

artwork

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Special Edition
Art and Community:
New Century,
New Connections



EXIT

C O M M U N I T Y A R T S N E T W O R K S A I N C



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CAN is a non-profit, membership based organisation that promotes cultural development by supporting community arts.

CAN

- works towards a society in which cultural diversity, artistic expression and human dignity are valued and supported
- promotes and supports excellent processes and practices in community arts
- advocates for community cultural development and community arts
- supports artists, artworkers and communities in work which supports these aims.

COMMUNITY ARTS

Arts practice and creative expression are at the heart of a community's vitality. People have always come together to sing, tell stories, enact rituals, to celebrate, to mourn and to mark significant events in their lives. Besides being able to see great art, people need to actively participate in these activities. This is what is meant by the term community arts, it might be a new name but it is not a new idea.

LOCAL CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

It is through the things we do together as groups and communities that we gain a sense of collective identity, a sense of place and a sense of belonging. When we value these things a positive concern for our social well being follows and we begin to take charge of our present and shape the future to meet our aspirations.

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Cover: Jim Daly in Melbourne Workers Theatre's *Tower of Light* at the Melbourne Festival attended by conference participants.
Photo: Ponch Hawkes.

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The conference organising team: (l to r) Janette De Cesaris, Judy Spokes, Anne Dunn, Sheena Leigh and Renae Berry

Foreword

Welcome to this special bumper edition of *Artwork* dedicated to coverage of last year's national 'Art and Community' conference. The diversity and breadth of views expressed in these pages shows that the ideas, networks and energy we hoped the conference would generate have certainly taken hold since we came together in Melbourne in October. This magazine is itself an expression of the free and independent discussion about practice that I am proud that the conference has helped to stimulate.

New connections in the new century was one of our key goals, and several recent developments suggest that the community arts sector has indeed begun the new century with renewed passion and purpose.

Firstly, I am pleased to announce that the City of Port Phillip, and the City of Melbourne have agreed to continue their 'Art and Community' partnership. This year the two councils, in partnership with the state local government sector, will establish a Victorian Community Cultural Development Network (working title only) to assist artists and cultural workers in local government and to advocate for better planning and resourcing for the arts from local councils.

Also committed to better networking and informed debate since the conference are artists and cultural workers of non-English speaking background. The recently established 018 email chat group set up at the conference has been a forum for intense debate about arts in a multicultural society. A regular contributor to this cyber debate is Nicola Josephs, whose response to the conference's cultural diversity forum you will find on page 20. Another dynamic forum for practice debates - also in cyberspace - is the community cultural development debate email group set up by Feral Arts. Since conference delegates were invited to join, this group is now jumping.

There are also countless informal, but equally crucial, new relationships being forged between the 700 delegates present in Melbourne and the 230 projects that were showcased throughout the three days. David Milroy's reflections on the Indigenous stream of the conference on page 17 describes some important new connections forged between Indigenous artists. It's amazing what can be achieved simply by getting together.

This edition draws together responses to all but one of the practice streams we presented at the Art and Community conference. An article triggered by ideas that emerged at the community circus forum has been held over for a future issue of *Artwork*.

Finally I would like to acknowledge the efforts of Community Arts Network SA for working together with conference organisers to bring you this special edition of *Artwork*, which will be widely distributed throughout Australia as our conference report to the field.

Anne Dunn
CEO City of Port Phillip

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