

ACCESSIBLE ARTS ANNUAL REPORT 2009



OVERVIEW



The inclusion of people with disability in the arts continues to grow and to be recognised by an expanding number of organisations and individuals. Significantly, the release of the *National Arts and Disability Strategy* by the Cultural Ministers Council provides a timely framework from which to draw support and to guide future development.

A number of our projects have entered a phase of consolidation and growth and it is gratifying that our work received a highly commended at the Australian Human Rights Awards in the Community (Organisation) category.

For much of the year, resources have been targeted towards the second Arts Activated National Conference, with its theme 'Arts - Access - Excellence' enhancing the reputation of Arts and Disability.

The second residency for an artist with a disability in partnership with Bundanon was awarded to Daniel Kojta; age restriction was eliminated for AART.BOXX artists; the state-wide consultations were completed resulting in the *Speak Up: Arts and Disability Key Priorities* report and regional community plans disseminated to stakeholders.

Strengthening the Arts and Disability sectors to enable people with disability to participate in the arts is key to sustainability. Accessible Arts enhanced the Disability Awareness Training program, expanded the festivals program, provided in-depth assistance to several key arts organisations and maintained strong partnerships with ADHC through the *Don't DISmyABILITY* campaign. The scoping study conducted in Western Sydney promises to provide lasting connections between arts centres and disability organisations in Western Sydney.

An arts and disability culture can only develop by fostering the practice of individuals. AART.BOXX, the Western Sydney Open Program, the Accessible Dance class and the Hip Hop group are all examples of programs aimed at developing the creative abilities of people with disability and showcasing those abilities.

The establishment of the Arts Advisory Service, the growth of the Tutors Directory, our participation on various committees, the development of teaching resources and the Companion Card industry forum has all been part of our service to the sector.

Accessible Arts financial position has remained reasonably steady during the tough economic times of 2009 returning a surplus of \$67,957. The continuation of the global economic crisis has been reflected in the drop in income from philanthropic grants and donations during the year. The appointment of a Development Officer to implement a fundraising strategy and broaden relationships with the philanthropic and corporate sectors is a progression for the organisation.

After another very busy year, one notably characterised by an increasingly strategic focus, our thanks to Arts NSW and ADHC for their continued support. The achievements were made possible by the dedication of the team of staff and volunteers at Accessible Arts and the ongoing commitment of Directors who give of their valuable time and expertise to guide the organisation.

The Staff and Board of Accessible Arts look forward to another year of further enhancing the lives of those with disability through fostering inclusive practices in the arts.

Maryanne Ireland, Chair
Sancha Donald, CEO

Front Cover:

Clarrice Collien, *In Summer*, AART.BOXX 09.

Opposite page, left:

Sancha Donald and Hon. Cathy Branson QC, Australian Human Rights Commission President, Australian Human Rights Awards 2009.

Opposite page, right:

Kevin Meagher, *Off The Edge*, Chrissie Cotter Gallery, Camperdown NSW, July 09.



REWARDING EXCELLENCE

Australian Human Rights Award High Commendation: The Hon. Cathy Branson QC, Australian Human Rights Commission President, awarded Accessible Arts a Highly Commended certificate at the 2009 Australian Human Rights Awards. One of five organisations shortlisted in the Community (Organisation) category, the certificate recognises the quality and efficacy of work achieved by Accessible Arts to promote the cultural rights of people with disability.

Arts Activated National Conference: The theme 'Arts – Access – Excellence' was conceived for the second Arts Activated Conference and the call for papers attracted over 70 submissions including seven from overseas. A conference committee was established and a strong two-day program incorporating accessible film screenings and performance was developed. The Powerhouse Museum, Sydney was secured as a venue and the conference website was developed including an online registration facility.

Bundanon Residency: Western Sydney based new media artist, Daniel Kojta was awarded the Accessible Arts Bundanon Residency to be undertaken in April 2010. Twenty applications from NSW based artists with disability were received. The selection panel consisted of Bec Dean Associate Director, Performance Space, Julia Tsalis, Writer and Program Coordinator, NSW Writer's Centre, Rhonda Davis, Senior Curator, Macquarie University Gallery and Sarah-Jane Rennie, Accessible Arts Board member.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

AART.BOXX 09: In partnership with Mori Gallery, 23 emerging artists and collectives with disability were featured in Accessible Arts national survey exhibition. Works on paper, sculpture, spoken word and a cinematheque showcasing a series of short films were exhibited, attracting almost 500 visitors. Eight artists took part in the Auslan interpreted public program, *Conversations with Artists*, attended by over 100 people. An emerging arts worker with a disability coordinated this program as part of an informal paid mentorship with Accessible Arts. The project attracted Australia Council for the Arts Community Partnership funding for the first time.

Dance Initiatives: The transition of Accessible Dance classes to independent management occurred after six years of support from Accessible Arts and Sydney Dance Company.

In partnership with Restless Dance Theatre SA, a project to spearhead professional development in inclusive dance practice in NSW was established and targeted as an Arts Activated pre-conference event for 2010.

Australian Ceramic Triennale: A key role was adopted to connect ceramic artists with disability to opportunities to participate in the 12th Australian Ceramic Triennale, held at the National Art School in Sydney. Curators were assisted in identifying artists for inclusion in exhibitions and the paper *Accessing the Mainstream* was presented, focusing on strategies and examples for fostering mainstream ceramics opportunities for people with disability. The paper was published by the *Australian Journal of Ceramics*.

Western Sydney Open Program: Puppetry workshops initiated during 2008 became a successful inclusion in the Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre programming. Support in the management of open workshops for people with disability in performance and drama continued at the Hawkesbury Regional Gallery.

Hip Hop / First Flight Crew: In partnership with Powerhouse Youth Theatre, 12 young people with disability participated in music workshops with hip hop artist Morganics, leading to performance opportunities at youth week community events in Western Sydney. An ongoing hip hop group was established offering eight regular members skills development and opportunities in performance at community events and fundraisers including a prestigious fundraiser event for Down Syndrome NSW alongside celebrities Leo Sayer and Richard Wilkins.

InterACT School Holiday Workshop Program: The InterACT School Holiday Workshop Program was devised in partnership with Powerhouse Youth Theatre to enable Western Sydney arts centres to run more integrated school holiday programs. Running a series of one-off, free drama workshops developed relationships with support units at Western Sydney schools. A young artist with a disability was mentored to assist in delivering the workshops.



STRENGTHENING THE SECTOR

Don't DISmyABILITY: Continuing as the arts program partner for Ageing, Disability & Home Care, Department of Human Services NSW *Don't DISmyABILITY* campaign, funding to devolve a small number of grants was received. Ten grants were distributed across NSW, including regional and rural areas. Projects funded included those facilitated by professional arts workers and partnering arts and disability organisations. The small grants strengthened the quality and sustainability of arts projects leading to events in celebration of International Day of People with Disability on 3 December 2009. Nearly 85 per cent of events registered for the campaign were arts related, an increase of 20 per cent from 2008. Accessible Arts staff collectively attended over 20 arts events throughout NSW during the campaign.

Access to Festivals: The Access to Festivals Coordinator position was established, strengthening relationships with new and existing festivals to raise awareness of access at festivals across NSW. The Accessible Cinema stream at the Sydney Film Festival was launched by Ron McCallum AO Chair of UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The documentary *A Good Man*, director Safina Uberoi, opened the stream and went on to be awarded the Foxtel Australian Documentary Prize.

Rear Window Technology was trialed at Sydney Film Festival to deliver closed captioning to audience members. An industry forum brought together film festival organisers, disability organisations, advocates and government organisations to discuss the trial and other new access technologies. Media Access Australia, The Other Film Festival, Blind Citizens Australia, Self Help for the Hard of Hearing, Deafness Forum and the Department of Broadband, Communications & the Digit were engaged.

Sculpture by the Sea ran a pilot Touch Tour program offering four well-attended touch tours during the exhibition and receiving very positive response from audience members. Audience surveys were distributed at Sculpture by the Sea as well as at the Sydney Film Festival to inform future festivals.

Electrofringe: A successful proposal to participate at this annual festival of electronic arts and culture included an information session and an electronic music making workshop by *Tra La La Blip*, electronic artist collective from northern NSW, to highlight current accessible practice within the art form.

Arts Centre Initiative Western Sydney: Arts centres and local councils across Western Sydney were supported towards inclusive and accessible creative programs and practices. Ten arts organisations in Western Sydney received assistance with audience development, marketing to the disability sector and advice on inclusive programming.

Education and Training: A total of 208 participants attended Disability Awareness and Access training. Most of these participants were reached through customised delivery onsite at a range of arts and cultural institutions including the National Museum, MCA, Sydney Festival, and two regional galleries, Blacktown and Goulburn. Bankstown City Council secured a training session and promoted the course to local services and the general public, attracting participants from a range of organisations and providing an opportunity for the nurturing of strategic alliances and networking. Wagga Wagga City Council booked two sessions over two days providing a professional development opportunity for key staff from across the organisation and implementing a strong emphasis on an 'all of organisation' approach to improving access.

Two casual trainers, including one with a disability, were engaged to assist with meeting the growing demand for Disability Awareness and Access training. Positive feedback was received about the training they delivered in both metropolitan and regional areas.

“The work of Accessible Arts has been invaluable to the Museum in the preparation of its Disability Action Plan. When published, the Plan will offer a model to others striving to improve the standard of access at public venues throughout Australia.”

MICHAEL TIERNEY, EXECUTIVE OFFICER, PUBLIC PROGRAMS AND OPERATIONS, AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM



CONSULTING THE SECTOR

Australia Council for the Arts

Training Project: Funding was received to deliver training to the Australia Council for the Arts to support the endorsement of the Council’s Arts and Disability Action Plan 2008 – 2010.

A four phase training project was designed to assist the Council embed the key goals of the Action Plan across all aspects of the organisation. Nineteen staff members from across all art forms and areas of the organisation attended a one-day Disability Awareness and Access forum. Attendees were nominated Access Champions and strategies were developed to share knowledge throughout the organisation. The project will continue during 2010.

Accessible Music Pathways

‘AMP’: An online forum was established connecting a social network of 56 musicians as a consultative group and information hub for music in NSW. A key focus for this group included broadening access to training and professional opportunities for young musicians with disability in NSW and to inform the wider music community of gaps in provision.

‘Speak Up: Arts & Disability Priorities for NSW’: A comprehensive report was released identifying key findings, issues and solutions resulting from a three year consultation process with the Arts and Disability sectors throughout NSW. The report and regional community plans were distributed statewide and published online. Findings were also presented to the national consultation held by Regional Arts Australia highlighting the needs of people with disability in regional NSW.



Australian Museum Disability

Action Plan: Consultation with internal and external stakeholders and the development of a comprehensive three-year action plan addressing the needs of both patrons and staff with disability was delivered onsite. An evaluation of the outcome of the Disability Action Plan from 2002 was also undertaken.

Western Sydney Scoping Study:

Seventeen disability services across Western Sydney were engaged in a scoping study to determine their participation in the arts, and knowledge and use of arts centres in the region. Information gathered was presented to arts centres and local councils to communicate access issues, including barriers experienced by the disability sector.

Page 4, clockwise from left:

Helen Newman and Jared Younger, Murray Arts film mentorship project, *Don’t DISMyABILITY*, Albury Wodonga NSW, Dec 09.

Philip Rasmussen, First Flight Crew, Richard Wilkins and Dan Malfitana, First Flight Crew, ‘Comedy is King’ Down Syndrome NSW fundraiser, Sept 09.

Bruce Maguire, guided touch tour, *Sculpture by the Sea*, Bondi NSW 09.

Jane Pollard, Education & Training Manager, Disability Awareness & Access Training, Blacktown Arts Centre, March 09.

Page 5, above:

Jeffrey Tonge, Affiliate Manager, Companion Card, NDS at Companion Card Industry Forum, Sydney Opera House, May 09.

Sarah Jane Rennie, Accessible Arts Director, filmmakers Safina Uberoi, Genevieve Clay and Lester Bostock, Sydney Film Festival Accessible Cinema forum, June 09.



“Accessible Arts is a small organisation, but its knowledge base, commitment to changing attitudes to disability, and dedication to grassroots initiatives has been inspirational.”

SAFINA UBEROI, DIRECTOR AND PRODUCER OF THE DOCUMENTARY ‘A GOOD MAN’.

PROVIDING A SERVICE

Website: Unique visitors to the website increased by 33 percent from the previous year and the number of pages visited increased by 36 per cent. Web content included the promotion of over 150 accessible performances and other events; call outs; workshops; and conferences from the Arts and Disability sectors. An online presence of all AART.BOXX artists was developed with individual artists’ profile pages and an image gallery. Profiles of projects funded by *Don’t DISmyAbility* Small Grants were developed and published along with the Arts Activated National Conference program including speaker profiles and abstracts. Social networking sites, including Facebook and Twitter, increased the promotion of website content and informed the broader community locally, nationally and internationally.

Newsletter: Up to 1750 subscribers were reached monthly with this free electronic publication. Articles and information from all levels of the Arts and Disability sectors were produced and an artist with a disability was featured every month. Highlighting organisations and events that are taking the lead to improve access continued for the second year. Apprenticeship Training Program graduate David Doyle was engaged to produce a monthly audio version of the newsletter, distributed online and podcast on a number of sites across the web.

Public Relations: The public response to Accessible Arts projects continued to increase, as did audience attendance at yearly events and festivals, indicating the organisation’s increasing public profile across the arts, disability and community sectors. Social networking and publicity in mainstream print media and radio have informed a broad audience. High profile activities including the Accessible Arts Award as part of the Local Government and Shires Association’s Cultural Awards and a high commendation at the Australian Human Rights Awards highlighted the organisation across the state and on a national level.

Western Sydney Blog: Targeted information on inclusive arts activities across the region, information about opportunities, projects, funding, resources, local artists and a profile page for the First Flight Crew hip hop performance group was continuously developed and attracted a growing number of visits to the website.

VOLUNTEERS

A dedicated team of volunteers contributed to integral aspects of work achieved throughout 2009. Two volunteer photographers, Gemma Deavin and Kate Ryan worked to improve photographic documentation of Accessible Arts’ projects. Carlyne Gilbert, Peter Muller, Peter Nomchong, Liz Pemberton, Joy Stone, Julie Adam and Gunta Vucina all generously worked on a weekly basis in a variety of roles.

Above:

Krystal Keller, singer/songwriter and Colin Watson, Art Gallery of NSW, International Day of People with Disability, Dec 09.

Opposite page:

Christine Morrow, AART.BOXX exhibition opening, Oct 09.

OUR PEOPLE



BOARD

Maryanne Ireland,
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Chrissie Tucker,
Vice Chair

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Joshua Dowse,
Company Secretary

Suzanne Becker

Lisa Havillah

Dougie Herd

Sarah-Jane Rennie

COMMITTEES

AART.BOXX 09

Accessing the Arts Group (ATAG)

Audience Reference Group

STAFF

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Alison Richardson,
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Matt Stewart,
inter/Act Workshop Coordinator

Jennifer Teo,
Strategic Initiatives/ Web Coordinator

SUPPORTING PARTNERS

**Arts NSW, Department of
Communities NSW**

**Ageing, Disability and Home Care,
Department of Human Services
NSW**

**Department of Community
Services**

**Australia Council for the Arts
Perpetual Trustees**

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