliher

Chairperson

Friends of NERAM Inc