

# ANNUAL REPORT 2020

## BUS STOP FILMS

INCLUSIVE FILMMAKING





## A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR, PETER TONAGH

What a year it was for Bus Stop in 2020! Even with our brilliant filmmaking expertise we couldn't have written a script that reflected the many twists and turns of the Covid year we all experienced. Yet even under such challenging and unpredictable circumstances Bus Stop Films continued to grow, continued to deliver an exceptional experience for our students and invested in setting up the organisation to further expand our impact in 2021.

2020 started off with our largest intake of students, with programs being delivered in Sydney, Parramatta, Wollongong and our latest addition, Canberra. Unfortunately, the pandemic very much impacted the face-to-face delivery for much of the year but, to use a very 2020 phrase, our "pivot" to online delivery under the direction of our outstanding COO Dianna La Grassa, went smoothly and we were able to continue to deliver our programmes effectively. And, of course, we learnt many lessons that will help us as we pursue further expansion over the course of the next few years.

We continued to attract critical grants and support from government, philanthropy and our corporate partners. This invaluable support funded our film projects and supported us to launch vital industry resources including 'The Inclusive Filmmaking Toolkit', jointly delivered with Taste Creative, and 'Inclusion in Action' Training. Both initiatives reflect our depth of knowledge and expertise in inclusive filmmaking and reinforce our position as the industry leader in creating a more diverse and inclusive sector. I am grateful to all supporters big and small, as each and every dollar donated or in-kind contribution made, actively assists us to use filmmaking and the film industry to enact positive cultural change.

As Chair of such a brilliant and distinguished organisation, I am thrilled that His Excellency General The Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Ret'd) Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia and Her Excellency Mrs Linda Hurley have returned to supporting Bus Stop Films as our joint patrons. It gives me a great sense of comfort and pride to have their support and companionship as Bus Stop moves towards being a truly national organisation.

Despite the dramatic impact of Covid on the local screen industry our team continued to source and support workplace opportunities for our students in line with our commitment to advocacy and the importance of professional outcomes for our students. Our students were employed on a range of major productions including Marvel's Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings. This not only cements us as a key player within the film industry but also reflects the global shift towards greater diversity on both sides of the camera, a cause that Bus Stop has been proudly leading for over 11 years.

As I wrap up my reflections of 2020, I want to extend my thanks to the Bus Stop Films Board: Dianna La Grassa, Jacqui Attard, Brian Maguire, Genevieve Clay-Smith, Emily Dash, Kate Aitken and Jennifer Collins and our Company Secretary Fiona Stuart, for their brilliance in the governance of the organisation. Their skills were vital in navigating the challenges of the year. A huge note of thanks to Kallistene Vihas, who gives her time to supporting the board and to Oliver Pase who made a terrific contribution through the Board Observership Program.

Of course, like any organisation, Bus Stop's success has been shaped by our leadership. Tracey Corbin-Matchett has embraced her role as Chief Executive Officer and, with the support of our Chief Operating Officer, Dianna La Grassa, and the entire team including all of our tutors and support workers, has accelerated our journey. A huge thank you to Tracey and the team.

We are all looking forward to an exciting journey in 2021 and beyond and thank you for all of your support.

*Peter Tomagh*



# CEO REPORT



Well, what a year!! My first full year in the driver's seat was certainly one for the history books. I felt such overwhelming pride in our amazing staff and students as they worked and studied through challenge and change.

Around all that was unfolding with the impact of COVID-19, one thing remained constant, our commitment to ensure our programs and processes supported inclusion and offered our students a fulfilling and engaging experience. Yes I still cried many times, full of heartfelt pride and appreciation for all things Bus Stop Films.

2020 saw us expand to Canberra, and returning to Wollongong, Sydney and Parramatta. We started off the year with our biggest number of students yet. With COVID-19 shutting down our face to face classes, it was our exceptional COO Dianna who led the implementation of our virtual program, setting up and supporting our staff and students to continue to work and learn online.

And around the constantly changing situation, we continued to educate, create and advocate, showing that #inclusivefilmmaking will not be thwarted by a pandemic and that we are a resilient, well governed and resourceful organisation, supported with diligence and compassion by our wonderful board of directors. While it was a tough year for the screen industry production wise, which impacted job opportunities for our students, we forged ahead to produce 9 brilliant inclusively made films - all under Covid safe conditions.

This year we saw changes to the Oscars, with the introduction of Representation and Inclusion Standards, recognition in Hollywood that true inclusion in filmmaking happens on both sides of the camera.

For us, some of our own amazing highlights this year was our first Sydney Film Festival screening with the cracker comedy *Groundhog Night*; the launch of The Inclusive Filmmaking Toolkit and our Inclusion in Action training, both initiatives furthering our commitment to see a more inclusive screen industry and we ended the year with our ABC collaboration celebrating International Day of People with Disability, “Why Digby Webster Makes Art” going viral with over 3.4M views... and that’s just some of 2020’s stand out moments!

The work of Bus Stop Films impacts and connects to so many people around the world, and I am grateful to each and every person and organisation who contributed their time, resources and creativity to support us to change lives and minds through film. 2020 personally and professionally brought me many challenges and together we faced them and thrived. Thank you for helping me keep the bus going!

*Tracey Corbin-Matchett*





The rollercoaster ride of 2020 put our students and staff to the test and through it all I was completely amazed at how incredible our team and students stood resilient and committed to the program.

For the first time ever Bus Stop Films made it through a pandemic and delivered our program online allowing our students to stay connected and continue to build their knowledge and skills in the filmmaking industry. In our classes, we delivered 6 inclusively made films all inspired by our students and led by incredible filmmakers and mentors. Our end of year showcase is a testament to the resilience and commitment of everyone involved.

When we talk about sustainability and the future of Bus Stop Films we've learned a lot from the 2020 year and can see the silver linings that have emerged. As we head into 2021 we're now able to offer an online program expanding our reach along with expanding into Brisbane. Our student cohort will be the largest it's ever been and delivering the most student led inclusively made films in Bus Stop Films history. It's extremely exciting to see the global shift towards inclusion with the new inclusion and diversity Oscar guidelines. Bus Stop Films being ahead of the curve will be delivering our Inclusion in Action workshops providing BSF with another avenue of revenue and further extending our credibility and reputation in this space.

With our incredible CEO at the helm 2021 is set to be our best year yet and I can't wait to see it all unfold. As COO it's a privilege and an honor to be part of this organisation and I can't wait to see all that our students will achieve.

Let's go 2021!

*Dianna La Grassa*

COO  
REPORT



## Bus Stop Films Board

Good governance grows strong organisations. To steer a not for profit organisation through a global pandemic and ensure it remains viable, functioning and navigating the myriad of government structures underpinning both the disability and screen industry takes nous, diligence and strategic understanding.

The BSF board is the backbone of the organisation and a highly valued part of the BSF family and they provide outstanding governance and financial oversight. In 2020 we added a new board member, Jennifer Collins, dynamo TV producer and industry legal mind Fiona Stuart came on board as Company Secretary, together they bring a wealth of experience in the development and production of screen content to BSF.

This year we took part in the Board Observership Program, which supports emerging leaders to gain an understanding of the machinery of boards whilst contributing their time and experience to an organisation. We were delighted to have Oliver Pase join us across 2020.

### **BSF Board as at December 2020:**

Peter Tonagh – Chair

Brian Maguire – Treasurer

Jacqui Attard – Board Member

Emily Dash – Board Member

Kate Aitken – Board Member

Genevieve Clay-Smith – Board Member

Dianna La Grassa – Board Member

Jennifer Collins - Board Member

Fiona Stuart - Company Secretary

The Board is supported by the dedication and fantastic skills of Kallistene Vihas.



## Bus Stop Films Advisory Board

BSF is grateful for the sage advice and support from our Advisory Board, consisting of Paralympian, aerial artist and disability advocate Paul Nunnari together with screen and media executive Courtney Gibson and our CEO Tracey Corbin-Matchett.

The advisory board workshops key strategic ideas such as the ideation of the Inclusion in Action program.



## BSF Joint Patrons

In 2020 we were thrilled to have *His Excellency General The Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Ret'd) Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia* and *Her Excellency Mrs Linda Hurley*, get back on board the bus as our joint patrons.

With our expansion nationally in train and our flourishing Canberra program, having their support to grow and shape our profile and engagement around Australia is an enormous honour.



## What a team!

BSF is based on bedrock of inclusion, kindness and creativity and in a year that was a challenge for many, our staff have stepped up and beyond to ensure our programs were delivered and that our students enjoyed an empowering and creative educational experience and our organisation is robust and functioning. Our Chief Operating Officer Dianna La Grassa showed skillful leadership and a strong understanding of education principles in setting up our online learning platform and supporting staff and students to flourish in the virtual classroom. Dianna's brilliant work in moving our programs online was honoured with a Governor-General's Medallion, congratulations Dianna.

Monica Power continued as our Support and Engagement Manager, ensuring students are well supported in the classroom and overseeing the support staff in their roles. Johnny Gabrael, ensures our accounts and staff are paid, and we're grateful for his skill with figures.

Bringing her amazing creative talents to the role of Marketing and Administration Coordinator is acclaimed photographer Alina Golovachenko, who joined the team after the lovely Vivien Mullan moved on from BSF in the mid year to take up a role with inclusive tech incubator Remarkable.

Our brilliant tutors educate, support and inspire the learning of our students. In 2020 our tutors saw many fresh faces in our classrooms including Julian Neuhaus, Andrew Kavanagh, Maddison Coles, Jillian Wade and Dan Sanguineti together with long-time tutor Sarah-Jane Johnson.

Our support workers provide the students guidance in the classroom and on set. In 2020 our support crew included Sarah McCarthy, Lilian Paterson, Melanie McKuch, Lucky Chen, Michelle Sutton, James Sutton and Carly Hawkins.





## Online Learning

Like many educational institutions, we had to move our Accessible Film Studies Program online when pandemic enforced shutdowns impacted our classroom access at our host partner sites. Under the direction of our COO and with support from Screen NSW and the skill of our web hosts team at Dialogic Studios, we were able to move the programs online, with our students learning like so many others did in 2020, via Zoom!

Always looking for silver linings, setting up the online platform also allowed us to deliver our new industry focused training program Inclusion in Action to practitioners across the country and around the world and we're now rolling out a full virtual program stream in 2021.

## Program partners and supporters

We couldn't do what we do with the support of our program partners. In 2020 we delivered our Accessible Film Studies Program in partnership with Australian Film TV and Radio School, Information + Cultural Exchange and with new partners Screen Canberra and University of Wollongong. During the year we also formed a partnership with Actors Centre Australia, delivering a number of workshops and master classes with the innovative acting school in Leichhardt.

We of course thank our supporters Panavision, Paige-Harrison, The Sherry Hogan Foundation, The Snow Foundation, PwC, Cushman + Wakefield, Accenture, Realise Business and Creative Plus Business and many more. Were so grateful for their support.





## New stops for the bus!

The year saw our expansion plans confirmed, with our successful funding grant from the Screenrights Cultural Fund supporting our expansion to Brisbane, Melbourne and Adelaide. We're so excited to be partnering with Griffith Film School, Griffith University in Brisbane to kick off our Accessible Film Studies Program in 2021 and finalising our partnerships with RMIT University in Melbourne and Mercury CX in Adelaide to launch in these cities in late 2021 ahead of the full roll out in 2022. Who knows where the bus will stop next?

## Resourcing the industry

Long before the Oscars saw the light, we've lead the way in #inclusivefilmmaking and this year cemented that expertise into resources for the industry, producing The Inclusive Filmmaking Toolkit in partnership with Taste Creative and the support of Screen NSW. The Toolkit is now available to filmmakers at all levels and is a powerful tool to promote greater inclusion in filmmaking practice.

Growing that theme we also launched our training program for the industry, Inclusion in Action. Inclusively developed with funding through an Information Linkages and Capacity Building grant from the National Disability Insurance Agency and with the support of the National Institute of Dramatic Art, the workshop is aimed at supporting filmmakers and producers to be more confident in employing, working alongside and collaborating with people living with disability.

Originally to be presented face to face in Sydney, Canberra, Adelaide, Melbourne and Brisbane, like most things in 2020 we moved the program online due to the impact of Covid19. The upside to the move to e-learning meant participants from across the country and even LA, Dubai and Moscow were able to learn and connect.

Filmmakers joined staff from agencies including Screen NSW, Screen QLD, Screen West, ABC and SBS in learning more about making movies inclusively. Face to face sessions were held in Sydney, Canberra and even regional NSW in partnership with Screenworks.



## Celebrating the films we made in the year like no other

In 2020 around all that was happening we still produced 8 amazing films. Each one inclusively made with the end to end contribution of people with disabilities and undertaken under Covid safe conditions. Showcasing again that art and creativity can flourish through inclusion.

Our usual showcase celebrations were a hybrid of events, with a face to face showcase able to take place in Canberra at the National Film and Sound Archive kindly hosted by The Governor-General and Mrs Hurley, though without our Sydney staff present (Border closures strike again!), and a virtual showcase filmed at Actors Centre Australia and streamed to share our 2020 program films to the cast, crew, staff, students and supporters.

The virtual event included special messages from Hugh Jackman, Zack Gottsagen and Their Excellencies the Governor-General and Mrs Hurley. Thank you to Julian from Ironbark films who directed and edited the virtual showcase and to Dan and the team from Sanguineti Media for filming the Canberra showcase. It wasn't quite the red carpet we're used to but it was wonderful to celebrate our students' achievements in what was a year like no other.

This year's amazing collection of films that will now be entered into festivals around the world, and who knows where the bus will stop next. Our 2020 Program films included:

*Job Security*  
*This is News Radio*  
*The Quest for the Golden Crystal*  
*Invisible Heroes*  
*The Enchanted Ball*  
*Filters*

We also produced *Groundhog Night* which premiered at the Sydney Film Festival and another amazing project *Invisible* in partnership with Animal Logic, supported by City of Sydney Council and Cushman + Wakefield that will premiere in 2021, so watch this space!







## The show must go on

Not even a pandemic can stop audiences' love of film. What we missed on the red carpet we made up in online viewing with festivals around the world moving to streaming platforms and we were thrilled to be part of the Sydney Film Festival's first ever virtual festival with our Screenability film, *Groundhog Night*, supported by Screen NSW and Made Up Stories. The comedy was written by and starring our talented board member Emily Dash and Directed by and also starring our wonderful Co-Founder Genevieve Clay-Smith. The film was co-directed by Rawley Reynolds, a student in our AFTRS program. Rawley assisted Genevieve to direct the project and gained many new skills through on the job training.

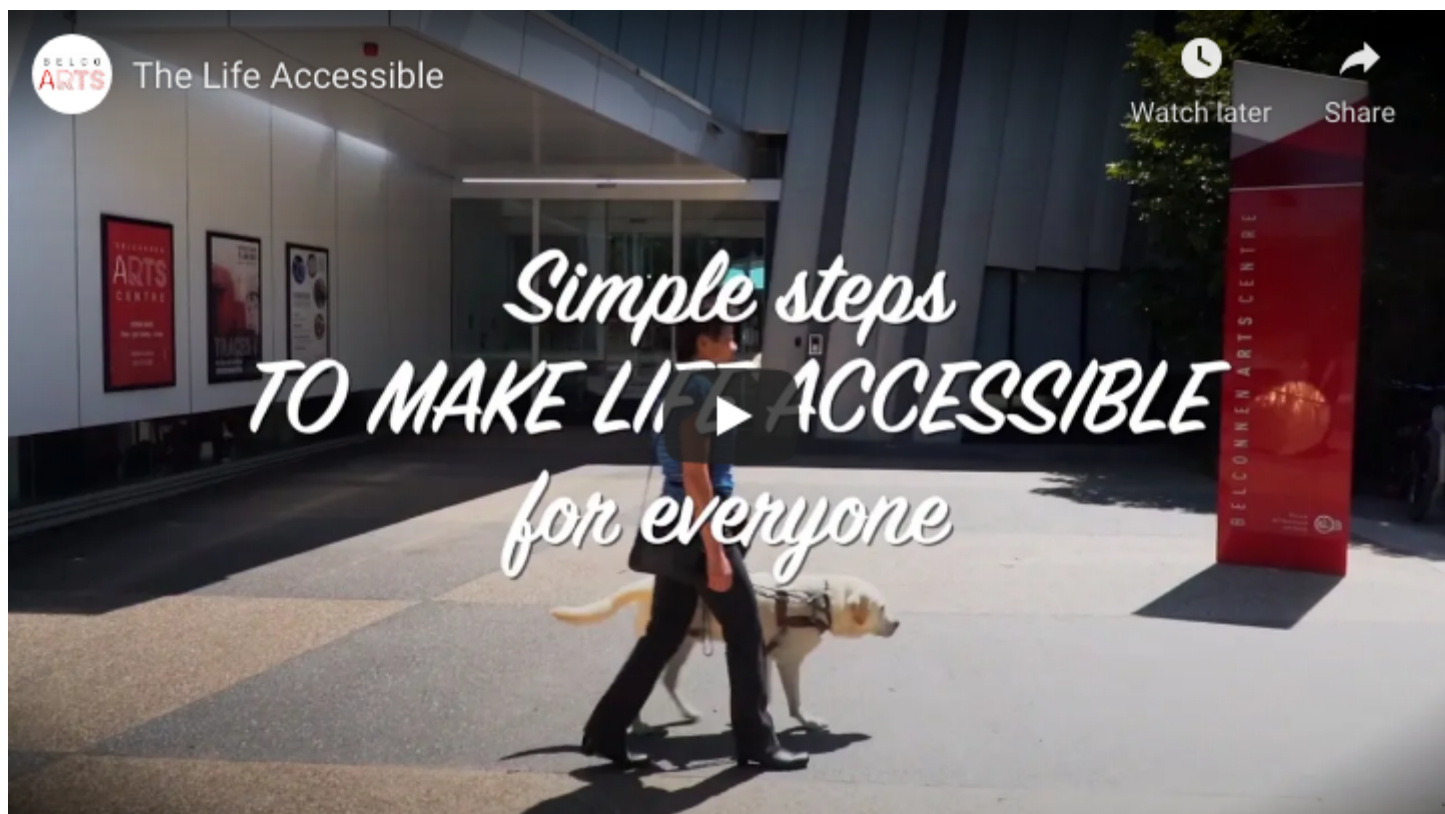
And whilst we couldn't travel this year the film certainly did, joining The Traveling Film Festival on a national tour and securing screenings at UNESCO City of Film events in Croatia, Korea and Brazil among its screening destinations. Also overseas, our film *Stairs* made in partnership with the Arts Council of Mongolia, had its world premiere at the Ulaanbaatar International Film Festival, followed by its Australian premiere at the Asia Pacific Screen Forum on the Gold Coast.

We had other stand out festival moments with our rom-com *Not A Wallflower* premiering at Melbourne International Film Festival ahead of the Aesthetica Film Festival in the UK. We ended the year with a huge presence on our national broadcasters, with SBS picking up 14 our amazing films to screen on International Day of People With Disability and ABC screening *Groundhog Night* as part of their Re-Frame initiative that same week. The suite of films are now available on the station's streaming platforms and are being enjoyed by audiences nationwide.



## Working It

It's no doubt the screen industry was hit hard in 2020. COVID-19 saw many productions grind to a halt and sadly that did impact the number of employment opportunities our students could engage in. The year did still offer some brilliant opportunities though, with 11 students gaining work on feature films including Marvel's *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings* and the rom-com *Long Story Short* as well a number of short projects including ArtScreen with Accessible Arts and an inclusively made project with Belco Arts Theatre in Canberra supported through Sanguineti Media.





ABC Arts ✓

30 November 2020 · 🌐

This year an unusual double entry was selected as an Archibald Prize finalist - Ernest Brothers, by artists Digby Webster and Neil Tomkins. We were lucky enough to have Digby walk us through his process and take us on a visit to see his work at the [Art Gallery of New South Wales](#). #IDPwD

We ended the year with a brilliant workplace opportunity through a collaboration with ABC Arts and Ironbark Films, culminating in the amazing interview with Digby Webster which went viral and reached well over 3.4million people online. The ABC Arts project was student Oliver's first workplace opportunity, which helped him, together with another student Audrey, land year long internships at AFTRS.



👍❤️👏 54K

1.5K comments 20K shares

➦ Share



## Financial Summary for 2020

In unprecedented times and despite a lean year with the impact of the pandemic, we are confidentially traveling strong into 2021. We continue to look for ways to improve sustainability and ensure our operations and programs are financially viable such as through fee for service training and consultancy.

Our revenue increased by 42% from \$450,526 in 2019 to \$689,271 in 2020, however our profits decreased somewhat from \$153,419 in 2019 to a loss of \$47,873 in 2020, a Covid impacted downturn due to student numbers reducing in terms 2 and 3 with the move to online and not being able to fundraise per our usual means. Good governance in previous years stood us well to manage this result with a strong asset base to support us back to growth.

Thank you to our brilliant Treasurer Brian Maguire for his dedicated and professional management of our finances and to Gregory Richards and his team at Page, Harrison & Co for their management of our audit requirements and assisting us through the impact of Job Keeper and other tax related changes in 2020. A copy of our full financial report can be found on the ACNC website.





