



1 Opening Doors

Ignition Theatre Training and Display Workshop

Vocational education courses in Melbourne and Broome providing arts experiences with employment outcomes for people with a disability.

Open Art ACT

A combined mental health and arts program at a Canberra community centre offering creative activities, community connections and new directions.

Northern Exposure

A multi-faceted arts development program creating new opportunities for improving health, wellbeing and economic independence in remote Indigenous communities in the Pilbara, Western Australia.

The Adelaide Festival Centre

Structural and policy changes to a major venue to improve access for all.

Ignition Theatre Training and Display Workshop

New experiences – dramatic outcomes

Introduction

I want to create an environment where people with disabilities are challenged to create cutting-edge work, where the expectations are high and there is competition to get in the course because it is for people who are talented and passionate about theatre.

KATRINE GABB, TEACHER/COORDINATOR,
IGNITION THEATRE TRAINING

Not only was [the Fish project] an outstanding visual art project, but the collaborative approach between agencies, the incredible social outcomes, dramatic personal development from the participants and great group spirit and bonding was evident.

DENISE WALKER AND LOREL WOODHOUSE,
DISPLAY WORKSHOP

Opening doors to education and employment is vital to increasing the involvement of people with a disability in the arts, but is perhaps more easily said than done. Across all areas of vocational education and employment, people with a disability are poorly represented.

Two examples of taking up these issues in relation to the arts sector are courses for young people with a disability at Technical and Further Education (TAFE) campuses – Ignition Theatre Training in Melbourne, and Display Workshop in Broome.

Ignition – the course

My mum asked me what I wanted to do and I said acting and she rang around.

EMILY ARDLEY, STUDENT

Ignition Theatre Training is Australia's first formal theatre training course for people with intellectual disabilities. It is provided jointly by the Drama department and the Work Education Unit at the North Melbourne Institute of TAFE (NMIT). Together these departments give students access to professional theatre-makers, theatre industry opportunities and equipment of a performance industry standard, as well as specialist support in relation to work and disability issues. The Ignition course is taught by experienced theatre practitioners and teachers who have a long-term, ongoing involvement in developing performance work with people with a disability.

Ignition began in 2002 with three students. In 2003, the group grew to eight. In order to give students individual attention, course capacity is 13 and in 2004 all places were filled.

The course runs three days a week from 10 am to 4 pm over a period of two years. Students study production, performance and theory. Production subjects cover lighting, stage management, costume and set design, while performance subjects include movement, voice, yoga and theatre-making. Theory subjects cover



Actors from left to right: Cameron Stanley, Michael Buxton, Kirk Best and Kerryyn Poke in *The Lounge*, November 2003, directed by Katrine Gabb at the Mechanics Performing Arts Centre. Photograph by Robert van der Helm.



Actors from left to right: Aaron Gaunt and Erin Pocervina in *The Lounge*, November 2003, directed by Katrine Gabb at the Mechanics Performing Arts Centre. Photograph by Robert van der Helm.



Jimmy Vouthas and Kerryn Poke performing at the Victoria Market in November 2002. Performance directed by Kate Sulan. Photograph by Brenden James.



Cameron Stanley, Michael Buxton and Erin Pocervina in *The Lounge*, November 2003, directed by Katrine Gabb at the Mechanic Performing Arts Centre. Photograph by Robert van der Helm.

Australian and international theatre in addition to theatre and disability. These subjects are chosen from the Entertainment Training Package but will be eventually replaced by others drawn from the new Performing Arts Training Package which has national accreditation.

The methods used by the teachers engage multiple learning styles and abilities, taking into account that many students do not read and some do not use spoken language as their main form of communication. For example, the theory subjects introduce important Australian plays by using images and videos to create their historical and geographical contexts and by workshoping segments of the plays themselves, while stage management classes use role-plays to enable students to experience decision-making in the position of stage manager.

An integral part of Ignition performance training is the creation of one minor and one major piece of theatre per year. Students are allowed sufficient time to explore the material, and different methods of devising dramatic scenarios are used to encourage them to fully participate in the development process. In their major work for 2003, *The Lounge*, students worked closely with Katrine Gabb, a teacher and director, as well as a professional musician and singer, costume designer, lighting designer and artist. Through improvisation, they decided on

material and developed dialogue which Katrine edited and shaped to create the final piece. The students also designed the set and costumes, wrote song lyrics and sang live as part of their performance. Students performed three shows of *The Lounge* at the Mechanics Institute Performing Arts Centre.

Staff assess the students' work through direct observation and demonstration. They conduct review meetings with students and their families or support workers twice a year. On graduation, students receive an NMIT-accredited certificate. When the subjects from the Performing Arts Training package are in place, they will receive a nationally recognised Certificate I.

The best thing about the course has been:

- **Working on *The Lounge* and finding my singing voice.**
- **Meeting people and doing Club Wild stuff.**
- **Meeting new friends and lighting the stage.**
- **Working with other students.**
- **Different odd jobs – we are a high-tech crew, just like a theatre company.**

ERIN POCERVINA, MATTHEW WARD, RUTH BEN DANAN, AARON GAUNT AND DAVID BAKER, STUDENTS

Ignition – access and opportunities

To be eligible for Ignition, students must be funded by a relevant government program. Each student must also have someone who can help them to get to and from places as required by the course.

The entry process consists of a group-based audition and individual interviews with an Ignition staff member. Successful applicants do not need to have reading skills or fine mobility skills but they must demonstrate their ability to understand instructions, a capacity to work alone or in a group and a passion for performing arts.

I'd be in a rap crew

Working in a theatre overseas

A movie star or something

JAMES CHEE, JIMMY VOUTHAS AND MATTHEW WARD, STUDENTS

During the course, work placements at Club Wild and the Art of Difference Festival link students with potential performance opportunities in the future. One of Ignition's first graduates has become a performer with Rawcus, a theatre company of actors with disabilities. Another is a volunteer assistant at Ignition. One of the aims of staff is to explore greater integration with NMIT's Drama department as a way of widening students' future options and encouraging greater understanding of what they have to offer the world of theatre.



Denise Walker, Art and Design Lecturer, Display Workshop. Photograph by Sally Alexander.



Students from the Display Workshop 2000 preparing the Fish in its early stages. Students welded and moulded wire over an old car into the shape of the fish. Photograph by Lorel Woodhouse.

Display Workshop – the course

I remember watching Denise work with a student with an intellectual disability and vision impairment ... She sat with him working through the colours, explaining how red or blue might feel to him ... Another man was working at the Cable Beach Resort as the confidential paper shredder. Denise asked him to ask his employer if he could take the paper he had shredded to use on the fish program. To think how important it was for him to get the paper shredding to the next class – he could hardly wait.

LOREL WOODHOUSE, KIMBERLEY PERSONNEL

Display Workshop is a training program in design, model-making, workshop practice and painting. It is the result of a partnership between Kimberley Personnel, an open employment service, and the Kimberley College of TAFE in Broome. It was first established in 2000 to offer training to Kimberley Personnel service users who could not meet the entry criteria for courses at TAFE. Up to nine places are offered for Kimberley Personnel clients and disadvantaged youth. Course fees are paid by the students or programs which support them. The course content is based around an accredited training program. Skills in making papier-mâché, sawing, painting, welding, nailing, gluing, printing, tie-dyeing, sewing and construction are learnt alongside team-building and timekeeping.

The course also offers students an introduction to post-secondary learning and opportunities for socialisation and wider community participation.

An important part of the course is designing and making work for a large public project. The design and construction of a float, the Fish, which won the award for the best float in the 2000 Shinju Matsuri Festival parade, provided the course and its vision with an extremely successful beginning.

It was an amazing project to coordinate and be involved in, seeing the students develop both socially and artistically while working within very tight time constraints. It was truly an inspiration to watch.

DENISE WALKER, ART AND DESIGN LECTURER

The Shinju Matsuri Festival (Festival of the Pearl) in Broome is a ten-day cultural festival celebration held around the August full moon. It features a wide range of cultural activities and one of its biggest events is a float parade through the streets of Broome. The Fish has continued to embody the spirit of the collaboration between the employment agency and the College of TAFE, as well as the achievements of the students. It was on the road for four years, appearing at festivals and conferences from Broome to Perth.



The completed Fish on display at the China Town Games. Photograph by Lorel Woodhouse.



The Kimberley College of TAFE (Broome Campus) float in the Shinju Festival float parade, August 2004. The float took six months for Display Workshop students to make, and won them first prize in the Schools and Universities section. Photograph by Sally Alexander.

Display Workshop – opportunities and outcomes

- **I think it was really great do the welding construction with Mr Eddy Logan and Mr Ron. Eddy Logan and Ron help put the papper masha and I did most of painting.**
- **Got to make lots of friends and we won.**

STUDENTS' WRITTEN FEEDBACK

Three important outcomes for the students in Display Workshop are enrolment in further TAFE courses, participation in community activities and recognition of skills by employers.

Some students have taken up one or more of the TAFE courses available to Kimberley Personnel service users: general education for adults, computing, business studies, and welding and construction. In these courses they participate in integrated classes but are given extra individual assistance. Some have gained the confidence to get involved in a local community activity that meets their interest, such as surf-lifesaving, Speedway and Lionesses. A number have found employment on the basis of their accredited skills in areas such as car detailing, laundry, housekeeping and welding.

Alongside these broader outcomes, less quantifiable outcomes which are specific to individual students are equally important to Kimberley Personnel and the College.

For Lorel Woodhouse, the desire of one participant to stay with the Fish and finish the whole two-kilometre parade, outweighing his dislike of walking anywhere on any occasion, was as significant as the acquisition of employable skills.

Conclusion

In different ways, Ignition Theatre Training and Display Workshop highlight the extent to which vocational education and training is a gateway to employment and satisfying community participation for people with a disability.

In the case of Display Workshop, the partnership between the Kimberley College of TAFE and Kimberley Personnel means that there is a dedicated agency to support students in finding vocational activities. In fact, the role of Display Workshop is to develop the work-related skills and self-confidence of the agency's clients.

Ignition is in a different position. As it is driven from within NMIT, post-training resources are not within the course's ambit. In this context, one approach to create more options for graduates is closer integration with the general Drama course at NMIT. Such a step would encourage wider awareness of what Ignition students bring to theatre and increase their opportunities to practise and contribute to the artform.

Open Art ACT

Creative combinations

Introduction

If you have an activity or something constructive you enjoy – you swim, write, do yoga – how much less would your life be without those things? With activities comes friends and a sense of belonging – these things are important to everyone.

RICHARD LEE, OPEN ART COORDINATOR

You can go to Belconnen Community Centre to play basketball, learn about parenting, participate in migrant English classes, or get involved in activities for young people. You can also enrol in the Leisure Program and learn badminton, go to yoga classes, join a book club or go to one of several arts courses for around \$30 a term. If you are interested in the arts courses, you could choose creative sculpture, drama, painting, music jam sessions, working with clay or creative writing.

If you have a mental illness, the Leisure Program offers a supportive environment for participating in a community activity. The arts classes, run under the banner of Open Art ACT, are an opportunity to get to know people who are interested in new skills and the experience of creating something for an audience.

**Feeling accepted and receiving positive feedback
Sharing ways of thinking – fun and important**

CLASS FEEDBACK



Artworks on display as part of the *Flowers of Hope and Vision* exhibition at the Canberra Museum and Gallery during Mental Health Week, October 2003. Each painting is a collective effort. Photograph by Richard Lee.



Open Art participant David Wilson builds up layers of colour in his paintings using a dot technique. In this photograph, he is working on an initial design in flat colour based on the flowers in front of him. Photograph by Richard Lee.

The program

In the ACT, where there are no local councils, Open Art ACT is the equivalent of a local government program. It is managed by Belconnen Community Service (BCS), one of several regional community organisations supported by the ACT Government to provide a broad range of services at the local level. These services include child care, family support, disability care and aged care. BCS also manages the Belconnen Community Centre where a number of its programs, including Open Art ACT, are located.

Open Art ACT came into being as Belconnen Open Art in 1998 after the closure of Watson Hostel, a 24-hour supported accommodation facility which had employed an arts officer. Staff at BCS saw the value of bringing the arts officer position under their wing as an addition to their community programs.

Open Art employs a full-time coordinator with professional arts training, plus several professional artists as sessional tutors. Its activities have expanded since it was established. Classes covering 11 different artforms are now held at both Tuggeranong Arts Centre and Belconnen Community Centre. They run over ten-week terms with four terms a year.

About 120 people participate in the program, and 70% of participants have a mental illness. In the environment of learning and making things together, the

classes enable people with mental illness to spend time with members of the wider community, and for the community to gain an understanding of what it means to live with mental illness.

More recently, outreach activities in several supported accommodation and hospital settings have been established. These became part of the program when Open Art took on classes previously supported by Mental Health ACT through the Psychiatric Rehabilitation Service (PRS).

Open Art sees the connection between these classes in mental health contexts and the community classes at Belconnen and Tuggeranong as opening an important path between institutional and community support. A metaphor Open Art uses for developing this relationship is 'diving in and bringing people on board'.

Once 'on board', Open Art encourages participants to see themselves as individuals and artists, rather than people with particular mental health issues.

**To be silly serious, sensual
Vain, varied, variant
Bored, bumptious, biting
Perpetually passionate
Wow!!!**

CLASS FEEDBACK

One result of this inclusive approach has been Open Art's recognition and success at the ACT Health Promotion Awards 2005, where it was awarded



Sculptures outside at the Canberra Museum and Gallery as part of the *Flowers of Hope and Vision* exhibition during Mental Health Week, October 2003. Students carved their sculptures out of hebel block (aerated concrete). The tutor, Renald Navily, encouraged the class to combine their efforts to form these totem poles. Several sculptors have gone on to further study and continue to pursue art as a career. Photograph by Richard Lee.

both the Excellence in Mental Health Promotion Award and the Overall Award of Excellence in Health Promotion.

Public outcomes

It was good to have work accepted by a prestigious gallery.

LARS NISSEN, PARTICIPANT

Seeking mainstream opportunities through exhibiting and publishing is an increasingly important thread in Open Art's activities. Participants were delighted by the interest shown by Canberra's Chapman Gallery as a result of their 2003 exhibition *Flowers of Hope and Vision*. The program coordinator's role now includes establishing a sale price for participants' work, as well as ensuring the provision of quality art materials.

Flowers of Hope and Vision highlighted the direction the program is now taking towards greater mainstream visibility. It was held at the Canberra Museum and Gallery during Mental Health Week 2003 and developed as an exhibition rather than a simple showcase. It highlighted the artistic and social intentions of Open Art by featuring individual works as distinct parts of a collaborative whole.

The exhibition included a number of the artforms represented in the classes and was particularly noticeable for its imaginative presentation of creative writing and drama. One of the creative writing participants had the idea of

framing the poems and stories so that they had the status of exhibits. He negotiated with a local framing business and took responsibility for the completion of the necessary work. This was an effective creative step and one of significant personal development.

Consciousness

So the stream flows on and on past green fields of encouragement and hope through swamps of despair **so the stream flows** through mists of uncertainty and sudden regions of clarity and bright sunshine green slopes hope abounds **so the stream flows** past doors to rooms not looked into and opportunities not recognised losses acknowledged griefs put aside **so the stream flows** looking for that place that time when it will all fall into place **so the stream flows** but the journey itself is an experience not to be missed leave it behind no going back **so the stream flows ...**

ELEANOR WAIGHT, *FLOWERS OF HOPE AND VISION 2*

Pathways

I learned to read more critically, to dare new styles, to do exercises that I would never have done otherwise. It has encouraged me enough to keep going in this direction.

CLASS FEEDBACK

One of the great strengths – and challenges – of Open Art ACT is that it is about both mental health *and* the arts. It does not only involve one or the other. Its activities are an opportunity for people with mental illness to engage in wider social interaction *and* for them to develop artform skills.

Creating work in a group environment, seeing your own progress and achievements and contributing work to exhibitions are important steps out of the closed world of mental illness. They also form a basis for volunteer work, study and employment in arts-related areas. Two participants have become tutors in the program, several have gone on to art courses at the Canberra Institute of Technology and a sculpture class participant has a mentorship with an established artist.

Sculpture has added tremendously to my life – opened up a world I'd never dreamt of being part of. The sculpture course brought out something I never knew I possessed. I can't draw a line but give me a chisel and I can create a form I want.

LARS NISSEN, PARTICIPANT

Lars Nissen enrolled in Open Art classes after seeing an exhibition. He started with bonsai and writing, then moved on to sculpture where he was instantly at home.

Jeffrey Frith, a sculptor with experience in a wide variety of materials, saw the



An abstract painting (acrylic) by Keca, depicting the growth of plants (particularly flowers). Keca also went on to study art at the Canberra Institute of Technology and graduated successfully. Photograph by Richard Lee.



Lars Nissen, *Looking Glass*, 30 x 30 x 15 cm, Hebel block carving

website Lars had created about his hebel* sculpture and contacted him for tips about working with hebel. Lars jokingly suggested an apprenticeship to learn about other materials in exchange for a website for Jeffrey (www.home.netspeed.com.au/frith/Art/). A mentoring relationship and friendship grew from there.

Conclusion

Open Art ACT combines a variety of interests and this involves a delicate balancing act. Managing the balance between mental health issues and art interests has been easier since Open Art was funded as a community rather than mental health program – the community funding framework has more flexibility. As a result, staff have been able to more easily shape the program in relation to both community and mental health interests.

With the increasing emphasis on exhibition work, another issue that has emerged is maintaining a balance between organising classes and putting on exhibitions. For the coordinator, organising an exhibition involves additional administration and contact with participants outside class time. Creating an exhibition steering committee made up of participants is being investigated as a way of sharing the workload and responsibility, as well as giving interested participants valuable administrative experience in line with the program's aims.

A third issue of balance concerns the purpose of participating in Open Art. For some participants, it may be an important step in new directions. Open Art's creation of firmer links into existing community organisations such as the Canberra Institute of Technology, artist-run studios and writing groups is a great development for them. For others, participating in a supportive group, making friends and engaging in a pleasurable and rewarding creative activity is a huge step in itself. Although the current funding climate favours 'moving on', ongoing group participation is also meaningful and productive.

I read the signs on the road with
interest
I must stop, give way and turn left
with care
And the lights teased me with
come-ons and put-offs
Until in the chaos of my thoughts I
saw something massive
An elephant that told me it was all
all right

DENIS ORAM, FROM 'ELEPHANT'

* Hebel block is aerated concrete often used as a building insulation material. It is an ideal learning material as it is cheap, easy to sculpt with hand-tools, and can be formed more quickly than other materials.

Northern Exposure

Working with the whole community

Introduction

Making baskets provides the possibility of extra income for the women of Parnngurr ... My role is to further extend the diversity and creative design aspects of basket-making and extend the women's knowledge of art markets and copyright law. They are aware that the market seeks individuality, something special and different which can be recognised as a Parnngurr basket.

JAN TEAGLE KAPETAS, DADAA WA ARTS DEVELOPMENT WORKER, PARNNGURR, 2004

In November 2003, an exhibition of baskets, works on paper and video productions from the Western Desert Martu* communities of Parnngurr, Punmu and Kunawarritji was held at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Art. The exhibition also launched the *Carer's Book*.

The artists and contributors to the book included people with disabilities acquired through injury, people with intellectual disabilities and mental illness, the elderly living with health issues endemic amongst older Indigenous people in remote areas, and carers for people with disabilities. It was the first time many of them had made items for sale or display.

The exhibition and the book were some of the first public outcomes Northern Exposure, DADAA WA's program with Indigenous people in the remote east Pilbara desert region of Western Australia.



Janice Nixon collecting grass. Photograph by Sandra Nixon.



Nancy Taylor gathering grass. Photograph by Sandra Nixon.

Background

The Parnngurr, Punmu and Kunawarritji communities were established in the mid-1980s when Martu people who had been settled in Jigalong, Warralong and other places decided to return to their traditional country. With the passage of time the need for these communities to develop some form of economic sustainability became increasingly pressing. The Elders who established the communities were ageing. Healthy people in their middle years often moved away to seek work and other ways of living. There were no opportunities for educational development for young people beyond primary school and little in the way of satisfying activities available. The communities maintained a no-alcohol policy but were concerned by the growing number of instances of petrol-sniffing.

In 2001, a team of DADAA WA arts workers and health professionals conducted a study of health and cultural issues in the three communities for the WA Department of Family and Community Services. They found that 'the health services, aged care services, rehabilitation, mental health services and disability services are very sporadic, not culturally appropriate and, in some cases, non-existent' (David Doyle and Val Shiel, DADAA WA report, 2001, pp. 8-9). They also noted that these conditions were part of an extremely fragile economic environment.

In response to the findings, DADAA WA proposed a program that would focus on the arts – traditional and contemporary – as the means of increasing the capacity of people to participate in and contribute to their communities.

Northern Exposure began in mid-2002 with the support of the Rio Tinto WA Future Fund. The success of the initial two-year program led to its current extension to five years.

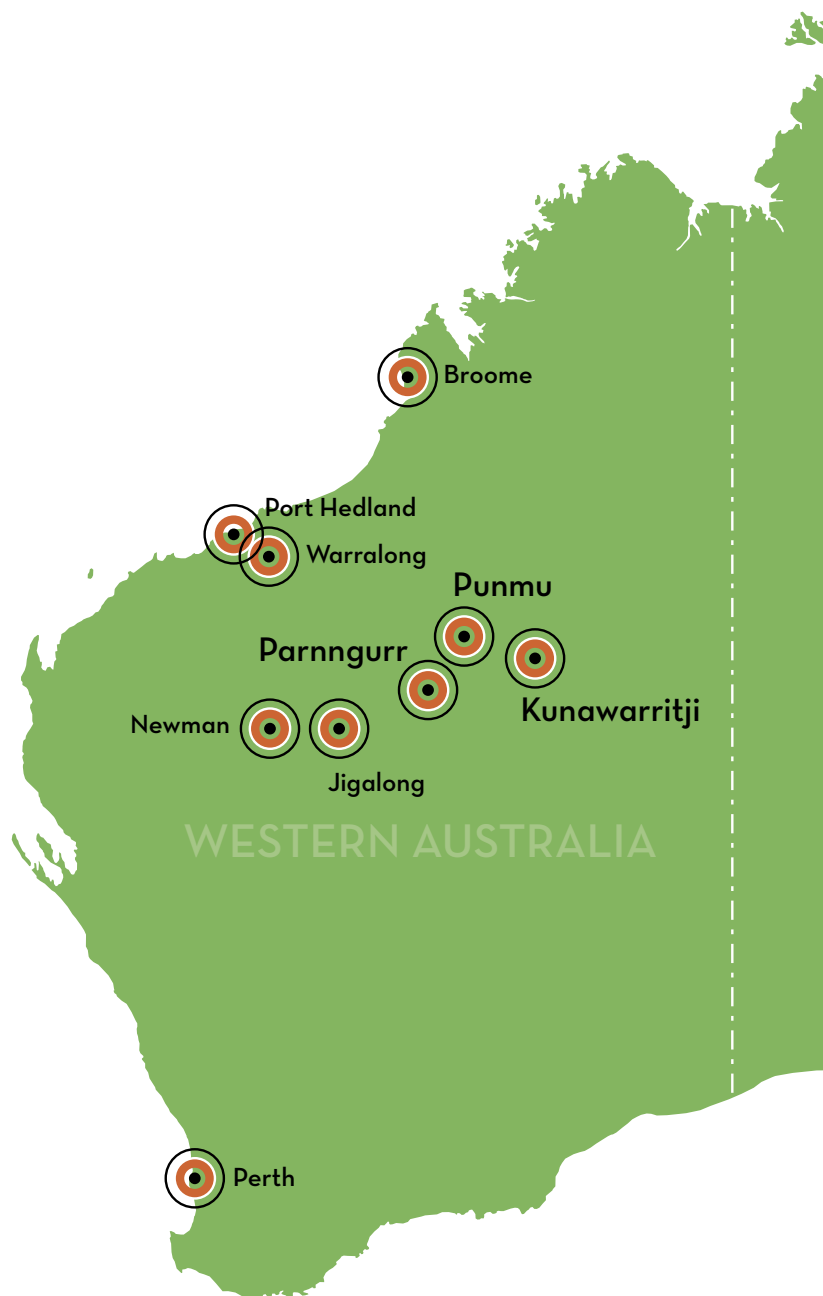
Program and methodology

There are about 150 people who all know each other, the history of generations, where families come from and who is related to whom and which family members are unable to speak to each other.

DADAA WA REPORT, DESCRIBING PARNNGURR, p. 3

The interweaving of individual and social health, Martu culture and contemporary arts activity in response to community interests and concerns is central to Northern Exposure. It requires a culturally sensitive and flexible program capable of working with the seasonal activities of Martu culture. The program also has to take into account the issues of climate, geographical distance, lack of basic infrastructure – including arts space – and budgetary constraints.

Workshops in specific arts activities as well as in arts management and promotion



The Punmu, Parnngurr and Kunawarritji communities are in the Pilbara region of Western Australia



Djagaru Bilabu begins a basket, coiling a combination of spinifex, ti-tree and wildflowers. Photograph by Nalda Searles.



Open weave spinifex basket with bush turkey feathers made by Darlene Kadabil. Darlene explores new forms, colour combinations and materials with each new basket. Photograph by Nalda Searles.

are provided on the basis of four- to six-week residencies. The communities suggest the appropriate timing for these (although they are often subject to sudden change for cultural reasons) and the art forms that are of interest to community members.

Workshop activities – some convened in conjunction with Arts WA – include painting, dance, music and songwriting, basketry, printmaking, textiles, oral history and book-making, arts law and copyright, arts business, marketing and promotion, community-based arts archiving and recordkeeping, and arts space management training. DADAA WA provides exhibition opportunities through its FREIGHT Gallery in Fremantle, and assists with promotion and marketing.

Many of the arts development workers employed by the program have multi-disciplinary experience, with qualifications in the arts, training, anthropology, Indigenous community development and/or occupational therapy. It is important that they have knowledge of cultural issues, culturally sensitive learning techniques and health and disability issues.

The program is managed by a coordinator, based at DADAA WA in Fremantle. Ongoing consultation takes place through regular feedback visits to the communities. The coordinator also spends extended time as an arts development worker in

each community to maintain an in-depth awareness of local issues and concerns. In an environment where Martu Wangka is the first language of all the communities, consultation is facilitated by ensuring that local translators act as interpreters at community meetings.

Outcomes and developments

Northern Exposure's work has led to the development of employment and income-generating activities. It has also encouraged the involvement of people with disabilities, addressed issues concerning the inclusion of people with disabilities in community activities and through this enabled significant developments in community wellbeing.

Mitchell, a senior man, did two paintings/drawings and it was so good for the young people to see him in there. After he left, they went over to his painting and were talking about it in detail.

NALDA SEARLES, DADAA WA ARTS DEVELOPMENT WORKER, 2002-03

The achievements of the Northern Exposure program have been economic, health-related and community-based. These three areas are interlinked, and developments in one area can reflect positive outcomes into the others. Northern Exposure is an example of an integrated program that addresses the interconnectedness of all three.



Parnngurr basket artists (L to R): Janice Nixon, Thelma Judson, Namaru Bidu and Djagaru Biljabu. Photograph by Rodney Glick.



Djagaru Biljabu beginning a coolamon-shaped basket. Photograph by Nalda Searles.



Painters at Parnngurr. Photograph by Jan Teagle Kapetas.



Thelma Judson weaving in the late afternoon.
Photograph by Nalda Searles.

Economic viability

The tangible achievements of the Northern Exposure program during 2002-03 included a large quantity of spinifex and wool baskets; spinifex and fibre jewellery and wearable art; a number of paintings on canvas; training resources, including four videos with themes of petrol-sniffing and bush tucker and the *Carers' Book*; musical scores and songs; and a community music picnic. These outcomes highlighted the importance of traditional art and enabled the development of artistic, business and life skills. They also brought community members together, supported discussion of health issues and increased community confidence.

Because one of the most pressing issues for the communities is economic independence, in 2004-05 the Northern Exposure program developed arts activities with employment and income-generating possibilities. Several artforms have emerged as important to the three communities, including basketry, painting and, more recently, photography. A digital photography program in Parnngurr has yielded work which is being considered for exhibition at the Art Gallery of Western Australia.

In 2004, five Parnngurr artists held a sell-out exhibition of their paintings at Port Hedland. Others have won local art awards and sold paintings to the National Gallery of Australia.

Basketry in particular has become an important activity for many women in the communities. They are able to sell their baskets through the Port Hedland Courthouse Art Gallery, locally to visitors and tourists, and occasionally at markets in Newman and Broome. Baskets have been purchased for the permanent collection of the Art Gallery of Western Australia. The income generated from the sale of baskets is extremely important to the women who make them. It is also a community activity, as the artists share their ideas and techniques.

Start off, that one ... at morning, finish ... late afternoon. Long time.

Sometimes all day. If not hunting, makim all day. Start morning. Making, making ... Nothing to do. I make basket ... Sometimes run out of grass. Run out of wool. Small ones. But I like to make big one. Like to put feather, lotta colour. Make good. Big one.

DJAGURU BILABU, PARNNGURR
BASKET-MAKER

Djaguru is one of 14 women making baskets with spinifex, wools, feathers, wildflowers and seed pods with support from Jan Teagle Kapetas in the 2005 Northern Exposure program. The role of baskets in Parnngurr economic and social life reflects traditional Martu culture as well as the importance of actual income. Baskets are often exchanged part-way

through the making. Ownership lies with the one who finishes the basket. Purchase price is paid to the owner, who will then share her earnings with whoever asks for financial help.

Community development and health

The 2002-03 program used the idea of 'buddy training' to create a disability awareness training program based on arts and cultural activities. The artwork generated through the program provided a strong basis for the development of inclusive Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) activities.

An important example of community development and health outcomes resulting from Northern Exposure activities concerns responses to petrol-sniffing. The community narratives and videos have helped people see alternatives to punitive measures. The program is now looking at projects with young men that are underpinned by cultural practices such as corroboree and artifact-making.

As well as changes in attitudes to petrol-sniffing, there has been a reduction in the shame of intellectual disability and mental illness. For one young man who experiences mental illness, Northern Exposure was the first program he had participated in. His father, who had previously kept him out of activities for

fear of him being 'crazy in the head', saw that art could give his son something dignified and valuable to do.

The way forward

The experience of working with traditional and contemporary arts in the context of the Northern Exposure project has motivated the communities to take up the idea of arts industry development. There are plans for dedicated art spaces at Parnngurr, Punmu and Kunawarritji. Artists who are ageing and/or have a disability are included and supported in these new plans. At Punmu, the school will develop a program of multimedia with DADAA WA's support. People with disabilities will also be part of this program.

The way women in Parnngurr have taken up basket-making highlights the incorporation of traditional lifestyle with economic enterprise. It also demonstrates the value of having something to do that is stimulating and engaging, and how it can improve the health and general wellbeing of communities.

Conclusion

Northern Exposure 2002-03 was developed in response to a gap in government service delivery.

The 2004-07 program continues this work in partnership with the Rio Tinto WA Future Fund, and with the support of government agencies.

The 'whole of community' approach is based on a view of community health that recognises the particular relationships between health, culture, social and economic structures and history in remote Indigenous communities. In practice, it enables attention to specific, identified issues such as support for carers and petrol-sniffing, as well as to community protocols and broader community interests and directions. In a small community it also makes practical sense to develop an inclusive program that supports and encourages everyone.

An important part of the program is working with the way community members understand and manage disability in their own under-resourced environment. Northern Exposure's approach is to offer resources that are culturally appropriate and address local community concerns.

* Martu, and the language Martu Wangka, are collective names for different language groups and the common language which developed as a result of the forced resettlement of Warnman, Putijarra and Kartujarra people.

Adelaide Festival Centre

Access for all

Introduction

I went through many festivals sitting with my head turned to 45 degrees in order to see the stage – that’s after you’d negotiated your way in – and what really peeved me off was that for this awful seat that you had to get up and down to let people through, you paid the highest price in the whole place. Now people using wheelchairs have improved sightlines and cheaper prices, and they are treated as valuable customers rather than awkward inconveniences.

RICHARD LLEWELLYN, DISABILITY ADVOCATE

When it was completed in 1977, the Adelaide Festival Centre (‘the Centre’) was the first cultural centre in Australia. Its combination of theatre, gallery, restaurant and outdoor spaces was an exciting, forward-thinking initiative for the arts. But if you were a wheelchair user, like Richard Llewellyn, it was less than straightforward to participate in what the new centre offered. And if you weren’t one of the initiated, the front door wasn’t exactly obvious.

In 2002, \$23 million was allocated for capital works to upgrade the centre, \$2 million of which was earmarked to address these access problems. When the new-look Centre opened in October 2003, it included much-improved access for everyone. Underlying this achievement was a revolution in dealing with disability



The Centre's main driveway and ramp. Photograph by Adrian Cowell.



Richard and Becky Llewellyn. Photograph by Cathy Llewellyn.

access issues, as well as persistence and commitment on the part of everyone involved.

Richard Llewellyn, long-time Adelaide Festival Centre patron and advocate for people with a disability and their rights to access, died in May 2004. He played a leading role in recreating the Centre as an accessible venue and was particularly instrumental in the achievement of early initiatives. Together with his partner, Becky Llewellyn, he also facilitated Disability Awareness Training for all staff, and both were employed by the architects of the 2002 building works to provide expert access advice. The Llewellyns were also members of the Centre's Patrons Reference Group. Richard's professional input and personal commitment were critical to the access development process and what it has achieved.

Creating an accessible venue – principles and practices

The Disability Action Plan

Following the introduction of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992, the Centre developed and implemented a Disability Action Plan. The first stage of the plan involved wide-ranging consultation with disability groups and the general public. Twenty-one of the 113 strategies identified during the consultation had been put in place by 1999. The 2002 capital works program addressed a further 63 strategies.

ACCESS CHANGES AT THE AFC

- **Development is a great improvement, love the openness of the plaza – so much more impressive than before.**
- **Great to see people with disabilities catered for.**

COMMENTS ON THE AFC OPEN DAY, 2003

Specific changes made by the AFC to improve access include:

- additional lifts and ramps
- unisex toilets in three different locations
- improved lighting
- more accessible parking spaces that can be pre-booked, and more drop-off points in both the car park and at main entrances
- wheelchair-accessible spaces in the Dunstan Playhouse, both levels of the Space Theatre and Her Majesty's Theatre, plus an entire row in the Festival Theatre
- hearing augmentation loops in large areas of each theatre venue
- audio description at selected performances for people with visual impairments; familiarisation sessions to explore the set and meet the actors on stage also provided by the State Theatre Company prior to selected performances
- guide dogs welcomed at all AFC performances
- 'companion tickets' for people who are accompanied by a companion, and arrangements for companions to be seated next to people using wheelchairs
- daily access reports based on information collected at ticket booking points, informing front-of-house staff of special requirements or mobility restrictions prior to each performance
- the formation of, and regular consultation with, the Patrons Reference Group
- Disability Awareness Training for all staff
- venue-hirers made aware of their responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act; all contracts include equity requirements regarding seating and pricing of tickets
- regular events like the Cabaret Festival featuring performers with disabilities
- wheelchairs available for loan
- signage in braille provided at an appropriate height for people using wheelchairs
- a teletypewriter phone in the foyer for people with hearing impairments.

Further information about access to the Centre is available from the AFC.

The fact that the Centre integrated the Disability Action Plan into its strategic plans for works, from the management to programming level, is a particularly important factor in its successful implementation over the long term.

The Centre's approach to access is based on three main principles:

- universal access
- staff training and development
- working with the community.

Universal access

Universal access is a concept that addresses access for people with a disability as part of the principle of 'access for all'. In design terms, it aims to create products, shape environments and manage services so that they can be used effectively by everyone. Ramps, for instance, are not concealed, unattractive extras for the sole use of those with a mobility impairment. General features like entrances are inviting to a diverse range of people. Information is made available in multiple formats. Services are managed to cater for specific as well as broad needs and must be capable of flexibility.

It's not just about wheelchairs – it's about people with prams, people on their own, people whose first language is not English ... making sure everybody feels safe and welcome.

KATE BRENNAN, AFC CEO

As a principal entertainment venue for Adelaide used by major promoters, the Centre actively works to ensure that its venue-hirers consider accessibility. Adelaide Festival Centre hiring contacts draw the attention of hirers to issues of equity in seating and ticket pricing. Hirers are also made aware of their responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act.

Adelaide Festival Centre programs

The Centre's own program includes the very successful Adelaide Cabaret Festival, which highlights fun and easygoing participation. Confident that it can cater for people with any type of disability or other requirement, the Festival has brought new, younger and diverse audiences to the Centre.

Another Adelaide Festival Centre program initiative is the Overture Program, which works with not-for-profit organisations to support the attendance of minority ethnic groups, refugees and low-income earners, as well as people with disabilities. Free and low-cost programming includes cheaper tickets to the Adelaide Cabaret Festival and events for disadvantaged schools.

Staff training and development

Staff training and development was central to getting everyone on board in the first stages of implementing the Centre's Disability Action Plan, and continues to be integral to the Centre's accessibility.

For me it is great to know that the work I do benefits people in the community who might not have previously had the opportunity to experience the arts. I get a lot of satisfaction from knowing that everyone has access to the arts activities that most people just take for granted.

JUANITA BECK, FRONT-OF-HOUSE SUPERVISOR

For Richard Llewellyn, it was the leadership, support and commitment of AFC staff that made the Centre's access achievements possible. An important aspect of such strong staff involvement was the provision of Disability Awareness Training for all staff, including technicians and managers. As a result, the responsibility for access is distributed across all areas – no specific person is carrying it for the organisation and individual staff members have the confidence to manage and respond positively to a variety of situations.

It takes quite a long time for some people with disabilities to gain the courage to try something new. I feel safe in the knowledge that if I persuade someone to visit the Festival Centre ... they will be treated with dignity and respect and their needs [will be] largely met by friendly, knowledgeable staff.

PAM QUICK, COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH WORKER



The Festival Centre before the capital works.



Adelaide Festival Centre after capital works completed. Photograph by Randy Larcombe.

Working with the community

The Patrons Reference Group meets four times a year and plays an important role in working with the community. It consists of people from disability sectors and carers. The Group's focus is how the inclusion of people with disabilities is progressing in all aspects of the Centre's operations. Presentation of information in an accessible way is central to working with the community. As a result of suggestions by the Patrons Reference Group, several brochures marketing the Centre's access features have been developed for all BASS ticketing outlets. These use international access symbols rather than a corporate style, and focus on welcoming people to discover what the Centre has to offer.

Feedback on access issues is collected from both the Patrons Reference Group and from the Centre's customer service feedback system. The Centre encourages patrons to communicate both their good and bad experiences. Staff are trained in valuing negative feedback and complaints, which in turn provides a basis for improving the quality of each patron's experience. Customer service ratings continue to improve, with satisfaction ratings at around 9 out of 10.

Conclusion

The Adelaide Festival Centre's success in redeveloping its venue for all forms of access highlights the importance of

support from senior management, a strong relationship with the disability community and the involvement of all staff. Comments from people who participated in the process also indicate that having supporters within the organisation is critical to the success of community advocacy. Wider government support for access, including funding for addressing access issues, is indispensable.

Changing an existing venue to improve access involves changes to buildings as well as to policy. For a large venue, putting access policy into practice also includes dealing with and educating the organisations who hire and use the venues. Ensuring that access needs are met also requires the active support of people with a disability – by identifying their specific requirements when booking tickets, offering suggestions for improvement and by letting staff know when things are, or are not, working well.

The Adelaide Festival Centre is monitoring the impact of its access strategies. To date, statistics show that the number of patrons who identify as having a disability is increasing and they are attending a wide range of events. The Centre, with the support of the Patrons Reference Group, is currently exploring further ideas for creating a more welcoming and manageable environment for people with disabilities and others who have felt disenfranchised from the arts.