

President's Report 2019

It gives me great pleasure to present the President's report to the membership of Williamstown Little Theatre Inc, for 2019.

I start by acknowledging that we meet today on the traditional lands of the people of the Kulin Nation, and pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging. They have provided stewardship of this land for 65,000 years. Our 73 years is a blink.

Governance theory tells us that, in order for those charged with the responsibility for running a company to claim success, they need to be able to demonstrate that they:

- Learn from the past
- Manage the present
- Govern for the future

I'm pleased to report that this continues to be a focus for the Committee.

In honouring the past, we acknowledge the long term commitment that so many have offered, and continue to offer this company. We were saddened to hear of the passing during the year of one of our past Committee members – Katherine Hawken. We remember Kat as a wonderfully multi-skilled person who brought endless vitality to the company during her time on Committee. A beautiful spirit, taken way too young.

We also note with sadness the passing of John Burrett, who will be remembered as a first rate set designer and a first rate curmudgeon – two titles he wore as a badge of honour. We also note the passing of Michael Schneider, a long time subscriber who had worked backstage with us in the past, and absolutely loved coming to WLT. Our love and best wishes to the families of these WLT legends.

In managing the company in the here and now, I offer my sincere thanks to my Committee colleagues. Thank you for your amazing and relentless energy and time commitment. I also acknowledge the many people (most of whom are in this room) who dedicate countless hours to making this place tick along.

I'm focusing this report, however, on how we're future-proofing Williamstown Little Theatre.

First and foremost, to be around in the future, we need to ensure that our product is worth buying, and that it continues to move with the times. Our Play Selection Committee continues to provide us with challenging, diverse offerings – and we were pleased to acknowledge the work of the Committee at Cordell day, and in particular the work of the PSC Chair, Damian Coffey with the awarding of the Grahame Murphy Award for Excellence. Our directors, design teams, backstage personnel and on-stage talent continue to generate theatre of the highest quality. Our continued excellent subscription rates indicate that the supply side is sound, and the demand side is committed and shares our passion.

To be around in the future, we need to make sure we understand the risks. We now have great processes in place for ensuring that a culture of workplace health and safety is central to everything

we do. Identified issues are raised and discussed as a standing agenda item at Committee meetings, and appropriate mitigation strategies are implemented. I thank everyone that works here for their commitment to safety, and their understanding when things need to be done differently.

To be around in the future, we need to ensure that we're not burning our people out. I'm pleased to report that we are well stocked in Stage Managers, designers, and wonderful front of house volunteers. Our set and costume realisation teams are doing great work, with wonderful camaraderie. I know that many companies are completely reliant on one or two, often very tired, people. We have been careful to ensure that is not the case here. The need to ensure an appropriate age, gender and skill mix on the Committee is something we've identified as a high priority.

To be around in the future, we need to ensure that our facility is fit for purpose. As you will know, we are still working through the planning process for our new foyer space, new bathroom facilities (including all-abilities facilities) and dressing room area. We continue to work with Council to reassure them that we are not planning anything they wouldn't be proud to have in their community.

Finally, to be around in the future, we need to move with the times. Our focus remains on ensuring our communications are presented in a way that satisfies how people choose to receive their information. We're also ensuring that our systems for data handling and storage are keeping pace. And that tickets are sold in a way that people want to buy tickets. We're even looking at how people buy their champers and chocolates at front of house! My sincere thanks to those who continue to move us forward in these important areas.

2020 promises to be a year of great challenge. We're looking forward to meeting those challenges, and reporting back to you, our members, this time next year.

Peter Newling