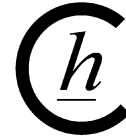


Annual Report 2005



CURRENCY HOUSE

Presented by Katharine Brisbane
at the 5th Annual General Meeting of Currency House
27th November 2005

This PDF available from www.currencyhouse.org.au

This is my fifth annual report and the year has been an anxious one for all of us as national and global politics have been hardening. It has been hard to see how one small non-profit association, or even the arts community itself, can begin make an impression on the many issues to which the arts should be a contributor. But I am pleased to say that our mission has been chipping away at the base and for this I have to thank our hard-working board.

The board has consolidated over the last two or three years and has formed solid working groups. The editorial board, with John Golder, Greig Tillotson, John McCallum and myself produces Platform Papers and is expected to publish two more books in 2006. Malcolm Duncan, Mary Vallentine, Luke Nestorowicz and I have undertaken the fundraising and financial management; Malcolm, Mary and I have spearheaded the Arts and Public Life Breakfasts; Peter Fyfe is our webmaster; Martin Portus our publicity adviser and Nick Parsons my artistic adviser and editor. Luke was recruited last April after Maria Crealey retired. We ask you today to endorse our nomination of both Luke and Greg Quirk, whose skills in marketing and risk management have already been put to work to our benefit.

This time last year I quoted in my report a resolution of the Board to determine the planning of our activities.

1. Each event should involve the membership
2. Each event should further our direction with information and argument
3. Each event should be financially self-sustainable
4. Each event should aim to draw in new spheres of influence.

In 2005 these have been our criteria in the selection of activities.

Arts and Public Life Breakfasts

Our initiative for 2005 has been our business breakfasts. These are designed to bring to the business sector our mission of asserting the value of the arts in public life. Their purpose is to bridge the gap between business and arts practice by inviting a speaker, now eminent in public life, who has had training in some aspect of the performing arts, to talk about how that discipline has contributed to their success in their present field. Thanks to the persuasive powers of Mary Vallentine and Malcolm Duncan the Sofitel Wentworth Sydney agreed to underwrite a breakfast for 60 people three times a year for three years. In April, July and October we hosted three breakfasts, with speakers Kim Williams, clarinettist, CEO of Fox and Chair of the Sydney Opera House; Carrillo Gantner, actor, founder of Melbourne's Playbox (now the Malthouse Theatre) who is now President of the Myer Foundation and chief investor for the Myer Family Group. And most recently Peter Garrett, former lead singer of Midnight Oil and president of the Conservation Foundation, now ALP Member for Kingsford Smith and

Opposition Spokesman on the Arts and Reconciliation. The ABC recorded all three addresses for later broadcast.

The idea has captured the interest of city executives and has proved surprisingly popular. Geoffrey York, GM of the Sofitel Wentworth has approved a further three breakfasts for 2006. They will be held on 12 April, 12 July and 11 October, and will be given, all being well, by Richard Broinowski, violinist, diplomat and nuclear activist; John Bell, actor and corporate actor-manager; and Rick Farley, actor and Aboriginal land rights negotiator.

We now have a growing list of regulars on which we shall build next year. One of those is Donna Payne, NSW Manager of the Australia Business Arts Foundation, who has offered to include our breakfast in ABaF's calendar of events. The breakfast network is also producing a nucleus of well-wishers who have offered their financial support.

Each breakfast has raised \$2,000 for us so this project has clearly fulfilled all four of our criteria.

Platform Papers

Platform Papers began July 2004. No.7 is now at the printer. Members receive copies as part of their membership; our subscription list is steadily growing and we are proud that their contents are becoming part of the national conversation. Subjects so far have been the sad state of the ABC, the growth of independent artists, the structure of the theatre industry, the dumbing-down of public debate, the state of the film industry, and the bureaucracy of the Australia Council. The January edition will be David Throsby's essay Does Australia Need a Cultural Policy? Cate Blanchett will launch this important debate at the Wharf Theatre in early February. The April essay, by Amanda Card, is entitled Body for Hire? The State of Dance in Australia.

The papers receive regular attention from the press and our subscription list now includes all the arts ministries and a growing number of regional libraries and arts organisations. Events were held in connection with each essay: in January we hosted a launch at the Malthouse Theatre in Melbourne and a panel discussion at the Stables in Sydney of Julian Meyrick's Trapped by the Past, which also received extensive press coverage. Robyn Archer's The Myth of the Mainstream was widely covered as she attended the Deakin Lectures in Melbourne, the Sydney Writers' Festival and the National Museums Conference in Canberra. In August John Golder and I spent two days in Wagga Wagga as guests of the University to talk to students and townspeople about regional theatre and film and promote Storry Walton's Shooting Through. And in late September Keith Gallasch's Art in a Cold Climate was launched at the Performance Space as part of a conference on innovation.

However, despite the load undertaken by John Golder and myself, costs are likely to exceed income for the immediate future. In what will be a continuing effort, our fundraising group has targeted a band of 12 people for each year to support publication with a tax-deductible donation of \$1500. The list presently stands at eight and the names of our supporters are listed on the verso page of Platform Papers.

This project earns three out of four on the resolution, with the assurance that financial sustainability is well under review.

Other events

Members

The labour involved in the above activities has been considerable and this year we have held only one members-only event. The board reviewed our history of private meetings, which had led to longer panel discussions before moving to Platform Papers as a more lasting and effective way of encouraging debate. It was also recognised that increasing pressures on members' time

was leading to lower attendances; and our members might be better served by our publications and newsletter, and occasional focused events. Accordingly, on 7 August we held a community consultation, which was attended by 24 people. We had a good round-table discussion over lunch but no issues arose to suggest we take another direction.

The 2005 Philip Parsons Memorial Lecture: 'Theatre Under Howard'

This address is given annually in partnership with Company B Belvoir. The York Theatre on 9 October was packed to hear David Marr give a passionate analysis of how public policy can affirm conservatism. The address is available on our website and will be broadcast by Radio National on 11 December at 11.05 am and repeated on 12 December at 8.25pm.

Belvoir retained the takings and the costs. In this they are supported by the NSW Arts Ministry.

History of Australian Television Conference 8–10 December Powerhouse Museum

Currency House is a partner with the principals, the University of Technology Sydney , ACMI and the National Film and Sound Archive, to research the history of Australian TV as part of its 50th anniversary in 2006. The project is supported by an Australian Research Council grant and this conference will review some of the first findings. It is convened by the two heads of the history project, Professor Liz Jacka and chief researcher Nick Herd. A second stage will be an exhibition at the Powerhouse Museum expected to open in April. Representatives of Currency House will attend and the project will become central to our activities in the coming year. Details and a registration form are available at: www.transforming.cultures.uts.edu.au

Financial

Subscriptions and donations have increased satisfactorily and the figures reflect our increased activity. We have kept our overheads within our small resources and I would prefer to see the deficit to date on Platform Papers as investment in a work in progress. The balance sheet shows an accumulated loss of \$4,159. The addition of both Luke and Greg to the Board will go a long way to securing our financial management.

Administration

Eamon Flack came to us in July 2004 as part-time executive officer and has worked hard to improve our computer records and bookkeeping system while fulfilling orders and answering the needs of the members. We make a good team and I'm grateful for his enthusiasm and efficiency. In September we purchased a new computer and new software and when the changeover of records has been completed we expect Eamon to be much more active on the creative side of our administration. Once more I must thank Peter Fyfe for the work he puts into our website; and to remind members that content on the site is growing daily.

Finally, my heartfelt thanks to the Board for their work during the year. And to members, our thanks for your continuing support. Please let us have your thoughts about our activities, about the Platform Papers or about any matter you believe should be occupying our attention.

Meanwhile, a happy Christmas to you all.

Katharine Brisbane

Director