



ANNUAL REPORT

Blue Roo Theatre Company Inc.

2021-2022

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Incorporation:

Blue Roo Theatre Company Inc. ® (ABN 37 522 461 876)

is an Other Incorporated Entity

The registered office is located at 58 Fernberg Road, Paddington QLD 4064.

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Website: www.bluerootheatre.org.au

Email: info@bluerootheatre.org.au

Charitable status, tax concessions and fundraising:

Blue Roo Theatre Company Inc. is registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) as a Public Benevolent Institution (PBI).

The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) has endorsed the Company as an Income Tax Exempt Charity. As a result, it receives income and certain other tax concessions, along with exemptions consistent with its status as a PBI which relate to Goods and Services and Fringe Benefits taxes.

Blue Roo Theatre Company Inc. is also endorsed by the ATO as a Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR)

1. Background

Blue Roo Theatre Company Inc is a not-for-profit independent production company. We provide an essential link between the disability community, the performing arts sector and the broader community in that all performers in our productions live with disability.

Blue Roo Theatre Company Inc comprises a diverse range of individuals who give their time, skills and expertise as volunteers. Management Committee members have skills and expertise in drama, governance, risk management, HR management, legal, financial management, strategic planning and program management.

Blue Roo Theatre Company Inc's artistic practice is original storytelling devised by the Ensemble members under the guidance of highly respected independent artists and Directors, original music and original movement responsive to the individual needs of the performers, their families/friends, their communities and society.

Our Vision

To provide vibrant performance experiences which publicly highlight and value the abilities of inclusive creatives.

To create thought-provoking reactions from our audiences.

Our Purpose

To produce work that engages and enriches our audiences' and performers' lives, challenges stereotypes and celebrates diversity and inclusion in the performing arts.



Our Values

Inclusivity—Include everyone

Excellence—Be the best you can be

Passion and Fun—Enjoy doing amazing things

Integrity—Operate with honesty, trust & fairness

Innovation—Encourage new ideas and methods

Empowerment—Build confidence & resilience



2. From The President

Blue Roo Theatre Company (Blue Roo) finished the 2021/22 financial year operating at a very different pace. The first half of the financial year focused on preparing and delivering our major production – *Mid Summer's Nights Dream*, under our partnership arrangement with Centacare and auspicing the delivery of *BOSS*. Both productions showcased the skills of Blue Roo's established ensemble members.

Throughout 2021–22, Delta, Omicron and other new COVID-19 variants caused disruptions. COVID significantly disrupted the delivery of the 2021 QPAC August production season, reducing expected audience numbers and disrupting marketing effectiveness for both productions. *BOSS*, a collaboration between an established artist and an emerging artist with disability, was well-developed and embraced by the audience; however, audience numbers were very low.

Plans for the second half of the financial year were significantly changed when two (2) events coincided. Blue Roo's application for a further three (3) years of organisational funding through Arts Queensland was not successful, and at the same time, Centacare advised that the participant referral and financial partnership of many years was not going to be renewed.

For Blue Roo to survive, it had to evolve from an organisation almost entirely dependent on government funding and the founding creative direction of a single NDIS provider to one which could generate the non-government funding it needed.

This was a challenge that Blue Roo chose to take as it would allow a different approach to what Blue Roo was previously offering. It meant a return to grassroots community theatre where performers with disability could be more engaged in expressing their

values, interests and concerns and could proactively design the creative developments of live and digital productions.

One of Blue Roo's intrinsic values has always been to offer performers opportunities for personal transformation, for participants to be heard in the community and to demonstrate how community participation can make a difference.

Blue Roo is exploring how to become more creatively diverse and expand our traditional income streams by creating a new range of earned income and increased sponsorship support. As we travel this different and more difficult road to financial viability, we are being aided by Arts Queensland, as they are providing two (2) years of transitional funding to support us in achieving this goal.

Committee members are all on board, along with an excellent creative team and a smaller ensemble of performers who are eager to perform in front of live audiences, develop acting and stagecraft skills, contribute to the productions in which they perform and establish arts employment skills pathways.

Blue Roo Theatre Company is entering a new strategic cycle – a time for creativity, vulnerability, innovation and making exciting choices.

I thank Arts Queensland for supporting our vision and their financial ongoing support. And our arts and disability sector collaborators and supporters (QPAC, Variety Queensland, our Patron Simone de Haas and Access Arts), our new school communities and our communities of local and regional supporters and our wonderful volunteers.

Together, we will continue to change lives.



3. Strategic Direction

It has already been identified that in 2021-2022 Blue Roo faced significant challenges, in addition to COVID disruptions, which still significantly impacted our planning and performers.

One thing learnt from this year is that Blue Roo is nothing if not responsive.

Flexibility, agility, courage and determination were required to keep going after the loss of government organisational grant funding and changes in partnership support.

Overnight Blue Roo had to develop plans and create products for the organisation to progress towards its changed vision and goals and establish financial viability.

What has changed?	What has not changed?
While the Pathways to Performance program was an existing program, it now had to be shaped and offered as a fee-for-service activity.	Blue Ro remains committed to original storytelling, music and movement, highlighting the individual strengths of Ensemble members.
Under the partnership with Centacare <ul style="list-style-type: none"> performers were provided; now, they had to be recruited externally. rehearsal space was provided – that resource was now lost along with a range of other operational supports. The annual financial sponsorship of our Showcase application was lost. 	Blue Roo continues to develop productions specifically designed to move between the digital world, the stage and community spaces.
Blue Roo has introduced structured employment pathways and programs for Blue Roo creatives of all abilities.	Skills development, mentoring, new partnerships and increased employment opportunities for Queensland artists and arts workers remain on the agenda of Blue Roo
Opportunities now exist to offer two key productions a year, and several short Workshop Programs focused on performing arts skills for the general public during school holiday breaks.	Blue Roo continues to produce work that engages and enriches the lives of our audiences and performers, challenges stereotypes and celebrates and encourages diversity and inclusion

4 Corporate Governance

Volunteering is an altruistic activity where people use their time to benefit other people or organisations without financial compensation.

One of the challenges Blue Roo faces as a small Incorporated Association is our reliance on individuals who give their time to the Management Committee and the activities of Blue Roo. While increasingly individuals are time-poor, Blue Roo has maintained a stable Committee of Management membership of loyal and dedicated members and supporters through this period.

We are actively seeking two Committee members with arts sector philanthropic connections and diverse corporate business connections to lead enhanced relationships with sponsors, donors, collaborators and stakeholders.

During this new phase of strategic alignment, the Committee is implementing a model for increasing non-government financial income. The evaluation and refinement of the new approach are ongoing.



Our new artistic programs and brand are growing through existing creative collaborations, new NDIS collaborations, fee-for-service skilling pathways and new school collaborations.

With administration staff of 0.5 FTE delivering Blue Roo programs and activities, our short-term focus remains on increasing operational capacity to the levels of comparable art organisations. This will enable us to stabilise the delivery volume and continue to meet growing artistic demand.

We have reframed the previous part-time administration position to include Administration and Social Media and have created a new part-time Fundraising and Promotions position to be filled.



Management Committee Profile

President: Deborah Walker *B Soc Wk, BA*

With experience in Queensland's vocational education and training sector, Deborah trained in her youth in speech and drama. Her strengths with people, change and program management, corporate governance and policy implementation are recognised within the public sector, where she held senior and executive-level positions.

Moving to the private sector in 2017 provided Deborah with new challenges and opportunities while meeting her passion for delivering authentic, quality products and services. This passion has carried over in her commitment to Blue Roo Theatre Company's success, where she oversees processes essential to the future stability and growth potential within Blue Roo.



Secretary Dale Johnson *B Ed Stud, Dip Teach, Cert IV Train & Assess, JP (Qual)*



Dale has three (3) passions in life with firm commitments to live theatre, music and comedy; excellence in teaching and advocacy for her husband's courage, ability and independence after suffering a severe stroke. She is dedicated to supporting the day-to-day resilience of the families of stroke and brain injury sufferers.

Dale has taught drama and theatre to children and young adults, literacy, numeracy and communication skills to adults and is a nationally published researcher.

She brings diverse skills, experience and networks to Blue Roo. She cites her most significant achievement in life as being able to 'laugh loudly on a whim' most days.

Treasurer: John Thurgood

John is a management consultant, former Executive Director of the Australian Institute of Training & Development, and business consultant to a range of small and medium businesses.

John established his business consultancy in the late 1980s focussing on business systems, finance and strategy for small and medium businesses, not-for-profits, professional practices and Local Government.

He has brought his extensive experience as a financial manager and researcher for community, state and national not-for-profit organisations to Blue Roo. John believes Blue Roo allows him to broaden his community contribution from specific individuals to the broader community.



Committee Member Cheryl-Anne Laird *BA (Psych, Hon), Gdip IR, MBA, B Law (Hon)*

Cheryl-Anne has an enviable reputation as a leading human resources and industrial relations consultant to clients in both the private and public sectors. She has built her success on forming long-term partnerships with her clients and becoming a trusted expert in her field.

Cheryl-Anne has a somewhat unique mix of tertiary qualifications, including Law and Psychology, which has allowed her to develop specialist expertise in assisting clients to navigate the myriad challenges that arise when employment and mental health issues combine.

These skills, experience, and her commitment to and passion for social justice issues led to Cheryl-Anne's inclusion as a committee member.



Committee Member: Genevieve Wells *B Soc Wk*



Genevieve's passion lies in the community sector, working with people with severe and persistent mental illness.

Her current role includes supporting people to navigate and gain access to the NDIS system, advocating for those deemed ineligible to receive support packages and assisting individuals in implementing their NDIS plans. Her area of interest is personality disorders and dissociative identity disorders.

Genevieve recognises that she is privileged to work to bring out positive change in people's lives. She draws inspiration from the people with whom she works, who are resilient and persevering, often facing enormous obstacles.

Committee Member: Stewart Thompson *Dip Arts (Disability)*

Stewart has extensive experience within the disability sector, which has allowed him to take a decisive advocacy role with significant experience in lobbying at all government and community levels to influence change and policy decisions.

He continues to focus on ensuring that people have choice and independence and receive the care and support they need to maximise opportunities and participate in community life.

Stewart originally joined the Management Committee when Centacare was a significant financial partner of Blue Roo.



Creative Team Profile

Creative and Musical Director Luke Scott

Luke brings over 27 years of experience in composition, coupled with over 12 years of working within the disability sector.

Luke's high-energy personality is a counterpoint to his ability to relate with the actors and crew, guiding them to reach beyond their creative potential.

With an ability to think outside the box, in 2021, Luke undertook the role of Creative Director for *Chasing Rainbows* to drive Blue Roo's new creative directions. He is succeeding in making the Blue Roo Theatre Company Inc. experience as inclusive and interactive as possible for all participants and audiences.



Patron & Artistic Consultant

Simone de Haas *Gold Matilda Award-winning Producer, Artistic Director & Actor*



Simone's critically acclaimed, creative capacities move effortlessly between the stage, the digital world and the boardroom. Whether singing, directing, telling quirky leadership stories or displaying the power of creative improvisation, Simone brings extraordinary insights into the evolving world. Her unique and diverse portfolio of work creates a robust platform for developing transformational leaders.

Simone is a highly sought-after inspirational, and insightful coach and mentor. She speaks internationally on Exceptionality™ and Stagecraft & Storytelling. Simone has worked as a Lecturer at Griffith University (Qld Conservatorium) and the Queensland University of Technology in Acting for Musical Theatre and Performance Studies and as Guest Director for the Opera Studio at the University of Southern Queensland

Administrative Support Team Profile

Bookkeeper: Jenny Delgado *Assoc Dip Bus, Cert Bus, AD Sc (High Hon)*

Jenny has provided professional bookkeeping and administrative support services to corporate and privately owned, customer-centric businesses for the last 13 years, encompassing the IT, Construction, Legal, Business Coaching, Recruitment and Media sectors.

In addition to her bookkeeping expertise, Jenny's essential skills include process improvement, project support and coordination, tender and proposal writing, database maintenance and recruitment.

Jenny's administrative, organisational, and customer service skills are outstanding, and this, combined with her attention to detail, strong work ethic and customer focus make her an asset to Blue Roo.



Administration Officer: Holly Leeson, *BA (Human Services), BA (Creative Industries)*



Holly has primarily worked with youth (aged 12 to 25) communities and people in flexible education and drug and alcohol rehabilitative settings.

She has experience in dance, music and visual art forms to re-engage at-risk people with their communities and support networks through culturally developmental frameworks. Holly has performed in and choreographed for companies and community productions across Southeast Queensland.

Unfortunately, Holly left Blue Roo in 2021 to tackle different challenges in the creative arts sector.

Administration & Social Media Officer: Vivien Whittle *Bachelor of Creative Industries (QUT)*

While Vivien joined Blue Roo in February 2022 as an Administration & Social Media Officer, she brings an extensive pedigree in film, stage and theatre, which we are eager to utilise.

Vivien has been acting since 2003, when she joined the Brisbane-based Australian Acting Academy. She has also trained and performed through Queensland Actor's Playhouse extensively.

More recently, Vivien co-produced *Plucked* (Whittleberry Productions) for the 2021 Anywhere Festival, which won the People's Choice Award. She has performed in various productions through Grownl Theatre & The Curators.

In 2022, the short film she co-starred in, *Good Times and That's Ok* (directed by Amanda Kaye), won Best Queensland Short Film and People's Choice awards at the Australian Independent Film Festival.

Oh yes, her administration and social media skills are pretty good too!



6. ACHIEVEMENTS

Even during new COVID waves restricting live audience attendance and our planned touring schedule, Blue Roo:

- Produced an outstanding inclusive main house performance (Midsummer's Night Dream), auspiced a new original inclusive production (BOSS), and piloted a new original work (Chasing Rainbows), all attracting audience and sector acclaim.
- Devised, created and piloted a new original Australian play targeting schools' participation, creating a new participant and audience transition pathway into the Queensland inclusive arts sector.
- Established new sector employment pathways for emerging inclusive creatives by establishing the Blue Roo Costume and Props Department and introducing Blue Roo mentorships for emerging inclusive creatives in script development and costume making, supporting the future capacity of the Queensland inclusive arts sector.
- Employed 16 Queensland artists, arts workers and mentorees with disability, strengthening employment opportunities for Queensland artists and arts workers.
- Supported 19 local and Queensland businesses contracted to supply for our work
- Provided 135 creative and skilling activities, strengthening the health and well-being and community engagement outcomes for disability sector participants.
- Attracted domestic and international digital audiences through our Digital Hub, extending the visibility, reach and impact of inclusive productions, artists and arts workers to Melbourne, Sydney, Gold Coast, Beaudesert, Cairns, Ingham, the UK, Canada, Malaysia, U.S.A, Germany, Argentina, Phillipines, South Africa and Spain. Our total number of Facebook followers and You Tube subscribers has reached 1,237.
- Blue Roo's philosophy and clearly defined strategic direction led to enhanced relationships with 7 new NDIS collaborators, four new school connections and three new business sponsors.

These achievements confirm Blue Roo, even under pressure, as an increasingly innovative, vibrant force in the small-to-medium inclusive arts sector in Queensland.

It also confirms the organisation's governance capacity to manage the extraordinary challenges it faced during this period successfully.

7. FINANCIAL SUMMARY

The financial audit prepared by the Kardia Group certified that in 2021-2022 the Blue Roo Theatre Company Inc. achieved a surplus of \$13,061, an increase of \$6,651 from the previous year, and no significant issues were encountered during the audit.

Refer to APPENDIX A.

8. OUR SUPPORTERS

Blue Roo Theatre Company Inc. wishes to thank our financial and nonfinancial supporters who contributed to sustaining the Company and without whom we could not exist.

Arts Queensland has enabled Blue Roo to deliver productions, has been supportive through redefining Blue Roo as a production company, and, importantly, offered an alternative transition funding source when our application for organisational funding was unsuccessful.

We are pleased to recognise our continuing partnerships and collaborations with Simone de Haas, our Patron, QPAC, the Variety Kids Choir, Sarah Jackson, our local and regional supporters, our new school communities and our wonderful volunteers. Blue Roo would also like to thank Access Arts for its ongoing support.

Together, we will continue to change lives through high-quality, vibrant performing arts productions, community engagement and advocacy.

While the partnership with Centacare finished in December 2021, it is appropriate to acknowledge the many years it was in operation.

