

## **Artists organisation**

Minutes of General Meeting held 19 July 1979, 8pm, at Garibaldi's Community Centre, 95 Riley Street, East Sydney

### **AGENDA ITEM 1 - NOMINATION OF CHAIRPERSONS**

Julie Ewington and Marr Grounds were nominated as chairpersons for the meeting.

### **AGENDA ITEM 2 – BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF PREVIOUS GENERAL MEETING**

All business arising from the previous General Meeting was covered in the Report of the Steering Committee.

### **AGENDA ITEM 3 – REPORT OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE**

Members of the Steering Committee were introduced to the meeting. A report was presented on activities of the Steering Committee from the time of the last General Meeting. These included:

- the distribution of a press release to the media;
- two members of the Steering Committee speaking about the organisation on Marius Webb's program on radio 2JJ;
- the production of posters and handbills to publicise the present meeting;
- the writing of an article on the artists organisation for publication in the Nation Review (week commencing 23 July,
- the compilation of a newsletter which, due to difficulties caused by the postal strike, was reserved for distribution at the present meeting.

A short report was given on General Meetings held in Adelaide (19 June), Brisbane (26 June) and Perth (20 June-).

Report on meeting with Visual Arts Board

A report was made on the informal meeting four members of the Steering Committee had with Leon Paroissien (Director, VAB) and Katrina Rumley (Senior Project Officer, VAB) on 12 July,

The general feeling given to Steering Committee members by Leon Paroissien was that the VAB would appreciate the formation of a broad-based artists' organisation. The example was cited of other Australia Council boards in areas with strong union support (for example, the Theatre Board) which have a real advantage over the VAB in controlling the flow of money to their area of activity.

With regard to funding, the VAB would not be willing to provide ongoing support for the running of an organisation, but would be interested in supporting short-term projects, such as:

- Research;
- Publication;
- Short-term administrative costs involved in both the above.

The VAB was willing to be consulted to assist in preparing a brief for research into the needs for and expectations about an artists' organisation. It was, however, felt that this research should be carried out by an independent person or group. Such research would ascertain potential membership.

Other points of discussion were:

- a. The seminar on moral rights for artists - it was seen as important that representatives from the artists' organisation be involved
- b. The VAB quarterly newsletter - which would circulate news about the artists' organisation.
- c. The artists' organisation newsletter - an ideal organ for the printing of information such as lists of professionals willing to assist artists with taxation and legal matters; and the results of research projects such as the recent VAB enquiry into tertiary art education.

Both Leon Paroissien and Katrina Rumley appeared to be impressed by the work already done towards laying the basis for an organisation.

There was brief discussion of this report. It was noted that it was now necessary for the organisation to prepare a brief for research into membership, and more detailed proposals regarding possible funding from the VAB.

### **Statement of Aims**

The Statement of Aims included in the Agenda for the last General Meeting had been revised and extended by the Steering Committee and was presented to the meeting for discussion and further amendment.

Several people commented that the term 'cultural worker' was not an adequate one, and although it was accepted that all terms and definitions at this stage should be seen as provisional only, the general feeling of the meeting was that this term should be clarified, and the functions expressed by it redefined. It was suggested that definition through practice be used, and that in place of 'cultural worker' the various categories 'artists, art students, art teachers, community art workers.. etc' be written.

The following items were proposed for inclusion in the Statement of Aims:

1. To make representations to the Department of Youth Affairs and Employment regarding the eligibility of artists for unemployment schemes.  
(eg Manpower in the USA and similar programs in New Zealand)

2. To make representations to the Local, State and Federal Governments regarding non-financial assistance to artists and arts organisations eg. waiving of payroll tax, sales tax, waiving or reduction of telephone and postage charges.
3. To extend item (8) to include 'the public': To promote the role of the artist as a valid and contributing member of society.
4. To lobby Local Governments regarding their responsibilities to include arts programs/activities within their realm of responsibility.

It was moved:

- a. that the above amendments be made to the Statement of Aims; and
- b. that the revised Statement of Aims be adopted provisionally by the artists' organisation.

## **CARRIED**

### **Membership**

The recommendations of the Steering Committee on the issues of criteria for membership, and the formation of a working group to prepare a brief for research into membership, were presented for discussion.

It was proposed that until research can establish clearly the identity and needs of potential membership, the organisation should maintain the widest possible terms of reference for membership.

## **CARRIED**

Several people expressed concern that VAB involvement in the research project might affect the nature of the research, and direct it towards fulfilling the needs of the VAB rather than those *of* the artists' organisation. It was stressed that the brief to be prepared was to be given to a body independent of both the VAB and the artists organisation and should therefore hopefully satisfy the needs of both organisations. The example was given of a similar study undertaken by the Crafts Board, the results of which appeared to be quite successful.

- a. that a working group be formed to undertake initial research in an attempt to ascertain the needs and expectations of the potential membership of the artists' organisation.
- a. that the working group aim to formulate a brief, in consultation with the VAB, to be given to an independent group which. will carry out further research in this area.
- b. that individuals working in specific areas of activity should be encouraged to make submissions to the membership working group, for inclusion in the research program and brief.

## **CARRIED**

### **Legal Report**

A report was given on the Steering Committee's preliminary investigations into possible legal structures for the organisation.

From discussions with Uri Windt of Actors Equity and Garth Simon, lawyer, it had become apparent that the most obvious option open to the organisation was to register as a union. This conclusion had been reached for the following reasons:

- a. The organisation would be Industrially weak and would carry campaign/publicity power only. By becoming part of the union movement it would be able to enlist the aid of other unions and would gain industrial strength.
- b. Union registration would confer legal status which in itself carries political power.
- c. By definition a union would represent the material interests of artists and this would guarantee a continuity of involvement which could not otherwise be ensured.
- d. As a union, the organisation could address the employment question more directly than, for example, an association could.

It was also commented that the fact that it was dealing with 'intellectual property' would give the organisation 'bargaining strength' under Arbitration.

The process of registering as a union involved four basic stages:

- a. The setting up of an unincorporated association with the general aims of the organisation.
- b. The drafting of a constitution to be approved by a General Meeting: by law the organisation would then exist.
- c. The formalisation of membership.
- d. Application to the Registrar of unions (to seek approval of constitution etc.)

The main problems to be encountered would be those related to the legal definition of membership.

With regard to the writing of a constitution, the following were seen as being of crucial importance:

- a. The organisation must be broad-based and ensure representation of all areas of interest.

- b. The organisation must be democratic and the organisational structure allow maximum participation of members.
- c. Unity - the organisation must be able to speak with one voice, based on a broad consensus of opinion.

It was generally agreed that there be further examination of the options for the possible structure of the organisation, and that more detailed recommendations on this issue be presented to the next General Meeting, including a first draft constitution.

## **Constitution**

The recommendations of the Steering Committee for a constitution were Presented to the meeting for discussion:

- i. that General Meetings be held at least three times a year.
- b. that a quorum of 20 be adopted for all General Meetings.
- c. that additional General Meetings be called by the majority of the Steering Committee. or by a quorum of the general membership on petition to the Steering Committee.
- d. that two weeks' notice in writing be given of each General Meeting.
- e. that Steering Committee meetings be open to all members, with speaking but not voting rights.
- f. that the calendar for Steering Committee meetings be sent to all members and kept up to date.
- g. that equal representation of all Sectional interests be ensured on all Committees.
- h. that adequate representation of sexes be ensured on all Committees.
- i. that all efforts be made to make information available to membership, eg membership lists to be available to all members.
- ii.

The following amendments to these recommendations were proposed:

- 1. with regard to item (e): the writing in of a further provision that all split decisions are to be referred back to a General Meeting.
- 2. that item (a) be amended to read "that General Meetings be held at least three times a year to take all major policy decisions".

3. that item (g), be amended to read "that proportional representation of all sectional interests be ensured on all committees.
4. that item (h) be amended to read "that equal representation of sexes be ensured on all Committees".
5. the inclusion of a provision for the formation of sub-committees which would make autonomous decisions on issues related to their own area of interest.
6. that item (i) be amended to include provision for a newsletter, suggested minimum number of newsletters per year.

It was also queried whether the constitution should make provision for the expulsion of members.

It was moved that the meeting accept the general constitutional structure proposed, with the incorporation of the above amendments.

## **CARRIED**

### **Future Structure of the Steering Committee**

The recommendations of the Steering Committee on future structure of the Steering Committee were presented to the meeting for discussion and amendment.

It was moved that the following items be written into a first draft constitution for the organisation:

- a. that a new Steering Committee be elected annually.
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- b. that no more than 50% of any Steering Committee be re-elected for the next term of office.
- c. that no person should be a member of the Steering Committee for more than two consecutive terms.
- d. that the Steering Committee be able to form working collectives to deal with specific issues,
- e. that the Steering Committee be empowered to invite members to serve on such working collectives.
- f. that the membership be encouraged to propose/present ideas for the formation of work collectives to the Steering Committee.

## **CARRIED**

The suggestion was also made that a phrase regarding the answerability of the Steering Committee to general membership be written into the constitution.

The proposals of the Steering Committee for working collectives to be formed to work on the following issues were accepted, and volunteers for each group were identified from the meeting.

1. Constitution -to write a first draft constitution for the organisation and research into possible legal structures of the organisation.
2. Membership - to prepare a brief for research into the needs for and expectations about an artists organisation.
3. Seminar on moral rights for artists - Australia Council funded seminar to be held at the Opera House in mid - November; working group to research and prepare papers for presentation at the seminar.
4. Art Education - to pursue the following issues and make subsequent proposals which an artists organisation could act upon:
  - a. Is it part of the role of the artist to teach as well as produce?
  - b. What is the position of the teaching artists eg. part-time teaching artists; the employment of women in tertiary education
  - c. To what extent could or should the artists organisation liaise with the Teachers Federation?
  - d. Does the present art education system generate popular cultural involvement and interchange?
  - e. Does it, at institutional and community organisational levels, make art and artists accessible to the community at large?

It was also agreed that a fifth working group be formed to liaise with the Creative Spaces movement.

The above groups comprise the following people:

1. Constitution – Ian Milliss, Jeanne Eager, Tim Burns, Vicki Varvaressos.
2. Membership – Ian Burn, Penny Upward, Vivienne Binns, Michiel Dolk, Dragan Ilic.
3. Seminar on moral rights – Virginia Spate, Jeanne Eager, John Peart, Terry Reid.
4. Art Education – Marilyn Fairskye, Garry McDougall , Simon Upward, Gregor Cullen, Barry Collins, Margot Gray, Nigel Lendon, Julie McBean, Rod Shaw.
5. Creative Spaces – Murray Overheu, David Horswell, Terry Reid, Peter Thornhill, Ross Wolfe, Erica Callan.

## **AGENDA ITEM 4 - ELECTION OF NEXT STEERING COMMITTEE**

Five members of the Steering Committee were re-elected and further nominations were called for. The meeting accepted the new Steering Committee to comprise:

Ian Burn, Garry Collins, Michiel Dolk, Jeannie Eager, Julie Ewington, Ivor Fabok, Margot Gray, Rosemary Johnson, Lyn Lee, John Peart, Loren Sherman, Yanni Stumbles, Peter Thorn.

The Steering Committee and all working collectives were to meet on Tuesday 31 July, 8pm, at the Old Marist Brothers School, corner Darley and Liverpool Streets, Darlinghurst.

## **AGENDA ITEM 5 – NOTICE OF BENEFIT**

The artists' organisation benefit was to be held on Saturday 18 August, 8pm, at the Old Marist Brothers School.

## **AGENDA ITEM 6 - DATE OF NEXT GENERAL MEETING**

It was decided that the next General Meeting be held on Thursday 30 August, 8pm at the Old Marist Brothers School.

## **AGENDA ITEM 7 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### **Fees**

The question of membership fees was raised and it was suggested that recommendations on this issue be presented for discussion at the next General Meeting.

### **Address for Steering Committee**

Address for the Steering Committee was to remain PO Box 309, Wentworth Building, Sydney University.

### **General Information**

It was suggested that a place for the presentation of general items of information and events of interest be made on the Agenda for the next General Meeting