



Secretary, Upper Lachlan Foundation

October 7, 2021

Dear Upper Lachlan Foundation

I am writing to provide you with an update on our progress towards the 2021 Gunning Arts Festival, and to thank you for the invaluable support you have provided to the Festival. Our primary aim is to support a community-run Festival delivering high quality arts events to our regional audience. We hope to provide uplift to the community to help build resilience; especially important over the last few difficult years. Secondary aims are to raise the profile of the Upper Lachlan region in order to attract visitors and support local businesses, and to help sustain the many cultural groups and arts practitioners of the region.

We had to transition our inaugural 2020 Festival to online due to COVID-19. Our initial Festival was very successful at raising the profile of Gunning. The feedback we received showed that we reached a large audience who appreciated being able to access locally relevant performances online during that initial lockdown period. While we all hoped that 2021 would be different this has turned out not to be the case and, once again, we are transitioning to an online Festival. We are building on the experience we gained last year and there will be a number of events that people can actively participate in as well as online performances, story readings and exhibitions.

One of our most successful Festival Activities in the lead up to the Festival weekend at the end of October has been our SnapWrite project. We have designed and established a SnapWrite Facebook group and invited submissions of photo stories that encapsulate living in our beautiful region. The response has been outstanding with several images submitted each day, and a huge positive response from other users. Conversations stimulated by the images have increased community connectedness during this difficult time.

We are immensely grateful for the support that we received from the Upper Lachlan Foundation to support online activities for the Festival. This support has been pivotal in enabling us to make the most of an online presence. Specific support for a Gunning Arts Festival Zoom account has enabled the Festival committee to meet seamlessly. Being able to see each other, albeit virtually, during meetings has maintained the cohesion of the team even when we are physically isolated. Given that we are constantly innovating and exploring new ways of creating a Festival, the ability to keep the team tight and united through Zoom has been incredibly helpful.

Of course, one of the consequences of transitioning to online is that it is harder to earn income through ticket sales. The Upper Lachlan Foundation grant to support online delivery means that we can continue to produce a high quality Festival this year and make many of the events freely available to our audience. At the same time, we are able to provide some financial return to the arts practitioners who are making it all happen, helping to support local creative industries during an incredibly difficult financial period for artists and cultural groups.

Sincerely

Michelle Storey  
Chair, Gunning Arts Festival committee