

arts • access • excellence
conference 2010

March 25 & 26 Powerhouse Museum Sydney



Presented by Accessible Arts www.aarts.net.au

Paper Name:	Whose Business Is It Anyway? Cross Sectoral Partnerships	
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Day of presentation:	Friday 26 March 2010	Program session no: 5e

Presented by Arts Victoria (Department of Premier and Cabinet), Disability Services (Department of Human Services), Office for Disability (Department of Planning and Community Development)

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION
(Judith Sears, Arts Victoria)
Powerpoint Slide 1

Welcome to **Whose Business Is It.**

As people who live and work on the lands of the Kulin Nation, we would like to acknowledge and pay our respect to the Elders of the Eora People, the custodians of the country on which we meet today and through them all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

I'm Judith Sears from Arts Victoria, and this is Criena Gehrke from Office for Disability and Eilis Hughes from Disability Services. We will introduce ourselves and our Departments more fully in a moment, first up I will just outline our intended approach to this presentation.

To present on the Victorian partnership that has developed over the past 4 years we need to begin by identifying what our business is. Criena will present information on the organic nature of our partnership – how and why it evolved, followed by Eilis discussing what we believe have been the key components and approaches – the mechanisms, resources and networks that have contributed to what we believe is a successful ongoing partnership / collaboration.

We will then each share with you our individual perspectives on how the partnership has impacted on our different branches / departments – a little showcase of our successful initiatives and achievements.

Criena will then address the question – Where to from here – focusing on the outcomes of our Arts and Disability Research Project with Eilis wrapping up with a whole of government overview – Whose Business is it really?

If we haven't overwhelmed you by then – you are more than welcome to pose any questions you may have to us at that point.

We decided we should start with the art so I'll now hand over to Eilis.

FOR ARTS SAKE

(Eilis Hughes, Disability Services)

DVD “For Arts Sake” excerpt from Weave Movement Theatre

(copies available from Eilis Hughes, eilis.hughes@dhs.vic.gov.au)

In keeping with the theme of Excellence in the Arts, we want to start our session by sharing with you some of the excellent art in Victoria. Sometimes when we get very caught up in the business side of our work, we stop and ask “Where’s the art?”. Our session is going to focus very much on the business of partnerships, but we want to be mindful that the purpose of our partnership is to foster excellent art with people with a disability. So here’s the art...

We are going to show you an excerpt from the **For Arts Sake DVD** which we will talk about briefly later. This excerpt features Weave Movement Theatre and their partnership with Moreland City Council.

WHO ARE WE?

Powerpoint Slide 2

Eilis Hughes, Senior Project Officer, Community Building, Disability Services Division

My name is Eilis Hughes and I am from the Disability Services Division in the Department of Human Services. I belong to the Community Development team there.

Disability Services Division has responsibility for providing and funding disability support services for people with intellectual, physical, sensory and neurological disabilities.

Why is arts and disability our business?

In line with the State Disability Plan the Division is making significant efforts to reorient service provision to become more self-directed by people with a

disability. The Division supports people to make individual choices about how they use their funded supports. For some people, this involves support to pursue the arts as a career or as recreation.

In order for this to happen for people, communities need to be skilled and confident to be inclusive. The Community Building Program, which I work on, works with local communities to achieve this.

Within the Community Building Program, we have found that not only is access **to** the arts important, but so is access **through** the arts. Our program has been involved in efforts to make arts experiences more accessible, but has also used the arts to engage, inform or challenge local communities to understand the experiences of people with a disability.

Judith Sears, Policy and Research, Arts Victoria

I've been at Arts Victoria for nearly 10 years in a few different roles, most recently as Policy Officer. Arts Victoria came into being with the Arts Victoria Act 1972 and is currently a branch of the Department of Premier and Cabinet. As the state government body responsible for the arts, Arts Victoria supports a diverse mix of arts and cultural activity across the state. We provide policy advice to the government on all things arts related; offer funding and opportunities for Victorian artists to further their careers; work to safeguard the state's cultural facilities and collections; and strive to ensure that all Victorians have opportunities to get creative and enjoy Victoria's vibrant cultural life.

Why is arts and disability our business?

Art is our business. However, ensuring access to the arts for people with disabilities as artists, arts workers and audiences has not always been identified a specific priority for our organisation. This has changed in the last few years and Criena will identify some of the factors influencing change very shortly - such as the policy context and burgeoning arts industry.

Creative Capacity + Arts for all Victorians has been Victoria's Arts Policy since 2003 and with the creation of its own outward looking Disability Action Plan now imbedded in its business and planning cycles, Arts Victoria is committed to change and increased access for all, taking a leadership role and encouraging all arts organisations to address access for all Victorians.

Criena Gehrke, Senior Project Officer, Office for Disability

I'm Criena Gehrke from Office for Disability in the Department of Planning and Community Development. The Office for Disability was established in 2006 with the "mandate to put disability on the agenda across the Victorian government."

So, apart from having a mandate....what does the Office for Disability DO?

Well, we provide policy advice to the Minister for Community Services, we support the Victorian Disability Advisory Council, we have a unit that works with statutory bodies and non-government organisations to develop disability action plans and we undertake a range of targeted strategic initiatives that have included the development of education resource kits, accessible housing guidelines, community awareness projects and of course arts and disability.

Why is arts and disability our business?

Now the interesting thing for Office for Disability is that when asked the question “Whose business is arts and disability in Victoria?” Our response would be not ours. Unlike Arts Victoria, art is not our core business.....we do not provide any funding programs to the arts.....and we are not a service provider like Disability Services.

But our business is to improve outcomes for people with a disability and to deal with barriers to participation in our communities. Our business is to support other departments to become more inclusive, it is our business to engage the unusual suspects across government who have a role to play in increasing the cultural participation of people with a disability in Victoria. There is also no doubt that art is a powerful and effective way of engaging people in discussions around a broad range of issues effecting people with a disability. That is why Office for Disability made art our business.

So now that you know a bit more about us, it is my job to take you back to the very beginning and talk about how this partnership evolved.

EVOLUTION OF THE CROSS-GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP (Crena Gehrke, Office for Disability) Powerpoint Slides 3-12

- The partnership has evolved organically over the past five years
- There is a shared vision
- The policy context in Victoria supports a cross-government approach and social inclusion agenda (A Fairer Victoria, Creative Capacity +, State Disability Plan, Disability Act 2006)
- The partnership began in a landscape where arts and disability was burgeoning (Back to Back , rawcus, Art of Difference, Arts Access Victoria, Ignition Theatre Training etc)
- Arts Victoria and Disability Services had already been investing in arts and disability and had a track record and commitment to cultural participation of people with a disability
- The need for a mechanism that linked government and non-government agencies was identified early on and the Arts and Disability Access Network was established
- The partnership provides opportunities to share knowledge, resources, network, gather information and have strategic impact across each of the portfolio areas

WHAT ARE THE INGREDIENTS THAT MAKE OUR PARTNERSHIP SUCCESSFUL – mechanisms, resources and networks (Eilis Hughes, Disability Services)
Powerpoint Slide 13

Having a shared vision

While our departments all have different responsibilities and perspectives, it was obvious to us at officer level that we had an area of shared vision, which was to increase the cultural participation of people with a disability in Victoria. Agreeing on this common goal while acknowledging the significant differences between our departments has enabled us to work together respectfully and productively. At times this has required some thought and skill in communicating within our own departments in articulating how that vision might be achieved and what our particular department's role might be.

Arts and Disability Access Network
Powerpoint Slide 14

From a somewhat informal genesis, we formalised the Arts and Disability Access Network (ADAN) with a Terms of Reference, which documented the shared vision and the way we would operate. Over time we reviewed the Terms of Reference and membership in order to ensure we were connecting as broadly as possible across the arts and disability sector in Victoria. We identified the gaps in the network and identified potential new members in a targeted way.

Regular meetings of Secretariat (us) to discuss issues raised at ADAN

The Secretariat is comprised of officers from the three core government departments. We meet regularly as required between ADAN meetings to respond to issues raised at ADAN, to plan for future ADAN meetings and to work on specific projects, such as research or events. We also stay in regular communication by phone and email to ensure we all stay informed about issues across arts and disability.

Big Picture thinking

As well as talking about the nitty gritty of access and the arts and specific projects, the ADAN has taken a Big Picture approach to thinking and talking. For example, ADAN has spent time at recent meetings examining where work in Victoria intersects with the National Arts and Disability Strategy. We have also made efforts to connect with government representatives from other jurisdictions to progress work across Australia.

Engagement Forums and Initiatives

The ADAN does not work as a committee of government officers working in isolation from our stakeholders. We are actively involved in supporting and running engagement forums and initiatives such as:

- A “Futures Forum” at the Art of Difference Symposium, where a broad range of state, national and international stakeholders were invited to discuss the future of arts and disability in Victoria, facilitated by ABC journalist Ali Moore.
- The Cinema Futura Project which was devised to speak directly with the cinema industry. As part of The Other Film Festival, the Cinema Futura Project focused on cinema experiences for audiences with a range of access requirements. We worked together to develop an industry engagement strategy that included audits of cinemas, the preparation of a discussion paper, and an industry forum. The engagement strategy paid off with the forum being well-attended by the major cinemas as well as by the Melbourne International Film Festival.

Embedding the partnership

Ensuring the partnership goes beyond personalities by getting executive buy-in, embedding in work plans, promoting the work within our departments.

Developing an evidence base

Committing to joint research to establish an evidence base to inform our direction.

HOW THE PARTNERSHIP HAS MADE AN IMPACT ON OUR OWN ORGANISATIONS – Showcasing initiatives and outcomes

Disability Services - For Arts Sake DVD (Eilis Hughes, Disability Services)

Within the Disability Services Division funded Community Building Program, there were a range of MetroAccess and RuralAccess workers who had been using the arts as a way of engaging with local communities, as well as supporting local artists with a disability to have opportunities similar to other local artists. They wanted to produce a resource to showcase their work and to give tips to other community builders.

The ADAN secretariat agreed to support this project with funding from Disability Services Division and Office for Disability, and with promotion by Arts Victoria.

The DVD – which you have seen a small part of this afternoon, and which we have copies of here to give away – showcases four projects from metropolitan and regional Victoria, and includes snapshots of a range of other projects. It comes with a resource booklet on Arts, Disability and Cultural Development. It has been used to promote the Community Building Program within the disability sector.

Aside from the DVD, the partnership has also had benefits for Disability Services Division in providing the Division with an avenue for communicating with arts

organisations about the new approach to self-directed support services and more awareness in the arts sector about the extent of the Disability Services investment in the arts.

Arts Victoria – Disability Action Plans (Judith Sears, Arts Victoria)

I just want to illustrate how this cross government collaboration is not restricted to the specific research partners making this presentation here today. I will quickly focus on our expanded partnership with Office for Disability but a similar beneficial partnership is occurring with Department of Human Services.

The Office for Disability has a Disability Action Plan unit which was conducting DAP training for the States 33 largest statutory authorities - 4 of which were Arts Agencies eg Museums Victoria, State Library Victoria, Arts Centre and National Gallery of Victoria. Office for Disability accepted my request to attend and all arts agencies were grouped together on the same table so we were able to discuss similar issues and possible strategies. Since then the other arts agencies have completed the training provided by Office for Disability and soon all will have disability action plans in place.

I could talk for an hour myself on the importance of DAPs as a mechanism for systematic change within the arts sector, with DAPs being identified as a strategy for increasing access in the Victorian Arts and Disability Literature Review and is a Priority Project for the National Arts and Disability Strategy.

However, the partnership has been key to all achievements in this area. Through the original partnership, discussions occurred across Office for Disability, contacts were increased and Arts Victoria has now established relationships across Office for Disability.

Successful outcomes from this extended partnership have included:

- DAP training for Arts Agencies and Arts Victoria (resulting in external looking dynamic DAPs)
- Arts Victoria now hosts the Arts portfolio DAP Network with membership including all agencies and Office for Disability
- Excellent advice and support in the disability area (from Arts Victoria's DAP to feedback on initiatives such as the online podcasts)
- Support and advice regarding the roll out of DAP training across the arts sector in Victoria
- Assistance with disability initiatives eg training smaller arts organisations
- And we are now in discussions regarding a possible partnership into the future, specifically around disability action plan training for smaller arts organisations.
- Raised awareness of disability and the need for increased access in the arts sector

**Office for Disability – Arts and Disability Research Project
(Criena Gehrke, Office for Disability)**

Without doubt the Victorian Arts and Disability Research Project has been a major outcome for us and I will talk about that in a moment.

However there have also been a myriad of small and equally important outcomes for Office for Disability. In line with our ‘mandate’, we measure our success by the influence we are having on (and the support we are offering to) other organisations particularly government agencies. It has been fantastic to see the improvement in the disability action plans produced by statutory arts organisations in Victoria which includes the biggies such as The Arts Centre, National Gallery of Victoria and of course Arts Victoria – this is largely due to the excellent work of the DAP team at Office for Disability. My position sitting in Office for Disability also means that cultural participation and the power of art is constantly on the radar within the office and this has flowed into other areas of our work, for example with the DiVine website which is an online resource and community hosted by Office for Disability. DiVine includes a section on arts and culture. (<http://www.divine.vic.gov.au/>)

But what about that research.....

**PICTURE THIS: ARTS AND DISABILITY RESEARCH PROJECT
Powerpoint Slide 15**

In 2008, Office for Disability with our glorious partners realised we needed to find out more about what was happening in the Victorian arts and disability sector (when we talk about the arts and disability sector in this project we mean, arts and disability, disability, arts, disability artswe believe in covering all bases).

There were a number of reasons for the project:

- 1 We needed an evidence base to support our own work and to strengthen our case when we were talking to other government departments
- 2 The peak bodies and non-government folk on the Arts and Disability Access Network were screaming out for some research to support their arguments for increased funding and resources
- 3 We didn't want to re-invent the wheel, so we wanted to know what strategies had been tried both in Australia and internationally
- 4 We needed some way to identify priorities and work out where we could have the most impact

- 5 We could guess what the issues were (and for the most part we were pretty spot on) but we needed to really find out by talking to artists and audiences with a disability, the arts community, disability service providers, peak bodies and others

So, we developed a broad research question.

How can participation in the arts for people with a disability as artists and as audience members be increased?

The project has three stages:

- A literature review, analysis and report
- A community consultation and report
- And the third stage which will be to use the findings of the report to develop a cross government approach to increasing access to the arts

So, what did we find out?

Broadly speaking all the key findings could be bundled under four themes:

1 Community Awareness and Attitudinal Change

Attitudinal barriers were mentioned time and time again. This included negative attitudes towards people with a disability as both artists and audience members. It was also felt that art created by people with a disability was not highly valued by general audience, the arts sector and sometimes families and carers. The need for audience development strategies was seen as vital to break through this barrier.

Disability Awareness training was identified as the single most effective way of changing attitudes within organisations but it did come with a disclaimer – it works best when there is leadership and commitment at the Executive level.

2 Policy, legislation and compliance

Legislation was seen as having had a positive impact on physical access to many arts venues in Victoria. However there still seems to be an ongoing issue with the expense of retrofitting older venues and design triumphing over access when it comes to brand spanking new cultural facilities.

There was a lot of discussion on the role of government and legislation in increasing access. The introduction of mandatory disability access requirements for recipients of government arts funding was a popular suggestion but not universally supported.

Disability Action Plans were seen as a tool for changing the culture of organisations and increasing access to the arts. For those of you not from Victoria, the Disability Act 2006 prescribes that all statutory authorities have a Disability Action Plan and this has had a direct impact on our large cultural organisations as I mentioned before.

3 Employment and education

This is probably one of the biggest ones. Emerging and established artists with a disability are desperate for professional development, mentoring, residencies and audiences. They also want to be able to access professional networks.

Interestingly, targeted funding for artists with a disability was a popular suggestion but not universally supported as a strategy in Victoria. The most common strategy suggested was the introduction in mainstream arts organisations of benchmarks or quotas.

4 Capacity building and sustainability

When it comes down to it, this is the clincher. The reports identify the need to build capacity and support sustainable, long-term outcomes for people with a disability as artists, artworkers, audience members and within their communities.

The issues are wide-ranging including

- the role peak bodies play in supporting sector development
- government funding models (both arts and disability) that aren't conducive to the continued growth of artists with a disability and the arts and disability sector
- the need for more time for the creative process and more accessible venues in which to create work
- And a more uniform approach across government (we hear you!)

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

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We will be reading the reports closely and Office for Disability, Arts Victoria and Disability Services will together develop an approach to increasing access to the arts for people with a disability in Victoria. We will also find ways of linking with the National Arts and Disability Strategy which has more than a passing synergy with the findings of these reports.

And as we move into the next phase we will continue to ask the big question WHOSE BUSINESS IS IT? It is our business but the research tells us it is also the business of other government departments including education, employment and transport. Their copies of the reports are in the mail.

CONCLUSION
(Eilis Hughes, Disability Services)

Each of our departments believes in increasing the cultural participation of people with a disability, but we come at this from very different angles. Individually, our departments could not achieve this outcome. But together, this partnership between three very different departments is working towards building capacity in Victoria that leads to more opportunities for people with a disability to work as artists and artswokers, participate within communities, attend performances and galleries, and to try something new.