

# Accessible Arts Annual Report 2016



## About Us

Accessible Arts is the peak arts and disability organisation across New South Wales.

Our vision is excellence in arts + disability.

Our mission is to provide leadership in arts + disability through information, advocacy and the facilitation of excellence in professional arts practice.

## Highlights

### **Sector Development**

\$543,559 in project spending to facilitate pathways to best practice and artistic excellence in professional arts + disability.

Biennial national conference, Arts Activated 2016 'Pathways to Practice', held at Carriageworks attracting over 350 delegates; 57% of the 63 speakers identified with lived experience of disability.

### **Arts Development**

#### **Grants Program**

60 applications received.

Investment in 26 projects to a total value of \$199,788.

Locations: Sydney Metro, North Coast NSW, Lower Hunter, South West NSW, Western Sydney, South Western Sydney, North West NSW, Eastern Riverina and South East Sydney.

## **Delineate**

21 applications received.

Investment in 6 projects to a total value of \$24,000.

Locations: Sydney Metro, Northern Sydney, Central West NSW, North Coast NSW, Lower Hunter and South Sydney.

## **Access Development**

Disability awareness training delivered to over 100 individuals.

## **Communications and Marketing**

Across all digital channels, our combined audience reach increased by 33%.  
154,935 unique visitors to [www.aarts.net.au](http://www.aarts.net.au)

Global audience reach with 'Catalyst Dance Residency 2016' short documentary screened on International Day of People with Disability 2016 at United Nations, New York.

## **From the Chair**

In 2016, we celebrated the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Accessible Arts. This milestone prompted reflection on how the sector itself has transformed during that time, and the contribution that Accessible Arts has been able to make to that change. Our actions and programs remain focused on supporting people with disability to develop their artistic practice and to achieve excellence in an environment in which that work is broadly acknowledged and celebrated.

The major event on our 2016 schedule was the fifth national arts and disability Arts Activated conference, which was realised successfully as an inclusive disability-led forum that resonated around the country and internationally. We also delivered significant outcomes through the second year of the 'Catalyst Dance Residency', and the third year of the Deaf Arts program.

Our partnerships are important to us and I would like to thank Arts Access Australia, the British Council, icare Lifetime Care, Ausdance and the City of Sydney, for the considerable expertise each of those organisations has provided in assisting us to develop and refine our various projects.

Our regional presence remains a high priority as we endeavour to fulfil our brief of supporting pathways to excellence outside the major urban areas. Several of our programs provided us with the opportunity to interact with specific regional centres, including the Riverina, Wagga Wagga, Kurrajong, Gunnedah, Kandos and Armidale.

2016 saw some changes to Board membership. I would like to thank Lisa Havilah and Ken Groves, who both left the Board during the year, for their respective and valued contribution to the organisation. We were very pleased to welcome Alex Jones as a director. Alex brings a wealth of experience as an advocate for people who are Deaf or have a hearing impairment, as well as an artist's perspective through his career as an actor and producer.

As we move into 2017 there are challenges ahead. Our long-serving CEO, Sancha Donald, has signalled that she will complete her term with Accessible Arts in the first quarter of 2017 after nearly 12 years in that position.

We also face longer-term challenges to our core funding base as the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) rolls out, and core, state-based funding to advocacy organisations like ours is rolled back. The Board has embarked on a range of discussions and initiatives to consider and address these circumstances as we move forward. In the interim, the organisation is in a healthy position going forward, having returned a positive financial result in 2016.

I offer my thanks for a very successful and productive year to my colleagues on the Board, to Sancha Donald and all the Accessible Arts staff and volunteers.

Emeritus Professor Sharman Pretty, Chair

## From the CEO

Throughout our 30<sup>th</sup> year, initiatives and projects that progressed our vision of excellence in arts practice achieved many high quality outcomes. A key highlight was the fifth iteration of our flagship event, the national Arts Activated conference, which was held in September at Carriageworks. This disability-led two-day event attracted 355 attendees from state, national and international arenas and focused on the theme 'Pathways to Practice.'

In relation to arts development activity, the second year of our third 'Catalyst Dance Residency' took place in August, in partnership with Critical Path and Ausdance NSW. This national dance development program provided opportunities for 14 dancers and arts practitioners with and without disability. We also partnered with 'Art Month Sydney' to lift the profile of visual artists with disability within this high profile mainstream visual arts festival and the broader community. Artists from 'Studio A' were selected to exhibit their work in the Sydney College of the Arts' Outsider Art Gallery as part of this partnership.

The Supported Studio Network, a national body that builds capacity, provides resources and strengthens connections to sustain diverse supported studio models, was further developed through the dissemination of the 'Needs and Gap Analysis' survey. Regional Arts Australia's Artlands conference, held in Dubbo, provided an opportunity to showcase work from studios across Australia via video

as well as an exhibition from supported studio, 'The Art Factory,' in the Riverina region.

In relation to sector development activity, the financial support of icare Lifetime Care enabled us to establish nine artist-run initiatives. This was the second year that the 'Small Grants' and 'Quick Response Grants' programs were awarded. Totalling \$200,000, these grants assisted 26 emerging artists to professionalise their practice and develop within mainstream arts contexts. Six 'Delineate' grants of \$8,000 each were awarded to support disability-led projects that build capacity, leadership skills, and artistic networks for artists with disability.

The Deaf Arts program continued to develop, with a second iteration of the Deaf Aboriginal Cultural Youth Camp held at Ngurra Bu (Hunter Valley) with 18 attendees and their families. This was followed by our first Deaf artists networking forum. The Deaf Arts Network also entered into a partnership with the 'Imagined Touch' installation at Carriageworks, as part of the Sydney Festival 2017. The year ended with the Deaf Arts Network being selected as a finalist for the 10th National Disability Awards in the 'Community Partnership Award' category.

Three 'Creative Causeway' meetings were facilitated to discuss ideas about arts and disability practice. Sessions were led by Caroline Bowditch (international Australian performance artist with disability), Tracey Callinan (CEO of Arts OutWest) and artists Clara and Lisa Wherby and Jenny Cheeseman (Peacock Gallery).

Services to regional areas have been widespread. We delivered disability awareness training to arts organisations in regional centres, engaged with a number of grant recipients in rural and remote areas, facilitated artists from regional areas to participate in programs through providing funding support, and ensured regional representation in initiatives such as the Arts Activated conference. With the roll out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), we supported Octapod to host two forums in Port Stephens and Maitland. These occasions provided an opportunity for people with disability in the Lower Hunter to discuss how the NDIS might assist them to include arts and cultural activities in their lives. Other initiatives included a partnership with Ability Options, to support the establishment of the Western Sydney arts and disability hub 'Front-Up', and to share relevant NDIS related information.

In relation to access development, our access consultancy continued to provide direct disability advice and training to a broad range of arts organisations. The 'Accessing the Arts Group' met on two occasions to provide both support and information to staff working in access related roles in cultural institutions. Other access initiatives included the provision of audio description for Vivid Sydney, and the development of the 'Accessing Sydney Collectively' campaign. Funded by the City of Sydney, this print/digital campaign is specifically aimed to reduce barriers that prevent participation and engagement in Sydney's cultural and creative life for people with disability.

As part of our communications strategy, our brand was refreshed with the launch of a new website and the development of a sub-branding structure. The production of high quality video documentation of our projects has gradually evolved and has allowed us to produce short, affordable, lasting, accessible demonstrations of the work that is available via YouTube to a global audience. For the second year in a row, a film commissioned and produced by Accessible Arts was included in the 'UN Enable Film Festival', in celebration of International Day of People with Disability 2016.

Accessible Arts remains financially stable returning a small surplus. With a healthy balance sheet, and the support of other financial partners, the organisation is in a strong position to deliver its objectives in 2017.

Our thanks go to all our stakeholders, funding partners and partner organisations for their involvement and interest in our work, and also to the staff, volunteers and directors whose collective guidance and dedication is central to the growth of inclusive practice in NSW. We offer special thanks to our core funding bodies, Arts NSW and the Department of Family and Community Services, whose support enables us to continue to foster the expansion and development of contemporary arts and disability practice and the engagement of audiences with disability.

Finally, as I prepare to leave the organisation in early 2017, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Chair, Emeritus Professor Sharman Pretty, for her strategic guidance, which I know will continue to shape the organisation and its future.

Sancha Donald  
Chief Executive Officer

## Sector Development

### **Arts Activated conference, 'Pathways to Practice'**

The 2016 Arts Activated conference was held on 20-21 September at Carriageworks, Sydney. This conference was the fifth in the series, which began in 2007. Arts Activated aims to create a welcoming professional industry event, providing a showcase of inclusive arts and cultural programs, projects and research from across Australia. It also highlights the advancement of professional arts practice by artists with disability across all art forms.

The conference attracted 355 attendees, that included registered delegates, speakers and companions, access providers and VIP guests, as well as Accessible Arts Board directors, staff and volunteers. Across the two day program, delegates heard from 63 speakers from around Australia and overseas, over 24 sessions. Taking into account session chairs and cultural

activities, 26 contributors were from interstate, and 57% of contributors were people with lived experience of disability.

Arts Activated 2016 received positive feedback about venue choice, program presenters, and its engaging atmosphere which supported networking between contributors and delegates.

### **‘Heading West’**

‘Heading West’ was a partnership between Accessible Arts, Arts North West and Arts Northern Rivers that supported the development of arts and disability practice in North West NSW.

A key outcome of this initiative is the ‘Enabling Community Creativity: A Regional Arts and Disability Resource Manual’ that will be available online in 2017. This resource will be disseminated to all Regional Arts Development Organisations across NSW.

### **NDIS Forums, Hunter Region – Port Stephens and Maitland**

In collaboration with OCTAPOD, Accessible Arts engaged with the arts and disability communities in both Port Stephens and Maitland in the Lower Hunter region. OCTAPOD coordinated two ‘Inclusive and Accessible Community Forums’ to discuss access and inclusion in the arts within the context of the roll out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The forums included case study presentations, provided resources and information on programs, and highlighted services offered in the Lower Hunter region.

An interactive workshop was also facilitated at each forum. The workshops identified key opportunities for the community to partner and network, in order to maximise positive outcomes for individuals and the broader sector, under the NDIS. The forums provided the Lower Hunter region communities with a positive framework to support inclusive and accessible arts practice.

### **Deaf Arts Network Forum**

The Deaf Arts Network facilitated a key face-to-face networking event in December 2016 for Deaf, hard of hearing, and DeafBlind artists. In the format of a relaxed wine and cheese night, the event was an opportunity for artists to develop a social network and find out about relevant programs. Artists were provided with information about how to gain access to cultural events, venues and funding. Feedback was positive, with strategic outcomes identified to be delivered in 2017.

### **Supported Studio Network (SSN)**

The Supported Studio Network’ (SSN) Steering Committee held two meetings in 2016, with representation from WA, VIC, QLD and NSW. An SSN ‘Needs and Gaps’ survey was developed and completed by eight supported studios across Australia. It identified a number of key focus areas to support in future

years.

Accessible Arts, in collaboration with a number of supported studios in Australia, developed SSN promotional material that included printed posters and a video. These were launched at The Art Factory's (a regional NSW supported studio) 'INSPIRE' exhibition at Artlands, the Regional Arts Australia conference held in Dubbo.

### **'Creative Causeway'**

'Creative Causeway' is an initiative of Accessible Arts that brings together key stakeholders in the arts + disability sector and community to share expertise, networks and professional arts practice.

In 2016, three gatherings were held:

- 'Infiltrating the Mainstream and Leadership' in collaboration with Caroline Bowditch (creator of 'Falling in Love with Frida') at Critical Path
- 'What are the possibilities and examples of quality arts and disability practice in regional NSW?' in collaboration with Arts Out West in Orange
- Artists Carla and Lisa Wherby in conversation about 'Access to the Arts for People with Disability' (facilitated by Kristina Tito), followed by a presentation by Jenny Cheeseman (Peacock Gallery) and Kristina Tito titled 'What does best practice look like in an arts and disability project?' at the ThinkAbility Forum in Beral.

## **Arts Development**

### **'Catalyst Dance Residency'**

The 'Catalyst Dance Residency' has been a national artist development program spanning two years and supporting 14 dance practitioners with and without disability, who demonstrate commitment to integrated dance practice. The Catalyst program included masterclasses, dance training, choreographic workshops and research, artistic and career development, and mentorships with key dance practitioners.

In 2016, the residency was led by choreographers Marc Brew and Sarah-Vyne Vassallo and included an intensive research choreographic laboratory over six days at the NSW hub of choreographic activity, Critical Path. The artist residents undertook practice-based research in collaboration with Brew and Vassallo. Artist residents were exposed to the foundations and principals of choreography and experienced sessions reflecting each lead choreographer's interests and methodologies.

An industry and public sharing was attended by over 40 key arts sector stakeholders, as well as family and friends of the artists, to highlight the outcomes of the week long residency.

## **‘Artist Run Initiative’ (ARI)**

The ‘Artist Run Initiative’ (ARI) project has supported the autonomy of nine artist run initiatives for artists with and without disability across NSW. Supported by icare lifetime care, the ARI project provides opportunity for social inclusion, networking, artistic and business skills development, and peer-reviewed practice.

Six of the ARI projects produced their major outcomes in 2016, which included performances and exhibitions. Three ARIs will produce their major outcomes in 2017. Five of the ARI projects have been led by artists with disability, with the other four co-facilitated by lead artists with and without disability.

The ARI project has supported development of artists with and without disability in their local communities across visual arts, literature, photography and performance areas.

### **ARI – Sydney Deaf and Hard of Hearing Photographers**

In collaboration with the Deaf Arts Network, the ‘Artist Run Initiative’ (ARI) project supported the autonomy of a new Sydney Deaf and hard of hearing photographers group for emerging artists who are Deaf.

The project supports and provides opportunity for social inclusion, networking, artistic and business skills development, professional artist talks, and peer-reviewed practice. The objective of the Sydney Deaf and hard of hearing photographers project is developing work toward a public gallery exhibition in 2017.

### **Deaf Aboriginal Cultural Youth Camp 2016**

Accessible Arts’ Deaf Arts Network partnered with Deaf Children Australia, and a number of other organisations, to support a three day Deaf Aboriginal Cultural Youth Camp. The camp brought together 14 Deaf and hard of hearing Aboriginal young people aged from 9 to 20 years, from Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales. The event was held in May at the Ngurra Bu Camp in the Wollombi Valley, NSW.

The camp provided Deaf and hard of hearing youth with an opportunity to participate in accessible cultural experiences and skill building through inclusive activities.

The objective of the Deaf Aboriginal Cultural Youth Camp was to help strengthen each participant’s sense of identity as a Deaf Aboriginal person. Attendees participated in activities such as smoking ceremonies, tracking animals, Dreamtime story-telling and cave visits.

### **Accessible Arts Grants Program**



Accessible Arts administered its second year of 'Quick Response Grants' up to \$5,000 and 'Small Grants' from \$5,000–\$20,000, in 2016. These grants were made available through a funding partnership with icare Lifetime Care.

This funding is designed to assist arts and cultural projects at any stage of their creative development or public presentation. The program delivered \$149,735 in 'Small Grants' funding to 11 artists and \$50,053 in 'Quick Response Grants' funding to 15 artists throughout 2016 - 2017.

The funding allocation was spread across NSW and included projects in the areas of visual arts, music, theatre, dance, literature and film.

## **Delineate**

In partnership with the Don't DIS my ABILITY campaign, run by the Department of Family and Community Services (FACS), Accessible Arts has supported six 'Delineate' projects across two years.

The 'Delineate' program is designed to boost disability-led projects that build capacity, leadership skills, and artistic networks for artists with disability, as well as creating cultural change.

In 2016, six projects from across NSW were funded a total of \$24,000 towards the first stage of their projects.

## **Access Development**

### **Training and Consulting**

Accessible Arts runs disability awareness training and access consulting services to arts organisations across NSW. Since the introduction of the Disability Inclusion Act 2014, this has become an important offering available to the arts community. Training covers topics such as disability history, legislation, culture, appropriate language, access barriers and access solutions. Consulting services include conducting access audits of premises and practices, as well as working with organisations on the development of their Disability Inclusion Action Plans (DIAPs).

Bespoke training was conducted for a number of organisations, including the Sydney Festival, MCA and the Biennale of Sydney. Representatives from a number of other arts organisations from across Sydney and NSW participated in training and discussion with Accessible Arts staff, guest speakers and consultants.

### **Accessing the Arts Group (ATAG)**

'Accessing the Arts Group' (ATAG) is a professional development group for arts organisations and venues, aiming to provide both support and information to improve disability access and social inclusion in the arts. Two gatherings of

this group were held in 2016. An online form exists on the Accessible Arts website to register for membership to this group.

### **Destination NSW, 'VIVID Sydney'**

As part of the second year of a partnership arrangement with Destination NSW, Accessible Arts was contracted to provide a number of audio descriptions for light works for 'Vivid Sydney.' Artist Imogen Yang created the audio files which were then uploaded onto the 'Vivid Sydney' website alongside general information about the work.

### **'Accessing Sydney Collectively'**

In partnership with the City of Sydney, Accessible Arts continued its strategic communications project 'Accessing Sydney Collectively'. In 2016, national sector engagement was undertaken to develop and deliver a unique Access Symbol. This communications process brokered relationships with 12 of Sydney's leading cultural organisations, and led advocacy conversations between key communications, marketing and digital teams from Sydney Theatre Company, City Recital Hall, Maritime Museum, Museum of Contemporary Art, Belvoir, Sydney Festival, Sydney Writers' Festival, Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney Film Festival, Carriageworks, Australian Museum and State Library of NSW.

Partner organisations signed a Memorandum of Understanding that committed to participating in the project for two years, and placed the Access Symbol on website landing pages. The Access Symbol supports improved online access awareness, connectivity and navigation for people with disability, underpinned by the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines [WCAG 2.0], and responds directly to digital human rights considerations.

Completion of the project is on target for 2017, and will produce 10,000 free pocket guides incorporating Braille, a mobile site ([www.asyd.co](http://www.asyd.co)), and a short url marketing strategy.

## **Communications and Marketing**

In 2016, Accessible Arts completed a brand refresh and launched a new, easy to navigate website. Custom designed in Wordpress, this has been built to high accessibility standards to ensure our work is accessible to everyone. Accessible Arts continued its strong social media presence, leveraging particular traction on Instagram. We continued to communicate with the Deaf and/or hard of hearing community through Auslan interpretation of the newsletter, and through the Deaf Arts Facebook group. Other direct messaging continued through distribution of the electronic versions of the Access Quarterly, monthly eNews, and project specific direct mail campaigns.

Multi-media activities were a key focus for Accessible Arts in 2016. Staff worked collaboratively with filmmaker Hugh Clark to produce five arts and disability short films. The 2016 'Catalyst Dance Residency' short documentary

gained a global audience at the UN Enable International Film Festival, and was screened at the United Nations headquarters in New York. Small grant recipient Alison Winchester's short film was featured at the 'Focus on Ability' Film Festival in Chatswood, Sydney. Accessible Arts continues to be recognised for its high quality captioning and audio description of video content, using YouTube as a platform to distribute short films to raise awareness of people with disability in the Australian arts sector.

## **Digital Engagement and Growth**

Facebook followers: 3,895 - 10% increase

Instagram followers: 824 - 97% increase

Twitter followers: 6,273 - 3 % increase

Deaf Facebook Closed Group: 542 members - 53% increase

YouTube: 6,644 views - 12% increase; 160 subscribers - 39% increase

Monthly eNewsletter: 1,679 subscribers - 14% decrease

AARTS website visits: 154,935 unique visits - 37% increase

Across all digital channels that Accessible Arts uses, our combined audience reach increased by 33% in 2016.

## **Board, Staff, Partners**

### **Board and Staff**

Emeritus Professor Sharman Pretty, Chair

Andrew Buchanan, Vice Chair

William Thorne, Treasurer

Kate Lidbetter Company Secretary

Kenneth Groves (resigned 21/04/16)

Alexander Jones (appointed 19/10/16)

Lisa Havilah (resigned 19/10/16)

Mark Walton OAM

Sancha Donald, Chief Executive Officer

### **Partners**

Family and Community Services – Aging, Disability and Home Care

Arts NSW

icare lifetime care

Don't DIS my ABILITY Campaign

City of Sydney

With thanks to Lucy Giumelli Saini Trust and the Raymond E. Purves Foundation

To view the 2016 financial statement, go to [www.aarts.net.au](http://www.aarts.net.au) or request a copy by phone or email.

Accessible Arts is assisted by the NSW Government through Arts NSW.

## Back Cover

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