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Melbourne's West bands together for groundbreaking arts partnership

*What do nine arts organisations in Melbourne's western metropolitan area have in common? **Arts West**.*

Arts West is an unique model of nine arts organisations in Melbourne's west sharing marketing, professional and diverse audience development activities with the aim of collectively raising their profile, building audiences and expanding commercial opportunities.

With the support of the Victorian Government, through Arts Victoria, and partnership with Gandel Philanthropy and the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, **Arts West** has become the only cooperative arts marketing body of its type in the nation.

The nine **Arts West** organisations are youth literary organisation, 100 Story Building; peak body for the dance sector, Ausdance Victoria; community arts and cultural festival, Big West; giant puppet company, Snuff Puppets; Newport arts and creation space, The Substation; Cohealth Arts Generator (formerly Barkly Arts Centre); Footscray Community Arts Centre; Western Edge Youth Theatre; and Women's Circus.

Arts West grew out of an initiative of Arts Victoria in 2012 which aimed to encourage arts organisations to work together to build sustainability. A proposal was submitted by arts organisations located in Melbourne's inner western suburbs and **Arts West** was born.

The Minister of the Arts, Heidi Victoria, who will launch **Arts West**, said that the **Arts West** model demonstrates the virtues of collaboration and thinking differently about common challenges.

*"It is fantastic to see a group of organisations banding together to proactively seek out new opportunities, tackle common issues and build sustainability. While the **Arts West** organisations are all very different, they share an entrepreneurial spirit and a focus on presenting the best art and contributing to the community," Ms Victoria said.*

*"The Victorian Coalition Government is very proud to have initiated and supported this project, which in a relatively short time has already seen some great outcomes, from the pooling of resources and expertise, to gaining significant philanthropic support. **Arts West** is a blueprint for cooperation and sustainability in the arts and is a model that could be applied right across our arts sector – and beyond."*

As part of the project **Arts West** sought the expertise of external consultants, Fotis Kapetopoulos (marketing and development) and Ben Starick (communications and media relations) who have worked with **Arts West** over a 12 month period to enhance income, marketing reach, audience engagement and publicity opportunities.

Jade Lillie, Footscray Community Arts Centre Director and CEO, said that one of the most important aspects of **Arts West** is the focus by all of the organisations to engage and secure culturally diverse audiences, *"We see established and emerging culturally diverse audiences as essential to the survival of the arts across Australia and specifically in Melbourne's west."*

"It was at times a challenging endeavour, bringing together nine different organisations, but we all share a common value and desire to grow the arts in the west," added Ms Lillie.

The Substation Director, Jeremy Gaden said that given Melbourne's west is the fastest growing region in Victoria it is essential that arts organisations share resources to meet that growth, *"We see tremendous economic growth across the west driven by population settlement, academic and industry growth and we need to be able to meet that cultural demand."*

Interviews and photographs available upon request.

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