

Summer 1997



## Judy Morton Reflects ...



"In the early 1970s I was working in the welfare sector which was concentrating on researching community service issues. This was all very well – but what I really wanted was to shift the research into action.

"In 1974, after discussions with a visiting researcher from HAI (Hospital Audiences Incorporated) in New York about the role of arts in hospitals, we submitted proposals to the Australia Council and a couple of philanthropic trusts. They were successful and Arts Access was born as a pilot program.

"For the next four years Arts Access was a one-person project. In the late 1970s, due to a lack of money, the organisation was put on hold for eighteen months. Nevertheless, there was enormous support for the organisation, with people believing that it was too valuable a concept to lose. In 1979 it was formally constituted. The following year, with only three months' money in the kitty, we appointed Dinny Downie to head up the organisation.

## Big break through

"The big break-through came in 1980 when, thanks to some pretty intensive lobbying, we were able to persuade the then Minister for the Arts, Norman Lacy, to make a small grant to Arts Access, which was the starting point for organisational growth and then ongoing State Government support that we receive today.

1982 was a major year for Arts Access. We initiated the Theorem Project, having been inspired by the 1981 International Year of Disabled Persons. We employed an amazing

Chilean artist, Aldo Gennarro, to run a series of workshops which covered a range of art forms for people with disabilities. It eventually sold out performances in the Concert Hall! Arts Access was now on the map, testing the organisation to learn how to cope with growth and success.

"One of my favourite early memories is when Arts Access sent in artists to St Nicholas Hospital in Carlton, creating a link between the resident severely intellectually disabled people at the hospital and local schools. These kinds of links remain an important focus for the organisation's future.

"Another recent success is the current nationally-touring Body Suits exhibition which clearly demonstrates how Arts Access continues to break down barriers. This exhibition has challenged the way many people view the 'normal' body.

## A critical role

"Arts Access is critical for many reasons. The arts are important to ALL people's lives. Many disadvantaged and disabled people have, in the past, missed out on having the arts as part of their lives. Arts Access gives many of them the chance to engage in community creativity as well as to explore their own individual creativity. Involvement in the arts is an enriching and powerful experience.

"Arts Access has always been able to break new ground. From recent dance programs with the brilliant Cando Co from the UK, to responding to de-institutionalisation moves in the community/health/welfare services, we've been able to play a part, inspire and enthuse new partners and continue to link in with existing friends. We've certainly come a long way.

"The future continues to look challenging. Arts Access must investigate new possibilities. It has to get the corporate sector on-side, not just through funding, but by forging long-term and meaningful partnerships."

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**From the  
Executive Director  
Jane Haley**

What a welcome I have received as the new Executive Director of this thriving Organisation. Being able to make a contribution to its work is a great privilege for me. Arts Access has a phenomenal record of achievement with a high national reputation and a proud history.

For the last three years I have been working as manager of the Queensland Theatre Company, with principal responsibility for policy, planning and strategic management.

Prior to this position I had considerable experience as the manager of community-based arts organisations in Tasmania, NSW, ACT and Queensland and as a senior policy and program manager for state government arts and education bodies.

Over the last 15 years I have developed a good understanding of community cultural development and of the strategies that deliver valuable programs and services to the community. That's why I am so pleased to become a part of Arts Access.

This position allows me to marry my great passion for community cultural development to my ability to apply efficient and effective management skills. I am able to apply my skills to something which makes a real difference to the life of the community.

Arts Access faces a number of challenges, the most immediate is the need to find a new home.

One important priority for the future is to ensure that the record of achievement is maintained and properly managed in what is an ever changing social, political and economic environment. Respect for our

needs as human beings (both as individuals and as members of a community) often seem less important than the achievement of economic 'efficiencies'. I believe that community and culture are important factors to be added in to profit and other business equations.

At the same time it is important that Arts Access responds to the expectations and opportunities the late 1990s environment. Notions of community and culture are being re-defined. We need to consider such things as the way in which information and new media technologies (like the Internet) can be used to increase access and participation for people in arts and cultural life of the nation.

Arts Access also needs to look at how it communicates with its 'constituents', especially young people. Communication is critical to building, strengthening and celebrating community culture.

Although I have been with Arts Access only a brief time, I can honestly say that I have never before worked with a group of people who are more impressive in their commitment and achievement. I really enjoy working with them and I am most excited by the potential that this team offers to continue to develop the great work of Arts Access.

I'm sorry that Judy Morton will finish as President so soon. She has done a fantastic job for Arts Access since its inception. In the time I have worked with Judy, I have found her terrific - full of ideas, energy and enthusiasm. I know she will continue to be a tremendous ambassador for us.

There are four other people who have recently left Arts Access and whom I would like to thank: Helen Bowman, my predecessor as Executive Director, Administrator Rhona Bester, Administration Officer Sam Marsh and Artistic Program Manager Bobbie Hodge. Arts Access owes much of its success to their contribution and dedication.

I look forward to my role with Arts Access and hope that members and friends will feel happy to let us know how we are going.

## **Full Steam Ahead On Arts Training Program For 1998**

The feedback Arts Access has received on the courses it has run in 1997 has been fantastic.

As a result, the organisation is anticipating strong response to seminars and workshops planned for the new year.

The forum, "Money - How to Get It, Where to Get It", was attended by sixty people. Concentrating on practical issues, the forum looked at identifying and gaining access to government and non-government funding sources for arts programs as well as the establishment of partnerships with corporate sponsors. Thanks to the strong response, Arts Access anticipates running similar forums in 1998.



Artworks created by staff during Arts Practice Training Workshops in Textiles and Mixed Media lead by artist/trainer Claire Humphrys-Hunt. Staff attending these Workshops came from a range of disability arts programs operating throughout Regional Victoria and Metropolitan Melbourne.

Photography by Claire Humphrys-Hunt.



Other successful highlights for the Training Program in 1997 include the Diploma of Arts Small Business and Community Theatre course. Nineteen people enrolled in this extensive 150 hour course. The response to the course has been excellent and plans are afoot to extend the course to include a Publicity and Marketing Module in 1998. Arts Access is a registered private provider of training and the modules taken by students in this course are accredited.

In 1997 Arts Access also offered arts practice training in puppetry making and manipulation; music percussion and creative voice; mixed media and textiles.

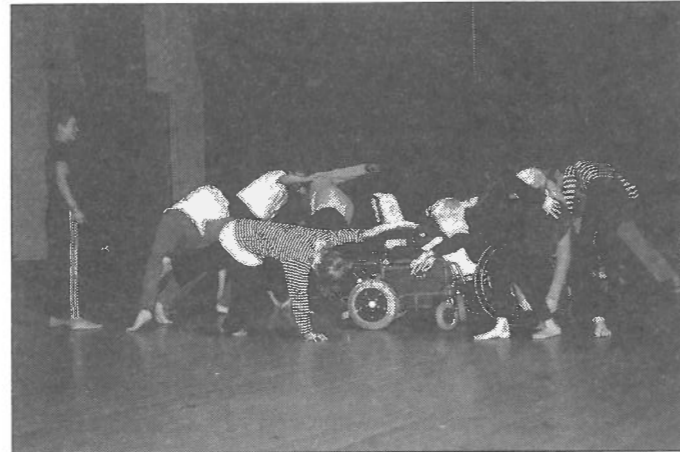
The Arts Practice Training courses will continue in 1998 with an emphasis given to circus, mask-making and physical performance as well as a range of visual arts practices.

## Moveable Dance Program Just Keeps Moving...

The Moveable Dance Project has taken on a life after the close of funding. The Workshop teachers and participants continue to meet regularly.

The Project, which included a 12 week series of contact improvisation Moveable Dance Workshops and Cando Co Dance Company Workshops and Masterclasses, was a tremendous success.

The dance workshops were designed for professional dance artists (with and without a physical disability) and people with varying degrees of performance experience with a physical disability. Initiated and managed by Arts Access, the Workshops provided participants with the chance to learn new artistic skills and develop their own creativity.



Janice Florence, a professional dance artist with a physical disability, and Martin Hughes, professional dance artist, were employed to co-ordinate the Workshops.

Janice reported that: "Moveable Dance has been both exciting and challenging. We are potentially on the brink of a ground-breaking new venture".

"As we worked we realised more and more the completely individual nature of each dancer. While two people in the group may officially have the same disability, each have their own completely individual style, range and aesthetic - as with all humans who dance."

The participants of the Moveable Dance Workshops attended the internationally acclaimed Cando Co Dance Company workshops and masterclasses. Cando Co Dance Company is a contemporary dance company from the UK which has artists with and without a physical disability.



Pictures - Members of the Moveable Dance Workshops participating in the Cando Co Dance Company Workshops, October 1997  
Photography by Angela Bailey

Arts Access secured funding through the Australia Council for the Moveable Dance Workshops and Cando Co Dance workshops and masterclasses.

Arts Access is hoping that the Australia Council will also fund the second stage of the project in 1998.

Comments from participants:

Cando Co Dance Company - instant success.

Cando Co Dance Company presented workshops and masterclasses for the Moveable Dance Project participants and performed at Gasworks for the Melbourne Fringe Festival. They were awarded the "Best of the Fringe Movement Award" for 1997.

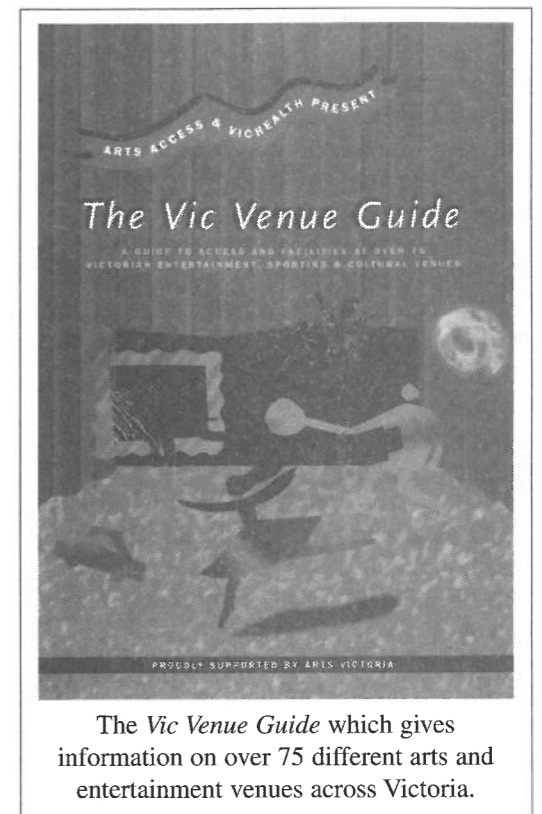
"Thank you Arts Access - the Movable Dance Project has changed my life".  
Phil Driver

"After the Cando Co masterclasses and workshops I was so excited about the possibilities for the Moveable Dance Project that I just couldn't shut up. My friends didn't understand how I could 'dance' so I showed them the Cando Co Dance Company video and they were just as excited as I was".  
Ashley Heenan

### Venue Guide – A Valuable Reference For Planning Outings

The Vic Venue Guide has received excellent reviews since its launch in late November by the star of 'Crazy for You', John O'May and Paralympian, Sandy Blythe.

The user-friendly guide has particular relevance for people with a disability, including wheelchair access and specific seating requirements for people with hearing or sight impairments. The Vic Venue Guide includes a city of Melbourne mobility map, specialist booking services and transport and visitor information.



The Vic Venue Guide which gives information on over 75 different arts and entertainment venues across Victoria.

Over 75 of Melbourne and regional Victoria's arts, entertainment, sport and tourist venues are listed in this indispensable volume. The information is distinguished by quirky icons, including seating plans, toilets, disability access, transport, parking, drink and food facilities.

The Guide has been produced by Arts Access and is sponsored by the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation and supported by Arts Victoria.

The Guide is also a valuable resource for tourism service operators, access and disability agencies and carers.

*The Vic Venue Guide has been published by Hyland House and is retailing through good bookshops for \$19.95. It is also available to EASE ticket service subscribers and Arts Access members for only \$14.95, if purchased directly through Arts Access.*

## Accessing the world of the arts

In September 1997 with funding from the Leadership Program, Dean Michael, Program Manager of the Entertainment Access Service (EASE) at Arts Access travelled overseas on a bench marking project to look at levels of access offered to people with a disability in the arts and cultural fields. This is a brief report of some of his findings.

My travels took me to London, Edinburgh, New York and Washington. I visited theatres, galleries, cinemas, and museums as well as arts and disability organisations, some similar to Arts Access and EASE. I was constantly delighted and challenged by what I discovered. The most dynamic discovery was that none of the organisations I met with was debating whether a disability market existed: all were simply marketing to the disability audience in much the same way they marketed to singles, families and groups. This approach is well supported by the funding bodies, at a national, local or philanthropic level, which are encouraging theatres and art galleries by providing funding with an access criterion.

At Sadlers Wells in London, Free For All, a committee of people with a disability, is being consulted by management, designers and architects about the renovation of the famous venue. The committee is being chaired by a woman with a disability. Each committee member is paid for their expertise.

For its production of "Molly Sweeney" at The Arena Stage in Washington, the management took the opportunity to target a wider audience of people with vision impairments. As well as presenting extra audio-described performances, panels were conducted after selected performances where people who are blind or vision impaired talked about their experiences of blindness.



Services for people with a disability are promoted outside the Lincoln Centre in New York

Touch tours of the set and costumes were conducted before selected performances and people with vision impairments were given the opportunity to meet the actors in the production, then the 'characters' and, in some cases, touch them. All the theatre's programs are produced in large print, Braille, and on audio cassette, and are free.

The Arena Stage also has a wide variety of other services available and figures are kept on how many patrons use the infra-red headsets for people with hearing impairments, book accessible parking bays and other services. The number of patrons with disabilities represent over \$100,000 worth of tickets a year.

Other selected cases of marketing include The Filmhouse in Edinburgh where subtitled films are promoted regularly in the monthly program to people who are deaf. Edinburgh's Lyceum Theatre regularly consults its patrons about their needs. The theatre provides pillows in a range of shapes and sizes for people who have difficulty sitting for extended periods of time. At the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, touch tours of selected objects are available for people with sight impairments and carers are admitted free.

## About Arts Access

Arts Access facilitates opportunities for people with a disability and people who are disadvantaged to actively participate in the artistic and cultural life of the community.

Equal access, choice and active participation are achieved in partnership with professional artists, arts organisations, disability agencies and other community development bodies.

Arts Access coordinates four major programs:

- the Artistic Program provides opportunities for people to explore and develop their creative potential and artistic skills through collaborative model and pilot arts projects in diverse community settings using all artforms;
- the Entertainment Access Service (EASE) provides access to cultural events through the EASE Ticket Service and advocacy and training through the Venue Access and Industry Development Programs;
- the Library and Information Service assists people with a disability and those interested in working in the area of arts and disability with advice, information, reference materials and resources; and
- the Training Program coordinates accredited training courses for artists and community development workers as well as one-off workshops in arts practice and working with people with a disability.

## Staff

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EASE Ticket Coordinator  
Training Coordinator  
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