

# ≡ *Burning News* from the Incinerator Theatre

June 2020

## Ipswich Little Theatre Society Inc Newsletter



Ipswich Little Theatre  
— SOCIETY ESTABLISHED 1946 —

**Editor:**

**Ian Pullar**

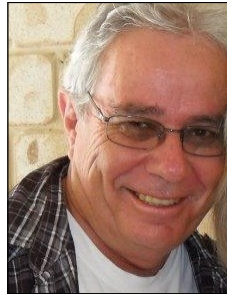
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**NEXT ILT  
COMMITTEE  
MEETING  
To be advised**

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*If we billed all our productions as "Protest Plays" could we have full houses again?*



### From the President

Dear ILT Members,

Well, I think we can all agree that 2020 is certainly one of the biggest plot twists we have all seen in a while. As a member of ILT, I'm sure you are all missing catching up with everyone and enjoying the community and camaraderie that ILT offers us. Thank you to all who have reached out – we're grateful for your support.

We hope you and you families have managed to stay safe and well during isolation. I've been so grateful for all forms of the arts during lockdown. There are many people who would not have been able to cope as easily without music, theatre, painting, books, movies, Netflix and many more art forms during recent times.

As you can imagine, things here have been quite challenging. We have waited until now to bring you up to date as we needed to have a firmer picture of the future and what we, as a theatre, need to do to operate safely and without fear of causing risk to any member or patron.

For a community theatre group that operates for 339 days of the year, you can imagine this drastic and immediate change of pace has impacted on us all differently, but now is the time to remind you all that we are all in this together. The experience for the audience and the cast will always remain our priority at Ipswich Little Theatre, so as restrictions start to lift we're preparing to welcome you back when the time is right.

After considerable discussion and research our Executive and Administration committee have brought together a small team of dedicated members who are working through and creating the framework for our COVID Safe Plan, WH&S Plan, Cleaning Plan and Checklist for display to patrons. They have to consider additional cleaning to the theatre and surrounds; the social distancing rules of 1.5 metres and the 4 sqm individual rule that applies to audiences as well as cast and volunteers during rehearsals and production; changes to cash handling on site, switching from allocated seating to general admission; risk to patrons and volunteers due to additional exposure while remaining financially responsible to the people who have donated, volunteered or raised funds to get us to the financial position we are in – and taking care not to squander their efforts in any way.

Currently, our 80 seat theatre capacity would be reduced to approximately 20 patrons per performance, possibly fewer to allow for 1.5m access aisles. Our community theatre also has a number of sub-groups with varying circumstances and age groups for which we have to assess the best outcomes. The social distancing rules similarly affect the capacity of the Jean Pratt Building. We take the responsibility of providing a safe experience for all very seriously and these current uncertain times has heightened this need tremendously. We have placed a priority on finding the best balance we can between what is possible and what is practical.

We are aware the task is not small, and the goalposts are changing every day. There is a ridiculous amount of information out there relating to COVID and it all seems to be popping up in various locations. We ask that rather than dilute any work done by the COVID subcommittees, you forward suggestions directly to me as President for consideration and then if it has any impact or offers any change to our stance as an organisation then it will be communicated from Executive to the appropriate people.

This theatre and all it offers our community and our members is something we will never ever take lightly. We guarantee that we have the entire theatre's best interests at heart: we want the joy of live performances as much as you do. But, we make the safety and well-being of our Theatre community our major priority. We will do what is right for Ipswich Little Theatre and all of its members when the time is right.

We look forward to when we can once again safely share in the pure joy of creating and presenting live theatre for you all to enjoy at Ipswich Little Theatre.

With the kindest regards,

*Jim*

## Vale Patricia “Patti” Pratt: 7 June 1941 – 3 June 2020

Patricia King first acted for Ipswich Little Theatre in 1961, appearing on the Town Hall stage as Tweeny in *The Admirable Crichton*. Following her marriage in 1964 to Alex Pratt (son of our beloved Jean), she



changed her name, but continued to act for us frequently. Over all her almost 60 years of involvement she appeared in 28 major productions (five of which were seasons of One Act Plays), seven Festival plays, four Daytimers productions, one Theatre Restaurant and three ten minute plays. She was a very accomplished actress, winning a number of acting awards, and a delight to work with. I had the pleasure of working with her on a dozen productions, usually as director, but several times as co-player.

Not only did Patti tread the boards, she took on numerous administrative roles. For many years, she was a member of the Administrative Committee and Selection Committee. She served as Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Treasurer, Librarian, Festival Secretary and Director of Junior Theatre. In recognition of her contribution to ILT, she was appointed a Life Member in 1991.

Patti left school after Junior and became an office worker for several organisations. After the birth of their two children, she and Alex retrained as teachers. She went on to obtain a diploma, and then bachelor and master's degrees. She taught St Edmund's, St Mary's and TAFE and was very highly regarded in her profession.

But above all, she was our friend. Because of the restrictions in place, we were unable to attend her funeral on 11 June at St Mary's. But we plan to hold a commemorative function once restrictions permit. (When Alex died in 2016, we farewelled him at the Incinerator.) We will miss her company and her vibrant personality.

Patti is survived by her daughter Melissa and son Robert and her three grandchildren. We extend our sympathy to them, to Eleanor (nee Pratt) and Clive Beale and the extended Pratt and King families.



As No 1 in *Nina in Numberland*, her last stage role.

## Vale Yvonne Hawkins

Yvonne Sigston joined the theatre as a very young girl in 1950 and was in a number of plays till her marriage in 1954. Unfortunately, in keeping with the times, her husband didn't entirely approve of his wife performing on stage, so her acting career came to an abrupt end. We can think of no living person who performed for us at an earlier date.

In later years, she became one of our most regular patrons, almost never missing a play. She was an invited guest to our big 50 years at the Incinerator Theatre celebration last November. Her daughter Gilda Davies also performed for us and came to our plays whenever she was conveniently visiting her mother from her home in Western Australia. Yvonne was a beautiful lady.

## Get Well Sandie

Unfortunately, Sandie Henwood had a fall and broke her wrist. This has meant that she is unable to drive and so is doubly confined to barracks. She claims to be on the mend and we certainly hope she will be fully recovered soon.

In the meantime, Jim Orr is carrying out her cleaning duties, but with extra load of the Covid-safe requirements which require regularly sanitising even though there is no use.

Jim will be particularly keen that Sandie recovers soon.

## Zooming into Another Meeting

During this unprecedented lock-down – have you noticed the absolutely unprecedented use of the word “unprecedented”? – the management of the Society has been in the hands of the Executive, who have been valiantly trying to map out a road forward. They realised that one essential element of any plan is for all our members and sub-groups to be working to the same agenda. Accordingly, the Executive decided to hold another Admin meeting, conveniently on the usual date of the second Tuesday in the month.

The meeting, of course, could not be held face to face, so Shane Mallory, by request, hosted another Zoom meeting attended by almost all members from the comfort of their homes.

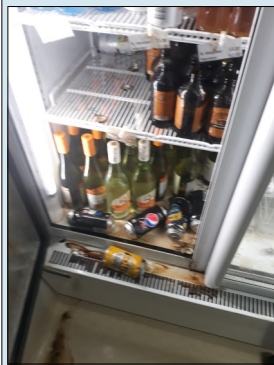
Although not as good as the normal face-to-face meeting, this get-together at least established the contacts so sorely missed and greatly aided two-way communication.

## A Totally Unexpected Consequence

As the result of the close-down and the complete lack of use of our bar refrigerators, they suffered extreme cooling. One day when Bar Manager Jim Orr (doesn't he

wear a lot of hats?) arrived at the site he discovered that a large amount of the stock (fortunately mostly soft drinks) had exploded and spread their contents over a vast area. It took him hours to clean up the sorry mess.

No doubt he regretted taking on the role!



### Note:

While we are in close-down mode, our entertainment licence is suspended, so no drink sales are permitted.

But even though virtually no one uses our toilets, we still have to pay the fee for each of our eight pedestals.

## From the Archives

The close-down has given us the opportunity to undertake a number of maintenance tasks and also to get back to the archives. Readers may be interested to compare our modern organisation with the one ILT was before it moved to the Incinerator in 1969. So here are some extracts from minutes of those years which show how things have changed. In those days there were no sub-groups (other than Junior Theatre which was started in 1968), so meetings were short, with the minutes running to no more than two pages of hand writing.

The minutes of Admin in May 1967 list among the attendees Mesdames A. Pratt and C. Beale. By the next year, the new secretary (Mrs I. Pullar) allowed these ladies to use their own names of Patti and Eleanor....

In March 1967 a major item for discussion was whether the price of programmes should be raised from 5 cents to 10 cents. It was agreed to try the higher charge but “if not successful, charge the usual price.”

The minutes of August 1969 records the quotation for the works required to convert the Incinerator to a theatre were:

Removal of hoppers etc	\$402.80
Toilets (inside)	\$193.20
Entrance	\$206.50

This is somewhat different from the \$400,000 we spent simply to put a roof over the courtyard. But it must be remembered that at the time we only had around \$1500 in the bank!



## DIARY DATES

### Programme for 2021

Selection Committee is now faced with the complex task of trying to formulate a programme for 2021 without knowing what the regulations will allow by the start of the new year. What will be the 'new normal'?

The obvious starting point will be to investigate which, if any, of the plays advertised for the 2020 season can be rolled over. To that end each of those directors and casts are giving consideration to their availability.

Daytimers, S-Troupe and Young Theatricals and Tourific Troupers are coming to the conclusion, that short of a vaccine or a miracle, they will not be active on the Theatre precinct for the rest of 2020. So, all we can do is to advise our patrons to

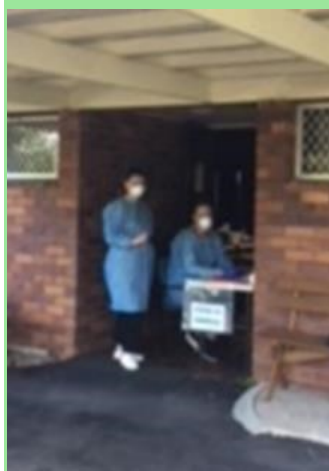
**WATCH THIS SPACE!**

**We will be back!**


**TO BE ADVISED**

### COVID Testing

During the current restrictions when we are unable to make use of our own facilities, the Jean Pratt Building's amenities are being put to good use as a COVID Testing Site. We have made the building



and the drive available to QML for this purpose. When people are directed to undertake a screening test for the virus, they simply drive to our premises, proceed on the circular drive to be tested by the staff on duty. The process takes only a few seconds.

The station is doing good business. One day last week 58 tests were carried out.

This is our contribution to the National containment strategy.

#### 2019 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE CONTACT DETAILS

President	Jim Orr	0402 377 258
Vice President	Ann Collyer	3288 7053/ 0400 997 365
Past President	David Austin	3812 9431 / 0413 636 249
Secretary	Helen Pullar	3281 4437/0400 801 443
Treasurer	Chris Greenhill	0427 977 007

#### CONTACT DETAILS FOR OTHER IMPORTANT POSITIONS

Front of House Management Coordinator	Courtney Murrin	0457 734 433
Subscription Secretary	Di Johnston	0447 191 954
Group Liaison/ Publicity Co-Coordination	Robyn Flashman/ Robyn Harm	3812 3450/ 3812 3516
Building Bookings	Desley Cronon	3288 8754 / 0435 309 352
Junior Theatre/Little Players	Deirdre Lowe	0409 202 380
Young Theatricals	Kyle Breese Samantha Johnson	0423 278 833 0415 453 952
S-Troupe	Di Johnston	0447 191 954
Daytime Theatre Troupe	Kay McAllan	5464 3965/0439 305 658
Tourific Troupers	Helen Pullar or Jane Sheppard	H 3281 4437 .J 5464 5363
Theatre number	NB: Only during rehearsals or meetings	3812 2389