

FUTURE PROOFING THE TMAGGOTS

DISCUSSION PAPER – SEPTEMBER 2017

Intent of paper

The Committee has identified several challenges to the current association structure and event design. This paper was prepared to guide discussion at the 2017 AGM.

Background

In 2005 the Friends of TMAG helped to form a 'young' friends group, the TMAGgots, to encourage younger people to become involved with TMAG.

The TMAGgots' Association Constitution (2010) cites the principle purposes as:

- **the promotion of arts and culture to young people; and**
- **the promotion of arts and cultural works by young people.**

The association website describes the TMAGgots as having the "sole aim of connecting people with the arts, culture, history, heritage and science through the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG) and other places."

In 2016 the TMAGgots celebrated its ten year anniversary. While financial and non-financial membership remains strong, over recent years the Committee has been working to address three key issues affecting the long-term viability of the association:

- **a change in the audience demographic, with a shift toward an older cohort;**
- **challenges maintaining skills and membership across the Committee; and**
- **the introduction of staffing charges for after-hours events at TMAG.**

These issues – together with the need to update the TMAGgots Constitution in line with contemporary not-for-profit associations – are discussed further below.

Issues for consideration

Target audience

The target TMAGgots audience was historically the 18 – 30 age bracket. However, over time the demographic has shifted upwards – somewhat following ageing of the original member cohort, but also as older cohorts in Hobart (such as those typically aligned with the Friends of TMAG) became aware of and interested in the style of event provided by the TMAGgots.

The TMAGgots has adapted its marketing over time to accommodate older members (eg replacing 'young' with 'young at heart') but is conscious of maintaining a distinct identity from the Friends of TMAG and not deterring younger cohorts from attending events and engaging with the museum.

Recently, the Committee has focused on attracting 'young professionals' (mid 20s – 40s). This seems to strike a balance with TMAG's increased energy to engage young adults through partnerships with UTAS and hosting after-hours events. However, given this evolution, it is important for the TMAGgots to re-evaluate its core purpose (as described in its Constitution) and its point of difference from other friends groups.

Committee membership

Given the TMAGgots demographic, Committee members tend to be engaged in full work and/or study, and often hold other volunteer positions. In recognition of this, the Committee has taken steps to streamline the association structure (eg delineating roles and responsibilities; establishing the Wild Apricot website; and removing unnecessary administrative burdens) with the intent to make roles more manageable and thereby more attractive to potential Committee members.

At the same time, however, the Committee has experienced an unplanned high turnover of members. The role of Vice-President – designed to support succession planning – has also been unfilled for two years.

While the Committee uses existing networks to promote the benefits – notably development and mentoring opportunities – to potential members, it seeks feedback as to how it may better attract Committee members in the future.

Event costs at TMAG

In 2016, TMAG introduced staffing charges for all after-hours events held by friends groups. While this is a cost-recovery model only (no other event hire charges apply), at \$70 per hour/per VSO at 2 – 3 VSOs per event, it has reduced the ability to run cost-neutral or fundraising events.

TMAGgots is currently exploring avenues available to address this issue, such as training Committee members in OHS/evacuation procedures to reduce the VSOs required. Where applicable, the TMAGgots may also co-host or participate in existing after-hours events (such as the TMAG/UTAS Welcome to Hobart).

The TMAGgots will still look to host some solo events, such as the upcoming Life Drawing (which will run at a loss) where there is significant ability to engage our target audience and build their relationship to the museum. However, it is important to consider the impact that event costs – and the diminished ability to fundraise – will have on the TMAGgots ongoing financial viability.

For context, the TMAGgots averages \$1500 per year in membership income. Events are designed to be cost-neutral or low cost. Historically, the Annual Quiz was the primary fundraiser with cash bars run at other TMAG-based events providing some supplementary income. These funds have been channelled back into shaping unique events, by providing fee or subsidised events, making charitable donations, purchasing goods or infrastructure that supports our relationship with and the work of TMAG, or purchasing artwork for the wider community to enjoy.

In addition to event costs, other annual costs include insurance, website administration, website domain costs, administrative costs (eg postage), and negligible, miscellaneous costs (eg ice).

Constitution

In 2016, former Committee member, Mark Fitzgerald, produced a draft Constitution that aligns with contemporary, not-for-profit association constitutions. The Committee has reviewed the draft but has not formally progressed given the current issues up for discussion.