



FRIENDS OF THE ACADEMY INCORPORATED  
**CHAIR'S REPORT TO THE 2020 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
**Held on 03 October 2021 at**  
WAAPA, 2 Bradford Street, Mt. Lawley, W.A. 6050  
Academy of Performing Arts Lecture Theatre 3.101

2020 was memorable for all the wrong reasons. Undoubtedly a year to remember, and for some a year to forget. The seriousness of COVID-19 touched every facet of our lives, some more than others. The Friends of the Academy has luckily weathered the storm. We're still here and looking forward to 2021; although it must be said with some trepidation.

Not every year is going to be bountiful and 2020 certainly didn't yield our organisation any bounty, but we did manage to support WAAPA students in our usual way with grants and payments for some secondments. We contributed \$20,000 to the ECU 'Student Hardship Fund' and our contribution was matched by ECU dollar for dollar. In a wonderfully generous effort ECU donated a total of \$3.2 million to the fund that supported its students through the initial uncertainty of COVID.

All tertiary students in WA were affected but probably WAAPA students more so than others because they rely on face-to-face performances and classes. They adapted magnificently and implemented 21<sup>st</sup> century technology for use in lectures and performances offered over the internet. Many of those innovations will remain as useful learning tools and be integrated into future course learning techniques.

The WAAPA campus was shut down, the theatres fell silent, and we all missed seeing the students perform . . . but not completely, because several forward-thinking students put their performances on the internet and attended classes remotely. We were introduced to the novelty of seeing and hearing students sounding as being together but actually performing in isolation. The wonders of technology! When live performances were finally staged, seats were very limited because of the need for social distancing. The early booking privilege for Friends proved to be invaluable during this time.

I must thank all members who supported us financially through membership renewal payments in 2020 when there was no guarantee there would be any shows to attend. Your contributions enabled us to donate a total of \$47,600 in support of WAAPA student grants. I especially thank those members who chose to make an additional personal donation. While donations are always welcome, they were particularly helpful this year. Income dropped drastically for 3 reasons: cancelled Tours of the Academy, poorly supported Open Day BBQ, membership renewals shortfall and some refunds.

While some performances have been held, Friends after-performance suppers have been cancelled because of the need for social distancing and safe food handling by attendees. The suppers may resume, albeit in a different format to comply with best medical advice when it is safe to do so. Nevertheless, we're determined to, as far as possible, pick up where we left off in 2019!

Performances may have been few and far between, but we have still been active where possible. For instance, our Student Grant scheme is still operating but will now be an online application rather than paper and mail by Australia Post. We feel that this restructuring will make the process much more streamlined and more in line with current technological capabilities and will be fully operational for the start of 2021.

Perhaps the biggest news in 2020 was WAAPA's planned move to the CBD.

Details of the new campus are sparse, but building should begin in 2022. Rest assured that information will be shared with members as soon as is possible

I will spend the next few years preparing and assisting the Friends for the move to the CBD but it's my intention to resign as Chair in 2024 or 2025.

The remainder of my time as Chair will be spent setting a new course and era for the Friends of the Academy. I believe that after more than twenty-five years in the role I still have much to offer a new Chair and committee to embrace the 'new' WAAPA and the next chapter in the evolution of an internationally respected learning institution.

In the meantime, there's still much to do and your committee is determined that our high standards of performance will continue.

Thank you all for your continuing support.

Kevin Button  
Chair – Friends of the Academy Inc.

Date: 03 October 2021