

MAYOR DAMIEN RYAN

Good afternoon and welcome.

My name is Damien Ryan and I am the Mayor of Alice Springs Town Council.

I am pleased to be here to officially launch three Meeting Place exhibitions.

Two of those exhibitions are from here in the Northern Territory.

All around us is 'Who We Are' - the most recent group exhibition by the artists from the Free Space Studio in Darwin, NT. It looks at ideas and perspectives around identity.

We are lucky to have two of The Free Space Studio artists with us today: Abigail Maralngurra and William Mareko.

In the Chill Out gallery, we have a small selection of work from 'Freedom', an exhibition by Katherine artists about having the freedom to express themselves. The exhibition is a result of workshops with Step Out and Katherine Regional Arts.

And all the way from Germany, as you came into Witchetty's you would have passed 'Many Things Melt in the Desert - Station One' by visiting artists Dirk Sorge and Jovana Komnenic from Berlinklusion.

'Many things melt in the desert' is an interactive installation exploring multiple perspectives incorporating writing, sound and visual art. It's great to have our international colleagues presenting work here in Alice Springs.

I hope you all have time to enjoy the exhibitions during Meeting Place.

And now I'll hand over to Jenine for the NT Arts Access Awards.

JENINE MACKAY (WITH MAYOR DAMIEN RYAN HANDING OUT AWARDS)

Good evening.

I'm Jenine Mackay and I am the CEO of Incite Arts here in Alice Springs.

ABOUT THE NT ARTS ACCESS AWARDS:

The 2018 NT Arts Access Awards recognise the contributions of individuals, groups and organisations in the NT who have been working to improve accessibility in the creative arts for people with disability, across all genres of creative endeavor.

The awards are a joint venture of Arts Access Darwin and Incite Arts and have been running since 2009.

The awards aim to acknowledge NT based artists with disability, arts workers, support worker, community groups and organisations who have made an outstanding contribution through their creative practice.

THE MICHELE CASTAGNA MEMORIAL AWARD

In 2017 we named the award for an Outstanding Individual Artist: the ***Michele Castagna Award***. This category is named in memory of Michele Castagna, 1944-2016. The naming of this memorial award honours Michele's memory for now and the future and recognises Michele's outstanding contribution to Incite Arts in her role as Chairperson from 2007-2014.

Along with Incite Arts, Michele was also instrumental in founding Arts Access Central Australia (AACA) in response to recommendations from the 'Mapping New Territory Project' in 2003.

In 2014 Michele was awarded a Certificate of Recognition from Arts Access Australia (AAA), the peak arts and disability organisation in Australia, for her significant contribution to removing barriers to arts and cultural access, experienced by people with disability as audiences, artists, arts workers and/or arts leaders.

In 2015 Incite Arts acknowledged Michele's contribution to the development of arts and disability in Alice Springs with the presentation of a Life Membership to the organisation.

In 2016 Michele was awarded the NT Arts Access Award for Excellence in Inclusive Arts Practice. Michele has left an enormous and unique creative legacy for our NT arts and disability community and we thank you Michele.

THE 2018 AWARD CATEGORIES & RECIPIENTS

In 2017 NT Arts Access Awards are being presented in the following 4 categories:

>**The Michele Castagna Individual Artist Award** – Recognising an outstanding NT artist.

>**Projects** – for projects which have demonstrated outstanding leadership in accessible and inclusive arts practice.

>**Individual Arts Workers and Disability Support Workers** – recognizing individuals who have been instrumental in supporting the creative practices of artists with disability.

>**Local Community Groups and Organisations** – recognising local community groups and organisations for their contributions to increasing accessibility in the arts.

ABOUT JUDGING

NT Arts Access Award recipients are judged on the following criteria:

- Artistic merit and high-quality artistic outcomes;
- Community engagement and long service and ongoing contributions to accessibility in the NT.

This year's awards were judged by Meagan Shand the CEO of Arts Access Australia. Arts Access Australia is the national peak body for arts and disability,

Arts Access Australia works to increase opportunities and access for people with disability as artists, arts-workers, participants and audiences. We would like to thank Meagan Shand for generously offering her time and expertise to judging this year's awards.

THIS YEAR'S AWARDS GO TO...

THE MICHELE CASTAGNA INDIVIDUAL ARTIST AWARD

WINNER: Dion Beasley

Dion Beasley lives in Tennant Creek and is well known across the Territory as the artist behind the much loved 'Cheeky Dogs' brand. Dion's formal art career started in 2006 when the first Cheeky Dogs T- shirt line was launched. Since then, his reputation as an accomplished visual artist has grown from strength to strength.

Dion has an uncanny memory for landmarks, dogs and direction, and is able to document and express this through his artwork. Over the years, Dion has shown a keen interest in drawing topographical style maps and creating unique dioramas of communities in Canteen Creek, Tennant Creek and other places of significance to his life.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED: Kyle Adams

Kyle Adams is a long term member of CemeNTstars drama group where he began to explore writing music, RAP and DJ'ing. This culminated in the development of an original RAP song to accompany his 2016 shadow puppet theatre piece entitled 'So You Can See My Hear'.

Since then Kyle, with the support of an ArtsNT grant, has collaborated with Darwin Mentors to develop his DJ, RAP, music writing and performance skills. Kyle is positioning himself firmly in the role of an exciting Emerging Producer and contemporary RAP artist. Kyle's work is distinctive and sophisticated and explores themes including bullying, goals and goal setting, cultural politics, his Filipino multicultural identity and friendship. He also comments on the power and positivity of people with a disability.

Kyle has pursued the development of his own strong personal RAP voice, explored singing, creating original songs and music, developed skills in mixing, DJ'ing and focusing on his future goals, including presenting here at Meeting Place.

ARTS WORKER CATEGORY

WINNER: Virginia Heydon

Since 1996 she has worked in Alice Springs to provide creative arts opportunities for young people & people with disability. Virginia played a key role for the seminal 'Mapping New Territory' project 2003, partnering with the disability sector to deliver an arts program for people with disability. This saw the beginning of Arts Access Central Australia (AACA) 2004 - 2013.

Virginia was a key member of the AACA Advisory Committee, working alongside Michele Castagna and other committed community members to build practice and creation of arts project and artworks in the arts and disability space.

Virginia was a key member of the Incite team that enabled the direct delivery of AACA's work 2004 – 2013. With the AACA amalgamation with Incite Youth Arts to become Incite Arts, in 2013, Virginia played a key role for the formation and all subsequent work of the Performance Ensemble: "stArts With D". Some of their recorded and live works are being shared with you here at Meeting Place.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED: Yo Bell

Yohanna Bell is a researcher and creative storyteller from Darwin. Being inspired by the lack of stories about remote Indigenous children, Johanna started working in collaboration with Dion Beasley from Tennant Creek to bring his "Cheeky Dog" drawings to life with her clever use of text and storytelling. Dion has muscular dystrophy and profound deafness, the two have formed such a bond that Yohanna is now working on a third book with Dion - a memoir about Dion's life.

Yohanna has also founded the popular live storytelling and pod cast project SPUN. This year during the Darwin Festival Yohanna included an Auslan interpreter to bring the stories to an all-inclusive audience.

Yohanna also worked in collaboration with Dion for the PAIRED exhibition at NAVA in Darwin.

LOCAL ARTS OR COMMUNITY ORGANISATION CATEGORY

WINNER: Ngaruwanajirri Art Centre & Studio

Ngaruwanajirri is a Tiwi word meaning 'helping one another', a fitting name for the art centre which was established in 1994 to provide a focus and source of independent income for people with disability on the Tiwi Islands.

Ngaruwanajirri Inc has produced exciting talent in recent years, with their works being selected for the National Aboriginal Art Awards at the Northern Territory Museum and Art Gallery and being included in touring exhibitions throughout Australia and in public and private collections both locally and overseas.

Projects WINNER: CemeNTheads Drama Group for 'In My Skin' 2017 & 'AnOther Story' 2018

CemeNTheads for people with mental health issues has been running for two years run by Artistic Director Tania Lieman as a CemeNTworx, a program of Darwin Community Arts in association with Mission Australia. The two productions of 'In My Skin' in 2017 and 'AnOther Story' in 2018 were developed and both premiered at consecutive Darwin Fringe Festivals with sell out seasons.

'In My Skin' was awarded Excellence in Community Engagement and the Community Arts Excellence award for Darwin Fringe Festival in 2017.

'In My Skin' was performed again during Mental Health Week and Disability Awareness Week, 2017. The 'AnOther Story' production is planned for this year's Mental Health week.

The CemeNTheads tell stories of their experience living with mental health challenges and focus on positive strategies, stories of strength, recovery and hope. The CemenNTheads also offered opportunities and a platform for further growth, development and performance opportunities for several of the participants.

Projects HIGHLY COMMENDED: Palmerston College for ‘Our Own Way’

Under the mentorship of Corrugated Iron Youth Arts and in partnership with Down Syndrome Association, Palmerston College Special Education Centre performed ‘Our Way’ at Palmerston College Theatre in August this year.

The production consisted of 30 young people performing dance, drama, a sign choir and djembe drumming. The production was a theatrical collaboration about the performer’s stories of Self.

Students focused on reoccurring themes of strength, change and choice as a catalyst for thinking about their own lives, the journey they have been on and what they will choose in the future. This physical ensemble work offered personal accounts of independence, growth and empowerment.