



CLIFTON SCHOOL OF ARTS INCORPORATED ANNUAL REPORT 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023

Clifton School of Arts stands on Dharawal country. We acknowledge the Wodi Wodi people as the Traditional Custodians of this Land. We recognise their continuing connection to land, water and community, and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT, DAVID ROACH

Clifton School of Arts (CSA) has been a community owned and volunteer run institution since 1880. Over that time, generations of members and volunteers have dealt with countless challenges from bushfires, storms, landslides and white ants to two World Wars, a Great Depression and at least two pandemics. While the latest of these, COVID 19, closed our doors for some months in 2021-22, the work of Clifton School of Arts continued.

The fact that we have emerged in 2022-23 stronger than ever, says a lot about our history, the resilience of our members and the ongoing support of our community. I am particularly indebted to CSA's voluntary management committee members who so generously give their time and expertise. In addition to their governance of CSA's operations, this year they carried extra responsibilities as CSA embarked on major projects, transitioned to DGR status, upgraded our accounting and venue booking systems and much more.

I was extremely proud that this year the CSA committee and members committed to support and raise money for the Yes vote for The Voice Referendum.

I want to acknowledge our community partners: Wollongong Art Gallery, UOW, Illawarra Historical Society, South Coast Writers Centre and Scarborough Public School, our media supporters: Illawarra Flame, ABC Illawarra and WIN 4 and our generous local suppliers including Active Electrical & Data, Austi Bookkeeping, Coal Coast Brewery, Cocoon Trading, Eve & Co Catering, The Imperial@Clifton, Jeremy Park Photography, Martini Plumbing, Mia Mia Bar Wollongong, Moonlander Media, The Photo Fixer Thirroul, Pro Sound and Lighting, Twig & Bo Florist and Wollongong City Libraries.

Finally, I want to acknowledge our wonderful donors whose ongoing generosity and support make our projects possible.

OVERVIEW

Over the past 12 months Clifton School of Arts has

- enhanced the range of activities and services that we offer to the local and wider Illawarra community.
- continued to build our profile through our website, newsletter, events and community engagement.
- maintained and preserved our heritage building.
- progressed plans for the construction of disability access and facilities and a multifunctional gallery.

- strengthened the network of key community partners by collaborating on cultural projects.
- preserved and built on our strong financial base.
- enhanced our governance, planning and management systems thus ensuring the viability of the CSA into the future.

ACTIVITIES

The year started memorably with the **111th Anniversary Celebrations** and historical exhibition held over the weekend of 11-12 July 2022 to commemorate the construction of the CSA building which was opened in 1911. Special guests included Dharawal and Yuin traditional custodian, Paul Knight, Federal Member for Cunningham, Alison Byrnes, local member, Lee Evans MP and NSW Minister for the Arts, Youth and Tourism, Ben Franklin, Councillors, Richard Martin and Cameron Walters, as well as past CSA presidents, committee members and CSA members old and new. Wollongong Lord Mayor, Councilor Gordon Bradbery AM, launched Dawn Crowther's *Chronicles from Clifton*. We were also honoured to welcome many former Clifton miners and their families as well as many past and present Clifton residents, who reunited with old acquaintances and shared stories.

In the following week, 68 students from Scarborough Public School, their teachers and some parents visited the historical exhibition. We hope to strengthen the relationship with Scarborough School and plan further **school visits** and collaborations.

This year saw the launch of CSA's **Artists Forum** where practising artists get together on the second Thursday of every month to discuss their practice and exchange ideas. The initiative of members, Roger West and Hugo Zweep, the forum has proved a great success with ongoing presentations and guest speakers. Comments and feedback from participating artists indicate that they find the group to be inspiring and supportive and a great way to connect with fellow practitioners.

Art workshops have been at the heart of CSA's activities for many years. Once again, this year they have proved extremely popular. Workshops included Karen Hook's Drawing Inside/Outside in July, Ann Clarke's Native Plant Drawing in September, and Gabrielle Freer's Charcoal Drawing in May.

As a **gallery and exhibition venue**, CSA's light-filled spaces have never been more sought after, with bookings extending more than a year in advance. This year's notable exhibitions and events included *Sweet Nothings* by Bec Kos, the *Aurobindo Project* by Sound Bath, *Fragility* by various artists, *Yield* by Pilar Helmers, Kurt Sorensen's *Their Names Upon Gallipoli*, *Bleeding True* by Squashed Bug, Ian Brown's *Locus and Botanica*, *Tranquility* by Wendy Fogarty, Geoff Morrell's *The Body Keeps the Score*, *Treasure Teachings* by James Kates, Stephen Dupont's *Archives*, *Travelling On* featuring IAVA artists, Vyvian Wilson's *Resonance*, *Shibori and Indigo* Michele Elliot's two-day dyeing workshop, *New Works* from Samantha Arnall, and Hal Pratt and Ashley Frost's *Arboreal*. Thank you, Vyvian Wilson, Cheryl O'Connor and Kieran Jones for ongoing management and coordination of the venue.

In September, several UCI **World Championship Cycle Races** passed by the CSA. Knowing there would be thousands of spectators and millions more around the world watching the live broadcast, we displayed on our northern wall a large banner that read WELCOME TO DHARAWAL COUNTRY.

As part of our **Meet the Maker series**, artist and member Jennifer Gowen presented *Arts in Afghanistan* at Coledale Community Hall on 20 November. It was a well-attended event with 50% of funds raised donated to SCARF, a Wollongong organization that supports refugees and their families.

GOVERNANCE

Once again, this year saw steady growth in our **membership** with 33 new members. Total membership at 30 June 2023 was 183. Dawn Crowther was made an Honorary Life Member. This

year we said goodbye and a sincere thank you to artist, Vyvian Wilson, who retired as our venue hire officer. This was, in effect, a full-time unpaid job which she performed extremely efficiently and diplomatically. Vyv has been a significant member of the CSA family for many years and she will continue to be an active member.

The **Committee** met 11 times during the year. Our AGM was held in October and General Meetings in December 2022 and March, June and October 2023. During the year, we said goodbye and thanks to committee members Hugo Zweep, Prue Watson, Anne Guigni and Jane Johnson and welcomed Cheryl O'Connor and Kieran Jones.

In December, after researching and consulting with our membership, we published a new [Strategic Plan for 2022-23](#), updating our Vision, Purpose, Values and Objectives.

An annual Information Statement was submitted to **ACNC**.

Led by member, Brian Murphy, this year we successfully carried out an **energy audit**. This information will help us achieve our planned 2025 net zero emissions target.

This year CSA became a Registered Organisation under the **Centrelink Voluntary Work Program**.

Thanks to the support of a club grant from the Shellharbour Club, we purchased a portable **stage and efficient PA system** which has had multiple uses and is available to hirers.

We are extremely grateful to member, Brian Murphy, and Venue Hire Manager, Kieran Jones, who have created a highly automated and much more efficient **venue hire system**.

PROJECTS

Last year, Wollongong City Council approved the DA for our new gallery, walkway and accessible facilities, designed to meet the highest standards of energy efficiency in both construction and operation. This year Tim Antiohos continued his generous commitment to the CSA by developing plans and drawings for the next stage, a construction certificate. To help pay for engineering and other specialist reports, we held a **fundraising evening** in February featuring brilliant Italian classical guitarist, Lorenzo Bernardi. With Italian food and wine provided by Tom Chiumento's Mia Mia Bar, the night was an outstanding success. Thanks to the generosity of our donors, we raised over \$50,000 for our building project. Thanks also to our fundraising mentor, member, Jane Westbrook.

Member Alison Wiig generously initiated the construction of a perfect **scale model of the CSA** complete with the new gallery and walkways. Model builders, Jim and Sue Roach, have now completed the model and planning is underway for a public unveiling.

During the year, planning and preparations continued for one of the CSA's most ambitious undertakings. A partnership with Wollongong Art Gallery (WAG), **the Gentle Project** will celebrate the life and work of artist and mentor, the late Ian Gentle who lived and worked at Clifton School of Arts for ten years from 1986. The project team led by Artistic Director, David Roach, made significant progress on a book, a film and exhibition and events planning. The project will open from 1 December 2023 and will run for two months at CSA and three months at WAG. We are grateful for the support of The Gordon Darling Foundation and substantial donations from private donors.

Planning advanced on the exhibition **Prelude: Artists' Books** which will open in November 2023 as a prelude to CSA Artists' Book Prize Exhibition in 2025.

COMMUNICATIONS

Five editions of our **newsletter** were published, in August, November, February, March and June. We have continued to develop and expand our **website**, adding additional information relating to events, donations, bequests, venue hire FAQs and inventory. CSA's Instagram and Facebook accounts have a growing following with regular posts helping drive traffic to exhibitions and events. In the past year, CSA has regularly **featured in stories** in Illawarra Flame, the Mercury, Win 4 TV, ABC TV and radio and Region Illawarra online magazine.

FINANCE AND ACCOUNTS

Following months of intense work, the Federal government approved **Deductible Gift Recipient** status for the CSA in November 2022, which means that we are now eligible to receive tax deductible donations into the new CSA Public Fund. The first report to the Register of Cultural Organisations was submitted in January 2023. We would not have been able to achieve this milestone without committee member Sarah Gardner's extraordinary leadership and expertise for which we are deeply grateful.

With the assistance of member, Martin Gorrick, CSA Secretary, Bernie O'Donnell, developed a **bequests strategy** and completed a campaign to make local law firms aware of the CSA as a potential recipient of bequests from the estates of their clients. [Bequest information](#) was published on our website. We are grateful to Martin Gorrick and Bernie O'Donnell for their leadership on this.

2022-23 saw the completion of the transition of our accounts from a spreadsheet to the **Xero online accounting platform**. The new system enables us to invoice for venue hires, membership fees and website sales, as well as provide timely budget reports to keep the Committee, membership and government agencies well-informed. The transition will also help us prepare for future growth in financial activities. We are enormously grateful to Di Oliver from Austibooks for assisting in the process and to committee members, Anne Guini and Sarah Gardner.

The **CSA's accounts for 2022-23 were independently reviewed** by Denis Yeo of Wollongong Business Accountants. Income for the year was \$114,255 of which \$65,725 was for donations to the Public Fund as part of the special fundraising event and the Gentle Project. Expenditure for the year was \$37,509 resulting in a surplus of \$76,746. This brought total equity to \$195,405 which, together with the value of the CSA building, amounts to \$1,445,405.

THE YEAR AHEAD

Thanks to the dedication and hard work of CSA members and friends, it has been an exciting and successful 12 months for Clifton School of Arts. Even in the toughest times, CSA has been a beacon of hope in the Northern Illawarra, connecting people, supporting and inspiring the community. We are eagerly anticipating the year ahead and looking forward to welcoming locals and visitors, old and new friends alike through our doors.

It's worth noting that 2030 will be our sesquicentenary. 150 years since the first meeting of Clifton School of Arts in a tiny weatherboard shack in 1880.

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