



# VicHealth

LETTER

Issue No. 23 Winter 2004



## ARTS FOR HEALTH

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Art at the Margins  
Housing Estates and Art

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**Cover:** Women's Circus regularly perform at venues throughout Melbourne.

Our strong association with the arts began in 1987 when VicHealth successfully bought out tobacco sponsorship of the arts. We replaced Marlboro with SmokeFree. In 1999, we began focusing on promoting access and participation in the arts rather than sponsorship and provision of health messages at performances and events.



VicHealth supports the arts because it provides great opportunities to promote health. An example of this is a Swedish study that found attendance at cultural events and singing in a choir has a positive influence on survival.<sup>1</sup> Community Singing Across Victoria, a project supported by our Community Arts Participation Scheme, has become a raging success in just three years, with more than 60 groups now operating across Victoria. This project brings people throughout Victoria together to sing, share food and gather regularly in a positive, friendly environment. It's a great idea. It's good for health. As Fay White, doyenne of community music, has said: "People are looking to find that community connection again and they can do it so easily and comfortably through singing."

We know that one of the factors that influences our mental health and wellbeing is social inclusion.<sup>2</sup> Access to the arts helps people to connect socially and participate in their community's cultural life. As part of the Major Arts Partnerships program the Geelong Performing Arts Centre targets its 'Musical Mornings' to attract older, socially-isolated people living in the Surf Coast Shire. It links with the council and service providers to run a bus to performances. Getting out, getting together, having fun. That's healthy—mentally healthy.

Our Art and Environment Scheme is designed so local communities work constructively together to create art. Local government is a central player in community cultural development activity. Through partnerships between community members and artists it is possible to connect people and create art that impacts positively on the local environment. This project builds meeting places for communities, further advancing our objective to encourage social connection to promote health.

The arts can also promote mental health and wellbeing because diversity is valued. A range of voices can be heard and flourish through the arts. Creative activity can also be a way of expressing and articulating complex issues. Art can act as a powerful advocacy tool on issues such as discrimination, homelessness and violence. This is not just healthy for those involved but, when done well, can add to the audience's understanding and knowledge of the community it lives in. Involvement in the arts can also have very specific benefits leading to higher literacy levels, reduced crime, increased self-esteem, self-confidence and skill development.

The relative newness of these approaches means we are continuing to invest in evidence to better understand the mutual benefits that come through the relationship between health, the community and the arts. This will come through discussion, hearing different viewpoints, as well as research. Intuitively we know the arts have tremendous power but VicHealth is not an arts organisation. We fund the arts to achieve health outcomes. We want to see the arts flourish but we want to see a proven benefit to health.

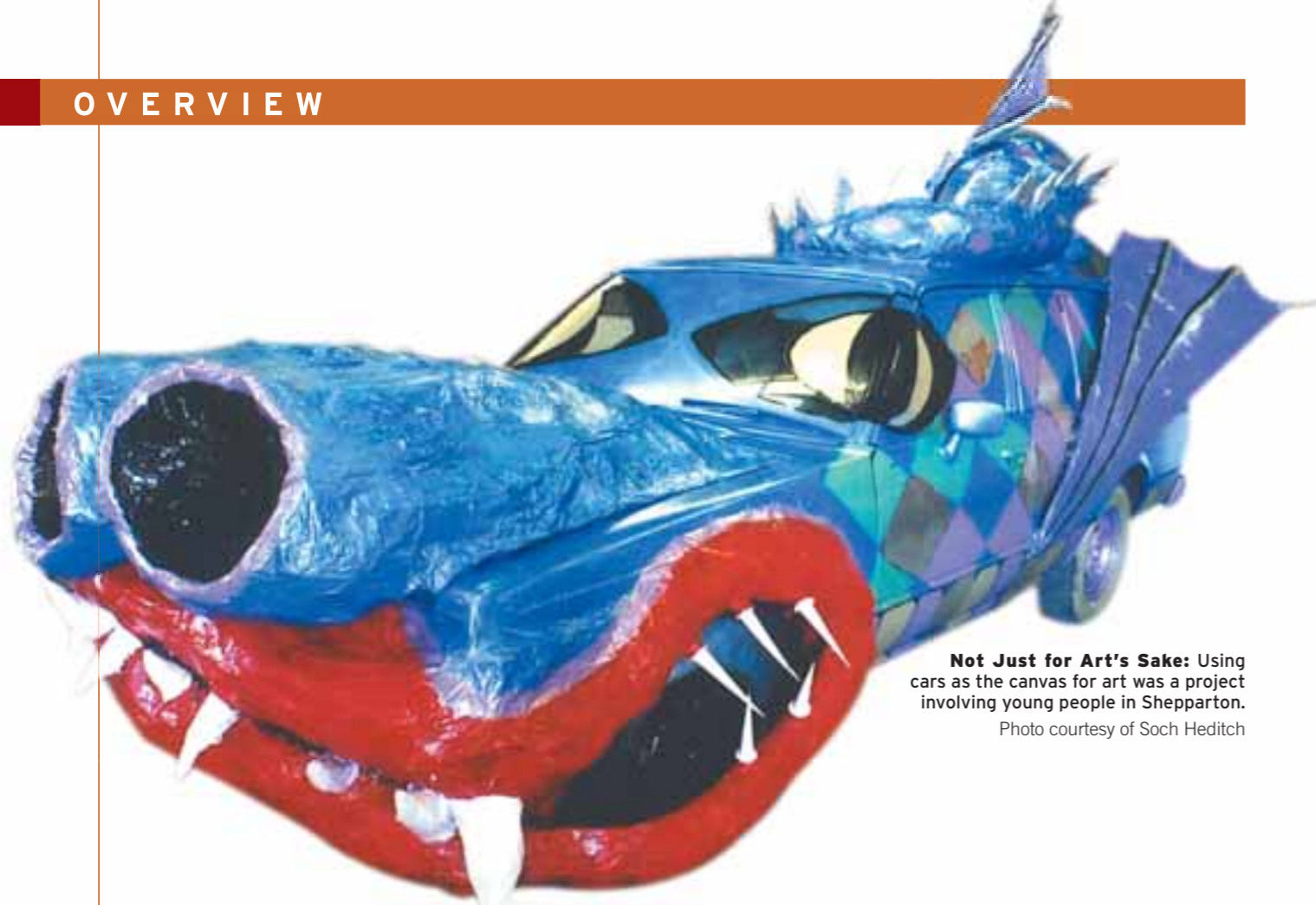
VicHealth has made a significant investment in evaluation of community arts participation (see page 11) and our major arts partnerships (see page 14). We know that it supports the factors that influence mental health by providing opportunities for social connection. Research is also being conducted by Paul James at RMIT's Globalism Institute about the effect art can have on the wellbeing of communities. Angela O'Brien's Risky Business project examines the value of arts in programs working with youth at risk (see page 19).

We are at the beginning of a renewed and potentially exciting relationship that can be of great benefit to the community's health and wellbeing.

**Dr Rob Moodie**  
Chief Executive Officer

<sup>1</sup> Byrge LO, Konlaan BB, Johansson E, Unequal in Death: Attendance at cultural events, reading books or periodicals, and making music or singing in a choir as determinants for survival: Swedish interview survey of living conditions BMJ 1996; 313:1577-1580 December.

<sup>2</sup> VicHealth, Mental Health Promotion Plan 1999-2002.



**Not Just for Art's Sake:** Using cars as the canvas for art was a project involving young people in Shepparton.  
Photo courtesy of Soch Heditch

# RestART:

## Building access, participation, health

Since its inception VicHealth has actively supported health promotion activity through the arts. Historically sponsorship of the arts occurred, with health messages being delivered through relationships with various arts partners. This changed in 1999 when a new framework to promote mental health and wellbeing was developed by VicHealth.

Under this framework, activity that encouraged social inclusion, promoted economic participation and valued diversity would be supported and fostered to improve community mental health and wellbeing.

The Arts for Health Program was launched in 2000 under the Mental Health Promotion Framework. The Program contributes to mental health promotion with funding schemes that create opportunities for participation and access in the arts, increase ways for communities to engage with each other through the arts and promote healthy environments in which arts activity takes place. Such activity directly improves opportunities for social inclusion to occur and many voices to be heard.

Mental Health Promotion through the arts is now implemented through our:

- Community Arts Participation Scheme—increases access

to participation in creative activity for those people who are less likely to be involved such as older people, women, culturally and linguistically diverse (see page 6) and allows audiences and performers to come together in a creative way to explore issues of community concern that impact upon health (see page 16).

- Major Arts Partnerships Scheme—increases audience access to arts activity through organisational development within 10 large arts organisations including the Victorian Arts Centre, Regional Arts Victoria, The Playbox, Hothouse Theatre and the Koorie Heritage Trust (see page 14).
- Local Government Art and Environment Scheme—supports local government to develop cultural activity through community arts work involving local people (both artists and non-artists). The scheme improves the built environment and engages local communities in all aspects of the activity setting up networks and connections (see page 14).
- Communities Together Scheme—strengthens communities through support for the staging of community driven celebrations and festivals.
- Workforce and sector development through support for networks, conferences and learning circles.



Since 2000 VicHealth has supported 10 major arts organisations, 16 local governments engaged in Art and Environment work, 135 projects through the Community Arts Participation Scheme and numerous small festivals and events.

Backing this activity up is evidence gathering. It is vital for us to build further evidence about the program to clearly demonstrate the effect on the mental health and wellbeing of the community.

We are investing continually in research and evaluation of our programs and reporting on that evidence and disseminating it widely.

### How are we working now?

As discussed, since 2000 the emphasis has shifted from a sponsorship approach to the provision of short to medium term funding designed to utilise the skills of the arts sector and arts facilities in order to increase social inclusion, value diversity and address discrimination and violence.

This year VicHealth is refining its role in the arts and health area. We remain committed to the role of arts in the creation and maintenance of a healthy society and as a means to promote mental health and wellbeing.

Increasing access to the arts and presentation of work that engages the community in dialogue about community concerns and issues is fundamental. As well, encouraging the arts to be responsive to diverse audiences can be a key factor in creating a more inclusive community.

The evaluation and existing evidence indicates that there is a continued role for VicHealth to:

- Promote the benefits and develop clear understandings of creative arts participation to the health sector, general public and governments.
- Develop the community/arts sectors' knowledge and understanding of health and health promotion.
- Bring sectors together in project partnerships to explore common interests.

The next phase of our Arts for Health program will consolidate the current program with some adjustments to the Community Arts and Major Partnership program in particular. Details of these changes will be announced in August. The changes will be in response to the issues raised by evaluation activity and consultation with stakeholders. Register on the VicHealth website [www.vichealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au) to be aware of when new guidelines become available. ■

### THE LINK BETWEEN ARTS AND MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Our health promotion work is grounded in evidence which is regularly reviewed. As a consequence of this we know:

- Through involvement in creative activity, participants have been shown to develop supportive social networks and report increased feelings of wellbeing (Jermyn 2001, Matarasso 1997).
- Young people's involvement in creative activity can result in improved academic achievement, school retention rates and levels of self esteem, and reduced drug and alcohol consumption and juvenile offending (Heath & Soep, 1998, University of Pennsylvania 2001, Harrison, 2003).
- Engagement in activity which facilitates meaningful contact for people from diverse cultural backgrounds reduces ignorance pertaining to cultural diversity and discriminatory beliefs, attitudes and behaviours.

If constructed appropriately, participation in arts projects provides a vehicle for this contact (VicHealth Evidence review 2004).

- Community-based arts activity can make considerable contribution to community health, development and renewal (Williams 1997).
- Communities with high rates of participation by individuals in community activities have better health outcomes than those with low levels of civic engagement (Marmot 1999).
- Cultural celebrations and events can promote community co-operation, bring new talents to communities, promote awareness of community issues, develop talents in a community, reduce community isolation and promote economic development. All of these outcomes are clearly linked to individual and community health (Globalism Institute 2003).

# Crossing the Tightrope

*People of all ages and backgrounds are showing why social circuses are a great vehicle for improving people's health. By Rosie Hoban.*

Children are still running off to join the circus. Only these days their mums, dads and grandparents are following close behind, anxious to experience the comradeship, freedom and confidence their progeny have discovered under the big top. This year VicHealth, as part of its Community Arts Participation Scheme, will support at least four Victorian social circuses including the embryonic Frankston Circus, the Fruit Acrobats Circus in Wodonga, the City of Hume's West Side Circus and the veteran Women's Circus.

The social circus model used worldwide and by these four circuses is compatible with VicHealth's agenda to promote physical and mental health and wellbeing. At its heart, social circus has a philosophy of acceptance and seeks to create a respectful and supportive environment where people can experience something that may be radically different to anything else they have ever tried. The language is supportive, not critical, and fun and participation is more highly valued than the outcome of a routine.

Andrea Ousley, acknowledged by many as the doyenne of circus in Victoria, was captivated by social circus when she saw

50 women of all sizes and backgrounds perform on stage at the first-ever Women's Circus show in 1991. She felt their power and strength as a community and wanted to be a part of it.

"I was a 31-year-old, full-time, at-home mum and I was looking for that sense of belonging those women seemed to have," Andrea says. Twelve years later, Andrea is still performing, but her passion is teaching social circus around the world including New York, Singapore and Hong Kong. Her name is connected with many circus initiatives, particularly Westside Circus which she helped establish.



## The capacity to change lives

Social circus, Andrea believes, has the capacity to change lives and she has seen it happen many times. It helps women, particularly those with a low self-esteem and a loathing of their bodies, find a new confidence. Circus is used as a recovery tool for survivors of domestic and sexual assaults, helping those women reconnect with their bodies instead of living outside them. But at its heart, circus is fun and it is this intangible quality that draws people and keeps them attached to the now thriving communities throughout Victoria. Andrea suspects circuses now provide a strong and trusting community that many people have found was missing.

"A lot of balance routines don't work unless someone is supporting someone else. So this sense of trust in yourself and the other person develops. Circus also allows people to challenge themselves incrementally, moving from solitary juggling to a pyramid routine with others," Andrea says.

"Circus works well with young people because they are allowed to take risks and in our society, risk taking is now discouraged. But at the same time as learning to take risks you are taught to recognise the limits."

The Women's Circus appears to be thriving and cannot >>

## Health Benefits of social circus

- Participation by hard to reach groups of people including Young People, Women and Older People
- Social inclusion for Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Safe Risk Taking by Young People
- Increased Levels of Physical Activity
- Rebuilding of Confidence and Self-Esteem for Women who have Experienced Violence
- Increased Community Involvement

The greatest social impact of participation in the arts - and the ones which other programmes cannot achieve - arise from their ability to help people think critically about and question their experiences and those of others, not in a discussion group but with all the excitement, danger, magic, symbolism, feeling, metaphor and creativity that arts can offer (Matarasso 1997).

**EVIDENCE**

**Social Circus:** By including and supporting people to perform well, social circuses create environments that are conducive to improved physical and mental health.

Photo courtesy of Fiona Stewart

meet the community's demand. It runs two classes five nights a week, trains 150 women, runs 10-week 'developing trust' classes for new women, has 100 women on a waiting list and can no longer accept overseas participants. However it's somewhat of an illusion. All this activity does not guarantee its sustainability. This, in fact, presents the toughest high wire act of all. Despite its international reputation as a leading model assisting women who have experienced violence, its existence remains constantly under financial threat.



### Westside Circus Helps the Young and Disadvantaged

The Women's Circus has many offspring. In 1996 Melbourne social worker and circus participant Debby Maziarz, who at 24 had spent seven years in the Women's Circus with Andrea, became convinced that circus could engage and stimulate at-risk and disadvantaged young people. The pair set up the North Melbourne-based Westside Circus for young people aged between 12 and 25 years. It offers circus to disadvantaged young people and establishes partnerships with a diverse range of community groups, schools and agencies. One of these is the Ballan Rotary Club that provides bus transport for performers when the circus stages a show.

Debby's passion for the circus stems from its capacity to

influence behaviour, build emotional strength and resilience, and improve physical outcomes. Once young people begin 'playing games' at Westside and graduate to more complex routines, they realise their body has to be looked after. Gradually, regular junk food consumption gives way to a diet that includes energy sustaining foods and they see their body as something to look after rather than abuse. Her understanding of the power of circus comes from personal experience and almost eight years at Westside.

"I joined the Women's Circus when I was 17 and off the rails a bit. It was amazing how circus became a place where I could use my body and all the energy I had in an environment where I was accepted. Circus is such a great tool for so many different groups. I recently gave a workshop for a group of wild young boys and there were so many ways to engage them, putting them in harnesses and bungy jumping. They could engage in at-risk behaviours in a safe space. Suddenly this group of young boys were working in teams, relying on each other to make a routine work," Debby says.

Debby, Westside's artistic director, sees a show or annual performance as the outcome of a journey, sometimes a watershed in a young person's life. During Wednesday workshops at the North Melbourne Community Centre, the 25 beginners and 25 advanced performers learn to fail and try again. The performance, during which they concentrate

### THE SHY CIRCUS PERFORMER

Leanne Chapman never ran away to join the circus. Head bowed and heels dragging she reluctantly went along to Westside Circus with her mother by her side. Family members, familiar with the benefits of circus and the talents of Debby Maziarz and Andrea Ousley, 'persuaded' the withdrawn 15-year old Keilor teenager to check it out.

Terrified and shy, Leanne walked into Westside's stadium announcing to Debby she would not participate in anything physical and would only play music if necessary. She recalls looking around for a corner to hide in.

But it wasn't long before Leanne fell in love with circus and the palpable feeling of welcome. She soon came to know the emotional safety net that is the cornerstone of Westside. Falling, being caught by your fellow performers and then being encouraged to try again changed Leanne's life.

Six years later she knows every nook and cranny of the space, has delivered monologues in large shows beneath a spotlight and has been the support person in more routines than she can count. Leanne is now proud of the pivotal role she plays as a base person in a pyramid routine. She has performed tricks on a cloud swing (a rope suspended from the ceiling to form a U shaped swing) as well as trapeze.

Three years ago, after becoming a physically fit, skilled and passionate performer, Leanne became a Westside circus trainer and runs programs during school holidays.

More importantly, she has a deep understanding of the apprehension felt by so many young people referred to Westside by their school or family. She sees the fear in their eyes.

"I was a very tall 15-year-old girl and I walked hunched to try and disguise my difference. I was bullied at school and I found it a hard place to be, but I was pretty good academically so I just relied on that to keep me going. I wasn't fit and I felt really uncoordinated. Outside school work and my books I had no self esteem and I hated the body I lived in because I always felt so on display when what I really wanted was to hide," Leanne, now 21, says.

Now studying Occupational Therapy full-time at La Trobe University, Leanne graduates next year and wants to explore how circus can be used in occupational therapy with children with a disability.

Leanne is part of Westside's four-person performance ensemble developing new and dramatic routines, which will be a part of a large-scale show in October.

on three favoured skills or routines, links them with the community and shows their friends and family that they can do it. Hundreds of young people have done it thanks to Westside, and seven performers from the first 1996 intake have been trained as circus trainers by Westside.



### Frankston Circus Links Youth With Community

Two of Debby's train-the-trainer graduates recently took the lead when the Frankston circus, Throw, Swing, Jump, laid down mats for the first time at the Frankston Arts Centre's CUBE 37 space. The three-day intensive workshop for disadvantaged youth aged between 13 and 24 years heralded the start of the circus, which will provide weekly training and more intensive workshops during the next school holidays, culminating with a public performance in September. Throw, Swing, Jump began with 12 participants and hopes to develop a core team of up to 20 performers and become self-sustaining beyond September.

Arts program coordinator at the Frankston Arts Centre Merryn Tinkler says the circus grew out of a short circus program run at the centre two years ago as part of the Alternative Arts Festival. That program, driven by the Frankston City Council's commitment to youth and to providing alternatives to traditional sports, was an overwhelming success.

"We recognised then and through our understanding of social circus that it is a great way to reach young people. Many young people are involved in drinking and drug taking and we hope the circus will offer an alternative," Merryn says.

The Frankston circus program is also designed to help participants link with other community activities and facilities such as skateboarding and bike riding.



### Fruit Acrobats Challenge Notions of Ageing

The rich circus tradition in Albury-Wodonga will undoubtedly help the Fruit Acrobats take a foothold in the area's arts and cultural program. But the newly-established circus for older people isn't relying on sentiment alone. It wants the community to own the circus by being committee members, community lobbyists, advocates and show participants.

"The Fruit Acrobats will have a core group of performers, but when we are gearing up for a show we will look at the community to provide musicians, sewers, designers, scriptwriters and technicians. That way we can have different layers within the circus and embrace the community," says Jan who is team manager for community health and health promotions with the Upper Hume Community Health Service, which auspices the circus.

The Fruit Acrobats share circus space with the now-famous Flying Fruit Fly Circus, which began in Albury-Wodonga more than 20 years ago. While they have learnt much from

the success of the children's circus, more recent influences include the Performing Older Women's Circus (an offshoot of the Women's Circus), which performed in the area as part of a VicHealth-funded Falls Prevention Program, involving 2500 people. This circus performance led to a 20-week pilot circus program and two-years funding from VicHealth.

The pilot program, involving 50 people, was a success; introducing participants to floor-based activities as well as the tight wire, unicycle, stilts and trapeze. Now the Fruit Acrobats Circus Community has begun in earnest with 50 in the core group and 20 on a waiting list.

While Fruit Acrobats espouse all the philosophies of social circus, its other dimension and passion is to challenge commonly held notions of ageing. The participants, most aged between 45 and 73 years, want to celebrate their age and learn routines which push their physical and emotional boundaries in a safe environment under the watchful eye of trainers from the Flying Fruit Fly Circus.

Jan and her team began the circus adventure watching for physical outcomes in each participant. "We don't think about that now because we know it is a by-product of being physically active. It's the social outcomes we watch for now—the community being developed regardless of gender, age or background." ■



Women's Circus: Spectacular performances are integral to its success.

## SINGING FOR YOUR SUPPER

**T**alk about singing for your supper. Community Singing Across Victoria is one of the real success stories of VicHealth's Community Arts Participation scheme. In town halls and community centres throughout the state people are getting together, regardless of their vocal abilities, age, background or gender—and singing. Community Music Victoria's Fay White has set up a model that involves everyone quicker than your average a cappella harmony. The program is about developing leaders who join people together, regardless of their ability, and have them sing as a group. Throw in a meal – a bowl of soup, some salad and the intended effect is achieved: a social gathering around singing; with food; for health. More than 60 groups are operating in Victoria from the Acafellas in Castlemaine, to Vocal Nosh in Emerald, to Local Vocals in Ashburton. It's about loosening up, laughing, being involved and making a bit of a racket in the process. Participants don't have to be singers. They just have to be able to make a sound and the rest follows. The leadership training makes the program organic and self-fulfilling.

Singing sessions are good for people—bringing them together, creating connections, breaking down a sense of isolation and strengthening communities. All this is music to the ears of VicHealth as it promotes mental health and wellbeing.

For further information contact Community Music Victoria on 9419 1354 or check out the website [www.netspace.net.au/~cmv](http://www.netspace.net.au/~cmv)



# Knowing what works

## Evaluating Community Arts Participation

**E**valuating a diverse range of arts projects presents its own unique challenges. Few know this better than Clare Keating, a director of the management consultancy Effective Change, who recently conducted a two-year evaluation of VicHealth's Community Arts Participation (CAP) Scheme, part of the Arts and Mental Health Program.

"For starters, these projects are not undertaken in controlled settings, as in a study," Ms Keating explains. "We are evaluating different types of projects—performance, festivals and visual arts—involving diverse groups of people, all working to different timeframes, ranging from six months to two years."

To assist participating groups to evaluate their projects, Ms Keating was commissioned by VicHealth, Arts Victoria, Darebin City Council and the City of Whittlesea to develop the Evaluating Community Arts & Community Wellbeing guidelines.

"Evaluation is an integral part of these projects, not an add-on," Ms Keating says. "If groups identify their aims and specific indicators of success, they will be better able to document their projects, building an evidence bank that will help shape future funding proposals and result in more effective projects."

Available evidence shows that the establishment of strong partnerships is vital, as the division of responsibility between partners can be a major stumbling block.

"The quality of the partnership can influence the success of the project," Ms Keating says.

"When groups partner to undertake a community arts project, they need to assign responsibilities, deciding who is going to be responsible for the art and who is responsible for the welfare of participants. If the partnership falters, the project and those involved can be badly affected."

For more information on the CAP Scheme see *Creative Connections: Promoting Mental Health and Wellbeing through Community Arts Participation*.

Guidelines for the Community Arts Participation Program will be available on the website in July 2004. The Evaluating Community Arts & Community Wellbeing guidelines can be downloaded at <http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/caps>

## PROMOTING HEALTH THROUGH COMMUNITY ARTS PARTICIPATION

### Strengths

- Participating groups and individuals report a positive impact occurring through participation.
- Vulnerable groups are linked to relevant support services.
- Inter-agency links are created, increasing communication and improving services for young people, older people, women and other target groups.
- Participants learn transferable skills such as problem-solving, communication, negotiation, cooperation.
- A community is created among those working on the project, bolstering individual connections to the community.
- Arts projects transcend language and cultural barriers helping to bring people together.
- Organisations outside the arts sector develop an understanding of health promotion through partnership with a VicHealth-funded community arts project.
- Evaluation enhances the ability of organisations to mount successful projects and obtain required funds, as they can demonstrate the benefits to their target communities.

### Weaknesses

- Arts projects are often held up to greater scrutiny than similar programs in different fields due to scepticism about using arts as a tool for health promotion that can lead to social engagement and better health outcomes.
- Short-term funding places pressure on the smaller agencies and arts groups undertaking such projects. Longer-term projects are more likely to have a positive impact on socially and emotionally isolated participants.
- CAP projects are often undertaken by small organisations that are not specialists in health program delivery, creating a strain on infrastructure and gaps in the evaluation of health outcomes.
- The evaluation processes are still being refined – there needs to be an emphasis on the importance of evaluation and relevant resources provided.
- Community arts organisations need to be more scrupulous in their evaluations, determining clear goals, establishing indicators for success, documenting the process, so that a comprehensive evidence base is built up.



"I can't afford to live anywhere else, but I have felt more of a sense of community here than I did when I lived in the country"

- Lyn Dixon, Chairperson North Richmond Tenants Association.



Photographer : Angela Bailey  
Artist: Sue Davis.  
Constructed as part of the sculptural installations of the 2003 Moon Lantern Festival.

# From the Ground Up

By Karen Coghlan

A sea of handmade lanterns casts shifting streams of light over darkened high rise buildings, as a parade of more than 1,000 people snakes its way past a giant beaming Buddha, watched over by glowing cows grazing on the grass.

This is the vision you would see if you were to step on to the North Richmond Housing Estate in September during the Moon Lantern Festival. This annual Chinese/Vietnamese Autumn Harvest Festival is part of the Arts and Culture Program of the North Richmond Community Health Centre, which is supported by funds from the Australia Council, VicHealth, State Government, the City of Yarra and philanthropic sources.

The estate's sometimes forbidding edifices are transformed by the warm lantern light, the buzz of conversation and the art installations dotted around the grounds. So too are the lives of the residents, artists and neighbours who participate in the festival and other arts and culture projects across Melbourne.

Lyn Dixon, Chairperson of the North Richmond Tenants' Association, and her six-year old son live on the estate, thriving among this diverse creative community.

"I can't afford to live anywhere else, but I have felt more of a sense of community here than I did when I lived in the country," Ms Dixon says.

Both she and her son are involved with lantern-making, an essential component of the preparations for the festival.

"I don't see myself as an arty person and I wouldn't have had the opportunity to experience art-making if it wasn't for the program," Ms Dixon says. "I absolutely love it and it has gotten me more involved with the community."

In turn, participation has changed the way she feels about herself and her environment.

"I have been involved with the festival for three years, but last year I walked the parade for the first time and it was just awe-inspiring," she says. "Walking around the estate and seeing all the beautiful art filled me with an enormous sense of pride."

## Building Community Spirit

Ms Dixon says the benefits extend beyond the individual experience and includes a change in the spirit and the dynamic of the community.

"The Tenants' Association meets with the police each week to discuss safety issues," she says. "Happily, we can report to them that we don't have problems with graffiti. The young people here are involved in the Moon Lantern Festival and other projects, and they feel a sense of pride about the estate as their home."

The festival has acted as a catalyst for further community and arts projects which have transformed the built environment and the perception of the estate, connecting it to the wider City of Yarra community.

Festival artistic director Liss Gabb says the North Richmond program has been running for 10 years, allowing "time for relationships to flourish, for people to build their skills and confidence, and to start to take ownership of the projects".

Ms Dixon concurs: "This year for the first time, we will exhibit some of the art created for the Festival in a gallery in Fitzroy, which will be a resident run project. It's really important for people from outside the estate to see what we are capable of doing."

## An Arts Led Revolution at Atherton

At the Atherton Gardens Estate in Fitzroy, writer and community arts worker Graham Pitts has observed an arts-led community revolution.

Two-and-half years ago he arrived there to work on a large-scale theatre project, *Such Lives*, involving more than 100 residents, which has since led to the establishment of English classes, a choir, *The Voices of Atherton Gardens*, and spawned community activism. Many participants of the original production have taken on roles as community leaders, and gone on to work on a Neighbourhood Renewal Project with the Office of Housing.

Mr Pitts describes Atherton Gardens as "a vertical city separated geographically and economically from the surrounding gentrified suburbs".

He says arts projects help people to cross the physical and psychological divide, giving residents a voice, while also engaging audiences from the neighbourhood and beyond. This is exemplified in two theatre projects the community is producing this year. Both will feature the lives of residents and use a variety of media as well as singing and performance. The first, *Inside Out*, will involve more than 100 residents and be performed at the nearby Fitzroy Town Hall. The second, *Outside In*, will take place in four flats within the estate, but will be aimed at the general public.

While many might be sceptical about the impact of arts on wellbeing, Mr Pitts has borne witness to changes in the emotional landscape that have resulted from the arts and culture projects. From his office at Atherton Gardens, rather than hearing voices raised in anger, he hears snatches of conversation in English and Chinese that drift up from the language classes below, while a flurry of colour and movement is provided by a Chinese dance troupe that practices in the courtyard, and afternoons are often enlivened by music and song as the choir hits high notes. ■

## FREE BOOK AND EXHIBITION

Public Art Public Housing is:

- A book and exhibition
- A celebration of community cultural development
- Stories, painting, theatre, festivals, sculpture, music and installations
- A celebration of the collaborative work of residents, artists and organisations on public housing estates across Victoria

The book and exhibition will be launched in Melbourne in September before travelling to a regional location.

Public Art Public Housing is a partnership project of the Arts and Culture Program of North Richmond Community Health Centre (NRCHC) together with the Cultural Development Network Victoria (CDN), and Neighbourhood Renewal, Department of Human Services (DHS).

The project is funded by VicHealth and the Department of Human Services and has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body. For your free copy of the book or for more information about the exhibition contact: Morag Lark, John Paxinos & Associates Ph 03 9696 5085 Fax 03 9699 4885

Email mo@paxinos.com.au



# Tip of the Iceberg

*In the art and environment scheme what you see is not all you get.*

Any debate about the role of the arts in the community is welcome. There are always varying view points and this is part of healthy community participation and dialogue. It is also useful to remember that 30 years ago people challenged the notion that physical activity and healthy eating were a part of maintaining a healthy heart. The emerging evidence now suggests that community participation and civic engagement is as fundamental to mental health as physical activity and healthy eating are to heart health.



The Arts and Environment Scheme may well be VicHealth's barbecue stopper. Ideally it creates community discussion, involvement, participation and a lasting result that the community is proud of.

We are not artists at VicHealth—we are here to promote good health across the Victorian community and we see the Arts and Environment Scheme as one of many ways we can achieve this.

The Arts and Environment Scheme has a three-fold purpose. Firstly, and most importantly, it aims to encourage people to get involved with their community through local arts projects because we know that increasing social connections and getting people involved is good for our mental and physical health. We know that people with good social supports and networks have a death rate of one-third to one-half of those who are socially isolated.

The second purpose is to strengthen local government expertise in development of cultural projects. Local governments have a strong history in promoting health and supporting the arts however the link between the two has not always been readily made. Through participation in the scheme local governments have integrated cultural activity into health planning and developed links across the organisation to ensure the project succeeds.

The third purpose of this scheme is the use of the arts to improve the environment. This again has a health rationale. By making the environment more attractive and accessible as a public space, people can meet, create new social connections and be physically active. ■

# Accessible from any direction

*MAPS: the Major Arts Partnership Scheme takes shape. By John McLeod.*

Since 2001, VicHealth has worked in partnership with 10 major arts organisations to promote health. These organisations vary in size, functions, art forms and geographic locations. The funding scheme is collectively known as MAPS (the Major Arts Partnership Scheme).

Social connectedness and valuing diversity are two major determinants of mental health and wellbeing, and have been identified for special attention in VicHealth's Mental Health Promotion Activity.

An important feature of the MAPS has been to increase access to the arts by people who are socially or economically disadvantaged—because they have the poorest health. These groups also have less access to the arts because of the cost, location, the type of arts that are on offer, or simply lack of experience in attending the arts.

Increasing access to the arts needs to focus on the barriers particular groups have to participation. Lack of transport, cost and perception of relevance can all be barriers. Responses should be tailored to the population group and the barriers. Free or discounted tickets may be appropriate for some groups, whereas the provision of transport may be the best response for geographically-isolated, older people.

If arts organisations really want to engage a different group of people, they probably need to vary their current work. This may include the content, style and relationship with a potential audience. Through MAPS, a range of successful strategies have been developed to suit the context of each arts organisation. Some of these strategies and examples include:

- **Programming for diversity.** Footscray Community Arts Centre is a hub for access strategies for a wide range of arts activities. For example, the centre was a base for a drama project involving Vietnamese-Australian young people with a disability. Playbox has formed partnerships with small theatre companies working with diverse communities and has been a major promoter of Aboriginal theatre through the *Blak Inside Series*.

**Opening Night:** Throughout the 2003 Melbourne International Festival many people headed to Federation Square to participate in nightly dancing lessons. It was access and participation for health in action. Photo courtesy of Carla Gottgens.



- **Giving new communities a voice.** The Immigration Museum makes an open invitation every year for ethnically-based communities to mount a temporary exhibition in the access gallery. The process enables the community to tell their collective story and share it with others.

**Giving everyone the opportunity to take part in the cultural life of a community is important for health.**

- **Reaching out to new audiences.** Regional Arts Victoria and the Melbourne Festival combined to create 'Bal Moderne'. This participatory dance event was held in Victorian regional and metropolitan centres and culminated in a performance at the Melbourne Exhibition Building.
- **Changing the location of performances.** HotHouse Theatre tours to remote locations in north eastern Victoria. They support and build the capacity of communities to promote and present the touring programs.
- **Redefining participation.** The Biting Dog Festival at HotHouse is a professional theatre experience for many young people throughout the north-east region in which they devise and present a play based on a set minimal script.

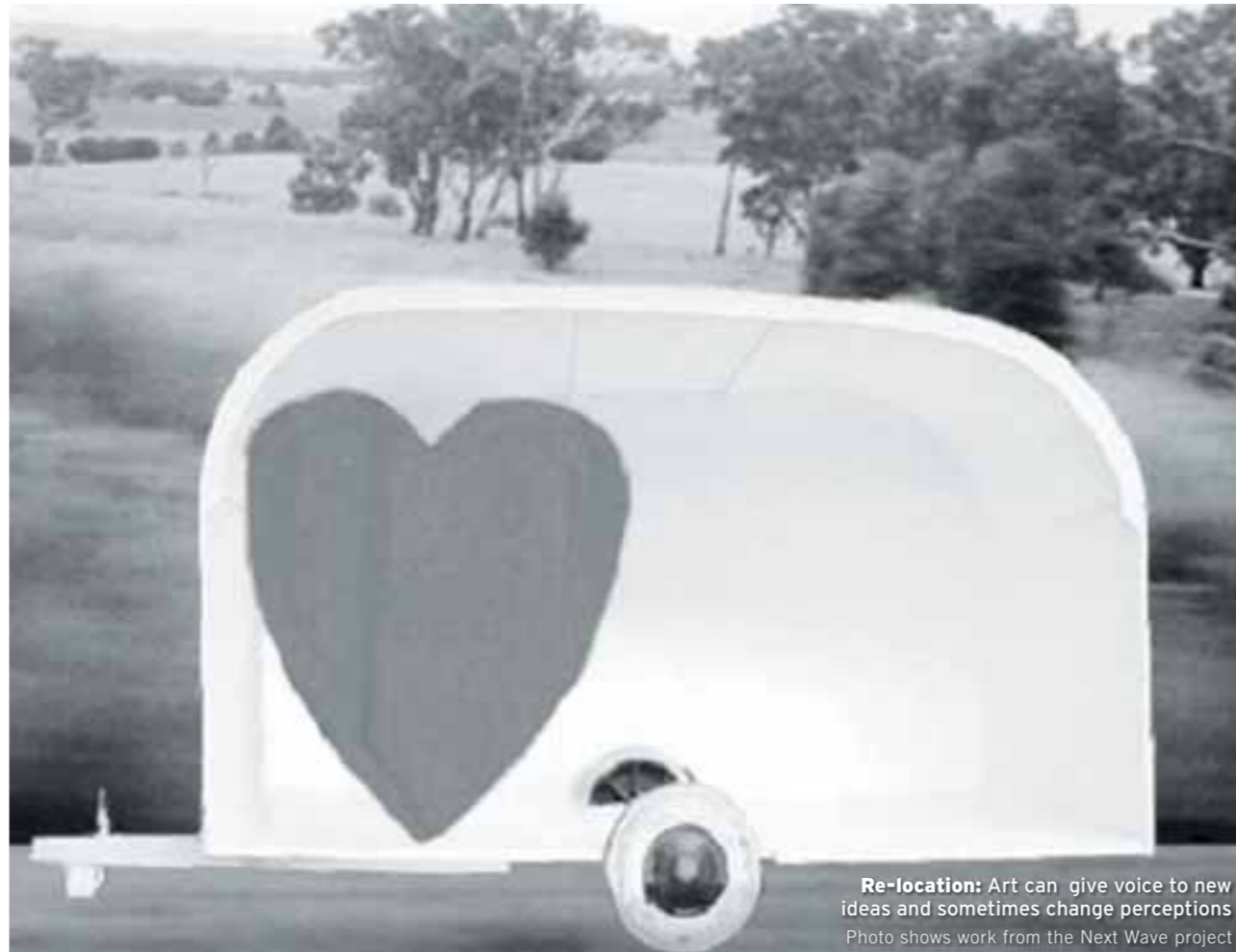
- **Providing free or low-cost events.** All of the organisations have free events or discounted tickets that are available to students, people with health cards or recipients of other benefits. Such tickets are normally combined with specific marketing strategies to ensure that a different audience is being attracted rather than the existing audience for a cheaper price. The Geelong Performing Arts Centre (GPAC) runs the annual 'Poppy Kettle' day for parents and young children. Last year, disadvantaged young mothers and their children were targeted.

- **Forming partnerships with non-arts organisations.** GPAC targets its 'Musical Mornings' program to older, socially-isolated people. A partnership was formed between GPAC, the Surf Coast Shire and service clubs. The shire's 'Meals-On Wheels' staff identify socially isolated people, the shire buys the tickets and provides buses, service club volunteers drive the buses, GPAC pays for the petrol and a low-cost lunch is available.

A significant outcome of the scheme has been the development of practice standards which can be implemented by arts organisations to deepen and diversify their audience base. VicHealth is interested in increasing the number of arts organisations implementing the standards and will be working with Arts Victoria to make progress in this area. ■

• John McLeod evaluated the Major Arts Partnerships Scheme for VicHealth. All information relating to MAPS can be found at [www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/maps](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/maps).





**Re-location:** Art can give voice to new ideas and sometimes change perceptions  
Photo shows work from the Next Wave project

# The Power of Art

*Community Arts can benefit the audience as much as the participant. This can lead to a healthier society.*

**H**ave you ever listened to a song that rocked your world, read a book that changed you forever, seen a play or a film that made you walk out into a different world than the one you left behind just hours before? Most of us have.

That's why VicHealth's investment in the arts is so powerful. Not only does it work for the participants, transforming lives in ways that can only be beneficial to health, but it can also, when done well, affect the audience: potentially altering perceptions; increasing understanding and respect for other views; and, in the process, improving a community's health.

Somebody's Daughter artistic director Maud Clark calls it the power of the arts: a way for people on the margins to tell their story in a setting that is equal, level, unique. "The arts are a hugely potent meeting point as human beings. If you can get it right so many bridges are

crossed so what can happen in an hour might never happen in someone's lifetime."

"We're helping build a more inclusive community, making connections, overcoming isolation," says Susan Ball, project co-ordinator of the Community Arts Participation Scheme. "We know that making social connections is important for health. Community art provides an opportunity for many voices to be heard, not just a few – and that is good for everyone's mental health."

## Creating Dialogue Through Art

It might be a cliché but the arts do a great job in reaching those people seemingly out of reach. Arts allow people to tell their story in their own voice. It doesn't measure; it creates. It doesn't judge; it includes. It also creates a dialogue between those that may never ordinarily meet in a safe environment: the homeless and the architect; the

prisoner and the magistrate; the distracted student and the teacher. They become—through the arts—the participant and the audience.

"The arts have a particular way of engaging people with difficult issues," Ms Ball says. "This doesn't have to be a matter of confrontation, but difficult issues can be easier to digest when presented in a creative way."

Ms Clark has seen this happen many times during nearly quarter of a century involved with Somebody's Daughter. "Many (in the audience) come along expecting to feel good about coming along, then they're taken on a journey and their whole world view is challenged. That's what the best theatre does anyway."

The participants benefit too. A current endeavour by Somebody's Daughter in Albury-Wodonga targets young men and women aged 12 to 16 years who have fallen out of the school system and often have associated social problems. "We went there in 2000 for an eight-week pilot and the outcomes were outstanding," Ms Clark says.

"It's the process. You can't take away the pain, you don't have the power to change their past experiences, but you're working with people's ability to handle life as we know it. Learning that there can be such a thing as safe touch rather than something that's a violation. Learning that someone is interested in your story. You try to tap into—and provide—a passion to get beyond whatever they're stuck in.

"A lot of people want to lump us in the therapy basket, and that causes me great pain. As I see it, the arts are the only equal meeting ground, and the quality of the work we produce is essential to the process working. Because we always strive to create work of a professional standard, rather than people sitting back in the audience and ➤

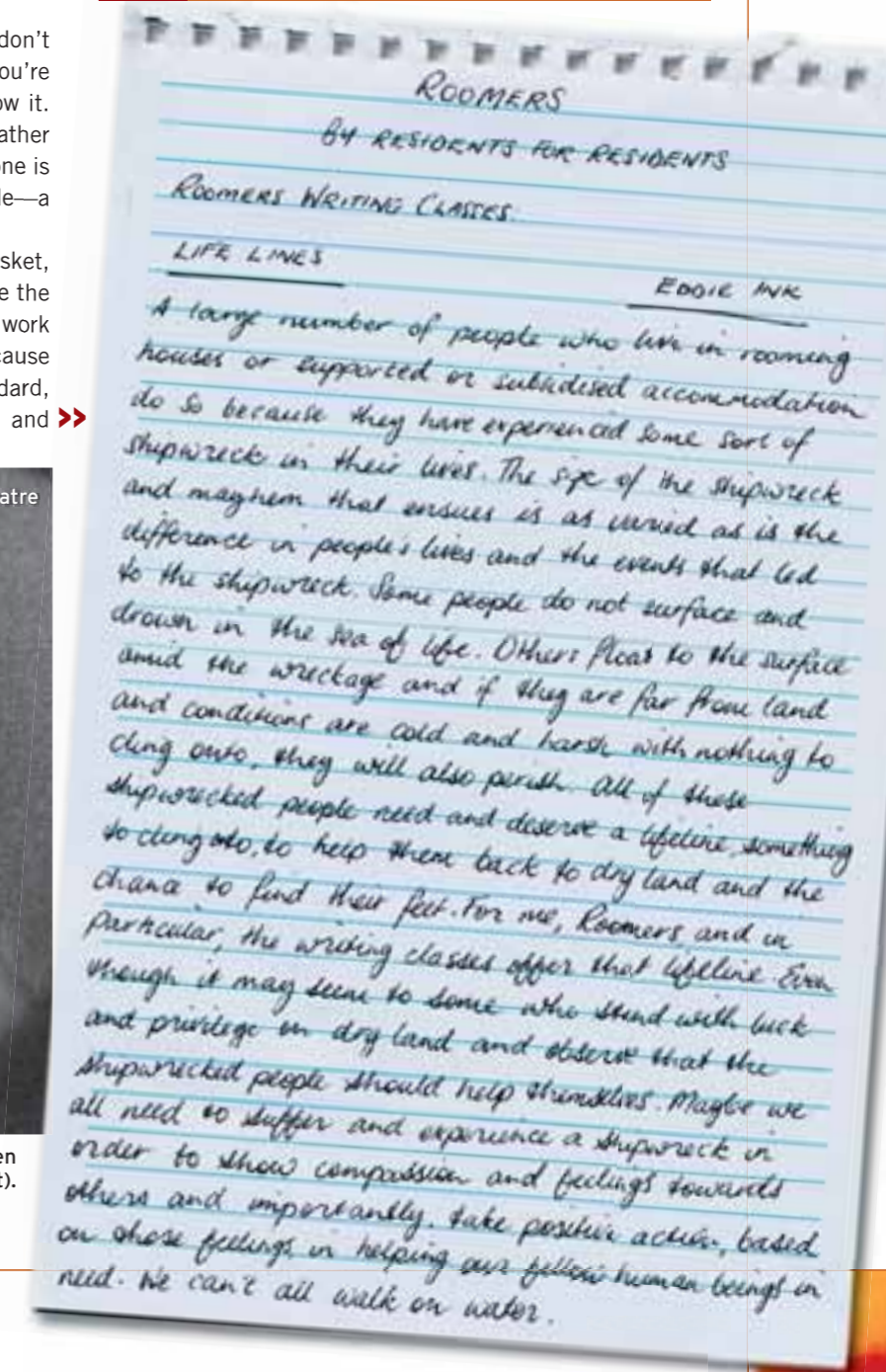


WHAT the \*\*\*\* is a young and emerging artist?

**Lifelines:** Poem by Eddie Ink written for Roomers Magazine (right).

## PERFORMANCE TO ACTION: REACHING DIFFERENT AUDIENCES

It's a busy time for Somebody's Daughter Theatre Company performing in front of a variety of audiences. In June the Bring Her Home Art Exhibition opened at the Albury Museum as well as a project coordinated by the City of Greater Geelong & BAYSA which opened in late June during Drug Action Week. In the past three months Somebody's Daughter Theatre Company and Highwater have performed at the World Health Promotion Conference, Parliament House for the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee and in July are opening the Victorian Association for the Teaching of English (VATE) State Conference at LaTrobe University.



saying 'Isn't this good for them?', they say 'Isn't this good theatre?'. And beyond that, the core group we are working with in Wodonga, they are all back undertaking education. These are kids who were on life-support a couple of years ago," Ms Clark says.

Relations with local institutions such as the police, teachers, the media and government can change as a result of this process. Positive reinforcement from both sides to each other does improve health and wellbeing.

### A Haven For Young People

Art is transformative: changing base material into something else; transforming the art maker; transforming the viewer. This is something that the Artful Dodgers Studio understands. Since 1996, as part of Jesuit Social Services' Gateway program, the Collingwood studio has been an art-making haven for young people at risk, primarily those with the dual diagnosis of substance use and mental health issues.

One of the next Artful Dodgers projects is a liaison with the Melbourne Fringe Festival (MFF) and internationally lauded, Melbourne-based architect Sean Godsell. "It is a collaboration called Home or House, responding to the concept of home and homelessness," explains MFF creative producer Elena Vereker. "It has been a very valuable dialogue both ways. It began with conversations and the feedback of ideas. Sean did a draft design and that will now be created as a physical structure which will also function as a gallery space for the young people's artwork."

Ms Vereker says festivals have the potential to change thinking and the tide of awareness by putting artistic responses in the public's mind and sparking debate: "It usually takes time but arts can become a real instigator of altering perception. Young people are demonised and have assumptions made about them that say they're all terrible,

#### HOME OR HOUSE PROJECT – IT'S A STARTING POINT

"The second the arts try to provide answers it turns into something didactic and in fact cancels debate. In my mind the power of the arts is that it gets people talking, it gets people investigating what other people's opinions are, what alternative ways there are to approach it and to provide multilateral solutions. The issue of homelessness has been dealt with in certain ways. There are alternatives and this should be a seed of a starting point of debate. It should be something that hits at the core and lets passionate responses come out from that."— Melbourne Fringe Festival creative producer Elena Vereker.

but give them a platform where they can be showing their art in a quality environment and suddenly the work is seen for what it is. This can help to remove those predispositions to judge and we can break down those barriers and put people in contact with others from various and diverse backgrounds. And that's where the arts can really work as a face to face connection point."

Valuing diversity and reducing social isolation: both are critical for improving mental health and wellbeing.

Godsell's structure will be built in the forecourt of the National Gallery of Victoria in St Kilda Road in the month leading up to this year's MFF. "It will be very urban—a building that speaks to the idea of sleeping rough," Ms Vereker says.

### Quality Art Essential

It must be remembered that quality is crucial to all these health outcomes. If the work is no good, there is little self-respect to be gained, little chance of genuine positive feedback, little hope of connecting with a mainstream audience, and less chance that similar projects will be funded. When the work is good, people who have previously been defined by their deficits—'homeless person', 'drug addict', 'person with a disability'—find that new descriptions are conjured based on what they can do—actor, animator, acrobat, architect.

Another recent project was Nature vs Culture, which produced works on canvas, sculpture, photography and performance art that was exhibited in various places, including the Next Wave festival. "It is identity transformation work—that's where the magic happens. Visual art allows you to make statements that can be quite strong and quite subtle. It allowed them to engage in a discourse beyond the realm of their own experiences, to be part of a bigger world than their own," Gateway arts and culture coordinator Vicky Guglielmo says.

"Part of what we are achieving is skilling up these young people, so that hopefully they can get through the crisis periods that occur in their lives and engage back into the broader community. Some of the participants have moved on to quite remarkable things—TAFE, other projects, employment. Others remain in the studio and are working on other projects."

As director of the Cultural Development Network, Judy Spokes has witnessed this alchemy in action. "Given its unique power to motivate, fascinate, activate people, and express their identity and sense of meaning, culture should be at the centre of our efforts to strengthen communities and engage their marginalised members," Ms Spokes says. "The arts are at the heart of culture; they can reach people, can draw them out in expression of their values, aspirations and concerns in ways that communicate powerfully to themselves as well as others. An emerging 'sense of meaning' is the result, and is surely a crucial element in positive mental health. This is as true for community health as it is for individuals' health." ■

# Investigation, Analysis, Action

## Evidence plays a leading role in bringing results

Enhancing the health and wellbeing of young people 'at risk' presents particular challenges for researchers and arts workers in the field, according to Associate Professor Angela O'Brien, Head of Creative Arts at the University of Melbourne and chief investigator of the Risky Business research project, which is establishing, documenting and analysing nine creative arts projects for marginalised youth.

The three-year project in three urban and rural Victorian communities (Footscray, Dandenong and the Bendigo region) is funded by the Australian Research Council (ARC) and supported by nine industry partners including VicHealth, Arts Victoria, Department of Human Services, Magistrates Courts, Department of Justice and youth services providers in the regions.

Prof O'Brien, whose multi-disciplinary team is midway through the research, says that evidence collected to date confirms arts involvement does have a positive effect on young people at risk; however, it is necessary to be responsive to the needs of this vulnerable population.

"Arts participation boosts confidence and self-esteem," she says. "However, in our follow up we found that once the projects finished there was a corresponding drop in mood among many of the participants."

Two factors that influenced the success of the arts projects were the time-frame and the level of support available to the young people during the project.

Following up with young people post-participation presented another challenge, as the participants constituted a highly mobile population, often suffering homelessness and moving in and out of custody within the Juvenile Justice System, making them difficult to contact.

Prof O'Brien and her team have incorporated their learnings into the current arts projects, fine-tuning operations and strengthening relationships with key stakeholder organisations. By the time all the arts projects are completed at the end of this year, they hope to have identified the best ways to enhance the health of young people at risk, one of the groups of most need in our community.

In other arts-focused research, Prof Paul James from the Globalism Institute at RMIT is assessing the impact of arts events, festivals and commemorations on local and global communities, in a series of studies funded by VicHealth, ARC and RMIT.

"Much of the research on the impact of the arts on health has been methodologically quite weak," says Prof James. "It has

focused on interviewing people immediately after a specific event, where they are more likely to give a positive response. However such research has not definitively shown how arts practice affects communities and what role it plays in community wellbeing."

Rather than examining one event in isolation, the three-year VicHealth-funded local study widens its parameters to examine 10 regional and metropolitan Victorian communities, including provincial cities and agricultural communities, across multiple arts activities.

The researchers will collect data from many sources—statistics on births, deaths and marriages and health status, subjective feedback from individuals about the impact of arts on their lives, and assessments made by researchers in the field—for in-depth analysis and comparison.

The research has turned up some surprising findings that will help identify the factors that knit the fabric of a community together and contribute to a sense of belonging and wellbeing.

"We found that many people from Broadmeadows reported a strong sense of place and community, which we might not have thought existed looking at the socio-economic data," Prof James says.

According to Prof James, evidence indicates an interplay between individual wellbeing, arts practice and the wellbeing and sustainability of communities as a whole, suggesting the need for an integrated culture-wide holistic approach to health.

"In conducting this research, we are looking at health in a new way," he says. "We hope to be able to mount an argument for a broader approach that involves many sectors of the community working together on projects that will enhance community wellbeing." ■



**Facing Facts:** There is a connection between individual wellbeing, arts practice and community wellbeing.

# Building Cultural Strength through the Arts

*Culture has always been understood as central to health and wellbeing by indigenous people. VicHealth is pleased to invest in projects to support the cultural expression of such a rich and talented community. The projects profiled are examples of this richness and the strength that is gained through positive engagement and expression through the arts. It is a sample of the inspiring work that ensures the voice of Indigenous Australia is heard.*



**The Bridge:** The Torch Project performed The Bridge throughout regional Victoria.

Photo courtesy of Rusty Stewart for The Torch Project

## 1. The Torch Project – Re-igniting communities

Over the past eight years The Torch Project has undertaken the not-inconsiderable task of community cultural development in rural and metropolitan Victoria. Through arts projects, primarily performance based, The Torch Project empowers communities to act on difficult issues. It has been supported by more than 200 Indigenous, government, church, educational, business and community organisations. A prime example was last year's show, *The Bridge*, devised over a 10-month period working in north-western Victoria. It was produced under the auspices of the Brotherhood of St Laurence in partnership with these organisations, and travelled throughout Victoria addressing issues including incest, racism, domestic violence, drought substance abuse and relations with police.

"There are some very difficult issues out there, and we feel privileged that communities invite us in to share them," says Angela O'Donnell, company manager of The Torch. "I don't know of anything that achieves a sense of community

pride like the arts. There are many ways we measure our success. We look at the number of people through the door, the way it engages people, but how do you measure networks and rapport built within communities?

The model is not just about performance. It's about embedding activity that works through issues to improve mental health and wellbeing within the community. Local social issues and community needs that are identified are given voice through workshops, community consultation, activity in schools, theatrical and artistic expression.

"The outcomes we aim for are determined on a project-by-project basis, negotiated with the steering committee that is established for each project. After the project has finished, the steering committee is left in place. For example, in 2002 our Re-Igniting Community South-East project was based at Bairnsdale, and that steering committee is still going strong, meets every month, and recently became an incorporated body."

*A major research and evaluation report about the Re-Igniting Community project that addressed issues of history, culture, identity and belonging in East Gippsland and South West Victoria is available through the Centre for Popular Education, University of Technology Sydney at: <http://www.cpe.uts.edu.au/pdfs/TheTorch.pdf>*



**Koorie Heritage Trust**  
"Gnokan Danna Murra Kor-ki"

## 2. Koorie Heritage Trust

**C**ommunicating the significance of Koorie life as an essential part of Victoria's heritage is vital for proper reconciliation in Victoria - Jim Berg, Founder

The Koorie Heritage Trust has been funded under the

Major Arts Partnership Scheme. The Major Arts Partnership scheme aims to improve access to the arts and assists the 10 organisations involved to attract new audiences particularly those who have not previously been involved in the arts.

Established in 1985 by Elder Jim Berg JP, Justice Ron Merkel and Ron Castan QC, the Koorie Heritage Trust aims to preserve, protect and promote the living culture and history of the Indigenous people of south-eastern Australia.

'Give me your hand my friend, and bridge the cultural gap' is the Trust's motto and all activities and projects focus around reconciliation, healing, moving forward and honouring what has been before.

Valuing diversity is important to the community's mental health and wellbeing. The Koorie Heritage Trust's work is vital to this aim.

- The Koorie Heritage Trust Cultural Centre offers a secure and permanent keeping place for over 4,500 Koorie artefacts and artworks as well as more than 15,000 photographs.
- Two beautiful gallery spaces present emerging and established Koorie artists with the opportunity to express their talent in an encouraging and supportive environment; providing a valuable showcase for the diversity of south-eastern Australian Indigenous art as opposed to that from the top end of Australia.
- The Library provides access to invaluable educational and cultural resource material including a rare book collection.
- Educational and cross-cultural training services aim to provide reconciliation through understanding the oldest living culture in the world.
- A Permanent Exhibition provides visitors with an interactive sound and visual display that traces the history of the Koorie people from 60,000 years ago through to present day issues that confront the culture.
- The Trust provides an Oral History service for recording stories of the past to be shared with future generations as well as reuniting families from the Stolen Generations through the Family History Unit.
- Koorie Pty Ltd provides the wider community the opportunity to purchase authentic Indigenous art and gifts that are predominantly from Victoria.



**ILBIJERRI**  
ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER  
THEATRE CO-OP LTD

## 3. Ilbijerri Theatre Co-op

Ilbijerri Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Theatre Co-operative was founded in 1990 by a group of Indigenous artists and community members. Its aim is to maintain and reaffirm Indigenous stories through the performing arts. It was established with a commitment to nurture and develop indigenous performing artists, actors and theatre practitioners and give voice to Indigenous stories through high quality professional theatre.

In partnership with the Koorie Network for the Future projects Ilbijerri is continuing to offer performing arts workshops for youth. These workshops have taken place in Bairnsdale, Echuca, Ballarat and Heywood and are planned for both the Shepparton and Dandenong area. The network is a long term project to provide leadership training and skills to indigenous communities and is supported by VicHealth because it impacts on the long term mental health and wellbeing of the Victorian community.



**The Warrior:** Performed at The Next Wave Festival 2004. Photo courtesy of Bill Poon

## 4. A Performance

**W**hat Is A Warrior?' is a dynamic new play produced by the Warrior Spirit Arts Collective for the Next Wave Festival 2004. More than 700 people attended the performances at the CUB Malthouse Theatre to experience first hand a very personal and moving story that represents an authentic voice of young people in our community.

Funded under the Community Arts Participation Scheme it is a performance to promote mental health and wellbeing of participants and audiences by giving voice to and raising awareness about a diverse range of issues.

'What Is A Warrior' was a raw and ultimately positive story of Adam a 17 year old Koori boy (played by Mungara Brown ) confronting the triumphant and shadowy world of his father's past, the death of his mother, his expulsion from school, the breakdown of a relationship and the temptation of crime. All these events are framed around the question, 'what is a warrior?'

"I'm going to be a warrior when I grow up," Adam tells his sister Grace in the opening voice over. The question of what it means to be a warrior in a mixed up contemporary world, however, comes back to plague Adam. "You've got to learn to fight with your fists boy", his father, an ex champion boxer constantly tells his teenage son through an alcoholic haze. But what is he fighting for and what is he fighting against? The old people had it easy Adam reckons, "what did they have to fight for, all they had to do was hunt for food and dance around the fire, it was easy to be a warrior then."

The play encourages us all to find the Warrior within and to respect each other, our community and our culture. It is a play about cultural pride, listening, and understanding.

The play was supported by Multicultural Arts Victoria, Northland Secondary College, Next Wave and Ilbijerri and funded by VicHealth. ■

## VicHealth Board Changes



Ms Jane Fenton is VicHealth's new chairperson. She took over from Professor John Funder on March 30, 2004. VicHealth would like to take

the opportunity to thank Professor Funder on the wonderful contribution he has made to the Foundation and to the health of all Victorians. His presence will be missed but he has left a great legacy. In the next edition of the VicHealth Letter we will carry a departing message from Professor Funder and profile more extensively our board.

The board's composition has also changed recently with Ms Jerril Rechter and Professor Richard Smallwood officially joining the board on March 30. Both are wonderful acquisitions with Ms Rechter's experience in the arts and Professor Smallwood's background in medical research adding significant depth and voice to the board.

Unfortunately for VicHealth, Leeanne Grantham is moving with her family to South Australia and therefore has had to vacate her position on the board. She has made a wonderful contribution during her relatively short stay on the board and we wish her and her family all the best as they enter a new phase of their lives.

## Health 2004

The 18th World Conference on Health Promotion and Health Education was held at the Melbourne Convention Centre from April 26-30, 2004. A great success, the conference was attended by over 2500 delegates from around the world.

The morning after a magnificent opening ceremony kicked off the conference at the Melbourne Concert



Hall, the Victorian Minister for Health, the Hon. Bronwyn Pike MLA, chaired the opening plenary session in front of a packed house. From there it was on with 250 sessions and 800 oral presentations being crammed into four days.

Among the highlights were:

- The plenary sessions – particularly memorable were Dr Antanas Mockus and Rev. Andrew Mawson's presentations on day three.
- The Cervical Screening, Health Promoting Schools and HIV streams held at the Exhibition Centre
- The incorporation of youth and indigenous streams into the conference
- The energy, discussion and ideas generated and shared over the four days
- Lunching with the luminaries where delegates shared the table with the leading lights in health promotion and health education
- Skills development sessions covering a range of themes
- The social and cultural program including the major conference event held at St Kilda's Luna Park.

In fact there were too many to mention. The IUHPE thanked all sponsors and conference partners in what was a collective undertaking of enormous significance. We trust that the seeds of significant action to improve health throughout the world have been planted during the conference.

It's worth noting that more than 100 sessions at Health 2004 were recorded and are available as either DVD (plenary and many sub-plenary sessions) or audio CD or cassette. DVDs, CDs and cassettes can be ordered from Conference Media Services.

## Funding Opportunities

### Active Participation Funding Guidelines

The Active Participation Grant round closes Friday 16 July, 2004. It offers Local Grants (\$3000) and Partnership Grants (\$30,000). Funding guidelines are available by contacting VicHealth on (03) 9667 1333 or the VicHealth website [www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/active](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/active)



## Communities Together Scheme

Applications for the Communities Together: Community Festivals and Celebration Scheme close Wednesday 25 August, 2004. Funding guidelines are available by contacting VicHealth on (03) 9667 1333 or the VicHealth website [www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/cts](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/cts)

## Research Grants

### Public Health PhD scholarship

Applications for Public Health PhD Research Scholarships commencing in 2005 are due in by August 20, 2004. These Scholarships provide funding for graduates to undertake a PhD in public health research. Applicants must conduct their research in Victoria and be based at a Victorian research institution.

There are up to six three-year doctoral Scholarships available to graduates who have completed a health related degree (or equivalent).

### 2005 Senior and Public Health Research Fellowships

Applications for the 2005 Senior and Public Health Research Fellowships are due by Friday, 9 July, 2004. Further details on the VicHealth website.

## Publications

### Report reveals health costs of violence

The Department of Human Services and VicHealth launched The Health Costs of Violence: Measuring the Burden of Disease Caused by Intimate Partner Violence on June 16, 2004. This report is the centrepiece for increased activity designed to raise awareness about this public health problem.

Copies are available from VicHealth on (03) 9667 1333 or the VicHealth website: [www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/ipv](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/ipv)



### Quick Guide to PICSAR

A quick guide to the Participation in Community Sport and Active Participation Scheme is available at VicHealth on (03) 9667 1333.



## Mental Health Promotion in Practice Series

This series has been developed on the basis of evaluation of projects funded as part of VicHealth's Mental Health Promotion Plan. An order form is available from the Mental Health and Wellbeing Unit at VicHealth on (03) 9667 1332.

## Website

### New Resources Available

Leading the Way case studies [www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/leadingtheway](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/leadingtheway)  
Fact sheets on a range of issues from partnerships to case studies available at: [www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/factsheets](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/factsheets)  
Walking School Bus™ Guide for parents and teachers is available at: [www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/walkingschoolbus](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/walkingschoolbus)

Check out the web portal of the International Network of Health Promotion Foundations. It gives you all the information you need to know about health promotion foundations around the world. It can be found at: [www.hp-foundations.net](http://www.hp-foundations.net)

To register and receive fortnightly updates go to [www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/register](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/register)

## Seminars

### Healthy, not Wealthy, but Wise

On May 26, 2004 VicHealth held a seminar examining the access for healthy food choices that exists within the community. Dr Cate Burns from Deakin University released a literature review describing the link between poverty, food insecurity and obesity at the seminar which is available at: [www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/seminars](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/seminars)

### ANEX

Anex invites you to participate in the Anex Harm Reduction Conference 2004: People, Practice, Evidence to be held 20-21 July, 2004. The cost is \$176. Discounts are available for Anex members.

Speakers include:

- David Herkt, long time users' activist and current documentary maker for New Zealand television on the social history of illicit drug use;

- Mr. Tony Trimmingham, CEO of Family Drug Support, on the impact of illicit drug use on families;
- Anex is a community based organisation dedicated to the prevention of drug-related harm for individuals, families and communities. For more information please visit: <http://www.anex.org.au/conference2004/conference.htm> or contact the Anex (03) 9417 4838.

## Healthy Urban Environments Workshops

Integrated planning and design for physical activity and shade

The workshops offer practical information, resources and advice on planning and developing urban environments that encourage physical activity and offer protection from the sun's harmful UV rays.

Eight workshops are being held throughout Victoria as detailed on the registration form. For more information and registration please contact Nicole Maruff on 03 9321 1537, email [Nicole.Maruff@heartfoundation.com.au](mailto:Nicole.Maruff@heartfoundation.com.au) or visit [www.sunsmart.com.au](http://www.sunsmart.com.au) or [www.heartfoundation.com.au/sepavic](http://www.heartfoundation.com.au/sepavic)

## Other News

### Depression research boosted by 16 grants worth over \$1 million

Last month, beyondblue: the national depression initiative allocated over \$1 million through its research program, the Victorian Centre of Excellence in Depression and Related Disorders to undertake work in:

- primary mental health care
- depression in children, young people, older Australians, women refugees
- cognitive behaviour therapy
- postnatal depression
- depression in people living with HIV/Aids
- substance abuse
- depression linked with other conditions such as heart disease and diabetes.

### Planning for Health and Wellbeing Awards

VicHealth is supporting a category in the Planning Institute of Australia (Victorian division) awards.

Projects nominated for this award will make an innovative contribution to the promotion of integrated urban and regional planning for health and wellbeing. For more information go to: [www.planning.org.au/vic/frame.htm](http://www.planning.org.au/vic/frame.htm)

## Healthy Business Opportunity

Connectus, an initiative of the Premier's Drug Prevention Council



(PDPIC), is a unique prevention program offering real employment opportunities for disengaged young people and providing realistic employment solutions to industries and communities. Young people considered 'at risk' and missing out on employment opportunities are identified, recruited, challenged and trained to make them ready for pre-committed traineeships.

This program is part of a wider project to develop a strategy to prevent young people from developing problematic drug and alcohol use through the provision of training and employment opportunities.

For further details contact Connectus at 9667 1388 or check out the website [www.connectus.com.au](http://www.connectus.com.au)

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Disclaimer: Views and opinions expressed in the VicHealth Letter do not necessarily reflect those of VicHealth.

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