

Abbotsford Convent Foundation

Annual Report 20/21



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Convent.



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Images from top left to bottom left: 1. Uncle Bill Nicholson Welcome and Smoking ceremony, *Open Spaces*, 2019. Photo by Anne Moffat / 2. *Disco Instamatic*, Midsumma, 2021. Photo by Sofia Siconetto / 3. Convent building and Heritage Gardens. Photo by ACF

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Cover: *Street Dance* as part of *Freedance*, 2021. Photo by Mathew Lynn

A message from the Chair



Victoria Marles

2020/21 was one of the most challenging times in the Convent's history with a sharp reduction in visitor-dependent income, due to ongoing lockdowns. As an organisation without ongoing government operational support, we were buoyed by the three levels of government recognising the importance of the Convent.

Key grants such as the Federal Government's Restart Investment to Sustain and Expand (RISE) Fund enables an ambitious new public program, *Interspecies* as an ephemeral public art takeover in 2022, as well as a new ecommerce site and Meet the Artists videos to support our Convent tenants.

Our donor community rallied around the Convent and has given generously—with donations to our Keep it Green: Adaptation appeal matched dollar-for-dollar by Creative Partnerships Australia up to \$50K through Plus1. These funds are enabling the Convent to transition to a COVIDSafe precinct by purchasing infrastructure to support more outdoor arts and cultural activities.

Significant work and extensive community engagement has taken place on the new Master Plan, with a final plan due in the new year. This will provide an ambitious new vision to future-proof and protect the Convent precinct for the generations to come.

Key preservation works such as the Gatehouse project commenced thanks to Heritage Victoria funding. Work also started on the Bishop's Parlour Foyer to preserve the 120-year-old tessellated tile floor, made possible through the Copland Foundation, Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation through the Eldon & Anne Foote Trust, and FDC Construction & Fitout.

I am so proud to be part of this wonderful community and grateful for the support that we have received from so many during this enormously challenging time. From Federal, State, Local governments, to the philanthropic and donor community, Convent tenants, the ACF's executive team and staff—all have played a leading role in ensuring the Convent can navigate these unprecedented times, and come out stronger than ever to serve our community.

A message from the CEO

COVID-19 impacts caused the Abbotsford Convent Foundation (ACF) to reflect on its role in the COVID-normal. Now 17 years old, we are in an ambitious phase and taking an 'opportunity approach' to the pandemic's challenges. Through diversifying, adapting, and enabling, we continue supporting many communities: tenants; artists; venue hirers; event partners; donors; and the public to not only maintain—but grow and thrive.

While the Convent was only open for 134 days, we still welcomed 414,118 precinct visitors and tenancy occupancy remained stable at 95%. While our 31 venues were severely constrained by restrictions, we changed event spaces into rehearsal spaces, resulting in a 388% increase in artists working at the Convent developing their practice.

The Convent's development project, Pivot, continued for a second year, providing much-needed support to the arts community—and positioned the Convent as a significant producer. We sincerely thank the Victorian Government and the Australia Council for the Arts for making this possible.

Sadly, due to the significantly adverse financial impact of COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions, in early 2021 we made the hard decision to close c3 gallery after 13 years. We remain committed to supporting artists with this venue, and the space, now known by its original name, The Store, will be transformed, enabling a broader range of arts and cultural programming later this year.

I wholeheartedly thank Chair, Victoria Marles and the ACF Board who have taken every challenge as an opportunity and shared their time and wisdom so generously during this unique time.

Every day my team's boundless, purposeful resilience provides joy and inspiration; as does the tenant community; our many donors, partners and patrons who have continued to support the Convent; and our community who returned so enthusiastically after each lockdown. I thank you all for your invaluable and positive contributions.



Collette Brennan



Vision

To be renowned for stimulating cultural exchange through the wonderful and unexpected curiosities of our people and place.

Purpose

To transform people's lives through diverse cultural experiences and the striking landscape of our place.

Values

Empowerment

We offer a program experience and landscape that helps people live well. Our community is engaged and feels ownership of and responsibility for the Convent.

Distinctiveness

We make our place the home of arts and cultural innovation, often at the engine room of independent practice, that is shared with our clients, audiences, and visitors through unique and distinctive programs.

Resilience

We constantly seek to be a robust organisation. We adopt an entrepreneurial approach that is consolidated through continually improved systems, renewed and new partnerships, and a commitment to providing excellence in our unique client and visitor experience.

Relationships

We nurture, renew, and inspire our partners, communities, visitors, and audiences through the depth and breadth of our engagement opportunities.

Living Legacy

We acknowledge the past and at the same time, we look to the future. We seek to understand the needs of our communities and continually evolve our precinct, programs, services, and experiences to stimulate new conversations, and stay at the forefront of contemporary practice.

Discovery

We share our point of view and invite participation to stimulate emotional responses and transformational ideas, about our place and the world around us.

Potential

We encourage our team to contribute by bringing their passions and expertise to the table, empowering them to reach their individual and collective potential.

Highlights



20,000

Visitors attended the *Flesh after Fifty: Changing images of older women in Art* exhibition in two months.



93
Independent artists have been supported through Pivot, a development program to enable artists to reorient their practice in a COVID-normal world.



388%
Increase in use of the Convent as a rehearsal venue.



1680
Hours worked from home by Convent staff to comply with public health directions.



15%

Growth in newsletter subscribers and at least 8% growth in social followers on last year.



414,118
Visitors to the Convent precinct.



128
Donors had their donation to the Keep it Green: Adaptation appeal matched dollar-for-dollar by Creative Partnerships Australia's Plus1 funding.



15
People found employment with the Abbotsford Convent Foundation through the State Government's Working for Victoria program.

10,000+
Heritage tiles will be cleaned and mended as part of the restoration of the Bishop's Parlour Foyer.



134
Days the precinct was closed due to COVID-19 health restrictions.

Images from left to right, top to bottom: 1. Detail from *Flesh after Fifty: Changing images of older women in Art*, 2021. Photo by Jane Scott / 2. Convent gardens, 2021. Photo by Collette Brennan / 3. Pivot artists, 2021. Photo by Nkechi Anele / 4. *Peek-A-Butoh*, 2021. Photo by Mathew Lynn / 5. *HURU-hARA* as part of Asia TOPA, 2020. Photo by Mathew Lynn / 6. *Sangam Festival*, 2021. Photo by Arun Munoz

Images from left to right, top to bottom: 1. *Disco Instamatic*, Midsumma, 2021. Photo by Sofia Siconetto / 2. *Peek-A-Butoh*, 2021. Photo by Mathew Lynn / 3. *Dance Massive* Open Studios, 2019. Photo by ACF / 4. *Sangam Festival* workshop, 2021. Photo by Arun Munoz / 5. *Paper Planet*, 2021. Photo by Theresa Harrison / 6. Bishop's Parlour Foyer. Photo by ACF

Programs

PIVOT

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on the Australian arts and entertainment sector with \$24 billion in lost income and 80,000 jobs lost in 2020 alone¹. In recognition of this adversity, especially its effects for independent artists, the ACF created the Pivot program. Pivot acknowledges the world has changed, and we, as sector leaders, need to work with artists and undertake strategic practice-based action and research to explore opportunities presented, to test new ideas and approaches, to support independent artists through crisis and to work collaboratively to generate the change needed to navigate the new COVID-normal world.

Pivot, launched in June 2020, delivered two short-term residency programs—the first supported by the Australia Council for the Arts and the second supported by the Australia Council and Creative Victoria. Since it began, this program has enabled 243 artists to explore creative practice and examine, articulate and represent new forms of expression to define this unique moment in human history. The program is representative of Melbourne's culturally rich community and includes artists from First Nations (12), Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) (10), female identifying (10) and LGBTQIA+ communities (6).

For the second Pivot program, the ACF has partnered with research agency, Patternmakers, who have been tracking audience behaviours and attitudes to the arts since 2020, with the COVID-19 Audience Outlook Monitor. They will deliver the project evaluation and act as provocateur, to capture learnings into the artistic process, and understand audience attitudes, behaviours and barriers. This data will inform and support artistic investigations to support the adaptation and regeneration of their work.

Over the last year, we also worked with leading First Peoples, NSW-based performing arts company, Moogahlin Performing Arts, who worked with Melbourne-based artist Sermsah Bin Saad, as part of their annual Yellmundie festival. This provided time, space, and support for a creative development of Sermsah's *'Seventh Season Dreaming'* which was filmed and broadcast as part of *Yellmundie at Home* festival. *ButohOUT!*'s *Odd Hours* which was developed as part of Pivot, went on to receive a 4-star review in *The Age*.

Our second Pivot program attracted 153 expressions of interest, from which 22 were selected to work with us from May 2021. A sample of some of the incredible work being explored includes Katerina Kokkinos-Kennedy—working with a strong female team addressing climate change; Kelli Alred—curating an outdoor exhibition for the Convent in 2022; Sunanda Sachatrakul inviting audiences to be part of an Indian wedding; Jun Bin Lee who is investigating Chinese immigration history through stories of Chinese cabinet makers in 1880s Melbourne to anti-Asian sentiment during the pandemic today. Some artists are exploring the digital realm, such as celebrated jeweller and Convent tenant Katheryn Leopoldseder, with her exhibition, *A New Day*; and Govin Ruben from TerryandTheCuz—researching a digital expression of *Sk!n*, around human-trafficking stories. Others like Luke George, primarily a dancer and choreographer, have moved to a more craft-based approach. With these talented artists, we are currently exploring funding partnerships with an eye to future presentations of some of the works.

¹ Creativity in Crisis: Rebooting Australia's Arts and Entertainment Sector After COVID, Alison Pennington and Ben Eltham, The Centre for Future Work at the Australia Institute, July 2021



Pictured: *ButohOUT!*'s *Odd Hours*, 2021. Photo by Vikk Shayan

Key Programs

The last year has shown us that now more than ever, the arts are vital to our quality of life. Research from the Australia Institute shows that 73% of Australians sought out arts and culture to improve their mood and wellbeing over the last year². Lockdowns and public health restrictions have provided an opportunity to adapt the Abbotsford Convent's approach to programming, through offering more open-air events, digital innovation and COVIDSafe practices to ensure the physical and digital precinct is a place to participate and collaborate—whatever the circumstances. Key programs such as Convent Live and Convent Kids continued to attract diverse audiences and support new works from artists, collectives, and small to medium arts organisations.

Convent Live

ButohOUT! returned for the fifth year to stage the incredible *Odd Hours* with their immersive 4-day takeover of the Industrial School. Midsumma Festival brought *Disco Instamatic* by Tanzer, the 2020 Abbotsford Convent Studio Resident. This reimagining of music video meets disco had hundreds of people dancing in the North Laundry in April/May. Forest Collective and Dan Thorpe enchanted audiences in the Industrial School with their contemporary classical concert, *Emo Phase*.

Featuring globally renowned artists from the South Asian Diaspora, *Sangam*, our first festival of the year took place in February and presented a range of interdisciplinary activities across jam-packed weekend sessions. In the first of many events to come, Melbourne's most exciting party purveyors, Wax'o Paradiso curated an eight-hour dance party on the Mercator Lawn, brought to life by a six-point, vintage hi-fi system.

Convent Kids

Even in the face of pandemic restrictions, the Convent's popular family programs continued to thrive online. Teaming up with Convent tenant, Kids' Own Publishing, the Convent delivered a digital series, *Kids' Home Publishing*, that encouraged kids and their families to make their very own books from home. Running over six art-inspired

weeks, local artists shared their own book creations to inspire pint-sized publishers.

"This video premiered at the Public Libraries Victoria webinar, with 100 Children's and Youth librarians across Victoria in attendance. Suffice to say, there wasn't a dry eye in the (Zoom) room!"

Emma White – Public Libraries Victoria, Children's and Youth Services Special Interest Group Convenor

We chose to move another of our programs online—with our digital offer of *Sapling School* designed to encourage children and families to get into their own backyards to start planting. Cat Sewell, lead artist and play specialist, took audiences through Poorneet (Tadpole Season) in line with the Kulin Nations calendar with some hands-on, home-based activities to learn about the Indigenous seasons and DIY gardening tips for children and families thanks to the Hamer Sprout Fund.

Once restrictions eased in late 2020, Convent Kids returned to onsite activities, beginning with the Convent's collaboration with Dancehouse to present *Freedance*, offering children and families free, weekly dance workshops. 2021 kicked off with *Arrival: The Reeflings*, a playful, interactive, journey for children aged 3-9 that allowed the children to rediscover the Convent's gardens while following custom-made inflatable puppets on their journey. This was followed by Indian dance and music storytelling workshops at *Sangam Festival*. The focus on movement and expanding imaginations continued with *Peek-A-Butoh* sessions, where participants made masks and explored shapeshifting with Japanese Butoh artists. Polyglot Theatre designed a special event, *Paper Planet*, specifically to meet the needs of families who have a child or children with a disability. Families and children were invited to create a beautiful world inside a forest of tall cardboard trees, using only paper, tape, and their limitless imaginations. With 450 attendees featuring children, parents and teachers, close to 65% were new visitors to the Convent.

² Lockdown and the arts, Australia Institute, May 2020



Images from top left to bottom right: 1. *HuRU-hARa* as part of Asia TOPA, 2020. Photo by Mathew Lynn / 2. *Sensory Art Lab*, 2020. Photo by ACF / 3. *Paper Planet*, 2021. Photo by Theresa Harrison / 4. *Sangam Festival*, 2021. Photo by Arun Munoz



Partnership Events

Over the last year, it has been even more important that precincts like the Convent collaborate with other arts venues, artists, collectives, organisations, and festivals to provide a place that inspires and brings diverse communities together. Despite lockdowns impacting on delivery of in-person events, we still worked with 80 artists across 80 events throughout the year. Some of the year's highlights:

RISING Festival

ACF joined with the inaugural RISING Festival and Collingwood Children's Farm to deliver the ambitious *The Rivers Sing* project as it travelled through Abbotsford. Over the course of six weeks, *The Rivers Sing* saw a new piece of sonic artwork composed by acclaimed opera singer Deborah Cheetham AO, with artists Thomas Supple and Byron J. Scullin, travel down the Birrarung and Maribyrnong, to be listened to by audiences and passers-by alike.

Flesh after Fifty

This ground-breaking sell-out exhibition curated by Jane Scott explored and challenged negative stereotypes of aging, while celebrating and promoting positive images of older women through art. Attracting over 20,000 visitors in two months, the exhibition was staged across four venues including the Magdalen Laundry, the Industrial School, St Heliers Street Gallery and outdoors in the Sacred Heart Courtyard. Featuring artworks across a range of artforms from artists such as Maree Clarke, Ponch Hawkes, Megan Evans, the Hotham Street Ladies and Peter Wegner, the exhibition also included 10 new commissioned art installations. The theme challenged participants to produce art that explored untold stories to reveal the way in which fashion, ageism and oppression of women has influenced what we see and how we interpret older women in society. The exhibition was accompanied by curatorial discussion and community engagement in a series of talks, workshops and performances.

Convent Live

The precinct became a stage for the best of Melbourne's genre-pushing and horizon-expanding live experiences within the Convent's unique spaces. We are particularly

pleased to see key event partnerships return to the Convent after a particularly challenging year for the arts and cultural community. Convent Live highlights included:

Midsumma Festival

Staged over three nights, *Disco Instamatic* by Tanzer was a hyper-colour reimagining of the traditional music video. Featuring stars from across Melbourne's queer arts landscape such as Jan Druze, Benjamin Hancock, The Huxleys and Aysa Buffet, it also included DJ sets from Butch le Butch. Continuing the music focus, Forest Collective featured Dan Thorpe with *Emo Phase*, in a series of high energy, genre defying music for piano and ensemble, revisiting his past repertoire and featuring a world premiere concert with Cat Hope.

Sangam Festival

Presented across the Convent, Dancehouse, Bunjil Place and Dandenong Drum Theatre, this celebration of South Asian culture at the Convent featured fun, interactive workshops by day such as Bollywood and Punjabi folk dancing, Mehndi body art and a beautiful, large-scale Rangoli using an assortment of colourful rice and lentils. In the afternoon there was an incredible panel discussion with Chris Sohn, Geskeva Komba and others on art, community and change. At night, the Convent was centre stage for Dada Desi featuring performances across genres from music to spoken word by 11 artists including Pedro Cooray, Sunanda Sachatrakul, Amna Bee and Janaki Gerard.

Freedance

Working with the challenges of new social distancing directions, this series of dance classes presented with Dancehouse centred on providing a safe way for the local community to come together and connect. With no dance experience required, these classes were for both adults and children. Six professional dancers including Shamita Sivabalan, Josh Lowe, Trevor Santos and Keir Choreographic Award (KCA) 2018 winner Melanie Lane provided over 30 people from the arts industry with employment. With hundreds attending, more classes were scheduled over the 10 weeks to meet the overwhelming demand from participants.

Galleries

St Heliers Street Gallery

Reopening in early 2021 once restrictions eased, St Heliers Street Gallery welcomed visitors with three exhibitions that were rescheduled from 2020 and featured a range of artists including Convent tenant, Isabel Koslowsky.

The first exhibition by Anabela Sobrinho & Elly Louise Tyquin, *Universal Space*, focused on the concept of space as one of the five elements of the Tibetan culture. It used a mixture of paintings and weaving to show the transition from dark to light, both visually and metaphorically.

Ellie-Louise Tyquin curated the next exhibition, *Public/Private* which featured three artists, Amelia Dowling, James Hale and Natalya Stern, and explored the process of writing and using words to express emotion and trauma. Dowling's series, *Loose Threads & Things I Never Told You*, consisted of 17 vintage postcards with embroidered text. Hale's works comprised various phrases written with ink on cardboard with wry reflections on life and love, referencing contemporary queerness and popular culture. Stern's video, entitled *Empathy - Sympathy* highlighted the differences in human experiences in connection with the ability or inability to empathize through spoken word.

Jess Jarvie's exhibition, *Among the Leaves, Among the Shadows*, featured a series of delicate watercolour paintings of found and collected Indigenous flora. Annie O'Rourke's exhibition, *Work of Reclamation* explored historical imagery of girls and women working in Magdalen Laundries around the world. O'Rourke uses repetition, mirroring, layering and distortion to echo the way in which enduring myths developed about girls

and women in these institutions. The works also considered the intense historical reactions to women who were believed to have breached the social standards of the time.

Isabel Koslowsky has a passion for contemporary landscape paintings inspired by the natural Australian environment. She staged her first solo exhibition, *Dreamscapes of the Natural World*, an exploration of her abstract interpretations and personal memories of the Victorian bush landscape. Selling several large works on opening night, she is committed to pushing her arts practice further, and is planning to apply for arts residencies in the future.

c3 Gallery Closure

c3 Contemporary Art Space closed from late April 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions and the Convent made the difficult decision to permanently close c3 in March 2021 due to significantly adverse impacts on the Convent's revenue due to the pandemic. In 13 years, the gallery presented the work of over 2,000 artists across more than 1,800 projects under the curation of Gallery Director, Jon Butt, and attracted almost half a million visitors, making it one of Australia's most visited artist-run initiatives.

However, with crisis comes opportunity, and as we recover from the pandemic, this space now known by its original name from the time of the Good Shepherd Sisters at the Convent, The Store, will support the work of Convent tenants and creative partners. This will extend our current portfolio of venue spaces to support our ambitious arts and cultural program and enable more diverse arts experiences.



Images from top left to bottom right: 1. Sarah McConnell, *Climarte*, 2018. Photo by ACF / 2. Isabel Koslowsky, *Dreamscapes of a Natural World*, 2021. Photo by the artist / 3. Anabela Sobrinho, *Inventive Investigation*. Photo by the artist / 4. Jess Jarvie, *Among the Leaves, Among the Shadows*, 2021. Photo by the artist



Pictured: Jacob Boehme, *Blood on the Dancefloor*, 2015. Photo by Dorine Blaise

People

Abbotsford Convent Studio Residency Program

This program focuses on supporting artists to develop works that are site-specific or site responsive. The artist-in-residence typically joins our onsite community in the Convent precinct for up to six months and often remain creative collaborators well beyond their residency. In 2020, our resident was Jacob Boehme.

Jacob Boehme is a Melbourne-born and raised artist of the Narangga and Kaurna Nations in South Australia. Jacob is the founding Creative Director of Yirramboi Festival, and recipient of the 2018 Green Room Award for Curatorial Contribution to Contemporary and Experimental Arts.

During his six-month residency, Jacob worked with the Convent on *The Elders Project*—supported by Commonwealth grant funding from the Indigenous Languages and Arts (ILA) Program. *The Elders Project* is a multi-artform/multi-platform project that captures, profiles, and celebrates older people in the arts, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, and celebrates the mavericks, disruptors and leaders that have shaped the Australian arts landscape over the past 40-80 years.

This residency provided an opportunity to build strategic partnerships with key organisations and funders, towards the realisation of a public program currently in development. This includes a podcast series featuring recorded interviews with Elders in the arts as well as an extensive online archive hosted by Stanford University in California, USA. The online archive will be an exhibition, providing background and displaying the research behind every episode of the podcast. This work will culminate in an international launch event which will be staged in 2022 both at Stanford, Toronto Harbourfront and here at the Abbotsford Convent.

This ambitious project will document and profile these stories, histories and significant moments so this can be shared with future arts makers, build an intergenerational mentor/mentee relationship for arts practitioners, and recognise the contribution and impact of Elders to the Australian arts landscape.

“As Artist-in-Residence at the Abbotsford Convent I was able to develop an international program of First Nations activity. Whilst I could not physically experience a residency at the Convent because of COVID-19 restrictions, I received invaluable support from the ACF team. It was the team at the Convent that really made my term as Artist-in-Residence the most productive and joyful experience. They generously offered their time, skills, knowledge and networks to help build a new body of work which crosses borders and sectors, is of its time and honours Indigenous ways of knowing and doing. I look forward to sharing what we have created together with our Australian, Canadian and American communities in the very near future.”

Community

Tenant Community

The Abbotsford Convent is currently home to more than 120 artists and creatives, as well as a diverse range of organisations and wellbeing practitioners, transforming the precinct into a lively hub of creativity, soul and dynamic energy. The tenant community are vital to the cultural fabric of the Convent, providing a vibrant context for creative discovery, healing, gathering, and learning.

Similarly to other industries, the Convent tenant community has also been adversely affected by COVID-19 restrictions. During this time, the Abbotsford Convent was able to support tenants with rent relief as part of the Victorian Government's Commercial Tenancy Relief Scheme. We also welcomed new tenants to the Convent community such as Dinzi Amobi-Sanderson, designer and founder of ULO, who sources her colourful wax fabrics from Africa and creates head-turning clothing and homewares. Sarah Russell and Johanna Howe are the names behind Melbourne-based label, Caves Collect who design ready-to-wear women's fashion with a focus on quality and local manufacturing. Writers, Alexia Kannas and Rebecca Harkins-Cross have also joined the tenant community—which is currently at 95% occupancy at the Convent.

Another exciting new addition to the Convent's tenant community is Australian National Academy of Music (ANAM). They are the country's leading music performance training organisation and have been based at the South Melbourne Town Hall since 1996. With long-running engineering works taking place at the Town Hall over the next few years, ANAM will now call the Abbotsford Convent home over the next three years and take over nine spaces across the precinct. Looking forward to performing in the Convent's unique spaces, ANAM are excited about the opportunity to provide a nurturing environment for both the

musicians and staff, as well as enhancing the Convent's live music offering for the community.

Once restrictions eased late last year, tenants in Mercator and Sacred Heart buildings ran a successful open studio event over the first weekend in December which drew hundreds of customers, who were eager for COVIDSafe face-to-face retail experience after the long Melbourne lockdown. A key highlight was the Cone 11 pop-up shop and display for their Good Plate Project in the ground floor of the Sacred Heart building.

Through a City of Yarra grant, the Convent was able to showcase the stories of two tenants, David Booth (Ghostpatrol) and Cone 11 as part of a pilot Meet the Artists video series. The reaction from both the tenant community and the public was so positive that further funding has been secured through the Federal Government's Restart Investment to Sustain and Expand (RISE) fund to produce additional tenant videos in FY21/22.

To further support the tenant community, ACF was pleased to partner with the State Government's Working for Victoria program, which enabled us to secure a new short-term role focused on tenant engagement by expanding our retail offer onsite for artists and creators. In addition, the Federal government's RISE funding will also support tenants with a pilot ecommerce site which will be launched in late 2021.

"I feel really lucky to have a studio at the Convent. It's a beautiful space: the animals, the plants and the seasonal change in the grounds is really beautiful. I feel very lucky to live my life as an artist. I love the opportunity to open my studio and invite people in, share and be transparent about who artists are and what they do."

David Booth – Ghostpatrol, Convent tenant since 2019

Convent Made

The end-of-year Pop-Up Shop was a huge success once again with 26 tenants participating and showcasing a wide range of homewares, artworks, books and clothing. Staged in the Salon for the first time, this space provided ample room for products to be displayed and for customers to maintain social distance while browsing and connecting with makers and creators. Open for most of December, the Pop-Up Shop was run by 17 tenant community volunteers while the ACF managed the administration and store fit-out. Over \$17,000 in sales were made, representing a 3% increase on the prior year.

Volunteer Community

In early 2020, the Volunteer Program for the gardens, events and tours was hibernated because of the COVID-19 stay-at-home restrictions. In March 2021, the garden volunteer program returned, running for 13 weeks with 332 hours volunteered to maintain our gardens and grounds for our community, before being once again paused because of COVID-19 restrictions. Once restrictions eased again, 47 hours of support was provided by 6 volunteers during the *ButohOut! Odd Hours* and *Sapling School* programs.

Online Community

Abbotsford Convent continues to increase its digital communities with year-on-year growth throughout all its key channels: 8% growth on Facebook and 9% on Instagram. Our newsletters are delivered to more than 15,000 subscribers each month which is an increase of 15%. This collective growth is remarkable considering the challenging year that the Convent has faced with a high proportion of the year in lockdown, and this demonstrates the high engagement of our audiences.



Images from top to bottom: 1. Caitlin Klooger from Ink and Spindle, *Open Spaces*, 2018. Photo by Anne Moffat / 2. Kathryn Leopoldseder, *Open Spaces*, 2018. Photo by Anne Moffat

Place

Strengthening the Convent through COVID-19

The Abbotsford Convent receives no recurrent operational government funding and relies on the income generated through its events, venue hire and tenancies to maintain 'business as usual' expenditure items such as repairs and maintenance, security, staffing and insurance—alongside the incredible support of our growing donor community.

The ongoing impact of the pandemic is far reaching and will be felt for years to come—and we have a lot of work to do to rebuild and regenerate. With the Abbotsford Convent closed to the public for 134 days over the last year, there was no opportunity to rely on our regular sources of revenues as we are, like all arts and cultural organisations, heavily visitor-dependent. Even when the Convent gates are closed, the costs of managing and protecting an expansive heritage precinct and its diverse community continue. To help us traverse this difficult environment, the ACF launched a public appeal in May, *Re:generate*, to help the Convent through the pandemic, and into this next chapter of repair and recovery.

We couldn't have navigated these many challenges alone, and when we called out to our friends and community, they were right there alongside us. Thanks to generous public donations from our amazing community of supporters, and a \$10,000 COVID-19 Emergency Response grant from the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, the Convent's *Re:generate* fundraising appeal surpassed its stretch target of \$110,000. These vital funds have supported the ongoing essential operational costs that have continued throughout the pandemic, and some which have increased—including sustained heightened site-wide cleaning to comply with COVIDSafe requirements—alongside year-round amenity and services for the precinct, as well as assistance to support the Convent's tenant and venue hire community.

During the months of lockdown, the ACF continued to advocate to all levels of government for critically needed support due to the adverse impacts of COVID-19. In February 2021, we were grateful that the State Government provided the ACF a one-off \$300,000 grant. We were also thrilled to receive generous funding through the Restart Investment to Sustain and Expand (RISE) Fund – an Australian Government Initiative. This grant will enable ACF to develop a series of engaging performances and events showcasing internationally renowned and celebrated Australian curators and artists over a 4-month season from winter 2022. Other key initiatives made possible through this grant include the development of a dedicated ecommerce website to connect our community with the products and services of the Convent's gifted tenant community—essentially bringing our annual Convent Made Pop-Up Shop online—creating a year-round offering and providing a vital source of revenue to tenants even during lockdowns. And we are also so excited to

be building on the pilot video series, *Meet The Artists*, that we created with the support of City of Yarra during the 2020 lockdown, to create a brand new series of videos, providing stunning and intimate glimpses inside the studios and creative practices of some of the Convent's tenant community.

In between lockdowns and ongoing restrictions, we've been excited to welcome our 2021 cohort of *Pivot* artists to the precinct. Funded by the Australia Council for the Arts and Creative Victoria, *Pivot* is a short-term residency program offering artists to experiment, explore and develop their creative practice—especially as the arts sector navigates the devastating impacts of the pandemic.

We have also been proud to launch *Convent Connections*, a seasonal online publication created exclusively for our supporter community—sharing more detail about the programs and projects our donors' and partners' support enlivens across the precinct. We thank our dedicated partners, including Perpetual, who again provided generous flexibility in their grant-making in 2021; allowing ACF to redirect specific grant funding in direct response to the significant impacts of the pandemic, to support the ACF's highest organisational need—precinct sustainability.

We remain humbled and heartened by the care and generosity of the Convent's donor community—and enormously grateful for the support shown by so many individuals and valued partners. In the year ahead, as we adjust to the new COVID-normal world after extended periods of isolation and begin to re-open the precinct to the community, the continued support of our donor and partner community will be essential and invaluable.

"Watching the place develop over the years and now seeing it enlivened with rich, diverse, and impactful programming has been an inspiration. The Convent's combination of a thriving creative community, incredible built and natural environment, accessibility, and unique approach to programming, makes the Abbotsford Convent a vital contributor to the vibrancy of the Victorian arts sector"

Rose Hiscock – ACF donor and Director Museums & Collections, University of Melbourne

Working for Victoria Program

Over the last year, the ACF has employed 15 staff through the Victorian Government's Working for Victoria program, providing vital support to Victorian jobseekers who lost their jobs because of the pandemic, particularly in the arts and cultural sector. This in turn has also provided the ACF the opportunity to expand its visitor experience and our focus on precinct and event operations, particularly when it comes to complying with COVIDSafe plans for venues and programming.

Pictured: Sacred Heart walls, 2020. Photo by Collette Brennan

A Place for Reconnection

While lockdowns and COVID-19 capacity restrictions have reduced visitor numbers, once restrictions eased the Convent saw visitors immediately return, eager to use the precinct to reconnect with everything they had missed during lockdown. Attending events, performances, and exhibitions, learning face-to-face and simply enjoying being with friends and family in the Convent's heritage grounds and lush green spaces. Despite the precinct being closed for 134 days, over 414,118 people attended 1276 events in FY20-21.

The Convent's focus on operating a COVIDSafe venue has and continues to be paramount to ensure the safety of our visitors, tenants, customers, hirers, creative programming partners, and staff. Over the last year, the Convent has created a check-in point at the Front Gate and venues, worked closely with hirers and events to ensure COVIDSafe compliance, increased cleaning and sanitisation of high touch areas, and followed a stringent work from home where possible policy during lockdown periods. As restrictions eased, we reopened the precinct to the public when we could, and the health and wellbeing of our community was and remains our highest priority.

A Place for the Great Outdoors

With the Convent's gardens and external spaces providing a COVIDSafe environment, many outdoor events were popular—including the return of *Brewers Feast*, an annual festival focused on craft beer, live music and food. It saw over 2,000 visitors enjoying tasting samplers, workshops and relaxing in our heritage gardens in February.

Pent-up energy from lockdowns was released with a series of outdoor dance events such as *Wax'o Paradiso* with their eight-hour dance party set and *Sound System Giants*, where reggae and dub met Colombian picó and saw hundreds enjoying socially distanced dancing, drinking and eating on the Mercator Lawn.

A Place for Centre-Stage Moments

The *Boîte Singers' Festival* returned with a jam-packed program of 20 musical events. Featuring singing concerts celebrating a variety of styles—from barbershop to Sephardic music—and creative workshops on song writing, singing, polyrhythms and more, catering to all skill levels.

We were also deeply honoured that The Dhadjowa Foundation had their official launch at the Convent. The Dhadjowa Foundation is a grassroots movement to provide strategic, coordinated and culturally appropriate support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families whose loved ones have died in custody.

A Place for Learning and Professional Development

With a renewed interest in creativity inspired by the pandemic, the Convent as a centre for learning saw a range of classes being offered from acting to meditation and movement, to singing and crafting. Close to 500 classes and workshops were run attracting 10,000 attendees. Arts and cultural independents, organisations and collectives held 517 rehearsal sessions with over 5,000 participants—an increase of 388% on the year prior. With an increase in venues being available due to events being rescheduled due to COVIDSafe density limits, these spaces have been used extensively by Pivot artists, who have been able to experiment and develop as part of their artistic process.

Providing a welcome break from Zoom meetings, the Convent also provided a unique and memorable setting for workplaces to reconnect for team building and development with 140 meetings involving over 2,500 attendees from an array of organisations. Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation delivered a series of Cultural Awareness and professional development sessions for the higher

education, not-for-profit, government and corporate sectors. Local cultural organisations re-established connections through team planning days after working remotely, including the Human Rights Arts and Film Festival, Circus Oz, Polyglot Theatre and Organise Us.

A Place for Buying Local

Now more than ever, supporting local has become a key consideration for many consumers as well as making the home more comfortable during lockdown. Homewares, gifts and books, were the focus of the Mother's Day market and the Melbourne Book Market and attracted hundreds of Melburnians eager to support local producers and makers. The Melbourne Farmers Market continued in and out of lockdown with both the Abbotsford Farmers Market in conjunction with the Collingwood Farmers Market running on a bi-monthly basis, offering locals an opportunity to buy fresh, seasonal Victorian produce all year-round.

A Place for Special Occasions

This year the Convent was thrilled to announce that Melbourne's renowned catering and event company, Peter Rowland Group, will become part of the Convent's tenant community in late 2021, to provide exceptional catering and events across the precinct.

Established in 1962, the Peter Rowland Group has been catering for weddings, corporate and private events in high profile venues, and has a deep appreciation of working in heritage venues and the arts and cultural sector; including the World Heritage listed Royal Exhibition Building, Malthouse Theatre and Sovereign Hill. Expect to see inspiring menu options with a range of new cultural, plant-based, and non-alcoholic beverage menus, and 'Pop Up Picnic' hampers for the Convent grounds as part of their repertoire.



Images from top to bottom: 1. *Butoh2021!! Odd Hours*, 2021. Photo by Vikk Shayen / 2. *Cam's New Years Eve*, 2019. Photo by Cam's Kiosk



Protecting our Precious Place

Being the custodian of a National Heritage Listed precinct requires ongoing conservation and enhancement of our precinct's natural and built form to deliver a vibrant mix of cultural and community activities.

Last year, the ACF commenced work on a new Master Plan, last created in 2005. This Master Plan will provide a holistic vision for the precinct for the next ten years. After a competitive EOI process, the Master Plan contract was awarded to Hassell. The Master Planning process has been underway since late 2020 with comprehensive public engagement phases, multiple stakeholder sessions and online surveys. The last Engagement phase included the development and presentation of Strategic Master Plan options, and the final Master Plan report is due to be completed in late 2021.

The ACF continued to build its organisational capacity and expertise. This year we focused on designing new methodologies for heritage research and data collection to support potential conservation, restoration and repurposing projects. The support of the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust continues to bolster our efforts to engage heritage consultants and specialists for scoping and costing of complex projects across the precinct, to seek future funding support.

Conservation and Restoration

There are two significant projects currently underway: the stabilisation of the Gatehouse building and the conservation and restoration of the Bishop's Parlour Foyer tessellated tiles. These projects are focused on safeguarding our precious heritage assets that are in a deteriorating condition and at risk of further degeneration without swift intervention.

The Gatehouse Project is the stabilisation of an ensemble of three structures, at the rear of the Providence Building and with an external façade to St Heliers Street. These are believed to be some of the oldest structures at the Convent. The Gatehouse has been adapted over time but is currently in a dilapidated condition. The works will ensure that the structure is stable and will prevent further deterioration. Once stabilised, we can plan for the longer-term safeguarding and making ready for future conservation works and repurposing of the structure. This project was funded through a Living Heritage Grant from Heritage Victoria. Pre-works have already started, and construction is expected to commence in October 2021.

The 120+ year old Bishop's Parlour Foyer tessellated tile floor is the most significant at the Convent because of its detailing and design. The 10,000+ tiles were originally laid on a concrete slab which had cracked and sunk over the years, resulting in damage to a significant number of tiles. This required remediation to avoid further damage. The works are expected to be completed by late 2021. The project has been supported through philanthropic grants from the Copland Foundation and the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation through the Eldon & Anne Foote Trust, alongside an in-kind partnership with FDC Construction & Fitout.



Pictured: Convent grounds. Photo by Yvonne Qumi

Keep it Green

The Convent's annual *Keep it Green* fundraising appeal raises valuable funds to ensure that our precious green open spaces are protected and nurtured as places for community to retreat, connect and commune with nature all year round.

The 2020 *Keep it Green: Adaptation* fundraising appeal presented a fantastic opportunity for ACF to partner with Creative Partnerships Australia through the Plus1 program—enabling the matching of every donation, dollar-for-dollar, up to our \$50,000 goal. This appeal saw 128 donors have their donations doubled. Funds raised are supporting the COVIDSafe adaptation of the precinct to ongoing pandemic restrictions—by helping us bring more arts and cultural activities from the inside of our buildings, to the outside in the Convent's green open spaces. By investing in outdoor-appropriate infrastructure including a large-scale marquee, staging, lighting, shade, and sound equipment, ACF can safely connect artists with audiences, and community with each other, in an ongoing COVIDSafe way. In addition, funds raised are supporting the sustained protection and nurturing of the Convent's 6.8ha of gardens and grounds—providing essential support for our green spaces to survive and thrive amongst increased outdoor arts and cultural activity in our new COVID-normal world.



Images from top to bottom: 1. Jacaranda tree, Convent grounds. Photo by Anne Moffat / 2. The Fernery, Convent Courtyard. Photo by Anne Moffat

Abbotsford Convent Foundation Arts Trust

Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income

For the year ended 30 June 2021

	2021	2020
REVENUE	\$	\$
Donations – cash	188,449	145,350
Grants Received	97,500	71,900
Interest Income	785	3,373
TOTAL REVENUE	286,734	220,623
EXPENDITURE	\$	\$
Donations to Abbotsford Convent Foundation	121,152	342,000
Other Donations	–	–
Bank Charges and Fees	1,111	1,491
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	122,263	343,491
(DEFICIT) / SURPLUS BEFORE TAX	164,471	(122,868)
Income Tax Expense	–	–
SURPLUS / (DEFICIT) FOR THE YEAR	164,471	(122,868)
Other Comprehensive Income	–	–
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE SURPLUS / (DEFICIT)	164,471	(122,868)

Notes to Financial Statements

Abridged financial statements: These abridged financial statements are prepared from the full audited financial statements. The Abbotsford Convent Foundation (ACF) is constituted as a company limited by guarantee. The company owns and manages the property at Abbotsford. The company also acts as trustee of the Abbotsford Convent Foundation Arts Trust. The financial statements are prepared in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and Corporations Act 2001. The statements are audited by Banks Group and lodged with the ACNC. The ACF has tax-exempt status and is the trustee of the Abbotsford Convent Foundation Arts Trust, which is a Deductible Gift Recipient listed on the Register of Cultural Organisations. Donations over \$2 to the Abbotsford Convent Foundation Arts Trust are tax-deductible. A complete set of financial statements is published at abbotsfordconvent.com.au

Abbotsford Convent Foundation Arts Trust

Statement of Financial Position

As at 30 June 2021

	2021	2020
ASSETS	\$	\$
Cash and Cash Equivalents	523,136	353,755
Term Deposit	165,603	164,818
Trade and Other Receivables	23	5,718
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	688,762	524,291
TOTAL ASSETS	688,762	524,291
LIABILITIES		
Trade and Other Payables	–	–
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	–	–
TOTAL LIABILITIES	–	–
NET ASSETS	688,762	524,291
Settlement Amount	100	100
Retained Income	688,662	524,191
TOTAL EQUITY	668,762	524,291

Abbotsford Convent Foundation

Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income

For the year ended 30 June 2021

	2021	2020
	\$	\$
OPERATING REVENUE		
Car Park Income	532,285	793,670
Events	14,254	209,982
Grant Income for Operating Activities	845,310	796,958
Room Hire	219,879	426,378
Rental Income	1,670,710	1,727,856
Recoveries of Outgoings	82,249	115,310
Other Revenue	5,070	12,864
TOTAL OPERATING REVENUE	3,369,757	4,083,018
Interest Income	423	2,123
	3,370,180	4,085,141
OPERATING EXPENDITURE		
Administration	327,954	362,088
Advertising and Marketing	68,535	94,883
Car Parking	114,645	190,679
Fundraising	25,003	14,418
Insurance	129,496	128,918
Programming	118,485	350,180
Rates and Taxes	68,411	67,567
Site Operating Costs	945,184	919,930
Staff and Employee Expenses	1,971,418	2,087,994
Other Expenses	33,949	35,179
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENDITURE	3,803,080	4,251,836
OPERATING RESULT BEFORE DEPRECIATION	(432,900)	(166,695)
Depreciation	945,511	927,429
OPERATING RESULT AFTER DEPRECIATION	(1,378,411)	(1,094,124)
NON-OPERATING GRANTS AND DONATIONS		
Government Pandemic Support	890,550	837,000
Donations	3,885	3,621
Grant Income for Capital Projects	6,500	-
TOTAL GRANTS, DONATIONS AND SPONSORSHIP	900,935	840,621
RESULT FOR THE YEAR	(477,476)	(253,503)
Income Tax Expense	-	-
Other Comprehensive Income	-	-
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE RESULT	(477,476)	(253,503)

Abbotsford Convent Foundation

Statement of Financial Position

As at 30 June 2021

	2021	2020
	\$	\$
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and Cash Equivalents	2,121,260	1,052,801
Tenant Bond Deposits	252,626	273,653
Trade and Other Receivables	256,304	265,084
Prepayments	153,534	114,770
Security Deposits	32,281	32,092
Inventory	9,840	13,740
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	2,825,845	1,752,140
NON-CURRENT ASSETS		
Property, Plant and Equipment	17,234,194	18,119,294
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS	17,234,194	18,119,294
TOTAL ASSETS	20,060,039	19,871,434
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Trade and Other Payables	429,099	527,304
Deferred Income	831,313	81,516
Rental Bonds and Deposits	250,612	265,022
Employee Benefits	182,751	163,420
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	1,693,775	1,037,262
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Employee Benefits	28,178	18,610
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES	28,178	18,610
TOTAL LIABILITIES	1,721,953	1,055,872
NET ASSETS	18,338,086	18,815,562
Equity	18,338,086	18,815,562
TOTAL EQUITY	18,338,086	18,815,562

The accompanying notes on pages 12 to 15 form part of these financial statements.

Supporters

The ACF acknowledges the financial and philanthropic support of the following people and organisations who contributed to the ACF and the Abbotsford Convent Foundation Arts Trust in 2020/2021. The last year has been incredibly challenging for the Abbotsford Convent, as it has been for all in the arts and cultural sector, who have been hit especially hard by the pandemic impacts—and unable to rely on our people-dependent income streams. We are so grateful for the invaluable support we have received from our donors and partners, both longstanding and new, and we look forward to enlivening the Convent precinct with your support as we navigate this next year ahead, together.

We also acknowledge the vision of the Abbotsford Convent Coalition whose members campaigned for seven years to secure this precinct. Our success today would not have been achieved without their commitment, and that of many others. Over the years, the Convent project has also been greatly assisted by a vast number of individuals and organisations who have contributed their time, energy, skills and financial support. The ACF is extremely grateful to all those who have provided support.

Principal Donors

Michael Adena & Joanne Daly
Dr. Christopher Baker (Bequest)
Simon Cowen
Vallejo Gantner
Diana Heggie
David Laidlaw & Megan Laidlaw
Sally Romanes

Major Donors

Marc Besen AC & Eva Besen AO
Collette Brennan
Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM
Suzy Chandler
David Constantine &
Hannah Constantine
Rosina Gilder
Peter Griffin AM & Terry Swann
Robert Hocking & Tina Hocking
Karen Inge
Graeme Johnson OAM &
Joan Johnson
Ruth Jones
Peter Kelly
Maggie Maguire OAM
Victoria Marles
Judy Matear & family
John McLeod & Paula McLeod
Pamela McLure
Prof. Peter McPhee AM &
Charlotte Allen
Ann E. Miller AM
Baillieu Myer AC
Cynthia Nadai

Alexander Patton & Anna Lucas
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Wayne Vincent
Judy Williams & Peter Williams AM
George Willox
Anonymous (1)

Key Supporters

Ros Abercrombie
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Emily Lin
Margaret McNaughton
Alexandra Murphy
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The Hon. Justice Michelle Quigley QC
Hayden Raysmith AM
Gregory Shalit & Miriam Faine

The Shamatha Group
Michael Smith OAM
Michael Sokulski
Ilona Topolcsanyi &
Colin Hopkins (Cone 11)
Lorrae Wild

Friends

David Baile
Robyn Bainbridge
Alison Barber
Heather Barton
Ryan Batchelor
Nancy Black
Justin Blumfield
Judith Bomball
Arthur Braun
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Robert Brown
Patricia Browne
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Abigail Cooper
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Alan Daley
Suzanne Davies
Lynette Faye Dean
David de Kretser
Sandie de Wolf AM
Anna Dollard
Anne Dowling & Tom Dowling

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Prof. David Forrest
Jim Freemantle
Jeanette Fry
Kath Fyffe
Nicholas Garnham
Robyn Gawenda
Caroline Gawne
Luke Gianfriddo
Alison Gibb
Stephen Gow & Mary Gow
Camilla Graves
Matthew Grazia
Andrew Gunn
Natalie Hilton
Debra Hirschfelder
Greg Hordacre
Dr. Irene Irvine
Walter Kane
Roger King OAM
Angela Kirsner &
Richard Kirsner
Shona Kohler
Anna Kopinski
Rachel Kwei
Genevieve Lacey
Jeanne Lee
Giovanna Luciani
Martin Lukas
Jessica Luu
Peter Marburg
Milosh Milisavljevic &
Karen Milisavljevic
Patricia Miller
Traudi Moon OAM
Judy Morton
Marc-Michael Muehlhaeuser
Christine Mullen
Tim Northeast
George Novakovic
Christine Nurse
Clare O'Dwyer
Rema O'Neill
Rosamund Palmer
Fiona Patten
V. Prentice
Emilio Raviola
Ian Renard AM
Thomas Rendell
Lee Ridder
Gary Rimmington
Kirsty Rivers
Warren Rixon
Janey Runci
William Russell
Daniel Saks
Pam Saunders &
Barry Saunders
Hannah Schwartz

Señor BBQ Catering &
Entertainment
Gina Settle
Anne Sherman
Terry Shields
Bruce Sims
Kelli Strugnell
Dr. Bob Sullivan
Peter Sutton
Takashi Takiguchi &
Yumi Umiumare
Dr. David Ware
Gregor Whyte
Moyna Wilson
Amanda Witt
Fiona Wood
Lissa Zass
Anonymous (12)

Trusts & Foundations Principal Partners

The Dara Foundation
The Lionel & Yvonne Spencer Trust

Major Partners

The Copland Foundation
Creative Partnerships Australia
Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation

Supporting Partners

The Angior Family Foundation
The Bowness Family Foundation
Helen Macpherson Smith Trust
NB Gantner Family Trust

Associate Partners

Ballandry (Peter Griffin Family)
Fund: a sub-fund of the Australian
Communities Foundation
The Hamer Family Fund:
a sub-fund of the Australian
Communities Foundation
McLeod Family Foundation
Inner North Community Foundation
Henkell Family Fund:
a sub-fund of the Australian
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Vincent Painting

Corporate Supporters

Arbortryst Pty Ltd
Colour Factory
Community Bank Clifton Hill –
North Fitzroy
Reground

Government Project Partners

Federal

Australia Council for the Arts
Department of Industry, Science,
Energy and Resources:
Australian Heritage Grants
Department of Infrastructure,
Transport, Regional Development
and Communications

State

Creative Victoria
Victorian Government Department
of Environment, Land, Water &
Planning: Living Heritage
Grants Program

Local

City of Yarra

Event Partners

3MBS Fine Music Radio
Convent Bakery
Kawai
MAV Melbourne
Peter Rowland Group

Program Partners

ButohOUT!
Dancehouse
Forest Collective
Kids' Own Publishing
Melbourne Fringe Festival
Midsumma Festival
Polyglot Theatre
Sangam Festival

Board and Team

Board

Victoria Marles, Chair
David Laidlaw, Deputy Chair
Ros Abercrombie
(from 20 Jan 2021)
Justin Blumfield
(from 22 Jan 2020)
Diana Heggie
Ruth Jones
Stuart Kells
Tim Northeast
(from 20 Jan 2021)
Hannah Schwartz
(from 20 Jan 2021)
Michael Sokulski
Antonia Syme AM
Judy Williams

Independent Committee Members

Matthew Bilney
(Audit & Risk Committee)
Peter Doughty
(Audit & Risk Committee Chair)
Giselle Pinto
(Fundraising Committee)
Sally Romanes
(Fundraising Committee)
Jerome Tymms
(Finance & Capital Works)

Executive

Chief Executive Officer:
Collette Brennan
Chief Operating Officer:
John Di Natale

Administration

Accounts Manager:
Ilona Molyte
Accounts Coordinator:
Tim Di Natale
(until 15 Dec 2020)
Shona Kohler
Finance Manager (Working For Victoria):
Keith Hammond
(from 1 Jun 2021)
HR Officer (Working For Victoria):
Bhawna Sharma
(from 15 Feb 2021)

Administration & Governance Manager:

Luke Gianfriddo
Administrator:
Callum Stewart
(from 16 Jun 2021)
Volunteer & Admin Coordinator:
Alice Brush
(until 18 Jun 2021)

Building & Facilities

Buildings & Facilities Manager:

David Campbell
(until 9 Jul 2020)

Site Operations:

Jason Kain

Heritage Assets:

Lynette Dean

Gardeners:

Joanne Bechaz
(until 17 Mar 2021)
Mal Jackson
Chamilka Panduwawala
(from 19 Apr 2021)

Site Coordinators:

Paul Blakeney,
James Crosland
(Events Tech),
Samuel (Otto) Enos
(from 2 Mar 2021),
Sam Hodder
(until 25 Jul 2020),
Jason Hood,
Nick McGinnity,
John Moyle,
Ben Steiner,
Zhiying Zhang
(Events Tech)

Precinct Operations

Coordinator (Working For Victoria):
Adam Green
(from 9 Mar 2021)

Precinct Operations Assistant

(Working For Victoria):
Colin Aslin
(from 26 May 2021)
Nicholas McGinnity
(from 24 May 2021)
Winnie Vuong
(from 24 May 2021)
Kenny Waite
(from 26 May 2021)

Development & Fundraising

Head of Development:
Alexandra Murphy
Development Coordinator:
Kristen Augeard
(Fixed term contract)
Development Projects Officer:
Philippa O'Brien
(until 22 Oct 2020)
Senior Philanthropy Officer:
Grace Wescott-Dawson
(from 20 Jan 2021 – 31 May 2021)

Marketing & Communications

Marketing & Communications Manager:
Estelle Conley
(until 2 Jul 2021)
Marketing Coordinator (Working For Victoria):
Nkechi Anele
(from 7 Apr 2021)
Marketing Intern:
Mathew Lyn
(from 16 Jun 2020 – 30 Oct 2020)

Programming

Producer:
Peter Quinn
(from 6 Jan 2021)
Natale Smith
(until 29 Jan 2021)
Associate Producer:
Jo Leishman
Community Arts Officer – Programming (Working For Victoria):
Jessica Bellamy
(from 21 Jun 2021)
Heven Osborne
(from 21 Jun 2021)
c3 Contemporary Art Space Director:
Jon Butt
(until 17 Mar 2021)
c3 Gallery Manager:
Katie Paine
(until 27 Jul 2020)

Tenancy

Tenant Community Manager:
Leonie Wray
Tenancy Coordinator:
Anna Shewan
(from 4 Mar 2021)

Venue Hire

Acting Venues Manager:
Nada Cordašić
(until 18 Dec 2020)
Venues and Events Manager:
Kristy Foulcher
(from 3 May 2021)
Venues and Events Coordinator:
Jafar Abdus-Samad
(from 7 Dec 2020 – 30 Apr 2021)
Venues Coordinator:
Sherry McLane Alejos
Visitor Experience Liaison (Working For Victoria):
Sophie Gleeson
(from 17 May 2021)
Beatrix Macintyre
(from 26 May 2021)
Timothy Woods
(from 17 May 2021)

Volunteers

We are deeply grateful to our passionate and committed community of volunteers—those who have been able to give their time across the FY21 and those that have volunteered in the past but have been unable to return due to COVID-19 (public health restrictions). We look forward to welcoming our volunteer community back as soon as restrictions allow.

Volunteers

Naomi Callander
Peter Kelly
Simon Marty
Helen McCormack
Marg McVey
Bella Persano
Amanda Russell
Ben Russell
Pam Walford
Bruce Ward
Moyna Wilson



Pictured: Sacred Heart Courtyard at night, 2020. Photo by Collette Brennan

Thank you!

Your support protects, enriches and enlivens the Abbotsford Convent precinct

The Abbotsford Convent precinct is owned and managed by the Abbotsford Convent Foundation (ACF)—an independent, not-for-profit organisation—on behalf of the community.

As custodians of the Convent precinct, it's our privileged responsibility to care for, maintain and protect our 11 heritage buildings—as well as our precious and expansive 6.8 hectares of green landscapes—places of creativity, celebration, retreat, and sanctuary for all.

With the support of our growing community of donors and partners, we take enormous pride in restoring, nurturing and enlivening this iconic arts and cultural hub, piece by piece, for the enjoyment of the people of Melbourne and Australia.

Now proudly inscribed on the National Heritage List, it takes a significant amount of time, energy, specialist support and resources to care for this iconic place—and we couldn't do it without the generosity of the community who care enough to contribute to see it thrive.

The ACF does not receive any recurrent government funding, from any level of government, to manage or maintain the Convent grounds, or to activate the Convent precinct with a range of diverse and engaging arts and cultural programming year-on-year. We rely on our social enterprise model alongside the support of passionate, community-minded individuals, organisations and philanthropic partners to help protect, maintain and bring the Convent precinct to life each year.

If you love your time spent at the Convent, and feel grateful for this extraordinary community asset, please join our growing community of supporters and make a donation today. The Convent was saved by the community—for the community—and your support will make a direct and meaningful impact; helping to keep it thriving for generations to come. If this is a place that is meaningful in your world, please help safeguard and enliven it for the future.



Abbotsford Convent.

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