



Maroondah Arts Advisory Committee – Minutes

Meeting Details:

Date: Wednesday 8 March 2023

Optional Pre-Meet - Guided Site Visit to Ringwood Arts Precinct public art Time: 6:30-7:00pm Location: Meet at Realm front desk 6:25pm

Committee Meeting Time: 7:00 - 8:30pm Location: Meeting Room 1 & 2, Realm

Attendees:

Councillors

Cr Mike Symon (Chair)
Cr Paul Macdonald
Cr Suzy Stojanovic

Council Officers:

Chris Zidak, Manager Business & Precincts
Elise Murphy, Coordinator Arts and Culture
Rebeccah Penrose, Asset Planner (Open Space)
Stefanie Black, Asset Planner (Open Space)
Emma Hills, Governance Officer (Minute Taker)

Community and Creative Industries Representatives:

David Billimoria
Grace Watson
James Andrews
Kali Michailidis
Katie Stackhouse
Maryanne Leavey
Sharyn Mullens Taylor OAM
Wendy Catling

Apologies:

Councillors:

Nil

Council Officers:

Marianne Di Giallonardo

Community and Creative Industries Representatives:

Nil

Conflict of Interest Disclosure:

Councillors:	Nil
Council Officers:	Nil
Community and Creative Industries Representatives:	Nil

Items Discussed

1. OPENING OF MEETING (Acknowledgement of Country)

Cr Symon opened the meeting and read the Acknowledgment of Country.

Maroondah City Council, in the spirit of Reconciliation, acknowledges the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation as traditional custodians of the land on which we are gathered today, where Indigenous Australians have performed age-old ceremonies. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

2. WELCOME

Cr Symon introduced himself and the other two Councillors and welcomed all in attendance. Cr Symon also noted that there are five new members on the committee this year and thanked the three outgoing committee members - Kiron Robinson and Aunty Janet Turpie-Johnstone who have reached end of 4-year term, and Andrea Jackson who has taken up a role at Council.

The group went around the table and introduced themselves briefly:

Chris - manager of business and precincts at Maroondah City Council

Maryanne - theatre manager at Aquinas College, also past dance school manager

Kali - manager of external relations at TarraWarra Museum of Art

David - musical director Croydon Wind Symphony and role at Department of Education and Training

Sharyn - founder of Fresh Theatre for Social Change

James - founder and managing director of YourDNA Creative Arts

Grace - engagement and learning role at NGV, freelance curatorial and youth arts

Katie - artist and teacher at Steiner school

Wendy - artist and visual arts faculty leader at Wesley College

Elise.- coordinator of arts and culture at Maroondah City Council

Cr Symon requested the confirmation.

Cr Stojanovic moved the Minutes from Wednesday 14 September 2022 and David Billimoria seconded them. The minutes were confirmed.

4. ITEMS

SECTOR INSIGHTS

ITEM 4.1

Cr Symon introduced the item.

Elise asked that all members go around table to share insights from their spheres so as to provide information and perspectives to the group.

James advised that he is the artistic director of YourDNA which provides arts-based programs to support people with physical and intellectual disabilities aligned with NDIS. With key to NDIS being employment, arts in unique position to facilitate this. James advised that they currently have 100 students but a waitlist of 450. James noted that there is a great opportunity for Council to be involved in this space and noted that Federal Government art initiatives create scope for programs such as YourDNA.

Wendy noted that wellbeing, relationships, consent and gender are the big issues for teenagers and schools at the moment and these themes could be considered for art engagement in Council.

Sharyn advised that she works with Fresh Theatre which is a not-for-profit for people ages 10-18. Sharyn noted that they have more young people involved this year which may be due to the cost of living increase as young people can't afford other art programs but are still wanting to continue their passion. She noted that Fresh Theatre are a low-cost option. There are challenges meeting demand with existing volunteer base.

Grace noted that there are more ideas than opportunities at the moment. She has seen a lot of people with ideas and creative passions who are looking for places to reflect themselves and options to show work She spoke about how Council grants are great for young people who are ready to express their ideas and are looking for ways to put them into practice.

David advised that in contrast he has found that from a performing arts perspective it has been hard to recruit. He noted that this could be due to covid as a lot kids let go of their skills or instruments. He noted that bands are struggling to get members particularly brass instruments. David advised that he wants to look at finding ways to reengage young people. Collaboration is also an issue, it would be good to build forums for various arts organisations to connect. Working together can create great outcomes and would mean the risk and reward is shared. Even a one-off or annual event could make a real difference.

Cr Symon noted that there a formats for events like this for sporting clubs and Council that get clubs together to talk about opportunities and make connections.

Sharyn noted that the eastern suburbs don't have as many workshops or places to engage. There is an opportunity for symposiums or forum for artists.

Katie advised that there is a Regional Arts Australia conference (Artlands 2023) coming up in Canberra in September on bringing regional arts industry together, which also provides funding for people who want to go and could be interesting model for forum. Katie agreed that there is more activity in the inner suburbs. In her field, there has been a lot interest in public art within councils. Katie also noted that the National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA) website has information regarding public art and has updated artist fees, which are both good for industry and a challenge for artists to afford to collaborate with other artists.

Elise advised that the 2023/24 Arts and Cultural Grants funding that supports artists and arts organisations in Maroondah is opening soon. She will provide information to the group to share to networks.

Maryanne suggested that several Council areas could work together to offer online training. Maryanne also elaborated on her introduction and advised that she studied visual arts at RMIT and is now doing a Master of Art Management at RMIT.

Wendy noted that collaboration is big theme in the VCE curriculum this year - art and creative practice. Workshops on how to write applications for arts grants could be helpful.

Kali advised that her work at TarraWarra focusses on grant applications and funding. She noted that since covid, many foundations and government bodies restructured what they will fund and tailored quite specific criteria, with reporting and acquittals also having more requirements now. Focus on First Nations first as a key criteria. More accountability is good but process is more onerous for arts organisations who are trying to roll out initiatives, and it is tougher all round. State government body Creative Vic also totally restructured their grants last year, with this year very different from what happened last year. No announcement on what is happening next year, although probable will follow federal policy lead. Last year there were state government grants available for organisations that are large or small, but medium organisations of 10-30 staff members weren't accounted for.

BUSINESS AND PRECINCTS ORGANISATIONAL REALIGNMENT

ITEM 4.2

Cr Symon introduced the item and noted that since Phil Turner retired late last year, Council has had a realignment.

Chris Zidak provided a powerpoint presentation and introduced himself.

He studied classical guitar and considered going on tour but chose to pursue architecture. Chris graduated architecture in Launceston and then gained a position at the Launceston Council. He joined Maroondah around the time they were building Ringwood activity centre in partnership with QIC Eastland.

Chris introduced the Business and Precincts team members and spoke about the projects they have worked on over the years including the coworking space in Ringwood, activity centres in Ringwood and Croydon and shopping centres throughout Maroondah.

Chris spoke about the cultural venues and precincts in Maroondah:

- Ringwood Arts Precinct - including ArtSpace at Realm, Maroondah Federation Estate (and Gallery)

- Wyreena Community Arts Centre
- Karralyka Performing Arts
- Croydon Community Wellbeing Precinct including future black box theatre

Chris advised that the Business and Precincts team have always worked collaboratively with other teams within Council. For example when the bus interchange upgrade was taking place and funding was available, the arts and culture team assisted with involving local artists to contribute to the project. The team are always looking for opportunities for artists to monetise their skills.

Existing Business and Precincts collaborations include:

- Eastland activations, public art, Urban Art walks
- LXR Ringwood and Croydon Station redevelopment public art
- GloBird Energy public art mural which came about through Nic Daws engaging with businesses and an opportunity was discovered.

Chris advised that recently funding has been secure for the Reignite Croydon: Laneway Lights project which is a public art infrastructure project and will see up to four artists commissioned along with a mentorship opportunity. The project hopes to contribute to perceptions of safety and night time economy in Croydon.

James noted that this follows on from what David said and is creating opportunities for collaboration. He noted that there are projects already in place that will get people together.

Chris noted that businesses and organisations could conduct networking events at Karralyka. There is potential to build the economy for artists. If people are already aligned then the connections are there for other organisations.

Grace advised that Burrinja Cultural Centre put on an event called Artists Meeting Artists which invites local artists to a productive space for collaboration. She noted that the event is mainly visual but could be extended easily.

Sharyn said she has been on this Committee for many years and noted that many things being discussed tonight were tabled many years ago for input. She noted that it is really affirming to see things that the Committee have worked on in the past being put into practice now. These conversations are important. The talents and skills here are really valuable.

Cr Symon noted that it is also great for Councillors as they can absorb the information being discussed and can advocate for these issues.

David spoke about the upcoming Croydon redevelopment with the new train station and community wellbeing hub, and would like to hear an update on this in a future meeting and continue with arts community consultation. It is an amazing opportunity over the next years to make Croydon an arts and cultural hub, and look at night time economy and night life.

Cr Symon noted that the Federal Government have promised \$5 million for that project which is really beneficial to such a large project.

Wendy said she is excited to hear Council is bringing the night to life in Croydon with the laneway lights project. She noted that main street has been a difficult area and it takes time for change but the project sounds really positive.

Cr Stojanovic asked if the Gluttony Festival would be coming back this year. Chris advised that it wasn't this year, but they are looking at opportunities for next year.

Kali noted that it was great to see a crossover between business and arts. She noted that if Council can advocate for businesses to collaborate with artists that could help to facilitate connections. She noted that similar to the way businesses sponsor sports clubs there could be opportunities for artists to do the same.

Chris advised that prior to covid we were seeing a lot of engagement and over time we will see more collaboration again. He noted that Eastland have been a long-term partner of Council and are open to exploring opportunities for the arts.

Kali advised that TarraWarra are currently finishing up grant that allowed for donations from private sponsors to be effectively doubled, a great selling point for them as it meant any donations made would reach twice as far. Businesses and art working together can be beneficial to both parties. How to get funding is a skill worth developing for small arts organisations, who often don't know how to communicate their value. Good to explore how to bring businesses together to sponsor arts. I.e. businesses could pool funds to develop grants/invest in identified projects?

David noted that it will be interesting to see how things develop given the current economic situation. Businesses that support locally may have an edge in the future. Local businesses will be willing to support the arts if it brings them a return.

Cr Macdonald provided an example of Bendigo Bank who are big on community sponsorship which has been shown to benefit both parties. Sponsorship is really important in supporting local groups and if you don't ask you won't get it.

Kali noted that small arts groups don't know how to communicate with potential sponsors which is where Council could help.

Sharyn noted gaining DGR status not easy to access for organisations, but there are ways of auspicing DGR status for organisations, so donations can go through auspicer.

Chris responded to David's comment and noted that Croydon Main Street is one of the longest running trader associations. A number of activations could be delivered under the trader association as they collect funds from traders and apply for a number of grants. There is an opportunity to work with them in this space.

NEW REVIVE NATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY DISCUSSION

ITEM 4.3

Cr Symon introduced the item.

Elise provided a powerpoint presentation and noted that Revive is new 5-year national Cultural Policy with \$286 million committed to revive Australia's arts, entertainment and cultural sector.

Elise outlined the new organisations that will sit under Creative Australia. Elise noted that the policy is structured around five pillars, with ten principles that sit across the pillars to guide government actions and investments over the next five years.

Elise posed three discussion questions to the group with regard to how the new policy could impact Maroondah.

- What are the opportunities and challenges?
- Where are areas for growth?
- Where are the gaps?

Cr Symon noted that in the national funding landscape, there are challenges in differentiating Maroondah from surrounding areas in the East, often with no distinction perceived between the outer and inner eastern suburbs despite these being very different areas with regards to arts and culture. He noted that we need to work with our neighbours but also in certain ways we need to compete against them to achieve funding in this area. We need to show how we are different and unique and advocate why funding should be directed to us rather than others.

Cr Stojanovic asked whether we could obtain funding for an art festival. She advised that she is hearing that people in the arts are struggling with mental health post covid. A festival could help to lift and assist the art community. She asked whether there is something in this policy that we could use to achieve this.

Chris noted that a festival hasn't been done before but could be.

Cr Symon noted state funding was more likely.

David noted that the Yarra Ranges could be a great connection to work with as the area (in terms of population) is much more spread out over wide geographic area. We could build events with Yarra Ranges that leverage the art infrastructure in Maroondah and bring their audiences. There is already so many options in the inner East, North or South, so not worth competing there.

James spoke about how regional art has increased in recent years. Time and resources would need to be used strategically to get the best opportunities.

David said he has tried to organise tours but he has no connections there and it is hard to attract people when you don't have the connections to set something up.

Elise advised that they have started a new meeting forum with Eastern region councils including Yarra Ranges LGA to explore community cultural development, so will be aiming to increase reach.

Cr Symon advised that there is now an opportunity in the new Local Government Act that allows for collaboration with other Councils. He noted that Maroondah now work with Yarra Ranges on the internal audit which is very different from arts but is an example of working together.

Jason spoke about the First Nations pillar and how it creates a focus in that area for organisations to work from, which could be first step.

Chris noted QIC Eastland could be involved in putting name to something in community - requires holistic approach to see what we could do together.

Break

Sharyn Mullens Taylor left the meeting at 8:45pm after the break.

PLAY & GATHERING SPACES DRAFT STRATEGY DISCUSSION

ITEM 4.4

Cr Symon introduced the item.

Rebecca Penrose and Stefanie Black provided a powerpoint presentation

Rebecca provided some background about how the strategy has come to be.

A risk assessment was completed on the 127 existing Maroondah play spaces and from that a prioritised capital renewal program was developed and scheduled. This identified a need to expand provisions to include inclusive play and gathering opportunities.

From this understanding Council then created a Vision: *Provide inclusive places within our open spaces that aim to cater for all cohorts within our community. Places that promote gathering, interaction, connection, wellbeing and liveability, that are thoughtfully and sustainably planned to honour Maroondah's natural environment and culture.*

Rebecca spoke about the vision boards that outline what the vision looks like when put into practice and the elements that were being taken into consideration for the project.

Rebecca also spoke about some examples of places in Maroondah where arts and culture have connected with open spaces.

Rebecca noted the ways in which people can share their thoughts and contribute to the play and gathering strategy.

The team are also collaborating across all services areas and using the internal community of Council to help create great places in the Maroondah Community.

Maryanne noted that she loves the idea of an amphitheatre and spoke about an experience traveling in Memphis where a park on the corner drew crowds of people from live music being played there.

James noted that the Tim Neville arboretum amphitheatre on Dorset Road (Knox Council) is a great place to gather or perform and is wheelchair accessible with accessible bathrooms. Good for different stakeholders, can also bring stallholders/businesses in.

Wendy advised that the sound shell stage at Ringwood Lake Park is underutilised and needs enhancements to make it more accessible and flexible for use. Provided examples of no lighting, no backdrop on the stage, area in front of stage is on a rise and the slope needs to be landscaped for accessibility.

Elise noted receiving feedback from arts and music organisations about costs associated with hire perceived to be high, even when not using power.

Grace advised that she recently moved here and spoke of a positive experience with the Ringwood Park Lake informational signage. She advised that it was really engaging and gave a sense of the history and identity of the area with artefacts and photos of people and contributions to the area etched on plaques. Are there more key individuals in Maroondah's history, particularly diverse communities, we can elevate in these places of play?

Katie Stackhouse left the meeting room at 9:00pm.

David noted that some of the spaces need a refresh. The Mullum Mullum Creek Trail signage is graffitied and ageing. There are a number of spaces along there that could be used for yoga or interactive activities. The artist trail along Tarralla Creek would benefit from refreshed signage.

Rebecca noted that creek trails are a bio link and they create corridors for people. This strategy is looking at how we can activate them more.

Wendy noted that signage is a great way to be able to tell the stories of the families who have hung onto land to protect species.

David Billimoria left the meeting room at 9:06pm.

James praised the robust play instruments in the play space at Wyreena and McAlpine Reserve and noted they are great for people with disabilities as they are accessible.

Kali noted that signage can create activities for kids that are different from a playground but will engage and occupy children in a different way, like a kids arts trail in galleries but outdoors. Augmented reality good for older kids and an expanded family experience.

Wendy said opportunities for kids to experience through other senses are great too. Wendy also noted that there could be an artist in residence who devises programs for families along these trails.

Cr Stojanovic spoke about the benefit QR codes could provide including that the information connected to the signage could be changed without having to physically change the sign.

James noted that the stories we tell are important and a First Nations focus would be good. QR codes could be altered for different themes like NAIDOC Week or International Women's Day. Participation rates could also be tracked to demonstrate data to other organisations and could be used to justify the investment in programs, whether heritage or arts focused, and see what is popular.

Cr Stojanovic left the meeting room at 9:15pm.

Rebecca and Stefanie provided postcards that link to the survey and encouraged all to fill out and share with other communities and connections who might want to feedback as well.

PUBLIC URBAN ART UPDATE

ITEM 4.5

Due to timing it was advised that this item would not proceed and the information would be distributed to all members.

Cr Symon advised that the next meeting will be Wednesday 17 May 2023 and it will be at a different venue.

The meeting concluded at: 9:18pm.