

## **Taranaki Arts Trail 2024**

### **Chair's Report**

Very sadly, I open my report for 2024 with the news that we lost one of our beloved artists this year.

Patti Crocker & her husband Brian served on the TAT committee for the last few years & were well known pottery/ceramic artists locally in Inglewood, as well as around the region & further afield.

Earlier this year, Brian advised us that he & Patti would have to stand down from the committee & withdraw from TAT 24 due to Patti's health, & over Labour weekend Patti lost her battle against her cancer.

I had always admired Patti & the challenges she faced & the way she used her App on her phone to convert our conversations into words so she could follow the meeting due to her deafness. She was a valued member of the committee & the art world.

On a positive note, I am reliably informed that before Patti left us, she insisted that Brian carry on with his craft & we look forward to having him back on the trail in due course.

#### **The Start of Taranaki Arts Trail 2024**

As some of you are aware, we had a rocky start to 2024. Commencing with following a huge TAT 23 ten-year anniversary event, a financial deficit & a challenging AGM whereby all the previous committee office holders resigned.

Fortunately, we managed to recruit an amazing group of volunteers who put their hands up to help & quickly found they were assigned rolls they hadn't quite bargained for, but they excelled at them all. Also, our Coordinator Nicki, who saw us through the first few months of artists registration & programme proofing, steered us well until June.

But from this time onwards, the committee (all of whom are volunteers) found themselves in the position of putting on the Taranaki Arts Trail 24 to best of our abilities without a coordinator until the end of October.

We had meetings every two weeks, on average about two hours long, as we were conscious that we didn't want anything to fall through the cracks.

Taranaki Arts Trail 2024 launch exhibition commenced on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> July at the Percy Thompson Gallery in Stratford. The reason for the midwinter launch was due to the dates we would normally have of the month prior to the trail, had been allocated by the director to another exhibition, therefore we had no choice but to take what we were given or alternatively, not have a Percy Thompson Gallery exhibition at all.

That said, it was a well-attended launch event & I hope all our exhibiting artists felt it was still worth their efforts to place a work there.

## **Finances 2024**

The financial challenges we faced this year started with a deficit in our accounts, which the Treasurer has report on in her financials for 2024.

This was followed by the recognition that we would probably not & did not have the volume of artists register that we had in 2023, which would naturally affect our bottom line.

Our annual routine costs were going up, as with all things, but our registration fees were static. Also, not all of our sponsors/patrons came back on board, which also reflects the financial climate the county was in.

Many of the grants that we apply for, needed us to demonstrate that the Taranaki Arts Trail, supplies 'value for money' (as I mentioned at the Centre City Hub launch) to the region & is worth the investment & that their grant/investment is going to be returned to the region.

I will touch on this point later.

So, we faced some serious financial challenges & this was naturally reflected in some of the services that we would normally invest in, such as some advertising etc.

That said, with an astute treasurer on board, who loves a good spreadsheet! We have managed to navigate a positive financial outcome.

## **Sponsors & Patrons**

Thank you one & all, we could not put on the Taranaki Arts Trail without you & thank you to those who may have supported us in previous years, but found they couldn't quite make it this year. Personally, I have an automatic payment of \$30 setup every month & have done for several years & I encourage others to do the same.

On a very positive note, for 2025, we have expressions of interest from at least two new sponsors & look forward to working with them.

## **Committee Members**

What an amazing team we have turned out to be & I am honoured & grateful to have been working with you over the past year. Nothing was too much trouble to address, discuss & come up with a solution. Which invariably meant someone putting their hand up & running with it, all in their own time. As much as I want to acknowledge you individually, I think it only fair that I thank you as a collective & I hope & pray you may stay on if there is a TAT 25!

The committee gave up many, many hours of their time to stage TAT 24 & I congratulate all of them on their hard work, which is not over yet!

## **Coordinator**

Kerilyn Douwes stepped into this role just as the trail was about to start, so she received very little hand-over & just had to learn all about the committee, artists & how TAT worked as she was visiting artists & receiving their thoughts & ideas.

That said, I believe she has done sterling work & has produced an excellent comprehensive coordinator's report which will act as the foundation for an anticipated TAT 25. I only hope she stays on to continue with this work if that is what is decided.

## **Centre City Exhibition Hub**

This was something completely new for TAT, a collaboration with a large commercial enterprise. There was some trepidation when this offer was muted & I shared in those qualms. But after our initial meeting at Centre City with Rebecca Johnson & the details of their offer was laid out, as well as a visit to the suggested shop space to be used for the exhibition, all those concerns were allayed.

Once again, the committee threw themselves into making that space work as an excellent showcase for our artists works. We managed to recruit a band of volunteers to engage with visitors, who wouldn't necessarily visit an art exhibition, but as it was there, they ventured in. The feedback that Centre City & TAT 24 has received as the result of the Hub exhibition, has been overwhelmingly positive & Centre City are keen to look forward to next year.

Thank you to all our wonderful Hub volunteers, you all did great work & were successful in selling three of the exhibits.



## **TAT 24 Wrap Up**

As I previously mentioned our Coordinator has produced a comprehensive report from the artist feedback forms. Unfortunately, only just over 50% of artists submitted forms, but this still allowed her to correlate the information & has produced some mixed but mostly positive results.

I found the most surprising figure to be that of sales. While I acknowledge that art sales information is a sensitive subject, as I said at our Hub launch, it is crucial information when applying for grants to support our future.

Out of the 44% of replies that chose to supply us with the dollar amount, there were over \$96,000 in sales made & many commissions in the wings.

This would therefore probably equate to, if the majority of artists had reported back on their sales, to well over \$150,000 if not nearer \$200,000 in sales overall. That, I would suggest is a successful TAT 24.

I also appreciate that not all artists had sales & I hope that will not deter them from coming on board again.

In conclusion, it is my belief that this was a successful TAT 2024 against all the odds, so well done to all.

## **Taranaki Arts Trail 2025**

If TAT is to be held in 2025, there are some fundamental issues that need to be addressed very early on in the year.

We are an Incorporated Society & the legislation under which we are registered is changing. This means our constitution needs to be revised & the way we do business & the processes we have in place for holding members personal data, needs to be updated & kept current.

Michelle Phelan our Secretary & I have been to a workshop on this matter & although the changes are not huge, they need to be worked on as a matter of urgency in 2025.

There are several other subjects that came to the fore in the feedback forms as well as some of my thoughts & areas for discussion early in 2025.

- Time of year that we hold the trail (if this changes it will mean a considerable disruption to our financial reporting & may mean missing a trail year)
- If the trail was to move to June/July 2025 then artists registrations would need to be in by the end of January

- If the trail was to move to June/July 2025, the programme would probably need to be designed, proofed & submitted to the printers by the end of March
- Do we still need the volume of programmes we normally print
- The impact on artists having to produce 12months work in 6months
- Programme needs opening time clarity between the two weekend openings & the 10day openings
- TAT identity, are we an 'artist in their studio trail' or 'an artists collective in a gallery trail' or mixture of both
- The definition of 'an artist'
- The ever-shifting marketing space from print to digital
- When we commenced our synergy in timing with the Garden Festival & shared a programme (2023 we had to split due to the volume of artists), TAFT had two questions on their BERL survey, in 2021, 44% who replied had also visited art studios & 13% of those had spent more than \$500 on art works. In 2022, 46% of Garden Festival attendees had visited between 1 to 5 studios & 7% more than 5 studios.

There are many, many more areas for discussion in 2025 but many of my comments made above would naturally fall if we did not hold a TAT 25.

So that just leaves me to wish you the best for the festive season & next year.



Sue Kelly

**Chair of the Taranaki Arts Trail 2024**