****

**The Sydney Feminists’ 2018 Annual General Meeting: Report**

**Date and time**: Saturday 1st December 2018, 9am-11am

**Venue:** Newtown Women’s Library, 8-10 Brown Street, Newtown

**Committee/Team Members:** Tessa Barratt (President); Brianna Attard (Secretary); Joseph Salemi (Treasurer); Vicky Simister (Assistant Treasurer)

Good morning everyone and welcome to this year's annual general meeting. My name is Tessa Barratt and I am the founder of the Sydney Feminists, a small but highly active nonprofit educational organisation.

For those of you unfamiliar with the Sydney Feminists’ history, we were founded as a Meetup group in 2012. Initially it was just me and my co-founder Joseph Salemi, holding small, quiet dinners at various locations around Sydney with the intent of meeting like-minded individuals. Then we acquired a licence to screen an educational documentary about the misogyny inherent in modern day media. We started to screen this for free at public venues around Sydney and slowly gathered a small following. Before long, we had other dedicated volunteers joining us in our mission to educate as many people as possible about feminism and its necessary role in Australian society. Over the years, the Sydney Feminists has hosted a wide range of events: documentary screenings, panel events, talks, fundraisers, workshops and more. Eventually we refined our focus to educational workshops and projects and today these areas of the organisation are flourishing.

You will be hearing from the rest of our committee and support team in a few moments and they will give you more details, but before we get into that I would like to give everyone a brief overview of the organisation's achievements, improvements and changes this year.

**Fundraising:**

As many of you are aware, we held a fundraising event at the Red Rattler Theatre in Marrickville in June of this year. Former volunteer and longtime Sydney Feminists member, Michelle Imison, was instrumental in designing, organising and putting on this ambitious event. We were once again graced with the talents of Whim 'N Rhythm, Yale University's all-female, all senior a cappella group, who put on a stellar performance for our paying audience. While the event was a modest financial success, we were able to make enough to cover our baseline operations and continue for another year. Furthermore, it brought the team together and gave us the opportunity to have fun and celebrate. Special thanks to Michelle for putting this event together.

**Events:**

Along with a fundraising concert, we also held a documentary screening event in September with a focus on medical sexism. The film was about one woman's journey to get a diagnosis for a chronic illness and the prejudice and institutional discrimination she experienced along the way. It was a powerful and moving event which brought in a diverse crowd of people. It provided me with the opportunity to talk about a subject close to my heart, which is the gender gap in healthcare, and how medicine needs a #MeToo movement as well. Both the film and the 10 minute talk I gave afterwards were well received by the attendees. We also gave the group ME/Action the chance to hold a stall and discuss the chronic illness in question with audience members at the end of the event. Overall, the screening went very well and we were given exceptionally positive feedback both on the night and afterwards via email and messages. We achieved our aims of educating the public about a feminist issue and equipped people with tools and how to make change in this area.

We also held several social dinners this year via our MeetUp platform. Both Michelle and Joanna spearheaded these gatherings which provided a fun and safe space for feminists to get together and discuss topics of interest with like-minded people. Our heartfelt thanks to both these women for holding these small gatherings across the year.

**Workshops:**

TSF’s workshops coordinator, Brianna, will go into more detail about the success of the workshops this year. Needless to say, we have gone from strength to strength in this area and are confident we can do even better next year.

**Meetings:**

In 2017, our meetings were held on Thursday nights and were very dry and boring. I realised that we needed to change things up to make them more engaging and interesting for our volunteers. This year the structure was much more streamlined and interactive and at the end of each hour there was a second, optional hour for people to get involved in activities such as arts and crafts and/or critiquing the rough drafts of our workshops. The icebreakers, mini team meetings and interactive activities have proven very successful and we have held productive and entertaining meetings all year. A big thank you to all of you who have attended. Your participation and feedback has been extremely helpful.

**Student Inquiries:**

A little-known aspect of the non-profit’s educational work is our ability to answer the questions of high school and university students working on personal interest projects or assignments on feminism. We frequently get contacted by young people who want to interview feminist activists about the work they do. As our committee is always under the pump, we have needed dedicated volunteers to answer the students. This year, Jess Corban and Elizabeth Roche have been outstanding at doing this job. They have diligently answered numerous student enquiries and have participated in interviews. The committee would like to express our appreciation for the work they have done in this area. I'm sure the students appreciate it as well!

**Media Interest:**

The Sydney Feminists are regularly contacted by TV and radio stations who wish to get our opinion on various hot topics at the time. The way the media works is that they send you an email requesting your attendance at a studio in the city. They normally send this email about 2 to 3 hours before you're expected to be there, so it's extremely rare that we’re able to take up these opportunities. However, this year we were able to give one television interview and two radio interviews about our perspective on important issues and discuss the work we are doing. A big thanks to the team members who took time out of their day to make this happen. It's great to have this kind of exposure for the organisation.

**Research:**

 This year, we have been fortunate to have four a dedicated researchers producing high-quality academic pieces for the website’s educational resources section. These pieces serve multiple functions: they are a resource to direct students to, they are data to draw from for our workshop team and they are freely available to any and all who are interested in exploring pertinent feminist topics. Pieces range from the representation of women in advertising, to women in family law, to the gender pay gap, to gender stereotyping in children. All of our researchers are students or graduates themselves and are highly qualified to write these academic essays. The content of academia is too often locked up in ivory towers; only those enrolled at universities or who have the money to afford memberships to journals, have access to this information. One of the aims of this project is to make quality information freely available to all who would use it or benefit from it. I thank the researchers for sharing in this vision and contributing their skills and expertise. The content they have created is superb and I strongly recommend reading through them. We have big plans for next year, but this year our database expanded considerably, and we have a committed team of individuals to thank for that. Keep up the excellent work!

**Writers:**

 The Sydney Feminists has a highly active Blogger and Tumblr platform populated by well written articles on a diverse range of subjects. Our Tumblr is focused on pop culture analysis and hot button issues in modern feminism, and has gone from strength to strength this year due largely to the efforts of Brittany and Esther who have been working hard to gain a bigger following and consistently produce top-quality material. They have been joined by Vanessa and Alex who are also contributing fantastic pieces. Tumblr is very youth-oriented, so it is an important platform to invest in and we are very excited to see where it goes in 2019.

Our Blogger has been running for a few years now, but this year it has gained considerable traction. For the bulk of 2018, just a small team of writers were updating it weekly with everything from op-eds, think pieces, news reports, information and personal stories. As the general theme this year has been on medical sexism, our Blogger writers have supported this by writing pieces focused on various women's health issues. Most recently, we put out an advertisement to recruit more writers and to our delight, many talented women put up their hands to volunteer. We now have a large and highly active writing team and are producing 2 to 3 pieces on Blogger each week. This year has seen the refinement of both Tumblr and Blogger, and next year we intend to expand our readership and get the word out there about this informative, quality resource. I have been heading the writing team and I can honestly say they are some of the most dedicated, switched on volunteers I have had the pleasure to work with. I thank you all for your contributions and am very excited to see where we go next year.

**Social Media:**

Our Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are active and enjoy an impressive number of followers. This has been down to the very much appreciated work of a team of volunteers who’ve continually posted informative news pieces on contemporary issues as well as thought provoking discussion points and interesting perspectives. We would like to thank our team of admins for keeping these platforms running this year and in previous years. There’s a lot of you to thank for this, including Miya, Kate, Naomi and Caitie for Instagram, Vipula and Kaila on Twitter, and Mireille, Sarah, Emma, Erin, Belle and Adela for Facebook. 2018 has seen some major changes which will be discussed a little later in this report. However, for now I would simply like to thank all of those volunteers who prioritised TSF each week to thoughtfully post up something educational. We appreciate your dedication and hard work in this area and the communities that you’ve grown online.

I’ll end this part of my report with an update on volunteer membership. The organisation has grown exponentially this year and we have many volunteers working several different departments. We have a number of volunteers who have been with us for a few years and we are very grateful to them for their dedication, diligence and consistency. We would also like to commend the new volunteers who have offered their time and expertise to help build the organisation and support its overall mission. Simply put, this nonprofit would not exist if it weren't for the hard work of a dedicated team of activists putting in the time and effort between work, study and personal commitments. Our heartfelt thanks to all of you for being a part of this community group. Volunteers are rarely thanked for what they do, so I want to sing your praises. You are amazing people and we are grateful to have you as part of the team.

I’d now like to hand over to Vicky, the assistant treasurer, who will give this year’s financial report.

**REPORTS**

**Treasurer’s Report**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **INCOMINGS** |  | **OUTGOINGS** |  |
| Membership | $ 242.84 | Website | $ 146.02 |
| Merchandise | $ 57.00 | Women's Library | $ 50.00 |
| Donations | $ 463.79 | MeetUp | $ 241.82 |
|  |  | Merchandise | $ 194.61 |
| Ticket Sales | $ 991.00 |  | Fundraising Expenses | $ 54.41 |  |
|  | Documentaries | $ 157.07 |
| Office | $ 164.49 |
| Banking | $ 214.27 |
| Event Costs | $ 857.50 |
|  |
| **Total Incomings** | $ 1,754.63 | **Total Outgoings** | $ 2,080.19 |
|  |  |
| Previous Balance End 2017 | $ 2,567.12 |
| **Net of 2018 income & expenditure** | -$ 325.56 |
| Balance End 2018 | $ 2,241.56 |

Social Media

TSF’s platforms are the organisation’s way of connecting its educational goals to the wider community and other partners. It’s been a year of massive growth, both in terms of the admins and the types of content we posted, which is reflected in the stats across all the platforms. A quick look at the figures: Instagram consistently maintained its following of 20,000+ people, while Facebook saw huge engagement in the last six months of the year resulting in nearly 2,000 new followers, and Twitter peaking in August with over 16,000 impressions.

*Regular posting by new and existing admins led to a major jump in engagement on FB*



We received the most engagement with our posts about medical sexism, #MeToo, sexual abuse and harassment, the gender pay gap and domestic abuse - all of which are incredibly pressing challenges and issues for the movement in 2018. We’ve also had guest contributions from eco-feminist Erfan Daliri and supported numerous partners with promoting their feminist causes, including the pro-choice #Panuelazo rallies across Australia and all kinds of feminist books, talks, film-makers, artists and performers.

It’s clear from the above, that TSF comments on a wide range of issues while simultaneously being asked to promote a lot of activities. This is a tough juggling act to manage, even with the recruitment of a dedicated manager to grow and mentor the admin team since August. That is why the Committee are downscaling the social media team from today onwards, to focus on promoting the work of the organisation more specifically and to reduce the management needed to oversee a team of more than 10 volunteers at its peak. Thank you to everyone who has helped us promote the aims and causes of TSF, we couldn’t have gotten here without you!

**Workshops - Brianna**

The workshop team built a new workshop on “Empathy” for the first half of the year. We had a big team, so it was great to collaborate via Skype meetings to develop our workshop. I was able to test parts of the workshop to a small group of Global Studies students from Long Island University in the US who wanted to hear about The Sydney Feminists, intersectionality and current feminist movements. The full workshop was then delivered at a team meeting in June for feedback. While we were hoping to do a public demo of the workshop in November, we ended up having to prioritise refining our Masculinity and Respectful Relationships workshop for our upcoming 2-day stint at Cobham Juvenile Justice Centre. Joe and I are really excited about how we (with the help of Alma) have improved this workshop, and are excited to deliver this next week. Neha also stepped in and delivered a second presentation to the Global Studies Students at Long Island University in October this year. I want to thank Brittany for her work on the workshops, whilst also writing for the writers and finishing her thesis - a real powerhouse! For 2019, we are hoping to get an Outreach Manager volunteer to help us promote the workshops to organisations and schools so we can deliver more workshops for 2019.

**Thank you to Vicky, Brianna and Joseph and Neha for their reports.**

I'd like to conclude my President’s report by offering a genuine and heartfelt thank you to all of our volunteers and especially our committee. Few people see just how much hard work and administration goes into running a community organisation and it would not be sustainable without dedicated and hard-working people putting in the hours and the effort to make it work. I have thanked volunteers throughout my report because I know how thankless these jobs are. Community activists are the backbone of social change. There are many of us and yet we’re quite invisible to the rest of society. However, when we combine our efforts in a collaborative approach we can do a considerable amount good and I am honoured to have had the privilege of working with so many diligent and driven people in this movement and in this organisation.

It has been a big and important year for The Sydney Feminists. We have worked hard to refine our focus and achieve our objectives and I'm feeling especially optimistic for 2019.

As per the regulations of the Department Of Fair Trading, all committee positions are now made vacant. Paid members who have been volunteers for one or more years are welcome to run for these positions and all paid members are able to vote on them. I'd like to ask my co-founder, Joseph, who has long been our public officer, to conduct the process of swearing in 2019's committee.

Thank you everybody for your support and for coming to this year's annual general meeting. I would now like to conclude the AGM and open up to our end of year party.