



Chairperson's Report for Friends of NERAM Inc

2025 AGM

On behalf of the Friends of NERAM Committee, I'm delighted to present the 2024 report on our activities during this time. The Friends' Committee had ten meetings in 2024, plus a planning meeting.

Our 2024 AGM was on Sunday 24 March, held at the Mazda gallery. Our objectives as stated by the Constitution are:

- raising funds for the benefit of Friends and NERAM,
- liaising with the Director and Board,
- growing our membership,
- organising events and creating awareness and appreciation of the visual arts and associated activities.

As a committee we are committed to NERAM as a significant place of learning in the creative arts and as an iconic institution in the New England.

Current Committee members:

Debra Kelliher Chairperson

David Rose Deputy Chairperson

Lynne Walker Secretary

Stephen Halliday Treasurer

Merran Pearson Membership Secretary

Trevor Edgar Member (deceased, December 2024)

Kaelem Burgess Member

Kerry Dunne Member

Martha Saw Member, Co-Chair Fundraising Subcommittee.

All members of the Committee contribute their skills with energy and professionalism; however, I wish to particularly thank two Committee members: Treasurer Stephen Halliday who has suggested and applied a range of practical solutions to make operations more efficient and professional and has driven our work to become a registered charity. Stephen's knowledge is invaluable. I also thank David Rose, who has worked tirelessly to bring the Friends of NERAM High Country Autumn Printmaking Workshop to life as well as streamline communications. I wish to acknowledge



Committee member Trevor Edgar who died suddenly in December, 2024. We all miss him and look back on his contribution with affection and respect.

Financials

Income

Income from the 2024 financial year (ending on 31 December, 2024) from membership fees, fundraising and donations was \$67,322.68 (a 9 % increase from the previous year). This represents a strong result, particularly when considering we were unable to hold Neramble during 2024 (which could normally be expected to contribute more than \$10,000 in clear profit to Friends).

Expenses

For the 2024 financial year Friends were able to contribute \$51,728 to support exhibitions and projects at NERAM and, consistent with previous years, an estimated \$100,000 in in-kind support (primarily by way of volunteering).

The level of contributions made by Friends to NERAM during 2024 represents a 70% increase from the previous year. However, this significant increase in contributions did result in Friends ending 2024 with a small operating deficit of \$(2,277).

This year-end result was not unplanned. During the year, the FON Management Committee had determined that it may be appropriate to draw down on retained earnings (accumulated profits from previous years) to enable the provision of project and sponsorships contributions to NERAM at a higher value than in previous years (but with any resulting operating deficit maintained at under \$2,500).

The draw down on retained earnings during 2024 is consistent with recent past practice (as reported to/and approved by FON members by way of the annual accounts in the 2014, 2017, 2019 and 2020 financial years).

It should also be noted that the reported increase in general fundraising expenses (\$6,923 for 2024) is largely reflective of costs associated with a new flagship program for FON - The Friends of NERAM High-Country Autumn Printmaking Workshop held in March 2024 (with the expense total including



payment of industry standard tutoring fees for 3 workshop facilitators and the provision of high-quality course materials for all participants).

Balance Sheet

Despite ending the year with a small operating deficit, our year end bank balances remain healthy with total funds held of \$53,311 (inclusive of \$12,000 in income received in advance – White Rhino subscriptions for 2025). This provides a strong foundation for our planned fundraising activities and continued support of NERAM during 2025.

Oars Awards

We gave two Oars Awards in 2024, to Bob Clarke and Kim Taylor. Both these Friends have contributed generously to the work of NERAM with Bob being Chair of the NERAM Board and Kim Taylor being a member of the Board.

Membership

Current membership (including those with Life membership) stands at 295 as at 31 January 2025.

Activities

Friends of NERAM conducted a range of fundraising activities throughout the year.

The Friends of NERAM High-Country Autumn Printmaking Workshop was held on the weekend of 12 April, 2024. This was managed by Deputy Chair David Rose and featured three New England printmaking teachers: Leah Bullen, Lizzie Horne and Liz Powell. Evaluations from the were uniformly enthusiastic and the workshop generated a small surplus.

The Fundraising Sub-Committee catered for eight exhibition openings, two ‘At Home’ fund raisers, twelve White Rhino Film Club showings, a High Tea and the 2024 AGM. We are grateful to the members of this hardworking committee as well as those Friends who provide extra assistance at events. Co-Chairs Martha Saw and Prue Melville oversaw the Fundraising Sub-committee.

The White Rhino Film Club Sub-committee offered a full program of films at the Armidale Playhouse, with monthly showings plus a film festival in July. Playhouse Theatre management are very supportive of the Club. Film showings are accompanied by notes from John Wearne and Mike Gibson. Wendy Wearne and Lynne Walker assist with administration, and Paul Gaddes manages the technology. There are now 122 members of the White Rhino Film Club and it is fully subscribed.



White Rhino have forged an excellent and mutually beneficial relationship with Regional Cinemas Australia, the new owners of the Belgrave Cinema.

The 2024 AGM in March saw us vote for three works to be restored under the Adopt An Artwork program. We raised sufficient funds to restore all three: Elioth Gruner's *Untitled Beach Painting*, Richard Phillips's *Zinnias* and Brett Whiteley's *Head of Bacon*. We contributed additional funds for the badly damaged Brett Whiteley work which required a custom-made perspex box covering to protect it. A successful High Tea in July raised more funds for this initiative.

Chair, Debra Kelliher, ran a 'Leading Volunteers' online webinar for the Australian Friends of Federations of Museums, of which Friends of NERAM is a member, in April 2024 which was well received.

The Friends of NERAM Management Committee successfully worked through the process for registration of Friends of NERAM as a Charity. We received confirmation of our new status from the ACNC on 19 July 2024. We adopted Xero software to simplify accounting and in line with best practice, developed an induction process for new Committee members. We welcomed two new Committee members, Kerry Dunn and Kaelem Burgess in November 2024.

Two At-Home fundraisers were held: one at Joc Coventry and Mahalath Halperin's home and one at Edward and Heather Cowie's home. We are grateful to these Friends for their generosity and hospitality.

Friends donated towards the purchase of analogue printing equipment for NERAM's Black Gully printmakers to be installed in the Museum of Printing. This equipment was purchased from Edwards Printing, Tamworth.

We completed 2024 with a Christmas party for FON members on 1 December.

Friends of NERAM organised an En Plein Air workshop for the weekend of 29/30 March, 2025 because of the strong reception of last year's Autumn Printmaking Workshop. Local artists and teachers Isabelle Devos and Leah Bullen were employed to lead the workshops, to take place at Blue Hole, Gara Gorge. Once again, Deputy Chair David Rose has led this initiative.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the FON committee members who give their time, talent and enthusiasm so willingly. A very big thank you once again to the two Subcommittees – Fundraising and White Rhino Film Club.



We acknowledge NERAM Director Rachael Parsons, Finance and Admin Officer Leah Gilbey, Registrar & Collections Manager Jennifer Taylor, Exhibitions & Curatorial Manager Belinda Hungerford, Communications Officer Rochelle Tubb and Front of House Coordinator Emily Simson for their continued professionalism and enthusiasm as staff of NERAM. They all go beyond the boundaries of their roles in their desire for excellence and passion for art.

And thank you to all Friends' members for the continued support of NERAM and your attendance at events and exhibitions. Your membership supports NERAM which is an invaluable institution for the arts in New England.

Dr Debra Kelliher

Chairperson

Friends of NERAM Inc