

ACCESSIBLE ARTS ANNUAL REPORT 2008



OVERVIEW



To be short-listed for an Australian Human Rights Community Award is certainly gratifying. But the applause for our work also recognises the growth of the arts and disability sector and it reaffirms that quality access to all aspects of the arts is a human right.

Continuing with the theme of excellence, an artist residency was established in partnership with Bundanon Trust for an artist with a disability. We also sought to recognise the leading cultural projects within the local government arena through the establishment of the Accessible Arts' Award and as part of the Local Government and Shires Association's Cultural Awards.

Consulting with the sector is vital if we are to influence government and other local agencies to provide greater support and opportunities for people with disability who wish to participate in the arts. The sector has been very responsive in supporting the various forums and surveys that we have conducted throughout the year. These include the 'Speak Up' consultations across NSW; 'POW WOW' in Western Sydney; a pilot study of cultural opportunities for people with disabilities; and a survey of stakeholders.

Above, left to right:
Maryanne Ireland, Chair
Sancha Donald, CEO

Front Cover:
Scott Trevelyan, master printmaker, Sen-9, 2006,
300 etchings in artist books (set of 5).

The organisation has sought to strengthen the arts and disability sector by providing Disability Awareness training to an increasing number of arts organisations. We continue to maintain our partnership with the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care in relation to the Don't Dis My Ability campaign and we have further developed our Access to Festivals program including enhancing our work with the Biennale of Sydney and the Sydney Film Festival. We initiated the very successful tour by Betty Siegel, Director of Accessibility at the Kennedy Centre for Performing Arts in Washington and we commenced research into access issues relating to heritage buildings. A cross government Arts, Sport and Disability forum provided an opportunity to share innovative approaches to improve access for people with disability.

Developing the skills of individuals is key to building an arts and disability culture. AART.BOXX, including a steering committee and public programs; the Mixed Abilities Ensemble; the Visual Artists' Studio Program; the Apprenticeship Training Program; Western Sydney Open Program; Sound Circles; and the Integrated Dance class are all examples of our programs aimed at developing and highlighting the creative talents of people with disability.

Servicing the sector has been achieved through a redevelopment of the website to reflect not only our work but also the key developments in the sector and to showcase leading examples of art and disability. The newsletter and the enquiry service continue to be prime sources of information to our stakeholders and an increase in our public profile has helped to promote these services to larger audiences.

Strengthening ourselves is a continuous process. Key developments in 2008 have been an increase in our funding from government and philanthropic sources; recruitment of new board members including Dougie Herd, leading disability advocate and Executive Officer of the Disability Council of NSW; the review of major policies; and the establishment of a volunteer workforce.

Finally, our sincere thanks go to our partners, who have provided a range of support, to the Board for their guidance and commitment to the values of the organisation and to the very dedicated, productive and inspiring staff.

Maryanne Ireland, Chair
Sancha Donald, CEO



REWARDING EXCELLENCE

Human Rights Awards 2008

Shortlist: Finalised from around 220 nominations, this acknowledgement of the work of Accessible Arts framed the year's achievements with distinction in the arts and disability sector as well as in the broader community. These awards recognise the extraordinary contribution to Australian society of a wide variety of individuals and organisations committed to issues of human rights, social justice and equality.

Accessible Arts Cultural Award:

In partnership with the Local Government Association of NSW and the Shires Association of NSW, this new award was established to recognise excellence in access initiatives within council supported community arts projects. Camden Council won the award for establishing a new community facility that combines traditional and digital arts to increase opportunities for creative expression to people of all ages, all backgrounds and all abilities in the Camden area.

Bundanon Residency: An artist residency for a NSW artist with a disability was established in partnership with Bundanon Trust. The four-week residency provided an opportunity for Northern Rivers based print maker, Scott Trevelyan to develop his practice and access facilities at the residency complex. As a direct outcome, Trevelyan's work was curated in the exhibition 'Born to be Wild' held at Penrith Regional Gallery early 2009.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

AART.BOXX 08: Launched by Professor Colin Rhodes, Dean of Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney on the 18 October 2008, 300 visitors attended this survey exhibition of national significance. A diversity of works by 23 artists were selected from a total of 53 applicants. Held in partnership with Tin Shed Gallery at the Faculty of Architecture, Design and Planning, University of Sydney, the three-week exhibition included a public program with artist talks, access tours and workshops.

Western Sydney Area Initiative:

A number of arts opportunities were established to engage individuals and organisations in the area. An Outreach Program using specialist music equipment was delivered to two disability services in Blacktown. A performance workshop program was established as part of the Western Sydney Open Program in partnership with Hawkesbury Regional Gallery. The Apprenticeship Training Program designed in partnership with Parramatta Riverside Theatres and Julius Media, saw eight people qualify with Certificate II in Live production, Theatre and Events. The Mixed Abilities Ensemble training program, in partnership with Fairfield's Powerhouse Youth Theatre, offered skills development in the performing arts for 12 people with and without disability.

Visual Artists' Studio Program:

With funding from the Sidney Myer Foundation, nine artists with disabilities accessed a supported art studio one day per week over 18 weeks at Pine Street Creative Arts Centre. Professional art tutors facilitated the project, providing electives in ceramics, printmaking, painting and drawing. The artists' assisted in the coordination of an exhibition as part of the professional development component of the program. Held at CarriageWorks in Sydney, Fridaze exhibited works from the studio program in October 2008.

Ongoing Programs: Sound Circles workshops were delivered to communities across NSW including the Blue Mountains, Illawarra and North Sydney. This initiative based on combining sound, percussion, body movement and improvisation is an Access Arts Queensland project being realised in NSW with support from Accessible Arts. In partnership with Sydney Dance Company, Integrated Dance classes were presented for the fifth year, offering weekly tuition in movement and dance to people of all abilities.

Left to right:
Hard Daze, produced by
Mixed Abilities Ensemble.



“We want Sydney Theatre Company to be inclusive and welcoming to everyone and we’re pleased to be working with Accessible Arts and other arts organisations to maintain and improve access and opportunities for people with disabilities.”

ANDREW UPTON AND CATE BLANCHETT,
CO ARTISTIC DIRECTORS OF SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY

STRENGTHENING THE SECTOR

Betty Siegel Tour: The national tour by Betty Siegel, Director of Accessibility at the John F. Kennedy Centre for Performing Arts in the US informed the arts industry about international standards of accessibility. Support from the John F. Kennedy Centre for Performing Arts US, Australia Council for the Arts, Arts Access Australia, Media Access Australia, Arts Victoria and Arts Access Victoria was secured. Around 60 CEOs, producers and directors of arts companies attended the event “Inclusive Leadership: Innovation and Impact” at the Utzon Room, Sydney Opera House. Additional representatives from the arts industry attended a panel presentation by Betty Siegel “Good Practice, or Goods Lift” at Parramatta Riverside Theatres. Other presentations included a Plenary Session at the Australian Performing Arts Centres Association Conference and sessions at the Other Film Festival, Melbourne Museum and Queensland State Library.

‘Removing the Obstacles’ Report: Investigating the relationship between heritage and disability discrimination legislation, initial findings identified that heritage legislation does not prevent arts organisations from providing access for staff and patrons with a disability. Initial results contributed to the Senate Inquiry into the Disability Discrimination and Other Human Rights Legislation Amendment Bill 2008. Findings were also presented by authors Carmen Siu and Courtney

Weller on a panel at Arts Law Week Sydney 2008 offering guidelines to arts organisations about access within a current legislative context. Funding was secured from the Law and Justice Foundation to re-engage the authors to complete the report.

Don’t Dis My Ability Campaign:

As the arts program partner for the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care’s Don’t Dis My Ability campaign, funding was secured to devolve small grant opportunities to supplement quality arts events in celebration of International Day for People with Disability on 3 December 2008. Sixty-three registered arts events from across the state contributed to 50 per cent of the total program for the campaign. Twenty-three grant applications were successful including projects in regional and rural areas and projects facilitated by independent arts workers.

Arts, Sport and Disability Forum:

A cross government forum supported by the NSW Department of Arts, Sport and Recreation recognised and discussed the barriers faced by people with disability accessing the arts. Attended by 50 representatives from the arts and disability sectors and five Human Services departments, the forum identified issues to be addressed by Government. Accessible Arts has begun to work with each of the government departments in attendance to overcome the barriers that were identified.

Education and Training:

The training program was revitalised during 2008 with the appointment of a new Training Manager. Arts organisations were supported to take a holistic approach to their staff ‘disability awareness and access’ training, with encouragement to think beyond a model that promotes face-to-face training for front of house, education and security staff only. A range of training methods for staff across all levels of the organisation was promoted including long-term training plans linked to the development of Disability Action Plans.

Between May and December, 86 participants successfully completed the TAFE NSW accredited Disability Awareness and Access course and 130 people participated in customised training from a range of organisations including the Art Gallery of NSW, National Portrait Gallery, Historic Houses Trust and Sydney Theatre Company. Volunteers from the Sydney Film Festival, Sydney Writers Festival and the Biennial of Sydney were also trained.

Volunteers from Vision Australia and Guide Dogs NSW/ACT participated in training sessions as guest speakers with disabilities, presenting personal experiences of accessing the arts. Regional areas were encouraged to source a local guest speaker, assisting arts organisations to build stronger links with local disability services. Overall participant satisfaction was high with 95 per cent evaluating their training as either excellent or close to excellent.



Access to Festivals: Four major arts festivals were assisted in the delivery of access services and programs for new and existing audiences with disability. Graeme Innes AM, Human Rights and Disability Discrimination Commissioner for Australia launched the Sydney Film Festival Accessible Cinema strand. Nine films by, for and about people with disability were screened; five films offered audio description and one film included captions. Accessible Cinema screening *Red Like the Sky*, directed by Cristiano Bortone, won the Audience Award for best feature film at satellite venues. 'Silence is Golden?' was presented as the first forum in NSW to focus on the introduction of audio description and captioning in the film industry. Film and festival directors as well as audiences and access service providers shared knowledge.



The Biennale of Sydney provided live audio description of exhibitions at selected venues for the Lord Mayor's Community Access Day. Launched by Lord Mayor Clover Moore MP on 23 August, over 150 people attended the access day, which also included tactile and sound installations as well as Auslan interpreted tours. Volunteers from Vision Australia were professionally trained to deliver audio description alongside curators at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Art Gallery of NSW and Pier 2/3, The Wharf. City of Sydney provided free transport between venues. Both the MCA and the Art Gallery of NSW have begun to provide audio described tours as a result of this initiative.

Opposite page:

Disability Awareness & Access training at Goulburn Regional Art Gallery. Image courtesy Kirsten Jeffcoat.

This page, clockwise from top:

From left to right: Marah Braye, CEO, Biennale of Sydney, Cliff Jackson, Vision Australia, Lord Mayor Clover Moore and Sancha Donald, CEO, Accessible Arts at the Biennale Lord Mayor Community Access Day, 23 August 2008.

Fridaze exhibition, CarriageWorks, October 2008.

Betty Siegel, Director of Accessibility, John F. Kennedy Centre for Performing Arts, Washington DC, national tour.

Alison McLaren, Audience Development Officer, Accessible Arts and Graeme Innes AM, Human Rights and Disability Discrimination Commissioner, Australian Human Rights Commission, Sydney Film Festival Accessible Cinema launch, 2008.



“As an Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) survivor, the attention and focus that I was able to dedicate to my practice whilst at Bundanon, was priceless. This meditative-like state enabled me to produce a more informed and resolved quality in my artwork.”

SCOTT TREVELYAN, MASTER PRINTMAKER AND RECIPIENT OF BUNDANON RESIDENCY FOR AN ARTIST WITH A DISABILITY.

CONSULTING THE SECTOR

NSW Arts & Disability Action

Strategy: Over 250 individuals and organisations participated in 12 ‘Speak Up’ consultations in regional and remote locations of NSW, contributing to the development of a NSW Arts & Disability issues paper. Further consultations were held with support groups in Sydney identifying issues specific to people with various access needs. Draft findings from consultations were submitted to the Cultural Ministers Council National Arts and Disability Strategy as well as the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs National Disability Strategy. Initial outcomes from consultations included the establishment of local arts and disability action groups bringing sector representatives together to lobby for and implement actions identified at ‘Speak Up’ consultations.

‘POW WOW’: A forum in Western Sydney engaged 45 people in the arts and disability sectors in a cross-sector learning and networking opportunity. The sustainability of creative programs was the key focus of the forum with a panel presentation including representatives from Penrith Regional Gallery, Powerhouse Youth Theatre, Blacktown City Council, Australia Council for the Arts and Bankstown Day Options disability service.

PROVIDING A SERVICE

Website: With the launch of a new website in February 2008, development of online resources met the demand for current information about the arts and disability sector. Visits to the website remain strong with a 27 per cent increase in traffic throughout the site and unique visitors increasing hits by 22 per cent. The introduction of an Artists Gallery, showcasing works from AART.BOX 08 saw unique visits to the site increase by 50 per cent during the exhibition.

Newsletter: Distributed monthly to over 1600 subscribers with a 15 per cent increase in subscriptions throughout the year, this service offers free arts and disability sector news, information and promotion of events and opportunities from local, national and international sources. Profiles of artists with disabilities became a regular monthly feature, together with highlighting organisations and events in the sector that are leading the way to improve access.

Public Relations: Increased demand for information and training services and high attendance at ‘Speak Up’ consultations throughout NSW indicate an increase in the public profile of Accessible Arts as the peak arts and disability organisation across NSW. Publicity surrounding the Betty Siegel tour and exposure on the ABC’s Sunday Arts program, featuring the Biennale of Sydney Lord Mayor’s Community Access Day were key contributors on a national scale. Local sponsorship by 2SER radio station of AART.BOX 08, listings in the Sydney Morning Herald and the prominence of the gallery space used for the exhibition also contributed to this increase. Other high profile activities including the Accessible Arts’ Award as part of the Local Government and Shires Association’s Cultural Awards and being short-listed for an Australian Human Rights Community Award delivered heightened capacity to inform a diversity of stakeholders.

OUR PEOPLE



BOARD

Maryanne Ireland
Chair

Suzanne Becker

Joshua Dowse
Company Secretary,
Public Officer

Elena Gildina
Treasurer

Dougie Herd

Sarah-Jane Rennie

Chrissie Tucker

STAFF

To view the profile of
current staff please visit
www.aarts.net.au/about-us/staff/

COMMITTEES

AART.BOXX 08 Creative

Committee: This committee of ten emerging artists was established as a professional development component of AART.BOXX and provided valuable creative input into the exhibition.

Accessing the Arts Group (ATAG):

The continual growth of this lobby group within the arts saw over 45 members informing their respective organisations about best practice accessibility, to deliver understanding and positive outcomes within core business strategies.

Audience Reference Group:

This group was established to assist in the development of innovative and high level responses to issues associated with accessing the arts by people with a disability.

SUPPORTING PARTNERS

- > **Arts NSW**
- > **Department of Ageing, Disability and Homecare**
- > **Department of Community Services**
- > **Australia Council for the Arts**
- > **City of Sydney**
- > **Perpetual Trustee**
- > **Ernst & Young**
- > **Sidney Myer Foundation**
- > **The RA Gale Foundation**
- > **Lucy Giumelli Saini Trust**
- > **Law and Justice Foundation**
- > **Disability Council of NSW**
- > **Media Access Australia**

Opposite page:
Denis Bosnjak, Betty-Lou-Gerson,
AART.BOXX 08.

Above:
AART.BOXX 08 Creative Committee.

To view the 2008 financial statements go to the website or request a copy by phone or email.

Accessible Arts is assisted by the NSW Government through Arts NSW, Department of the Arts, Sport and Recreation.



arts|nsw 





ACCESSIBLE ARTS

Pier 4 The Wharf
Hickson Road
Walsh Bay NSW 2000

Phone: (02) 9251 6499
Fax: (02) 9251 6422
Email: info@aarts.net.au
www.aarts.net.au

Western Sydney Office

Blacktown City Council
Level 1, 62 Flushcombe Road
Blacktown NSW 2148

ABN 48 116 402 192