



craft + design centre

Craft ACT: Craft + Design Centre

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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

It is an understatement to say that 2020 was a year of challenges! But it was also a year of opportunities, learning and of resilience. The year started with devastating bush fires in so many areas of Australia, including Canberra and our region. The end of January brought a hail storm which damaged many buildings, and then in February, without warning, a global pandemic. By the end of March the Craft ACT team had closed the gallery and shop and moved to working from home. This initial shutdown lasted several months, during which time the staff developed and delivered ideas for taking exhibitions on line and sought to keep contact with members and our audience through digital means. Even our AGM was coordinated through Zoom, with members and staff adjusting to new communication methods. A gradual reopening from July was managed with an eye to safety and provision of a much needed community service as we sought to reconnect with each other in person.

For the Craft ACT board of management our focus in 2020 was to support our CEO, Rachael Coghlan, as we encountered each new challenge from Covid-19. This included negotiating our way through new government funding support programs, building information technology support, keeping the planned exhibition program running wherever possible and managing work health and safety procedures as restrictions changed. I thank our board members for remaining engaged and positive throughout such a challenging year, especially as they juggled the changes to their own workplaces and studios.

An important role for the board has been to support fundraising efforts. With the help of nearly 200 donors we reached our Fifty@50 fundraising target in July, ensuring that more artists, more audiences and more venues can be part of the Craft ACT story for many more years. Board members, including new member Jenny Edwards and past president Graeme Humphries, supported the commencement of a new fundraising initiative, the Circle of Hands, which will support an exciting new program for makers in 2021.

My thanks also to the Craft ACT staff: Kate Nixon, Madisyn Zabel, Meagan Jones, Vy Tsan and Selena Kang whose commitment to innovation helped ensure that exhibitions moved online and programs were rescheduled or modified as needed. The team demonstrated a capacity for adaptability that ensures Craft ACT could continue to serve our members and the public even when the gallery was closed. The board acknowledges the expertise of our CEO, Dr Rachael Coghlan, who has provided leadership to the team throughout the year and maintained a positive approach even when times were dark.

Bright moments for 2020 included confirmation that Craft ACT would receive four-year funding (2021-2024) from the Australia Council, ensuring that the organisation has a stable and sustainable financial base as we enter our 50th anniversary. The delivery of DESIGN Canberra in November also demonstrated the resilience of local makers and craftspeople, and garnered significant support from local audiences. In a year in which many traditional markets for our members were cancelled there was great financial support from our audiences through open studios.



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Craft ACT Members are of course the backbone of the organisation. Our membership numbers attest to the success of the many programs and benefits offered by Craft ACT and confirm our relevance to the community we serve. Whilst on site visitation was limited for half of the year, our digital engagement grew stronger and more diverse.

As in all years funding support from government and sponsors is welcome, but in 2020 it was essential to maintain our operations. I thank the ACT Government, the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy (an initiative of the Australian, state and territory governments), and the Australia Council for the Arts (the Australian Government's arts funding and advisory body) for their on-going support of Craft ACT. The organisation has also been thrilled to continue to receive significant financial support from our sponsors in such a challenging year for many industries and without which many of our programs, particularly the DESIGN Canberra festival, would not be possible. We thank you for your support.

Rebecca Coronel  
President  
Craft ACT Board of Management