

WAMA IN 2021: CHAIRMAN'S REPORT, ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The WAMA team, has managed to maintain good momentum and achieve significant progress in Victoria's second year of COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions. Naturally, progress in some areas has been slower than normal under these circumstances, but all in all we can be very proud of what has been achieved.

The wet Winter and Spring have ensured that the WAMA site looks magnificent, with the flora growth inside the predator proof fence a sight to behold.

Thanks to the efforts of the site team, several very successful working bees were squeezed in as the COVID-19 regulations allowed. Thanks go to Catherine Franklin Hensler and David Pratt for organising these working bees.

Progress of our flora initiatives including the Native Grasslands project in collaboration with Jallukar Landcare has flourished. Long swaying Wallaby Grass and two types of Spear Grass now covers the area to the height of over one metre in places.

Landscape design activities, by OCHRE were completed for the Endemic Botanic Gardens, but COVID-19 restrictions have prevented planting in 2021. All the required species have been successfully propagated with outstanding support from Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne.

The Stage 1 planning application for the WAMA site including the gallery and associated buildings was filed with Northern Grampians Shire Council (NGSC) early in 2021. NGSC requested that a complete masterplan covering all envisaged stages of the project be submitted. Now completed, the planning application has recently been gazetted. We are hopeful of full approval prior to the end of the year.

A big thank you to the WAMA Design Consultation Team including Ayesha Burnett, Jill Burness, Glenda Lewin, Jacqueline Healy and Glen Holland. The team have worked closely with MVS Architects and Tract Landscaping to develop the concept design and address any issues raised by NGSC.

Within our art space, The WAMA Art Prize, a \$25,000 biennale national award for excellence in nature-inspired art created with or on paper was an outstanding achievement, with over 800 artworks entered. The major acquisitive prize of \$15,000 was awarded to Tasmanian artist Melissa Smith for her work *Listen Deeply – Lake Sorell*.

Three awards of excellence were awarded to Diane Fogwell for her work *The Dead Tree Scroll – Silent Extinction*, Janet Matthews' *Just flying through* – *Red-Tailed Black cockatoos*, and Juanita McLauchlan's *Found*. Amanda Blake-Sutterby won the People's Choice Award for her work *'Cape Gooseberry'*.

An excellent video recorded virtual discussion is available on the WAMA website featuring the winning artists – it is well worth watching. Well done to all the artists involved and a heartfelt thank you to all the WAMA supporters who donated to this initiative.

Commissioned mural artist Mike Maka together with Conrad Bizjak and well-known indigenous artist Robert Young painted engaging nature-inspired murals with the theme of the dreaming story of Bunjil's flight on the temporary huts at the entrance to the WAMA site. This activity created considerable interest in the local community and online, setting the scene for the future of WAMA.

The construction of WAMA owned and operated off-site art storage facilities was completed. Thank you to the donors who contributed to this venture.

In the area of obtaining grants and government support in 2021, WAMA applied for both the Federal Government's Safe Haven Grant and Building Better Regions Fund, Round 5 Grant. Disappointingly, although being acknowledged as fully compliant - applications for both grants were unsuccessful.

Discussions, sponsored by Visit Victoria, continue with the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions, and all available Government grants continue to be regularly reviewed to identify opportunities for WAMA.

With COVID-19 restrictions continuing to be in force for the most part of the year, this effected the running of WAMA events including only one Nature Play Day being held in 2021. However, this day was a great success, as was "Mt Marriot" with the children that attended.

For the second year in a row, WAMA's annual fundraiser in Dunkeld could not be held. This event will now be held on March 5 2022 and will be the formal launch of the WAMA Capital Campaign.

Overall support for WAMA continued to grow from far and wide with almost 2000 Facebook followers, 1500 Instagram followers and over 6,000 supporters recorded on our database.

On behalf of the Board, I wish to extend my heartfelt thanks to all volunteers, staff, supporters, and donors for a wonderful year despite world challenges that we all faced.

Greg Lewin AM
Chairman
WAMA Foundation Ltd