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Imagine life with only
one tune, one song,
one voice, one colour.



VicHealth



DANCE

VISUAL ART



COMEDY



Be entertained
Have a laugh
Experience something new
Get involved
Take a stand

Arts About Us

VicHealth's Arts About Us program encourages dialogue about the benefits of cultural diversity and the harm caused by race-based discrimination.

Arts About Us currently provides three-year funding to 16 community and arts organisations that have partnered with VicHealth to deliver the pilot phase of the program. Each project is working with various organisations to create and showcase art that strengthens cultural understanding, celebrates cultural diversity and generates discussion about the effects of race-based discrimination.

For many years, VicHealth has developed strong partnerships with arts organisations to increase participation in arts activities, break down social isolation and build social connectedness. This has included supporting Indigenous and migrant and refugee communities to strengthen and present their arts and culture.

arts about us

PERFORMANCE



THEATRE

MUSIC



Arts About Us takes this approach a step further by using various artistic pursuits to communicate about cultural diversity, race-based discrimination and intercultural relations to a wide audience.

While Arts About Us projects are targeted to areas that are culturally diverse, they also aim to reach audiences in outer-suburban and regional areas in which an increasing number of new arrivals from overseas are settling. Many of these areas also have well-established Indigenous communities.

As well as traditional arts venues, the projects use community venues such as sporting clubs, social clubs and schools. The aim is to take the program's messages to people who may otherwise have limited opportunities to engage with the arts.

VicHealth has engaged production company Artistic Merit to support the Arts About Us projects to enhance their events and performances and help them broaden their audience reach.

The company will also develop an Arts About Us Roadshow, a touring production that will draw from the current Arts About Us projects to create new events that will reach and connect with audiences in rural and regional Victoria. A filmmaker is also on board to capture the stories behind the projects and extend the reach of their work through video.

The research

Arts About Us is part of a broader program established by VicHealth to support cultural diversity and reduce race-based discrimination. This program has been developed by VicHealth and its partners in response to studies showing that people who are exposed to race-based discrimination have a higher chance of developing a range of health problems.

Research has shown a link between race-based discrimination and an increased risk of anxiety and depression, as well as physical conditions such as diabetes, obesity and cardiovascular disease.

On the flipside, research indicates that being able to express ourselves and be who we are, free from discrimination, is good for our health and wellbeing. It also shows that cultural diversity in a community has advantages for all of us.

Victorians value diversity and fairness – in fact, nine out of ten people agree that it's a good thing for society to be made up of different cultures.

Yet many Victorians from non-English speaking and Indigenous backgrounds still experience race-based discrimination. It takes place in everyday situations – at the shops, on public transport, at sports grounds, in schools and in workplaces.

It's important for Victorians to understand that race-based discrimination affects people's health and wellbeing and that we all have a role to play in stopping it.



The projects

With everything from photography and plays to music and comedy, Arts About Us projects take ideas and messages about cultural diversity, race-based discrimination and intercultural relations to a wide audience, encouraging people to think about their own misunderstandings of different cultures, the benefits of cultural diversity and the impacts of race-based discrimination.

Through the work of the 16 pilot projects, Arts About Us offers Victorians a myriad of ways to be entertained, have a laugh, experience something new and get involved – and most importantly, to take a stand against race-based discrimination.

Anti Racism Action Band (A.R.A.B) Sound and Music Hub Victorian Arabic Social Services

Up to 60 music-hungry young people from culturally diverse backgrounds around the northern suburbs of Melbourne are working with music professionals to create their own unique sounds.

Composer and sound artist Kelly Ryall, composer and musical director Irine Vela and musician Tim Rogers are working with the group to create new blends and incarnations of traditional, classical, street beat, electronica, hard core rock and body rhythm that form the musical scores and sound landscapes for A.R.A.B's range of performances and special projects.

Calling the Shots Phunktional

Calling the Shots is a community-based project that uses art to address issues commonly afflicting young adults.

The project brings young people from diverse backgrounds together to create music, film and theatre performances that draw on their different cultures, talents and insights. Running in Epping and Mildura, Calling the Shots is led by professional hip hop musicians, breakdancers, scriptwriters, filmmakers and actors from Phunktional.

Face to Face – Unity in Diversity City of Greater Dandenong

Face to Face – Unity in Diversity brings together people from diverse backgrounds and invites them to tell their stories about Springvale.

The project is giving local people the skills and resources to capture everyday life in the community through video, art, writing and an interactive website. The project is helping people understand the different cultural backgrounds of the people who live and work in Springvale and make it unique.

Hip Hop Academy presented by FOABP x FCAC

Footscray Community Arts Centre

Young people in Melbourne's inner west have the chance to learn hip hop history and skills and work with some of Australia's most dynamic hip hop artists.

As part of their residency with Footscray Community Art Centre, Comedy Festival stars Aamer Rahman and Nazeem Hussain will direct Hip Hop Academy, a program of free workshops teaching elements of hip hop culture. Some of Australia's most dynamic hip hop artists will facilitate practical sessions in beats, rap, dance and street art.



InterACT – Arts Project

Cultural Infusion

The InterACT – Arts Project connects professional artists from different cultural backgrounds with community groups to develop a multi-arts production that promotes diversity to mainstream audiences.

Conducted in partnership with local governments in Wellington, Casey, Hume, Brimbank and East Gippsland, the project provides opportunities to promote dialogue and cultural diversity at high-profile events, such as Australia Day concerts at Federation Square and the United Nations Advance Global Health Conference, as well as at community and school events.

Nam-Oz

Multicultural Media Exchange

Nam-Oz is giving a voice to those who are missing – and sometimes misrepresented – in the mainstream media. The first program of its kind in Australia, Nam-Oz is linking young people from Indigenous, refugee and migrant backgrounds with experienced journalist mentors.

The stories that result from this collaboration are being published in an online newswire service dedicated to countering attitudes of intolerance and discrimination, as well as in Leader Newspaper Group publications across Melbourne.

NationHood

North Richmond Community Health

NationHood is a suite of creative projects that showcase young people's experience of living in Australia. The projects feature original music and dance pieces that explore themes of race-based discrimination and cultural diversity.

The next stage of NationHood will draw together young people from the North Richmond Housing Estate, Melbourne's Sikh community and regional areas of Victoria. The project will be supported by professional artists and scriptwriters, a leadership program and an online communications campaign.

Re-Igniting Community The Torch

The Torch is a cross-cultural arts organisation that works in partnership with Victorian communities. It is committed to creating high quality, narrative art that raises public awareness of community concerns to drive change locally and beyond.

Volunteers work with local communities to design and deliver projects right across Victoria. A few examples include *Pondi*, a performance with the Swan Hill community telling the creation story of the giant Murray River Cod, *Weaving Across Walls*, a documentary of a Shepparton-based Indigenous weaving project and *Culture*, a three-day cross-cultural community festival in Violet Town.

Stand Up 4 Rights

Centre for Multicultural Youth

Stand Up 4 Rights is a comedy project that engages young people from across a range of cultural backgrounds who live in the cities of Melton and Wyndham.

With support from professional comedians and advocates from Youth Law, a production team of eight to 12 young people take on script writing, directing, performing, promotion and event management. Once the participants have received their training in comedy and performance delivery through weekly workshops, the group has the opportunity to perform at local secondary colleges and community events.

Talking Difference Museum Victoria

Talking Difference is a creative web-based project which presents new multimedia work created by Victorians from different backgrounds.

Artists and community members are working together to capture ideas and stories about cultural difference. The project will present this work online and provide innovative opportunities for a broad range of people to take part in the discussion.



The Babel Project

Jewish Museum of Australia

Using the biblical story of the unfinished Tower of Babel as a starting point, documentary photographer Georgia Metaxas and participants from different backgrounds and faiths have worked together to create and present a multimedia and multicultural exhibition.

Using disposable cameras, the participants photographed more than 1000 pictures of shared domestic commodities and environments including fridges, breakfasts, living rooms, couches, gardens, families, friends, shoes, the street and sky. After a year of working, creating and building, the team has used their photographs to create the Tower of Babel installation, along with a dense soundscape incorporating their 14 languages.

The Black Arm Band Community Engagement Program

City of Melbourne Arts House

The Black Arm Band presents music of the Australian Aboriginal experience. Professional members of the band run workshops in Indigenous communities to build self-esteem and identify and mentor emerging Indigenous talent.

The project supports musicians to get involved in performances and events held by The Black Arm Band. In late 2010, The Black Arm Band performed with international artists Sinead O'Connor and John Cale as part of the flagship Melbourne International Arts Festival event, *Seven Songs to Leave Behind*, at the Sidney Myer Music Bowl.

The Diversity Commissions

Regional Arts Victoria

Regional Arts Victoria has recently commissioned works by two of Australia's leading producers: *The Merger* by Damian Callinan and *The Caravan Burlesque* by legendary burlesque production house Finucane & Smith. Both productions have been "built to tour" and will visit regional and remote communities across Australia over the next two years.

Each production explores themes of cultural diversity and discrimination but approaches this task from extremely different perspectives.

The Merger tells the story of the Bodgey Creek football club, a club that attempts to stave off a take-over bid by recruiting players from the Asylum Seekers Refuge Centre. *The Caravan Burlesque* is a pop up Parisian salon with world-exposition flair and a quintessentially Australian edge.

The Fair Go Comedy Tour

Trent McCarthy and Associates

A group of professional and emerging comedians – many from refugee, migrant and Indigenous backgrounds – are developing stand up comedy, theatre and music shows exploring cultural diversity, discrimination and the 'fair go'.

Altogether more than 50 performances will be given in 20 sports and social clubs, churches, community halls and council venues in outer-suburban and regional locations. Comedy workshops will be offered to local schools and community groups during the tour.

Theatre for Our Diverse Community

La Mama

Iconic La Mama presents a series of plays exploring the issues of discrimination and cultural diversity in our community. In Theatre for Our Diverse Community, La Mama uses the power of theatre to promote discussions, change negative attitudes and embrace cultural diversity in the community.

Some of Melbourne's leading theatre makers are collaborating to create a series of dynamic and powerful performances. While each play explores different cultural experiences – a Vietnamese migration story, a



young Australian photo-journalist, students and workers from India, women from war-torn Sarejevo and the Aboriginal settlement at Corranderk – a recurring theme is the crucial role that the individual and the community play in combatting discrimination.

WeR1 National Gallery of Victoria

WeR1 is bringing Victoria's oldest and newest inhabitants together to recognise what they have in common and develop a greater understanding of the issues that keep them apart.

Young people from six outer-suburban, rural and regional communities are participating in a range of art-related activities such as artist talks, youth-to-youth gallery tours, workshops, performances and installations.

Get involved

Arts About Us intends to grow beyond the current 16 projects and provide opportunities for more Victorians to get involved and be exposed to messages about the effects of race-based discrimination.

We welcome ideas about how existing activities could be further developed or opportunities for new partnerships. Please contact VicHealth's Arts About Us program on (03) 9667 1333 or at artsaboutus@vichealth.vic.gov.au

We also welcome opportunities to generate community discussion about the effects of ethnic and race-based discrimination, particularly on health. Please contact Sarah Dunning on 0432 267 409 or at sarah@thelaunchbox.com.au

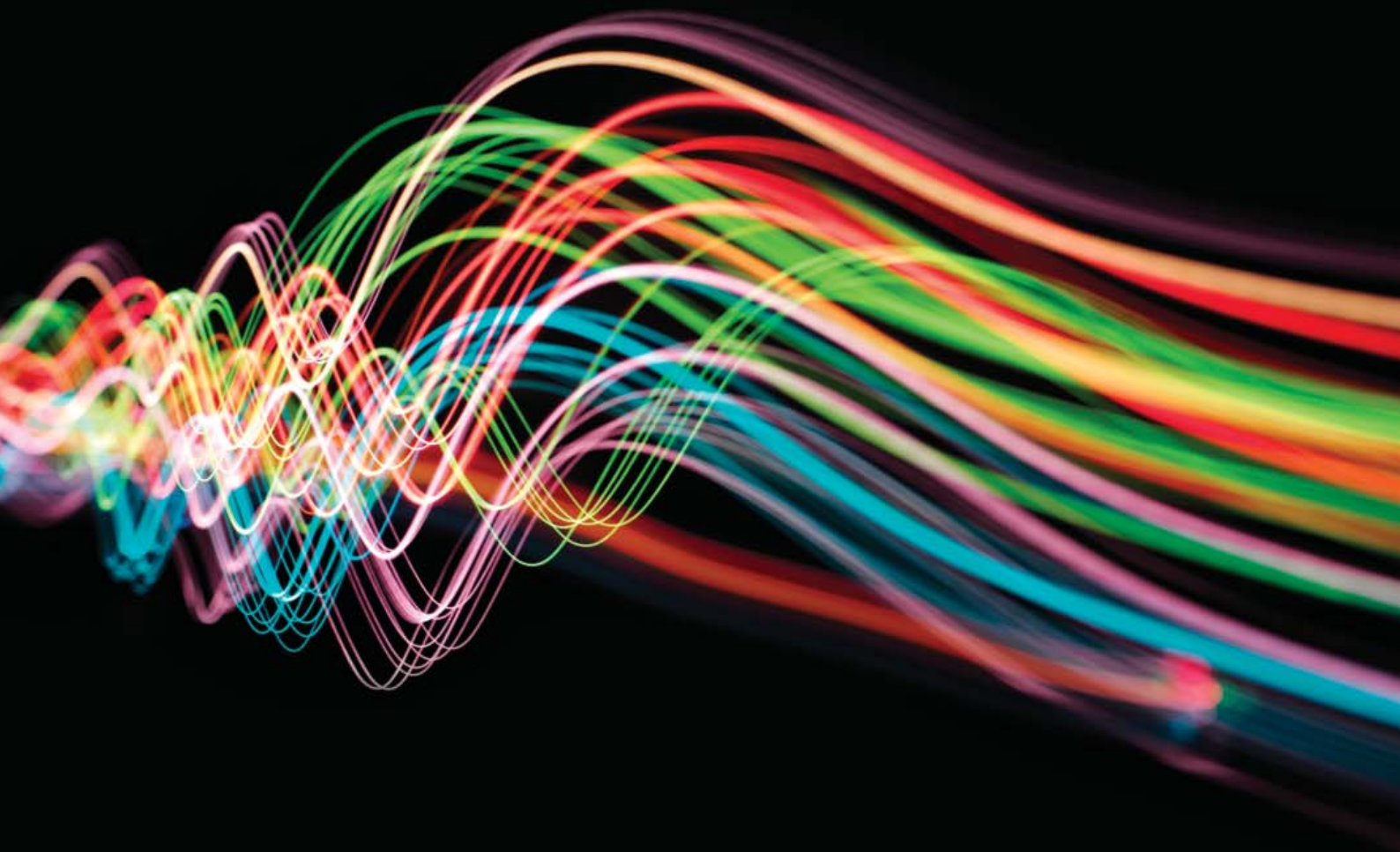
If you would like to get involved in a particular project, please contact the organisation directly or email artsaboutus@vichealth.vic.gov.au

To find out about Arts About Us shows, exhibitions, events and activities visit www.artsaboutus.com.au

Pecan Summer The Short Black Opera Company

Pecan Summer joined Arts About Us in May 2011. The Indigenous opera shines the spotlight on an important, but largely unknown, piece of Australian history: the 1939 walk off Cummeragunja Mission, where 200 Aboriginal men, women and children crossed the Dhungala (Murray River) in defiance of their persecutors.

Pecan Summer is a vehicle for Indigenous singers and audiences alike to engage with the power of storytelling through opera, and encourages the professional development of Indigenous opera singers. Arts About Us is supporting the Short Black Opera Company to produce an annual Melbourne Spring Intensive program for Indigenous singers from 2011 to 2013 at the Victorian College of Arts. Each Spring Intensive will provide the cast for the performance of Pecan Summer in 2012 and 2013 in regional Victoria. Arts About Us is also supporting the company to perform Pecan Summer at the Melbourne Arts Centre in September 2011.



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