

Forbes Arts Society

President's Report 2015-2016

Every year seems to be a busy year and this past financial year is no exception. We have been very busy trying to faithfully implement our goal "To foster the visual arts and encourage their enjoyment in the communities of our region."

This year I will strictly report our activities on the financial year past. This will mean that there may be some overlap with last year but it is better to have everything running on the same time frame.

We have been able to run some seven exhibitions in the Town Hall and in the Platypus Gallery. These were a very diverse array of visual arts, ranging from the ever amazing photographic competition "Life in Pictures" in the Town Hall in August 2015 to the wonderful exhibition of paintings by Rosie Johnston and Jac Clark in the Town Hall in October. This Exhibition was the Arts Society's contribution to the River Arts Festival.

In November and early December we had two exhibitions running concurrently in the Gallery Firstly a "Smalls competition" (paintings or drawings less than 15 x 10 cm). The People's Choice was won by Klara Ward. She became winner of this year's Golden Palette award. The concurrent exhibition was an ever amazing exhibition of the fibre arts of the Orange Fibre Arts Group. There was a small exhibition of some terrific bird paintings by Di Gee from the South coast. The 2016 year began in the Town Hall with a major exhibition of paintings and metal sculptures called "Ninety Seven" by the artists Kathleen McCue and Nina Roderick.

This year's Heritage Competition for paintings, drawings and photographs was on the theme of landscapes of the Forbes Shire. The Council Acquisition Prize was won by Karen Ritchie for her lovely painting of the wetlands at the north end of Lake Forbes.

During the year members competed in art competitions at a number of local shows and those held by nearby art societies with, I might add, some considerable distinction.

During October 2015 the "Somewhere Down the Lachlan Sculpture Competition" was held and the \$20,000 acquisition prize was won by Harrie Fasher for her sculpture "The Horse and I" which is to be moved shortly to the courtyard bounded by the Presbyterian Church building, The Council Chambers and the Town Hall. The \$4,000 open prize was won by Christine McMillan for her extraordinary sculpture "The Disc" made from echidna spines. The collection of sculptures has now been handed over to the people of Forbes into the care of the Forbes Shire Council for permanent display. It remains amazing to see how many people visit the somewhat controversial Pyramid sculpture. Rarely do you walk past in the main part of the day without seeing someone looking at it (and the other sculptures in the Albion Art Park), children playing on it, not to mention people photographing it. It without doubt must be the most photographed structure in town!

The Amazing sculpture continued with some pace with the letters all completed and powder coated to their amazing scarlet, footings have been designed and constructed as have the mounting posts all ready for installation in early summer. It was at that point we were

informed of one more hurdle we had to jump and that took longer than it did to construct the sculpture. However we now have all required approvals. When we finally had the approvals in hand and we were ready to go the rains came and we have been unable to install it through autumn and winter now we have a spring flood. As soon as we can get vehicles on site installation will begin. But who knows when that will be but it will be great day when we do. Just as a sideline the value of the design, construction and installation of AMAZING has been estimated as if it were a commercial project and the all up value will be in the vicinity of \$150,000, most of this has been covered by voluntary activity. I cannot complete a description of the progress of the AMAZING project without thanking Kim Muffet who has almost single-handedly organised its construction and planned out its installation. He has born the disappointment of being unable to install it. Thanks Kim.

We (the Somewhere Down the Lachlan sculpture sub committee) have continued planning for the Somewhere Down the Lachlan Sculpture Trail. Recently we have entered into discussions with Lachlan Shire Council who are keen to get involved and have already been planning to move "Utes in the Paddock" to the western end of the Trail. When that and another project is completed they will be able to be more actively involved in the Trail's development that is anticipated to be in the 2017-18 financial year.

Early this year the Society with the terrific help of the Forbes aboriginal community and in particular the Dreaming Centre committee applied for a \$300,000 government grant to expand the Dreaming Centre with the development of some nine sculptures depicting components of the local Wiradjuri culture to be placed around the north part of the lake. Each sculpture will have information available for both primary school children and secondary students, also for visitors to town. There will be other minor works including a special teaching area to be established among the trees on the eastern side of the lake.

There were in excess of 250 applicants for the grant. In June we were notified that we were short listed in a group of 25 applicants and a full application was made in the latter part of June and now we wait. I expect to hear very soon as to whether we are successful or not. The exciting part is that the Government has \$2.4 million for these grants this year the maximum grant is \$300,000 which gives us something like a one in eight chance of success. This is a very significant project for Forbes but especially for the local Aboriginal community. In terms of the sculptures they will be very varied (they are yet to be designed but topics have been short listed). This project in its own right will be a serious tourist attraction and a very serious educational tool for our local communities and all with a Wiradjuri background, not to mention visitors. Clearly such a significant group of sculptures will take pride of place and be the first stop on the Somewhere Down the Lachlan Sculpture Trail. And still we wait.

When Forbes was recently visited by the NSW Governor General Hurley and his wife they became very interested in the sculpture program. To cut a long story short we have had discussions with his Excellency and he and his wife have agreed to become Patrons. This is a very considerable honour for the Arts Society and the people of Forbes.

The Platypus Gallery has traded successfully again this year. The success has been many fold. We were able to sell enough of our works to pay for the operation costs. We were able to host several exhibitions and competitions and members' paintings, photographs and wood art have been able to be displayed. An interesting addition to our array of art works have been an increasing array of cards suitable for greetings of one kind or another.

The number of visitors has remained high with well in excess of 2,500 visitors from all states of Australia and from many countries around the world. Some 40 % of visitors are travellers from outside of Forbes. I was chatting to a couple of visitors to the gallery and not knowing if they were local or not asked if this was their first visit to the gallery "Oh no" was the reply this must be our fifth or sixth visit. So I displayed my ignorance and said "oh you must be reasonably local. "Oh no" they said "We come from Melbourne. We love this gallery and drop in every time we pass through"! When I mentioned this to others who work in the gallery many reported similar things. There is widespread approval of the gallery and its exhibition of local arts by locals and visitors to the town alike. It seems 'as they say' we are now on the map! Again I wish to acknowledge all the many volunteers who man the gallery Mondays to Saturdays, many of these people do not have any arts connection. They just think it is a great thing for the town and want to help. To each one of them I give our deepest thanks. Thanks must also go to our local artists who display their work in the gallery. It is impressive that the work of accomplished artists is seen side by side with beginners and none look out of place. The gallery organisers are always looking for new works, paintings, photographs, drawings, woodwork, ceramics and fibre arts or for that matter any other art of interest. Special thanks go to Jenny Currey and Pammie Thompson who over the past year or so have managed the staffing of the gallery. This is no mean task Thanks to Lyn Henley and all the others who look after the management of the gallery in practical terms, cleaning it, keeping it tidy and providing for the workers.

Workshops

During the year a number of workshops were held to help artists develop their skills and to acquire new ones. The workshops were

Landscape Painting with Glenn Morton

Diane Gee taught us sketching and bird painting

Orange Fibre Artists Group held another basket weaving workshop

Pammie Thomson taught watercolour painting for beginners.

Painters and photographers meet regularly, painters every Thursday at Northside Chapel, photographers on the first Thursday each month at the Forbes Services Club. The group also have regular visits to places of photographic interest as well as regular internal challenges and competitions.

It seems to me that we have fostered the visual arts and encourage their enjoyment in communities of our region and have developed a fellowship of artists. We have been able to help experienced and developing artists to acquire new skills and to improve their work and provided a gallery for them to exhibit their art for display and or sale.

We have been active seeking appropriate grant funding. This leads to the newest of our activities which was announced last year. I am referring to our food event to be known as 'Grazing Down the Lachlan' or 'Grazing' for short. Wendy Muffet and a group of enthusiasts on steroids have begun to plan for this fantastic event to be held in September next year. The purpose of this event is twofold, firstly to provide a high quality food event to be held at the Amazing site on the banks of the Lachlan. This event will be a tourist attraction in its own right. Its second purpose is to run the event at a profit which will be to assist the Society in its work in particular the important sculpture program. This is a huge undertaking but the subcommittee have begun with great enthusiasm. They have appointed two Sydney chefs as creative directors of the event. They are O Tama Carey and Matt Lindsay.

O Tama has been a head chef at a top Sydney restaurant and she also works on SBS. Matt Lindsay is head chef at Ester Restaurant which was listed as one of the top five restaurants in Australia. They have begun well. Watch the website Grazing Down the Lachlan which will go live shortly. Keep your eye on this for up to date information. There will be a limited number of participants at the event and tickets are expected to sell very quickly when they become available.

Currently there are 91 financial members and 9 Friends of the Gallery.

Lastly I would like to thank each member of the subcommittees for all their hard work to make things happen. I won't name them because there are too many. However I would like to single out Leone Morrison who at this election is retiring as the treasurer of the Society. She will continue on the painters and photographers subcommittee. Without Leone we would have been in a dark place some time ago. Thanks Leone for all of your work for us all.

I would also like to thank the committee for its diligence in getting things done.

Last year I made some remarks about the fogies running the place and for the younger generation to put their hand up. This year and into next year the subcommittees have increasing numbers of the younger generations, for this I (an old fogie) am very thankful. I can report that all is well with the Society. We know fairly clearly where we are going and have a pretty good idea of how to get there.

The last thing I want to say is to give thanks to the Forbes Shire Council for all of their support over the past year and particularly to Mayor Phyllis Miller for her enthusiasm for what we do and her tireless support.

Lastly Forbes Services Club has been a considerable sponsor of the Society and our activities. To them I give thanks.

There are so many individuals and companies who have volunteered to assist us and who have supported us with their skill to each of them we give thanks, you have kept us afloat.

Keith