

# Increasing opportunities for people with a disability to participate in the arts:

assisting local government and other cultural development workers to develop capacity.



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The Cat in the Flowers, Rhonda Johnson, Colour Gang, Barinsdale

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## Today's presentation:

- Introducing policy principles about arts participation for people with a disability

- What does the research tell us?

- How local government and other cultural development workers can contribute

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The Cultural Development Network is an independent non-profit group that links communities, artists, local councils and organisations across Victoria.

We advocate a stronger role for participatory arts and cultural expression to build a healthier, more engaged and sustainable society.



Discussion group, Morwell, 2008  
*Conference: Communities, Accessibility and the Arts: responding to and embracing difference and diversity in arts and cultural contexts*

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# Four Pillars of Sustainability

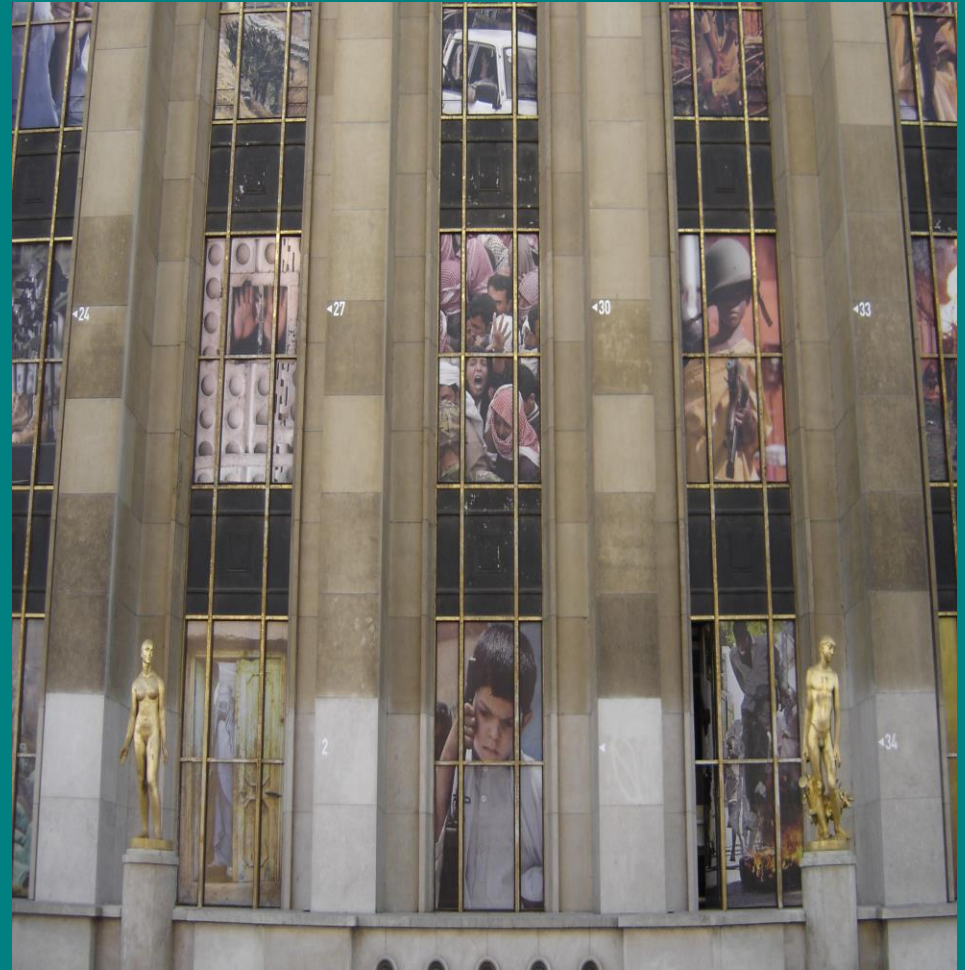
Economic viability

Social inclusion

Environmental responsibility

Cultural vitality

*Jon Hawkes, 2001*



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# People with a disability in Australia

- roughly 20% of the total population, and increasing as society ages
- experience lower educational achievement, lower employment rates and lower incomes than the rest of the population.

Rates of disability increase steadily with age:

- 4% of 0-4 year olds
- 41% of 65-69 years olds
- 92% of people older than 90.

*Australian Bureau of Statistics, (2003a). Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers.  
ABS: Canberra [www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/](http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/) (ABS 2008)*

# Social model of disability

.... barriers to the full social participation of people with disabilities are located in the way society is organised,...challenges society to address and dismantle those barriers (Oliver, 1990)

*The social model [of disability] encourages society to view disabled people as equal with non-disabled people – with rights rather than needs, and differences rather than problems.”*

*Equal spaces: best practice guidance for arts providers on disability,  
Arts Council of Wales, 2008*

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# The affirmation model of disability

introduces concept of a 'non-tragic view of disability and impairment.'

(Arts Council, Northern Ireland, (2003a: 9)

- ... the social model of disability, while acknowledging the way society excludes disabled people, does not allow for a positive social identity and life experience for people with a disability.
- “in embracing an affirmative model, disabled individuals assert a positive identity, not only in being disabled, but also in being impaired.”
- (Swain and French, *Journal of Disability and Society*, 2000, 15, 4)

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# Arts participation is a human right

..... United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights: *'Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, and to enjoy the arts'* (1948).



Participant, Club Wild hiphop workshops,  
Sydney 2008

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# United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Article 30 names participation in cultural life

1. Governments recognise the right of person with disabilities to take part on an equal basis with other in cultural life, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities:

- a) Enjoy access to cultural materials in accessible formats;
- b) Enjoy access to television programmes, films, theatre and other cultural activities, in accessible formats;
- c) Enjoy access to places for cultural performances or services, (theatres, museums, cinemas, libraries, tourism services, monuments, sites of national and cultural importance)

Australia ratified the Convention on 17 July 2008. [www.un.org/disabilities](http://www.un.org/disabilities)

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# First National Arts and Disability strategy

*..... to ensure that all Australians with a disability  
are given the opportunity to engage fully  
in the arts and cultural activity'  
(Cultural Ministers Council, 2009)*

*Rawcus Theatre  
Company*



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# Statistics about arts participation

## Attending arts events as audience member

- Adults with a disability significantly less likely than others to have attended arts events and venues.
- 82% attended at least one cultural venue or event over the past year, compared with 92% of others.
- Difference remained constant over past four years.
- People with the most restrictive disability experience were even less likely to have attended cultural venues/ events.

*ABS (2008) Cultural Attendance by Persons with a Disability*

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# Statistics about arts participation

## Active participation in the arts

- Lower rates of participation in the arts than every other activity
- 26% had not taken part in any of the arts activities surveyed in the year prior
- 15% were involved in art or craftwork, for or with other people
- 7% involved in art and craft group activities away from home
- 5% involved in performing arts group activities.

*Cultural participation by Persons with a Disability and Older Persons , ABS, 2003a*

- Australian data not yet available on people with a disability who work, or aspire to work, as professional artists

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# Interest in arts participation

A survey of the Deaf and hearing disabled community in Victoria indicated that more than half the respondents indicated they would like to attend more arts and cultural events (Effective Change, 2003)

This confirms CDN's experience across Victoria (metro and regional) that people who have a disability would like to participate in the arts more often, and in a wider range of artforms and roles. This is true even for people with a disability who currently participate in the arts.

# What prevents people from participating?

The literature (and our experience) indicate a number of factors;

- Financial - cost of admission and capacity to pay
- Physical –  
transport and parking difficulties,  
lack of access features in venues,  
both physical (wheelchair access,  
hearing loop technology)  
and interpretive (e.g. subtitles and Auslan interpreters)
- Low levels of arts awareness - lack of information  
about accessible venues and activities in marketing materials



Club Wild, Portland, Victoria, 2007

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# What prevents people from participating?

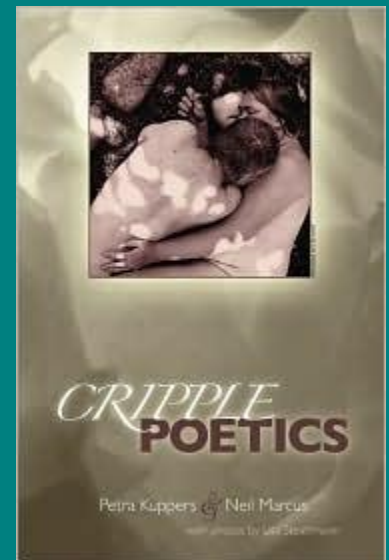
The most significant factors..... awareness and attitude

- negative or limited views about possibilities for people with a disability, from the wider community, government /policy makers, managers, staff in community and arts organisations, employment services, education and training, families and carers, people with a disability themselves

Contributing factors:

Reduced opportunities result in less experience,  
lower aspirations fewer role models, reduced demand  
.....a negative cycle

Low levels of disability awareness and experience



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# Impact of attitudes towards disability

Negative attitudes or lack of awareness regarding arts participation

- reduce the interest and confidence of people with a disability
- reduce the interest of the wider community in supporting and attending disability arts

If change is to occur.....

- negative views about disability must be challenged.

(Abbas et al, 2004, Ryerson Institute for Disabilities Studies. Canada)

*Did I think like that?  
Me, a problem, helpless yet  
another cost item on their  
waiting list  
My impairments don't cause  
me to suffer,  
but your attitudes do*

Extract from poem,  
*They'd Rather Shoot Us All*, Adele  
Goodwin,  
Moving Beyond: Arts and Disability  
Strategy for Wales

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# Impact of attitudes towards disability

Disabled artist and activist Petra Kupperts

The prevailing social attitudes of disability as negative or a deficiency lead to negative aesthetic constructs about disability and body ....

Disability arts ...therefore disadvantaged in attracting audiences. People do not want to see, hear or think about life experiences deemed too harsh or sad. Change will be difficult while tragic image is applied to disability arts (Kupperts, 2000, *Accessible Education: Aesthetics, Bodies and Disability*)

*Disability and Contemporary Performance : Bodies on Edge (Kupperts, 2003) ....*

....new perspective on contemporary identity politics and aesthetics. Disabled performers challenge, change and work with current stereotypes through their work.....explores freak show fantasies and 'medical theatre' as well as live art, webwork, theatre, dance, photography and installations.



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# A successful policy intervention

The Arts Council of Wales achieved dramatic increases in arts participation rates by disabled people, between 2003 and 2007

Government arts grants increased 48%  
Attendance rates at arts venues  
funded by the Arts Council increased 48%.

Arts Council of Wales

(2006). Moving Beyond, An Arts and Disability Strategy for Wales.

(2008). Moving Beyond Action Plan 2003/06: Summary Report on Progress March 08.

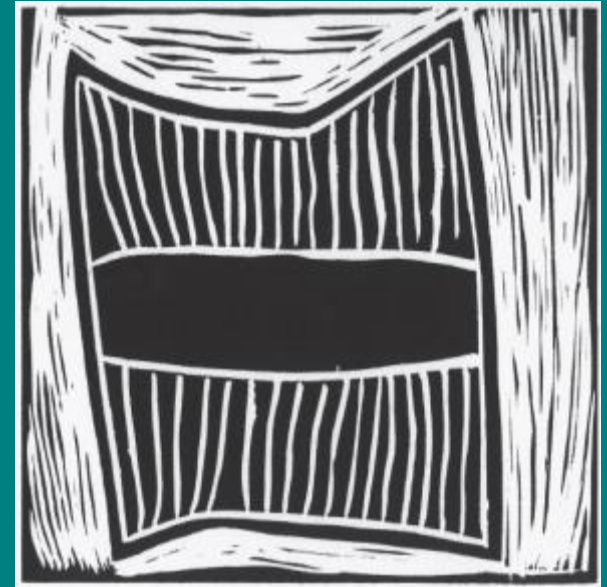


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# How local government and other cultural development workers can contribute

- Develop your expertise
- Have a pro-active approach about arts participation by people with a disability
- Advocate with councillors, managers and other gatekeepers.
- Encourage and support local opportunities
- Facilitate participation through
  - support of arts workers (professional development, networking, communication)
  - support of partnerships between those with specialist expertise, those with resources and current or potential participants



Sunstripes, Katie Jean McKenzie, 2003

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# How local government and other cultural development workers can contribute

Ensure that your organisation's policy and action frameworks consider

- inclusive opportunities (Arts Strategies)
- arts opportunities (Disability Action Plans)

Considering all levels of participation; therapy, recreation, community arts, training, professional practice and employment.



Scar Tissue dance video,  
The Olimpias, 2005

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# Discussing particular challenges

- isolation, especially amongst people from regional communities.
- availability and suitability of places to make art
- time needed to develop skills, negotiate education and funding
- support.....provided by carers, councils, funders and others,
- need for self-advocacy and representation.



**Brrr Theatre, Ballarat**

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# In summary: Increasing opportunities for people with a disability to participate in the arts

People with a disability 20% of the population, and increasing  
Lower levels of participation in the arts,  
and in interest in increasing participation; all artforms, all levels

Most significant challenges to participation -

lack of awareness, leading to negative or uninformed attitudes

Strategies – improve awareness, increased support, inclusive policies

Resource list- draw on previous effective experiences

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## A successful organisation

*The programs were well promoted in accessible formats. Family members and carers were kept informed at all times of what the participant was doing, what they were achieving by offering monthly reports. A lot of time was spent workshopping with participants around communication strategies and developing more skills, building up self esteem with fun activities and making sure all staff participating in program were CLIENT FOCUSED and disability aware prior to commencement of programs. This took one term usually in each case. People with a disability were then keen to participate in active and confident ways and knew they were being understood and valued.*

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