

A New Era for Arts Access

New Executive Director for Arts Access

Dinny's Leaving



Dinny Downie — former Executive Officer of Arts Access

Royal watching, colour consulting and lively discussions on religion and politics, Dinny Downie's style will be absent from lunchtime conversation at Arts Access.

Effective on August 31st, Dinny Downie has announced her resignation as Executive Officer to take up the position of Development Officer at the Victorian Arts Centre.

Dinny sees her move to the Arts Centre as a new and exciting challenge after spending eight years working to build an organisation that is successful and steadfast.

"I have every confidence that this team will continue to grow in new directions and I am looking forward to my new position as Development Officer," she said.

The changes herald a new era for Arts Access beginning with the development of new programmes, the building extensions and the appointment of Kate Brennan as the new Executive Director.

Kate Brennan, Programme Director at Arts Access has been appointed Executive Director replacing Dinny Downie.

Her appointment as Executive Director comes as no surprise to those who are familiar with Kate and her work. She has already had a taste of what is in store when she acted as Executive Officer for five months in 1987 while Dinny was away on secondment to the Australia Council.

Earlier this year she also visited the United States to experience similar programmes to those conducted at Arts Access through Hospital Audiences Inc. and Very Special Arts International contacts.

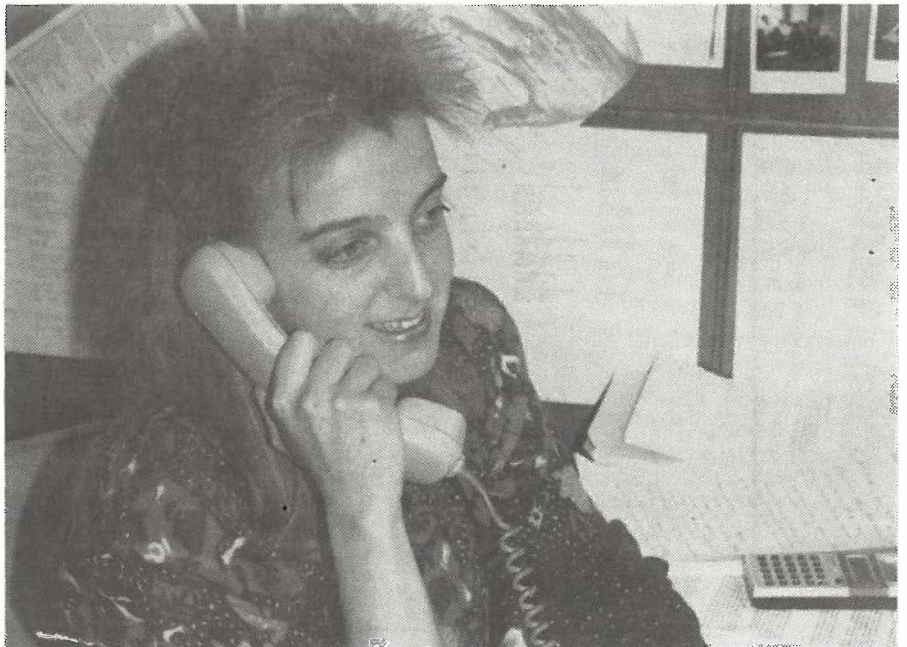
Kate is an experienced drama teacher with a strong background in administration, and had been working with an overseas aid agency developing curriculum and innovative community education programmes before working with Arts Access.

Kate's initial involvement with Arts Access was through Theorem and she has worked extensively since then with people with disabilities.

Her new position as Executive Director sees Kate continuing her role as overall Programme Co-ordinator with the support of more senior project staff, developing new areas of growth for Arts Access and taking on the overall administration of the Society.

"I am excited by the new challenge and am confident that my term as Executive Director will be a productive time. The work done by Arts Access will continue to provide support for access and participation in all areas of the arts for all the people we are involved with," said Kate.

An exciting new change that will happen when Kate steps in on September 1st is the newly created position of Development Officer who will work alongside Kate to raise the profile of Arts Access and work on a general support strategy.



Kate Brennan — newly appointed Executive Director of Arts Access

An Executive Directive

Several weeks ago when I was told of Dinny's resignation at one of our staff meetings my jaw literally dropped. After eight years of incredible dedication and obvious results I thought it would be appropriate to ask Dinny for her reaction to leaving Arts Access and the most outstanding moments in her career. The letter that follows is her reply –

Dear Carmel

You asked me for my reaction to my leaving Arts Access after eight and a half years and my brain stopped working for a while but maybe this will help. My memories are of a country bumpkin very scared, and not quite sure of what I was doing and certain I had never heard of arts and creativity and not disability or disadvantage and certainly not Community Arts.

One room in the back of a disused house in St Kilda Road – an awful hangover from the night before, and a man who walked into the room, reached for the phone, placed his bet on the day's races and said that he was the President, didn't know much about arts and "that stuff" and "Judy will ring you later." Strange another man clunking down the hall, "Welcome, have you got any idea what you are doing?" – Isi Plack. "Probably dropped you off the deep end" – Alan Moor, Vice President, got an appointment with Judy did ring and gradually the days turned into weeks, people appeared, got an appointment – \$4000 – still Plack. "Put on ties," I told the President and Vice President – "How does a woman as young as you have Norm Lacey MP, Minister for the Arts – a young woman appeared – "How does a woman as young as you have a highlight of those eight years. A young woman appeared – "How does a woman as young as you have such a big job?" I asked Andrea Hull.

Now I need help, Belinda Kirkwood arrived for an interview – the only time I saw her in boots, tartan skirt, twinset and pearls. Belinda stayed for three years and became our Project Officer.

We need more room, ring the Ministry for the Arts – "Not our job but you could look at two small rooms in the front of a building in Parliament Place." – Bernie Stewart, who later also helped us with our present offices. And so we moved from one room to two – Jos Evans joined us, Betty McDowall moved fast to protect her office space next door and then eventually became a friend and Committee Member.

Great idea lets work with Aldo Gennaro. One year given to the biggest project Arts Access has ever undertaken – chaos, calm, we never get there without John Ellis and Peter Oysten teaching me about theatre, "you must have a script Dinny," said Peter – we never got a script! Aldo resigned, Race Mathews told him to get back to work. 'Theorem' was part of the opening month of the Concert Hall-packed houses and we are still not sure of what happened or why but we learned so much.

The following years have been full of artists working their backsides off, government departments arguing why not and yet giving to this fantastic work, people with ideas, Paul Clarksons, John Webbs, Ian Traegers all contributing from very different perspectives. All the time Arts Access Committee meeting, having ideas, applying the brakes. I remember getting a piece of written work back from Dick Conigrave who was in charge of publicity it only had twenty five alterations in red ink and thinking I'm getting better!

I knew we had achieved something when we successfully worked our way through some financial trouble – we had overspent on artists. Chinka fired questions – "How much, who will help?" The solutions soon fell into place. One department forwarded next year's grant, another came through with money early, artists said they would wait, the bank gave us an overdraft and funding bodies said they were there if we couldn't make it. We did and it was this support that helped us through.

Once again we approached the Ministry for help with space – "Try talking to Victorian College of Arts" they have an empty run down office space in South Melbourne – but Oh! What a position, Oh what space, an office each in fact. Isi, our Treasurer called in, "we can't afford it but I'll see what I can do about carpet and curtains!" John Coe was asked to negotiate a lease that has held us in good stead and protects us financially. It still leaks and we now share offices because there's so many of us, but it's enabled us to extend our work – thank goodness for Ken Daly, Sue Evans, the team at Disability Services, making it possible for us to have a word processor and doors that open. Thank God for Susie O'Dwyer who has now worked voluntarily for Arts Access for five years—she actually likes cleaning!!

As each year went by our clients become more and more receptive to our work, and now we are spread like jam all over Victoria, sometimes Australia. It still amazes me to hear of people who advise to integrate people from institutions into the community – a thing that has been the thrust of our work for many years now – but it does highlight the continuing need to talk about our work to everyone that will listen.

Integration is what Community Arts is all about – and Community Arts is what Arts Access is about. Highlights of the eight years always focus on people, Deb Mills recommending that I work at the Australia Council for five months, a Committee ready to support another month at an administration course in Sydney, and Gary from Public Works agreeing to clean, garden, mend and fix.

So Carmel there you are. Now Arts Access has a strong team of committed staff, artists, and people in funding bodies working for a quality of existence that everyone has a right to. There are a hundred ways it can happen, and I hope history will say that Arts Access helped.

Dinny Downie

Our multi-faceted functions



Carey Brickel
Returning as our
Project Officer. Sally
Marsden has been
filling Carey's position
International influences



Anne Maree de Jong
Ceramicist
Trainee Community
Artist
Pot of gold



Tori de-Mestre – artist
Co-ordinating 'Art
Party', arts and crafts
for children
Flash of inspiration



Susie Dickson
Staff
Photographer/Office
Assistant
The smiling face at the
front



Jennifer McCarthy –
Artist
Community Visual Arts
Programme
New and still
enthusiastic



Carmel Meiklejohn
Publicity Officer
Patient purveyor of the
printed word



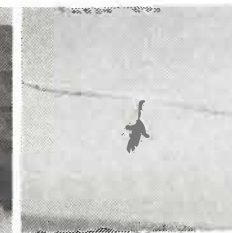
Barbara Milne
EASE Administrative
Assistant
Ticketing tycoon



Chris Milton
Ticketing Project
Officer
Despite his success,
hasn't got tickets on
himself



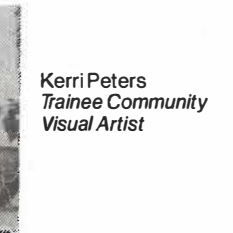
Sue O'Dwyer
Office Volunteer
Indispensable!



John Paxinos
Financial Consultant
assisted by Perry
Paxinos



Jeanette Pierce
EASE Secretary and
Bookkeeper
Bright and breezy!



Kerri Peters
Trainee Community
Visual Artist

Leanne Sarah
Office Administrator
Fax and figures

An Exciting Future for Arts Access

Even without Dinny's move to the Arts Centre, the coming months and years promise to be challenging and exciting for Arts Access.

We have planned extensive programmes in the areas of artist and staff training, information dissemination about the field of arts and disability, arts advocacy for individuals with special needs, regional development and resource production.

These are in addition to our on-going work in prisons, remand settings, Community Residential Units, Special Accommodation Houses, psychiatric and intellectual disability institutions and day programmes, schools, welfare centres, and with the many individuals and groups within the community whose needs are not being met by the arts or other community services.

The EASE programme is continuing from strength to strength in response to strong demand and of course we plan to develop workshop space and complete disability access within our building.

Dinny leaves behind her an energetic, innovative organisation with a clear direction, skilled staff and sound management committee.

Following in Dinny's footsteps as Executive Director will necessarily keep me on my toes. Alterations to our staff structure will however mean the development of new strengths for Arts Access. In particular I am looking forward to working with a Development Officer whose role will be profiling and marketing. This position will be advertised shortly.

I am also looking forward to the continued support, and creative input from all Arts Access staff and artists into the 1990's.

The comments on the final page of this newsletter are Dinny's greatest tribute. They reflect the value of her work and what Arts Access now means to the community and will continue to mean.

Finally from all the staff and artists – Dinny, an enormous thank you and good luck.

Kate Brennan

So long...it's been good

And what of the future? During the past year the demand for knowledge of our work has grown and we have therefore been more and more involved in training people and sharing the knowledge and experience we have learnt over the years. 1989 sees a development in this area with many plans aimed at seminars and training schemes throughout Victoria.

This will run parallel to our work with clients and our efforts towards integrating as many people as possible into the mainstream of living. So far our efforts in this area have been focussed on Special Accommodation Houses and Community Residential Units, and I am sure this will remain a priority.

Kate Brennan will be the Director of the Society and we all believe this to be a positive and progressive appointment. Kate has been the Programme Director at Arts Access for the past 18 months and she has introduced exciting new directions for the Society.

We have worked closely for that time and I will miss her as a colleague and friend. I am sure our friendship will survive the change.

I leave the Society full of hope and secure in the knowledge that everyone now associated with it can only take it to its next step into the future of change, creativity and innovation.

After eight years it is impossible to name everyone who should be thanked. Enough to say that organisations such as Arts Access can only grow and succeed through inspiration and support from staff, committee, funding bodies and friends. Arts Access has grown and has been successful... Q.E.D.

Thanks
Dinny Downie.

Dinny Downie

From our President

It would be hard to over-estimate the impact that Dinny Downie has had on the Arts Access Society and its work in the field of creativity and disability

In many ways, Dinny has made Arts Access Society what it is today. In 1980 when Dinny arrived at Arts Access, the state of the organisation was at best uncertain. With funding for no more than three months salary, only one or two programmes operational and occupying the corner of an office in St. Kilda Road, Dinny faced a task that would have daunted and demoralised lesser mortals.

Dinny's tenacity has made Arts Access a prosperous and stable organisation. When the Victorian

Ministry for the Arts somewhat reluctantly agreed to a one-off grant of \$4000 in 1980/81, it little realised that the Society was to develop into the Ministry's second highest funded Community Arts body in the State.

Dinny's contribution to the growth and development of Arts Access has been crucial. Through her hard work and positive outlook Arts Access has developed a reputation as an effective programme and service provider. She has brought to the people she works with a positive outlook, the ability to set goals and only then to consider the possible restraints and "what-ifs."

Clearly no organisation can survive and prosper through the efforts of a single person. An important strength of Arts Access has been the hard work and

dedication of the people involved, and this has been due in no small measure to Dinny's special talent for getting the best out of people, for demanding some commitment and effort that she puts into her work.

Finally, Dinny's commitment to the philosophy and ideals of Arts Access has put the organisation and the issues involved in the arts, disability and integration, "on the map" at both State and National levels.

In whatever capacity we have been involved, Dinny's liveliness, sense of humour and enjoyment has made working for Arts Access a pleasure. So thank you Dinny for eight years hard work, dedication and stimulation. Judy Morton. President.

The Nature of Arts Access

"We are all very appreciative of the support and funding Arts Access provided for the Senior Citizens of Bairnsdale, and hope to be considered for future programmes"
East Gippsland Centre

"Damien clapped and clapped. He was very happy. The circus had a band that they played all through. Damien's parents are very poor and it was good that we could take him. It was good that we got cheap tickets. Thank you very much!"
Karri

"Our relationship with Arts Access has always proved a pleasant and positive experience, each learning from the other, and I know that many staff and patients look forward to further successful projects in the near future!"
Mont Park Hospital

"Considerable gains have been made by our students in the areas of self expression, self esteem and participatory skills. The programme has been of particular benefit to non-verbal and emotionally disturbed students."
Nepean School

To the people we work with Arts Access means many things – Access, Enjoyment, Creativity, Tickets, Workshops.

Thanks to Graham Berry and Typographical Services

ARTS ACCESS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Registered by Australia Post
Publication No. VAW7218

**Postage
Paid
Australia**

Ms Marie Van Baer
Disability Services
Public Library
328 Swanston Street
MELBOURNE
VIC 3000



If undelivered return to:

Arts Access Society Inc.
109-111 Sturt Street, South Melbourne, 3205. Australia.