

Access Arts Annual Report 2019 - 2020



Image: Access Arts Achievement Award-winner Carol Taylor models her adaptive fashion label, MeQ Designs, on the Brisbane catwalk at the Mercedes Benz Fashion Festival



the Chief Executive Pat Swell

Access Arts has a successful 37-year history as Queensland's peak body and strategic leader for arts and disability. We work across all artforms providing a ladder of artistic development to vulnerable Queenslanders who experience disability or disadvantage, delivering arts programs from entry to professional development levels.

2019/2020 was the first full year of operation after Access Arts transitioned on 1 April 2019 to become a wholly owned subsidiary of CPL – Choice Passion Life, the leading provider of integrated support, therapy and advice for people living with disability in Queensland and Northern New South Wales, and their families. Our head office moved to the CBD.

From March 2020 our activities were impacted because of COVID-19.

Notwithstanding, during 2019/2020 Access Arts supported 58 different activities enabling 1,865 Queenslanders to participate in 545 workshops and showcase their talents to 163,214 members of the public, in Queensland and Canberra.

Workshop Programs

Our weekly workshops in the visual and performing arts are our bedrock. These programs range from first-time entry level to career development for emerging professional artists. Several of our participants have been developing their artistic practice with us for over a decade.

In August our visual artists moved out of the rented studio in Eight Mile Plains and into their new dedicated Access Arts Studio which CPL built for them in Yeronga. To celebrate,

we held a public *Community Sharing Week* in October, attended by Yeronga's Brisbane City Councillor Nicole Johnstone among other guests.

As well as relocating our visual arts workshops, we moved our performing arts workshops from New Farm back to Ashgrove in September, as Brisbane Powerhouse reclaimed the premises we had rented there.

In January our former Camera Wanderers' program developed into individually-based Digital Media workshops. Responding to demand, April saw us introduce by request individual mentoring for performing and visual arts practitioners which provided more in-depth skill-development or introduced new areas of arts practice.

"It is essential for me to continue and if possible increase my participation with Access Arts, as it has proved essential to my mental health and wellbeing. My ongoing participation within the Access Arts programs has been recognised by my treating professional specialists as being an essential therapeutic support."

We remodelled our programs to fit better within the NDIS framework, and implemented the new model in April. We worked individually with participants not yet transitioned to an NDIS Plan to help them secure NDIS funding. For those rejected by NDIA we secured Continuity of Support (COS) funding from State or Federal governments. Finally, our last remaining non-NDIS participant crossed the line in April 2020 when we secured Queensland Community Support Scheme (QCSS) funding.

We benefitted from CPL's automated systems and software to manage the detailed requirements of NDIA administration, including Riskman for incident management which facilitates WH&S.

Our aim in our transition to CPL was for participants to experience minimal change.

Even though we transitioned, relocated our visual and performing arts workshop into different parts of Brisbane, and introduced a new cost model, our participant numbers remained constant.

In March, Covid-19 disrupted our workflow. Staff worked tirelessly to re-configure how best to present our programs online and then supported our participants to access virtual facilities. The result was that 70% of our participants moved to online delivery of workshop programs, continuing to develop their arts practice. During this period of uncertainty, participants were appreciative of our regular COVID-safe messaging that kept them up-to-date with changes as they arose.

Showcasing Our Artists' Work

St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital: Over 65,000 people saw the 45 artworks by our community and emerging professional artists at our first exhibition at St Andrews called *Time,* which hung for 8 months. Hospital staff commented on the feeling of safety and mental wellbeing these artworks brought to the patients, especially as they were the last items patients saw as they lay horizontal on a hospital trolley prior to being wheeled into the operating theatre. Promoted through the hospital's Best Practice magazine and their enews, we reached a new market. Opened by our Patron His Excellency the Honourable Paul de Jersey AC Governor of Queensland on 4 July, when *Time* ended the following February the exhibition looked as vibrant as the day it was hung. "Highlight for me was seeing the pride of artists such as Jacob and Chris standing by their works and speaking with the Governor. A first for them - not having exhibited before." MinterEllison gave their first sponsorship to Access Arts to enable this: "Thank you for allowing us to be part of such a wonderful initiative" said Robert Reed OAM, Special Counsel, MinterEllison.

KPMG: Celebrating Difference was the title of our artists' 7th annual exhibition, again

opened by our Patron His Excellency the Honourable Paul de Jersey AC Governor of Queensland on 18 September marking Disability Action Week. "You've lifted me up" commented one guest. 16 artists exhibited, 13 artworks sold, KPMG estimated that 15,000 people enjoyed the artworks during the 3-month exhibition.

BrisStyle Xmas Market: Access Arts' stall transformed State Library of Queensland at BrisStyle Christmas Market on 7 December. 11 Access Arts artists proudly stood alongside Brisbane's professional artisans. Our artists sold \$500 of artwork.

Gifts & Gratitude: our end-of-year performing arts showcase took place in Ashgrove on 9 December. 13-year old Charlie Lavender summed up the occasion:

"The Access Arts performance was absolutely splendid. I like music and everyone expressed themselves through rhythmic original music. I really related with all of the performers.

There was a variety of spirit and charisma coming from everyone and the performers' confidence certainly had a big effect on me and the audience.

I think if all of the performers glow bright, the light they shine will create a star which will keep shining as long as you stay true to yourself and never give up. Keep your confidence and you will certainly get far

I think this concert should get bigger and use more space, and more people should see this. If I, a 13-year-old boy, had hope for these people to have a shot at peaking top stardom, then I am certain I am not the only one who will give gratitude to this group of believers.

Through this, it will show everyone that they can be what they want to be no matter what. I was honoured to be in the presence of them thank you very much."

Partnerships and Collaborations

Arafmi is a non-profit supporting wellbeing of people with mental illness, their families and carers. Arafmi commissioned our Theatre and Dance Ensemble to present *A Time to Shine* at Brisbane Convention Centre on 15 October at the *Becoming Visible Carers Forum* celebrating National Carers Week.

Ausdance Queensland: Our Arts Manager Tim Brown, a practicing dancer, was invited to join panels of peer assessors for Ausdance Queensland's residency opportunities in March and in May.

Belconnen Arts Centre, Canberra: we forged a new partnership when two of our Brisbane Outsider Artists submitted work for Belconnen's IGNITE:7 project. In March we reached new interstate audiences with 4 artworks by Belinda Peel displayed for 7 months at Australian Government Department of Communications and the Arts, while 3 artworks by Tanya Darl hung at Brindabella Business Park, Canberra Airport. "It is fabulous that we are able to include work from QLD based artists in our IGNITE 7 exhibition series" said Monika McInerney, CEO, Belconnen Arts Centre.

Brisbane Disability Expo saw our Rhythm Circle perform at the Royal International Convention Centre in November.

Brisbane Open House Festival which celebrates Brisbane's architecture enabled the work of artist Belinda Peel to reach the architectural market last October when two of her artworks were exhibited for 12 days.

Micah Projects and United Artists Project:

supported the first solo exhibition of Access Arts community artist Marisha Targett, whose exhibition *Pushing Colour* took place at Hope St Cafe, South Brisbane in November. Our community artist Cindy Martin then held her first exhibition there in December.

Other exhibition opportunities promoted further artwork sales. Levi Diball sold 2 artworks at Mental Illness Fellowship of Queensland Recovered Futures exhibition, and Belinda Peel sold artwork at Art From the Margins' exhibition.

Queensland Ballet: Arts Manager Tim Brown was invited to contribute to their October *Limitless Leaps* dance workshop for 30 autistic children. Tim was also invited to present a talk on inclusive and accessible approaches to teaching dance at Queensland Ballet's *Ambassador Program* for Practicing Educators.

Queensland Music Festival: In the prelude to the Festival, Queensland Music Festival invited Access Arts to join Play Me I'm Yours by painting one of the 20 pianos to be activated throughout Brisbane for the Festival duration. Alexandra Ellen and Suzanne Dang volunteered as key artists, and led 8 additional artists from our Studio to create 'Harmony', as the piano became named. Harmony was launched in Brisbane Square, then sited at Fairfield Shopping Centre for 6 weeks. Such was its impact, some 950 members of the public tinkled its ivories entertaining 16,560 shoppers. Harmony was finally adopted by the PA Hospital for elderly patients after the Fairfield activation ended.

Then on 27 July 15 Access Arts Singers joined the 2019 **Queensland Music Festival** mass choir for *Help Is On Its Way,* a spectacular enjoyed by thousands of people across Queensland in support of positive mental health for men.

Undercover Artist

Undercover Artist Festival is Australia's premiere disability arts festival for professional performing artists. Access Arts initiated the Festival in 2015 as a direct

result of need expressed by performing artists with disability. Intended to be biennial, the second Festival took place in 2017. Repositioning our programs under the NDIS framework which became fully operational in Queensland over 2019 and with Access Arts' transition to CPL, the intention was for the third *Undercover Artist Festival* to take place in September 2020.

The venue for both the 2015 and 2017 pilot festivals was Queensland Theatre. Access Arts worked with our venue partner to grow this nation-leading event, and CPL financed a complete festival re-branding by Sounder- and agency that, weeks later, was later named the best in the world by the Best Brand Awards: https://youtu.be/k8D5aZGhnLl

For the first time, Brisbane Festival agreed for *Undercover Artist* to be part of Brisbane Festival, the British Council offered support. Sponsored by CPL, Alicia Cush was appointed Festival Producer for 6 months while further funding was sought. *Undercover Artist Festival* was promoted nationally and regionally at conferences in Sydney, Canberra and Kooralbyn, attracting great interest. A Steering Group of leading experts with disability chaired by Associate Professor Bree Hadley met regularly.

Then COVID-19 affected plans. When it was clear that a September 2020 Festival was no longer viable, an Arts Queensland project grant enabled Access Arts to re-frame *Undercover Artist* for 2020 into a capacity-building program for Queensland artists with disability.

Grants and Awards

\$10.000 Access Arts Achievement Award:

founded in 2014 and seed-funded for five years by Access Arts Life Member Peter Vance to support Queensland artists with disability, the Award is a proven pivotal springboard for the careers of each winner. In the run-up to the application closing date each year, Access Arts collaborates with Arts Queensland to

deliver a grant-writing workshop for potential applicants.

Winning the 2018 Award raised the profile of Gold Coast visual artist **Carol Taylor**. It enabled her to become the world's first quadriplegic fashion designer. In 2019 she exhibited at Artisan's *Agency By Design* exhibition in June and July which toured to Canberra's Tuggeranong Arts Centre in 2020/21, and opened the *Fantauzzo Next Generation* show at the *Mercedes Benz Fashion Festival* showcasing her adaptive fashion label, MeQ, on the Brisbane catwalks.

When the Achievement Award seed-funding ended, in 2019 CPL committed \$100,000 in sponsorship to Access Arts so the \$10,000 Access Arts Achievement Award can continue for a further 10 years.

Winning the 2019 Award enabled Gold Coast aerial artist Lauren Watson to take up a Circa Studio Residency in February and, mentored by Vulcana Circus Artistic Director Celia White, take the first creative development for her forthcoming show *Nerve*.

The distinguished panel of judges – QAGOMA Assistant Director Tarragh Cunningham; Brisbane Festival Program Director Kate Fell; Associate Professor Bree Hadley; CPL CEO Rhys Kennedy and Momentum Arts Director Nigel Lavender – exceptionally awarded two additional commendations which CPL also sponsored: to Whitsunday First Australian artist Felicity Chapman and to Brisbane performer Madeleine Little.

SAFE grants of \$1,000 each support
Queensland artists with disability to take the
next step in their artistic career. In 2019-2020
CPL agreed to sponsor two SAFE grants per
year for the next ten years, enabling us to
double the number of SAFE grants we can
award each year.

Gladstone visual artist **Craig James** used his SAFE grant to come to Brisbane as artist in residence during Flying Arts <u>Alliance</u>'s <u>State of</u>

Diversity exhibition in February which featured one of Craig's artworks, prior to the exhibition touring the State. "For 20 years I have not been able to participate in large social gatherings – I not only lasted 3 hours but went to an after dinner event. This project allowed me to join the dots and develop strategies on how I am to join in or feel a part of the whole. It is this networking that has opened doors and allowed for me to think more broadly on where my arts practice will head" commented Craig

2 SAFE grants enabled two young Queensland performers to attend iconic Back to Back Theatre's three-day intensive CAMP in Geelong in March. "I am so grateful for the opportunity to have attended CAMP through the Access Arts SAFE grant" said Brisbaner Alexandra Ellen, "I feel like I have developed both as an artist and a person. I was free to just be and create! I was in the moment and these moments were beautiful, encouraging, empowering and fruitful." Alexander and fellow SAFE recipient, Sunshine Coast-based Allycia Staples, forged a strong peer friendship.

First Nations Arts Projects

Access Arts was fortunate to receive a 50% funding increase from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet for our work supporting social and emotional wellbeing of First Australian Queenslanders south of the Tropic of Capricorn through arts programs. The new Deed secured this funding for 3 financial years.

The significant impact resulting from COVID-19 has been more pronounced for First Nations creatives, many of whom practice within unfunded organisations, run their own small businesses or have contract-based project work. Many have advised of impacts including cancellations of major commissions, workshops and exhibitions along with closures of shop-fronts and markets where they sell their artworks. Due to the higher risk factors and health issues faced by First Australians, many creatives are self-isolating, separated from their family, friends and networks.

Two Sisters Talking led by Anpanuwa Joyce Crombie and Aulpunda Jean Barr Crombie, Wangkangurru/ Yarluyandi women from the Simpson Desert Birdsville, fostered cultural conversations for residents of Longreach. A partnership with Red Ridge Interior Queensland Ltd exploring Indigenous themes and culture through weekly painting workshops, Two Sisters Talking was particularly important when COVID-19 disrupted the order of society and family lives. The project gave purpose and normality to daily living, supported the 41 First Australian participants' mental well-being, gave social connection with yarning continuing over zoom, fostered pride through sharing Indigenous culture with the 14 non-Indigenous participants, and provided paid work for the 10 First Australian artists under lockdown working on this project.

Based in Barcaldine, Culture Cares celebrated that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were Australia's first explorers, first navigators, first engineers, first farmers, first botanists, first scientists, first diplomats, first astronomers and first artists. Spanning art, health and wellbeing, and in partnership with Red Ridge in collaboration with the Central West Aboriginal Corporation, 23 First Australians worked with 7 non-Indigenous participants on this project that brought paid work to 14 First Australian artists. Bringing recognition that First Nations people have occupied and cared for this continent for over 65,000 years, Culture Cares gave muchneeded sense of purpose, 'norming', connectedness and well-being at a time of unknown; reducing social isolation and keeping people connected when COVID-19 thrust society into turmoil and uncertainty.

access arts The significance of St George's Mani Tribes Gallery in helping young Indigenous Australians rediscover purpose - putting returners from jail, lost and unemployed, on a path to a constructive future - has been documented on ABC News. But the program was defunded early in 2020 and the Gallery space closed in March; 2 First Australians lost full-time jobs, 12 local artists had no sales point for their artworks, the associated community work ceased. Access Arts partnered with South West Queensland Regional Arts for a Business Plan to be produced. Justin Bishop, Arts Director of Black Square Arts and Manager of Wei'Num Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts and Crafts Corporation, was commissioned to develop the Business Plan with the local Indigenous artists. In parallel, three community arts projects involving the police station, the school, and totems for kindergarten children, were run. A direct result was that Mayor O'Toole agreed to work with the Council grants officer and St George

> Together We Stand, a collaborative crossregional project for South East Queensland North First Nations visual artists from Kabi Kabi, Wakka Wakka, Butchulla, Jinnaburra, Quandamooka, Turrbal and Jagera Country, was developed by 10 First Nations creatives to support these artists to keep connected and creating during COVID-19 as their Caboolture Hub Studio had to close with corresponding programs cancelled. During this partnership with Creative Arts Alliance, artists documented their journey over the weeks, and then came together at Together We Stand Artist Talk to discuss their experience, process and practice in response to the *Together We* Stand project and COVID-19. The online presence enabled over 4,500 attendees to view the Artist Talk. "Your support and belief in our voices is empowering and uplifting so thank you. Maarubaa nginda."

Aboriginal Housing Company to explore

funding options to re-establish a lease.

Access Services

Cairns Regional Council, in partnership with Arts Queensland, engaged Access Arts as Queensland's premier arts and disability advocate and service provider to develop an Arts and DisAbility Strategy for Council. The methodology was process-driven and included opportunities for active engagement and participatory activities throughout the consultative phase, including a workshop with Council staff, 40 interviews, and a Survey Monkey questionnaire disseminated to Council officers, disability service providers, and diverse partners with an interest in arts and disability. The preliminary report was delivered in August, the final Arts and DisAbility Strategy was submitted in November 2019, and agreed by Cairns Regional Council in September 2020.

Marketing

For the first time, Access Arts enjoyed a strong marketing presence though the CPL Marketing Team. An indicator of the immense impact this made is that the Access Arts website received 82.5% new visitors in 2019/2020:



Our social audience grew by 9.6% compared with the previous financial year, our engagement rate jumped from 6.9% to 10%.

access arts Quality Audit, Feedback, Evaluation

Access Arts was audited in March against the **Human Services Quality Framework** as well as the NDIS Practice Standards as part of CPL, successfully achieving certification in both audits with no area of improvement identified.

Gathering feedback is an important part of our work and key to helping us improve our service. Our feedback systems cover all workstrands. Learning how our participants were managing when COVID-19 forced us to deliver workshop programs online - a wholly new departure in our 37-year history - was especially crucial. We issued a Survey Monkey questionnaire, had an excellent 63% response rate, and found feedback extremely positive:

"I appreciate that Access Arts is able to offer the online programs, as I have been medically advised to self-isolate due to my compromised immune system and underlying health conditions. The online sessions allow me to still work towards reaching my NDIS goals; having positive and meaningful contact with others; being able to still focus on learning and developing my artistic skills. The online programs are important to my mental health, as I am able to still have a connection with the outside world and Access Arts, as well as giving me purpose in my life both now and looking towards the future."

Supporters of Access Arts (CPL) Ltd

Grants

Queensland Government through Arts Queensland Australian Government Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet **Brisbane City Council**

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ADFAS Brisbane River

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Staff

Chief Executive Officer: Pat Swell
Arts Manager: Tim Brown
Visual Arts Coordinators (jobshare):
Rachel Gaffney-Dawson/ Jasmin Coleman
Administrators: Carla Sanzone,
Mary Schneider

Artsworkers: Brooke Austen, Sophie Banister, Francesca Co-beng, Amy Davidson, Rebecca Dostal, Eleonora Ginardi, Alice Gittins, Catriona Holland, Tess Parker, Velvet Pesu, Tichawona Mashawa, Walter Stahl, Clare Stephens.

Post Script

As a wholly owned subsidiary of CPL, Access Arts (CPL) Ltd now reports against the financial year rather than the calendar year that Access Arts Incorporated reported against. This Post Script reports key activities between 1 January to 30 June 2019 covering the period between our last Annual Report for the 2018 financial year and this Annual Report

covering the 2019/2020 financial year, and the winding up of Access Arts Incorporated.

Partnerships and Collaborations

The Quest: developed specifically to continue the legacy of the successful 2017 community engagement project We All Dance, this 2019 partnership with Ausdance Queensland, Micah Projects, Phluxus2Dance, QPAC and Queensland Ballet delivered 12 workshops at QPAC over 8 days to 14 emerging performing artists, led by 5 artists as the first stage development of this project. Stage 2 has been deferred due to COVID-19 to 2021.

Creative Meet-up: 7 days, 9 workshops, 12 deaf or disabled performing arts practitioners in Brisbane. Partnership with the University of Melbourne for research led by Kath Duncan, Research Associate and Chairperson with the Australian Research Council, into Disability and the Performing Arts in Australia: Beyond the Social Model.

Disability Awareness Training commissioned by Stage Queensland, attended by 50 arts and venue managers from across Queensland at HOTA, Gold Coast.

SAFE Grant

Enabling pianist **Jeff Usher** to accompany performer Karen Lee Roberts in her play *Chameleon* at The Butterfly Club, Melbourne. "I gained greatly in confidence, not only as accompanist and musical director for this play, but also as a supporting actor. The Butterfly Club season was the most intensive set of performances we have undertaken (five performances within a week)."

First Nations Arts Projects

eXcelsior, in partnership with BlakDance, supported a three-week residency for emerging Queensland-based company eXcelsior with a final showing and sharing at Backbone Youth Arts.

Making Memories, in partnership with the Institute for Urban Indigenous Health (IUIH)
Salisbury: a 'Mums and Bubs' bellycast project that culminated in the Mater Hospital exhibiting the bellycasts the during NAIDOC Week.

Collaborative Stories, in partnership with Central Queensland Regional Arts Services Network supported by the local Red Cross, Shire and City Councils, High School, Pastoral Company, CQ University and Woorabinda Women's Group. Following 2 youth workshops in Rockhampton, 6 intensive workshops over 3 days in Arts Camp at Blackboy Outstation, 1 cultural workshop with First Australian artist Steve Camp at Wadja High School Woorabinda, and 1 Children's Workshop with First Australian Arts Officer Nickeema Williams at Woorabinda Primary School, this Woorabinda-based arts project showcased at Rockhampton's Kern Arcade Gallery celebrating NAIDOC. As a result of Collaborative Stories, Woorabinda Aboriginal Shire Council earmarked a workshop space in community to allow artists to have a safe space to work on their art every day.

Yuwarr (meaning 'corroboree or dance'), in partnership with Creative Regions: 325
Bundaberg primary and high school students learnt the Yuwarr routine under the guidance of Indigenous dancer Robert McLellan, then performed at the Reconciliation Day ceremony at Buss Park.

Dress the Central West, in partnership with Red Ridge and led by Aboriginal Elders: an intergenerational multilayered regional skillsdevelopment project aimed to improve mental health and well-being in the communities of Blackall, Barcaldine, Winton and Longreach.

New Life Members

At Access Arts Inc's AGM in March 2019 Life Membership of Access Arts was awarded to *Catherine Black*, the Association's former Treasurer for services to our financial stability, and to *Bill Thomas* for long-standing membership of Access Arts since 1983 and his continued active involvement in our work.

Transitioning to Access Arts (CPL) Ltd, Winding up Access Arts Inc

As implementation of the NDIS drew nearer which would change Access Arts' funding from State Government Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors block funding in advance, to individual billing for each service to each member or participant in arrears, it became increasingly apparent to the Management Committee of Access Arts Incorporated that our current programs would not be sustainable under the NDIS, which would make it unviable for Access Arts to continue.

The Management Committee considered options and proposals from a range of organisations. CPL's mission and values aligned well with those of Access Arts, their proposal was designed to provide immediate stability and certainty for Access Arts.

At a Special General Meeting, Members authorised the Management Committee to enter into an agreement to transfer the business and assets of Access Arts Incorporated to Access Arts (CPL) Limited. The business transferred to CPL on 1 April 2019, Access Arts' head office moved from Bardon to CPL's headquarters in the CBD in June, the and the final financial report for Access Arts Incorporated for the period ended 31 October 2019 was completed by auditors in November 2019.

Access Arts

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