

Presidents Report for Huon Folk Inc [Cygnet Folk Festival] at AGM 2022/23

It was such a joy to deliver the 2023 Cygnet Folk Festival on the back of having had two cancelled festivals. The 2023 production was greeted unanimously by patrons, artists and site and production teams and crews alike as a resounding success.

The Festival Committee changed a little this year with the loss of Vallorie Hodges, a former President and long-time contributor to the committee, who stepped down and has since returned to the USA, and also the loss of Megan Helmer – who has however continued to be a great support in the Festival Venue décor team. The committee welcomed on board Robert Alcock and Alice Toner-Brown. Michael Russell stepped into the role of Vice President and Sally Port into Secretary role whilst Treasurer, Michael Thomsen and myself, Anne Foale [President] continued in our roles. Ray Mainsbridge continues as our Public Officer. Appreciation is extended most sincerely to these folks as well as to other committee members, Michael Bentley and Chris Ellis.

The committee worked hard to soundly monitor the Festival's financial situation throughout the year as two years of no festivals had impacted the reserves of the organisation. As well as instituting a regular finance sub-committee meeting schedule [led by Michael Russell] , we worked hard at selling festival merchandise through an online portal; growing memberships, and highlighting our VIP and Patron options in membership, seeking sponsorships – albeit mostly small amounts but nevertheless helpful, hiring out our tent/marquee to other festival/event entities, introducing festival managed for-profit bars in a small number of Festival venues and encouraging donations to the festival in a number of ways- eg at point of sale with tickets, via a donation repository [a bespoke guitar donation container] at the festival site.

Alongside this work Erin Collins and Bridget Binnie, our highly valued employees, worked extremely hard in chasing grants for the festival. Also they carefully managed the expenses of the festival to keep us in a positive financial situation. For example Bridget has juggled working out of the public space at the Huon Valley Council hub – which whilst not an ideal working environment regarding privacy and noise – has the distinct advantage of being free!. Erin meanwhile continues to work from home. We are so happy to have both these employees back with us full time and having in Erin's case weathered very impactful health issues in 2021/22, and Bridget's having given birth to her second child.

We are grateful to our on-going sponsors, Willie Smiths, Hobart Brewing Company, TPR Realty, The Southern Swan, Huon Valley Financial Services [Bendigo], Huon Valley Council [in kind] and also to our major sponsorship from The Port Cygnet Cannery which will come to an end due to the sale of the business. We welcomed new supporters, Rosalie Woodruff and David O'Byrne and are also very grateful to our Festival patrons, Don Gordon, Rosemary Briggs, Robert and Margaret Valentine and Jane Tolman.

This year we also instituted two Cygnet Folk Festival Awards due to the generous bequest from the family of Dr Dennis Dubetz who passed away in 2021. Dr Dubetz was a long-time supporter and lover of the festival and had been a GP in Cygnet for many years after coming to Tasmania from Canada via Queensland. Awards went to a young and upcoming local musician – Isabel Rumble and a couple of collaborating musicians from much further away

Andrew Veivers and Kacey Patrick. Both Awards of \$1000 each have been very much appreciated by the recipients who have both used the funds to support the production of new recording projects, a first CD launch by Isabel and a recording of some film clips by Andrew and Kacey.

During this past year the Cygnet Folk Festival past a very significant milestone by celebrating the 40th anniversary of the inaugural festival at Cygnet on May 7th 1982. Much work went into planning a preparing for celebrating this milestone, albeit that the actual deliver of said celebration was much thwarted by COVID. Finally however it did come together for a small weekend event – Friday night dinner and the next day, Saturday – two concerts in the Carmel Hall and St James Auditorium. The was a great spirit at the dinner and at the concerts and those who attended thoroughly enjoyed the event. Unfortunately, the weather on the Saturday was atrocious and consequently the attendance was nowhere near as many as we had hoped for. Financially the event was not a success but the quality of the event and the joy of those who braved the weather was undisputed.

Another addition to the festival smorgasbord over the past three festivals [2019, 2020 and 2023] has been the Festival Feast as a precursor to the actual festival. Each one has been more successful and it has become a joyful addition to January. We are indebted to the work of Sally Port in driving this event and bring her great enthusiasm, artistic decor team and great love of food and fun together to make this something that patrons love. We are sad to see Sally step down from the committee role this year to make time for her other community work but appreciate that she will stay connected with the décor team and the Feast production.

Our crew, contract volunteers and regular volunteers are the back bone that keeps the festival viable over so many years and I thank them all most sincerely. I note particularly our book keeper Christine Chivassa and our Data base manager Chris Ellis and a new contract crew this year Sue Lehtonen who has taken on the role of Performer Services manager. We are most appreciative of Jane Herbert who relinquished this role during the year having done a sterling job of it for one actual festival and two cancelled ones and who mentored Sue most diligently into the position.

Please accept as given my heartfelt thanks to all who have contributed in so many diverse ways to the success of this enterprise of love and passion for music and celebration. You are too many to mention individually but without this collective energy we would be a hollow shell of what we actually are - which is a thriving, inspiring and generous community of lovers of folk music and community culture.

Anne Foale
President
17.4.2023