



ACCESS ARTS

# Grow

ACCESS ARTS' 23-24  
ANNUAL REPORT



Queensland  
Government

Access Arts is supported  
by the government  
through Arts Queensland



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# Corporate Information

## Board of Directors

**Rhys Kennedy**

Chair

**Leanne Perry**

Secretary

**Wendy Lavelle**

Director

## Leadership Team

**Billie Lewis-Cassidy**

General Manager

**Tim Brown**

Arts Manager

**Rachel Gaffney-Dawson**

Visual Arts Program Manager

**Madeleine Little**

Undercover Artist Festival Director

## Registered Office

**CPL Group**

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**Australian Business Number (ABN)**

56 631 019 166

**Patron**

Her Excellency the Honourable Dr Jeannette  
Young PSM, Governor of Queensland

Please visit our website at [accessarts.org.au](http://accessarts.org.au) for a  
full listing of our locations.

**Acknowledgement of Country**

The CPL Group acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia, and we pay our respects to Elders past, present, and emerging. We are committed to honouring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their unique cultural and spiritual relationship to land, water and seas and their rich contribution to society.

**Artwork Front Cover**

CRESCENDO (Detail) by Rhonda Cavell,  
Hero artwork of "Grow" Exhibition





Artwork: 'Awesome Peaceful Flowers' (Detail) by Colleen Stevensen



## Foreward

Access Arts is delighted to present our 2024 Annual Report, centred on the theme of 'Grow.' This sentiment captures the essence of Access Arts' mission—fostering creativity, connection, and a sense of calm through artistic expression.

This was a year of blossoming creativity, where we saw artists with disability across Queensland continue to grow, flourish, and share their unique perspectives with the world.

Through diverse programs, workshops, and showcases, we built upon the foundations laid in previous years, steadfastly supporting artistic expression, professional development, and meaningful engagement. Our collaboration with CPL – Choice, Passion, Life allowed us to extend our reach and navigate new challenges, bringing more opportunities to the artists and communities we serve.

This year marked a transition for Access Arts as we adapted our Governance Board structure and introduced a new Advisory Board. This change reflects our commitment to agility and community-driven leadership as we continue to expand our reach and impact within the arts and disability sectors. The Advisory Board will bring together a diverse group of industry experts and community voices to guide the organization in its strategic vision, ensuring we remain focused on fostering creativity, inclusion, and growth.

Despite the challenges posed by sector-wide shifts, we view these obstacles as opportunities for growth. Our ability to adapt, upskill, and re-structure the organisation positions Access Arts as a vibrant and sustainable force in the arts landscape, driving forward an inclusive legacy for Queensland's artistic community.

As we move closer to the Brisbane 2032 Olympics and Paralympics, Access Arts is committed to playing a pivotal role in showcasing Queensland's creative talent, enhancing cultural vibrancy, and contributing to a legacy of accessibility and inclusivity in the arts. This vision aligns seamlessly with **Creative Together 2020 - 2030** and **Elevate 2042 Legacy Strategy** where we continue to set ambitious goals alongside sector partners to ensure equitable representation for artists with disability.

We extend our gratitude to all artists, staff, partners, and supporters who have journeyed with us throughout this year. Your dedication continues to drive our mission forward, and we look forward to another year of creativity, connection, and community.

“Flowers make me feel at peace, and I love photographing flowers because they are so beautiful,”

— Colleen Stevenson, Featured Exhibiting Artist







## Highlights:

### - **Expansion of Workshop Program Outcomes:**

This year marked significant growth for our workshop programs, with new collaborations that broadened our reach and deepened our community impact. Notable highlights included a special showcase at Backbone Youth Arts, where participants had the chance to present their works in a professional setting. We also launched Festive Fusion, an Afternoon Tea at KPMG, where our Theatre and Dance Ensemble performed, highlighting the transformative power of inclusive spaces. Our Ashgrove workshops once again served as a hub for creativity and collaboration, providing an essential platform for artists to grow and develop their craft.

### - **Undercover Artist Festival:**

A flagship event for Access Arts, the biennial Undercover Artist Festival continues to demonstrate our market leadership in the disability arts sector. This year's festival brought together artists from across Queensland, featuring an array of disability-led works that showcased the incredible depth, diversity, and regional reach of talent within our community. These performances fostered significant social impact and furthered opportunities for economic participation, reinforcing the festival's role as a key platform for artistic development.



Pictured: Bernadette at Access Arts' Festive Fusion Performance





Artwork: ALL THE THINGS I'VE DONE by Dion Halse, Exhibited at "Self-Portrait" Exhibition

– **Brisbane Festival Partnership:**

Access Arts proudly partnered with Brisbane Festival, contributing to an important conversation about accessibility in the arts. As part of this collaboration, Access Arts led a panel discussion with esteemed artists delving into the creation of accessible pathways for disabled artists, promoting inclusive work across national and international festivals, and re-setting the narrative for what accessible, world-class art looks like.

– **Professional Development Initiatives:**

Our Earn From Your Art program continued to build capacity and leadership among emerging artists with disability, providing essential skills training in artistic entrepreneurship. This program plays a vital role in fostering career development and economic participation within the arts sector, empowering artists to sustain their practice and achieve long-term growth.

– **Visual Arts Exhibitions:**

Our visual arts program flourished, with successful exhibitions at St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital and KPMG. These events provided artists with increased exposure and tangible economic opportunities, generating sales, and building networks. The diversity of works on display highlighted our commitment to promoting the voices of disabled artists, ensuring they are seen, heard, and valued across various professional platforms.

– **Disability Awareness Training:**

This year, Access Arts delivered Disability Awareness training to 66 participants across Metro and Regional locations in Queensland. This bespoke training, led by artists with disability, included tailored sessions Access Arts and CPL Corporate Partners, further strengthening our commitment to inclusion in the arts and corporate sectors.

"I love being a part of the art family that we have at Access Arts! I am extremely grateful for being a part of it!!"

— Tanya Darl, Exhibiting Artist

## Workshops

# Performing Arts Program

Our year-round workshops have been central to our mission, providing a nurturing environment for artists with disability to explore and develop their performing arts skills.

Throughout FY 2024, artists participated in:

- Theatre and Dance Ensemble
- Theatre and Dance Skills Extended
- Access Arts Singers

This year, our Theatre and Dance Ensemble collaborated with the Queensland Youth Orchestra for a special performance of *Cloud Temple*, a highlight that showcased the synergy between music and movement. This collaboration allowed our artists to perform alongside established musicians, enhancing their skills and confidence.

Another significant achievement was the Undercover Artist Festival. The festival, a cornerstone event for Access Arts, featured our Theatre and Dance groups, presenting works that celebrated diversity and challenged perceptions.

Our performers brought fresh, original pieces to the stage, continuing to develop their repertoire and professional experience. The *Otherwise* performance was a prime example of how Access Arts redefines the possibilities of performance, encouraging audiences to engage with new and diverse artistic expressions.

Throughout the year, our performing arts programs have provided more than just a platform for creativity—they have fostered social connections, built confidence, and opened new opportunities for paid work in the arts.

“The show invited audience members to suspend their preconceived notions of what a traditional performance should be.”

— Audience Member, ‘Otherwise’ Performance





Pictured:  
Rachel Gaffney-Dawson (left)  
and artist Peter Hughes (right).



# Visual Arts Program

Access Arts' visual arts studio remains a creative hub for artists with disability, offering workshops throughout the year that cater to beginners as well as emerging professional artists.

## Our program includes:

- **Brisbane Outsider Artists (BOA):**  
Focused on helping emerging artists develop their practice and prepare for exhibitions.
- **Mixed Media:**  
Providing a space for artists to experiment with various forms of visual expression.
- **Textile Art:**  
Encouraging the exploration of fabric, design, and creative expression through tactile art forms.
- **Arts Business:**  
Designed to teach artists how to market their work, manage sales, and build sustainable practices.

## This year, we hosted two major exhibitions:

- **'Self Portrait' at St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital:**  
Running from July to October, this exhibition featured 21 artists, each offering a glimpse into their life experiences through visual art. Works ranged from abstract self-portraits to depictions of personal passions, with the exhibition also available online, making it accessible to a broader audience.
- **'Relaxed Frame of Mind' at KPMG:**  
Launched in October, this exhibition explored themes of peace and tranquillity. It included 46 artworks from 23 artists, with an opening event that allowed attendees to meet the artists and learn more about their creative journeys. This exhibition was also made available online, supporting sales and offering new income opportunities for participating artists.

These exhibitions provided artists with vital exposure, helping them to grow their careers and reach new audiences.



## Celebrating Individual Achievements

### Peter Hughes Finalist in the Darling Portrait Prize

Access Arts artist Peter Hughes had his artwork 'Miriam Vale Merlo Coffee Shop' selected as a finalist in the Darling Portrait Prize, hosted by the National Portrait Gallery in Canberra.

Peter's artwork was selected as one of 24 finalists, from nearly 1000 entries. Peter's artwork was exhibited at the National Portrait Gallery from 22 June – 13 October 2024. Peter received an artist fee, a copyright and image licensing fee and paid airfares and accommodation to attend the opening event in Canberra. Peter was supported with his exhibition application and gallery communications through the Arts Business Worksop.

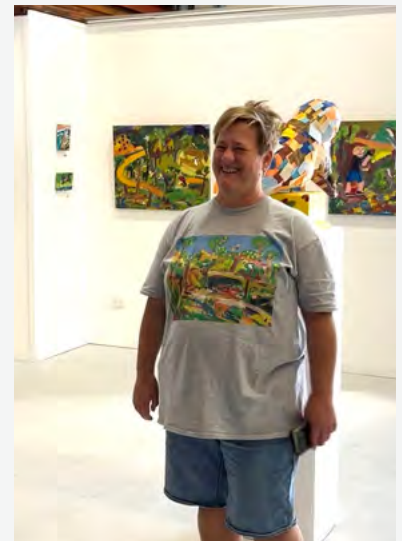


Pictured: Peter Hughes artwork 'Miriam Vale Merlo Coffee Shop'. This is the artwork that was selected as a finalist in the Darling Portrait Prize.

### Belinda Peel Solo Exhibition

Access Arts artist Belinda Peel was supported through the Access Arts 1:1 Mentorship Program and Arts Business Workshop to host her third solo exhibition.

Belinda's exhibition was titled 'Surround: From Bush to Bay' and was held at KEPK Gallery in Yeerongpilly. Belinda's work beautifully captured her adventures in the great outdoors, reflecting her deep love for nature and its inhabitants. Belinda exhibited a collection of water-based oil paintings, water-colour paintings, sculpture, and animation. Belinda also sold a range of t-shirts featuring her artwork.



Pictured: Belinda Peel at her solo exhibition.



# Colleen Stevenson Solo Exhibition

Access Arts artist Colleen Stevenson was supported through the Access Arts 1:1 Mentorship Program to host her first solo exhibition titled 'Flowers and Reflections' at Hope St Café, South Brisbane.

For more than ten years Colleen has been sharing her knowledge and appreciation for nature and everyday beauty with Access Arts. Colleen's practice is primarily photography-based. However, Colleen also enjoys mixed media art making and creative writing.



Pictured: Colleen Stevenson (left) and Symone Male (right) at Colleen Stevenson's solo exhibition opening. Symone Male supported Colleen through the Access Arts 1:1 Mentorship Program to bring the solo exhibition to fruition.

"When I go out and do photography, I get lost in the flowers and reflections. It is amazing how it makes you feel. You are in the moment. All other things that have been happening in my life are transformed with the beauty of the flowers and reflections. I feel I am transfixed in the moment. I go back time after time, and it is fresh every time. This exhibition is dedicated to my husband and son, David and Dave."

– Colleen Stevenson

Artwork: 'Awesome Peaceful Flowers' (Detail) by Colleen Stevensen





## Professional Development Program

# Safe Grants

This year, Access Arts awarded two SAFE Grants to support emerging artists with disability. Kerry Beazleigh from Brisbane and George Parkyn from North Queensland each received \$1,000 to take the next step in their artistic careers.



### Kerry Beazleigh

A talented Brisbane Outsider Artist (BOA), Kerry used her SAFE Grant to acquire a digital projector, significantly enhancing her ability to produce realistic oil paintings. Kerry shared, "As a realist oil painter, using reference photos is an important part of the process. "While I can and sometimes do freehand draw my layout onto the canvas, this projector will save me hours of work and help overcome some of the physical limitations of my health issues."



### George Parkyn

Based in North Queensland, George Parkyn has been using his SAFE Grant to showcase his work in a special exhibition titled "FND Artworks Summer of 23 Collection," held at ARTmatters Community Gallery in Gladstone. His vibrant, layered pieces resonate with themes of overcoming personal challenges, with the process of creating art providing him with mental well-being benefits. George's dedication to sustainable practices and self-expression is a testament to his artistic vision and personal growth.

"This project has given me a new life, keeping me alive, motivated, and emotionally charged. I discovered that although struggling, I was able to create, enjoy, and develop a new chapter in my life that has been welcomed, supported, admired, and celebrated by so many others."

— George Parkyn, SAFE Grant Recipient



## Professional Development Program

# Earn From Your Art

The Earn From Your Art (EFYA) initiative continued to support artists in developing their careers, offering training, mentorship, and leadership opportunities.

This year's trainees successfully transitioned into roles within the arts sector, including Events Producer, Mags Doherty who shared:

"I have learned how to facilitate performing arts groups, seen and been involved in everything to make a performing arts festival amazing, and I have learned to work with different people and collaborate ideas."

Mags has a history with Undercover Artist Festival, performing in the 2021 edition with Screech Arts.



Pictured: Mags Doherty performing at Undercover Artist Festival 2023

This year, she not only continued her involvement by featuring in their latest award-winning performance, *Blind in the Rabbit Hole*, but also took on a leadership role behind the scenes, broadening her skills and experience.

Alexandra Ellen EFYA trainee shared, "Focusing on the accessibility of the festival suited my passions and career goals perfectly..."

"...I've come away with a greater understanding of accessibility in the arts. The process of working was very accessible with each shift being tailored to my energy levels and capacity."

Alexandra's experience underscores the program's commitment to creating accessible work environments while equipping artists with the skills they need to succeed.

The Earn From Your Art program is designed not only to build professional skills but also to ensure that artists with disability can engage fully and comfortably in their roles, helping them to achieve long-term success in the arts.

"...I've come away with a greater understanding of accessibility in the arts..."

— Alexandra Ellen

Pictured: Alexandra Ellen performing at Undercover Artist Festival 2023





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## Professional Development Program

# Access Arts Achievement Award

The Access Arts Achievement Award remains a cornerstone of our commitment to supporting and celebrating the talents of artists with disability.

In 2023, the award was presented to Donna Lawrence for her work *Light and Shade*, a series that explores the nuances of Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (DBT) through visual art. Donna's innovative approach combines abstract visuals with introspective themes, creating pieces that reflect the complexities of mental health and the therapeutic process.

The award has supported Donna to exhibit her work at the Belco Art Gallery in Canberra during Mental Health Week, providing opportunity to engage with new audiences and expand her artistic reach.

By showcasing her work on a national platform, the award not only supported Donna's career development but also facilitated important conversations around mental health through art.

The Access Arts Achievement Award continues to play a vital role in the professional growth of artists with disability, providing artist with the resources and recognition to realise their potential. We are proud to support artists like Donna who use their creativity to make an impact, and we look forward to discovering and uplifting more exceptional talents in the years to come.



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Pictured: Self portrait of  
Donna Lawrence

“I’m already motivated to work towards another show. I’d like to thank Access Arts again for their support—it’s been life altering for my mental health.”

— Donna Lawrence, 2023 Achievement Award Recipient



Pictured: Deaf Indigenous Dance Group (DIDG)  
performing at Undercover Artist Festival 2023





# Undercover Artist Festival

In 2023, Undercover Artist Festival delivered the most accessible festival yet. The biennial remains a flagship event for Access Arts, celebrating the diversity and creativity of artists with disability.

Held from 20–23 September 2023 at Queensland Theatre as part of the Brisbane Festival, this year's event brought together performers from across Queensland and beyond, offering a platform for new and established artists. Creating inclusive spaces for all is not just a goal but a necessity.

“Undercover Artist Festival is a fantastic approach at transforming how we make theatre and support artists & storytellers through it.”

— Goddess Naavikaran, Club Undercover

The 2023 festival was marked by several key features:

- New Disability-Led Works: Four new performances were developed and premiered, showcasing the talents of artists who brought fresh, innovative pieces to the stage. Works like *Sleep and the City* by Emma-June Curik and *Betsy and I* by Alexandra Ellen captivated audiences, highlighting personal narratives and unique perspectives.
- This year featured WunderSounds, a bold new music concert headlined by artists with disability. It featured some of the most talented musicians from Queensland and beyond, including Aspy Jones (Gympie), MC Wheels (Sunshine Coast), Emma Tomlinson (Sunshine Coast), Ambition Road (Brisbane), Tony Dee (Brisbane), and nationally recognised musician and disability arts advocate Eliza Hull (Castlemaine, VIC).
- A screening of regional company Crossroad Arts' multilingual, site-specific theatrical work *Breathe In* brought regional disability-led arts to the forefront, with a post-screening panel discussion about integrating access and authentic storytelling in performance. This screening led to five Matilda Award nominations, 3 wins for Lord Mayor's Best New Australian Work, Best Video Design (Freddy Komp), and The Judges' Award (for breaking new ground in integrating multiple communication modes within the artistic process).
- Beyond the stage, Undercover Artist Festival served as a space for dialogue, learning, and connection. It encouraged audiences to challenge preconceived notions of what disability arts can be and to embrace the beauty of diverse, authentic storytelling.



Pictured: Madeleine Stewart performing at  
Undercover Artist Festival 2023

15  
events

3  
world premieres

1000+  
attendees

3  
sell-out shows

63.4%  
Disabled or d/Deaf  
Artists/Arts Workers

All  
Disability-led  
Professional Acts







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