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THE BROWN'S MART COMMUNITY ARTS NEWSLETTER
Issue #1, 2008
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THE EO WRITES
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Welcome to the first newsletter for 2008. There have been significant and positive developments with Brown's Mart Community Arts (BMCA) since we launched our Reinvention Program in February 2007. One such development, a fundamentally important one, is that BMCA is now back in good standing with Arts NT and consequently our core funding for 2008 (\$130,000) was approved by them also. Being re-funded in 2008 is a significant achievement because BMCA were on notice in 2007, and in real danger of being defunded in 2008 had we not performed well against our self-defined program last year. Congratulations and many thanks to members, Staff and Board members who worked very hard to realise our 2007 Program.

Successes of 2007

We can thus build on the successes of 2007 and continue with our process of reinvention as a grassroots arts development organisation. These successes include:

- * forging strong and productive partnerships with Darwin-based community organisations including Melaleuca Refugee Centre, Multicultural Council of the Northern Territory, Africa Australia Friendship Association;
* regaining significant Australia Council project funding for projects run by Arts Access Darwin and for new media/new technologies workshops in Malak;
* reinvigorating Brown's Mart Reserve, exemplified by an increase in usage particularly by Indigenous and youth sectors, the upgrade of facilities and safety standards, and stepping up entrepreneurial efforts through, notably, Cantina Roja;
* increasing our membership from 22 in 2006 to more than 122 in 2007.

More to come in 2008

There is much to be done still. We intend to consolidate work we initiated in 2007 and expand in some other areas. Some work to look forward to include:

- * expanding the hours of the Malak Telecentro;
* collaborating with the Multicultural Council of the NT to again produce CulturFest in 2008, highlighting the restoration of the Grand Parade involving culturally diverse community groups;
* contributing to community cultural development in nine

Indigenous communities in the Top End through auspicing major youth diversionary activities funded by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs; * piloting community gardens in Malak and Bagot Community as community cultural development projects.

This year we also expect our other regular programs to flourish:

The Darwin Fringe Festival, scheduled for June 18 – 29, will be restructured this year so its events showcase community arts we (and our partners and communities) produce, with events and venues distributed across Malak, Bagot Community and Brown's Mart Reserve.

Arts Access Darwin will undertake a major advocacy and arts production project called Open House featuring a series of exciting events highlighting the work of artists with disabilities held throughout the year, to be launched during the Darwin Festival.

Fist Full of Films celebrates its ninth year and, aside from its exciting screenings and awards, will commence work on setting up an independent governance structure for itself to better involve and maximise participation of various stakeholders.

Sculpture in the Park, staged every two years in Civic Park, is on again in 2008, featuring even more community participation and innovation; this year's SitP is planned to be held during the Darwin Festival (in August) rather than during the Fringe.

Challenge

It will be a busy year, with a major challenge being how we resource our operations. We have retained 2007 funding levels, which is \$50,000 less than 2006 funding levels (we suffered a funding cut from Arts NT as part of our being put on notice). We will need more than the core funding from Arts NT to realise our plans for 2008. We will seek increased funding from other government sources but also from foundations and philanthropic organisations.

I look forward to working with you in 2008.

- Bong Ramilo, Executive Officer, BMCA

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COMMUNITY GARDEN
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Come one and come all to green our urban spaces! We're starting work on establishing a Malak Community Garden in and around the Malak Shopping Centre. The plots of land comprise existing garden

beds on several sides of the centre whilst there is also space indoors and in a basement car park. We aim to develop the garden over the following months with a variety of plantings and projects.

It is envisaged that group members with gardening skills will take turns in running work sessions in which they share relevant knowledge: eg. bed preparation, planting, pest management, composting, worm farming, harvesting, pruning, thinning, food storage and so on.

Eventual produce from the garden will be shared equitably among group members and may also be used in proposed community dinners for the Malak area. We will apply for some grants to kick things along but what we really need right now is warm bodies and enthusiasm.

Come along to a meeting to find out all about it, Sunday 6 April at 5pm. Meet behind the Malak Shopping Centre, outside the Chambers Crescent Theatre.

Donations of the following items are also sought:

- * any kind of garden tools
- * pots and planter boxes
- * hoses, sprinklers, irrigation fittings
- * compost bins
- * anything that might be useful for a garden!

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BROWN'S MART THEATRE
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So many changes have been happening around the Browns Mart precinct that I am actually not sure where to start. Perhaps chronologically is best which means Cantina Roja. Around August last year we started opening the bar on Thursday and Friday evenings under the name of Cantina Roja. If you haven't noticed the bar is red. It is a simple bar selling bottled beers and spirits and a small range of wines. On certain nights we go wild and make a few cocktails like Mojitos and Bloody Marys. We also provide very simple fare, a sort of tapas concept or probably more like an antipasto plate with such provisions as olives, marinated artichokes and Persian feta served with bread, olive oil and dukkah. This to date has been a small success but there is lots more room for growth and improvement. That is the challenge and everyone loves a challenge.

Then what happened next: the removal of one of the storage rooms that turned the Courtyard Room into a bigger space for hire. This still has not quite been finished as it is just waiting for a lick of paint. This room is to be another hire space but at a cheaper

rate than the theatre. It has many benefits. It opens directly on to the courtyard which is great for shows such as bands and events like Fringe Clubs. Also the space will be available for rehearsals, private functions and art exhibitions. We already have a number of exhibitions booked especially. Engineers without Borders are hosting a national touring Indigenous exhibition and Sculpture In The Park will be using the courtyard in conjunction with the room plus the usual park for its upcoming event.

The other major change that has occurred here is that the Venue Management office and the general administration of Brown's Mart Community Arts have now moved downstairs to the old Music NT premises, an area which has been greatly reduced to increase storage space which was lost by increasing the Courtyard Room. Does all that make sense? All the contact details remain the same, just retrain your instincts to select the door to the right rather than heading up the stairs.

That's about it for now, we hope to see you all at the Cantina on Friday nights.

Cheers

Anna Stewart, Venue Coordinator, BMCA

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Don't forget the
Annual General Meeting
of
Brown's Mart Community Arts Inc.
at Chambers Crescent Theatre, Malak
1:00 pm on 19 April 2008.
ALL FINANCIAL MEMBERS ARE INVITED
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Proposed Amendments To The Constitution
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At the Annual General Meeting on 19th April 2008, two amendments to the Constitution will be proposed.

The first amendment is to change the name of the association from Brown's Mart Community Arts Inc to Darwin Community Arts Inc. This proposed name change was included in the Reinvention Program of 2007. The Board decided in December 2007 to undertake the formal name change in 2008 during the AGM.

The proposed change to the association's name seeks to formally represent the focus of our work on communities in the Darwin region and seeks to clarify categorically the distinction between the association's work in community arts on the one hand and the venue (Brown's Mart) after which the association was originally

named. This name change will remove the basis for confusing the venue with the association.

The second amendment deals with Section 3.5 (Membership) and seeks to redefine membership year as twelve months from date of joining. Section 3.5 currently states:

"The Membership Year shall commence on 1st of March and expire on the 28th of February following and nothing in the Constitution shall prevent the Board from accepting in lieu of the normal membership fee an amount which is not less than one half of the normal membership fee for the Membership Year where a person has applied for a membership after 31st of August. In the event that a member pays for renewal of membership at or before the Annual General Meeting following the expiry of that person's membership on 28th of February that person's membership shall be deemed to be continuous."

Instead of the rather complicated current arrangements in Section 3.5, the amendment suggests:

- * Membership commences on the date of payment of the Membership Due;
- * Membership expires 12 months after the date of payment of the Membership Due;
- * The period of continuous membership is calculated solely within dates of paid membership;
- * It is the member's responsibility to keep track of when a membership is due for renewal, but BMCA will endeavour to give members four weeks' notice of the renewal date.

The proposed change seeks to simplify how we define and track the duration of membership by adopting a "rolling" system for the membership year, where it is defined as twelve months from date of joining (or signing up or renewal). We now have the technology to automatically track renewal dates and to automatically send our renewal reminders (CiviCRM, a membership management software application) which will make the proposed amendment workable.

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Regarding delay in serving notice of membership expiry on 28th
February 2008
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Unfortunately, members have not been given reasonable notice that memberships expire on 28th February, allowing them to renew memberships before or on that date. We offer our apologies for this. We can, however, advise members that they have until the AGM in April to actually renew their memberships if they wish to retain continuous membership (important if they intend to stand for election as an office bearer), as stipulated in Section 3.5 of the Constitution. There is a question though as to whether members

who have not renewed before 28th February will be entitled to benefits in the case that they have not renewed.

As we did not give reasonable notice of the expiry date, the Board have decided that members have until the date of the AGM (19th April 2008) to renew in order to preserve continuous membership and that they also retain all benefits until they renew.

We hope this extension of membership duration and effectiveness of benefits for all members to April makes up for the late notice of membership expiration. Please contact BMCA during office hours regarding renewal of your membership.

We look forward to seeing you at the Annual General Meeting and receiving your input regarding current and future directions of BMCA.