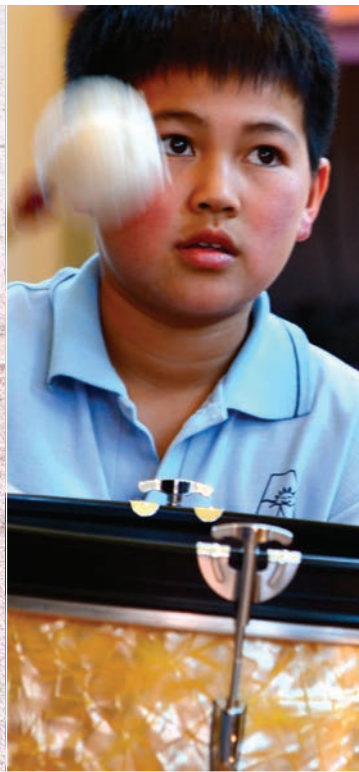


The ACCESS Program at ArtPlay and Signal

An Australia Council for the Arts Creative Community
Partnership Initiative Report Summary



ArtPlay Backyard



City Beats



Evolution



Signal 37



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This report responds directly to the goals of the Creative
Community Partnership Initiative of The Australia Council
for the Arts. Separate reports for each of the four projects
in the ACCESS Program are available at: http://education.unimelb.edu.au/news_and_activities/projects/artplay/the_access_program

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Summary

The **ACCESS** Program took place at two public arts facilities, ArtPlay and Signal, in Melbourne between 2010-12. It involved four arts projects that delivered engaging creative arts programs for diverse groups of children, families and young people. It has enabled significant learning for ArtPlay/Signal as an organization and its partners, and offers insights for arts leadership, artists and others involved in the development of arts and cultural practice and policy.

Who participated?

- 746+ diverse users over 180 days – the majority had no previous involvement in ArtPlay or Signal
- 67 artists
- 18 staff
- 5 researchers

Outcomes

- High levels of engagement amongst users
- Significantly broadened the reach of Artplay and Signal
- Development of new and revised arts programs
- Employment of a wide range of artists
- Development of multiple partnerships with arts and non-arts organisations
- Development and consolidation of community engagement and relationship-building practices
- Generation of an artist 'hub' for professional learning and exchange
- Multiple national and international presentations, publications and exhibitions
- Generation of a knowledge base that has informed policy within the City of Melbourne

Background

What are ArtPlay and Signal?

ArtPlay and Signal are unique community arts spaces managed by the City of Melbourne. They cater for children and youth aged from three to their early twenties and provide dynamic and diverse opportunities for social engagement and cultural expression. A key feature of both facilities is the emphasis given to artist-led practical programs.

ArtPlay has developed a highly popular multi-arts program for children aged 3 - 12 and families, with continuing support provided by the City of Melbourne. The facility has consolidated its position through the development of a number of key partnerships, ongoing innovation through grants-funded programs, and a commitment to continuous learning informed by professional exchange and research.

Located in the heart of the city alongside the main river precinct, **Signal** provides a studio space for young people aged 13 – 21. It offers a wide variety of free creative arts workshops that enable young people to develop their skills and interests by working alongside commissioned professional artists.

The early development of Signal was guided by an identified need by the City of Melbourne to provide experiences that would encourage, “Young people [to] actively participate in, and contribute to, the social, cultural, creative, recreational and civic life of the city.”¹ The opening of Signal, alongside the continuing development of ArtPlay, created challenges and opportunities for both facilities. For Signal the immediate priorities were to develop a clear mission, exploring and establishing programs that were ‘edgy’, and inclusive of young people from diverse backgrounds. ArtPlay, informed by on-going reflection and research, continued to revise and refine its practices, balancing established popular programs with new and innovative workshop concepts. The attendances at ArtPlay were high, and the quality of workshops was engaging, but research had identified a need to engage more children and families from marginalised and disadvantaged backgrounds.



1. City of Melbourne, Empowering Young People Policy 2010-2013. <https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/getinvolved/PastConsultations/Pages/DraftYouthPolicy.aspx>

The ACCESS Program

The aspiration for excellence and greater inclusivity led to the development of a Creative and Community Partnership Initiative funded by the Australia Council for the Arts. This initiative provided a unique opportunity to initiate, implement and research the development of innovative community engagement practices which would strengthen and embed values of participation, excellence and evaluation into the vision and organisational structure of both Signal and ArtPlay. The key goals of this Program were to:

1. Broaden the reach of ArtPlay and Signal through four projects that would attract, engage and sustain the involvement of diverse groups of children, families and young people
2. Develop, research, embed and sustain community cultural development principles in the systems and practices of ArtPlay and Signal
3. Build and develop strong partnerships between ArtPlay and Signal with other arts and non-arts organizations to extend and enrich opportunities for creative community engagement, and
4. Create a hub for artists and professionals working with children, families and young people that would support information sharing, networking, mentoring and training.

Four Projects

Four projects were established to address the goals of the initiative; two based at ArtPlay and two at Signal. The four projects were,

1. **The ArtPlay Backyard**
2. **ArtPlay Melbourne Symphony Orchestra City Beats**
3. **Evolution**
4. **Signal 37**

Full reports for each of these projects is available at http://education.unimelb.edu.au/news_and_activities/projects/artplay/the_access_program

Research

The primary foci of the research was to map and interpret what invites and enables children, youth and families to participate, how they respond to workshop activities, what they gain from such activities, and the conditions that support engagement. Interwoven with these focus has been an investigation of artist learning and the ArtPlay and Signal organisational environments. The evaluation has sought to explicate themes and narratives that are relevant and useful both to ArtPlay/Signal and also transferable to other contexts that involve artists and arts educators who

work with children, families and youth. Conceptualized as participatory action research², the goals extend to building the capacity of ArtPlay and Signal to reflect systematically and critically on practices. In partnership with the University of Melbourne, ArtPlay and Signal staff have actively contributed to processes by consulting, gathering, contesting and communicating evolving interpretations of how best to realize the organization and partner goals in practice. The research has involved cyclic and inter-dependent processes including immersion, exchange and representation.³

The ACCESS Program Framework

The following creative and cultural development indicators frame the design of the program and evaluation:

Access

What groups of children, young people and families access ArtPlay/Signal? What other groups could benefit from access to ArtPlay/Signal? What attracts and enables participation in the ArtPlay/Signal programs?

Creative and Artistic practice

Is creative process promoted in ArtPlay/Signal programs? If so, how? Do the ArtPlay/Signal programs promote artistic achievement? If so, how?

Cultural Citizenship

Are children, young people and families included and engaged as cultural citizens both in the ArtPlay/Signal programs and organisational management? If so, how?

Engagement

Are children and young people engaged in the experiences offered in the ArtPlay/Signal programs? If so, how?

Social Connectedness

Are children, families and young people involved in ArtPlay/Signal programs connected with others? If so, how?

Sustainability

Are the practices developed as part of the ACCESS Program sustainable? What changes, if any, have occurred within the organisation that will sustain the learning gained from this initiative?

Further explanation of the ACCESS Framework is provided in the Appendix.

2. Whyte, W. F. (1991) Participatory action research. Sage focus editions. Vol. 123. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

3. The research design for the ACCESS Program was informed by previous research undertaken at ArtPlay. For more information go to http://education.unimelb.edu.au/news_and_activities/projects/artplay/behind_the_bright_orange_door

The artPlay Backyard



ArtPlay Melbourne Symphony Orchestra
City Beats



Evolution



Signal 37



Outcomes

Goal One:

Broaden the reach of ArtPlay and Signal through four Access Projects that will attract, engage and sustain the involvement of diverse groups of children, families and young people. (CCPI Goal – Increase opportunities for individuals and communities to actively participate in excellent artistic practice)

Project One. The ArtPlay Backyard

ArtPlay: multi-arts and play outdoor program involving children aged 2 to 12 years and their families



The **ArtPlay Backyard Project** involved a partnership between ArtPlay, City of Melbourne Urban Design and Community Services, who together explored the current use and potential future design of the outdoor 'backyard' space immediately behind ArtPlay. The main goal was to extend what ArtPlay offered beyond largely indoors and booked programs to a wide range of free and accessible outdoor 'artful play' family experiences. The public-access workshops attracted many families who had never been to ArtPlay before indicating that the openness of the program and its orientation to play attracted families who were otherwise reluctant to engage in a recreational family arts experience. The outcomes of this Project have informed a successful bid to the City of Melbourne for the first phase of a redevelopment of the Backyard space.

The Program

- Four modules involving over 40 interactive sessions
- Open to children of all ages and their families from the general public
- Free of charge and largely non-booked
- Sessions ran from forty-five minutes to one-hour
- Sessions facilitated by artists, ArtPlay staff, and City of Melbourne landscape architects
- Activities were informally presented, open-ended, play-based and largely child-directed
- Activities allowed children of different ages to engage
- Pre-school and school groups from disadvantaged, marginalized communities and hard to reach communities were supported to attend
- A wide range of consultation processes were explored including observation, in-situ task stimulated interviews and photographic documentation
- A successful bid to the City of Melbourne to begin the first phase of capital works in the ArtPlay backyard environment. The outcome of the year one capital works has been an extension of the deck at the back of the building together with additional storage for outdoor art making materials.

Outcomes

- 542 children (birth to twelve years) participated
- The majority of participants had never attended ArtPlay before
- Over 90% of survey respondents reported that they enjoyed the program
- Longer average length of stay by participants than scheduled indoor ArtPlay preschool workshops
- The practices of each module informed the development of subsequent modules
- Adult modeling and the use of sensory-rich and transformative materials promoted 'artful play'
- The opportunity to transform materials and their environment was a key factor to participants' engagement
- Artist-guided encounters were balanced with participant-led exploration, creating a reciprocal and responsive model of practice
- The delivery of sessions in the outdoor Backyard space provided a neutral space that encouraged the participation of many families otherwise hesitant to engage in arts experiences

*They were helpful and inspiring. Obviously experienced with children. We were impressed by the way the staff spoke to the kids - respecting and challenging. The children led the activities and the ArtPlay staff helped by providing extra materials when needed and encouraged the kids.*⁴

Recommendations

- The outcomes of this evaluation should inform the future development of the Backyard environment both in terms of program and design
- ArtPlay should continue to offer free outdoor programs, available to diverse community members
- ArtPlay should link further its indoor and outdoor programs so as to encourage broader participation

For more information on the ArtPlay Backyard Project go to http://education.unimelb.edu.au/news_and_activities/projects/artplay/the_access_program



4. Parent

Project Two: ArtPlay Melbourne Symphony Orchestra City Beats

ArtPlay: Music. Primary school groups. Children aged from 9-12 years

The **City Beats Project** built on an established and successful partnership between ArtPlay and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and was developed to engage school children from diverse backgrounds with limited prior music experiences in creative, excellent, innovative and inclusive music practices. Led by Gillian Howell, an experienced teaching artist, and three to four MSO musicians, these workshops provided opportunities for young people to engage in co-music making that was at times sophisticated and challenging. Within the artist-scaffolded framework, students were encouraged to improvise and contribute to whole-group compositions.



The Project

- Four schools per year who each participated in four 2 hour workshops scheduled throughout the year
- Schools targeted: cultural diversity, economic disadvantage, limited access to music and/or other social and well-being needs
- Free of charge with transport provided
- No need for prior music education
- Focus on both exploration and accomplished performance
- Students actively involved in composing and performing

Outcomes

- 160 students participated over two years
- One year 5/6 class from 8 metropolitan schools participated
- 8 teachers participated
- 8 professional musicians, 7 from the MSO involved
- 96% of the students surveyed (n = 40) enjoyed the workshops
- All participants and teachers surveys were overwhelmingly positive about the program
- All participants surveyed said they would like to participate again
- All participants said they would like to participate other Artplay programs
- High levels of engagement observed and reported by participants, teachers and MSO musicians
- Considered valuable by teachers for providing musical activities otherwise inaccessible
- Activities pitched at an appropriate level for participants to engage successfully
- Emphasis given to creative musical exploration and group work engaged students in a positive community-building experience
- Artist modeling and access to professional-quality instruments exposed students to high levels of musical accomplishment
- Students were engaged by co-music making with professionals
- Collaborative compositions initiated from child and adult experience stimulated engagement
- Playful games facilitated engagement, alleviating initial participant uncertainties
- One-on-one interactions between musicians and children were crucial to engagement and learning

- Small group work supported student creative exploration and input
- The workshops generated an innovative and accomplished composition
- The project promoted team-work and empathy amongst the students
- Students were considered capable of dealing with complex and deeply-felt issues
- Students exposed to musical concepts not encountered before
- Teachers facilitated engagement by learning alongside students.

Without the ongoing commitment of ArtPlay, money, parental availability, interest in artistic activities, and the parents role as participator in educating the child beyond the classroom, are all factors that would prohibit these children from ever participating in a City Beats program.⁵

Recommendations

- The Project should be continued as it provides an alternative engagement with the MSO to the ArtPlay MSO ensemble program also run at ArtPlay
- The Project would be further supported by establishing a stable group of MSO musicians available to regularly contribute
- Public performances, outside of school time, would add to the social and cultural experience gained by the children
- More opportunities to get to know the personal stories of the musicians would have extended student awareness to the possibilities and challenges of working as a professional musician
- Further development of relationships with schools would deepen the experience gained by students.

For more information on the ArtPlay MSO City Beats Project go to http://education.unimelb.edu.au/news_and_activities/projects/artplay/the_access_program

Project Three: Evolution

Signal: Visual arts. Young 'dis-engaged' people aged from 15-22

The **Evolution Project** was developed in partnership with the Melbourne City Mission youth services, The Capital City Local Learning Employment service and the Inner Melbourne VET Cluster. It was created in response to an identified gap in service delivery for young people in the City of Melbourne. The Project targeted young people aged 15 to 22 years who were not currently studying or employed and restricted by diverse, and sometimes severe, health and social issues. Small groups undertook an eight to ten week program and worked alongside a professional artist and a youth worker. They were introduced to a wide range of creative experiences including visual art, design, film/video, animation and photography.



The Project

- At the time of reporting, there have been 8 program cycles, each involving two five-hour workshops per week, undertaken over an eight to ten week period
- Each cycle included 5 to 12 participants, aged between 15 and 22, who were identified as disengaged from formal learning, unable to adhere to the social and cultural conventions of schools and other educational institutions
- Referrals to the Evolution Project were informed by knowledge of young people's case histories
- Signal provided public travel Metcards and free lunch for participants
- The program structure and flexibility allowed young people to self-direct and negotiate their use of space and materials/resources
- The emphasis given to art-making focused attention on the participants potential rather than their personal challenges
- The young people were given open access to the Signal studio facilities

- A focus on non-intimidating, open-ended exploration was effectively balanced with the challenge of goal directed and exhibited art practices
- The Project schedule allowed sufficient time for participants to develop finished artworks while providing numerous short-term goals, i.e. one artwork every two weeks
- The open, informal and relaxed atmosphere of the workshop activities supported opportunities for participants to connect informally and socially with each other, the artist and the youth worker.

Outcomes

The following outcomes stem from an evaluation of the first five Evolution cycles:

- 31 young people participated
- 25 out of 31 young people have moved from Evolution onto further study or employment.
- Attendance rates of the cycles: 1) 81%, 2) 64%, 3) 64%, 4) 81% and 5) 59%
- Given the profiles of participant's attendance rates provided strong indication of engagement
- The artist and youth worker, family members and Signal staff strongly support the Evolution Program being effective for engaging and re-engaging young people
- The youth worker was central to recruitment, supporting attendance and maintaining communication with the participants between workshops and after the Project
- The effective planning, development and continuous evaluation of this Project relied strongly on clear communication and a positive and direct working partnership between the youth worker and the artist
- The diverse backgrounds and complex needs of participants required the artist and youth worker to create flexible and individualized learning programs for each participant. Workshop activities, which were tailored to individual interests and needs, engendered the confidence of participants to create, share, and express themselves through the visual arts
- Participants appreciated working in a trusting environment and access to a dedicated and well resourced and centrally located arts studio
- The final exhibition promoted social relationships and a public acknowledgement of participant achievement

- Since the inception of Evolution referrals by youth services to the Project have increased indicating a growing awareness by case workers of the value of such a program
- Acknowledged as an example of best practice in the Department of Human Services, Victoria, Good Practice Guide 2011
- Successfully gained from The NewsBoys Foundation funding to support the development of the program
- Successfully gained funding from the City of Melbourne and Frontyard Youth Services.

It's such a huge accomplishment for her to stick with a course for the whole time and see it through. Normally after one, she will simply refuse to return, I can't tell you how many times she has dropped out of programs but I know she felt really comfortable and welcomed here.⁶

Recommendations

- Evolution should be offered as an ongoing program at Signal
- Evolution participants should be encouraged and supported to participate in other Signal programs
- At the time of reporting, the same artist and youth worker team had facilitated Evolution. Whilst this supported the early development and consolidation of the initiative, the future delivery of the project will require input from a wider pool of professionals
- The knowledge gained from the Evolution project, particularly in relation to working with disengaged youth, should contribute to professional learning programs for Signal staff, artists and other professionals.

For more information on the Evolution Project go to http://education.unimelb.edu.au/news_and_activities/projects/artplay/the_access_program

Project Four: Signal 37

Signal: *Multi-arts. Young people aged from 15 – 22 years*

Inspired by the Chicago based project, Gallery 37, the inaugural **Signal 37 Project** adapted this model to provide nine arts-based mentorships over a two week period. It was introduced in January 2011 and aimed to stimulate and support young people to generate works and consider potential future arts career pathways. The workshops included digital sound art, street art mentoring with Blender Studios and Ghostpatrol, hip hop, parkour, flashmob training and public stunts with A.R.A.B. (Anti Racism Action Band).



The Project

- 7 program streams that participants could choose from over the course of two weeks
- It was a free event
- Provided access to experienced artists, leaders, resources, ideas, tools, creative spaces and career pathways.
- Provided opportunities for in-depth, intensive and artist-mentored studies in specialised art forms
- Nurtured professional pathways, otherwise not available to young people
- Through targeted relationship and partnership building the Project broadened participation at Signal
- Signal employed a Signal 37 Coordinator to liaise with community groups and attract young people from diverse backgrounds
- Emphasis was given to practical, and often collaborative, art making alongside artists, in a professionally challenging environment to produce innovative and high quality artistic outcomes
- Tea House Chats scheduled in a lunch area provided opportunities for participants to interact with young people and artists from other streams.
- Artists engaged participants by modelling artistic practice.
- Working closely with professional artists, and using the same tools, materials and studio environments that artists work with, facilitated young people's self-identification as artists
- Central to engagement was the development of 'edgy', relevant and challenging arts activities
- Participants were engaged in authentic processes and decision-making, requiring them to take responsibility for their actions and the quality of their art works
- Collaborative work provided opportunities for social interaction, peer learning and peer encouragement
- The opportunity to create work alongside a professional in professional environments was empowering for young people
- The Anti Racism Action Band, a culturally diverse youth arts group first engaged as part of this program, has since been scheduled as part of the Signal general program
- Partnerships with Doutta Gala, A.R.A.B and the Drum broadened the Project's outreach to marginalized and culturally diverse youth

Outcomes

- 93 young people aged between 12 and 26 years registered to participate
- Most young people accessing Signal 37 had a prior connection with Signal
- All survey respondents reported they valued their experience
- 88% of participants surveyed (n = 42) reported the Project met their expectations
- 90% reported they learnt new art skills, techniques and processes
- Small group numbers and targeted group access facilitated the individual engagement needs of participants with a diversity of ages, genders, experience and cultural backgrounds
- Re-engaged young people who had been involved in previous Signal Programs, including Evolution, and in doing so develop deeper and ongoing relationships with participants.

Recommendations

- Signal 37 was highly engaging and should continue to be part of the Signal programming.
- Continued relationship-building activities are needed so as to attract marginalized and hard to reach young people.
- Further development of internal participant tracking systems would assist Signal to develop a clearer return user participant profile (background, interests and prior experiences)
- Participants felt that more opportunities to collaborate with other streams would enhance the Project

For more information on the Evolution Project go to http://education.unimelb.edu.au/news_and_activities/projects/artplay/the_access_program

Goal Two:

ArtPlay/Signal Goal – Develop, research, embed and sustain community cultural development principles in the systems and practices of ArtPlay and Signal.

(CCPI Goal – Increase the contribution of the community arts and culture to Australia's artistic and community development, through appropriate and effective evaluation)

This goal points to two key aspirations of the initiative: effective evaluation and the embedding of creative and community development (CCD) principles into organizational management and culture. The evaluation methods adopted for the ACCESS Program were collaborative and participatory. These orientations to evaluation align with CCD practices including, consultation, relationship building and participant-led programming that were given emphasis throughout the Program.

Consultation and Relationship-Building

A key goal of the ACCESS Program was relationship building, particularly with marginalized, disadvantaged and hard-to-reach groups. Guided by this aspiration ArtPlay and Signal have mapped, consulted, initiated and developed relationships with individuals and communities from diverse backgrounds. This endeavor has been led by the ACCESS coordinator position, first undertaken by Amanda Haskard, and later adopted as a shared role between Jessica Adams (ArtPlay) and Marion Singer (Signal). Debby Maziarz, employed as part of the Signal 37 Project was responsible for developing partnerships with arts and non-arts organisations that worked with culturally diverse youth groups. In the case of the Evolution Project, the Melbourne City Mission: Frontyard services youth worker played a crucial role in building relationships with disaffected young people by managing the referrals, providing support during workshops and continuing to stay in contact with participants several months after the program had finished. These positions, in collaboration with the efforts of artists, ArtPlay and Signal staff and partners, have enabled the development of new, deep and ongoing relationships with children, youth, families, pre-schools and schools.

We had a couple of young women who were quite anxious. It was like pulling teeth trying to get communication happening. Two of them weren't verbally communicating. Once she felt safe and supported she was very open...one workshop she was laughing ...there was a whole shift. That was great to see. There are some issues of trust there and big issues and barriers that they need to get over in order to feel comfortable.⁷



7. ACCESS Coordinator



Outcomes

The ACCESS Coordinators with support from others have:

- Undertaken a community access scoping exercise and developed an inclusion and action plan, which has informed a strategic approach to engaging diverse communities. This plan takes into account cultural diversity, economic disadvantage, access to the arts, and identified social and well-being needs
- Actively sought out groups (playgroups, child care, community arts and school groups) that involved children whose participation was potentially restricted by barriers created by language, distance or economic disadvantage
- Facilitated the participation of diverse groups including recent migrants, children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, children from regional Victoria, indigenous children and children with special needs
- Led staff professional learning sessions on topics including, working with young people with difficult behaviours and young people with special needs
- Developed initiatives at both ArtPlay and Signal prioritizing the engagement of culturally diverse school groups in co-designed and long-term programs
- Played a significant role in establishing and maintaining clear communication channels with partners throughout each program
- Established strategies for promoting continuing relationships including the instigation of the 'Friends of ArtPlay' card, which provides free entry to indoor programs for families identified as marginalized or disadvantaged
- Identified and developed multiple strategies with which to feedback to participants and maintain ongoing relationships, for example through the production and dissemination of the ArtPlay Backyard and Evolution booklets, outdoor poster panels and community information translated information panels into seven languages
- Developed a range of strategies for consulting with youth, young children and families
- Developed further opportunities for participant led programming. For example, through the ArtPlay grants committee and the Signal Curators program.

Recommendations

- While the central city locations of ArtPlay and Signal are readily accessible via public transport, communities living outside the inner city do not readily connect with these sites. Outreach programs and participant engagement processes are needed to effectively build ongoing and collaborative relationships with communities reticent to come into the City
- There is a need to develop further opportunities for schools involved in the City Beats programs to also engage in other ArtPlay programs

Goal Three:

Build and develop strong partnerships between ArtPlay and Signal with other arts and non-arts organizations that extend and enrich opportunities for creative community engagement. (CCPI Goal – Deliver innovative community based arts programs with long-term outcomes through arts and non-arts partnerships)

The capacity to realize the goals of this initiative has relied on strong partnerships with arts and non-arts organisations. With support from the ACCESS Coordinators, an extensive range of partnerships have been extended and initiated during the course of this program. These include:

ArtPlay Backyard Partner:

- The City of Melbourne Urban Design Branch and The City of Melbourne Community Services (*Internal Partners*)

ArtPlay Melbourne Symphony Orchestra City Beats Partners:

- The Melbourne Symphony Orchestra
- Kinglake Primary School
- Ardeer South Primary School
- Wooranna Park Primary School
- St Josephs Primary School
- Sunshine West Primary School
- Tate Street Primary School
- Richmond West Primary School
- Broadmeadows Valley Primary School

Evolution Partners:

- The Capital City Local Learning Employment
- City Mission (MCM): Frontyard Youth Services
- VET Cluster (IMVC) – Youth Connections Program
- NewsBoys Foundation
- City of Melbourne City Safety Branch (homelessness and safety) (*Internal Partner*)

Signal 37 Partners:

- Anti Racism Action Band (A.R.A.B)
- Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
- Australian Youth Climate Coalition
- Melbourne City Council Youth Service
- Frontyard Youth Services, Melbourne City Mission
- The Drum, Drummond Street Relationship Centre
- Doutta Galla Community Health – Youth Service

- City Mission (MCM): Frontyard Youth Services
- Australian Youth Climate Coalition (AYCC),
- Sustainable Living Foundation and Melbourne Bike Festival
- The City of Melbourne Community Services (*Internal Partner*)

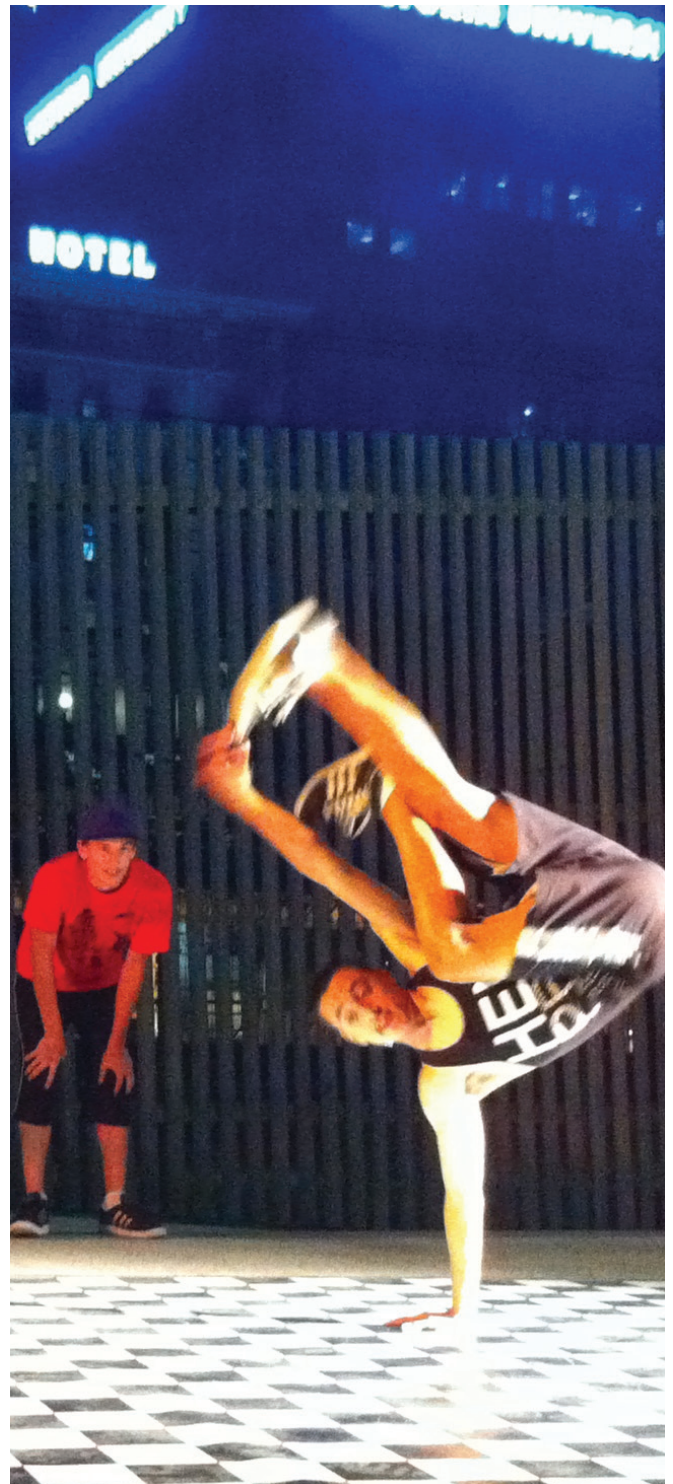
Working with diverse partners has extended the capacity of both ArtPlay and Signal to design innovative programs and to attract diverse community engagement. The partnership between The City of Melbourne Urban Design team and ArtPlay was made possible by the commitment of employees from both organizations. The landscape designers have actively contributed to the planning, development and evaluation of the program, and have also engaged in direct and extensive community consultations. In doing so they have learned further about how children and families use space and materials in an outdoor setting and developed new techniques for consulting with young children.

The MSO Ensembles partnership is long standing and ongoing at ArtPlay. This initiative stimulated ArtPlay to extend this partnership to include City Beats, a Project focused on working with marginalized or disadvantaged school children. The commitment by MSO to this Project extended upon the outreach and education activities of the organization and has enabled ArtPlay to make a wider offer of music education to the community.

During a formative period of development at Signal, the Signal 37 Project provided a catalyst for partnership-development. A key goal of this Project was to identify artists and arts organisations that would support Signal to identify, attract and engage young people from diverse backgrounds. This initiative provided an opportunity to re-engage young people who had been involved in previous Signal activities, including Evolution, and in doing so develop deeper and ongoing relationships. The development of a shared vision, investment and clear communication amongst several partners was essential in establishing Evolution, and for successfully gaining funds from the NewsBoys Foundation which were used to employ

a youth worker position. The ACCESS Coordinator facilitated the necessary open and effective communication between the group members of the Evolution advisory committee. In particular, the partnership between City Mission: Frontyard Youth Services and Signal was integral to the success of the Evolution Project. The youth worker was able to recruit and support the young people involved whilst Signal provided artist expertise and a dedicated arts studio.

Evident within each of the four ACCESS Projects were the value and importance of a key advocate who represented a particular partnership. These individuals made a clear time investment in a project and were prepared to promote the project within their own organization. Challenges arose when these advocates discontinued their role in a project, particularly when the history of the partnership has not been clearly passed on to other representatives within the organization.



Goal Four:

Create a hub for artists and arts workers involved in working with children, families and young people; one that supports information sharing, networking, mentoring and training. (CCPI Goal – Stimulate innovation across organizations, governments and in communities in the use of the arts to address issues of community well being)

The development and delivery of the four ACCESS Projects has generated significant opportunities for exchange and learning between many artists and other professionals who work with children and young people. For example the opportunity for artists, designers and ArtPlay staff to work alongside each other in the unbounded outdoor space behind ArtPlay required artists to plan and develop new approaches to working with children. In the case of the Evolution Project it was the first time that the artist had worked with severely disengaged young people. In collaboration with the youth worker this program enriched the knowledge of both professionals. In all programs the artists were given paid time to reflect on and evaluate their work with young people. To extend and consolidate such learning ArtPlay and Signal have run a number of artist talks and discussion forums including:

- 15 artists presentations given by local and international artists as part of the *ArtPlay Learning Exchange*. Attendance has been regular (median of 15 per session) and included teachers, artists, arts workers from other organisations and ArtPlay and staff. From these presentations there has been the development of a series of 7 commissioned papers written by artists⁸
- Three ArtPlay Backyard Forums involving designers, ACCESS Coordinators, researchers and artists, to discuss practical and philosophical elements of the program
- A Risk and Responsibility forum for artists working with youth at Signal
- Professional development sessions for MSO musicians working with children, given by international consultant Frazier Trainer and by local artists.

To provide a permanent resource and meeting space for artists who work with children, the *ArtPlay Learning Lounge* was established with a collection of books, periodicals, research papers and screen-based resources that focus on creative and community development with children and young people. The space is now open to the public.

Interest in the innovative work undertaken as part of the ACCESS Program has stimulated a series of conference and symposia presentations given by ArtPlay/Signal Creative Producer and members of the University of Melbourne research team. Together they have delivered presentations widely throughout Australia and in a variety of international contexts such as the Tate Modern, London the University of Cambridge, PlayDUcation, Berlin, and the Playeum in Singapore.

The ArtPlay Learning Exchange program is now consolidated and ongoing and has attracted artists, other professionals, and arts teachers, who have never been to ArtPlay before. The focus of these sessions has largely been on children.

Recommendations

ArtPlay and Signal each have the potential to serve as national and international creative hub for artists who work with children and young people. Both facilities should continue to grow their capacities to generate knowledge and promote exchange between artists and other professionals.



8. These papers are available at www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/artplay



Sustainability and Future Directions

The ACCESS Program has had a substantial effect on the core program, organizational structure, methodologies and user groups of two key public arts venues in the City of Melbourne.

The Backyard Project has actively engaged ArtPlay in diverse forms of family-led practice and community consultation. Backyard workshops are now built into the ongoing programming of ArtPlay. This has led to a shift of resources from booked indoor to free outdoor workshops with the knowledge that such experiences cater for broad family interests and needs whilst also making more visible the possibilities of 'artful play'. Working with designers this project has generated a successful capital bid to the City of Melbourne that has resulted in the first phase of redevelopment of the Backyard environment. Further capital bids will be undertaken in 2013. The partnerships established through this program have informed the initiation of a Play Policy for the City of Melbourne. The Project has also led to the incorporation, into the City of Melbourne Arts and Culture policy, of an objective to develop on line resource for artists and producers who do or wish to work with children and families.

Generating from the ACCESS Program has been the City of Melbourne Children's Forum, initiated and supported by the ArtPlay/Signal Creative Producer. Run twice yearly, this event has brought together fifteen council units to investigate how best to engage children and families. Stemming from the success of the Backyard Project and other related initiatives has been a successful City of Melbourne research grant application that will explore the potential transferable learning relating to child and family engagement from ArtPlay to other units across the city, for example, libraries and festivals.

The partnership between ArtPlay and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra has been extended through the City Beats project. The ACCESS Program has stimulated ArtPlay and the MSO to engage in a deep and ongoing dialogue that will drive the future directions of this partnership, particularly in relation to achieving musical excellence with diverse communities.

Evolution, with its reach to highly disaffected and potentially at risk young people, has become embedded in the program of The City of Melbourne. Acknowledged as an example of best practice in the Department of Human Services, Victoria, Good Practice Guide 2011, Evolution has successfully gained continued funding from the City of Melbourne and Frontyard Youth Services. The Evolution Project has also influenced other areas of Council, for example; the City Safety unit.

The high levels of participation and engagement in the Signal 37 Project have proven the feasibility of the initiative that has established and strengthened partnerships with diverse artists and arts organizations. Culturally diverse youth communities first engaged as part of this program, such as those associated with Anti Racism Action Band, are now scheduled regularly at Signal. Whilst it is yet to be formally documented there are indications, supported by specific examples, that many of the young people who contributed to Signal 37 have continued onto other Signal workshops. Such return users are crucial to the development of a community of practitioners and future youth-led programming and mentorship at Signal. The other outcomes from Signal 37 have included the development of accredited units at RMIT University and the production of a series of papers by Signal Express as part of the Emerging Writers Festival. These outcomes support the aspiration of program that was to attract young people from diverse backgrounds in excellent professional arts practices that would stimulate future engagement with the arts.

The ACCESS Coordinator position (a shared position with two people across the two venues) has been pivotal in the creation of the ArtPlay and Signal Participation and Inclusion Action Plan. These operational action plans provide, through consultation with all staff, opportunities for all staff to tackle diversity and inclusion through their annual work plans. All the staff in the units now refers to this plan, which is embedded in their annual Professional Development Review. The work led by the ACCESS Coordinator has demonstrated the need for ongoing relationship building, financial support and collaborative planning so as to effectively engage disadvantaged and marginalized groups in future ArtPlay and Signal projects. It has also highlighted that building strong and lasting relationships takes time, resources, a commitment to collaboration and a willingness to experiment. This learning is now embedded in the organisational culture and practices at ArtPlay and Signal.

The critical inquiry generated from the ACCESS Program has been widely shared in presentations given locally, nationally and internationally. This commitment to exchange has led to the development of the *ArtPlay Learning Exchange* and *Learning Lounge* that are now both well established. This commitment to artists working with young people has been reinforced through the goal, certified in the City of Melbourne's Art Strategy, to develop web-based research hub for artists and producers who work, or want to work, with children and families. ArtPlay and Signal will continue to take a lead role in generating exchange and knowledge sharing amongst artists and professionals working with children and young people.

In summary the outcomes of the Australia Council funded ACCESS Program have been significant in terms of delivering innovative projects, engaging new and diverse members of the community and supporting major organizational review and change informed by a robust and participatory approaches to evaluation. The Access Program outcomes have been broad ranging for children and young people, providing opportunities for creative and artistic practice and community engagement (Figure 1). The Creative and Community Partnership Initiative has seeded ongoing programs now embedded in the programming of both ArtPlay and Signal and has created new partnerships with arts and non-arts organizations. It has enriched a research based and reflective culture within the organization as a whole, reviewing and addressing issues of equitable access, building greater diversity and, consolidating knowledge to offer higher quality and more targeted programming.

Figure 1: ACCESS Program Outcomes

<p>Access</p> <p>What groups of children, young people and families access ArtPlay? What attracts and enables participation in the ArtPlay programs?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A wide spectrum of participants from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds were involved in the Program. • Most of those involved had never attended ArtPlay or Signal. • Free and facilitated participation supported attendance, particularly of hard-to-reach groups. • 746 children and young people and 67 artists participated over two years in the Program
<p>Creative and Artistic practice</p> <p>Is creative process promoted in ArtPlay/Signal programs? If so, how? Do the ArtPlay/Signal programs promote artistic achievement? If so, how?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants, guided by artist modelling, and access to professional and stimulating resources, were engaged in diverse forms of creative inquiry that generated innovative individual and group artistic works. • Young people experienced the creative processes employed by professional artists directly. • For young children opportunities to transform materials and environments promoted creative and artful play.
<p>Cultural Citizenship</p> <p>Are children, young people and families included and engaged as cultural citizens both in the ArtPlay programs and organisational management? If so, how?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants were engaged as artists and co-creators who were encouraged to lead their own cultural learning into personal and rich areas of inquiry. • The Program promoted shared experience, collaboration and empathy amongst the participants. • Participants were exposed to arts skills and knowledge not encountered before. • A wide range of consultation practices were adopted that enabled young people to authentically contribute their ideas to the development of each Project. • Performances and exhibitions made a positive contribution to communities.
<p>Engagement</p> <p>Are children and young people engaged in the experiences offered in the ArtPlay programs? If so, how?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants were engaged in the project as evidenced by motivated and sustained motivation, positive affect, and very positive survey and interview responses. • Artist facilitated open-ended experiences that presented challenges and enabled participant-led exploration, were engaging. • Secure environments that promoted participant co-ownership were engaging.
<p>Social Connectedness</p> <p>Are children, families and young people involved in ArtPlay programs connected with others? If so, how?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants encouraged each other and connected socially, through art making undertaken in a supportive and informal environment.
<p>Sustainability</p> <p>Are the practices developed as part of the ACCESS Project sustainable? What changes, if any, have occurred within the organisation that will sustain the learning gained from this initiative?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The organizational learning gained from the Program has transformed programming and embedded community engagement practices into both ArtPlay and Signal. • The Program has further consolidated partnerships with arts and non-arts organisations. • Follow up relationships with participants is needed to further strengthen community engagement.

Appendix: The ACCESS Framework

Participation is commonly noted in evaluations of community-based programs that do not involve mandatory attendance. In this respect attention is given to the backgrounds of participants, cultural, socio-economic and educational, taking into account what promotes or restricts 'participation-building' practices (McCarthy & Jinnett, 2001). To account for participation the Framework gives attention to access: *who participates in arts and cultural experience and what restricts and supports such participation?*

Engagement is often cited in community arts program evaluations, (Burnaford, 2007; Murray, 2007/2008) and Larson (2000), one of the few in the psychology discipline to make a connection between the arts and engagement in recreational settings, argues that engagement is linked to learning experience and initiative. He believes the contexts best suited for the development of this initiative are those of "structured voluntary activities such as sports, arts and participation in organisations in which youth experience the rare combination of intrinsic motivation and deep attention" (p. 170). Chapman (2003) rightly notes that that 'engagement' is a readily used word that can have multiple meanings depending on the context in which the term is used. The term 'engagement' can also be closely associated with, and at times referred to interchangeably, with involvement and participation. Engagement is more specifically associated with participant commitment, vigour and absorption in an experience rather than simply compliant and or 'obliged' involvement (Schaufeli, Pinto, Salanova & Bakker, 2002). As part of the Framework, engagement is explored by the question, *are the participants invested in and committed to the experience offered, and if so what conditions support or restrict such engagement?*

Creative experiences are linked with wellbeing (McLellan, Galton, Steward & Page, 2012). For children, artistic experiences are those that extend the participant's aesthetic awareness and communicative capacities through processes that go beyond exploration to more intentional expression and making. Any attempt to define 'excellence' is problematic and raises questions about what is and isn't valued as authentic artistry⁹. The orientations

of an arts experience to process and outcomes are encompassed within the *creative and artistic experience* construct in the Framework which prompted the question; *does the experience give emphasis to both creative processing and the development of artistic outcomes?* This combined construct highlights the preconditions for innovation and 'excellence', namely creativity stimulated by an artistic challenge and the ambition to extend oneself.

The social capital and learning children gain from the arts is linked to social connectedness which refers to the opportunities for social exchange offered as part of an arts experience. Engagement in community arts activities is reported to have a positive effect on social connectedness by facilitating interactions between people with shared interests (Mulligan et al., 2006; Newman, Curtis, & Stephens, 2003; O'Brien, 2004). Both social connectedness and cultural citizenship are connected with relationship building, a cornerstone of community development and well being. Cultural citizenship highlights the rights of young people to engage in forms of cultural production and reception equivalent to what is accessible to adults, and in doing so be exposed to personal and collaborative experiences that promote child efficacy and agency, as current rather than future creators and citizens (Stevenson, 2003; Delanty, 2002). In combination, the Framework constructs of *social connectedness and cultural citizenship* draw attention to broad social and cultural values associated with art making. The question raised here are: *does the experience support social connectedness amongst the participants and are they engaged as cultural citizens?*

The impact, or positive outcome, of any innovative change in arts and cultural practice is ultimately enhanced or dissipated by its ongoing sustainability. This construct encompasses demonstrable outcomes and developments to programs, organizational structures, partnerships, professional learning and policies. It also points to transferable learning arising from the initiative; relevant to other groups engaged in creative community development. Central to sustainability is the effectiveness of partnerships.

9. An example of this tension is inherent in the comment made by Dame Lis Forgan, Chair, Arts Council England - http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/publication_archive/strategic-framework-arts

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I love working alongside the artists, meeting them, talking with them, and finding out how they get around to do things...where they started, what they do now... I just like seeing their perspective of things, it's really cool. It's really inspiring working alongside artists...they love doing what they are teaching you. You don't want to be working with people who are not artists.

Evolution participant

