



# Picture This

**Community consultation report and analysis, September 2009**

Increasing the cultural participation of people  
with a disability in Victoria



A Victorian Government initiative

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# Picture This

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Increasing the cultural participation of  
people with a disability in Victoria

**Community consultation report and analysis  
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## Acknowledgements

This community consultation report and analysis reflects the views of a range of stakeholders, with and without a disability, obtained at forums, focus groups and interviews conducted by the Cultural Development Network between May 2008 and February 2009.

All direct quotes are excerpts from transcripts from the community consultation and permission has been sought from key informants to be identified in this report. This report should be read in conjunction with **Picture This: Literature review and analysis** (DPCD, 2010). Together these reports provide a unique snapshot of arts and disability in Victoria and a springboard for future work.

**Picture This** was commissioned by the State Government of Victoria through the Office for Disability (Department of Planning and Community Development) in partnership with Arts Victoria (Department of Premier and Cabinet) and Disability Services Division (Department of Human Services).

Any views and recommendations contained in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the Victorian Government or indicate a commitment to a particular course of action.

Research for the report was undertaken by the Cultural Development Network between May 2008 and February 2009.

Thank you to all participants in the community consultation for their insights and expertise.

The Steering Group is also grateful for the assistance provided by the Arts and Disability Access Network.

### **Steering Group**

Office for Disability, Department of Planning and Community Development  
Arts Victoria, Department of Premier and Cabinet  
Disability Services Division, Department of Human Services

### **Community consultation research**

Cultural Development Network

### **Community consultation report and analysis**

Chris Brophy

## Victorian Government Project Partners

### **Office for Disability, Department of Planning and Community Development**

[www.officefordisability.vic.gov.au](http://www.officefordisability.vic.gov.au)

The Victorian Office for Disability was established in the Department for Victorian Communities in 2006 (now the Department of Planning and Community Development) with a mandate to put disability on the agenda across the Victorian Government. The Office for Disability is the first of its kind for Victoria. Its role is:

- to provide expert policy advice and support to the Minister for Community Services to implement a coordinated whole-of-government response to disability
- to support the Victorian Disability Advisory Council according to sections 11–13 of the Victorian Disability Act 2006
- to support the development and implementation of disability action plans according to section 38 of the Disability Act 2006
- to manage programs and activities, such as community awareness projects, that support the aims of the Office for Disability.

### **Arts Victoria, Department of Premier and Cabinet**

[www.arts.vic.gov.au](http://www.arts.vic.gov.au)

Arts Victoria advises on and implements arts policy. It is charged with making the arts available and accessible to all Victorians and with supporting and developing Victoria's artists and creative industries. Arts Victoria encourages innovation and diversity, values Indigenous culture and believes the arts play a vital role in strengthening communities. Arts Victoria is a part of Victoria's Department of Premier and Cabinet and reports to the Victorian Minister for the Arts.

### **Disability Services Division, Department of Human Services**

[www.dhs.vic.gov.au/disability](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/disability)

Disability Services is a division of the Victorian Department of Human Services. The division aims to improve the quality of life for Victorians with a disability by encouraging supports that enhance independence, choice and community inclusion. The role of the division is to fund providers across the non-government sector to provide direct support and care for people in Victoria with an intellectual, physical, sensory or neurological disability, or an acquired brain injury. The division also provides some care and support services to people with a range of disabilities. These services and supports are governed by the provisions of the Victorian Disability Act 2006.

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# Executive Summary

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## Executive Summary

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### **We have to start saying, 'Excuse me, we make up 20% of the population. What the hell are you doing?'**

Artists with a disability focus group

Australians with a disability continue to have lower participation rates in the arts than other members of the community. In early 2008, to better understand this disparity and to inform future directions, the Victorian Government commissioned research into arts and disability in Victoria.

**Picture This: Increasing the cultural participation of people with a disability in Victoria** is a three stage arts and disability research project that explores the underlying research question:

### **How can participation in the arts for people with a disability be increased?**

A literature review and analysis report produced in Stage One of the project was used to inform this next stage of the project and frame a discussion paper that provided a starting point for the community consultations. For a more comprehensive snapshot of arts and disability in Victoria, this Stage Two report should be read in tandem with the Stage One literature review and analysis report.

## Methodology

This report provides an overview and analysis of the community consultation conducted across Victoria by the Cultural Development Network during stage two of the project. Completed between May and November 2008, the community consultation engaged a range of stakeholders both with and without a disability, and aimed to determine current arts and disability approaches, models and practices.

The community consultation employed two data collection strategies. The first was a series of interviews with 24 key informants selected for their expert knowledge, personal experience and professional roles in relation to arts and disability. The second was a series of eleven focus groups and forums – five in metropolitan Melbourne and six in regional Victoria (Ballarat, Morwell, Shepparton, Bendigo, Horsham and Warrnambool) with each focus group and forum targeting a particular section of the Victorian arts and disability sector.

## Key findings and emerging themes

The **Picture This community consultation and analysis** report examines factors affecting the cultural participation of people with a disability as audience members and artists as identified by respondents during the community consultation. It also outlines strategies that were seen as successfully increasing opportunities in the arts for people with a disability in Victoria and respondents' suggestions for the future.

The picture of arts and disability in Victoria is incomplete – largely due to the limitations and inconsistencies of quantitative data collected in Australia on cultural participation by people with a disability. However a snapshot of the arts and disability landscape in Victoria begins to emerge through the findings of this research report around four key themes:

1. Community awareness and attitudinal change
2. Policy, legislation and compliance
3. Employment and education
4. Capacity building and sustainability.

## **1. Community awareness and attitudinal change**

Attitudinal barriers were one of the most frequently discussed topics during the community consultation. Negative attitudes to the arts in general, disability arts in particular or to disability itself, were all seen to function as active discouragements to participation both as audience members and artists.

The gatekeeper phenomenon – where families, carers and disability support workers have limited knowledge or interest in the arts – was seen as limiting arts opportunities for people with a disability, particularly those with high support needs.

The low value assigned to disability arts by some segments of the arts and welfare industries and by the general public were considered to present barriers to the further development of the arts and disability sector. These negative attitudes also manifested as a lack of serious critical analysis of disability arts in the mainstream media.

The need for audience development strategies was considered essential to break down attitudinal barriers in the general community that lead to patronising attitudes about the quality of art created by people with a disability.

Disability awareness training for arts organisations was also identified as one of the most effective strategies to achieve attitudinal change and promote the value of arts participation for people with a disability. The need to assign a high organisational priority to disability awareness training by engaging at senior management and board level was emphasised during the community consultation.

## **2. Policy, legislation and compliance**

While Australian and Victorian anti-discrimination legislation has resulted in enormous improvements in physical access to many arts venues in Victoria, barriers still exist. The cost of retrofitting older arts buildings, together with the absence of incentives or mandatory requirements continues to create a barrier to further improvement. The reduction of disability access features in new arts venues when budget pressures occur was also seen as an ongoing barrier.

## Executive Summary

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A range of strategies were suggested to improve physical access including the development of arts industry standards and guidelines; gradual allocation of funds to cover the cost of modifications; temporary solutions as an interim measure; and employing people with a disability or access consultants to advise on building projects.

The limitations of the federal **Disability Discrimination Act 1992** (DDA) were also considered a barrier. Issues identified by respondents included:

- the reluctance of individuals to lodge complaints under the DDA due to the stress and cost of the complaints process
- the perception that the unjustifiable hardship provision of the DDA allowed many smaller arts venues to avoid improving their disability access
- the failure of arts funding bodies at both state and federal level to make funding to organisations dependent on adherence to disability legislation or access guidelines even though under the DDA it is illegal for government arts funding bodies to discriminate against people with a disability.

The introduction of mandatory disability access requirements for recipients of government arts funding was a popular suggestion, although not universally supported. A suggested alternative was for funding bodies to encourage improvements by providing disability checklists and guidelines to funding applicants.

Under the Victorian **Disability Act 2006**, statutory bodies are required to produce disability action plans (DAPs). Recent DAPs released by Victorian Government arts statutory bodies reveal a growing commitment to disability access and disability awareness in these organisations. There is currently no compulsion for non-government agencies funded by Arts Victoria to produce their own DAPs, however Arts Victoria has commenced working with funded arts companies to encourage the preparation of DAPs.

A ratings system to indicate the degree to which disability access has been improved through the achievement of goals within DAPs was suggested by some respondents.

As activity levels in the Victorian arts and disability sector have increased, the demand for training and professional development is exceeding supply particularly for training beyond entry level.

### 3. Employment and education

To develop necessary leadership and administrative skills within the arts and disability sector, regular conferences and professional workshops devoted to arts and disability was seen as important.

The most extensively discussed strategy to support the professional development of artists with a disability was mentoring for both individuals and arts and disability organisations. Other strategies included leadership training, internships, residencies and collaborations between disability arts and mainstream arts companies.

There was also a demand for more access to professional networks of industry peers, providing artists with a disability the opportunity to inform and challenge their own practice and potentially access new markets.

It was widely acknowledged during the community consultation that finding employment in the arts is challenging for all artists and arts workers. However due to the disadvantage directly attributed to disability (including lower education levels, limited capacity to pay for arts training, attitudinal barriers) the introduction of incentives or quotas to improve the employment prospects of people with a disability in the arts was seen to be warranted.

The most common strategy suggested was the introduction in mainstream arts organisations of employment quotas or benchmarks.

Many of the discussions in the report circle around the twin issues of capacity building and sustainability of arts and disability in Victoria.

#### **4. Capacity building and sustainability**

##### **Community Building**

At a community level, the Department of Human Services Community Building Program (MetroAccess, RuralAccess and deafaccess) was seen to have made a substantial contribution to improving access to the arts for people with a disability.

The creation of access officer positions in arts organisations was also considered to be a very effective strategy. The model adopted by City of Port Phillip – with an officer in the arts and cultural unit dedicated to increasing arts opportunities in the local community for people with a disability – was considered highly successful.

##### **Changing role of arts and disability peak bodies**

Peak arts and disability organisations were seen as key to increasing capacity. With the growth and maturation of the arts and disability sector, respondents expressed the need for Arts Access Victoria, Victoria's peak arts and disability body, to be more responsive to the changing environment. The expectation during the community consultation was that a peak body's focus should be on capacity building, professional development strategies and advocacy.

## Executive Summary

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### **Data collection**

Respondents also identified the lack of reliable, current and comparable Australian statistical data on participation and employment in the arts as a barrier to capacity building and sustainability in the sector. It was felt that reliable data would offer a more complete picture of arts participation by people with a disability and strengthen the case for increased resources. The need for an up-to-date and comprehensive database of arts and disability organisations and services, or a current register of artists and arts workers with a disability was also suggested.

### **Financial barriers and arts funding models**

Financial barriers and arts funding models were widely discussed. Securing adequate levels of funding and support was seen as significant to increasing capacity within the sector.

Current government arts funding models, in particular project by project funding, were not considered to be conducive to the continuing growth and sustainability of arts and disability in Victoria. It was acknowledged, however, that this barrier is not unique to this segment of the arts sector.

Respondents reflected that artists with a disability, or art programs for people with a disability, face additional costs not applicable to the rest of the arts sector for example, the cost of interpreters, support workers and accessible transport.

A more cohesive government approach to funding for arts and disability activity was also advocated. Respondents felt that this would offer an effective solution to the administrative and creative challenges faced by organisations and individuals in receipt of both arts and disability services funding.

The introduction of targeted funding and incentives for artists with a disability was a popular suggestion but did not meet with universal approval. Some respondents expressed concern that a targeted approach to funding may corral artists with a disability and further entrench their marginalisation in the arts sector.

### **Time, space and creative process**

The issues of time, space and creative process recurred in a number of interviews and focus groups. Respondents reported that existing administrative, creative and funding processes do not offer enough flexibility or support for people with a disability. The need for additional time to create work or fulfil funding requirements was a common theme.

The need for regular access to affordable, accessible, dedicated spaces for art making, presentation and performance for people with a disability was identified, particularly in some regional areas.

Because of the shortage of administrative skills and expertise in some areas of the arts and disability sector, informants suggested a service was needed to provide assistance with the preparation and acquittal of grant applications and to provide information and advice on art supplies, training and possible partnerships.

## Conclusion

During the community consultation there was a detectable underlying mood of hope and optimism that the findings of this research project, in conjunction with the Cultural Ministers Council's **National Arts and Disability Strategy** would lead to significant positive outcomes for people with a disability in Australia – as audience members, creators and arts workers.

Access to a rich cultural life is the right of all Victorians and people with a disability should have equal opportunities to create, attend and work in the arts. What is evident is that inequality still exists – overwhelmingly there was a clear demand among respondents for an uptake on the numerous strategies uncovered during the community consultation and Stage One literature review.

What also emerges through this research is an indication of the depth and diversity of arts and disability activity in Victoria. The community consultation revealed a myriad of successful Victorian strategies and initiatives and a wealth of ideas and suggestions for the future.

The findings from this community consultation, along with the accompanying Stage One: literature review and analysis report will provide the basis for a cross-government approach to increasing cultural participation of people with a disability in Victoria.



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# Introduction

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## Introduction

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We have to start saying, 'Excuse me, we make up 20% of the population. What the hell are you doing?'

Artists with a disability focus group

Two pieces of data extracted from Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) surveys on people with a disability provide an appropriate starting point for this report:

1. In Australia, people with a disability comprise roughly 20 per cent of the total population and these one in five Australians experience lower educational achievement, lower employment rates and lower incomes than the rest of the Australian population. The incidence of disability in Victoria is the same as for the whole of Australia (20 per cent or one in five) (ABS, 2003: 3).
2. In 2006 in Australia, adults with a disability were significantly less likely than other Australians to have attended arts events and venues in the previous year. This difference had remained constant over the previous four years and, not surprisingly, people with the most restrictive disability experience were even less likely to have attended cultural venues and events (ABS, 2008).

No comprehensive Australian data is currently available on people with a disability who work, or aspire to work, as professional artists or arts workers, although on the basis of ABS surveys of general employment rates for people with disability, it is reasonable to assume the disparity in overall paid employment levels for Australians with and without a disability (53 per cent for those paid workers with a disability compared to 81 per cent of paid workers without) is also reflected in the arts sector (ABS, 2003: 3).

To shed further light on the possible reasons behind this continuing disparity in arts participation for people with a disability, and in keeping with the recent push by the Victorian Government for higher levels of social inclusion and opportunity for people with a disability, in 2008, a research study was commissioned by the Office for Disability of the Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development, in partnership with Arts Victoria in the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Disability Services Division of the Victorian Department of Human Services (DHS). The brief for the study was to investigate levels of cultural participation by people with a disability, both as artists and as arts audience members, with a focus on Victorians with a disability, to find possible answers to the underlying research question:

**How can participation in the arts for people with a disability be increased?**

The resulting Victorian Arts and Disability Research Project is a three stage project comprising:

**Stage One** A **literature review**, completed in September 2008 and a discussion paper based on this review to inform stage two of the research project.

**Stage Two** A **statewide community mapping and consultation** exercise via a series of interviews, focus groups and forums, conducted across Victoria between May and November 2008, to determine current arts and disability approaches, models and practices.

**Stage Three** Using the findings from stages one and two to develop **engagement strategies** to support a whole-of-government approach to disability in the arts in Victoria.

This report presents the findings from data collected through the second stage of the research project – the community consultation.

Through an examination of available published materials relevant to the research question, the 2008 literature review and analysis examined barriers and strategies to arts participation, giving each topic equal weighting. In contrast, data collected through community consultation is likely to result in a data pool where some topics are given more attention than others, reflecting the current concerns and priorities of the informants in the consultation.

The community consultation was informed and framed by a discussion paper developed from the literature review (see Appendix 1) and made available to the informants for the community consultation process, either directly or online through the Victorian Arts and Disability Research Project Wiki. The community consultation indicated widespread agreement among informants with the findings of the literature review as outlined in the discussion paper, with no evidence of disagreement with any particular finding in the review.

This report focuses on topics that received the most attention during the community consultation or which were judged to bring further useful information to the analysis of issues raised in the literature review.

To obtain a more complete understanding of the current state of arts participation among people with a disability in Victoria, the literature review and this report of the community consultation should be considered in tandem.

## Introduction

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## Terminology

The following terms are used throughout this report. For a glossary of these and other terms used in this report, see Appendix 5.

### **Arts and disability sector**

For the purpose of this report the term 'arts and disability sector' indicates the intersection between the arts and the disability sectors and includes:

- artists and arts workers with a disability
- organisations and sections of government that support, train, fund and advocate for artists and arts workers with a disability
- organisations, including disability peak bodies, mainstream arts agencies, and those sections of government that fund, develop initiatives and advocate for, increased access to the arts for people with a disability.

### **Person/people with a disability**

The terms 'person with a disability' or 'people with a disability' are the preferred terms in common usage in the disability sector in Australia and are used throughout the text.





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# Methodology for community consultation

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The community consultation stage of the Victorian Arts and Disability Project employed two methods for data collection:

1. a series of interviews with 24 people identified as key informants selected for their expert knowledge, personal experience and professional roles in relation to arts and disability
2. a series of focus groups and forums held in Melbourne and regional Victoria, each targeting a particular section of the Victorian arts and disability sector.

The key informant interviews, focus groups and forums were audio-recorded and later transcribed. The transcriptions were then used as the primary source for this research report. Any quotes identifying key respondents have been used with full permission of the speaker to whom the quote is attributed. Direct quotes from transcripts of forums and focus groups are presented anonymously due to the nature of the discussion at these sessions and the resulting recordings where, with the exception of the facilitators, it was not possible to identify individual speakers.

## **Framework for the consultation**

In September 2008, a discussion paper was developed from the findings of the Stage One literature review to inform the community consultation stage of the research project. This discussion paper (see Appendix 1) was used as the basis for questions posed in the key informant interviews, forums and focus groups. The paper was distributed to focus group and forum participants prior to their attendance and copies were made available, on the day, at all focus groups and forums. In addition, both the literature review and discussion paper were posted on the Arts and Disability Research Project Wiki to invite comments and discussion.

## **Key informant interviews**

The 24 key informants included representatives from arts and disability peak bodies; staff members from Victorian Government departments responsible for the arts or disability; arts organisations; artists with a disability; representatives from Victorian local government arts departments; RuralAccess officers; arts and disability training organisations; an arts and disability researcher; representatives from Victoria's major arts venues; and an access consultant.

Eleven key informants were male and 13 female, the large majority being aged between 40 and 55 years. This concentration of ages appeared appropriate given respondents were selected for the extent of their professional expertise and life experience.

As the brief for the research project was to investigate the situation in Victoria, most respondents (21) were based in Victoria; however, two respondents from Queensland and one from the United States were invited to contribute because of their unique expertise.

Eight (33 per cent) of the 24 key informants identify as having personal experience of disability, including psychiatric disability, deafness, vision impairment and physical disability. Others worked directly with clients with particular disability experiences, especially intellectual disability. Appendix 2 provides a full list of informants, including their names, professional role and organisation.

Key informant interviews were conducted in face-to-face meetings between the respondents and the Community Cultural Development Network Project Manager, John Smithies. Informants were asked the following open-ended questions and were encouraged to speak freely about any issue of concern to them:

- Please tell us what you know about participation in the arts for people with a disability in Victoria (perhaps considering levels of participation for different age groups, genders, geographic location, art forms, sectors) and any concerns you identify in relation to this.
- What do you think are the barriers that limit participation of people with a disability in programs you are involved with or others you are aware of?
- Thinking both about participation as audience members and active participants, what strategies, if any, does your organisation implement to increase participation? How effective are these? How do you know of the efficacy?
- What is going well in the area overall? What organisations or programs have good practice and are successful in increasing participation? What are the factors that contribute to this success?

## Focus groups and forums

Eleven focus groups and forums were held; five in metropolitan Melbourne and six in regional Victoria (in Ballarat, Morwell, Shepparton, Bendigo, Horsham and Warrnambool). Each session targeted a particular set of stakeholders in the arts and disability sector. Most sessions were attended by a majority of people from the target sector, but with a mix of attendees who had different affiliations. Research project staff encouraged attendance from any interested person at any session to gain the widest representation.

Each focus group included at least some respondents who identified as having a disability. This was particularly the case at focus groups in regional areas and the one in Melbourne targeting artists with a disability.

At all locations, a public forum was held as a prelude to the focus group to:

- provide background information on the research project and the arts and disability sector
- encourage attendance at the focus group
- encourage networking among the participants, which may contribute to ongoing collaborative work in arts and disability.

**Focus groups  
and forums**

(continued)

Associate Professor Petra Koppers, an artist and disability activist from the University of Ann Arbor in Michigan, was the main speaker at each of the forums and facilitated most of the focus groups. When the forum audience included artists, Petra Koppers was supported by playwright and poet, Neil Marcus. Research Project Manager John Smithies, and Meme McDonald also acted as facilitators and, at many of the forums, local speakers with expertise made short presentations.

Forum attendance (368) was higher than for focus groups (184) with at least half the forum attendees remaining for the following focus group. The average attendance at focus groups was 17.

Attendees included people from Melbourne and regional Victoria, across all adult age ranges, with a diversity of professional roles, disability and employment experiences and educational levels. As such, they comprise a sample that is sufficiently diverse from both demographic and geographic perspectives.

See Appendix 3 for further information on discussion topics and attendance demographics for each focus group.

**Limitations on data  
collected through  
the community  
consultation**

Focus group and forum participants were, to a degree, self-selected as they responded to public advertisements and targeted invitations calling for participation in the Victorian Arts and Disability Research Project. Their involvement was presumably because of a personal or professional interest or expertise in the field of arts and disability. This means respondents were likely to be coming from a position of informed engagement and while this provides a valuable contribution, it can also be considered a limitation on the data. Because the research sample is not random, information collected cannot be considered as predictive of the population as a whole, nor can it be compared directly with population-wide data provided by the ABS. It does, however, provide a comprehensive complement to ABS data by offering valuable insight into the factors that influence the levels of participation in the arts for people with a disability.





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# Common factors affecting arts participation for people with a disability

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**Disability and the arts in Victoria – an incomplete picture**

The literature review and community consultation stages of the Victorian Arts and Disability Research Project provided a wealth of material on the activities of the diverse and growing arts and disability sector in Victoria (see Appendix 4 Arts and disability in Victoria – a list). However, as the literature review revealed, there are significant gaps in available data about the sector due to variations in data collection categories and samples as well as an absolute failure to capture some essential data (for example, the lack of ABS data on the employment of people with a disability in arts and cultural industries). Because of this, it is not possible to obtain a complete and reliable picture of the levels of activity and employment in the arts and disability sector in Victoria.

This absence of reliable, current and comparable data reduces the capacity of government agencies to argue for increased government support for disability and the arts. It was suggested that Arts Victoria might improve its data capture for people with a disability by adding this category to its annual Client Services Survey, the key instrument used to assess the efficacy of Arts Victoria’s funding programs.

Another research gap identified in the literature review was the relative lack of effective evaluation processes and studies on the efficacy of strategies implemented to increase arts participation for people with a disability. This lack of research indicates a need for training or incentives to ensure improved evaluation processes and data capture for arts and disability initiatives in Victoria.

In response to a question about attendance by people with a disability at Back to Back performances, key informant Bruce Gladwin, Artistic Director of the Geelong-based theatre company, provided one example of the possible dangers of making judgements about attendance patterns in the absence of reliable data:

*I think we have very few people with disabilities coming and seeing our shows. It’s a very small percentage and it’s really hard to assess unless you do some sort of really extensive market research in terms of why someone comes, or what their understanding of disability is, or their interest in it is.*

In the community consultation, the most common way the absence of reliable data manifested itself was through a frustration expressed by respondents who found it difficult to find out what was actually going on in the sector. This absence of information was seen as a powerful barrier inhibiting participation, skill sharing, collaboration and cooperation within the sector.

*People are saying they hadn’t known about other people and what they’re doing, so I guess there is a need for networks for disseminating information to people who might be interested.*

Artists with a disability focus group

At the moment no one knows what anybody else is doing. Stuff's being replicated all over the joint. Brilliant stuff has just been done and forgotten - left for dust when the whole country could be celebrating – not just what Back to Back's doing.

Arts and disability organisations focus group

The literature review had concluded that there was a need for a current and comprehensive Victorian database of information on services, personnel and activities in the arts and disability sector. Input from the community consultation confirmed that this should be addressed.

There is optimism that improvements in data collection on arts participation by people with a disability will also be one of the long-term outcomes from the Cultural Ministers Council's **National Arts and Disability Strategy**.

## Legislation – impact and compliance

One of the strategies identified in the literature review to increase arts participation by people with a disability is the development of arts-specific or disability-specific legislation that aims to increase arts participation by people with a disability or to protect their right to such participation.

The two pieces of Australian legislation that have had most impact on arts and disability in Victoria are:

- the Australian **Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1992**  
([http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol\\_act/dda1992264/](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act/dda1992264/))
- the Victorian **Disability Act 2006**  
([http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/Domino/Web\\_Notes/LDMS/PubStatbook.nsf/f932b66241ecf1b7ca256e92000e23be/0B82C05270E27961CA25717000216104/\\$FILE/06-023a.pdf](http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/Domino/Web_Notes/LDMS/PubStatbook.nsf/f932b66241ecf1b7ca256e92000e23be/0B82C05270E27961CA25717000216104/$FILE/06-023a.pdf))

Both the literature review and community consultation found the DDA had made a significant positive difference to physical accessibility levels in government buildings, including major arts venues. (For a more detailed discussion of issues of physical accessibility at arts venues, see the later section in this report, 'Physical access and transport'). However, informants identified two compliance issues that lessened the impact of this legislation:

1. The reluctance of people with a disability to lodge a complaint under the Act due to the stress and cost of the complaints process.
2. The perception that the 'unjustifiable hardship' provision of the DDA (what key informant Jane Trengove has dubbed 'the art clause') allowed many smaller arts venues to avoid improving their disability access because the cost of compliance with physical accessibility standards would cause 'unjustifiable hardship' (DDA 1992: s11).

**Legislation –  
impact and  
compliance**  
(continued)

Key informant Betty Siegel, Director Accessibility at the Kennedy Center for Performing Arts in Washington DC, offered an American viewpoint on the impact of, and compliance with, disability legislation. The US has two pieces of legislation relevant to this report – the 1973 **Rehabilitation Act** which applies to organisations in receipt of any US Federal Government funding and the 1990 **Americans with Disabilities Act**, which extended the reach of US disability discrimination legislation to include commercial entities. These two Acts overlap: the first prohibits organisations that receive any form of federal funding, whether direct or indirect, from discriminating against people with disabilities in the provision of goods and services, while the second applies to discrimination in ‘places of public accommodation’. Under the first Act, complainants can sue organisations for damages if discrimination is proven and, under the second, complaints that are upheld will lead to a remedy for the problem. Siegel considers the US disability discrimination legislation has ‘more teeth’ than the Australian legislation with the result that:

*Nobody wants to end up in a complaint or end up in a lawsuit ... so that's scary enough to kind of motivate most organisations to go ahead and comply with the law.*

Although Betty Siegel acknowledges the effectiveness of the US disability discrimination legislation, she does not consider compulsory legal compliance to necessarily be the best way to effect a positive change in public attitudes to people with a disability, because:

*You want people to comply because they want to do it. Because when you force people to do it, then you run into [a] problem ... that, sure, you can make them put in the ramp, you can make the bathrooms accessible, but you can't fix people's attitudes by a law.*

Because of this, rather than mandating or prescribing compliance through legislation, Siegel considers it preferable for arts funding bodies to actively encourage inclusion of people with a disability by ensuring access issues are constantly on the agenda for grant recipients through the provision of access guidelines or through clauses in funding agreements. Siegel cites the National Endowment of the Arts (NEA), the principal US funding body for the arts, as a good example of the effectiveness of this active encouragement approach. The NEA provides a disability access checklist to all grant applicants and requires them to sign an agreement that they will abide by the US disability discrimination legislation. According to Siegel, this was effective on two levels, because: ‘One, it brought some awareness to the arts community, and two, it made them really want to do it’.

The addition of mandatory accessibility requirements to government funding agreements for arts grant recipients was suggested frequently in the community consultation process, as articulated by the following key informants:

Accessibility should be a condition for public procurement and funding, so that no arts organisation should get funding from Arts Victoria unless one, they're totally accessible, and they've got good policies and procedures etcetera, etcetera, for making sure that people with disabilities are able to participate as both performers and as audience members.

Lesley Hall, CEO, Australian Federation of Disability Organisations

The big barrier to accessibility completely being embraced is government and funding bodies. By them not saying that part of their funding has to go to accessibility, or that they will not fund unless they see an aspect of accessibility being inserted into the production plan.

Bernie Clifford, Training Manager and Access Consultant, Morris Goding  
Accessibility Consulting

There's actually no ties at the moment between funding and access. That has to happen – that has to happen before access will happen. It's not just Arts Victoria. It's local government, State Government, it's philanthropics.

Crusader Hillis, CEO, Gasworks Arts Park

The literature review also noted the recent global proliferation of government disability action plans (DAPs) in the wake of new disability discrimination legislation adopted in many countries, including Australia, as a strategy to overcome barriers to participation in the arts by people with a disability.

Section 38 of the Victorian **Disability Act 2006** is prescriptive in relation to Victorian public sector bodies, requiring each to develop a DAP to ensure the development of government services and supports that address the needs of people with a disability. References made to these plans in the community consultation stage are discussed in the following section.

## Disability action plans

With the exception of the focus group for mainstream arts organisations and interviews with two key informants (Arts Victoria Policy Officer, Judith Sears, and Access Consultant, Bernie Clifford), DAPs rarely featured in interviews or discussions during the community consultation. One possible explanation is that non-government arts organisations in Victoria are not required by law or funding requirements to develop DAPs.

The literature review found Australian DAPs have resulted in more accessible public buildings and more attention being paid to the rights of people with a disability at government level. However, the review also concluded that the strategies outlined in the majority of Australian arts agency DAPs examined were primarily inward looking. These plans seemed designed to ensure the government agency complied with the letter of the DDA law within the agency itself, rather than proposing more externally-focused, interventionist strategies to improve, for example, artistic development opportunities for Australian artists with a disability.

**Disability action plans**  
(continued)

Since the literature review was completed in September 2008, several Victorian Government arts agencies have produced new DAPs – Arts Victoria, Museum Victoria, the National Gallery of Victoria and the State Library of Victoria. Each of these reveal a growing commitment to disability access and disability awareness within their organisation, as well as the possible influence of the **aDAPting to Disability** guide and checklist prepared by the Victorian Office for Disability. The guide, now in its second edition, was produced to assist organisations with the preparation of DAPs, particularly those Victorian Government departments and agencies obliged under the **Disability Act 2006** to produce DAPs.

All four of the new DAPs are prefaced with an endorsement by the CEO or president of each organisation and, in terms of specific actions to improve opportunities for people with a disability, show a marked improvement on earlier plans examined in the literature review. The 2009-12 Museum Victoria DAP is noteworthy as it includes definite actions and delivery dates to improve data collection about patrons with a disability; to research visitation barriers for people with a disability; to develop new kits that enhance access for targeted groups with a disability; to adopt Smithsonian Institute guidelines for universal design of exhibitions; and, in consultation with disability peak bodies, to develop exhibitions about people with disabilities.

One of the criticisms of earlier mandatory DAPS was articulated by key informant Bernie Clifford who commented: ‘in the past, everyone quickly made one and then they just sat on the shelf’.

It was considered that a DAP becomes a ‘live’ and effective document when it:

- has CEO buy-in so that disability access becomes an organisational priority
- is embedded in the organisation’s business plan
- is both internally and externally focused, particularly when an arts agency provides programs and services to the public
- is developed in consultation with people with a disability
- has measurement and evaluation locked into the plan
- is monitored by a DAP steering group and reported on annually.

As yet, there is no compulsion for non-government organisations funded by Arts Victoria to produce their own DAPs, however Arts Victoria has commenced working with funded arts companies to encourage the preparation of DAPs. In June 2009, Arts Victoria, in partnership with the Australia Council, offered training in this area to Victorian arts organisations that receive recurrent funding from both funding bodies.

Key informant Maurice Gleeson, from Vision Australia and President of Blind Sports Victoria, suggested that arts funding agencies adopt the model currently operating for Victorian sporting organisations funded by government. Under this model, sporting bodies receive ratings on their demonstrated commitment to social inclusion of people with a disability to guarantee retention of funding:

What happens now, for the government to fund you, you actually have to have a strategic plan, plan of action. You have to actually show and demonstrate how you're going to become more inclusive... So if you don't show and demonstrate [that] over a couple of years, that you really want meaningfully... to become more inclusive, then your funding would be reviewed. And you have ratings... and it's really a significant change.

## Access officers

One effective strategy to ensure implementation of actions contained in an organisation's DAP is the creation of a staff position dedicated, either in whole or part, to disability access, that is, an access officer.

In her interview, Betty Siegel referred to one of the outcomes of the 1973 **US Rehabilitation Act** being the creation of such positions. Under Section 504 of the Act, it is mandatory for organisations in receipt of any federal funding to assign responsibility for disability access within their organisation to someone on their staff, such persons being given the title of Section 504 coordinator. In larger organisations, this might be a dedicated staff position for disability access, as is the case with Betty Siegel's own position at the Kennedy Center. In smaller organisations, disability access might be one of a range of responsibilities appearing on a person's job description – but someone in the organisation had to be responsible for disability access.

While such positions or duties are not mandatory in Victoria, community consultation raised the desirability of having a staff member in each organisation charged with responsibility for disability access. For example, access consultant Bernie Clifford, who would like to: 'encourage all festivals and venues and events to have an access worker or an access officer, like they would an occupational health and safety officer, a WorkCover officer'.

Another recent but still rare development in Victoria has been the creation of access officer positions that are specifically about disability access to the arts. Key informant, Cathy Horsley, Access Arts Development Officer for the City of Port Phillip in Melbourne, is perhaps the first example of this type of position within local government. Partly due to the existence of this dedicated position, Port Phillip has a strong reputation for a vibrant and dynamic disability arts community, as evidenced by the impressive number of well-established groups for artists with a disability operating in the municipality. For example, the BiPolar Bears Band, which has been around in some form for 15 years; the theatre group, Just Us (10 years); rawcus (seven years) and SPARC Theatre (three years).

**Access officers**  
(continued)

The work of the person in this dedicated arts access position helps to ensure the sustainability and longevity of these groups by supporting the preparation and acquittal of grant applications, advocating for arts and disability within Council, and promoting and marketing the activities of these arts groups.

Cathy Horsley believes that placing her position, which has recently become full-time, within the Council's arts and festivals team, has been a positive development for disability arts. The position is placed within an arts context as opposed to its previous 'special needs' recreational context. In a similar vein, a participant at the focus group and forum for disability arts organisations, who works at the Footscray Community Arts Centre, saw it as a positive step to have her position title recently changed from ArtLife and ArtDay Coordinator to Access Coordinator because it means her capacity to advocate for disability access across all of the organisation's programs has been expanded:

One of the exciting things I think about this new title is that I have permission to go to all of the other artistic meetings that happen around the centre. So I'm part of an artistic team of people [who] coordinate projects and workshops. And so now I say, 'Well, I need to look at the access issues that are in your projects'.

**Community building**

The literature review made a brief mention of the contribution made at local community level by the DHS Disability Services Community Building program, known in local communities as MetroAccess, RuralAccess and deafaccess. This program plays a role in facilitating access to the arts for people with a disability, and was responsible for a reported 244 arts and cultural projects with an access and inclusion focus during its first five years (2002–2007)(DHS, 2007a & b).

The community consultation offered an opportunity to gain a much deeper understanding of the impact and potential for the Community Building program as four key informants had direct experience of the program. These informants are Paul Dunn, former Senior Project Officer for Community Building who was instrumental in establishing the program, and three other key informants who have worked as RuralAccess Officers, Michael Uniacke, Richard Stone and Fiona Strahan.

The Community Building program was established to assist and encourage community development at a local level to improve access and inclusion for people with a disability in their local communities. The program is implemented in partnership with local communities. MetroAccess workers are based in each of the 31 local councils across metropolitan Melbourne. RuralAccess workers are located in 25 local councils and community health services across rural and regional Victoria. Deafaccess workers are based in five community service organisations across rural Victoria.

The role of the community building workers is to break down barriers by constantly keeping the inclusion of people with a disability on the agenda of local communities. Although the community building workers are not solely concerned with improving access to the arts for people with a disability, workers often used arts and culture as a way of getting started in their local community, where they were often initially met

with caution. According to Paul Dunn, the arts provided ‘a way of bringing a large number of people together around the project... because of the power of engaging a whole range of organisations in exciting and innovative ways which were fun and meaningful and moving’. To demonstrate his belief in the power of arts and culture to engage and break down barriers in a local community, Paul cited an example of the way a photography project run by a MetroAccess officer in Maribyrnong led to an improvement in disability access in the local shopping centre:

They exhibited in a cafe in one of the local shops... and it was so successful that another shop wanted the exhibition for the next year but... the shop wasn't accessible. So it meant that... to have the exhibition, they had to do something about the access issues in the shop – which they did, and then they had the exhibition.

Richard Stone also provided information on how he has used the arts in his position to break down barriers, for example, partnering a performing arts group for people with disabilities with the mainstream Warrnambool Theatre Company and securing funding so the two groups could mount a joint performance.

There was also evidence gathered in the regional focus groups and key informant interviews, of a perceived need for more RuralAccess officers because it was considered that sometimes access officers shared across regional and rural councils can be stretched, perhaps to the point of ineffectiveness.

## Attitude – it matters

In August 2009, just as this report was nearing completion, the National People with Disabilities and Carer Council issued **Shut Out!**, its report of a national consultation with people with a disability and with families of people with a disability. While not specifically about arts and disability, this consultation produced overwhelming evidence of the continuing presence in Australia of negative social attitudes about disability. The Council received 750 submissions, the majority of which (56 per cent) discussed the experience and impact of these attitudes on the lives of people with disabilities and their families, friends and carers. On the basis of the submissions, the report concluded that in Australia today: ‘negative attitudes are both powerful and entrenched and, as a result, exclusion is both systematic and systemic’ (National People with Disabilities and Carer Council, 2009: 12).

One of the most frequently mentioned topics throughout the community consultation was attitude – how a negative attitude to the arts or to disability can function as an active discouragement to participation in the arts by people with a disability and, conversely, how a positive attitude to disability and the arts can make an immense positive difference to someone with a disability, both in terms of their receptive participation in the arts as an audience member and also their creative participation as an artist or arts worker. This focus on attitudinal barriers was prevalent in the interviews with key informants, with 20 of the 24 interviewees speaking about this problem.

**Attitude –  
it matters**  
(continued)

The information gathered on the impact of attitudes can be divided into three parts:

- attitudes to people with a disability as audience members
- attitudes to people with a disability as artists and arts workers
- attitudes to the value of the arts in general and, in particular, to art produced by people with a disability.

**1. Attitudes to people with a disability as audience members**

If people with a disability are ignored, patronised or otherwise made to feel uncomfortable when they attend an arts event or program, they are not likely to want to repeat the experience.

Even if venue staff are well-trained in disability access services for their patrons with a disability, they can betray a negative attitude to disability simply through their body language. As this focus group comment suggests:

Body language is something that most people with a disability pick up on so quickly and the other people don't realise they've got. So when someone with a disability walks in, picks up immediately on body language and they don't feel comfortable ... they want out. Why go somewhere where you don't feel comfortable?

Shepparton focus group

The betrayal of negative attitudes to disability through body language is a failing also evident among many arts patrons without a disability who find the sight of a person with a disability to be either an uncomfortable or disturbingly unfamiliar experience. Staff or patron discomfort may also arise because they feel they don't know how to speak with a person with a possible communication disability, so they don't even try:

Sometimes if we see somebody with a physical disability you wouldn't even think to have a conversation with them because they may not be able to speak and so how do you communicate? The assumption – yeah, it was more about the assumption that they may not be able to have a conversation with you.

Shepparton focus group

This discomfort may simply be a case of unfamiliarity with disability but it can lead people to ignore or fail to offer assistance to patrons who have a disability, which in turn leads to discomfort for the person with a disability.

## **2. Attitudes to people with a disability as artists and arts workers**

Negative attitudes to disability can also decrease opportunities for creative participation in the arts for people with a disability.

There was a situation one time when there was a girl with Down syndrome and she wanted to be involved in a mainstream dance class. And the dance instructor just couldn't even anticipate her being involved and basically thought that she should go to a special disability group. I think she stayed on but, of course, the difficulty is that the attitude's there and it can manifest itself in other ways. And it's not necessarily the friendliest environment if you have to get to that stage of having an adversarial position to actually get in the dance class in the first place.

Lesley Hall, CEO, Australian Federation  
of Disability Organisations

And then there are the issues of when you go into a class that is just a general class. There are always some people who will kind of behave strangely and, 'What is she doing here and how can she possibly dance?' Often, if you're around for a while, they get used to it, but it is a bit of a barrier to overcome. And in a way, I find as time goes by, I'm less able to deal with it. So when there's a fairly strong reaction of that kind I think, 'Well, I don't know if I want to be here really'.

Dance student in artists with a disability focus group

The above examples demonstrate how negative attitudes can limit arts training opportunities for people with a disability. These same negative attitudes can also function as a barrier to a career in the arts industry for people with a disability. In this respect, people with a disability seeking paid employment in the arts face what former Arts Access Victoria Executive Director, Criena Gehrke, refers to as 'the double whammy' – not only do they have to overcome the usual barriers experienced by people with a disability when seeking any form of employment, they must also overcome a prejudice commonly held by many employment agencies and carers that a career in arts is financially precarious and therefore not a choice to be encouraged for a person with a disability.

In her interview, key informant Susan Maley also discussed the 'double whammy' effect, by quoting the example of a visual artist with a disability who described a visit to an employment agency as follows:

... when one hits the unemployment queue with a disability... The combination of 'would-be artist' with a disability is a challenge that no job counsellor can meet. It's a bad combo. I mean, it became pointless to say you were an artist because art was never recognised at job agencies as a profession. I was always asked if there was anything else I could do.

**Attitude –  
it matters**  
(continued)

Susan's PhD dissertation, **Making Their Way, Making Art and Making Money: The working lives of visual artists with disabilities**, draws on interviews with 21 practicing professional visual artists with a disability, 10 of whom are Australian. Several of the other artists she interviewed commented that in Centrelink there is a prevailing attitude that the arts do not represent a viable career option. Susan summarised this preliminary finding as being an indication that for artists with a disability, 'that stereotype of art not being a viable career on the part of employment counsellors can become a significant barrier to artists gaining crucial support in establishing and continuing a creative career'.

Annie Russell, Program Coordinator of the Work Education Unit at the Preston Campus of Northern Metropolitan Institute of TAFE (NMIT) reiterated the above viewpoint. Annie discussed the unexpected difficulties she experienced with an arts industry training board when establishing the acclaimed Ignition Theatre TAFE training program as an accredited certificate course at NMIT in Preston:

I didn't expect to have the barriers there. I've worked with a lot of industry training boards and I've found even the engineering skills industry training board or hospitality to be more open. I suppose I was shocked because I went in thinking that this would be quite easy. I thought they'd be more open than they were.

It was attitudinal. They said things like, 'Are you aware Annie, there's a lot of unemployment in the performing arts?' And I said, 'Yes, I was. I wanted people with disabilities to share in the unemployment', which is the way I had to put it to them to get them to really think through what they just said to me.

**3. Attitudes to the value of the arts in general and, in particular, to art produced by people with a disability**

A lack of appreciation for the arts or a failure to assign a high value to the role the arts play in contributing to social wellbeing and inclusion, was seen to limit opportunities for arts participation for people with a disability, through:

- the gatekeeper phenomenon (or what Annie Russell from NMIT referred to as 'well meaning watch dogs') where there is frequently an unwillingness on the part of support workers and carers to encourage people with a disability to engage in arts activities or to pursue training or careers in the arts
- a perceived reluctance by some disability funding bodies to fund arts programs where arts outcomes have a higher priority than social or health outcomes.

The gatekeeper phenomenon was cited frequently in interviews and focus groups as a potent barrier to arts participation for people with a disability. Particularly in supported accommodation situations, where residents depend on support workers to organise their recreational outings and support services, if a support worker has no interest in or appreciation of the value of the arts, the opportunities for the person with a disability to participate may be limited.

Also, if carers or support workers have low expectations of the person with a disability, they may not see the arts as a viable or appropriate career path, which can close off employment opportunities in the arts. Key informant Susan Maley spoke of a young woman with a disability who had won a state prize for screen printing, but whose disability employment agency was about to train her for a career as a kitchen hand. Thanks to a more enlightened case worker, the young woman was placed in an apprenticeship with a manufacturer of chain mail where she was able to use and develop her craft skills. Her employer is 'extremely pleased' and the young artist is 'delighted' because 'she has a viable source of income that is certainly paying her more money and feeding her spirit [more] than if she was just doing something very basic in a kitchen'.

The arts educators focus group provided an example of the impact of the second of the attitudinal barriers referred to above, where non-arts funding bodies or agencies may not consider professional arts activities or training to be a funding priority:

I think another barrier I've come up against is attitudes... We're an art department under the umbrella of health care, which doesn't get art. They actually argue 'Well, what's the difference between having them do art with trained people like ourselves, rather than just putting them in some community house with a box of coloured pencils?' They think it's the same thing... it stems from ignorance in a lot of ways. We need to educate people.

Arts educators focus group

In considering art products created by people with a disability, patronising attitudes and the low value assigned to disability arts by some segments of the arts and welfare industries, and by some members of the public, were considered to be barriers to the development of the arts and disability sector.

I think one of the biggest problems we've got is our own sector – the arts sector – arts and cultural sector recognising the quality of work – it's whether they be administrators, arts workers, cultural workers with disabilities.

Ross Barber, Executive Director, Access Arts (Qld)

This barrier also manifested as a lack of serious critical analysis of disability arts in the mainstream media. This denies the arts and disability sector of what was considered an essential element to ensure growth in public recognition for the sector and improvement in the quality of its artistic output, as Leesa Nash explained in her interview:

It's also about taking them [disability arts] seriously. There still needs to be the issue of quality control – and another thing that doesn't happen currently is reviews. People don't review much performance – community arts performances or... performances made by people with disabilities. Perhaps there's some fear or disregard or unknowing. I think if we're going to do stuff, it has to be accountable and we have to be able to listen to criticism.

Leesa Nash, Ignition Theatre Training, NMIT

## Strategies to achieve attitudinal change

Throughout the community consultation, opinions on attitudinal barriers were frequently expressed and passionate. Informants were also very forthcoming with suggestions for strategies to change attitudes for the better, because as one participant at the Warrnambool focus group commented: 'People are willing to be educated. We just haven't given them a chance'.

In accord with the findings of the literature review, feedback from the community consultation identified disability awareness training as one of the most effective strategies to achieve changes in attitude about people with a disability and about the value of arts participation for people with a disability. However, informants emphasised such training had to be both regular and organisation-wide to be effective, with a focus on training at senior management and board level to ensure disability access and equity was assigned a high priority in organisational planning and programs.

Other effective attitude-changing strategies reported during the community consultation included:

- disability audits of arts venues and consultation with people with a disability when designing new arts programs and services to raise awareness of the needs of audience members with a disability
- personal advocacy by people with a disability involving public speaking and presentations in schools and at mainstream arts meetings and events to counter uninformed attitudes about people with a disability and their capabilities
- organisational 'champions' who risk accusations of 'nagging' or 'haranguing' to ensure disability access is constantly on the agenda at all levels of arts planning and programming, both within their own organisations and within committees or arts networks in which they are involved
- inclusion of support workers accompanying people with a disability to arts activities in these activities so the workers can gain a greater appreciation of the value of the arts for their clients or even, perhaps, eventually be able to act as art tutors or facilitators
- partnering participants without a disability with participants with a disability in arts programs to break down communication barriers caused by discomfort about disability
- collaboration between mainstream organisations and disability organisations to develop arts programs and plans to ensure more equity in the arts for people with a disability

- coopting people with social or political influence who have personal experience of disability or family members of people with a disability to raise the profile of disability and the arts in the community
- incorporating units on arts and disability as a standard component of formal education courses for teachers and disability support workers.

And finally, never underestimate the power of the genuinely welcoming gesture and the difference it can make to a fuller participation in the arts for people with a disability, as these two examples testify:

Often it's a simple thing like coming up and introducing yourself and saying, 'Oh, look - Hi, Maurice, my name is John. Welcome to... If there's anything you need or anything I can assist you with please let me know'. Even that makes you feel really a part of it, rather than turning up and saying, 'Hi Maurice. Welcome' – and then moving on. Just that simple phrase ... makes you feel a part of it.

Maurice Gleeson, Vision Australia (who has a vision impairment)  
on his experience at committee meetings

With 'Phantom of the Opera', they did a performance. At the end of the performance they all bowed and then [the actor] who was the Phantom, he signed 'Thank you' ... he [had] asked the interpreter, 'How do I sign thank you?' and the interpreter showed him that sign for thank you. [He] bowed and signed 'thanking'. The Deaf people just really appreciate that. I felt as though he made that effort.

Ross Onley-Zerkel, Deaf Arts Network

As Fiona Strahan noted in her interview, if a person with a disability is made to feel welcome, even if other aspects of disability access may be less than perfect, they are more likely to become a return participant. For this reason, Fiona is proposing the addition of a new symbol to add to the international symbols signifying disability access. This symbol will feature a person pushing someone in a wheelchair to indicate the venue may have less than perfect access, but has very friendly staff who will do all they can to help you, or as Fiona herself described it:

A symbol for lousy access but by Jesus, go there – because they're really nice.



# Factors affecting arts participation as an audience member for people with a disability

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## Physical access and transport

### Physical access

Physical restrictions on access or movement within arts premises, such as limited or no wheelchair access, were identified as one of the most significant barriers to arts attendance for people with disabilities (ABS, 2008). A 2005 study on Australian museum attendance by people with disability (Landman et al, 2005) concluded that ‘the basic problem of not being able to enter or move through a building at all, but also not being able to enter and enjoy the museum independently’ was the major barrier to attendance.

Physical barriers to participation as an audience member was a regular topic raised in the community consultation, especially in the focus group and forum for Victoria’s mainstream arts venues, a group that included representatives from some of the Victorian Government’s arts agencies (Museum Victoria, Geelong Performing Arts Centre, National Gallery of Victoria, Victorian Arts Centre, and the Australian Centre for the Moving Image). There are perhaps two valid reasons for this focus on physical access. The first and probably most significant is that, increasingly, the management and staff of these arts organisations are taking on board more seriously the need to provide equitable access to their venues and programs for people with a disability, especially the Victorian Government arts agencies which are now obliged, under Section 38 of the Victorian **Disability Act 2006**, to develop and implement DAPs.

The second reason was perhaps because many of the people who attended the focus group had recently attended forums and workshops by visiting US speaker, Betty Siegel, Director Accessibility for the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington DC. The Kennedy Center is an organisation with an international reputation for pioneering and promoting access to the arts for people with a disability. A number of times in the mainstream arts organisations focus group, positive references were made to Siegel’s lecture, an indication of the value in sponsoring visits by experts as a strategy to improve access to the arts for people with a disability.

Since the passing of Australian and Victorian disability anti-discrimination legislation, much has been achieved in making public buildings more physically accessible for people with a disability, however, participants in the community consultation discussed several examples of remaining physical barriers that impact negatively on arts attendance for people with a disability, including:

- the high cost of retrofitting older or heritage listed buildings to improve their disability access; a barrier often cited to excuse organisations from making these changes
- arts venues that claim to be accessible for people with a disability where the public spaces may be accessible but other areas, such as backstage or artists’ studios, are not

- art spaces that advertise their disability access but these are less than ideal (such as back or side door entrances which sometimes require an advance phone call from the person with a disability to ensure someone is there to let them in)
- arts buildings that are accessible, but where the car park is located too far from the building, or where the grounds around the building are surfaced or designed in a way that causes difficulties for people with vision or mobility disabilities
- the Australian preference for 'continental type' seating arrangements in theatres (for example, at the Arts Centre on Southbank) which limit the possibilities for accommodating wheelchairs in an auditorium
- conflicts between 'life safety' and disability access, where occupational health and safety requirements for public buildings may actually inhibit access for people with a disability
- the tyranny of the architect or designer who makes 'big impact' designs for arts buildings a higher priority than access for patrons, particularly those with a disability, which can also sometimes lead to the reduction of disability access features when there are the inevitable budget pressures.

To counter the constant 'if-only-we-had-the-money' defence for not retrofitting older buildings, or for not having the budget to make an arts event accessible, access consultant and key informant, Bernie Clifford, suggested:

- refurbishment to improve access is planned for and implemented sequentially so costs can be spread over a longer period of time
- temporary arrangements to improve access are investigated and implemented pending planned refurbishments that will permanently improve access (for example, temporary ramps or sharing and co-purchasing equipment with other organisations).

Simon Klose, the Director of the Benalla Art Gallery, provided a good example of the second barrier cited above. At the Benalla Art Gallery, which is a public gallery, the public areas on ground level were upgraded but the artists' studio downstairs, which is used by a local potters group to tutor people with a disability, was not upgraded because of cost.

Key informant Michael Uniacke, who is a writer by trade, had a colourful way of describing the back-door disability entrance common at some arts venues, saying:

[It's] something about the segregation. It was like the old deep south of the 1950s. All the coloureds down the back. A special entrance for the 'handicapped' you have down a dingy alleyway past the rubbish bins.

**Physical access  
and transport**  
(continued)

Visual artist and Arts Access Victoria staff member Jane Trengove, who has a physical disability and uses her own car as her primary means of transport, cited a particular Melbourne arts venue she attends regularly for arts meetings where the car park is ‘miles’ from the main entrance and where the ‘horrible cobblestones’ with which the car park is surfaced nearly cause her to break her neck. One of the participants at the focus group for mainstream arts organisations, who is vision impaired, had a similar experience visiting Federation Square for the first time:

My orientation mobility officer in Vision Australia took me to Federation Square and it was a real experience. It was a case of, ‘Watch out for the steps! Be careful! There’s not enough contrast for the edge of the steps. The cobbles grow uneven.’ So I stumbled all around. For someone who’s vision impaired ... none of [them could] access Federation Square independently. They need to have someone help them.

In her interview, Betty Siegel raised the issue of the Australian preference for ‘continental seating’ in arts auditoriums. Continental seating has only two aisles at the side, making it more difficult to maximise spaces for wheelchairs at the ends of each row – in the US, four aisle seating designs are more common. Siegel also raised the issue of life safety vs. disability access requirements, and the problems this can cause. Two other key informants, Lesley Hall CEO of the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations, and Ross Onley-Zerkel, Coordinator of Deaf Arts Network, recounted personal experiences that illustrate Betty’s point:

Lesley arrived late at a film festival screening in a public cinema complex in Melbourne to see a friend’s film that was screening. Because there were no accessible seats available, she stood at the back of the cinema to watch the film. Ushers approached her and asked her to leave if she wasn’t going to sit down as standing at the rear of the cinema was not permitted. When Lesley tried to explain that she didn’t mind standing so she could see the film, staff called security.

Ross Onley-Zerkel’s example involved the placement of interpreters for Deaf patrons on a low platform on stage for a live performance of the musical, ‘Mama Mia’. To gain agreement to locate the interpreters onstage in the same eyeline space as the performers was considered a major breakthrough for Deaf patrons, but an occupational health and safety concern was raised as there was no barrier at the edge of the platform, which meant there was a possible danger interpreters might fall off the edge when the theatre lights were dimmed.

To overcome the physical barriers that may be created by an architect more interested in aesthetics than audience access, Betty Siegel and access consultant, Bernie Clifford, both advised employing consultants with a disability or who were experts in disability access, to inform and monitor building design and construction. Betty also mentioned that one of the most accessible theatres in the Kennedy Center is the Concert Hall, which, following its renovation to improve physical accessibility, can now accommodate 100 wheelchair users, an achievement she puts down to the input of the access consultant on the project, the late Ron Mace, who was a person with a disability and who is considered to be one of the fathers of universal design principles.

The desirability of mandating the use of universal design principles (where products and venues are designed to be usable by all people to the greatest extent possible) in the design of any new arts buildings or refurbishments of arts buildings, was also raised on a number of other occasions during the community consultation.

Other suggested strategies to overcome physical barriers include:

- developing industry standards and guidelines, incorporating universal design principles, perhaps by Live Performance Australia
- arts venues developing a checklist for disability access requirements to be distributed to all hirers, a practice that may prompt hirers to consider the requirements of audience members or performers with a disability
- using advocacy and protest to bring pressure to bear on arts venues with poor disability access; one example being a visual artist who refused to place his works in an exhibition in a gallery with inadequate access provisions
- using flexible thinking to solve physical access barriers; for example, a participant at the focus group for mainstream arts organisations applauded Betty Siegel's 'seats out' policy rather than the more common 'seats in' approach for wheelchair patrons – that is, leaving permanent spaces for wheelchairs in a theatre and only bringing in portable chairs for patrons without a disability when those spaces are not required on the day for audience members with a disability
- scheduling and promoting special viewing times for people with a disability during major art or museum exhibitions to overcome difficulties that might be experienced by patrons with a disability being able to move through these crowded exhibitions, or being able to see the objects on display
- promoting good disability access as an asset by arguing that it also improves access for elderly patrons or for families with prams
- encouraging the Victorian Government to introduce a dollar-for-dollar incentive scheme to encourage philanthropic arts patrons to contribute to the cost of retrofitting arts buildings to improve disability access.

**Physical access  
and transport**  
(continued)

**Transport**

Transport barriers to arts participation were discussed during the community consultation, but very little information was added to that already contained in the literature review.

Participants agreed that while public transport in Melbourne is affordable, especially for those with a travel pass or a Companion Card, who travel free, others who are reliant on taxis or maxi-taxis may find it too expensive to warrant travelling to an arts event or venue. The scarcity of maxi-taxis in regional centres was considered to be a barrier to participation, particularly at certain hours of the day when demand peaked, that is, around the start and finish times for disability employment programs and schools.

Maurice Gleeson from Vision Australia made a valid point about the barrier that may occur for people with vision impairment in the very last leg of a public transport trip to an arts event:

You might be a confident mobility user so you can go catch a tram or a train. You get right there, but you might have a venue which has a major intersection, a major roundabout. Now if it's in the evening, that you want to go out somewhere, and you're on your own, to negotiate certain areas could be a barrier, so you can get 90 per cent of the way, but you can't get that last 10 per cent without a lot of difficulty or uncertainty. People, obviously, with severe vision loss don't drive, and public transport is really good. It's cheap. It couldn't get any cheaper. If you're legally blind you're entitled to a free travel pass, but it's not of great value if you can't get to where you need to go to.

And finally, some people with a disability who would be quite capable of independently travelling by public transport to an arts event may lack confidence and so would not consider using public transport alone. The lack of a suitable companion or carer to accompany them on public transport is then another factor that presents a barrier to arts participation.

**Accessible  
information  
on the arts**

I know a lot of our residents rocked off to 'Priscilla' and a few things like that and absolutely loved [it], particularly a lot of our residents who are in wheelchairs [which were] accommodated... I think some of the trick is about letting people know what's about... and having people become aware of what they can access... I think we are only as good as the information we get.

Cathie Cerolini, Manager, Quality and Community Inclusion,  
Southern Region, DHS

The topic of how to ensure information about what's on in the arts or about the level of accessibility at a particular arts event is more available to people with a disability, was discussed at length in several focus groups and interviews. It was emphasised that this was not merely a case of producing information in accessible formats, including plain English versions for people with intellectual disabilities, but was also about getting information out to the disability community to encourage them to attend arts events and venues.

Strategies suggested to improve accessibility of information included:

- using a ratings system and international disability symbols on all programming information to indicate the level of accessibility of the arts venue and of the program content
- ensuring a prominent link to access information on the front page of arts organisation websites rather than burying it or providing it in tiny type. (One informant noted that finding arts information about local government arts initiatives on crowded local government websites was difficult, describing the task as 'untangling a rat's nest')
- ensuring arts websites are fully accessible to people with a disability by following recognised international guidelines for web accessibility (for example **W3C Web content accessibility guidelines 1.0** <http://www.w3.org/TR/1999/WAI-WEBCONTENT-19990505/>)
- exploiting other opportunities arising from developments in technology, for example, Gasworks Arts Park's use of an online wiki to promote its events to people with a disability and the Arts Access Victoria use of text messages to alert members of the Deaf community to arts events that are captioned or sign interpreted
- working in partnerships with peak bodies or networks for people with a specific kind of disability to distribute arts information of interest to that community, for example, distributing relevant arts information through Vision Australia channels to reach people with a vision impairment.

The literature review noted the positive impact the Internet and email have had on the capacity for people with a disability to access arts information from their own home. During the consultation, Maurice Gleeson from Vision Australia made another important observation about this positive impact when he commented that one reason many people with a disability prefer the Internet for communication is:

... because it's the only space that they aren't judged. Because they can come in online and no one will even know about their disability. And that's something that we need to develop and understand – that that's another major tool. It actually can affect people's space.

**Accessible information on the arts**  
(continued)

Too much reliance on the power of the Internet to distribute arts information is to be cautioned, however, as some other participants in the consultation noted, arguing that due to the lower income and educational levels of many people with a disability, they may not have access to the Internet or the skills to search it.

In addition, for those people with a disability living in supported accommodation, as Cathie Cerolini observed, even though:

*We have a computer in every CRU [Community Residential Unit] and they [the residents] have access to the Internet... the manager of the house is the main person that would have the access... [and] support staff don't always have non-contact time just to trawl through [the Internet].*

**Audience development for disability arts**

During the consultation, discussion of audience development strategies focused on developing audiences for disability arts, rather than on increasing attendance by people with a disability at general arts events and venues. Most of the discussed barriers to audience participation at general arts events were physical or attitudinal barriers, and these have been covered in other sections of this report.

Increasing audiences for artworks created by people with a disability was considered essential:

- to ensure sustainability of the arts companies and artists producing this work
- to breakdown attitudinal barriers in the general community that lead to patronising attitudes about the quality of arts work produced by people with a disability.

One participant at the focus group for mainstream arts organisations gave an example of the audience divide that is often evident with productions featuring people with a disability:

*We almost have like a whole new audience that comes in when we run anything associated with people with intellectual disabilities. We've got the B team comes for that and the A team comes for everything else.*

Suggested strategies to increase the audience for art created by people with a disability included:

- adding a disability arts performance to seasonal subscription packages for subscribers to mainstream theatre companies (Geelong Performing Arts Centre is using this strategy to build local audiences for Back to Back Theatre)
- targeting influential people in the local community when issuing invitation lists for previews and openings and developing strong marketing campaigns to appeal to mainstream audiences

- lobbying the mainstream arts media for more mainstream reviews of disability arts performances, exhibitions and events
- taking the artwork out to audiences in schools and community locations or, as one participant at the Warrnambool focus group put it, 'take it to where the people are rather than trying to drag people in ... because you just can't drag people off the couch'
- including art created by people with a disability in arts festivals, both at a local level in community festivals as well as in higher profile festivals such as the Melbourne International Arts Festival, so a general audience that might not necessarily make an effort to attend a disability arts event will be exposed to artwork by people with a disability
- arranging creative collaborations between disability arts companies with mainstream arts companies, such as those undertaken by rawcus with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and Back to Back with a number of other mainstream performing arts companies.

A rawcus theatre company spokesperson stated that each time rawcus was programmed as part of a mainstream festival or was involved in artistic collaborations with mainstream companies, they engaged with new audiences and estimate approximately 70 per cent of these attendees go on to become return audience members for the company (focus group for mainstream arts organisations).

An additional audience development strategy mentioned, which was seen to be essential in overcoming negative attitudes among the general population to performers with a disability, was to greatly increase the number of performers with a disability cast in mainstream theatre, film and television productions. The rationale for this strategy is twofold. Firstly, it would make people with a disability more visible and therefore a more commonplace element in the consciousness of art consumers from the general population and, secondly, it would provide people with a disability with the positive experience of having their lives reflected back to them from the stage or screen.







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# Factors affecting creative participation for people with a disability

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## The value of creative participation in the arts

The Stage One literature review found that at all levels of government, both internationally and in Australia, it is now widely accepted that participation in the arts can improve community health and wellbeing in general and social inclusion for people with a disability in particular. Informants in the community consultation concurred with this opinion, especially the participants in the arts educators focus group and forum who cited numerous examples of the positive and sometimes life changing value of creative arts participation for people with a disability. This is revealed in this anecdote from one arts educator who provides art lessons at home to a client with agoraphobia:

When we went to the art shop recently, which was really exciting, we had lunch together, and since then she's been doing a little bit of drawing when I'm not there, discussing maybe going to the park and doing some drawing, and opening the Venetian blinds, which is a huge thing. So yeah, I think just that one little venture to the art shop has shifted something with her.

This example also points to another valuable contribution creative arts participation may bring to the lives of people with a disability – it can provide opportunities for social interaction, the development of friendships and an increase in confidence for people whose disabilities may have led to social isolation and a consequent diminution of their self-esteem.

Creative arts participation can also perform a therapeutic role, particularly for people with psychiatric disabilities:

I guess from my experience working with people with disabilities... what I found the value of the arts was, it enables a person to tell their story. They do not have to sit in front of another person one to one and go through this whole traumatic experience of reliving and telling. They can paint it out and you can draw it out and you can sing it out and you can dance it out and by golly, you heal. I've seen it.

Warrnambool focus group

Art can also provide a communication medium for people whose communication may be limited due to their disability:

People who don't communicate through words [can] still communicate... art enables them – it provides a medium for them to communicate, or to express themselves... to achieve success. Because they might not have success in the traditional subject areas, or curriculum areas, [but] they can have success in art.

Arts educators focus group

## The creative continuum

The barriers to creative participation in the arts for people with a disability, and the strategies to overcome those barriers, will vary according to the nature of a person's creative participation. Creative participation in the arts for people with a disability can be divided broadly into three different levels and types of participation:

- 1. Recreational or therapeutic participation**, where involvement in the arts is treated as a pastime, hobby or therapy and where improvement in social engagement skills and health/wellbeing outcomes through engagement with arts activities is seen as a high priority. Many day programs for people with a disability who have high support needs are designed mainly for recreational or therapeutic participation.
- 2. Community cultural development participation**, where skills acquisition for participants through training by paid or volunteer professional artists is a priority but where the programs have community strengthening and social inclusion outcomes as a higher or equal priority compared to the arts outcomes.
- 3. Career development participation**, where participants undergo training and professional development in order to pursue and sustain employment in the arts at a professional level.

These categories of creative participation are by no means discrete or fixed. There can be overlap between intentions in each category and, increasingly, as the arts and disability sector evolves and grows, there is evidence of movement through the three levels as a form of creative continuum. One example of this continuum taken from the community consultation is rawcus, a well-established theatre ensemble for people with a disability from the City of Port Phillip.

As Cathy Horsley explained in her interview, rawcus began as a one-off initiative for the Awakenings Disability Arts Festival in 2000. It did so well, the City of Port Phillip continued to provide support for the group, which contributed to the capacity of the company to develop artistically and receive growing critical acclaim, which in turn improved its capacity to attract funding from other sources.

One of the current members of the Back to Back ensemble exemplifies the career progression possible for an individual artist with a disability moving from recreational participation in the arts to professional participation. Over a six-year period, having first encountered Back to Back when they performed at his secondary school, this man later took part in two community shows organised by the company. He then joined Theatre of Speed, the Back to Back offshoot for young people with intellectual disabilities, and ultimately auditioned successfully for a paid position in the Back to Back ensemble.

## Professional participation – the arts as a career

Many of the barriers to creative participation in the arts for recreational purposes that were identified in the community consultation (the gatekeeper phenomenon, transport and physical access barriers, prohibitive cost, lack of information on arts activities) have been previously discussed in this report. For this reason, this section will concentrate on barriers to creative participation in the arts at a professional level.

### **Training and professional development**

As activity levels in the Victorian arts and disability sector have increased, both in number and breadth of arts activities involving people with a disability, so too have expectations around skills development and employment opportunities. Currently, the demand for training and professional development exceeds supply, particularly for training beyond entry level.

Several of the participants in the consultation made this point when expressing their frustrations about waiting lists for programs or a lack of options for advanced training and professional development, for example:

I think there just needs to be more opportunities. You know how many people ring me and say, 'Oh, I've got a person who'd be great for rawcus'. And I say, 'Well, rawcus is really full, and JustUs is full and...', 'Oh, but it's a person with a disability and they're just such great performers!' And I talk to them about Rollercoaster and all the other initiatives I know about, but there are actually not enough.

Cathy Horsley, Access Arts Development Officer,  
City of Port Phillip

Community consultation participants also expressed a need for more opportunities to:

- access professional networks of industry peers to improve their capacity to break into new markets and develop an economically viable career in the arts
- access the creative works of other artists in their area of arts practice to inform and challenge their own practice.

In her interview, Lesley Hall, CEO of the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations, raised another valid point about the reason artists with a disability need to have improved access to higher level arts education and training opportunities, that is, the lower general educational starting point experienced by many people with a disability:

The training and skills development is a really big one, and pathways from those more programmed arts areas into other employment as artists, or opportunities to participate in things like visual arts shows that are out there for the community ... people with disabilities have more limited access to education and often [not] the same effective education as people without disabilities... Whether it's performing arts or visual arts, if you haven't had the training, the assistance, again... you're not on the same playing field.

In regard to the Deaf community, some of the educational disadvantage of the past is now being addressed with improvements in education, a fact raised by Ross Onley-Zerkel from Deaf Arts Network. Deaf school children are now more likely to be literate in English and bilingual in Auslan and English and so more able to participate in mainstream arts education and training. The Internet and other adaptive technology, and the consequent capacity to offer some tertiary level arts courses by distance education, has also made a difference to some artists with a disability, an advance illustrated by Deaf writer Michael Uniacke who successfully completed an arts degree by distance education where he could read all lectures and communicate with lecturers online.

Another compounding factor identified in the consultation, like lower basic education levels, is the fact that many people with a disability have lower income levels than the rest of the population, with many of them on disability pensions. This limited income may limit their access to advanced arts training due to the rising costs of university and TAFE courses.

Suggested strategies to address the increasing demand for professional development and training opportunities included:

- collaborations between disability arts companies and mainstream arts companies as a way of upskilling and inspiring the artists on both sides of the partnership (for example, the successful collaboration between the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and rawcus theatre company and Back to Back Theatre's collaborations with Melbourne Workers Theatre, Arena Theatre Company, My Friend the Chocolate Cake and Handspan)
- rewards and incentives to encourage creative collaborations and partnerships that lead to skills exchange and development
- leadership training, internships, residencies and mentoring.

During the consultation, by far the most frequently and extensively discussed strategy to support the professional development of artists with a disability was mentoring, preferably where mentors were paid to encourage them to take on and sustain this role.

**Professional participation – the arts as a career**  
(continued)

**Mentors and role models**

Access Arts (Qld) already has a well-established mentoring program and Arts Access Victoria is considering introducing mentorships and internships. Visual artist and Arts Access Industry and Audience Development Manager, Jane Trengove, also spoke at length in her key informant interview about the value of mentoring, drawing on her personal experience as an art lecturer and volunteer mentor of two visual artists with a disability.

Annie Russell from NMIT, home of the successful Ignition Theatre training course, advocated mentoring as ‘a good model of cross-fertilisation’ for the arts and disability sector. Annie stressed the mentor must take care to support and guide the mentee’s artistic development as opposed to imposing their own agenda, because with successful mentoring, ‘it’s got to be doing with rather than for’.

A type of mentorship can also occur at the organisational level, that is, where a more established organisation supports a developing or emerging organisation through the transmission of skills.

*Mentoring between organisations I think is just a wonderful, very rich thing that can really, really help arts groups... I think there’s so much room for that – people sharing resources, sharing the creative juices amongst different groups and stuff like that. And it can work really well.*

Warrnambool focus group

Bruce Gladwin, Artistic Director of Back to Back Theatre Company in Geelong, provided the following examples of how Back to Back acts as an organisational ‘mentor’ for other emerging theatre companies and actors with a disability:

- working every Wednesday with the 15 actors in Geelong’s Theatre of Speed, which has been operating for about five years
- running an annual summer school which is attended by people from disability theatre groups in regional Victoria
- undertaking a two-term residency in 2009 in Geelong’s Nelson Park School for students with disabilities.

Like Back to Back, rawcus and SPARC theatre groups from the City of Port Phillip also transmit skills to emerging community theatre groups by running training workshops in local government areas beyond Port Phillip.

Victoria's arts and disability peak body, Arts Access, makes a valuable contribution as an organisational mentor by auspicing and nurturing the Deaf Arts Network and The Other Film Festival, initiatives that are well on the way to developing sufficient capacity to grow and continue long term.

The need for mentoring and incentives to allow mid-career artists to take their practice to the next level – or to recover lost ground following career interruptions due to extended periods of illness related to their disability – was also identified during the consultation.

Key informant and researcher, Susan Maley, whose PhD focuses on interviews with 21 successful visual artists, spoke eloquently about the importance of having successful artists as role models, both for the development of upcoming artists with a disability and for sector development:

I think more information about the viability of artistic careers is really important and this can be having artists come for an in-service, to talk about what they're doing. They become the empirical data that this is do-able and that it's worth doing.

Susan then went on to speak about another essential element her research had identified as being a contributing factor in achieving success for the artists she interviewed, that is, passion and perseverance:

So one of the factors that I found was that there is a deep, deep commitment to making art and to the creative process. The majority of them said... you have to love it, you have to be committed to it, you have to devote the majority of your time to it, you have to persevere.

## **Employment**

One of the facts that must be faced when considering how to improve employment opportunities in the arts for people with a disability is the cold, harsh reality that finding paid employment in the arts can also be very difficult for artists and arts workers without a disability. Many people in the arts are either unemployed or intermittently employed. So, the issue is, to what degree are the limited arts employment opportunities for people with a disability due to the fact that a person has a disability or to the fact that the person is seeking employment in a notoriously difficult industry in which to gain paid employment.

This conundrum was taken on board in some of the discussions on employment during the community consultation. Participants acknowledged the universality of the limited employment opportunities in the arts. However, there was general acceptance that due to disadvantage that can be attributed to disability (lower educational levels, limited capacity to pay for arts training and lower confidence levels due to negative social attitudes), incentives or quotas to improve the arts employment prospects for people with a disability can be justified.

**Professional participation – the arts as a career**  
(continued)

To directly address the lack of arts employment opportunities for people with a disability, the most common strategy suggested was the introduction in mainstream arts organisations of employment quotas or benchmarks for people with a disability.

An example of a possible additional employment disadvantage for artists with a disability was provided by key informant Jane Trengove, a well qualified and successful visual artist who recounted her experience in making ends meet when she first graduated from art school. Like many newly qualified artists entering the arts industry, Jane sought paid part-time employment in a non-arts position to support her arts practice. Due to her disability, Jane could not work as a casual in a bar or cafe like most of her peers without a disability; she had to endure two years 'in a horrible wedding photo darkroom'. This illustrates the issue of artists with a disability also having limited options for employment in non-arts work to make money to support their arts practice.

Participants also discussed the negative flipside to targeted employment quotas or incentives that aim to privilege people with a disability. There is perceived to be a danger that artists and arts workers with a disability would find themselves placed even further beyond the mainstream arts industry by such well-intentioned schemes. Those who argued against this concern cited the example of successful government incentives and initiatives to promote the development of Indigenous arts in Australia, both as a way of addressing historical disadvantage and a means of developing arts practice, self-confidence and business skills in artists and arts workers from this community.

This corralling of disability artists was again raised in relation to the experience to date of theatre companies established for people with intellectual or learning disabilities. Although the original intent of these companies and courses may have been to develop skills in participants to improve their employability in the arts in general, the reality is graduates from the Ignition TAFE course in theatre arts at NMIT do not, as a rule, find paid work in mainstream theatre companies. The available work is with other theatre companies set up for actors or theatre workers with an intellectual disability. Bruce Gladwin, Artistic Director of Back to Back Theatre, admits this is the case also with Back to Back:

When the company started twenty-one years ago, part of the objectives were it would be a company [that] would be a stepping stone to other... employment and I just don't think that's ever really been fully realised, and it's not an objective that we uphold in the company... quite often someone casting a film or a TV show... looking at employing an artist with disability will contact the company [to] see if we have someone to meet that brief, and that happens quite regularly, but in terms of... other theatre companies employing the actors, it's a very unlikely scenario for that to happen.

There was also discussion about the employment potential of a developing niche market in the arts access services industry, a niche market in which arts workers with a disability would be advantaged compared to the general population.

Paid positions to supply this niche market could include:

- working as an access consultant on the design and construction of arts buildings and events
- working as a guide in museums and galleries providing audio or sign interpretation tours and services for patrons with sensory impairments.

To maximise the potential for these employment opportunities, it was considered that appropriate training courses could be introduced (a UK Masters level course in sign language interpretation for arts events was quoted as a possible model).

Two other issues were raised in relation to employment: payment and copyright. Discussions on these matters centred on the problems encountered in relation to the returns on sale of art works produced by people with a disability as part of an arts program under the control of a disability services provider. Questions were asked about who owns the copyright (the maker or the program?) and how to overcome problems making payment for works sold to an artist who is on a disability pension without affecting that pension. No real answers to these questions were identified, perhaps suggesting a need for guidelines to be developed on these two issues.

## **The changing role of arts and disability peak bodies**

With the growth and maturation of the arts and disability sector, and the consequent increase in demand for higher level professional development and training in this field, the roles currently performed by arts and disability peak bodies in each state are being reconsidered and debated.

Some key informants and focus groups expressed the need for Arts Access Victoria to be more responsive to this changing environment. There is an expectation that a peak body's focus should be on capacity building, professional development strategies and advocacy. Respondents also questioned why Arts Access Victoria continues to deliver respite and day programs, seeing this activity as detracting from the core function of an arts and disability peak body.

Arts Access Victoria was the first arts and disability peak body in Australia (established in 1974) and its continuing provision of services within DHS frameworks is, in part, a legacy of its origins as a community arts initiative.

**The changing  
role of arts and  
disability peak  
bodies**

(continued)

Arts Access Victoria, in addition to its advocacy role, currently provides a range of services to improve access to the arts for people with a disability and those who are disadvantaged. Through its Artistic Program, it offers workshops, arts events and artist development programs, including regular programs for people with mental illness or psychiatric disability and people with an intellectual disability, physical disability or acquired brain injury. Its Access Program aims to improve access to arts and culture for people with disabilities and people who are Deaf, and its EASE ticketing service offers a specialised arts booking service for people whose choice of seat is restricted due to physical or sensory impairment, people who require access to flexible booking and payment options plus reduced price and free tickets, especially for those who are financially disadvantaged.

Arts Access Victoria also offers disability awareness and DAP training for arts organisations and auspices initiatives such as Deaf Arts Network and The Other Film Festival.

In his interview, key informant Ross Barber, Executive Director of Access Arts (Qld), explained how the 25-year-old peak body has already responded to the perceived changes in need within the arts and disability sector. About four years ago, Access Arts (Qld) underwent a major change of direction, switching emphasis from audience development and the provision of recreational day programs to professional development for artists and arts workers with a disability as a means of supporting viable career paths in the arts. Access Arts (Qld) now has two professional development programs, one for visual artists and one for performing artists (including musicians), and a well-developed mentoring program. Accompanying this change was a decision to increase the number of people with a disability on the staff of the organisation to provide more paid employment and work experience opportunities for artists and arts workers with a disability. As a result, in 2008, seven of the 11 office staff at Access Arts (Qld) had a disability as well as 11 of their 34 contracted artists.

Two key informants from Arts Access Victoria, Criena Gehrke, then Executive Director, and Jane Trengove, Industry and Audience Development Manager, agreed there was a need for the organisation to change focus to respond to changing needs in the arts and disability sector. Both also discussed the fact that Arts Access Victoria is looking at the introduction of mentorships and internships to support and develop career pathways for artists with a disability.

The Western Australian arts and disability organisation, DADAA (Disability in the Arts, Disadvantage in the Arts, Australia) has a peak body role and delivers art day services. In addition to the advocacy and research functions characteristic of most peak bodies, DADAA also provides targeted cultural development programs for people with a disability in supported accommodation, or for disadvantaged members of Indigenous communities, in over 46 Western Australian communities. This latter achievement is made possible through a very well-resourced partnership with the WA Disability Services Commission through which DADAA is funded specifically to provide these services.

Former Arts Access Victoria Executive Director, Criena Gehrke, explained in her interview that one of the reasons Arts Access continues to provide respite and day services is the funding for these programs, which comes from the Disability Services Division of DHS, makes up a considerable chunk of the Arts Access operational budget (Criena estimated as much as 60 per cent). Consequently, whether Arts Access Victoria stops its respite and day services (and so effectively loses 60 per cent of its budget) or continues to provide these programs as well as taking on new professional development and industry development roles for the arts and disability sector, it would require a considerable increase in its operational resources.

Further discussion on Australian arts and disability peak bodies is included in the literature review report.

During the consultation, other suggestions were made for services a Victorian arts and disability peak body could provide to better support professional development for artists with a disability. These included:

- grant-writing services
- a more up-to-date online register of disability artists and arts and disability services
- an employment brokerage agency for artists with a disability.

## **Financial barriers**

You can have the most fantastic ideas or vision but without the resources you [are] not necessarily going to go very far. In other areas, affordability is a huge area for many people who have a disability [and] are either unemployed or underemployed. Affordability is a whole area that we need to keep working towards to improve our arts situation.

Arts and disability organisations focus group

Participants in the community consultation expressed widespread agreement on many of the financial barriers facing people with a disability who wish to participate in the arts as creators, whether for recreational or professional purposes. The following are some of the financial barriers to creative participation identified in the consultation, many of which concur with those identified in the literature review:

- Operating costs for art groups, companies and presenters, including costs of:
  - attracting and retaining trained personnel
  - insurance
  - renting premises
  - training.

**Financial barriers**  
(continued)

The cost factors are not unique to disability arts groups or artists with a disability; they are the same financial barriers faced by many other artists and arts groups in Victoria due to competition for the limited funding pool available for the arts. However, artists with a disability, or art programs for people with a disability, face additional costs that the rest of the arts sector may not incur, for example, the cost of interpreters and support workers and the cost of accessible transport. Because many people with a disability are on limited incomes and are frequently unemployed or underemployed, their capacity to pay for arts training and education may be limited, a disability-specific barrier articulated by one participant in the artists with a disability focus group:

I think it is important if people want to explore the arts, expand their knowledge and their experience... for some people with disabilities who are on a very limited income, it actually costs them to have a meaning in their life, and I think that is doubly discriminatory.

**Current arts funding models – the impact on arts and disability**

While there was frequent discussion during the consultation about the financial barriers mentioned above, one other financial barrier was considered to be perhaps the major obstacle to the growth and sustainability of the arts and disability sector in Victoria – the barrier presented by current arts funding models. During the consultation, this subject arose almost as frequently as the subject of attitudinal barriers and for this reason will be examined in more detail than other financial barriers.

One of the most common complaints made during the consultation was that most arts funding is project based, which is not conducive to continuing growth and sustainability in arts practice. Once again, this barrier is not unique to the arts and disability sector as it also affects the majority of other artists and small to medium arts organisations in Victoria.

However, arguments were mounted by several participants that disability arts is an emerging art form, produced by people who historically have been marginalised and disadvantaged. At this moment in time, to further develop the arts and disability sector and in recognition of the social, educational and economic disadvantage of people with a disability, targeted funding or financial incentives to advance the development of this sector and redress past disadvantage, may be warranted.

The thing that I reckon we haven't mentioned is the stability of an art group. It is all to do with funding. We go there and do one workshop for 'yadda yadda' weeks and then it goes... People who have been in an institution or a structured part of a week, there needs to be something sustainable there so they can relate [to] it rather than an up and an extreme down, an up and an extreme down. And that is one thing I've found the government isn't doing, is keeping something that has stability there. The rollercoaster for the disabled community is just going up and down.

The frequently discussed proposal for targeted funding and incentives did not meet with universal approval in the consultation. There was some concern expressed that this approach to disability arts funding may entrench marginalisation of people with a disability in the arts sector.

Another issue is the fact that the sector attracts two types of government funding – arts funding and disability services funding. At a state level, the Victorian arts and disability sector receives funding support from Arts Victoria (the arts), DHS (disability services) and VicHealth. At a Federal level, the sector receives funding from the Australia Council (the arts) and the Commonwealth Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (disability services).

Participants in the consultation spoke at length about perceived difficulties in the design and delivery of arts programs for people with a disability because of the need to constantly juggle different and sometimes opposing priorities of two types of government funding bodies – one focusing on artistic outcomes (arts funding bodies) and the other on health and social inclusion outcomes (disability services departments). Some participants also expressed the opinion that despite welcome and recent extensive funding support for arts programs by DHS, there was still a way to go in educating some DHS personnel on the value of the arts as a tool to achieve social inclusion outcomes for people with a disability, an opinion rather strongly indicated by these three quotes taken from the community consultation:

If you want to go to a barbecue or you want to go to the cinema, you're right. But if you want to do some vocational training or an arts course or something like that, you really don't have much opportunity.

It feels like with DHS there's a kind of random approach to how they support arts and culture.

We are funded by the DHS and they don't dig artists, really.

There seemed to be some confusion among respondents in relation to DHS funding and the ongoing implementation of State Government policy, which has seen a shift towards more self-directed planning and funding for people with a disability. This shift is intended to empower the person with a disability in their choice of appropriate supports to achieve more independent living and build the resilience of families and carers (DHS 2008b).

Two of the concerns expressed by participants about the shift from block funding for programs to individual support packages for people with a disability were:

- it could limit options for community groups to source or manage funding to sustain community arts programs for people with a disability
- for people with high support needs, the gatekeeper factor might kick in even more strongly with this approach, because if carers and support workers are not interested in, or do not see the value of, the arts, opportunities for arts participation for individuals with a disability may be reduced.

**Current arts funding models – the impact on arts and disability**

(continued)

An additional funding model issue raised by people with a psychiatric disability, or who had family members with a psychiatric disability, is that policy and funding for Victorian Government support for people with mental illness sits in a separate division (the Mental Health and Drugs Division) in DHS. It was felt this may present additional priority barriers for arts and disability organisations servicing people with a mental illness or for people with a psychiatric disability seeking to access arts activities. For example, a focus group participant with a psychiatric disability, who receives a disability pension, was told she would not be able to attend an art group in regional Victoria unless she paid for it, 'because of the funding. There was no funding there'.

Local government funding for the arts, while greatly applauded and appreciated by participants in the community consultation, can also create restrictions on access to creative arts activities and training because arts programs funded in this way are commonly restricted to residents of the particular local government area(s) where the funding is sourced. For example, a representative from Circus Oz expressed a desire to extend the reach of their Sunday circus skills workshops for young people with a disability, which takes 12 people at a time and always has a waiting list. However, as the program is funded jointly by only two local councils, they are obliged to restrict the workshops to residents from those two local government areas.

**Strategies**

Several participants in the consultation suggested the following strategies to overcome conflicts between government funding sources:

- If applying to a government department responsible for disability services, reframe funding applications for arts projects to emphasise social inclusion and wellbeing outcomes rather than artistic outcomes.
- Negotiate with government funders of disability services to allow variations in the use of grant monies to improve the likelihood of artistic outcomes from a project.

Overall, there was a widely held opinion that better funding models are needed to ensure an improvement in the creative capacity and sustainability of the arts and disability sector and to achieve this, access to stronger and more continuous funding support is desirable. Two examples quoted to demonstrate the positive outcomes of this type of ongoing, long-term government support were:

- Arts Project Australia in Northcote, Melbourne ([www.artsproject.org.au](http://www.artsproject.org.au)) – a permanent studio and gallery for artists with an intellectual disability which has been operating since 1974. It receives funding from a wide range of government and philanthropic sources, was assisted by these funders to purchase the building in which the studio and gallery are located, and has distributed and exhibited the work of its artists both nationally and internationally.

- Back to Back Theatre, Geelong ([www.backtobacktheatre.com](http://www.backtobacktheatre.com)) – this widely acclaimed performance ensemble was established in 1987 in a Geelong workshop for people with intellectual disabilities. It has developed into a touring ensemble with a national and international reputation for excellence and innovation, performing in mainstream arts venues and festivals in Australia, USA, Europe and Singapore. This company has a strong funding base with support from Arts Victoria, the Australia Council, the Commonwealth Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, local government and a range of philanthropic organisations.

## Time, process and creative space – disability requirements

Three other topics that recurred in a number of interviews and focus groups, especially the focus group and forum for arts and disability organisations, were time, process and creative space.

### Time

Time was considered an issue because, due to disability or illness associated with disability, greater time might be required to:

- prepare funding applications, acquittals or reports
- fulfil assessment requirements for arts training courses
- meet deadlines for artistic outcomes
- undertake a creative process
- provide for someone with communication difficulties to speak and be heard.

Jane Trengove spoke in her interview of her experience as an art lecturer seeing the difficulties faced by tertiary students with mental illness who have 'struggled to get through their course because they have bouts of illness, they can't meet course requirements, the course is not flexible'.

A staff member who works with Back to Back Theatre commented that because Back to Back has reached a stage where they receive recurrent funding, 'what that funding does is give us time ... time for work'.

A participant at the mainstream arts organisations forum and Ross Onley-Zerkel, from Deaf Arts Network, both spoke of the need for longer rehearsal periods for signing and audio interpreters. This is needed to ensure they have sufficient time to become familiar with the scripts or artworks and that the interpretation reflects as closely as possible the artistic intent of the production or exhibition being interpreted.

**Time, process  
and creative  
space – disability  
requirements**

(continued)

Scheduling of arts programs or training, or arts related forums and meetings may also be an issue. To attend such programs or meetings, people with a disability in supported accommodation may need the assistance of carers or special transport, both of which are usually most readily available during daylight hours.

And one final reason for more time from a focus group participant in Horsham:

*I think the time factor... for anyone making art takes time, and to create the space which is safe. People who have often come from institutions and very rigid places, need a lot of time and a lot of time without tick-the-box outcomes to begin with.*

**Process**

Process was considered an issue because certain well-established creative and administrative processes in the arts industry do not take into account the needs or restrictions of a person with a disability. For example,

- Deaf people may not be literate in English, or English may be their second language, so completing a written funding application form or interpreting funding guidelines written in English may be a barrier
- people with an intellectual disability or a disability that affects their speech may not be able to provide sufficient verbal or written feedback to evaluate the success of an arts program, even with assistance from a carer
- reporting systems for training programs or arts programs may be set up with reference to mainstream participants and may not be suitable for reporting the learning progress of people with a disability.

The obvious solution, suggested by informants, to overcome the time and process barriers was an attitudinal change by education and funding bodies. These bodies need to become more willing to accommodate the particular needs of people with a disability by offering them more flexible application, assessment and reporting processes. Informants also suggested other strategies to address these issues, including:

- using a video camera to produce a DVD record of the creative process and the response of participants to serve as an evaluation report
- establishing a grant-writing and reporting support service for people with a disability or for organisations offering arts programs for people with a disability
- changing funding application processes to make them more flexible; for example, a two-stage process where the person with a disability or a disability organisation does a verbal 'pitch' for their concept and if successful, they receive assistance to prepare a full application; or even allowing completely verbal submissions, either in person or via an audio-recording

- involving people with a disability on funding assessment panels to ensure greater understanding of the challenges faced by some people with a disability dealing with funding or reporting requirements
- negotiating with and educating funding bodies and education and training providers, by explaining clearly, and perhaps repeatedly, why you need time and process variations, a strategy recommended by a representative from rawcus theatre company at the arts and disability organisations forum:

It's been a really interesting journey with our funding bodies and I feel like, with Arts Victoria in particular, there's been an education that's had to take place. But it has taken place and been great. Our budget lines for our shows don't look the same as another small company. We do not meet for four weeks rehearsal and do a show. Our timelines are considerably longer, often one to two years. So that's different. We have this big cost for transport. We have support workers. We have Auslan interpreters. So we've got all these things in our budget lines that look different to other projects that they're looking at and now we don't have to explain that anymore, which is really great. There was a really big education process that we had to go through.

### **Creative space**

The perception of the self, and how you perceive yourself when you're practising art. And the idea of going into a space that's specifically for that purpose, on all of us, has a particular effect. So the whole value of art-specific spaces was part of what's underpinning this.

Arts educators focus group

Access to space and staff support is vital. Importance of a dedicated space as a strategy to increase visibility and ensure accessibility. If you have a space you can further develop your team and audiences. No need to keep moving and storing things. [There is a] need for an inclusive community art making space.

Morwell forum

The need to have regular access to affordable, accessible, dedicated spaces for art making, presentation and performance was frequently discussed, particularly at regional forums and focus groups as there was considered to be a lack of such spaces in some regional areas. For example, participants at the Morwell forum reported that because there are no public communal arts spaces in Bairnsdale and Baw Baw, people are often forced to use private houses to undertake arts activities for people with a disability.

**Time, process  
and creative  
space – disability  
requirements**

(continued)

One way of addressing this need has been for local government bodies to allow the use of unoccupied or disused buildings for arts groups, either on a gratis basis or for peppercorn rent. Back to Back Theatre, for example, has such an arrangement with the City of Greater Geelong, and Darebin City Council provides two weeks free access per year to the Darebin Performing Arts Centre for the NMIT Ignition Theatre training students. In Warrnambool, some arts and disability groups are taking advantage of the unused Fletcher Jones Factory, and a resource collective is located in a former butter factory in Gippsland, which they share with another organisation.

The downside to being offered free or low cost space in a disused commercial or heritage building is, however, poor levels of disability access. As noted earlier, the costs of retrofitting older buildings to make them more accessible is often considered prohibitive and if the building is heritage listed, modifications to improve access may be restricted.

The downstairs art studio at Benalla Gallery, which is used by a potters' group to train people with a disability, is a case in point, as the gallery director Simon Klose, explained in his interview:

We have had a studio under the gallery which was built specifically for community groups to meet and make art and that facility is now probably past its use-by date in terms of certainly disability access. It falls far short of the mark, with steps down and no fire escape, no disabled bathroom and quite a lot of things are not right. I'm kind of reluctant to close it down. I know that the 14,000 people in town are not going to be able to afford probably a lot of money to get it right. On the other hand, if I do close it, it means that all these groups are going to meet in ... facilities that aren't as empathetic – and removed from where the art is, and so these people won't be joining a big conversation about culture.

Access to high-profile arts spaces to showcase disability arts was also considered a need, but costs for spaces like those in Melbourne's Arts Centre complex were considered prohibitively expensive unless underwritten by a funder, as was the case with the 2008 Connected exhibition of artworks by people with a disability in the Arts Centre's Black Box space, which was funded by the State Trustees and coordinated by Arts Access Victoria.

**Capacity building  
and sustainability  
in the Victorian  
arts and disability  
sector**

Much of the discussion and analysis in this report has been circling around the twin issues of capacity building and sustainability in the Victorian arts and disability sector. The community consultation threw up numerous examples of the capacity building in Victoria within the sector, a capacity well illustrated by the Deaf Can Dance project (see Appendix 5). This recent best practice example demonstrates clearly what is now possible for Victorians with a disability in terms of initiating projects, securing funding, forming partnerships, providing arts training, and attracting critical acclaim.

The sections of this report that deal extensively with capacity building in the arts and disability sector are 'Professional participation – the arts as a career' and 'Current arts funding models – the impact on arts and disability'. A main theme running through those sections is the need to secure adequate levels of funding and support to ensure and encourage the further development of the growing skills base within the arts and disability sector so that it can progress to the next level. The essence of many of the calls to address this need during the community consultation is summed up by this participant in the focus group for artists with a disability, who put forward the suggestion of a clearing house to build capacity:

Most of us don't have the education and the background which other people take for granted to know what to write and how to do it. And why does a group of people who are not related to our community decide what our community wants?

Surely there could be an organisation, or someone, who takes up that, for want of a better word, a clearing house of doing that stuff. So they look at the grant and then they pull it out. They pick up the administration work. They tell you where you can get a wholesale rate for firing for ceramics. So they tell you where to get a wholesale rate from art supplies. Surely there is some way of reducing, then, the cost for not just an organisation, but ultimately that gets passed on to the individual.

In the arts and disability organisations focus group, one participant explained how such a clearing house would also benefit the families and carers of people with a disability:

Mostly the load of running [arts] groups is falling to the carers or the parents of the participants of that group. If you've got a mechanism that allows that group to go to somewhere for the funding, that will support the transport and the funding [of] the support staff, then you've got a sustainable community-run, community-owned organisation that's not going to literally, completely exhaust the parents and carers. If there were some kind of mechanism, either a statewide or a national mechanism that acknowledges [that] things start in the community and they can go for so long in the community before the community themselves are actually exhausted or burnt out, which is in nobody's interests.

Many informants expressed the opinion that arts and disability organisations and initiatives should be 'disability-led', that is, run for and by people with a disability. However, as the above quotes testify, many Victorian artists and arts workers with a disability require further training and professional development in order to build their capacity as leaders.

Key informant Fiona Strahan also made the point that research on arts and disability should ideally be undertaken by researchers with a disability. In support of this view, Fiona advocated a system for tertiary scholarships for people with a disability to improve their research skills.

**Capacity building and sustainability in the Victorian arts and disability sector**

(continued)

Regular conferences and professional workshops devoted to arts and disability are one means of developing necessary leadership and administrative skills within the arts and disability sector. In her interview, key informant Betty Siegel, spoke at length about the success of the Kennedy Center's annual Leadership Exchange in Arts and Disability (LEAD) conference. The conference has proven to be a most effective means of training and informing arts workers responsible for disability access. The LEAD network, which has more than 100 US cultural institutions as members, was cited in the Victorian Arts and Disability Project literature review as a possible model for the Australian arts and disability sector. The literature review also noted that the Accessible Arts NSW inaugural Arts Activated Conference in 2008 had the potential, if supported, to develop into an Australian version of the US LEAD network, providing a regular opportunity for national information exchange on arts and disability. In fact, a second Arts Activated conference is to take place in Sydney on 25–26 March 2010 and this year, in March 2009, as part of the Art of Difference Disability and Deaf Arts Festival organised by Gasworks Arts Park in Melbourne, there was a two-day International Arts Symposium focusing on disability and the arts with Australian and international speakers.

Another issue in relation to capacity building is the need for people with a disability working in the arts to have the freedom to fail in order to learn how to succeed, the importance of which was articulated by these three speakers:

We need to have control over where the money is spent. If we screw it up we need to learn how to screw it up, not for you guys to screw it up. We need to learn that.

Arts and disability organisations forum

The [need for] empowerment of those people to say, 'I'm going in this direction.' Because when people talk about there's no jobs in this [the arts], then many children fight with their parents about what they're going to choose. A person with a disability has a right to have that fight as well. We all have a right to fight.

Leesa Nash, NMIT Preston

So how do you learn resilience if you're not allowed to fail? Because to be independent, you need some of that.

Annie Russell, NMIT Preston





Part D

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# Key findings

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Previous sections of this report have examined in detail findings made through an analysis of the transcripts from audio recordings of interviews, focus groups and forums undertaken for Stage Two of the Victorian Arts and Disability Research Project. This section summarises findings on those topics considered most significant, as indicated by the frequency of their occurrence and the depth of discussion about them during the stage two community consultation.

The community consultation was informed and framed by a discussion paper (see Appendix 1) developed from the September 2008 literature review (Stage One of the Victorian Arts and Disability Research Project). During the community consultation, there was widespread agreement among informants on the findings of the literature review (as outlined in the discussion paper) as well as an absence of disagreement with any particular finding from the review.

Key findings, in order of their appearance in this report, were:

### **In relation to common factors affecting both receptive and creative arts participation for people with a disability**

#### **Data collection**

- Gaps in reliable, current and comparable Australian statistical data on some aspects of arts participation by Australians with a disability, as well as the relative lack of evaluation data to assess the efficacy of strategies introduced to address perceived disadvantage in the arts sector for people with a disability, reduces the capacity of arts and disability agencies, both government and non-government, to argue the case for increased government or private support for disability and the arts. One suggested strategy to improve this situation was the introduction of a disability category in the data sets collected each year by Arts Victoria for its Client Services Survey.
- The lack of a current and comprehensive Victorian database of information about arts and disability organisations and services or of an up-to-date register of artists and arts workers with a disability, creates barriers to sector capacity building that is possible through skill sharing and the establishment of funding and creative partnerships and collaborations. It also presents a barrier to the creation of employment and training opportunities for artists and arts workers with a disability and can lead to an unnecessary duplication of effort in a sector where resources are limited.

- Both the literature review and community consultation threw up issues relating to terminology used when discussing arts and disability – or specific disabilities. The literature review also found that variations in ABS definitions for particular arts terminology created inconsistencies in ABS data collection as it relates to people with a disability. Historically, people with a disability have experienced social exclusion, often through the use of pejorative language. It is important that the terminology used to discuss arts and disability is respectful of the right of people with a disability to define themselves and be defined by using terminology they have chosen and prefer. For all these reasons, it is desirable that an acceptable, standardised set of terminology relating to arts and disability be developed. This would enable improved data collection on arts and disability and also help to ensure a common understanding of the sector when government arts and disability policies and strategies are discussed and developed.

### **Legislation – impact and compliance**

- Both the literature review and the community consultation found Australian and Victorian anti-discrimination legislation covering people with a disability has resulted in an enormous improvement in physical access to many arts venues, particularly in major Victorian Government arts venues. Remaining barriers to improved physical access in arts venues in Victoria were considered to be:
  - the perception that the ‘unjustifiable hardship’ provision of the DDA allowed many smaller arts venues to avoid improving their disability access
  - the cost of retrofitting older buildings to improve disability access, together with the absence of incentives or mandatory requirements to encourage access improvements. This is a particular issue at local government level where disused government or commercial buildings are often made available to community arts organisations for minimal or no rental
  - the tyranny of the architect or designer who makes ‘big impact’ designs for new or refurbished arts buildings a higher priority than access for patrons, particularly those with a disability, which can also sometimes lead to the reduction of disability access features when there are budget pressures.
- There is a reluctance by individuals with a disability to lodge disability discrimination complaints under the DDA because of the cost and length of time it takes to lodge such complaints, not to mention the stress such action may cause. This was seen to present a barrier to enforcement of the legislation.

- Under the DDA, it is illegal for government arts funding bodies to discriminate against people with a disability. However, at present, arts funding bodies, both at a state and federal level, do not make funding dependent on adherence to disability discrimination legislation or access guidelines. The Australia Council will now expect arts organisations in receipt of recurrent funding to establish and report on key performance indicators relating to disability access. The introduction of mandatory disability access requirements for recipients of government arts funding was a popular suggestion during the consultation. A suggested alternative was for funding bodies to encourage strongly rather than legislate for improvements in disability access. One relevant model for this strategy was the model offered by the US National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), where disability access checklists were included as part of all funding applications and agreements. This model could be adopted by Victorian Government departments that provide funds to the arts and disability sector.

### **Disability action plans**

- Victorian Government arts statutory bodies are now obliged by law to produce disability action plans (DAPs). Recent plans released by these arts bodies reveal a growing commitment to the provision of disability access and disability awareness within these organisations, as well as the possible influence of the **aDAPting to Disability** guide and checklist prepared by the Victorian Office for Disability.
- As yet, there is no compulsion for non-government organisations funded by Arts Victoria to produce their own DAPs, although in June 2009, Arts Victoria, in partnership with the Australia Council, did offer training in this area to Victorian arts organisations that receive recurrent funding from both bodies.
- A disability inclusion ratings system to evaluate success in achieving goals of DAPs was also suggested.

### **Access officers and community building**

- The creation of access officer positions in arts organisations, where a staff member is dedicated, either in whole or part, to disability access, is considered to be a very effective strategy to ensure disability access is kept on the agenda at all levels of organisational planning and practice.
- The creation within local government of access officer positions dedicated solely to ensuring and improving arts access for people with a disability, as is the case in the City of Port Phillip, is considered to be the most effective type of access officer position to improve arts opportunities for people with a disability.

- The Community Building program, established and funded by the Victorian Department of Human Services, has done much to improve arts access for Victorians with a disability; however, some RuralAccess Officers have difficulties providing adequate services over big geographic areas when positions are shared across local government areas.

### **Attitudinal barriers**

- One of the most frequently mentioned topics during the community consultation was attitude – how negative attitudes to the arts in general, to disability arts in particular, or to disability itself, can all function as active discouragements to participation in the arts for people with a disability, both as audience members and creative participants.
- Patronising attitudes and the low value assigned to disability arts by some segments of the arts and welfare industries, and by some members of the public, were considered to be barriers to the development of the arts and disability sector. Negative attitudes also manifested as a lack of serious critical analysis of disability arts in the mainstream media, thereby denying the arts and disability sector of what was considered an essential element to ensure growth in public recognition and improvement in the quality of its artistic output.
- People with a disability seeking a career in the arts must also overcome a prejudice commonly held by employment agencies and carers that a career in the arts is considered to be financially precarious and therefore not a choice to be encouraged for a person with a disability.
- A number of strategies to change or dilute negative attitudes were identified, with disability awareness training being considered the most effective strategy. However, it was stressed that such training must be both regular and organisation-wide to be effective, with a focus on training at senior management and board levels to ensure disability access and equity are assigned a high priority in organisational planning and programs.
- A lack of appreciation for the arts, or a failure to assign a high value to the role the arts play in contributing to social wellbeing and inclusion, among families, carers and disability support workers, can also limit arts participation opportunities for people with a disability (the gatekeeper phenomenon is considered to be particularly limiting for people with a disability who had high support needs). This finding points to a need for strategies to change these attitudes.

**In relation to factors affecting arts participation as an audience member for people with a disability**

**Physical access**

- Some arts venues that claim to be accessible are in fact only partially accessible (for example, public spaces may be accessible but backstage areas or artists' studios are not) and access provisions for people with a disability are often less than ideal (for example, back door entrances only, car parks located too far from the building, or the grounds around arts buildings surfaced or designed in a way that causes difficulties for people with vision impairment or mobility disabilities).
- Occupational health and safety requirements for public buildings can lead to conflicts between 'life safety' and disability access, which may actually inhibit access for people with a disability.
- The high cost of retrofitting older or heritage listed buildings to improve disability access is often cited to excuse organisations from making improvements.
- The reduction of disability access features in new arts buildings when there are budget pressures was also considered to be an ongoing barrier to improved access for people with a disability.
- Suggested strategies to improve physical access to arts buildings for people with a disability included:
  - gradually allocating funds over time to cover the cost of physical modifications to improve disability access
  - considering temporary arrangements and structures as interim improvements until permanent modifications can be afforded
  - employing people with a disability or access consultants expert in disability access as consultants on the design and construction of arts buildings
  - developing arts industry standards and guidelines for disability access and access checklists for venue hirers
  - promoting good disability access as an asset for families and elderly patrons.

### **Accessible information on the arts**

- Ensuring the accessibility of arts information for people with a disability is not just a question of producing materials in a range of formats suitable for people with different disabilities. The means of distributing this information effectively to people with a disability is just as important.
- The Internet and related technologies (email, text messaging, wikis) constitute a major breakthrough to enable the effective delivery of information on arts events and programs to people with a disability in their own homes and workplaces. However, to ensure this opportunity is fully exploited, websites should meet international standards for disability access and access information on arts websites should be prominently signposted on the front page of the site.
- Too much reliance on the power of the Internet to distribute arts information is to be cautioned, however, as due to the lower income and educational levels of many people with a disability, they may not have access to the Internet or the skills to search it.

### **Audience development for disability arts**

- The need to grow audiences for artworks created by people with a disability was considered essential to ensure sustainability of the arts companies and artists producing this work, and to break down attitudinal barriers in the general community that lead to patronising attitudes about the quality of arts work produced by people with a disability.
- Suggested strategies to develop audiences for disability arts included: adding a disability arts performance to subscription packages for mainstream theatre subscribers; outreach – taking disability arts into schools and other community locations; including art and performances created by people with a disability in mainstream festivals; and initiating creative collaborations between disability arts companies and mainstream arts companies.

## In relation to factors affecting creative arts participation for people with a disability as artists and arts workers

### Training and professional development

- As activity levels in the Victorian arts and disability sector have increased, both in number and breadth of arts activities involving people with a disability, so too have expectations around skills development and employment opportunities. Currently, the demand for training and professional development exceeds supply, particularly for training beyond entry level.
- There is a demand from artists with a disability for more opportunities to take part in professional networks of industry peers. This participation could improve their capacity to break into new markets to develop an economically viable career in the arts and give them access to the creative works of other artists in their area of arts practice to inform and challenge their own practice.
- People with a disability often have lower basic education levels than the general population which disadvantages them when seeking advanced arts training. A compounding factor is people with a disability frequently have lower income levels than the rest of the population, with many of them on disability pensions, which may limit their access to advanced arts training due to the rising costs of university and TAFE courses.
- The Internet and other adaptive technology, and the consequent capacity to offer some tertiary level arts courses by distance education, has made a difference to arts training opportunities for some artists with a disability, for example, Deaf students who are literate in English.
- The most frequently and extensively discussed strategy to support the professional development of artists with a disability was mentoring, both individual and organisational, preferably where mentors were paid to encourage them to take on and sustain this role.
- The need for mentoring and incentives for mid-career artists to allow them to take their practice to the next level – or to recover lost ground following career interruptions due to extended periods of illness related to their disability – was also identified during the consultation.

- Other strategies to improve professional development and training opportunities for artists and arts workers with a disability included:
  - leadership training, internships and residencies
  - collaborations between disability arts companies and mainstream arts companies as a way of up-skilling and inspiring the artists on both sides of the partnership
  - the introduction of incentives to encourage such collaborations and partnerships.

### **Employment in the arts for people with a disability**

- To directly address the lack of arts employment opportunities for people with a disability, the most common strategy suggested was the introduction in mainstream arts organisations of employment quotas or benchmarks for people with a disability.
- Participants in the consultation acknowledged that finding paid employment in the arts can be difficult for all artists and arts workers whether or not they have a disability. However, due to the disadvantage that can be attributed to disability (lower educational levels, limited capacity to pay for arts training and lower confidence levels due to negative social attitudes about disability), incentives or quotas to improve the arts employment prospects for people with a disability were seen to be warranted.
- Artists with a disability may also have limited options for employment in non-arts work to make money to support their arts practice.
- Access services was identified as a developing niche industry in the arts where arts workers with a disability would actually be advantaged compared to the general population and where they could gain paid employment as access consultants or exhibition guides for people with sensory disabilities.

### **Capacity building within the arts and disability sector**

- There is a need to secure adequate levels of funding and support to ensure and encourage the further development of the growing skills base within the arts and disability sector to facilitate its progression to the next level.
- Because of the shortage of administrative skills and expertise in some areas of the arts and disability sector, informants suggested that until such skills are developed, a service (or 'clearing house') was needed to provide assistance with the preparation and acquittal of grant applications and to provide information and advice on art supplies, training and possible partnerships.

## Part D Key Findings

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- Regular conferences and professional workshops devoted to arts and disability are one means of developing necessary leadership and administrative skills within the arts and disability sector. Attendance by arts administrators and programmers at, and support for, regular Australian conferences on arts and disability (Arts Activated conference in Sydney and the Art of Difference International Arts Symposium in Melbourne) is recommended.

### **Changing role of arts and disability peak bodies**

- With the growth and maturation of the arts and disability sector, and the consequent increase in demand for higher level professional development and training in this field, the roles currently performed by arts and disability peak bodies in each state are being reconsidered and debated.
- The need for Arts Access Victoria to be more responsive to this changing environment, the expectation being that a peak body's focus should be on capacity building, professional development strategies and advocacy.
- Arts Access Victoria currently receives approximately 60 per cent of its operational budget to provide respite and day programs, which it may lose if these programs cease. If this organisation were to expand its services to take on a stronger professional development and support role for artists with a disability, alternative resources to implement the suggested changes to its core business would need to be sourced.

### **Time, process and creative space**

- Time was considered an issue because, due to disability or illness associated with disability, greater time might be required to meet application and reporting requirements of funding bodies or assessment requirements of arts education and training providers.
- Process was considered an issue because certain well-established creative and administrative processes in the arts industry do not take into account the needs or restrictions of a person with a disability.
- Regular access to affordable, accessible, dedicated spaces for art making, presentation and performance for people with a disability was identified as a need, particularly in some regional areas where there was considered to be a lack of such spaces.

**Financial barriers to creative participation in the arts for people with a disability**

- Artists with a disability, or art programs for people with a disability, face additional costs that the rest of the arts sector may not incur, for example, the cost of interpreters, support workers or carers to assist people with a disability at arts programs and the cost of accessible transport to get people with a disability to and from the arts activity.
- Current government arts funding models, including project funding which is the most common method of funding individual artists and emerging arts organisations, were not considered to be conducive to continuing growth and sustainability in the arts and disability sector. While it was acknowledged that this barrier is not unique to this segment of the arts sector, the need for targeted funding or financial incentives was identified to advance the development of this sector and redress past disadvantage. Disability arts is seen to be an emerging art form produced by people who historically have been marginalised and disadvantaged. Targeted funding and financial incentives would build the capacity of the arts and disability sector and recognise the social, educational and economic disadvantage of people with a disability.
- Another funding issue more specific to the Victorian arts and disability sector, is the fact that it attracts two different types of government support – arts funding and disability services funding. Some informants felt this funding model caused difficulties in the design and delivery of arts programs for people with a disability because of a perceived need to juggle the different and sometimes opposing priorities of these two types of government departments. Building on the success of existing arts and disability partnerships in government, both whole-of-government initiatives within Victoria as well as inter-government partnerships between Federal, State and Local Governments, was considered to be the most effective solution to this problem.



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# Conclusion

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## Conclusion

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### Conclusion

The findings of the Victorian community consultation indicate that inequality still exists and people with a disability do not have the same access to the arts as other Victorians. The factors affecting the cultural participation of people with a disability can differ depending on the context – there are issues specific to professional arts practice, community programs, local government and audiences with a disability.

However across these diverse areas, four key themes begin to emerge that could provide a framework for further work:

1. Community awareness and attitudinal change
2. Policy, legislation and compliance
3. Employment and education
4. Capacity building and sustainability

All Victorians are entitled to a rich cultural life and the opportunity to work, create and experience the arts is a fundamental human right. While this report and the accompanying stage one literature review and analysis highlight the inequalities that exist for people with a disability, they also provide a unique snapshot of a dynamic and burgeoning arts and disability sector.

Within these reports, there are a myriad of successful Victorian strategies and initiatives and a wealth of ideas and suggestions for the future. Overwhelmingly, there was a clear demand among respondents for an uptake of the numerous strategies uncovered during stages one and two of this research project. These strategies and initiatives will enable further capacity building within the arts and disability sector and support the next stage of its development as a vital and evolving part of Victoria's arts industry.

During the community consultation there was a detectable underlying mood of hope and optimism that the findings of this research, in conjunction with the **National Arts and Disability Strategy**, would lead to significant positive outcomes for people with a disability – as audience members, creators and arts workers.

The findings from this community consultation, along with the Stage One literature review and analysis will provide the basis for a cross-government approach to increasing cultural participation of people with a disability in Victoria.

## Footnote

The Victorian Arts and Disability Research Project occurred at a time of growing national interest in the cultural participation of people with a disability, an interest that led to several other Australian arts and disability research projects taking place in parallel with the Victorian project.

In 2008, shortly after the Victorian Government commissioned this research, the Cultural Ministers Council (CMC) of Australia announced its plan to develop a **National Arts and Disability Strategy**. The CMC issued a call for submissions to be sent to its strategy steering group during the same period as the research was undertaken for Stages One and Two of the Victorian Arts and Disability Research Project.

In the second half of 2008, two further Australian research projects on arts and disability were undertaken – one in New South Wales and one in South Australia. The NSW project was a literature review on arts and disability, prepared by Andrea Cheng for Accessible Arts, the NSW peak body for arts and disability (Cheng, 2008). This project forms the basis for a planned action strategy for arts and disability in NSW. Cheng's literature review was completed in the same month as the Victorian Arts and Disability Research Project literature review and discusses some of the same literature cited in the Victorian review, with a focus in its analysis on a NSW context.

In South Australia, in November 2008, an independent research company, DQ Facilitation, was contracted by Arts SA to consult with the arts and disability community to 'determine the service needs of the disability arts sector in South Australia and the best model of delivery' (DQ Facilitation, 2008: 4). The report of this consultation was released in December 2008 and, unlike the Victorian research, concentrated on creative arts participation, rather than arts participation as audience members by people with a disability. Despite this difference, many of the findings in the South Australian report supported findings made through the Victorian research project in relation to the employment and training needs of artists with a disability.

As all these research projects were commissioned at much the same time, there has been a certain amount of cross-fertilisation between the projects. The South Australia report, for example, acknowledged the usefulness of the Victorian literature review in identifying the main barriers to arts participation for people with a disability (ibid: 5). The Victorian literature review was also submitted to the CMC National Arts and Disability Strategy Steering Group as part of its information gathering process.



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# Appendices

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### Appendix 1: Discussion Paper

The following paper was provided to participants and any interested people prior to the forums.



#### Discussion Paper for Forums

#### Arts and Disability Research Project 2008

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

**The Cultural Development Network for the Victorian State Government through the Office for Disability, DPCD, Arts Victoria and the Department of Human Services.**

The content of this Discussion Paper is drawn from the findings of the research project so far, including an international literature review, key informant interviews and survey responses from individuals with a disability.

#### Background

The context for this project is the increasing recognition globally of the contribution of the arts to the strength of communities. In Australia and internationally, significant steps have been taken to improve arts participation rates for people with a disability. Yet in spite of the great progress that has been made, arts and cultural participation rates for Australians with a disability remain lower than those for the general population.

Through this Discussion Paper, we invite the community to discuss issues raised by the project and to assist us to:

- identify barriers to arts participation for people with a disability; and
- identify strategies for overcoming these barriers so that the disparity in arts participation can properly be addressed.

#### Value of the arts

A significant body of research exists documenting the benefits of arts participation for individuals and their communities. Arts can be considered as a basic human right and an intrinsically meaningful experience, as well as an activity that can assist in achieving many valued outcomes. These include increased social inclusion, improved health and

wellbeing, greater economic progress and better educational achievement.

The contribution of the arts to valued outcomes is widely accepted and is reflected in various levels of government policy and planning.

**DISCUSSION QUESTION: What do you think are the benefits of participation in the arts for people with disability?**

## **Disability in Australia**

### **Arts participation for people with a disability**

The ABS feature article, Cultural Participation by Persons with a Disability 2008 reported that, in 2006 in Australia, adults with a disability were significantly less likely than other Australians to have attended arts events and venues or participated in arts activities. This difference remained constant over the previous four years. Not surprisingly, people who experienced the most restrictions associated with their disability were even less likely to have attended arts events or actively participated in arts.

### **Barriers to arts participation**

This research indicates a range of barriers that prevent people with a disability participating more fully or frequently in the arts. These include:

- Financial - cost of admission and capacity to pay
- Transport - transport and parking difficulties
- Physical - inaccessible physical environments
- Interpretive - lack of disabled access features in arts venues, such as hearing loop technology, subtitles and Auslan interpreters for the Deaf and hearing impaired
- Information and availability- Lack of accessible information about accessible arts venues and activities in arts marketing materials, or lack of availability of arts activities.
- Training - inadequately trained arts personnel – low levels of disability awareness and skills among staff at arts venues
- Attitudinal - negative views about people with a disability, held by arts personnel and society in general
- Aesthetic – negative responses to arts practice by and about people with a disability

These barriers can also serve as disincentives for arts practitioners with a disability pursuing a career in the arts.

**DISCUSSION QUESTION: Which of these barriers do you consider the most significant in preventing people with a disability from participating more fully in the arts? Are there any other barriers you are aware of?**

### **Strategies to overcome barriers to participation in the arts**

Findings from the research so far indicate a range of strategies that can assist in overcoming of barriers to participation in the arts by people with a disability. These can be divided into the following broad categories:

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### **Strategies that could be undertaken by governments include:**

- arts-specific or disability-specific legislation, policies and planning, particularly DAPs, to increase arts participation by people with a disability or protect their right to such participation
- improvements to public transport services
- improvements in education and training for people with a disability

### **Strategies that could be implemented by arts venues and organisations:**

#### **Design strategies;**

- improved transport and parking access
- improved physical design and fit-out

#### **Audience development strategies;**

- use of adaptive technologies,
- staff training to improve service, increase skills in adaptive technology and reduce negative attitudes to disability
- greater range, diversity and affordability of accessible arts programs and events
- programming that is more reflective of the wider community experience including that of people with a disability
- marketing that improves awareness of accessible arts programs and events amongst people with a disability

#### **Employment and training strategies**

- to increase opportunities for artists and arts workers with a disability to be employed as artists and arts workers, and participate as volunteers and Board members of arts organisations;

### **Strategies that could be initiated by government, funding bodies, bodies or arts organisations including peak bodies;**

- funding programs and application processes that support and encourage greater levels of application from people with a disability or from organisations that foster arts participation by people with a disability
- recognition of artistic achievement in the area of arts and disability through arts industry awards, exhibitions and events that celebrate and showcase achievements;
- more research in the area of arts and disability; and,

**Strategies that need to occur at the widest community level**

- Changed public perceptions about disability, perhaps as a result of advocacy from people with a disability themselves and the wider community.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:** Which of these strategies would you consider the most important to reduce barriers to arts participation by people with a disability? Can you suggest any others?

Other gaps in the arts and disability sector

In addition, three other gaps were identified in relation to the Victorian arts and disability sector. They are:

- the absence of a current, comprehensive guide to arts and disability services, disability access guidelines and legislation in Victoria;
- the absence of a comprehensive web portal to promote and provide information on arts and disability services, adaptive technology for artists and arts audiences, opportunities and events in Victoria, particularly employment opportunities.
- the relative absence of effective, long-term career development strategies for artists or arts workers with a disability.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:** How important do you see these issues? Which of them would you nominate as priority for government attention and resources?

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### Appendix 2: Key informants

The following is a list of those people who were interviewed as part of the community consultation

#### **Ross Barber**

Executive Director,  
Access Arts, Queensland: Interstate peak body for arts and disability

#### **Cathie Carolini**

Manager, Quality and Community Inclusion  
Department of Human Services, Southern Region:  
State Government department with major role in providing disability services

#### **Bernie Clifford**

Training Manager and Access Consultant  
Morris Goding Consulting: Provide access for mainstream organisations,  
especially arts venues and festivals

#### **Neil Cole**

Playwright  
Former lawyer and former Member of the Victorian Parliament

#### **Paul Dunn**

Artist  
Former Senior Project Officer, Community Building  
Disability Services, Department of Human Services

#### **Criena Gehrke**

Executive Director (until December 2008)  
Arts Access Victoria: Peak body for arts and disability sector in Victoria

#### **Bruce Gladwin**

Artistic Director  
Back to Back Theatre, Geelong: Internationally recognised theatre company that  
employs artists with disability, based in large regional city near Melbourne

#### **Maurice Gleeson**

Policy and Advocacy Officer  
Vision Australia: Australia-wide peak body for people with vision impairment

#### **Lesley Hall**

CEO  
Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO): National peak body  
for disability organisations  
Board member Arts Access Victoria and Art of Difference Festival

#### **Nikki Sheldon**

National Policy Officer  
Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO)

**Crusader Hillis**

Director/CEO

Gasworks Arts Park, Albert Park: Arts venue and presenting organisation with a disability focus, inner metropolitan Melbourne

**Cathy Horsley**

Access Arts Development Officer, Arts and Festivals Department

City of Port Phillip: Local government arts programmer in inner metropolitan Melbourne Council

**Simon Klose**

Director

Benalla Art Gallery: Regional art gallery run by local government in small city in regional Victoria

**Susan Maley**

PhD student

Queensland University of Technology: PhD researcher investigating the experiences of visual artists with a disability

**Lisa Moss**

Team Leader

Personal Helpers and Mentors program, Casey area

**Leesa Nash**

Coordinator

Ignition Theatre Training, NMIT, Preston: TAFE theatre training program for people with learning disabilities

**Ross Onley-Zerkel**

Coordinator, Art of Difference Conference

Coordinator, Deaf Arts Network

Deaf Arts Network is the Victoria-wide arts network for Deaf people

**Annie Russell**

Program Coordinator, Work Education

NMIT, Preston TAFE

**Judith Sears**

Senior Policy Officer

Arts Victoria: State Government arts department

**Betty Siegel**

Director, Accessibility Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

Washington DC, USA: Leading international venue for performing arts

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### Appendix 2: Key informants (continued)

#### **Richard Stone**

RuralAccess Project Officer  
Warrnambool City Council and Corangamite Shire: Disability access role in local government across regional city and regional shire

#### **Fiona Strahan**

Artist  
Disability activist  
RuralAccess Worker (until December 2008)  
Hepburn and Moorabool Shire Councils: District-wide disability access role

#### **Jane Trengove**

Visual artist  
Industry and Audience Development Manager  
Arts Access Victoria: Peak body for arts and disability in Victoria

#### **Michael Uniacke**

Writer  
Policy Officer, Disability Action Plan Unit  
Victorian Office for Disability: State Government office for disability advocacy

## **Appendix 3: Focus groups and forums**

### **Focus group 1 – general public**

7 May 2008, Ballarat Fine Art Gallery

Presented in partnership with City of Ballarat, DHS (Grampians), RuralAccess, Deaf Access, MacCallum Disability Services

**Public forum:**

‘Communities, Accessibility and the Arts: responding to and embracing difference in arts and cultural contexts’

**Focus group:**

How can we increase participation in the arts for people with a disability?

**Attendance:**

16 – artists, teachers, Local and State Government workers, disability service providers, arts organisation representatives, arts therapists, health workers

**Disability identification:**

Approximately 40 per cent

### **Focus group 2 – general public**

9 May 2008, Latrobe Regional Gallery, Morwell

Presented in partnership with Latrobe City Council, Wellington Shire Council, Rural and Deaf Access, Regional Arts Victoria

**Public forum:**

‘Communities, Accessibility and the Arts: responding to and embracing difference in arts and cultural contexts’

**Focus group:**

How can we increase participation in the arts for people with a disability?

**Attendance:**

27 – artists, teachers (school and TAFE), Local and State Government workers, disability service providers, arts organisation representatives

**Disability identification:**

Approximately 20 per cent

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### Appendix 3: Focus groups and forums (continued)

#### **Focus group 3 – arts educators**

14 October 2008, Gasworks Arts Park, Albert Park, Melbourne

Presented in partnership with Gasworks Arts Park

##### Public forum:

‘Arts Education and Disability: Getting Out of the Box’

##### Focus group:

Issues in arts education and people with a disability – for education professionals from all sectors: school leaders, teachers, support staff from primary, secondary and tertiary sectors

##### Attendance:

11 – artists (2), arts organisation representatives (3), special school teachers (3) and disability service organisations (3)

##### Disability identification:

None specifically identified as a person with a disability

#### **Focus group 4 – artists with a disability**

15 October 2008, RACV Club, Melbourne

##### Public forum:

‘Artists and Disability: Finding New Voices’ – for artists and arts workers from all art forms, who experience disability

##### Focus group:

Issues in arts and disability for artists

##### Attendance: 11

##### Disability identification:

Approximately 66 per cent – vision impaired 33 per cent, physical disability 22 per cent and mental health issues 12 per cent

#### **Focus group 5 – arts and disability organisations**

16 October 2008, North Melbourne Town Hall

##### Public forum

‘Arts and Disability: Pride, Access, Change’ – for artists, arts workers, staff and members of organisations specifically focused on arts and disability

##### Focus group

Issues for arts and disability organisations

##### Attendance:

15 – arts organisations (5), arts and disability organisations (6), MetroAccess (1), disability organisations (2), special school (1)

##### Disability identification:

Approximately 27 per cent – vision impaired (3) and autism (1)

### **Focus group 6 – mainstream arts organisations**

17 October 2008, North Melbourne Town Hall

**Public forum:**

'Arts and Disability: Getting Out of the Box' – for those working in arts organisations and venues, arts presenters and festival and event organisers

**Focus group:**

Disability issues for arts organisations, venues, presenters and event organisers

**Attendance:**

21 – artists (3), local government (2), State Government (2), disability organisations (2), arts and disability organisations (1), arts organisations (11), including Melbourne Museum, Geelong Performing Arts Centre, National Gallery of Victoria, Victorian Arts Centre, Melbourne International Arts Festival and Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI)

**Disability identification:**

14 per cent - vision impaired (3)

### **Focus group 7 – disability service providers**

20 October 2008, North Melbourne Town Hall

**Public forum:**

'Disability and the Arts: Getting Out of the Box' – for those working in the disability sector, especially those interested in the arts

**Focus group:**

Issues for arts and disability services

**Attendance:**

19 – local government (3), disability service organisations (10), State Government (1), artist (1), arts and disability organisations (2), arts organisations (2)

### **Focus group 8 – the wider arts and disability community**

22 October 2008, 'The Connection', Shepparton

Presented in partnership with City of Greater Shepparton and RuralAccess

**Public forum:**

'Arts and Disability: Getting Out of the Box' – for people working in arts organisations and venues, arts presenters and festival and event organisers, and those who enjoy attending arts events

**Focus group:**

Issues for arts organisations

**Attendance:**

19 – local government (6), disability organisations (3), community organisations (8), artists (2) (Note: many local government staff present had backgrounds as artists)

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### Appendix 3: Focus groups and forums (continued)

#### **Focus group 9 – the wider arts and disability community**

24 October 2008, Bendigo Town Hall

Presented in partnership with the City of Greater Bendigo

**Public forum:**

'Arts and Disability: Finding New Voices' – for artists and arts workers, cultural development workers from local government and community organisations, teachers, therapists, event organisers

**Focus group:**

Arts and disability for cultural development workers

**Attendance:** 22 – State Government (1), academic (1), local government (6), arts and disability organisations (3); disability organisations (3), artists (6), community organisations (2)

#### **Focus group 10 – festival attendees and general public**

25 October 2008, Unconventional Art Conference, Awakenings Festival, Horsham

Presented in partnership with Awakenings Festival

**Public forum:**

Guest speakers; international artist, disability activist and academic Petra Koppers and playwright and poet Neil Marcus

**Focus group:**

Issues for people with a disability who are interested in the arts, as well as artists with a disability

**Attendance:**

9 – people with a disability (4), artists who work with people with a disability (4), arts and disability organisation (1)

#### **Focus group 11 – the wider arts and disability community**

14 November 2008, Warrnambool

Presented in partnership with City of Warrnambool and RuralAccess

**Public forum:**

'Arts and Disability: Finding New Voices' – for people interested in the arts, especially those with a disability, as well as those in arts organisations and the disability sectors

**Focus group:**

Issues for people with a disability who are interested in the arts, as well as artists with a disability

**Attendance:**

14 – arts organisations (1), arts and disability organisations (2), disability service providers (4), artists (1) and students (3)

**Disability Identification:**

Physical disability (1), psychiatric disability (2)

## **Appendix 4: Arts and disability in Victoria – a list**

The following arts organisations and events mentioned during the community consultation indicate the level and diversity of arts activity within the arts and disability sector in Victoria.

### **Art of Difference Festival, Gasworks Arts Park, Albert Park**

A two-week, biennial international festival celebrating disability and Deaf arts featuring visual, performing, new media and literary artists. Art of Difference 2009 was the fourth festival held in the nine years since it began and included professional development workshops and a two-day conference on arts and disability.

### **Arts Access Victoria, South Melbourne**

Victoria's peak body for arts and disability, Arts Access provides information and services for people with a disability or who are disadvantaged. Services include advocacy, the EASE ticketing service, arts events and artist development programs, including regular programs for people with mental illness or psychiatric disability and people with an intellectual disability, physical disability or acquired brain injury. Its Access Program aims to improve access to arts and culture for audience members with disabilities or who are Deaf.

### **Arts Project Australia, Northcote**

Arts Project Australia was founded in 1974 with the express purpose of exhibiting artwork by artists with an intellectual disability in a manner that accords them the same dignity and respect as other artists. Arts Project Australia runs a studio where people can develop their artistic potential with the assistance of practising artists and have their work promoted as belonging to the broad spectrum of contemporary art. It offers ongoing studio-based sessions, exhibitions and a leasing program through which the work of its artists is promoted locally, nationally and internationally across a variety of exhibiting contexts, including public institutions and commercial galleries.

### **Aspire, Warrnambool**

Aspire is a non-government organisation operating in south-west Victoria and Tasmania, with a head office in Warrnambool. It offers a range of community arts projects for people with psychiatric disabilities.

### **Awakenings Festival, Horsham**

Awakenings is an annual disability arts festival held in regional Victoria which was established in 1996 by the Wimmera Leisure Options Program (now Access for All Abilities), a program of Wimmera Uniting Care. It is a key Australian event in the disability arts sector, a recipient of many awards and is recognised nationally and internationally. The festival has strong government and philanthropic support as well as support from local Wimmera businesses.

### Appendix 4: Arts and disability in Victoria – a list

(continued)

#### **Back to Back Theatre, Geelong**

Formed in 1987 and based in Geelong, Back to Back Theatre is driven by an ensemble of eight actors perceived to have intellectual disabilities. From 1990 to 1998 the company undertook a series of highly successful collaborations with Circus Oz, Melbourne Workers Theatre, Arena Theatre Company, Handspan, My Friend The Chocolate Cake and Snuff Puppets. The company has been widely recognised and acclaimed for its performances and has toured nationally and internationally.

#### **The BiPolar Bears, City of Port Phillip**

The BiPolar Bears is part of the City of Port Phillip's Access Arts program, designed to create arts participation opportunities for people living with a mental illness. The band has been playing for 15 years, making it one of Melbourne's most stable rock groups. They have performed at Federation Square, the Sydney Opera House, Brisbane's Powerhouse, Rockhampton, with the Choir of Hard Knocks on ABC radio, across country Victoria, St Kilda Festival, regularly at Club Wild's discrimination-free dance party events, many mental health events and even a performance for inmates of the psychiatric ward at Port Phillip prison.

#### **Circus Oz, Melbourne**

Circus Oz, the renowned rock'n'roll, animal-free circus formed 30 years ago in Melbourne, conducts regular circus workshops in Melbourne for children and teens with disabilities in conjunction with Joint Councils Access for All Abilities. The workshops aim to build self-esteem, confidence, social skills and physical coordination.

#### **Club Wild, North Melbourne**

Club Wild is one of Australia's leading community arts organisations run by and for people with disabilities. It runs disability friendly dance parties, training and creative workshops in song writing, music performance, drumming and dance, hip hop, rapping, DJing, MCing, multimedia, event management and technical training and community building. Club Wild is based at Arts House, North Melbourne Town Hall.

#### **Connected exhibition, Melbourne**

An annual visual arts exhibition of works by new and emerging Victorian artists 18 years and over, who have an experience of mental illness or intellectual disability. The exhibition is funded by State Trustees of Victoria and takes place in the Black Box Theatre in the Victorian Arts Centre. In 2009, its seventh year, poetry has been added to the program.

#### **Creatability Events Network, Bendigo**

Creatability Events Network in Bendigo provides performing arts opportunities, workshops, dance parties and social activities for young adults with disabilities.

**Cunningham Dax Collection, Parkville, Melbourne**

The Cunningham Dax Collection comprises more than 12,000 works on paper, paintings, ceramics and textiles, created by people who have experienced mental illness or psychological trauma. The collection is dedicated to the conservation and ethical exhibition of these works, and the use of art to educate the public about mental illness. The collection is auspiced by the Mental Health Research Institute in Parkville and was founded by Dr Eric Cunningham Dax who was the Director of the collection until 1995.

**Deaf Can Dance, Melbourne**

Deaf Can Dance was a project developed by Deaf Arts Network in response to demand by young Deaf people for Hip Hop dance training. The workshops culminated in a performance for the 2008 Melbourne Fringe Festival and the initiative is continuing in 2009 as So You Think Deaf Can Dance, an eight-week series of dance workshops for young Deaf people 16 years and over at the Dance Factory in Richmond, Melbourne.

**Deaf Arts Network**

Deaf Arts Network (DAN) supports Deaf people in the arts, Auslan and Deaf Cultures by creating opportunities for Deaf artists and the broader Deaf community, and by linking the arts and Deaf communities with a news service. DAN works in partnership with Arts Access Victoria and the Victorian Council of Deaf People.

**EASE Ticketing Service**

The Arts Access Victoria EASE Ticketing Service offers practical information on arts attendance, a specialised seating service and affordable ticket prices (reduced price and some free tickets) to ensure more people with a disability can attend arts and entertainment events.

**Family Dog Theatre, Melbourne**

Family Dog Theatre began in 2002 at Horsham's Awakenings Festival. It has collaborated with artists from Ignition Theatre Training (NMIT), Westside Circus, Deakin University and the Victorian College of the Arts to support young performers using physical theatre, acrobatics, contact dance, stilt walking, puppetry, clowning and animation. Family Dog Theatre hosts the Bow WOW! Festival – an inclusive youth performing arts festival of workshops and performances. It also offers performance and production training to create recreational and career pathways for youth with disabilities.

### Appendix 4: Arts and disability in Victoria – a list

(continued)

#### **Footscray Community Arts Centre, Melbourne**

Footscray Community Arts Centre has a commitment to inclusive programs and offers two arts programs for people with a disability – ArtLife and Art Day West. ArtLife is a curated art day program that provides opportunities for participation in a range of artistic experiences including theatre, ceramics, music and writing. These arts activities are combined with development of life skills in areas such as communication, cooking and general self-development. Art Day West is a community-based arts program for people with a disability, covering activities in music, animation, visual and performing arts. It operates one day a week from Footscray Community Arts Centre.

#### **Fusion Theatre Company, Dandenong**

Fusion Theatre Company provides performance training and opportunities for people with disabilities. Members begin creating theatre by workshopping their ideas for new plays. This includes discussion, games, improvisation and reflection on the workshop. The program is funded by the City of Greater Dandenong.

#### **Ignition Theatre Training, Preston**

Australia's first formal theatre training course for people with intellectual disabilities is provided jointly by the Drama department and the Work Education Unit at the North Melbourne Institute of TAFE (NMIT). Certificate I in Live Production - Theatre and Events is suitable for students with disabilities, particularly those with individual learning needs. This course is supported by the City of Darebin, which provides activity opportunities for students in Darebin's Arts and Cultural Development Branch. To be eligible for Ignition, students must be funded by a relevant government program.

#### **Interact Australia Art Education Program at Abbotsford Convent, Melbourne**

This program is designed to enhance the educational opportunities of adults with disabilities in fine arts, theatre arts, multimedia, music, dance, communication and self-representation. The program emphasises engagement in collaborative projects with mainstream arts and community organisations, and students are encouraged and supported to participate in public cultural events showcasing their artwork and performance productions.

#### **JustUs, City of Port Phillip**

Formed in 1991, the JustUs drama group is a performance-based arts project that caters for people with an intellectual disability. Weekly workshops take place during school terms and provide company members with additional experiences through links with other drama groups, and connections with other activities in the City of Port Phillip and the broader community. Around 15 members participate in the program on an ongoing basis. JustUs has performed at Parliament House, Gasworks Art of Difference Festival, the Global Garden Party and Polyglot Theatre and Theatreworks in St Kilda. The City of Port Phillip receives funding for JustUs from the Department of Human Services, Southern Region.

**Karingallery, Geelong**

Karingallery is a commercial art gallery in central Geelong offering instruction in the visual arts for people with a disability, including painting, papier mache, sculpture, ceramics and printmaking. Finished artworks are displayed and sold from the gallery located in Geelong's art precinct in James Street. Karingallery is an initiative of Karingal Community Living, which provides day programs and activities for people with a disability.

**KickstART Contemporary Art, Albert Park**

KickstART Contemporary Art is an innovative visual arts program for people who experience mental illness. Classes are held every Wednesday 1–3 pm during school terms and focus on 2D work. The program includes regular exhibitions, gallery visits, life drawing sessions, art making outings and artist talks.

**NEAMI Splash Arts Studio, Preston**

Splash is a specialist service working exclusively through the visual arts towards psychosocial rehabilitation and recovery for people with a mental illness. Splash runs regular workshops in painting, drawing, print making, mosaic, sculpture and art forums. The studio also facilitates a range of community arts projects, exhibitions and other activities and has a Koori arts program that runs in conjunction with the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service.

**The Other Film Festival, Melbourne**

Presented by Arts Access Victoria at the Melbourne Museum, The Other Film Festival is a fully-accessible, biennial festival of Australian and international short films, documentaries and animations with a focus on disability. Academy Award winning animator Adam Elliot is the festival patron.

**Platform Youth Theatre, City of Darebin**

Platform Youth Theatre works with professional artists to create theatre with and by young people aged 16–26 of all abilities and provides some performing arts opportunities for young people with a disability.

**RAG Theatre, City of Port Phillip**

RAG Theatre is an award-winning ensemble of performers who create group-devised theatre based on the cast members' own experiences of mental illness. Founded in 1993, RAG Theatre is supported by the City of Port Phillip as part of a commitment to creating arts opportunities for people who experience mental illness.

### Appendix 4: Arts and disability in Victoria – a list

(continued)

#### **rawcus**

rawcus began as a Scope (Vic) Leisure Action initiative to set up a drama group to perform at the 2000 Australian Cerebral Palsy Conference. Invited by Scope to help establish the project, the City of Port Phillip then began discussions with Theatreworks to find a home for the fledgling company. A three-way partnership was formed to support rawcus, drawing on the combined expertise of a disability service, an arts organisation and local government. rawcus is now a dynamic exchange between artists with and without disabilities producing some of Melbourne's most vibrant and original theatre. The company collaborates with professional arts practitioners and devises new work that gives a voice to the imaginative world of the ensemble.

#### **Rollercoaster Theatre, Melbourne**

Rollercoaster Theatre is a non-profit organisation comprising an ensemble of eight performers with a disability. The company was set up in 2006 by the families of graduates of Ignition Theatre training course at NMIT to develop the artistic performance talents of Ignition graduates and other similarly qualified people with disabilities. Rollercoaster Theatre provides continuing education and vocational training in theatre management, production and performance, and promotes the ensemble through public performances on stage, at community festivals and in workshops.

#### **Second Story, Prahran**

Second Story is a program of Uniting Care's Prahran Mission which provides a structured psychosocial rehabilitation day program for people with a psychiatric disability who are between the ages of 16 and 65 and who live in the cities of Stonnington, Port Phillip and Glen Eira. It offers art programs in photography, leadlight, music, creative writing and creative expression.

#### **SPARC Theatre, City of Port Phillip**

Formed in 2005, SPARC Theatre is a weekly performance project that has been very successful in engaging participants who experience barriers to participation in community activities due to their substance-related brain impairment, mental illness and disabilities. SPARC Theatre meets each Wednesday morning at the South Melbourne Community Centre to explore theatre skills, acting, percussion and improvisation. Ensemble members are supported to extend their skills, work collaboratively and have fun creating original theatre.

#### **Stables Art Studio, Malvern**

Located in Burke Road, Malvern, the Stables Art Studio is a not-for-profit art studio run by Prahran Mission. It provides a space for artists with experience of mental illness to practise their art. The studio aims to provide a stimulating artistic community where aspiring artists can explore their creative endeavours at a low cost. The studio provides its members with all drawing and painting materials and equipment.

**Sticky Theatre Project, City of Port Phillip**

Sticky is a new project by the award-winning theatre company rawcus.

**10 x 10, Shire of Yarra Ranges**

10 x 10 is a performing arts event held in Mooroolbark targeting people with a disability. The 10x10 concept provides 10 artists, or groups of artists, with 10 minutes of performance time in their chosen art form. People with a disability can be involved in 10 x 10 as performers and also as backstage and front-of-house crew and in the distribution of promotional material.

**Theatre of Speed, Geelong**

Theatre of Speed is Back to Back's community theatre workshop, a group of ten young people with intellectual disabilities who come to Back to Back each Wednesday to collaborate with the professional ensemble to make a new experimental theatre show each year.

**Weave Movement Theatre, Melbourne**

Weave Movement Theatre is a Melbourne-based dance/movement performance company comprising people with and without physical disabilities and acquired brain injury. Weave was formed in 1997 through an Arts Access Victoria project and continues today, developing high quality performances under the artistic direction of Janice Florence, a dance artist who is paraplegic. It has presented works at Dancehouse, North Melbourne Arts House, Footscray Community Arts Centre and BMW Edge. Weave also offers workshops and training days.





### Appendix 5: Deaf Can Dance – a case study

The Deaf Can Dance project was developed by Deaf Arts Network (DAN) in response to an identified need among Deaf youth in Melbourne and was jointly funded by the City of Melbourne and VicHealth. It provides an excellent example of the way mentoring and capacity building initiatives can lead to greater sustainability for arts and disability organisations in Victoria and more opportunities for creative participation in the arts by people with a disability.

The Victorian arts and disability peak body, Arts Access, is the auspicing body for DAN. Arts Access has played a key role in building DAN's capacity to secure funding for the development of arts programs for the Deaf community, by providing assistance with grant applications, business planning and community consultation. In his interview, key informant Ross Onley-Zerkel, who has been the DAN Coordinator since 2002, discussed the evolution and success of Deaf Can Dance:

My job was to manage and organise a Hip Hop workshop and I got three well known dancers from [the television program] 'So You Think You Can Dance', [who] were our workshop leaders/teachers, for six months. [They] improved our Hip Hop skills, and then we were able to be one of the performances at the Melbourne Fringe Festival [performing at] the Victorian College of the Arts dance studio because [the project] received funding from the City of Melbourne.

We then were able to engage a choreographer by the name of Gerard Veltre... He did an excellent job and the funding also covered interpreters, so we had interpreters working with us through the creative process to ensure the communication happened, not only between ourselves and the choreographer, but also the other artists. So Deaf people were a part of the process and we could ask questions of the choreographer, questions to the Hip Hop dance teacher, questions to any of the other performers or artists... We had side performances at each show and the audience was made up of Deaf people and people ... who are interested in the Melbourne Fringe. We had four shows but we were sold out. At the end of it, we were just overwhelmed by that experience.

However, the end of the Fringe season was not the end of Deaf Can Dance, as Ross went on to explain:

The word got out and the country regions within Victoria, Ballarat, Bendigo, Gippsland, they heard about the show and they wanted us to take the show to them and also present workshops there. So something good has happened. It's one project which will live past the actual show... the 'Deaf Can Dance' group has the momentum and want to continue working together.

In fact, since Ross's interview, because of the success of Deaf Can Dance, DAN has secured additional funding from philanthropic organisations (Vodafone Australia Foundation, beyondblue and ANZ Trustees) for So You Think Deaf Can Dance, a series of eight Hip Hop workshops for young people 16 and over, held at the Dance Factory in Melbourne in August and September 2009.

## Appendix 6: Glossary of terms and abbreviations

### **ABS**

Australian Bureau of Statistics

### **Arts and disability sector**

For the purpose of this report, 'arts and disability sector' has been used as a convenient shorthand to indicate the intersection between the arts sector and the disability sector and includes all of the following:

- artists and arts workers with a disability
- organisations, and those sections of government, that support, train, fund and advocate for artists and arts workers with a disability
- organisations, including disability peak bodies, mainstream arts agencies, and those sections of government, that fund, develop initiatives for, and advocate for, increased access to the arts for people with a disability.

### **Auslan**

Australian Sign Language (Auslan) is the language of the Australian Deaf community. Not all people who are deaf use Auslan.

### **Carer**

In this report, 'carer' is used to refer to family members or friends of a person with a disability who provide unpaid care to that person. Paid workers are referred to as assistants, attendants, support workers or care workers.

### **CRU**

Community residential unit – a residential service for people with a disability as defined under section 64 of the Victorian **Disability Act 2006**. In each CRU there would be approximately five to six residents. DHS currently prefers to use the term 'shared supported accommodation' rather than community residential units.

### **Deaf**

Many people who are unable to hear and who use sign language identify themselves as belonging to a Deaf community with its own language and culture. In such cases, a capital 'D' is used when referring to this group. In other cases, 'person with a hearing impairment' is preferred.

### **DDA**

Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth Act)

### **FaHCSIA**

Commonwealth Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

### **DHS**

Victorian Department of Human Services

### Appendix 6: Glossary of terms and abbreviations (continued)

#### **Disability**

In the 2003 Australian Bureau of Statistics **Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers**, 'disability' was defined as any limitation, restriction or impairment, which has lasted, or is likely to last for at least six months, and restricts everyday activities.

The **Disability Discrimination Act 1992** defines disability as:

- total or partial loss of a person's bodily or mental functions
- total or partial loss of a part of the body
- the presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness
- the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of a person's body
- a disorder or malfunction that results in a person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction
- a disorder, illness or disease that affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgement, or that results in disturbed behaviour.

In this report, 'disability' is used to cover:

- intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities and autism
- physical disabilities
- psychiatric disabilities
- sensory disabilities

#### **Disability art(s)**

Art made by people with a disability which reflects the experience of disability. It is a creative work with a specific aesthetic purpose and is neither a hobby nor art therapy. It is a means by which people with a disability can tell their own stories by presenting their own perceptions of disability and the issues around it.

#### **Hearing impaired**

A loss of hearing ability in one or both ears. 'Hearing impaired' does not refer only to people who are deaf. In fact, many people in the Deaf community do not like the term 'hearing impaired' because of the negative connotations of the word 'impaired'.

#### **Intellectual disability**

A significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information, learn new skills and cope independently (impaired social functioning).

**NMIT**

Northern Metropolitan Institute of TAFE

**Person/People with a disability**

The terms 'person with a disability' or 'people with a disability' are the preferred terms in common usage in the disability sector in Australia and, for this reason, are used throughout this report.

**Psychiatric disability**

A term to describe the disability resulting from the experience of a mental illness.

**TAFE**

Technical and Further Education

**Vision impaired**

Includes people who are blind or experience low vision because their eyesight is limited or impaired and cannot be corrected with conventional glasses or contact lenses. Some people who are legally blind prefer to use the term 'vision impaired' rather than 'blind' as they still have some useful sight .



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