



10th anniversary catalyst

Community Arts Network Western Australia 10th Anniversary Catalyst Bulletin 1997–2007

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FOREWORD SINCE 1997, THE CATALYST COMMUNITY ARTS FUND HAS SUPPORTED PROJECTS THAT EXPRESS LOCAL CULTURE AND CELEBRATE LOCAL IDENTITY. EACH YEAR, THE CATALYST PROGRAM DISTRIBUTES \$215,000 OF STATE GOVERNMENT FUNDING TO GROUPS, INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES ACROSS WESTERN AUSTRALIA. THIS 10TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION OF THE BULLETIN IS A TESTAMENT TO THE HUNDREDS OF COMMUNITIES, PARTICULARLY IN REGIONAL AREAS, THAT HAVE BEEN EMPOWERED THROUGH PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY ARTS PROJECTS SUPPORTED BY THIS FUND.

THE PROJECTS HIGHLIGHTED IN THE BULLETIN REFLECT THE BEST OF COMMUNITY ARTS PRACTICE; INITIATIVES THAT PROMOTE THE VALUES OF COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT, SOCIAL INCLUSION, RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY AND SELF DETERMINATION. IT IS HEARTENING TO SEE THAT, THROUGH THE CATALYST PROGRAM, SO MANY COMMUNITIES HAVE DEVELOPED MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS AND CONTINUE TO DEVELOP THE SKILLS AND CAPACITY OF OTHERS IN THE SECTOR.

IN ANOTHER MAJOR MILESTONE, CAN WA'S INDIGENOUS ARTS AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT UNIT IN KELLERBERRIN RECENTLY CELEBRATED ITS FIRST YEAR OF OPERATION. DURING THE FIRST TWELVE MONTHS, THE COMMUNITY HAS EMBRACED THE ACTIVITIES OF THE UNIT AND EXPERIENCED SIGNIFICANT GROWTH IN ARTS ACTIVITY AND COMMUNITY COHESION. ONGOING SUPPORT OF THE UNIT DEMONSTRATES THE STATE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S REGIONAL AREAS.

THE IGNITE FUNDING INITIATIVE LAUNCHED BY PREMIER ALAN CARPENTER IN DECEMBER 2007, INCLUDED A 30% INCREASE TO CATALYST COMMUNITY FUNDING. THIS IS PART OF REGIONAL IGNITE! A PROGRAM THAT WILL DELIVER \$5.6 MILLION OVER FOUR YEARS TO REGIONAL FUNDING AND TOURING PROGRAMS. THE STATE GOVERNMENT RECOGNISES THAT CULTURE IS VITAL TO STRONG COMMUNITIES AND THAT CATALYST HAS A VITAL ROLE TO PLAY ACROSS THE STATE.

I OFFER MY CONGRATULATIONS TO CAN WA ON THEIR PUBLICATION OF THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY CATALYST BULLETIN AND WISH THEM ONGOING SUCCESS.



SHEILA MCHALE MLA
MINISTER FOR CULTURE AND THE ARTS

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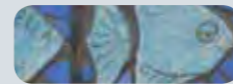


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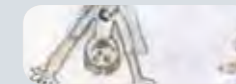
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COMMUNITY ARTS PRACTICE

BY PILAR KASAT, MANAGING DIRECTOR, CAN WA

AUSTRALIA HAS A PROUD COMMUNITY ARTS HISTORY AS WELL AS A TRACK RECORD OF GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR THIS PRACTICE. IT WAS THE WHITLAM GOVERNMENT IN 1973 THAT FIRST INSTITUTED A SUPPORT STRUCTURE WITHIN THE AUSTRALIA COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS FOR COMMUNITY ARTS PRACTICE. SINCE THEN COMMUNITY ARTS HAS HAD AN 'INTERESTING' LIFE WITHIN THE STRUCTURES OF GOVERNMENT. SOMETIMES IT HAS BEEN SUPPORTED AND LOVED, AND OTHER TIMES RATHER NEGLECTED.

Community arts practice is a hybrid. It does not fit neatly into a box. But that is also its strength. The role of Community arts is to challenge what art is and what values are represented in the creative process. Community arts have delivered some of Australia's best-known events. In fact, it was the Community Arts Fund of the Australia Council that funded the Sydney Mardi Gras and raised many eyebrows at the time!

As Pat HOFFIE put it so eloquently in *Community and the Arts*:

"Although community arts is not a singular activity or artform, and has never sought to define itself as a particular style of art, it nevertheless has principles which contain particular structures and frameworks, as do all approaches to art practice. The community artist, it has been said, works in a world of competing discourses—one discourse about the nature of art and representation; the other about political process, social change and community development"

HOFFIE, P. (1991). CENTRES AND PERIPHERIES. IN V. BINNS, *COMMUNITY AND THE ARTS* (P.43). NSW, AUSTRALIA: PLUTO PRESS.



PILAR KASAT

Community arts practice is about affirming cultural diversity and ensuring that in a democratic society, the arts are not just the realm of a privileged few. Creativity is an asset to any community. We must ensure that there are ongoing opportunities for all to harness and engage in cultural activities and in the practice of art making. I see community arts practice as a level playing field in which we are able, sometimes for the first time, to be in touch with our creative selves and the creativity of others. Community arts enable many voices to be heard and expressed.

In Western Australia we have been lucky that the State Government has consistently provided a mechanism for supporting this practice through the transfer of community arts funds to CAN WA. During the last 10 years and on behalf of the Department for Culture and the Arts, CAN WA has supported 651 projects and has received 1,000 applications.

This support has been critical to an arts practice that has faced many big challenges during the last ten years. Not to mention the very fact that we spent a great deal of time in the last decade, negotiating and convincing many of the benefits of community arts. Although art is well known for magically nurturing the soul, during an economic boom, it is rare to find those who are sympathetic to the many intangible benefits of accessing and participating in cultural and arts activities. I hope new and brighter times for the sector are just around the corner.

In this light, CAN WA welcomes the recent announcement made by the Premier which has confirmed that for the first time in its history, Catalyst will have a 30% increase in funds. Watch this space as CAN WA revamps Catalyst for 2009 to make it more relevant and accessible to communities.

It is my belief that a society will be richer if more of its citizens not only consume arts that are produced by some, but generate the creativity and art expression that fuels the ever-changing cultural tapestry of our society. ■



CHAIRING THE CATALYST ASSESSMENT PANEL

BY ROB EWING



SEASCAPES - MOTHER AND CHILD TOWER

As current Chairperson of the Catalyst Assessment Panel, I have the privilege of enjoying a challenging and rewarding role in the realisation of community arts projects. The position provides me with an exceptional insight into the aspirations of community organisations and the many artists working within the often challenging, sometimes perplexing, but never boring, cultural development sector. Many project proposals provide clear evidence that the project design and intent has grown from a community driven ferment.

We are inspired by a desire to contribute to and often redefine our role as participants, contributors and manipulators of our space and place within our community. Each funding round involves the deliberation and scrutiny of all proposals and it is through this process of evaluation that I am constantly reminded that as community members we have an intrinsic need to continually explore, interpret and redefine our sense of place within the Australian and broader international community context.

The world-wide-web provides us with a wonderful gateway into the cultural development debate within the Australian and international community. It presents us with vast and varied manifestations of community art, adding significantly to our perceptions of how community is expressed and defined and emphasising that our challenge is always to explore and redefine the role of community arts. The internet reminds us to accept a fluid interpretation of 'community'. With broadband and better access, technology is increasingly reducing the limitations imposed by the tyranny of distance in the development of new and exciting creative partnerships. Whilst such immediate access to the vast gamut of broader Australian and international community development process is important, equally so, I believe, is the need for us to focus on the role we play in defining our local community. As artists and community members working within the community cultural development sector, we are encouraged to embrace opportunities to reconcile the evolving and culturally diverse nature of our community, and to appreciate that this land of Australia will continue to define us as it has done for centuries.

During my time as Catalyst Chairperson I have been refreshed, inspired and enthused by the vigor and quality of the proposals that are received each funding round. It has been particularly pleasing to see diversity and innovation play an ever-increasing role in the design, development and making of community arts projects from many locations throughout the state. Regional areas are rich with creative innovation and small communities are no longer the poor cousins in the development and expression of creative cultural outcomes. They continue to make significant contributions to the broader Australian understanding, interpretation and sense of community cultural identity.

Invariably, many project proposals articulate processes that engage community members in the expression of their cultural identity and seek to evoke the ever-changing face of yours, mine, and our community. Through such processes we are better informed, more empowered and ultimately better placed to contribute to the cultural development of our community. ■



TOP>BOTTOM: BYFORD PEACE MEMORIAL; ROCKINGHAM-DERBAL NARA SCULPTURE.

Photos by Rob Ewing

"OUR CHALLENGE IS ALWAYS TO EXPLORE AND REDEFINE THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY ARTS."

LOOKING FORWARD— LOOKING BACK

Catalyst in the Political Ecology

BY MICHELLE HOVANE



Back in 1995 in Western Australia, we were laboring under conservative state and federal governments and the notion of 'community' was seen as a little subversive and therefore denigrated as artistically 'lesser than' the so-called high arts of opera, literature and theatre. The new Federal government had just gutted what was left of the 'Art and Working Life Program'—and funding had been shifted to the regions and local governments, which were seen as less politicised. It was still 'community arts' rather than 'community cultural development'.

It was in this climate that I first began working in the community arts sector, as a volunteer with the Ran Dan club (I was moonlighting from my day job as an organiser with the Teachers Union). At that time there was no triennially funded community cultural development organisation in Western Australia. Community Arts Network had a small office in a run-down part of East Perth. Artists tended to be 'guns for hire'. A shire would invite artists who would have a massive cultural experience connecting with the local community—the community participants would have an intense (and possibly life changing) experience working with the artists and then kaput. Finish. The chances of seeing again those people that you had connected so strongly with were pretty low.

It was also a given that as a beginner you would spend time volunteering—learning from and being mentored by those with more experience. Thank you Lachlan McDonald, Caroline O'Neil, Vanessa Lombardo, Di McAtee, Rob Crow, Gabi Mazalevskis, Sanjiva Margio and others for giving me 'the bug'! From their example, I found the courage to leave my well paying job and commit myself to the financially uncertain and experientially rich life of an independent CCD practitioner.

Such was the climate of the times, we found ourselves 'betwixt and between'—'border crossers' in a land increasingly concerned about border protection. We were not taken seriously by community development practitioners (community art being seen as window dressing compared to the real problems of poverty, homelessness, alcohol and drug abuse, and family violence). Community involvement was seen as necessarily lowering 'excellence' (the then current buzz word in conservative governance).

I want to state my belief that art is not a luxury but a necessity:

"Art and humanity are inseparable—it is a truth older than Chinese bronzes older than the Neanderthals buried their dead with flowers" (Elizabeth Lowell from 'tell me no lies')

and

"Art is not just a mirror to reflect reality—but a hammer with which to shape it" (Brecht)

Any act of creation is an act of hope—from having a baby, to making a cake, to painting on a canvas or telling our story, these all assume hope in a future. Our baby will grow up, that we and others will be alive to eat the fruits of our labour, that someone will see, hear and maybe understand our stories. Hope, I believe is an essential element of life. Without hope, we begin to die physically, socially and economically.

Today, 'sustainability' is the buzzword—but how do we create a project with sustainable outcomes? How do we sustain ourselves as grass roots CCD practitioners? Frankly, I haven't found either easy to achieve in my decade of practice so far.



LEFT>TOP: THE MESSENGER PROJECT—ANIMOCEAN.

Photos by Tim Grant

In this article I want to reflect on my experience in coordinating an artist-initiated, longer term community cultural development project, 'The Messenger Project' that ran in the Fremantle area over a period of seven years. I also want to reflect on the current shifts in the broader political and economic climate and what opportunities that opens up for us working in this field.

Community Arts Network played the role of midwife in the birth of The Messenger Project, a project that dominated my life for seven years. It was in Meeting Room 2 upstairs at the King Street Arts Centre at a cultural planning training week (the very first fully accredited course in 2000) that the Messenger Project began to take on a concrete form. Before then it had been a kernel of an idea in my mind.

Penny Kordyl was the Community Development / Community Arts Officer at the City of Fremantle at the time and she was already interested in engaging the community through the arts. She was in active dialogue with the Indigenous community and planning a tile project in a run-down park in Hilton. Meanwhile SWERVE members had been planning to engage the local community in sharing their stories by piloting some suburban street theatre. So we formed the first tentative partnership that came to mark the inception of The Messenger Project.

The Messenger Project was always intended to be a long-term cross-sector partnership which would engage with the different sub-communities within the Hilton area. It was intended to build bridges between social groups who were alienated from each other. At that time, the local papers were full of stories that demonized Indigenous young people and reported high levels of fear amongst the elderly residents of the area. The Messenger Project sought to create positive

interactions between these groups by facilitating the exchange of stories using arts and cultural tools and thereby contributing to community connectedness, safety and harmony.

Following the very successful pilot program in 2000 there was a two-year period of community consultation, networking and project shaping. This process was mostly informal and involved many, many cups of tea-knocking on doors and introducing ourselves. During this time I used to enjoy the look of relief on community members faces when I opened my Italian leather briefcase (op shop) with a flourish revealing nothing more than a large packet of Tim Tams. To me-it was this kind of clown approach and heart-based face to face interactions at a grass roots level that enabled the project to achieve such incredible outcomes with so little money.

"ANY ACT OF CREATION IS AN ACT OF HOPE."

Catalyst funding was the first cab off the rank and provided-along with cash and in-kind contributions from the City of Fremantle-the first mad 10 weeks of circus workshops-with 40 (mainly Indigenous) kids taking over the circus space in Old Customs House. More support from the City of Fremantle, Arts WA and Office of Youth Affairs followed to shape another 10 weeks of skills workshops into a public performance, 'Futcha Crew' for the 2003 Our Children Our Future NAIDOC Week. Simultaneously, funding from the victims of crime fund provided money to conduct ongoing Photoshop workshops at the PCYC targeting Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse youth. There were over fifty performers on the stage that night and they gave an awe-inspiring performance that was well received by the 500+, mainly Indigenous audience.

Support from the Australia Council and Healthway helped to create a program of multi-arts development that resulted in the 2004 multi-media circus extravaganza at the Fly by Night Club for Reconciliation Week. This time we targeted older members of the community and conducted over 30 interviews with older residents about life for young people in Fremantle 50 years ago. Our young performers told the older residents' stories as well as their own through a mixture of dance, circus and digital imagery (of historic and contemporary photographs) projected on screens behind them. It was a pretty special moment to see a couple of rows of grey hairs (mostly wadjela) laughing and clapping as they recognized themselves in the antics of the Indigenous kids.

In 2005, we undertook a year of intensive skills development in circus, dance, screen-printing and digital story telling, with a focus on involving local children and young people in weaving (with a group of Nyoongar women).

In 2006, the community made it clear that they wanted to have one large public event that would really make an impact on the broader community and give the young performers a chance to shine. We successfully obtained funding from Catalyst, the Australia Council, Healthway and the Office of Multicultural Interests for the show development, as well as from Arts WA for the show production. ANIMOCEAN would be a key free event within the 2006 Animate Fremantle Festival.

The ANIMOCEAN show was the most creatively and logistically ambitious performance that the Messenger Project has created so far. The scale of what we were doing, at times, overwhelmed everyone involved from participants to volunteers to artists and production staff. The end result however, was an unqualified success and created enormous pride and satisfaction for all involved. Indeed, more than a year after the performance, I am still getting feedback from both participants and audience members about how special and magical the show was.



THE MESSENGER PROJECT-ANIMOCEAN.
Photos by Tim Grant.



10TH CATALYST EDUCATION



THE MESSENGER PROJECT—ANIMOCEAN.

Photos by Tim Grant.

Other successes of the project include:

THE INVOLVEMENT OF OVER 150 LOCAL PARTICIPANTS, volunteers and artists from Indigenous, non-Indigenous and migrant/refugee backgrounds.

HUGE OPPORTUNITIES FOR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT, community participation, community expression, networking and increased appreciation for Indigenous and migrant/refugee groups within the general community.

NURTURING OF NEW COMMUNITY leaders to step forward. One of the more experienced volunteers, was the local host for the national gathering of the newly formed INDIGENOUS CIRCUS ARTS NETWORK (ICAN), was employed as a youth mentor by the City of Fremantle in an Indigenous Youth Engagement Project and became a member of the Nyoongar Advisory Committee on Fremantle Council.

NEW EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES have resulted for several volunteers and participants in the project.

THE INTER-SECTOR PARTNERSHIP BUILDING and networking which has grown between local service providers—The City of Fremantle, The Fremantle Police and Citizens Youth Club (PCYC) and the WA Circus School has created new synergies and much greater dialogue, resource sharing and integration, especially in response to the needs of indigenous youth.

NEW PARTNERS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS have tapped into the PCYC as a place accessed by numbers of Indigenous youth. FREO YOUTH services last year initiated a weekly outreach service based at the PCYC. In the meantime Challenger TAFE will be offering their Indigenous GATE (Gaining Access to Training and Employment) course for the second year running, with many of the participants in this course (and a couple of the tutors) being drawn from the Messenger Project.

THE WA CIRCUS SCHOOL has made access for Indigenous children and youth a core concern. A mentoring program will link new Indigenous participants with Indigenous peer mentors to provide support. The mentors will themselves be supported. A number of scholarships will also be available to Indigenous children and young people throughout the term program.

THE 2007 AUSDANCE WA JUMP INTENSIVE included subsidised places for invited Indigenous, non-Indigenous and migrant/refugee Messenger Project participants. This led later to the formation of a performance group for the 2007 Artrage 'Cross Fire' dance battle. A Messenger project participant was also invited to participate in a national AUSDANCE workshop held in Canberra in 2008.

THE NURTURING OF YOUNG LEADERS as peer educators/assistant trainers within the project over the past few years. Peer educators provided a new level of inspiration as role models within the project. Two of these peer educators have subsequently been employed as teachers in a new dance project being sponsored by the South Metropolitan Public Health Unit and based at PCYC in 2008.

This greater inclusiveness amongst service providers, and mutual participation by people of different backgrounds and cultures was one of the core aims of the original Messenger Project in 2000, so it is gratifying to see how sustained community cultural development does have multiple and multiplying positive community impacts.

Catalyst funding is just that, 'a catalyst' for communities to begin working with the transformation that community cultural development can provide. I imagine that Catalyst funding over its 10 years of operation has fuelled the start of hundreds of inspired journeys and explorations. However, Catalyst funding is limited and much in demand.

To make the project ongoing and sustainable and fulfil the considerable potential that long term CCD work can achieve other substantial funding and community partners must be found.

The Messenger Project was fortunate to develop three solid community partners in the City of Fremantle, the Fremantle PCYC and the WA Circus School—and these three partners (through the in-kind support of administration space, workshop venues, equipment, transport and information sharing) plus the commitment and in-kind support of the artist and community team involved, made it possible for us all to imagine an existence beyond the project-based funding that was our cash reality.

In late 2004, I received a Catalyst Professional Development grant to document the Messenger Project (2003 and 2004), reflect upon its successes and do some research into other comparable projects nationally.

What I found, was that in other states projects attempting the same kind of breadth of involvement and far-reaching outcomes that the Messenger Project had tended to be partnerships involving a longer term commitment of multiple government and community partners. In western NSW, a project similar to the Messenger Project had the commitment of fulltime teachers from the Education Department and fulltime health workers provided by the Health Department.

However, my interviews with project participants and partners reinforced my understanding of the very high value (and incredible cost effectiveness) of this work in adding exponentially to individual, community capacity and wellbeing.

The problem seems to be that in WA there is a lack of understanding of the benefits of CCD at a broader government level. The Messenger Project had been in active contact with people from the Education Department (both schools-based and those working in specialist directorates), TAFE (those involved in specialist access programs), public health units and the Department of Community Development. This contact had been mainly with employees, who like the artists were working at a coalface level and while they could often see the transformative effects of the project on their clients, or the effectiveness of their sponsorship dollar there didn't seem to be any straightforward way to progress this cooperation to a more senior level. If this had been possible, there might have been a more substantial commitment of resources beyond the networking and information sharing that was happening very well at a grass roots level.

"AT THE END OF 2004, A BOMBSHELL HIT—THE AUSTRALIA COUNCIL WAS SHUTTING DOWN ITS CCD BOARD."

At the end of 2004, a bombshell hit—the Australia Council was shutting down its CCD board. As an independent CCD practitioner I felt like I was being kicked in the guts. The Australia Council CCD board was the only national entity that recognised the worth of what we do as a professional artistic endeavour. To have this taken away felt like having my/our identity rubbed out. OZCO were also the only body which offered ongoing funding for organisations engaged in community cultural development practice. After being successful in getting three grants in the last five years, SWERVE was finally eligible for the 'hens teeth' of 'program funding', a necessary pre-cursor to the holy grail of triennial funding.

On a national level, the field rallied and held the Australia Council Executive to task for their non-consultative and unilateral decision. After two years of lobbying, the formation of NACA (National Arts and Cultural Alliance) and a national consultative process, we were assured that we had largely kept the funding for CCD—and in fact won new ground. WA was very well represented in this process and I believe this was an indicator of the strength of our work at a national level.

Personally, however, I was exhausted. I just did not have the energy and could not afford the unpaid time to do all the preparation and groundwork that a successful program funding application requires. Neither did anyone else in SWERVE. Moreover, it seemed neither did in anyone else in WA, with the exception of DADAA WA, (who after many years of exemplary CCD work and excellent partnership building) are now deservedly in receipt of triennial funding. In the list of 2007 grant recipients, I could not find any West Australian artists or companies who were successful in gaining either project or program funding for community partnerships.

To me this suggests that while there are still many artists in WA who are doing great work with communities, we are still evolving a recognition of our work as a vital professional contribution to community wellbeing and lag behind the other states in achieving higher and ongoing levels of support and resourcing.

The election of a Rudd Labor Government on a national level and a State Labor Government presiding over a booming economy gives us a unique opportunity to press our case forward for the recognition of the transformative potential of community cultural development practice on a truly sustainable level. As artists and groups, we need contributions from state and federal governments that will take us beyond the hand to mouth, project-by-project approach. It is time to lift up our heads and dare to dream of a future where we can assume ongoing funding for CCD projects that focus on particular communities, their needs and aspirations. I think we have gotten used to eating (and sometimes fighting over) the crumbs from the table of ascendant conservative rule and we need to break with our own lessened expectation.

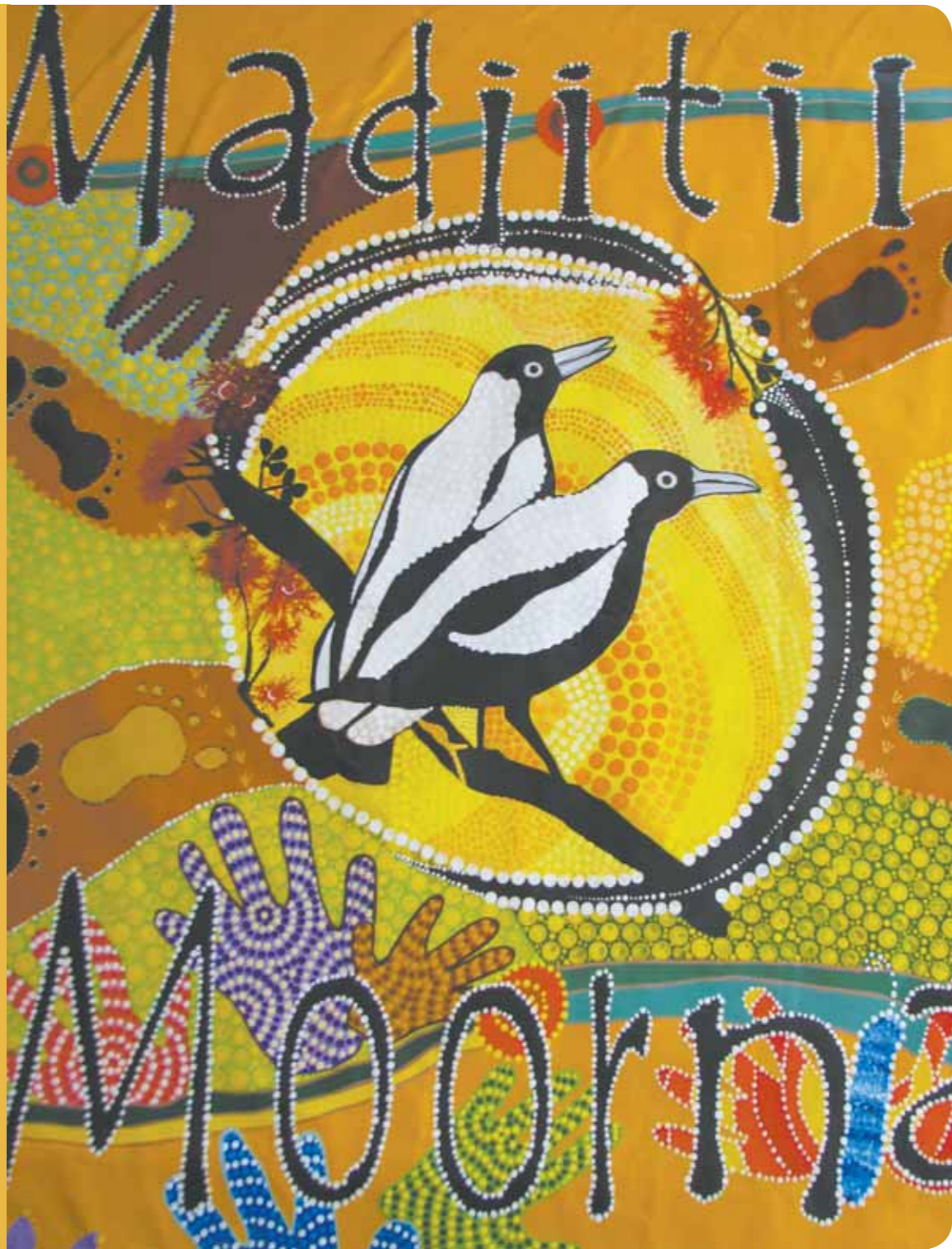
I propose that as individual and groups of practitioners we need to greatly increase the amount of resources our sector receives. This resource increase is well over due and needs to be exponential if it is to make a difference. We need to reach decision-makers at all levels of government and convince them of this.

I propose that we challenge local governments to commit to innovative pilot projects combining numerous government, non-government, council and community partners in a process that take place over a minimum of five years.

I propose that we press the State Government to come up with a creative solutions fund that would support cross-sector partnerships such as the Messenger Project on a 5-10 year basis.

I propose that we continue to press nationally for the greater resourcing and recognition of our work, not only within the arts but within the broader areas of health, education, Indigenous affairs, multicultural society and immigration to name but a few.

This publication celebrating and reflecting upon the fruits of 10 years of Catalyst Community Arts funding can be one important tool in this process. ■



MADJITIL MOORNA AND DJINDA

BY JO RANDELL

“WHAT MAKES
THIS CHOIR
SOUND SO
SWEET IS THE
PASSION THAT
EVERYBODY
INVOLVED
SINGS WITH.”

Background

The Madjitil Moorna project was begun in 2006 by ZIG ZAG COMMUNITY ARTS Inc. in the Kalamunda area. It was decided that it would be a great idea to involve Indigenous and non-Indigenous people singing together, led by Indigenous musicians. Several of us on the committee had experience of singing in a community choir and believed in the project's potential for healing and wellbeing—both personal and as a group. And of course, a performance at our festival in October would be a bonus!

Musicians Della Rae Morrison and Jessie Lloyd agreed to lead the singers and teach us their own songs plus other songs in language and a few written by Indigenous friends. We started, nervously, with 22 people.

The whole 13 week rehearsal process was such a wonderful exercise in trust and harmony that all of the 31 singers, of many racial backgrounds, who followed through to the performance wanted to continue as soon as possible. We also had three invitations to sing on the strength of that first Kalamunda Zig Zag Festival performance. At this stage we were funding ourselves and relying on the generosity of our artists, Della and Jessie.

MADJITIL MOORNA.
Photos by Jo Randell

Catalyst-funded Project

In 2007, we sought funding from CAN WA to extend the project and include the kids of the singers in a dance project. These kids would be our 'djinda' or 'stars' in Noongar language. The idea was supported by CAN WA and we took off.

The project began in earnest 10 weeks before the October Zig Zag Festival with new people coming along each week to learn the gorgeous soulful and uplifting songs chosen by our directors. With the help of practice CDs, many new singers were quickly ready to join in with performances that kept cropping up. Highlights included singing at The Fly By Night Musicians Club, NAIDOC celebrations, Chocolate Martini, the Kambarang Festival and Government House in the lead up to our main gig in Kalamunda.

With four weeks of rehearsals remaining, Indigenous dancers Lee West and Peter Nelson taught 20 little ones (kids of our singers) Aboriginal dance and their performance added fantastic value to our whole choir performance on Festival Day 2007. The children were excited to be performing traditional dance in front of a large and enthusiastic crowd. Their

parents were delighted to be sharing the experience with their children.

Catalyst funding made this two-part project possible. Artist's fees, the cost of scarves for the singers and some of our promotional materials were covered by the grant. Without it, 300 people, many of them coming unsure of whether they could sing, would not have had the extraordinary experiences they had during that ten week period. A survey taken during the project included an opportunity to say what 'Madjitil Moorna means to me'. Here are the responses of two of the Indigenous singers:

"My daughter and myself are very proud to be a part of the choir. As we are Aboriginal it has deeper meaning to us in the sense of its Aboriginal focus and it has innately touched us on a personal level. I think in essence what makes this choir sound so sweet is the passion that everybody involved sings with.

I think we are extremely fortunate to have Jessie and Della leading us, and to have the most beautiful songs to sing. This combination is why the choir has the ability to move so many people and spread the message of reconciliation far more effectively than any other method."

"Singing with Madjitil Moorna has made my spirit soar and my heart sing and my body tingle when the vibrations of our music and singing is in perfect harmony-I am alive in every cell."

As well as the CAN WA funding being a catalyst in 2007, the effect of this project is growing. In 2008, we have already welcomed 46 new singers of all ages and backgrounds. We have four performances to work towards and plans to tour in the Kimberley.

Many of the singers feel this choir gives them a chance to do something wonderful for themselves but more importantly, to contribute to positive change for Indigenous people and for our society as a whole. We believe it is a powerful vehicle for reconciliation.

Curtin University School of Film and Television

During the project we were approached by a team of Film and Television students to be part of a series called Noongar Danjoo, to be screened on Channel 31. The students filmed a rehearsal—the first rehearsal of 'The Sorry Song' by Kerry Fletcher. A core of the choir also recorded one of Della Rae and Jessie's songs, Gnank Boodja in the Curtin TV studio. An interview involving Jessie, myself and Dennis Symmonds as interviewer became the third element of their project.

The choir was thrilled to have these stages of their journey recorded. Della and Jessie were really pleased to have their award-winning song filmed and I believe the filming team gained a great deal from the experience also. As a gesture of thanks for our cooperation, Cherie Seah, the director of the student production, agreed to film our final performance at the Zig Zag Festival. This was a wonderful bonus for Madjitil Moorna. Copies of the collected recordings were then made available to singers.

Where to from here?

Madjitil Moorna is changing and growing in ways that we did not dream would happen. Now into its third year, we still have the wonderful leadership of Della Rae and Jessie, though their own musical careers are set to take off with their band Djiva.

The choir was honoured to be asked to perform the very poignant Sorry Song at the Perth celebration of the parliamentary apology on February 13 this year. Immediately after the speeches, we sang. The audience stood and swaying, with raised arms joined the chorus, 'Sing, sing loud, break through the silence, sing sorry across this land!' It was a precious moment for all of us but in particular the Indigenous singers whose pride in their culture was affirmed and strengthened.

Our direction is driven in part by performance invitations. Just a few days before our big performance last year, the choir was seen by an Aboriginal elder from the Kimberley—a woman who is very involved with others in trying to address the issues which beset her town and the surrounding communities. It is her hope that one day, Madjitil Moorna might be able to come up there and teach families our songs of hope and love and reconciliation. This wish has become our goal. There is a lot of work to do to make it happen, but we are confident of support and we are inspired!



TOP>BOTTOM: DJINDA; MADJITIL MOORNA.

Photos by Jo Randell

DARK CATALYST

The night-time projects of DADAA + CANWA

BY DAVID DOYLE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DISABILITY IN THE ARTS, DISADVANTAGE IN THE ARTS, WA



In the past few years the value and place of the Community Arts sector at a Federal Government level has undergone a massive re-think. During this period, I have often been asked to describe the value and role of CAN WA to the WA Community Cultural Development sector.

At the top of my response has been my absolute conviction that the Catalyst fund has played a critical role over the past ten years in stimulating Community Cultural Development (CCD) practice across WA. Our sector is vital at a State level largely because of the access that the Catalyst fund continues to provide to emerging communities who wish to trial the arts in and with community. Catalyst is a unique gateway for communities across WA to participate in the cultural life of the State and, importantly, an opportunity for emergent and professional WA CCD artists to gain employment, invest in community cultural development and forge new adaptive models of practice within community.

Ten years ago, DADAA was one of those organisations that were enabled to trial what was a new and drastically under resourced practice—Arts and Disability practice—through Catalyst.

When I look at the twelve projects undertaken or auspiced by DADAA through Catalyst during this period, it has been striking to locate the beginnings of some of the organisation's most significant and sustained services.

It is unlikely that without Catalyst, DADAA would have developed and sustained some of its major service streams. Our strong focus on mental health, young people with disabilities, the Lost Generation project (a 'whole of community' project), projects for members of our community who are ageing with a disability and who are living in state housing and institutions are just some examples of the vital work DADAA does with the assistance of Catalyst. From an initial small investment into these communities, the growth and sustained nature of these programs has been inspiring.

At a personal level, back when I was an artsworker, Catalyst was critical in providing me and DADAA's team with the opportunity to test community arts practices within some very complex communities. These included women with mental illness who had been victims of childhood sexual assault, homeless youth with significant substance abuse issues and associated psychosis, adults with disabilities who are ageing, musicians with intellectual disabilities and young people from non-English speaking backgrounds with intellectual disabilities who experience high levels of social isolation.

The opportunity to trial adaptive CCD and arts and health programs through Catalyst was groundbreaking in WA ten years ago and continues to be an area of boundary-pushing practice. The twelve funded projects resulted in a range of outcomes contributing to where DADAA sits today in the Australian arts landscape. DADAA works towards its mission-'Arts For Social Change'-in 46 WA communities, actively engaging over 4,000 people per year in cultural participation and production of a huge volume of cultural outcomes that explore the individual and collective identity of West Australians with disabilities and mental illness.

Two projects funded by Catalyst really stand out on personal and professional levels: STIGMA and Collective Poetry. Both occurred in 1998, the first year of the Catalyst fund. Both projects were conducted at night.

Collective Poetry was a mobile project that ran entirely on the trains and platforms of the Perth railway system. The project targeted homeless youth who lived in, on and around the rail system. As a 28 year old artsworker, I learnt a lot from the collective of project participants-tough,

socially excluded young people at a time when solvent sniffing was rampant and chroming had just started to take hold.

Collective Poetry was designed to provide, through photography and CCD processes, ownership over the rail environment to a group of young people who were at risk of acquiring disabilities through substance abuse. The project's mobile and loose approach backed a strategy to exhibit the artwork in each train carriage within the community poster cabinets of every train on the metropolitan line. Collective Poetry elevated the status of each participant and gave positive ownership over the environment in which they lived; mostly accessed illegally and where they were in constant danger of being evicted. This resulted in connecting participants to Transperth who co-funded the project and clearly placed the individuals and their plight onto the agenda of a Government Department that previously had no positive strategy through which to engage them. But perhaps the most significant aspect of the project was the exhibition of the work within the trains, which gave thousands of Perth commuters an opportunity to connect with and ponder the social placement of the project participants.

The STIGMA project assisted a large number of women with an experience of mental illness to develop a community narrative through writing and filmmaking. The emphasis of the project was in exploring the abusive, complex and often highly dysfunctional backgrounds from which their mental illness had sprung. STIGMA was not a project for mass audience consumption but rather part of a long process of healing, resulting in the reintegration of self through supportive cultural processes.

Both these projects provide a very small insight into some of DADAA's practices that have been supported by or benefited from an investment by Catalyst.

Catalyst provides the initial entry point to CCD for so many communities and organisations. The 'arms length', yet careful mentoring approach provided by CAN WA in their administration of the fund has resulted in an incredible commitment to the democracy of CCD in WA.

Catalyst embraces difference, the domestic, communal and celebratory in all of us. ■



TOP>BOTTOM: DADAA-SEE RED

"CATALYST IS A UNIQUE GATEWAY FOR COMMUNITIES ACROSS WA TO PARTICIPATE IN THE CULTURAL LIFE OF THE STATE."

STRETCHING COMMUNITY ARTS IN MANDURAH

BY JANE TILLSON, ARTS & CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICER, CITY OF MANDURAH



CITY OF MANDURAH—STRETCH FESTIVAL.

The City of Mandurah has applied for Catalyst funding on a number of occasions for projects delivered through the community at Mandurah's annual arts and cultural festival 'Stretch'. So this story about the Catalyst program is also a story about Stretch.

Working with community artists and organisations, the City presents Stretch over the first weekend in May. Stretch began in 2002, after an 18-month consultation with the local arts fraternity on where the long standing Mandurah Winter Arts Festival should head. Facilitated workshops saw the concept emerge that was later named Stretch. It was so called because the vision was for a festival that would stretch people's notions of what the arts are and stretch their participation in the arts.

The City of Mandurah allocates an annual budget for the festival, which covers a part-time coordinator's fee, infrastructure, marketing and a range of modest budget projects. It requires external partnership support, such as Catalyst funding, for the more complex projects conceived for each festival. Arts funding bodies focus on professional arts development. The beauty of the Catalyst funding is that it supports projects that encourage community involvement in telling local stories through arts based activities.

Local government and community are inseparable. This connection is an effective mechanism for implementing planning and projects at a grass roots level in partnership with centralised agencies such as Community Arts Network WA. The partnership is a marriage of local knowledge and networks, technical expertise and logistical support, funding and in-kind support, advocacy, broad network connections and community spirit around a shared vision.

Rates income never meets civic need which makes for a competitive environment for funding requests, particularly for arts based projects. Which is why the Catalyst program is so important as it allows for the delivery of arts based community development outcomes in towns and cities across the state.

Back to Stretch. The event is far more than a three-day festival. It generates creative activity up to six months prior to presentation. Consultation, concept development, project refinement, workshops, partnership development, design, construction and rehearsals occur in the community many months before the festival. It provides an annual focus of activity for the community and an important opportunity for career and skills development for local artists.

One of the festival's mottos is to 'take the ordinary and make it extraordinary'. For example 'The Yarning Project' encourages women to get out of their homes and to meet people with a shared interest to make art out of something that is commonplace. Knitters gather in the library on comfy sofas to click away with needles and yarns making work for the festival whilst swapping stories and growing friendships. In the first year, Stretch challenged the yarners to forgo familiar knitting projects and make flowers in only hot orange and red wool (that year's festival colours). It wasn't until they saw their flowers assembled as an installation in a professional space, that they understood their achievement and how they could contribute to an art project through their traditional skills. Last year they knitted food in the festival colours of yellow and green. This year their attention is on the sea world.

"THE FESTIVAL'S
MOTTO IS TO 'TAKE
THE ORDINARY
AND MAKE IT
EXTRAORDINARY!'"





In 2006, with Catalyst support, and in keeping with another festival goal of 'stretching people's notion of what art can be', we installed fourteen Hills Hoist washing lines on the foreshore and invited artists to use them as frameworks for their art. The artists linked with community groups of their choice to relay their stories through the hoist art. This project succeeded on a number of levels. It extended the artists through the consultation work they undertook, it broadened the reach of the festival by directly involving the groups and engaged a wide cross-section of the community through the unexpected art installation in a popular civic place.

With Catalyst support again, in 2007 16 of our artists undertook a research project to investigate the community's response to the rapid change Mandurah has been experiencing in population and building growth. The casual focus group meetings and survey responses managed by the artists informed the creation of individual works. These were hung from wire strung between pairs of lamp posts along the foreshore to form the installation 'Yellow'. As the name suggests, a single colour was chosen to provide maximum impact in the landscape and to use the psychological associations with the various tones of yellow to mirror the community's feelings about change. The stories behind the works were told through didactics and the material gathered is used in planning by the City of Mandurah.

The work of people in our community whose stories or presence can go unnoticed is featured in a number of projects at the festival. People with special needs, their families and supporters manage the festival parade 'Moving Art', which is noisy, colourful and fun. Masks, costumes and banners, created at workshops prior to the festival, combine with percussion to celebrate life, creativity and the range and depth of artists in our community. A growing interest in puppet making and performance provides another opportunity for artistic expression in the public domain.

TOP>BOTTOM>RIGHT:
CITY OF MANDURAH-STRETCH FESTIVAL.

Photos by Nat Brunovs and Ros D'Raine.

Mandurah and the Peel region have a rich Noongar heritage. The Aboriginal Cultural Tourism students attending the Winjan campus of Challenger TAFE in Mandurah and their families develop projects for the festival that not only provide arts outcomes and skills development but also tell stories about culture. Their contribution, with the support of Catalyst funding, gives the wider community an opportunity to experience our cultural heritage through extended welcomes to country, dance and art installations.

Each year more local artists and community groups are managing or presenting projects at Stretch. Local artists gain project management skills which underpin the growth of the festival and other community events in Mandurah. Emerging and tentative artists are able to show their work which strengthens their confidence, recognition and career development. The provision of technical, funding and infrastructure support through local government and partners combined with the passion and skills of the community provides an excellent festival development model.

External funding is not only critical to the projects it supports but is also fundamental to the viability of Stretch. It allows the core funding provided (in this case by the City of Mandurah) to meet the costs of infrastructure and a range of smaller projects which broaden the reach and provide critical mass. The Catalyst support contributes to the festival's success because it does what its name implies—it is a catalyst for artistic development, for creating a sense of place, for expression of local culture, for inclusion and for sharing stories.

Our thanks to the Board and crew of CAN WA for their support over the years. ■



CATALYST HELPS GROW HYPERTHEATRE IN DENMARK

BY PAUL DOQUILE

As a founding member of Hypertheatre in 2000 and President of Denmark Arts Council since 2005, my role is building community arts capacity and promoting generational skills transfer to leave a legacy of appropriate structures and human resources for the next decade and beyond. The need is particularly pressing in Denmark as we are in the midst of rapid 'seachange' growth.

There is growing pressure on the committee of Denmark Arts Council to consolidate its structure, principles and practices whilst continuing to provide a quality arts program. Our program aims to maintain and develop Denmark's existing culture through the ongoing creation of community arts participation opportunities for a growing population.

The existing culture of Denmark is an 'ease of association' within distinct sub-cultures. Acceptance of diversity is a precursor to this ease of association. A key objective for Denmark Arts is to play a role in keeping the degrees of separation between individuals to a minimum.

Over the past three decades Denmark Arts Council, and more recently Hypertheatre, has helped establish this culture through an evolutionary approach to community arts practice. This approach is proving effective in inducting new residents into the vibrancy of the town's cultural life.



DENMARK ARTS COUNCIL-HYPERACTIVE
Photo by Nic Duncan.

DENMARK ARTS COUNCIL-MOO'VED.
Photo by Nic Duncan.



From little things...

By supporting Hypertheatre and Denmark Arts Council, Catalyst funding has played a crucial role in the evolution of a distinctively Denmark approach to community arts practice.

My personal involvement with the Catalyst Fund began in 2000 when Hypertheatre received a small grant through Catalyst to pay local and metropolitan based trainers to develop the skills of an amateur performance group. It turned out to be a strategically important investment in human resource capacity.

The direct flow on from this investment was:

- the emergence of a Denmark based theatre company
- growth of regional networks
- members of Hypertheatre becoming key drivers within local and regional community arts.

To bigger things...

In 2004 and 2005, Hypertheatre supported Moo'ved in accessing Catalyst funding to assist the training of a cross generational cast in a major 'Wearable Arts' based performance in Denmark. These shows invigorated grass roots participation in performance art, brought together a diverse range of regional community organisations and local businesses, and galvanized relationships within the performing arts community.

In 2004, I received a Professional Development Investment through Catalyst. The outcomes of this investment were profound in both my personal and professional life.

Through this grant, Hypertheatre developed a partnership with Denmark Primary and High Schools, which led to the creation of an ongoing youth development program in performance and project management. The youth program created a solid capacity base within our emerging generation of performers and community artists. (Denmark Arts Council's current Trainee Arts Manager emerged from this program).

The investment also helped me to develop the skills and confidence to take on the Presidency of Denmark Arts Council in 2005.

In 2006, Catalyst funded HyperActive, advancing the youth program and creating the opportunity for local and metropolitan based trainers to collaborate on another youth training program. HyperActive shared the training resources and opportunities with adjacent communities.

And then things get really strategic ... research, analysis and establishing a tradition of local practice.

In 2005, Catalyst funded the Denmark Shire and Hypertheatre to begin the process of documenting the rich and varied history of community arts in Denmark. The project was set up to take a snap shot of social change in Denmark over the past 30 years. It created an opportunity for a representative cross section of the community to give their impressions of the role community arts has played in the social evolution of the town. The outcomes demonstrated a clear understanding of the community arts projects that brought together diverse groups and led to the evolution of the town's existing culture.

The next step in the research and documentation process was the 2007 Catalyst funded Professional Development Investment for Andre Steyl's 'Done My Way'—contemplations, analysis and documenting of almost three decades of community arts practice. The outcomes of this project identify a cohesive arts tradition and a solid set of principles and practices to hand on to the next generation.

And next...

All we can do is resource and support our next generation—they will find their way.

Thank you Catalyst fund and all the project officers for supporting Denmark in creating our community culture. ■



DENMARK ARTS COUNCIL—HYPERACTIVE Photo by Nic Duncan.



AGAINST THE CURRENT

*How Clay Fish and drumming
inspire at Nulsen Haven*

BY PATTI FERBER, CREATIVE AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR

'Those who do things a little differently bring colour to our everyday lives. They can challenge our beliefs and bring with their difference positive qualities that strengthen our community.'

(Description accompanying public art installation at the Rockingham Regional Campus Community Library which was part of the 'Impress Yourself' Catalyst Project 2007.)

Almost a decade after Nulsen Haven received funding for its first Catalyst project, the Community Art Room in Warnbro came to be and within nine months our seventh Catalyst project, 'Impress Yourself' launched itself out into the local community facilitated by Evelyn Lim, founding coordinator of the Community Art Room. The project included a ten-week drumming workshop, two other musical workshops, a weaving workshop and a 'mark making' workshop, which culminated in a clay fish mural called 'Against the Current'.

The users of the Community Art Room, most of whom have an intellectual disability, invited local community to be a part of their art project, including:

- the clay fish mural, a public art installation
- an evolving partnership with Rockingham Regional Art Inc.
- ongoing community drumming workshops including a performance at the Art Room's exhibition in August at the Rockingham Regional Campus Community Library
- stories through song and
- the possibility of sharing an art space with Rockingham Regional Art Inc.

The Catalyst Fund has introduced community arts, interactive musical appreciation and community cultural development to the residents of Nulsen Haven. The first Catalyst project, in partnership with a Lotterywest grant, provided the opportunity for a small group of residents to be supported by long-term staff partnerships, whilst exploring self-expression through artistic and creative development. Each of the following projects built on the last, with the result that we have an increasingly rich and meaningful community art, music and cultural journey for residents and the wider community of Nulsen Haven.

I believe that every personal experience of art, music and culture has added to our collective personal and community development. Sometimes these experiences have had dramatically enhancing effects on people's lives but there have also been subtle, incremental influences and triggers—quietly leading to positive change in people's lives.

Catalyst projects, either standing alone or in partnership with others, have ensured a steady community appreciation of the need for access into community art and culture for people with disabilities. In every partnership and workshop, artistic, music and cultural spaces are shared and we all learn how to move with others, how to respect and enhance experiences, and how to value the moment we're living within. We learn how to enjoy ourselves.

I have been lucky enough to be directly involved in five out of the seven projects. We began working with Kerry Fletcher, who has been our musical inspiration ever since we auspiced a 'Discover Community Arts' grant on her behalf in 1999. The Catalyst Program led me into Community Cultural Development and Public and Community Art Workshops and a mentoring program; the latter providing a staff member with the confidence to successfully apply for the 'Bridging Communities' project. I also sat on the Catalyst Assessment Panel for two years, an experience I found rewarding and very instructive.

Prior to our Catalyst projects a small number of individual residents practiced their art or craft in local community art centres. The second project, Multicultural Experiences gave us entry into the wider community and in every project since, our aim has been to share space with other individuals and groups within local communities. Kerry is our musical inspiration and along with Alain Thirion and guest musicians, continues to enhance our lives with music, dance and voice. Kerry rang us after reading a letter in a CAN WA newsletter! An enduring partnership between the Victoria Park Centre for the Arts and Nulsen Haven has grown over the past seven years with three Catalyst projects being based at the centre. This has been an invaluable community art and cultural partnership for people with intellectual disabilities.

'Impress Yourself' has been the next step in the ongoing rewards of the Catalyst Fund. ■

"I BELIEVE THAT EVERY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF ART, MUSIC AND CULTURE HAS ADDED TO OUR COLLECTIVE PERSONAL AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT."



TOP>BOTTOM: NULSEN HAVEN-IMPRESS YOURSELF

MY JOURNEY IN COMMUNITY ARTS

BY PAMELLA MOLLOY, COMMUNITY ARTIST



If you're reading this CAN WA publication then we probably have a common thread. We are most likely interested in art and community. I am a practising artist predominately working in the field of community arts. I started my art practice 28 years ago when I was pregnant with twins. After living on Australian surf beaches with my other half Mick, we knew it was time to find somewhere to settle.

First off we were in Midland in an old farmhouse. A friend said to me, 'You are so pregnant and can't do very much, so let's sign up for a TAFE course'. I signed up for design, ceramics, and spinning. My lovely daughters were born and we moved to Sorrento, then on to Geraldton when the girls were one year old. Not long after, I was back at university studying visual arts. The arts just seemed to seep into my soul.

I absolutely appreciate CAN WA as a grass roots funding body. With their assistance in funding projects over the years, I have been given the opportunity to work with so many remarkable people. I have worked with people who have told me the most interesting stories.

When I was a community artist for a Cultural Mapping project through the local Arts Council a few years back, I took pen, paper and coloured pencils with me and off I went to track down all the people over 80 years old who lived in a particular suburb here in Geraldton. It's a very old suburb and in earlier times housed railway workers and their families. One lady said she could remember when electricity came to town because before that she used to get up in the dark and light the oil lamp to feed her baby. This suburb, Wonthella, was a major tomato growing area and the older people of the community told me that during the war,

"I BELIEVE
THAT ART
COMES FROM
OUR OWN
TRUE NATURE."

Wonthella provided all the canned tomatoes to the troops. A mosaic artwork was created with the assistance of year 7 students with the central image of a tomato plant drifting up from the base with lovely ripe tomatoes on it. Around the plant is a border of handmade tiles that the students engraved.

I have worked with the Aboriginal people of this area and together we created a nine square metre mosaic for a suburban park on the Community Health Centre wall. I worked with two young trainees and the Aboriginal community worker down in the cellar of the historic Community Education Centre to create our beautiful mosaic. My trainees and I hit the suburbs knocking on doors of homes that surround the park getting feedback on what imagery should be included in the design.

A few years back, I applied for and was successful in receiving professional development funding from CAN WA. This gave me the opportunity to come down to Perth, visit galleries and artists and attend CAN WA workshops. I also did some work experience at the National Association for the Visual Arts and had time to develop my professional practice in my chosen field of ceramics.

My practice has grown over time, beginning with a part time TAFE course and gradually growing from small-scale practice to my present day work with community groups. I help communities apply for funding, develop designs and complete large-scale mosaics that have cultural relevance for them. Over the years, I have run Earth Day Festivals, workshops, face painting, developed my skills as a potter and created large-scale community projects that are now prominent in the Midwest. Recently I have been meeting with people with disabilities and their carers to develop a series of art workshops and produce a set of community mosaics for the local aqua arena.

I believe that art comes from our own true nature. I have spoken to other artists about this and from my own experience, some of my best work, whether it be functional pottery or large scale mosaics, comes from letting go a bit of the plan. Of course we need a rough plan—a bit of a map to tell us where we are heading—but sometimes if we put the map down for a while we discover new and unexpected things along the way.



MINGENew COMMUNITY TELECENTRE Photo by Pamela Molloy.



OF OLD CHINESE MARKET GARDENS AND NEW FOOTPRINTS

CITY OF SOUTH PERTH-MAINTENANCE

AN INTERVIEW WITH
NEIL KEGIE FROM THE
CITY OF SOUTH PERTH BY
LAUREN HOLST OF CANWA

How do you think Catalyst has contributed to the Cultural Development of the Community over the years?

It's been a very gratefully received source of funding. We see our vision for cultural development as compatible with CAN WA's. Through FIESTA, which is the City's annual community based festival, we try to illustrate heritage and links with the past and raise other issues as well. For example the relationship between Millennium Kids (an environmental group run by young people) and environmental sustainability has been very strong the last couple of years and CAN WA has contributed to those projects. We have accessed about \$5,000 in grants for each of those projects from CAN WA and then we've added value to them. This year, for example, we've accessed an extra \$10,000 from the Sustainable Energy Development Office (SEDO) and the city also contracts Millennium Kids to deliver its schools' Nurture/Nature program. CANWA is just one of the partners in that mix.

I guess when we started accessing CAN WA funds about five years ago, they were quite small discreet projects. Since then, they've really evolved into something a lot more substantial and through partnering Millennium Kids and SEDO, we were able to do quite significant community art projects. We're very happy with the relationship that we've developed with CAN WA. Accessing more funds, not to reduce contributions by the City but to make bigger projects, would be our next aim. If we could create some quite grand, ephemeral artworks around the City during FIESTA time, that would really be quite spectacular.

How do you find that Catalyst and the Community Arts Projects that you've undertaken around the City have contributed to the local Arts Community?

The philosophy of FIESTA and the City generally, is to look towards the strengths in the community and use what is unique about this community as inspiration. Local artists get involved and local schools are targeted so as to involve the school community as well.

So what has been your direct involvement and experience of the fund?

I've been here six years now, and have been involved in six FIESTAs. From the outset, I really wanted to integrate a community art component in FIESTA. The philosophy behind FIESTA is to involve the community as much as possible, getting a lot of community groups and schools involved and so on, and provide links to the history and heritage of the area. This year, we're looking at Windsor Park, where we've got a substantial marquee set up. We've had Millennium Kids deliver a project to schools, researching to create the inspiration that's used to create the artworks. We've received additional funding from SEDO to have wind-powered, solar-powered components for this project.

The community has come along on that journey with us. This year we'll have quite an installation at Windsor Park, which also links the last major event of this year's FIESTA, the Mends Street Carnivale, which takes place just over the road. We have the opportunity to access not only passing traffic, but also we're expecting about 10,000 people in the general area on Sunday. It's really just doing other things to add value to the projects and to bring them to as many people as possible.

The Chinese Market Garden project that we undertook a few years ago was fantastic. The whole of the Sir James Mitchell Park used to be market gardens, which were tended by Chinese immigrants who came in the Gold Rush 160–170 years ago. The market gardens existed for about 100 years, until about 1959–1960, so it's a tremendous part of the history of the state, the country and the local area. The Chung Wah Association was involved and it was also a multigenerational project. Local seniors worked with local school children, creating the installations, which were a representation of the Chinese market gardens. Bamboo poles, lanterns with Chinese

calligraphy represented the names of the market gardeners. The installation was set up on Sir James Mitchell Park to coincide with a free community concert featuring Paul Kelly, which attracted about 18,000 people. The installation was set up between the car park and the audience area so all of those people walked past and through it. It was terrific to see so many people accessing the work which was spectacular, particularly at night with the lanterns alight. It was really special.

In terms of the City's enthusiasm to involve the community in FIESTA, what do you see are the benefits of involving community in arts activity?

As to the first part of your question, FIESTA only exists for the involvement of the local community. So if people were simply not interested, then we simply wouldn't do it. So it's all about participation and giving people the opportunity to be involved. In terms of a community art component, well I mean, what's culture? We're just providing people with opportunities to participate and express how they feel about the community, the history of the area, and their views for the future.

"THESE KINDS OF PROJECTS CAN HAVE QUITE A PROFOUND EFFECT ON PEOPLE."



CITY OF SOUTH PERTH - WATERWORKS

In terms of the environmental sustainability concepts that you've been incorporating into the artworks, where did the inspiration from that come from? Would you like to see that become more of a focus or an interest in arts projects?

That's what these sort of community art projects can do—get a different perspective on everyday issues—so yes, and in terms of how this focus has developed we work very closely with local organisations. It was during the course of just bumping heads about how we can get an environmental message across, the idea about community art projects arose and then we look for ways to build on that idea. So rather than the City of South Perth just pushing an agenda from a few officers who might have an interest, we're really taking an issue into the community, getting interested stakeholders really motivated, getting different groups involved in the project, just using everything that we can to take those ideas forward. So the

thing has a momentum all of its own. Millennium Kids is a terrific example; we have all the local schools along with some terrific teachers. These are all committed stakeholders. Rather than us telling folks what we think they should do, developing community art in partnership with other groups is a very effective way of getting a message out into the broader community.

How do you think it's benefited the people involved in the projects?

Part of our evaluation process is getting surveys and feedback—particularly from kids involved about the projects. The feedback that we've had, particularly last year (a project called Water Works which was a series of installations at local schools, local waterways and local bushlands) was tremendous. From raising self esteem, 'the artist that was helping was the first person that told me I could do anything well...'. Really quite extraordinary stuff—right through to kids getting the message about caring for their waterways and thinking about the future in sustainable ways.



CITY OF SOUTH PERTH—CHINESE MARKET GARDENS.

And in fact, just going back to the Chinese Market Garden project, one older couple in particular was involved. When they moved out of their home, John lost his garden shed. He used to be into manual art and craftwork, and he didn't do any of that any more, he just mulled around the house. His wife told us that he had a completely new lease on life after the project. She kind of dragged him along to the first session and he said he might do a little bit, but he ended up two weeks, eight hours a day with a jigsaw cutting out all major pieces for the installation. The transformation we're told from his wife was just extraordinary. These kinds of projects can have quite a profound effect on people.

Catalyst has recently funded a project that's to be part of the South Perth FIESTA, can you tell me a little about that?

It's called Footprints. It's really about environmental sustainability, so Millennium Kids, our partner, have been delivering their Nature/Nurture programs to all of our local schools. It's located at a school zone on Windsor Park, just outside Perth Zoo and over the course of this week school students will be creating and installing the work, which will have elements of wind and solar power. People will be walking past that all week as a major thoroughfare near the entrance to the Perth Zoo and it will link with the last event of FIESTA which is on Sunday, where we expect to have about 10,000 people in the general area for our Mends Street Carnivale—so it's a very high profile project. These projects are great in their own right, but if you can take it to a lot of people then it really has added value. We're looking at raising an awareness of the carbon footprint and how we need to be sustainable into the future, for the participants and all the folks that go down to have a look at it.

The form of the project is all driven by the kids involved, isn't it?

Well we really don't know what this thing is going to look like, and that's just great. I mean all we know is we've got a lot of really good people involved—we've got a great team of artists, we've got the kids' inspiration (the artists are very sensitive to making sure that it's the kids ideas that really create the work) so that's really exciting. We trialled it last year with our Water Works project where we had half a dozen completely different installations throughout the City and they all evolved from the ideas of the kids. The children really have a great sense of ownership when it's done that way. That's tremendous. This is a bit different because it's consolidated in the one area, all the schools are coming together in the one area, contributing to the process in the one week, most of them doing a two hour session. It will evolve over the week and I know that we'll get a terrific result.

It helps to build the interschool community as well, throughout the city, so that's really great as well.

Just a couple of questions Neil, about how you feel the Catalyst Fund interfaces with Local Government in particular, as we get a lot of applications from schools and community groups and different kind of multicultural associations. How do you feel or how would you like to see the Catalyst Fund interact more with Local Government?

That's a good question. I guess fundamentally the role of local government has changed, and is continuing to change. It used to be 'roads, rates and rubbish'. Now local governments are being required to take on a lot more responsibility over a huge range of areas. Local governments are also like all large or most large organisations realising that if you actually have a large footprint then you have a responsibility to interact with the local community and respond to its needs.

The idea of local government being the first point of contact for, in this case community art projects, is sound. However there are pretty significant resource implications. What we try to do is form networks, for example we have a very good network including

the schools in the area. The City hosts annual principals' function all the local school principals get together to discuss with City officers and elected members the types of initiatives that can be jointly developed. That has been a really good way of communicating about our community art projects also. We try to do that as much as possible, and it's always a balance between an ease of communication, a point of contact, and resourcing—getting the word out to the local community in an effective way.

More than ever local government are looking to form partnerships in the community, and also to source external funds. To supplement the ratepayers' money that forms the basis of most of the expenditure of the city. So for example Footprints is about a \$22,000 project. The City puts in a fair bit of that and we have accessed CAN WA funds and in this case we're accessing SEDO funds as well.

Engendering support in the community and raising awareness so all of the responsibility doesn't fall onto the City as well and so that community partners are able to initiate their own projects.

That's exactly right. Building capacity in community groups is a way of meeting that challenge, so that the City and local governments don't have all that responsibility thrust upon them. Building capacity engenders a great sense of ownership. Working with a group to put together a funding application, rather than doing it ourselves and simply giving it to them, is an investment in the future.

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Did you have any ideas of how you would like to see the fund develop to better service local governments, or just to better build capacity in community's in the community arts sector?

Well I think it's really just a matter of scale. Our projects have evolved into bigger and better projects and we can see that continuing. Either that's directly through CAN WA or through other contacts or other agencies. That would be sort of a natural evolution. It's a resource issue really.

Would you hope to see a certain focus on the funds, so that you could really focus your activity and perhaps have a higher chance of accessing funds, with an environmental focus for example or with a multicultural focus over several years?...Or self-determination?

I think one of the great strengths of local government is that it can use local strengths to address local issues. While we're all aware of general issues in the community, to a greater or lesser degree they affect each local government area. But we wouldn't want to be in a situation of trying to fit a round peg into a square hole. As we have done in the last couple of years, with environmentally focused projects, we're using the strengths of our local community and our partnership of Millennium Kids to promote that focus. It could just as easily be community safety, it could be working with young kids at risk—there are lots of other issues in the community that we could focus on as well, and it really depends—that's where local governments have a great role in the community, working with relatively small population bases and using local strengths to address local needs. ■



CAPOEIRA

Catalyst and boundary-pushing forms

BY SALLY KINGDON-BARBOSA, PROJECT COORDINATOR, MUZENZA CAPOEIRA GROUP

For the past decade, Community Arts Network WA (CAN WA) and the Catalyst fund have played a pivotal role in the evolution and community cultural development (CCD) of Capoeira in Western Australia. It is integral to the Muzenza Capoeira team, formerly the Capoeira Samba de Roda Academy, that our work is undertaken with integrity and respect to the unbroken, oral lineage of the Capoeira tradition, whilst translating across language and culture the essence of Capoeira into a contemporary, culturally diverse Australian context. Within this context, it is of paramount importance that an acknowledgement and commitment to the first peoples of Australia is sought. CAN WA's vision and philosophy are fundamentally the same as the Muzenza Capoeira Group and this importantly gave Capoeira a place, because one of the fundamental variables in any arts practice is in the interpretation or definition of that practice.

The Capoeira team was invited by CAN WA to submit an article on our CCD practice and that article, titled 'Playing Seriously—Capoeira: engaging marginalised children', was published in *Artwork*, a national community arts publication (Dec 2005, Issue 63, pp 33-37). For a number of years we had been working on a definition of Capoeira, which articulated our contemporary practice. Our definition as was published is:

'Capoeira is a dynamic and spectacular cultural, sport/art form which draws on the rich tradition of Afro-Brazilian music, dance, story telling and self defense. From its beginnings Capoeira practice had been about strengthening the body and spirit of those who practice it and connecting them to their community.'



One of the key issues in developing Capoeira in WA was the perceptions held about Capoeira (many people simply had not heard of it or did not understand its origins), so the first step was a presentation of Capoeira accompanied by oral explanation and from here we evolved and developed the project in partnership.

Through the visionary leadership of CAN WA, the Capoeira team has successfully engaged in cutting edge strategies, which have had far-reaching, positive community benefits and in 2008 continues to grow, bringing social capital to our WA communities. As an example of this, in 2001-2002, CAN WA instigated a project using Capoeira practice as a consultative tool of engagement to elicit the views of marginalised young people in the locality of Balga/Westminster. The seed funding from this series of Capoeira workshops was from Safer WA and jointly managed by CAN WA and City of Stirling and the views and recommendations of these young people were documented in the City of Stirling Cultural Planning Report. We followed this up by developing and delivering the 'Capoeira Positive Behaviour Management Strategy'. This was an intervention and prevention program for children deemed 'at risk'. It was run as an after school program for two years, during which time numerous spin-offs occurred, including the development of the program into a school based delivery. Various school parents & citizens groups, whom we partnered with, successfully received Catalyst funding. In 2007, I successfully applied for a CAN WA professional development grant to develop a Capoeira school resource kit, which compliments the oral presentation and delivery of our school Capoeira program.

With the expansion of Capoeira programs, we required another fully qualified Capoeira professional, a Master of Capoeira to join the team, so we head hunted the best in the world and in 2005, Master Goioerê, the former and dual world Capoeira champion, came to WA bringing a wealth of experience having delivered numerous programs in Brazil for underprivileged children. As practitioners of Community Cultural Development, we continue to collaborate and partner with schools, local government authorities and community organisations, thereby bringing the joyous and vibrant energy of Capoeira to young people. Through the movements, songs and games, rooted within which the principles of freedom, equality and the resistance against social, cultural and economic oppression we hope to enliven communities. ■

AXE CAPOEIRA !!!



LEFT>TOP>BOTTOM: MUZENZA CAPOEIRA

Photos by Jon Green.





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CATALYST **COMMUNITY ARTS FUND**

The Catalyst Community Arts Fund is managed by Community Arts Network WA on behalf of the State of Western Australia through the Department of Culture and the Arts.

Catalyst supports Western Australian community art projects where people have the opportunity to participate, learn together and express their local culture and identity. CAN WA is especially interested in art projects that promote the values of community empowerment, social inclusion, respect for diversity and self-determination.

There is also a Professional Development Category, which is available to community artists and community cultural development workers for research and/or professional development activities that will benefit the wider community.