



Clifton School of Arts Inc. Strategic Plan 2022

Introduction

The Clifton School of the Arts is an historic landmark building, located just south of the iconic Sea Cliff Bridge in Clifton, in the Illawarra region on the south coast of NSW. For 110 years the building has provided a spectacular space for exhibitions, small concerts, film screenings, talks and a host of other community activities. The Clifton School of Arts building is owned and maintained by the community and is managed by a Committee of dedicated volunteer local residents.

History

The Clifton School of Arts Stands on Dharawal Country, the Traditional Homelands of the Wodi Wodi People. The CSA Committee and members pay their respects to the First Nations People of this country.

Situated on a narrow ribbon of land between the ocean and the Illawarra Escarpment, the village of Clifton grew around the Coal Cliff Colliery which commenced operations in 1877. In its heyday, the village boasted about a thousand residents. In 1910, the miners went out on strike for six months. With time on their hands, they put their skills to good use and built a School of Arts for the community on land donated by the mining company. The cost of £100 was raised by public subscription.

The miners planned to construct the facility in two stages. The first consisted of four rooms on two storeys. The building included a small reading library, an upright piano and rooms where the community could gather for meetings and classes. The second stage was to be a large hall at the rear of the building but before work could commence, the industrial dispute was settled, and the men headed back to the pit.

Not long after opening its doors, the little School of Arts was being buffeted by history. The following decades saw the Spanish Flu pandemic, two World Wars and the Great Depression. While these years of turmoil caused wild fluctuations in the fortunes of Clifton, a chain of committees somehow kept the Clifton School of Arts functioning.

By the 1980's the Clifton mine had closed, and the town's population had dwindled. Over the decades, the School of Arts building had deteriorated badly and looked as though it would have to be demolished. In 1996, the School of Arts Committee began fundraising and lobbying to restore the building. Grants were received from Wollongong City Council, NSW Heritage Commission, and private donors. Through the efforts and enthusiasm of the local community the beloved building was brought back to life. It has remained in community hands for 110 years.

Vision

To inspire, encourage and celebrate our community by continuing to develop the Clifton School of Arts as a creative, educational and cultural hub for the Northern Illawarra and beyond, honouring the vision of the original founders.

Objectives

By December 2022, the Clifton School of Arts will have:

1. Increased the **range of activities and services** that it offers to the local and wider Illawarra community and visitors to Clifton by:
 - a. Conducting a survey of members to ascertain information such as:
 - Interests and priorities for CSA activities
 - Demographics
 - What skills they could bring to the CSA as volunteers
 - b. Developing a diverse program of cultural and educational events that are relevant to members' interests and appeal to a broader cross-section of the community in terms of age and cultural diversity, including Indigenous communities while also ensuring calendar schedules on the booking system are an effective use of space available
 - c. Exploring the availability of other spaces in the area for overflow events
 - d. Considering the viability of developing CSA-initiated exhibitions

2. Developed a **stronger profile** for CSA and its activities by:
 - a. Continuing to build its reputation through the local media (especially 2515 magazine) and other fora, particularly in relation to 110th anniversary
 - b. Increasing outreach by developing a communications plan focussed on key stakeholders
 - c. Developing a membership drive to celebrate 110th and DA approval to expand the number and diversity of members and supporters
 - d. Maintaining regular communications with members, supporters and the community through the newsletter, events, website, and social media
 - e. Staging the 110th Anniversary celebratory events delayed due to COVID

3. Planned the financing of the **construction of an elegant, multifunctional gallery** at the rear of our much-loved heritage building, thereby completing the work that the original miners started in 1911 (subject to DA conditions) by:
 - a. Mobilising members and the community to support the construction
 - b. Obtaining quotes/estimates of the costs of construction and fit-out
 - c. Identifying the construction phases of the development
 - d. Preparing a budget to cover costs of the extension and its ongoing management
 - e. Developing a Business Case for the extension that includes an assessment of its financial viability/feasibility and a risk analysis
 - f. Seeking funds as required in line with objective 5 below.

4. Built a **network of key partners, members and supporters** that wish to contribute to the future viability of the organisation by:
 - a. Reaching out to neighbouring venues (Imperial Hotel etc) and Wollongong City Council to gather information about identified needs
 - b. Engaging members and volunteers in the activities of the CSA by being part of a 'working group'
 - c. Acknowledging the contribution of volunteers, donors etc via certificates/ plaques etc
 - d. Raising awareness of the historical, cultural and architectural significance of the building.
 - e. Raising awareness of the CSA among new audiences that are younger and more culturally diverse, and among local Indigenous communities

5. Established a **stronger financial base** that supports CSA's future aspirations by:
 - a. Developing a balanced budget for the current building, the extension and the long-term operation of the CSA.
 - b. Developing a fundraising strategy that identifies a range of potential donors and prepares CSA for DGR status.
 - c. Submitting applications for funding to selected sponsors, foundations, philanthropists, and local and state governments
 - d. Developing new fundraising initiatives such as through a crowdfunding platform through Creative Partnerships Australia.

6. Enhanced the **governance, planning and management** of the CSA and its activities by:
 - a. Creating working groups to assist with delivering each aspect of the Strategic Plan
 - b. Continuing to hold regular meetings of the committee and members, and working towards diversifying the membership
 - c. Ensuring that the management and financial practices of the CSA will be able to meet the anticipated increase in activity and demand
 - d. Applying to ROCO for DGR status and ensuring that the new Public Fund meets compliance requirements
 - e. Meeting compliance requirements e.g. by providing an annual information statement to the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission.
 - f. Fulfilling the Strategic Plan and supplementing it with a Values Statement.

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