

**CANBERRA  
POTTERS' SOCIETY**  
REPORT OF ACTIVITIES 2021



*Doug Alexander Prize winner 2021, Burnt, Lea Durie, black clay thread and sticks.*



## FROM THE BOARD

Dear CPS Members,

The Omicron variant made for yet another turbulent year for the Canberra Potters. It would have been even more difficult without the fantastic efforts of the CEO and CPS staff, and the understanding of members.

The composition of the Board at the end of 2021 was:

President	Jill Farrelly
Vice President	Janet DeBoos
Secretary	Kerry Byers
Treasurer	Wil Trewartha
Member	Christine Pearson
Member	James Collier
Member	Michael Flynn

### 2021 in Review

A report on CPS's 2021 activity is attached. It shows that COVID restrictions again had a major impact on normal operations. The restrictions affected the number of workshops, classes, exhibitions and member events CPS could offer.

Nonetheless financial assistance from the ACT and Federal Governments helped: CPS continued to be financially solvent and ended 2021 with cash reserves of a \$551,242 and a profit of \$16,372. More detail will be provided by the Treasurer.

The Board's decision to set aside a Prudential Reserve of \$134,000 proved important in the absence of the 2020 JobKeeper subsidy. It allowed the Board to avoid having to stand down all staff. This meant CPS could keep essential functions running, create some new sources of revenue and ensure a fast start up when restrictions were lifted.

Likewise, the decision to set up a Capital Expenditure Fund of \$180,000 is also starting to pay off for members, who will see the 7 new wheels and stools that arrived in time for Term 1 2022. The Board, CEO and staff will continue to replace outdated equipment progressively. CPS' old Kiln 3 will be decommissioned once the new Tetlow kiln arrives.

The Board decided, reluctantly, that it was necessary to increase class fees in 2022. This was to meet rising costs: our staff and teachers' pay is formally linked to the annual CPI increase announced by the ABS in October each year, and our suppliers pass on their increased costs to us.

Since the last 2021 AGM, Jo Searle and Tessa Hoser have stepped down from their roles on the Board. We thank them on behalf of all CPS members for their outstanding contributions over many years. We welcome Janet DeBoos and Michael Flynn to the Board to pick up where Jo and Tessa left off.


### 2022 Outlook

The Board expects that 2022 will be a year of consolidation that builds on the foundations of a long-term view of financial sustainability, best practice governance, and a commitment to providing first class pottery experiences to members and the community.

The updated 5 year CPS Business Plan for 2022-2026 is included in the AGM papers provided to CPS members.

Finally, we acknowledge the continued interest in CPS taken by the Minister for the Arts, Tara Cheyne MLA.

  
Jill Farrelly  
President  
3 May 2022

  
Kerry Byers  
Secretary  
3 May 2022



*CPS President Jill Farrelly (r) with Dr Sarah Schmidt, Director of Canberra Museum and Gallery (l) and Jeff Mincham AM at the opening of Viv La Vrai Ceramique: Adventures in Clay.*



## FROM THE CEO

A year like no other...aren't they all! If we learnt anything from 2020 it was how to be agile, resilient and...pivot. We entered 2021 with confidence that our new coping strategies would see us through another challenging year, and they did.

Our Education Program led by Sue Cant with assistance from Abbey Jamieson delivered three full terms of class activity, term 3 was impacted by lockdown and a limited term 4 was offered. We are constantly amazed by the demand and enthusiastic participation in our classes. Ongoing improvements to our online booking system made the enrolment process easier and more efficient. However, demand for classes remains high and to fulfil these needs we continued to offer Intensive Introductory classes and short courses throughout the year. A Summer School with Janet DeBoos, and Master Classes with visiting artists Jeff Mincham ran during the year. None of this would be possible without the dedication of our teachers and teaching assistants who fronted up even during times of great uncertainty to deliver expert tuition to our eager students.

The reputation of our gallery grows as a venue for discovering emerging makers and viewing regular exhibitions by emerging and established Australian ceramicists. Our Gallery Manager, Katrina Leske, presented a ceramic focused 2021 program that engaged and inspired our audience. Of note were Paul Dumetz's moving tribute to his late father, *My Dad: A Tribute to George* featuring 64 cups illustrated vessels. *Viv La Vrai Ceramique: Adventures in Clay* an exhibition of new work by master ceramicist Jeff Mincham attracted strong public interest and sales from collectors and major galleries. The resilience of our members was proven when towards the end of the year and after a period of lockdown we were able to mount our Members Exhibition neither diminished in quality or quantity.

The Canberra Potters Shop continues to be an essential part of our operations providing retail opportunities for a growing number of member makers. During 2021 the Shop represented the work over 25 artists across all forms of creative expression. We continue to sell the work from our past Artists in Residence. The shop offers the most diverse and largest array of ceramic art and pottery for sale in the region. During shutdown shop manager, Abbey Jamieson, developed the online shop to enable us to continue trading. An unexpected highlight was the creation and uptake of a line of *Clay Away Kits* enabling people to continue making while offsite.

The Technical team of Joey Burns, Technical Assistant, Dan Venables, Workshop Manager and Paul Dumetz, Workshop Assistant kept a steady flow of work cycling through the workshops and kilns even during the period of lockdown. Not wasting a moment of downtime, a total refurbishment of Workshop 1 was undertaken. New wheels arrived and a new kiln was ordered. This small but dynamic team kept our organisation running smoothly during a challenging year.

The AIR Program, although severely impacted by the ongoing health situation, still attracted three participants during 2021 and the resultant workshops and exhibitions were well patronised. Our studio holders were given special dispensation to continue essential work during the lockdown and received some rental assistance over the same period. Despite the adversity they were still able to contribute to the vibrant Canberra Potters community and take part in our activities. They are an essential part of our

organisation we continue our crucial role in providing studio, exhibition retail and teaching opportunities to our resident artists.

Several successful events were held in 2021. Our Market events program continued to gain strong interest with three markets held over the year. Each market affords our member makers real retail opportunities and exposure to an appreciative audience and adds vibrancy and activity to our facility. Several of our studio tenants took part in the annual TACA Open Studios with artists reporting strong visitation and studio sales. The stand out event for the year was our inaugural *Winter Festival: Fired Up*. Assisted by funding from the ACT Government's Winter Events Fund we welcomed over 1200 visitors to our facility for an evening of demonstrations, markets, performance, food and live entertainment.



Over 1200 people visited our Winter Festival event *Fired Up!* In August 2021. (Image: Martin Ollman)

Thank you to Jill Farrelly, Chair and the Board for their governance and continued support throughout the year. Their foresight in maintaining staffing levels through the enforced lockdown gave staff job security in uncertain times and most importantly allowed us to repair, prepare and reopen in good shape for the remainder of 2021 and beyond. A special mention to Wil Trewartha who along with my finance team of Kathy Vivian and Keely Mohr ensured we were able to identify and implement the various local and federal support packages available throughout the year.

Significant support is received each year from ACT Government through artsACT and additionally financial support is received to assist with facility and building projects. We look forward to their continued support.

Richard Thomas  
CEO  
Canberra Potters' Society  
3 May 2022



## CPS REPORT OF ACTIVITIES 2021

*Our Purpose: To develop Canberra Potters' Society and Watson Arts Centre into a dynamic, innovative and inspiring arts centre of excellence; to support personal and professional development at all levels of ceramic arts practice; and to engage the community through arts, exhibition and retail experiences.*

**GOAL 1 Continue to be a leading ceramic arts hub by delivering dynamic, innovative, and inspiring ceramics programs**

Program	Measure	2021	2020	2019
Masterclass/ Workshops	No. of hours	924	540	2495
Artists in Residence	No. of Residencies	3	0	5
Studio tenancies	Occupancy rate (%)	100%	100%	100%
Class contact hours	Adult	24105	12744	25594
	Children	3379	2349	6048
	Holiday	320	368	661

### Masterclasses & Workshops

COVID restrictions, impacted on our ability to offer a full year of masterclasses and workshops. Unfortunately, the planned Winter School featuring NSW artist Rob Linigen had to be rescheduled due to travel restrictions and was taught by Janet DeBoos instead. However, we did host a masterclass by interstate artists Jeff Mincham and Daniel Skeffington throughout the year.



Teacher Chris Harford demonstrating during a class at CPS (Image: Martin Ollman)

### Classes

COVID affected the number of programs we were able to offer. For example, Term 3 had to be closed altogether and Term 4 was shortened and offered reduced class sizes. Children's holiday and term classes did not run in Terms 3 & 4.

### Studio Tenancies

Tenancies remained stable during 2021 and continued to support our artists and reflect our role as a leading ceramic arts hub and are a significant part of our vibrant creative community.



Studio holder Julie Pennington in her studio at Watson Arts Centre, CPS (Image: Martin Ollman)

Studio holders during 2021 were Phoebe Breen, Steve Roper, Lea Durie, Julie Pennington, Jackie Lallemant, Sue Peachy, and Lucy lngs.

All eligible tenants were offered COVID rent relief from the ACT Government during the period of lockdown.

### Artists in Residence

No international residencies were offered due to continuing international travel restrictions. However, residencies were undertaken by two national visiting artists, Jeff Mincham from South Australia and Daniel Skeffington from New South Wales. Our EASS artist was offered a residency but declined the offer due to COVID concerns. The AIR studio was offered to local artists for the remainder of the year on a month-to-month basis and 3 artists took up this offer.





2021 Doug Alexander Award winner Lea Durie (r) with guest awards judge Bev Hogg (l)

## GOAL 2 Be a leading ceramics-focused exhibition space by delivering dynamic, innovative, and inspiring exhibition programs

Program	Measure	2021	2020	2019
Ceramic-centric exhibitions	Number of exhibitions	8	5	9
National & international exhibitions	Number of exhibitions	2	1	3
Studio Collaborative multidisciplinary exhibitions	Number of exhibitions	1	0	3
CPS curated exhibitions	Number of exhibitions	3	3	6
All programs	Number of visitors	7997	3488	11743

### Gallery Exhibitions

9 exhibitions were held in 2021 of which 8 were ceramic-centric (this compares to 6 in 2020, of which 5 were ceramic-centric).

Highlights included an exhibition of new work by master ceramicist Jeff Mincham *Viv La Vrai Ceramique: Adventures in Clay* and the

annual Member's Exhibition and Doug Alexander Prize that featured very strong entries despite a period of lockdown.

### Shop

The shop represented 36 local potters (an increase of 11 artists from last year) and seven AIR participants (a decline of three due to lack of visiting artists for the last two years).

The online shop continues to gain a following and the introduction of Clay Away kits has proven to be a profitable introduction to the shop line.

## GOAL 3 Be a vibrant, inclusive community venue by meeting the needs of the ceramics community and members through programs that are vibrant, accessible and inclusive

Program	Measure	2021	2020	2019
Community events	Number of events	3	2	3
	Number of participants	3427	1000	1100 (ex Christmas Fair)
Inclusion: Special group events	Number of events	4	2	4
	Number of participants	36	35	74
Member events	Number of events	3	0	9
Membership	Number of members	534	471	479

### Member and Community Events

Continuing COVID restrictions limited our traditional members' events. However, several events did go ahead including the Australian Ceramics Association Open Studios in November and three community markets attracting over 3400 visitors. Our inaugural Winter Festival: Fired Up! also attracted strong visitor interest.

### Inclusion and Access

Canberra Potters provides access to all levels of skill and ability. Courses are developed with the Education Program Manager and designed to meet students' specific needs. Although affected by COVID, CPS still managed to provide 4 standalone courses for 36 vulnerable people and to enable 15 people with disabilities to participate in mainstream courses in consultation with their Care Plan Managers.

### Membership

Our membership as of 31 December 2021 was 534 and consisted of 259 singles, 90 families, 112 seniors, 63 concessional students and 10 life members.



**GOAL 4 Be a recognisable brand in the ACT and Australian arts community by providing exciting experiences for makers and audiences, as well as bringing makers and audiences together**

Strategy	Measure	2021	2020	2019
Engagement	Email subscribers	1708	1206	720
	Social media followers (2021 inc. FB & Instagram)	3641(FB) 3621(Ins)	2800	2057
	Newsletters	24	7	7
Media	Reviews, interviews	3	5	5
	Media Releases	9	6	16

### Engagement and Media

There was a significant increase in online traffic during COVID which reflected work to improve our website that had experienced some difficulties due to the amount of traffic, and increasing interest in what we offer on social media. The reduction in the number of media releases reflects the number of events that could be publicised.



*Ceramicist and CPS staff member Abbey Jamieson promotes Immerse exhibition to local media.*

**GOAL 5 Be a sustainable arts organisation characterised by best practice governance. By adopting best practice Board, financial and people practices**

### The response to COVID

CPS staff, led by the CEO, again responded very effectively to manage COVID risks and minimise their impact through the COVID-19 Response Plan, Safe Operation Plan and Return to Work Plan.

Strategy	Description	2021	2020	2019
COVID	Respond to and address risks	Yes	Yes	N/A
Best practice governance	Review governance against AICD principles	Yes	Yes	N/A
	Implement Board submissions processes	Yes	Yes	N/A
	5 year Business Plan	Yes	Yes	N/A
Sustainable finances	Set aside funds for a Capital Expenditure Program	Fund intact	Yes	N/A
	Set aside funds for Prudential Reserve	Fund intact	Yes	N/A

### Best practice governance

The results of the first governance review were implemented. This included development and implementation of Delegations of Authority and a Board induction pack. It also included reviews of CPS' Working With Vulnerable People policy and its communication with stakeholders.

A second survey was conducted in late 2021. This found that our practices were sound overall with an average score of 4.1 on a scale of 5 (compared to 3.8 in 2020). It identified further areas for improvement which will be the Board's focus in 2022 such as risk management.

The Board agreed to an updated five-year Business Plan at its first meeting in 2022. The Plan covers 2022-2026.

### Sustainable finances

The Board implemented a number of proposals to ensure CPS' long term financial sustainability including:

- setting aside funds from our financial reserves for a capital expenditure program. This will ensure that we are able to fund; the replacement of ageing equipment such as wheels and kilns, as well as for leasehold improvements;
- setting aside funds from our financial reserves for a "Prudential Reserve". This will ensure that we are able to ride out unexpected events such as COVID for up to 10 weeks; and
- increase the annual surplus target to 6%.

### The Board in 2021

The Board met 10 times in 2021 (the Constitution requires four meetings) and the AGM was held on 29 April 2021. The Board and AGM considered 19 operational reports (compared to 20 in 2020) and 32 strategic submissions (8 in 2020) during the year.

The dates of Board meetings during 2021 and attendance of eligible Board members is provided in Appendix 1 overleaf.



## Appendix 1: The CPS Board in 2021

Board Member	CPS Member	20 Feb	25 Mar	AGM 29 Apr	20 May	24 Jun	19 Aug	2 Sep	16 Sep	21 Oct	16 Dec	Total
Jill Farrelly (President)	Yes	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10/10
Jo Searle (Vice President)	Independent	1	1	1	1	1	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	5/5
Nicole Hoffman (Secretary/Member)	Independent	1	1	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	2/2
Kerry Byers (Secretary)	Yes	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10/10
Wil Trewartha (Treasurer)	Independent	NE	NE	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8/8
Melissa Stenfors (Treasurer)	Yes	0	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	0/1
Don Porter	Yes	1	1	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	2/2
Tessa Hoser	Yes	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	NE	7/9
Christine Pearson	Yes	NE	NE	NE	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7/7
James Collier	Yes	NE	NE	NE	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7/7
Michael Flynn	Independent	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	NE	1	1/1

Note NE means not eligible

Board Business	2020	20 Feb	25 Mar	AGM 29 Apr	20 May	24 Jun	19 Aug	2 Sep	16 Sep	21 Oct	16 Dec	2021
Regular Reports	20	2	2	3	0	2	2	1	1	2	2	19
Strategic Submissions	8	5	3	0	1	5	5	2	1	6	4	32