

Western Edge Youth Arts Strategic Plan 2020-2024

Edge of the city, centre of the conversation

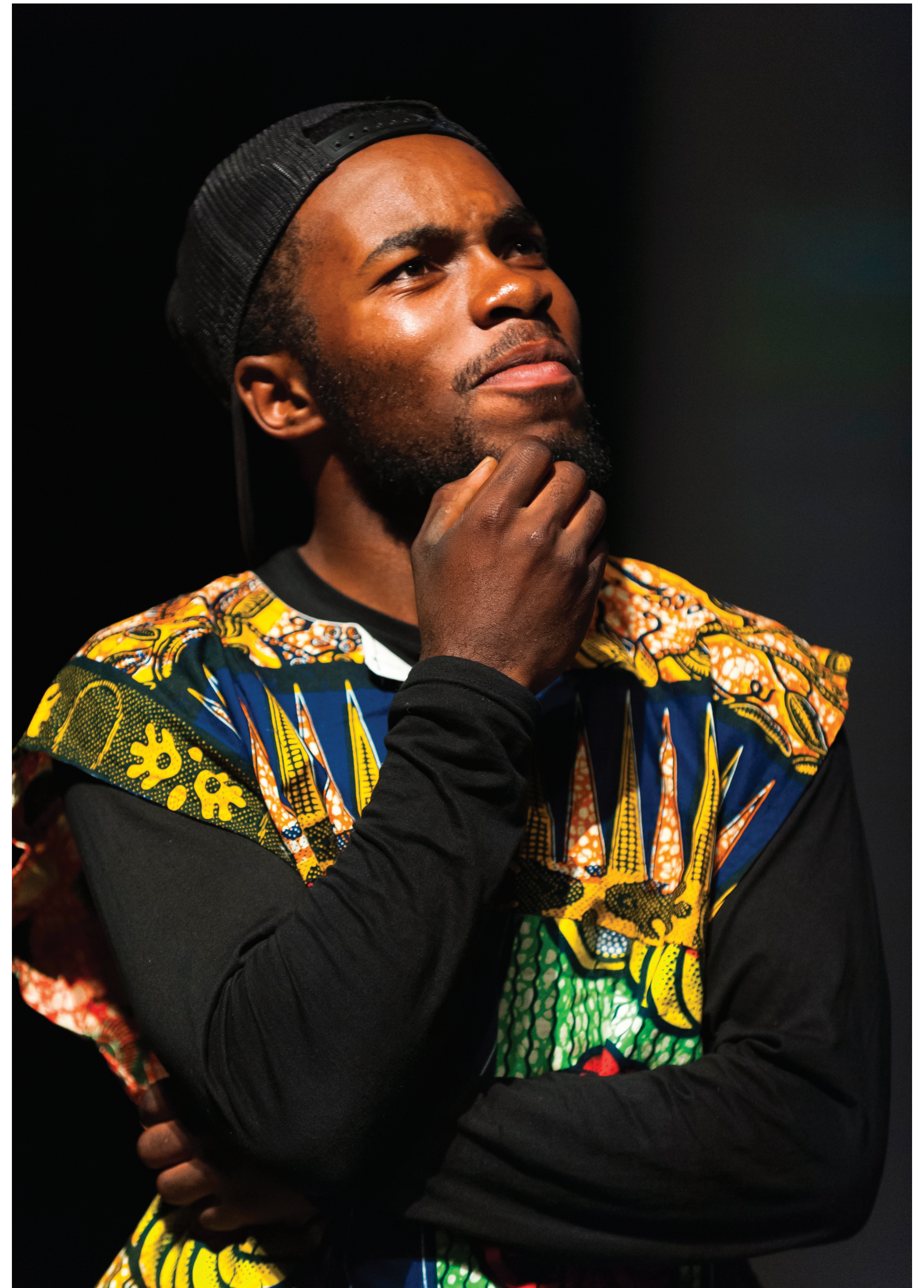
WESTERN
EDGE
YOUTH
ARTS

Acknowledgment of Country

Western Edge Youth Arts acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we work – the Wurundjeri and Boonwurrung Peoples of the Kulin Nation. We offer our respect to their Elders past, present, and future, and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people everywhere.

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Executive Summary

Our 2020-2024 Strategic Plan marks an invigorating next chapter for Western Edge Youth Arts (WEYA) as we welcome our visionary new artistic leadership team, co-Artistic Directors Tariro Mavondo and Penny Harpham. Together, they bring over two decades of multifaceted artistic experience working intersectionally in both community and industry.

Based in Melbourne's west since 2005, our company is comprised largely of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people. We are at the forefront of contemporary youth theatre that is deeply-rooted in community practice. WEYA's long standing engagement with underrepresented and structurally disadvantaged communities has always been driven by the belief that access to arts participation should be attainable for everyone.

This Strategic Plan is a living document, a planning tool with a clear set of priorities for the next five years including a framework with measurable outcomes. Importantly, it balances vision with viability to address the very real challenges that are present and foreseeable – namely human resourcing, wellbeing, and sustainability.

Recent planning consultation involving current and former young program participants, community organisation representatives, and staff, has ensured this Strategic Plan is directly relevant to our immediate, and prospective stakeholders, as a reflection of the needs and ideas of the communities we serve. We will continue in-depth consultation with communities, evaluating the impact of our programs on young people from the west, and to ascertain how our work is being received by their families, schools, artistic and cultural communities.

This plan respects the legacy of WEYA's past. We will continue to deliver and expand the In-School Residencies and Community Youth Theatre programs that have always been at the core of this company. We have also identified two key community needs that will be addressed through a new Youth at Risk Initiative, and Connection to Industry Initiative. This will provide greater accessibility for the most structurally disadvantaged young people in the communities we work with, and enhanced pathway outcomes for CALD young people who have demonstrated a commitment to a career in the creative industries.

To address these needs, we must ensure that our staff are well supported. We will be employing additional specialist staff and upskilling current staff to remain national leaders in cultural competency and racial literacy. We will also take an innovative approach to wellbeing practices by developing a wellbeing policy for the organisation, and employing a Wellbeing and Resilience Coordinator.

From 2020, we will expand our artistic practice and contribution to the greater arts sector by extending our professional development program to include an Industry Ambassadors Committee. In 2021, the Edge Ensemble, our flagship performing ensemble, will collaborate as the cast of a new Malthouse Theatre production, *The Hate Race*, written by Maxine Beneba Clarke.

We are proud of our diverse Board and Artistic Leadership teams who are role models for our young collaborators as they step into their power and develop their own skills as artists, and artistic and cultural leaders. We believe the future of Australian performance is intersectional, inclusive, diverse and safely delivered, and must be led by the next generation of great CALD artists. We may be at the edge of city but we are at the centre of the conversation.



Defining our terms

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

The young people we work with tell us they prefer not to be defined by labels. WEYA is aware of the complexities and contested languages around the term culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD). It is not a term that WEYA is satisfied adequately and respectfully reflects the communities we work with. In practice, 'CALD' has excluded White Australia, which ghettoises many communities.

Consequently, we are seeking a new language, in collaboration with our peers across Australia, to develop a better way of acknowledging and speaking about the many communities that make up contemporary Australia. In this plan, we have maintained the current language 'CALD' to describe our communities, however, we have decided to omit this term from our vision statement.

Young Collaborators

We want to recognise the active role that young people play in our work, and in their communities. Therefore, in this plan we refer to the young people we work with as 'young collaborators'.

Structural Disadvantage

Structural disadvantage refers to the impact of intersections of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and ability, that can negatively affect a person's safety, job opportunities, physical and mental health.



"The best form of existence is not to have to broadcast it."

Support Artist feedback, July 2019 evaluation





Vision

A thriving next generation of influential artistic and cultural leaders who represent an ever-evolving Australia.

Purpose

WEYA's purpose is the empowerment of young people from diverse communities in Melbourne's west to tell their own stories, in their own way, and with their own voice. By providing a safe space to explore creativity, learn new artistic practices, and develop leadership skills, WEYA constructs supportive pathways for young people to achieve their own creative agency.

Values

Inclusivity - inviting participation from all voices and identities, embracing multiplicity, and taking an intersectional approach.

Access and Equity - welcoming all young collaborators, no matter what their identity or circumstances.

Empathy - treating others with humility, kindness, and compassion.

Respect - learning from everyone we work with, and embodying leadership built on reciprocity.

Transparency - acting honestly and sharing knowledge.

Safety - ensuring a physically, emotionally, and culturally safe environment for our staff, young collaborators, peers, partners and audiences.

Part A:

About Western Edge Youth Arts

History

Western Edge Youth Arts (WEYA) is a not-for-profit arts organisation, working with young collaborators from the western suburbs of Naarm (Melbourne). WEYA was established in 2005 as a small arts organisation with one school-based program and one community-based program. These core programs have become the foundation of our company, nurturing strong reciprocal relationships with structurally disadvantaged and under-represented communities.

From this foundation, WEYA has grown exponentially. We have tripled the capacity of our core programs, and supported a growing number of cultural and artistic leaders. Many of these leaders are now WEYA facilitators, Support Artists, and Board members, and have also initiated and collaborated on ground-breaking cross-cultural projects with communities across Australia.

Today, WEYA works with over 300 young collaborators, and approximately 35 Support Artists, Lead Artists, professional guest artists, and creatives. Each year we partner with multiple local councils, schools, community service organisations, local businesses and venues, to deliver approximately 170 workshops, creative projects, and performances for over 2000 audience members.

“All I can say is that the work that you and your team has presented will go a long way to transforming the meaning of ‘general public’ to refer to a diverse range of people including us people of colour!”

Future Echoes Audience Member, October 2019

Growth

WEYA is a company on the rise. In 2016, we outlined an ambitious Strategic Plan, and can proudly share some of our key outcomes in the last three years:

- Our audiences grew by 36%.
- We welcomed 28% more young collaborators to our programs.
- We expanded our Community Youth Theatre program, building new relationships and establishing new home-bases at The Bowery Theatre in Brimbank and the Wyndham Cultural Centre.
- We shared our practice in a range arts spaces throughout Victoria - Arts Centre Melbourne, Melbourne Theatre Company, Malthouse Theatre, SIGNAL Arts, Due West Festival, The Potato Shed Drysdale, Mildura Arts Centre, Riverlinks (Shepparton), Bunjil Place (Narre Warren), Wedge Performing Centre (Sale), and Geelong Performing Arts Centre.
- We went out on the road, independently producing our first regional tour, opening-up conversations that we have at WEYA to isolated communities across Victoria.
- We diversified and strengthened income streams, increasing financial reserves by an average of 9% annually.
- We increased multi-year funding agreements, from three funders in 2016 to nine in 2019.

Beyond the outcomes, evaluation undertaken in 2018 demonstrates significant impact for young collaborators¹:

- 82% told us their creativity was stimulated through participation.
- 33% told us they felt a stronger sense of social connection with their peers.
- 79% told us they gained a significant amount of new knowledge, ideas and insight.
- 78% told us they feel valued.
- 80% of our audiences agreed that WEYA events are a place where they can connect with people who hold similar interests and values to their own².

¹ WEYA Evaluation Report 2018- % of respondents who gave a score of 7 or more (1-10) scale.

² Information collected via 2018/2019 WEYA audience surveys.

Who We Work With

Young collaborators

WEYA's young collaborators come from Melbourne's west, where many communities experience structural disadvantage. In-School Residency young collaborators are aged 5–17 years, 30% are multilingual, with English as their additional language. Community Youth Theatre collaborators are aged 14-25 years, 70-75% self-identify as non-white Australians from the Global South, predominantly from Africa, Pacific Islands and Central Asia³.

Partners

Our partners are integral to the success of our work and are often part of the communities we work in. They provide financial support, but more importantly they are responsive to the needs of our network of young collaborators. They open doors to rehearsal rooms, training institutions, performance spaces, even buses.

- Education partners: Victorian State Government Schools servicing low socio-economic and structurally disadvantaged communities. They report NAPLAN scores and learning gain below the state average and School Student Family Occupation and Education (SFOE) Index ratings below 1. Together, we create spaces that break down the social and structural barriers that have prevented young collaborators from connecting with each other and the education system.
- Local Government: Brimbank, Maribyrnong and Wyndham City Councils, including Wyndham Cultural Centre and St Albans Community Centre. Together, we reactivate and reimagine spaces to serve the needs and share the stories of the community.
- Arts Organisations: Malthouse Theatre, Arts Centre Melbourne, SIGNAL Arts, Kindred Studios, Footscray Community Arts Centre as well as local arts festivals. Together, we are creating new channels and opportunities for mutual cross-cultural exchange both on and offstage.
- Funders: State Government (Creative Victoria, Dept. of Education and Training, Dept. of Premier and Cabinet, and Dept. of Health and Human Services); Foundations (Sidney Myer Fund, Besen Family Foundation, Newsboys Foundation, Kimberley Foundation, Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation, and Arts Assist). Together, we are re-investing wealth in community-focused arts to create a more cohesive and socially-just society.
- Artistic collaborators: multi-disciplinary professional artists who are innovators in their fields. Together we are creating a new youth-led creative practice, built on respect, reciprocity, and skill-sharing.

³ *Profile data of CYT young collaborators is collected from online registrations, which is not compulsory. Many young people take part without registering online. From observation, we know that there is a higher proportion of CALD young people.*

Audience

WEYA's commitment to community-led practice gathers audiences with close connections to the young collaborators. From analysis of audience surveys collected during our shows in 2018, we know:

- 50% are not regular theatre goers.
- 46% self-identify as non-white Australians.
- 40% speak a language other than English at home.

Sector Positioning

Within the dynamic national and local landscape of youth arts organisations, WEYA is a leading voice with expertise in engaging young people from under-represented and structurally disadvantaged backgrounds. We set a benchmark for contemporary practice in this space. Geographically, we are uniquely positioned to serve the communities and young collaborators of Melbourne's west.

What sets us apart is our:

- Proven commitment to removing structural barriers including geographic, economic, and cultural marginalisation.
- Youth-led approach, which prioritises long term connection with individuals and communities.
- A practical pathway that supports each young collaborator's journeys from initial exploration, through to professional engagement.

WEYA is equally passionate about, and dedicated to, collaborating and partnering with peer organisations to ensure holistic sustainability for our sectors. WEYA offers the arts sector:

- Culturally diverse artists who are trained and deeply-rooted in community practice.
- Creative Cultural Development frameworks, pedagogies, and methodologies for working inter- and cross-culturally in respectful, reciprocal, empowering, and decolonial ways.
- Cultural competency programs that unpack 'whiteness' and interrogate structural inequalities.

In the future we look forward to strengthening our cross-cultural exchange with our First Nations and fellow community youth arts organisations such as Ilbjerri Youth Ensemble, Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company, Urban Theatre Projects and Backbone Youth Arts.

Approach to Practice

At WEYA, we recognise that every person in a community holds a unique role. WEYA's lateral, youth-led approach responds to the specific needs and interests of the individuals in the room. To us, young collaborators have an exciting ability to speak truth to power, shift paradigms, and re-centre the conversation around what matters. We prioritise safety and respect, giving all young collaborators equal opportunities; using their age, experience, and background to drive the creative process rather than limit it.

Our practice is informed by the African philosophy '**I am because you are**'. It is at the core of our organisational structure and our embodied, ensemble-based training.

Young collaborators come from a range of historically silenced communities, and often experience the ongoing erasure of cultural identity. We encourage young people to be at the centre of the conversation; to take up space. To do this we use practices grounded in frameworks such as biomythography, the telling and retelling of narratives by people who have experienced structural oppression; reinterpreting history and imagining the future; using fiction and biography to tell the most well-rounded and inclusive stories possible.

Our staff and artists are always present to facilitate this process. Support Artists are the beating heart of WEYA. They are emerging artists, aged 18-25, from the communities we work with. They often participate in WEYA's school and community programs before moving into this leadership role. They provide an important link between WEYA and the communities, built on trust and lived experience. Support Artists learn on the job, developing facilitation, leadership, and a vast array of creative skills.

Lead Artists are professional artists with experience working with young people. They deliver creative projects and manage the community of Support Artists and young collaborators to create performances. We engage professional artists to stimulate young collaborator's imaginations and expand their creative agency. We do this through facilitated conversations, meal-sharing, multi-disciplinary performance techniques and training, public outcomes for communities, and facilitated group reflection and evaluation.

In art, as in life, there is no such thing as a finished product, only an ongoing conversation: we are always in a state of becoming. As young people go through physical, emotional, psychological and social changes, they embody the very nature of becoming. WEYA is here to ensure that every young person, especially those at the edge of the city, is at the centre of the conversation.



“I was able to bring my own tradition and culture into the production and we were able to showcase that to others who are from different parts of the world. We were able to write our own scripts and have our own inputs in different areas of the play.”

Footscray CYT young collaborator, 2018



Current Programs

WEYA currently delivers three core programs:

- In-School Residencies Program
- Community Youth Theatre Program
- Professional Development Program

Together, they represent a practical pathway towards a professional future in the creative industries.

See Appendix A: WEYA's Integrated Program Pathway (p.22).



1. In-School Residencies Program

Each year WEYA creates original, transformative performances with three Victorian State Government schools. With an emphasis on social connection and safety, these 20-week residencies build educational engagement and learning outcomes, and often represent students' first experience of theatre making, shaping their future artistic engagement. The excellence of WEYA's school programs has been recognised by recurrent funding from the Victorian Department of Education and Training since 2009.

2. Community Youth Theatre (CYT) Program

WEYA currently delivers CYT projects in Wyndham, Footscray, and St Albans. CYT is a free, open-access program for members of the community aged 14-25, delivered from May – November. Weekly after-school workshops provide the opportunity for young collaborators to develop skills in devising original theatre, culminating in a production staged at a local venue. These productions are an important community event that facilitates a reciprocal intergenerational and intercultural exchange.

3. Professional Development Program

WEYA's Professional Development Program is designed to address the lack of diversity in Australia's performing arts industry, particularly in leadership. It offers an alternative training pathway for young CALD artists from Melbourne's west to increase their artistic agency within the company, develop their own practices, and take up new opportunities in the creative industries.

The program currently has three strands:

- Employment and on-the-job mentoring: WEYA employs CALD emerging artists, aged 18-25, as Support Artists across all In-School Residencies and CYT programs each year. In 2020, WEYA will offer 12 Support Artist positions.
- Training: WEYA offers free intensive masterclasses for young collaborators aged 16-25. Workshops provide a holistic overview of the industry, delivered by cutting-edge practitioners from a variety of creative and social practices.
- Creating and performing: The Edge Ensemble is WEYA's flagship ensemble of performers aged 18-25, who have demonstrated a commitment to a career in the performing arts. The Ensemble is a gateway to the industry, and a tangible, aspirational pathway for the young collaborators in the CYT and In-School Residencies programs.

PART B: OUR ENVIRONMENT

External Operating Environment

Opportunities

Geographic location: Melbourne's west has the youngest population in Victoria, and one of the fastest growing in Australia, with an anticipated 32% population growth across the region before 2023. It is also one of the most multicultural: there are over 130 cultural groups, 150 languages represented, and 52% of people who speak a language other than English at home, the highest in the state⁴. Despite this rapid growth, young people in Melbourne's west have limited opportunities to access the arts due to structural disadvantage.

Safe intercultural exchange: In this rapidly growing, diverse region there is an urgent need for intercultural activities that provide safe and inclusive spaces where young people from different cultural backgrounds can build respectful relationships, and develop cross-cultural understanding.

Cross-sector partnerships: Linking arts programs with health and social services improves the health and wellbeing outcomes for young people⁵. Social service organisations working in Melbourne's west recognise the need for creative opportunities for the young people they assist and are looking to partner with arts organisations to deliver them.

Alternative training: There is a need for alternative professional pathways that circumnavigate traditional inner-city institutions, which are currently inaccessible to emerging artists from structurally disadvantaged areas.

Challenges

Structural disadvantage: A person's safety, job opportunities, physical, and mental health is impacted by structural disadvantage. The change needed to dismantle structural disadvantage is slow-moving.

Extremist politics: There is an emergence of populist extremism in mainstream culture and politics, fueling racism, intolerance, hate, and fear. Racism and discrimination remain major issues for CALD young people nationally⁶, and a consistent theme raised by CALD young collaborators in WEYA's programs.

Inequality in Australia's arts sector: CALD people represent 39% of Australia's population but only 5% of the leadership of Australia's performing arts sector⁷.

Arts Funding: Changes in government arts policy has led to a decrease in arts funding, increasing competition for alternative sources of revenue, and the cessation of dedicated youth arts funding⁸.

Youth Mental Health: One in four young people face mental health challenges, with the major concerns being 'coping with stress', 'school or study problems' and 'body image'⁹.

“Talking to people from different schools and different ages about racism and other issues helped us all gain a better understanding of each other and society.”

St Albans CYT young collaborator, 2018

4 2016 Census

5 Supporting healthy communities through arts programs – Vicki-Anne Ware, January 2014, Closing the Gap Clearinghouse.

6 Multicultural Youth Australia Report 2017-18, Johanna Wyn, Rimi Khan, Babak Dadvand.

7 Diversity Arts Australia's 2019 Report, 'Shifting the Balance: cultural diversity in leadership within the Australian arts, screen and creative sectors'.

8 The Big Picture: Public Expenditure on Artistic, Cultural and Creative Activity in Australia, A New Approach, 2019

9 Hall, S., Fildes, J., Perrens, B., Plummer, J., Carlisle, E., Cockayne, N., and Werner-Seidler, A. (2019) Can we Talk? Seven Year Youth Mental Health Report - 2012-2018. Mission Australia: Sydney, NSW

OUR ENVIRONMENT

Internal Operating Environment

Strengths

Reputation: Well-established reputation as a leading youth arts organisation, with a strong brand that speaks to our target audiences and provides a platform for growth.

Partners: Strong network of partnerships with community and cultural service organisations in Melbourne's western suburbs, as well as major arts institutions.

Staff: A small, dedicated staff who are highly skilled in working collaboratively with our stakeholders. Our staff are agile, future-focused, and able to identify and create new initiatives to meet emerging community needs.

Governance: Great governance provided by a stable and diverse Board.

Leadership: A leadership structure that allows for succession, legacy, and replenishment across key artistic and management functions.

Evaluation: A redeveloped evaluation and reporting framework to improve future monitoring of organisational goals.

Funding: Recurrent income from a range of sources, including multi-year agreements which provide organisational and project-based grants, allowing WEYA to be responsive to our young collaborators' interests and needs.

Challenges/Gaps

Financial: WEYA's programs are free and performances are free or low-cost to ensure accessibility. However, this leads to a reliance on government and philanthropic financial support in a highly competitive environment.

Gaps in accessibility: Youth at Risk¹⁰ are not engaging with WEYA programs to the same extent as other young collaborators. To build new partnerships with organisations in the social services sector, and engage potential young collaborators using those services, will involve extensive research, in-depth consultation, additional specialist staff, and the development of a shared language and methodology.

Wellbeing: WEYA staff and artists work within communities and with young collaborators who are experiencing trauma and structural disadvantage. This can impact staff members in complex ways.

Salaries and wages: WEYA's wages are significantly below the national average for the youth arts sector¹¹. This presents significant risks to staff retention and attraction of talent in the future.

Staffing: WEYA currently has limited human resources to increase engagement in communities, provide one-on-one mentoring for emerging artists, invest time in development activities and pursue new initiatives.

¹⁰ Youth at Risk are generally identified as those at risk of: leaving the education system prematurely; entering the criminal justice system or re-offending; self-harm or suicide; drug-related harm; becoming homeless; or harm due to abuse/neglect within the family. Department of Health's definitions.

¹¹ 2017 Theatre Network Australia Salary Survey Report

Part C:

FUTURE FOCUS

Recent evaluation

Reflection and evaluation has always been integral to WEYA's practice. In 2018-2019, using a new evaluation framework and working with the Cultural Development Network, we undertook rigorous evaluation of our programs, involving surveys, interviews and focus groups with current and former staff, young collaborators, Board members, and partners.

Young collaborators told us:

- There are urgent and unique issues around safety, representation, and family that drive young people in Melbourne's west to aspire, to achieve, to express themselves, and to find like-minded people with whom they can connect.
- Young people need a culturally safe, easily accessible, consistent and supportive environment to train and grow – both as emerging artists and as young people finding their way in a world where they are often misinterpreted and underrepresented.
- There is a hunger to be in the room with professional artists and to use their time with WEYA to link into the creative industries.

This evaluation and an assessment of current opportunities and challenges, has crystallised our purpose and identified two areas of need within the community which WEYA will address with two new initiatives.

1. Providing young people at risk a more accessible entry point into our rooms. (Youth at Risk Initiative)
2. Providing young collaborators support to maintain their autonomy and resilience as they navigate the industry. (Connection to Industry Initiative)

These new initiatives bookend WEYA's Integrated Program Pathway, providing greater accessibility and enhanced outcomes. See Appendix A: WEYA's Integrated Program Pathway (p.22).



“ I love that we all come together as a family – the connection was like nothing I’ve ever experienced in my life.”

Manor Lakes P-12 young collaborator, 2019



New Initiatives

Youth at Risk Initiative

WEYA's experience and recent consultation with social service workers has indicated that alternative approaches and programs that effectively engage Youth at Risk in creative programs will require research, specialist staff, and establishing new working relationships with organisations in the social services sector. Therefore, we will undertake a period of research and development of this initiative throughout 2021, with the view to implementing a pilot program in 2022. As a long-term initiative, the following activities will ensure the right partnerships are established, and that the resulting program is specifically designed for effective engagement and sustainability.

In 2021:

- We will employ a Community Engagement Coordinator who will establish a partnership framework (referral model) to inform and support initial activities, connecting WEYA to the social services sector.
- We will employ a Wellbeing and Resilience Coordinator who will research the specific needs of Youth at Risk, develop new policies and identify and coordinate the necessary training for staff.
- Core artistic staff will work with the Wellbeing and Resilience Coordinator and social services partners to integrate research and training into a new pilot program.

In 2022:

- We will trial the pilot Youth at Risk Program.
- We will undertake evaluation to refine the program and assess future sustainability.



Connection to Industry Initiative

Feedback from WEYA alumni, professional artists, and Support Artists has revealed that young collaborators face systemic barriers to professional employment in the sector. The reciprocal respect that defines WEYA's practice is often missing in the wider industry, where progress is slow.

We recognise that our young collaborators are the cultural and artistic leaders who will drive that progress. Therefore, it is essential that they maintain autonomy and community values at the beginning of their professional career. To facilitate this, we are inviting industry professionals into WEYA's spaces to develop respectful, reciprocal working relationships with young collaborators. Those relationships will act as a support structure for when they have moved beyond WEYA.

This initiative will commence 2020 with the following activities;

- We will provide an industry mentor for 12 young collaborators who are participating in WEYA's Professional Development Program.
- We will create an Industry Ambassadors Committee, consisting of people who are influential, well-positioned and well-connected in the industry. The Committee will help find the mentors that will best serve each young collaborator's unique artistic journey.
- Mentors will support young collaborators in their pursuits in the creative industries, including writing, directing, acting, design, music and producing.
- We will conduct a thorough evaluation process to ensure the sustainability of the program into the future.



New Initiatives

2021 – 2024 Artistic Program

As WEYA moves into a new period of growth and expansion, we look forward to strengthening our networks and deepening our impact both in communities in the west as well as nationally. WEYA will continue to build lasting collaborative partnerships with First Nations artists and organisations, community youth arts organisations and mainstage theatre companies throughout Australia. Looking further into the future, WEYA sees potential in cross-cultural exchange in the Global South, connecting our young collaborators with artists and communities from their cultural backgrounds.

2021 will see WEYA take on its most ambitious project to date, as we support the Edge Ensemble in their first collaboration with a mainstage theatre company. Malthouse Theatre and WEYA will collaborate on a production of *The Hate Race*, an adaptation of Maxine Beneba Clarke's groundbreaking memoir about growing up black in white middle-class Australia.

WEYA co-Artistic Director Tariro Mavondo will direct the cast of ten, comprising of four professional African Australian actors and WEYA's six Edge Ensemble members. This will be a positive move to amplify the voices of people from communities that are radically underrepresented on Australian stages and in mainstream media. It is also a crucial next step in the professional development of our Edge Ensemble artists. For Malthouse Theatre, it is an opportunity to undertake co-creative models to explore taboo issues with cultural sensitivity, dedication and integrity.

Beyond 2021 WEYA will work towards expanding our reach throughout the western suburbs of Melbourne, creating new partnerships with schools and local councils through our In-School Residencies and CYT Programs in suburbs such as Melton, Tarneit, Flemington and Sunshine.

In a first for WEYA, we will also create a revolutionary Decolonising Education Teacher Training Program to share our methodology for working with CALD young people with educators. This will help to build understanding, trust and pride in schools throughout Melbourne's west.

Introduction to our Planning and Evaluation Framework

WEYA's Planning and Evaluation Framework follows the planning methodology and measurable outcomes schema developed by the Cultural Development Network, now used by many cultural organisations around Australia. It based on evidence and outcome-focused planning, and provides a way to tell the story of the value of arts and cultural activities and the role it plays in community resilience and health and wellbeing. WEYA has been using these measurable outcomes for evaluation of programs since 2018. See Appendix B: Evidence (p.23).

Evaluation provides an understanding of the impact of WEYA's programs on young collaborators, informs progress towards our goals, and provides solid evidence to assess, refine and develop future activities. We use a range of evaluation tools - surveys, focus groups, and interviews - to gather expert opinions from professional staff, teachers, support artists, young collaborators, and audiences. Regular reporting of this evaluation is undertaken by WEYA's staff and provided to WEYA's Board, stakeholders and funders.



Planning and Evaluation Framework

Goal 1. Young people feel safe and connected

WEYA is committed to:

Facilitating experiences where young collaborators feel safe, valued and connected.

Centring community engagement practice around principles of wellbeing.

Strengthening young people's engagement with education through the arts.

We will use

and develop

to deliver

and achieve these measurable outcomes (CDN Framework)

- An evidenced-based co-design and outcome-focused program.
- Skilled and empathetic staff trained in cultural competency and racial literacy.
- Newly appointed Community Engagement Coordinator and Wellbeing and Resilience Coordinator to deepen engagement and wellbeing practices (2021).
- Specialist training and counselling resources for staff.
- Partnerships with Victorian State Government schools, social services, local councils, youth services, cultural organisations.
- Rigorous evaluation and reflective practice.

- An integrated wellbeing approach and policy for the organisation, its programs and young collaborators with support from Arts Centre Melbourne's Arts Wellbeing Collective (2020).
- An engagement strategy for targeting structurally disadvantaged and marginalised youth (2021).
- A new Youth at Risk pilot program in partnership with local social service organisations (2022).
- An additional In-school Residencies project with one new Victorian State Government School (2021).
- An additional CYT project in partnership with a new local council in Melbourne's west (2023).

- Open-access facilitated group workshops – In-School Residencies and CYT Program (ongoing).
- Up to 8 public performances a year in school and community settings.
- Youth at Risk pilot program (2022).
- A suite of tailored one-off workshops for schools.

- Metric: 80% of respondents give responses of 7 or more (1-10 scale) to questions designed to measure:
- Knowledge, ideas and insight generated.
 - Sense of safety and security increased.
 - Wellbeing improved.
 - Social connectedness enhanced.
 - Feel valued by community.

Lasting impact: Young people have a deeper sense of belonging in their community.

Goal 2. Young people are inspired to express themselves and their ideas creatively

WEYA is committed to:

Offering programs that inspire young collaborators to express themselves and their ideas creatively.

Employing CALD facilitators who are positive role models.

Facilitating spaces for young collaborators to showcase their culture, practice, and talent with pride and agency.

We will use

- A lateral co-design approach to creating work with young collaborators.
- Leading practitioners from multi-disciplinary art forms.
- Newly appointed Community Engagement Coordinator and Wellbeing and Resilience Coordinator (2021).
- Community partnerships with local councils, cultural groups, youth services and arts organisations.
- Rigorous evaluation and reflective practice.

and develop

- A community of practice through regular training and professional development.
- An Affirmative Action Employment Policy (2021).
- An additional In-School Residencies project with one new Victorian State Government School (2021).
- An additional CYT project in partnership with a new local council in Melbourne's west (2023).
- Stronger community networks.

to deliver

- Open-access facilitated group workshops – In-School Residencies and CYT Programs (ongoing).
- Up to 8 public performances a year in school and community settings attracting up to 3000 audience members by 2024.
- New Australian works that authentically reflect communities in Melbourne's west.

and achieve these measurable outcomes (CDN Framework)

- Metric: 80% of respondents give responses of 7 or more (1-10 scale) to questions designed to measure:
- Diversity of cultural expression appreciated.
 - Agency and voice enabled.
 - Creativity stimulated.

Lasting impact: Reduced discrimination toward young people from marginalised and structurally disadvantaged backgrounds.

Goal 3. Young people are skilled and influential creative and cultural leaders

WEYA is committed to:

Delivering programs that develop creative practice and leadership skills.

Empowering young emerging artists to generate new works, and build confidence in their creative practice.

Building a vibrant and structurally sound community for emerging and professional CALD artists in Melbourne's west.

We will use

- Professional artists skilled in theatre, screen and multi-disciplinary performance making.
- Partnerships with performing arts venues and creative spaces.
- Connected and influential mentors.
- Tailored approaches to assisting emerging artists on their journey beyond WEYA.
- Rigorous evaluation and reflective practice.

and develop

- Masterclasses and workshops facilitated by professional artists.
- Tailored support for individuals.
- Increased employment opportunities for young collaborators who have entered our programs.
- Edge Ensemble ongoing training and creative development.
- An Industry Ambassadors Committee. (2020).

to deliver

- Two new works by Edge Ensemble by 2024.
- Annual masterclasses delivered by 10 professional artists.
- 12-15 Support Artists employed per annum across all In-School Residencies and CYT Programs.
- Linkages to employment and training opportunities beyond WEYA.
- Collaboration with Malthouse Theatre - *The Hate Race* (2021)

and achieve these measurable outcomes (CDN Framework)

- Metric: 80% of respondents give responses of 7 or more (1-10 scale) to questions designed to measure:
- Knowledge, ideas and insight gained.
 - Professional and/or practice capability increased.
 - Employment-enhancing skills development facilitated.
 - Aesthetic enrichment experienced.
 - Access to beneficial networks and resources increased.

Lasting impact: Increased representation of CALD artists and leaders across Australia's creative industries.

PART D: STRATEGIC FINANCIAL & OPERATIONAL MODEL

Financial Overview

WEYA is a financially sustainable organisation, maintaining a positive cash flow position. Since 2009, the organisation has had an average annual turnover of \$495,000 and has increased its reserves by an average of 9% per annum. Aside from grants received prior to delivery in the next financial year, liabilities are limited to payroll accruals and long service leave (approximately \$20,000).

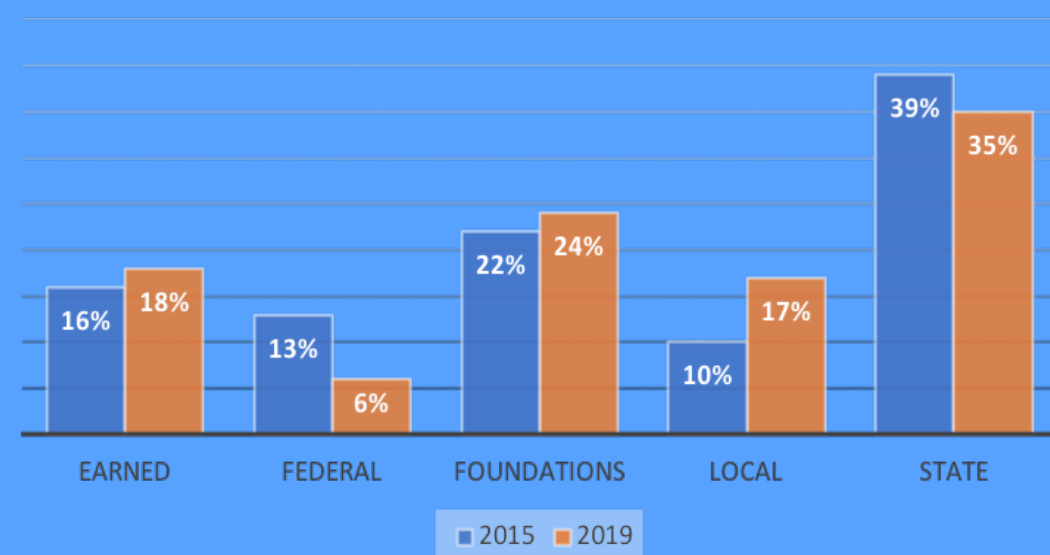
WEYA's financial stability can be attributed to sound financial management and broad support from federal, state and local governments, as well as trusts and foundations (see bar graphs below).

State government funding provided 39% of WEYA's income in 2019, followed by 24% from trusts and foundations. To improve sustainability and capacity for forward planning WEYA has successfully increased the number of multi-year funding agreements from three in 2016 to nine in 2019. Multi-year agreements extending beyond 2019 include those with the Department of Education and Training, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Creative Victoria, Maribyrnong City Council, Sidney Myer Fund, Besen Family Foundation, Kimberley Foundation and Lord Mayors Foundation.

Funding from local government increased by 8% between 2015 and 2016, due to the expansion of CYT programs to Wyndham, Geelong and St Albans - attracting both cash and in-kind support from Brimbank, Geelong and Wyndham City Councils. Earned income has increased from performance fees and fees from schools for In-School Residencies.

Staffing salaries and wages make up 70% of WEYA's overall expenses. WEYA does not engage artists on a voluntary basis. Aside from WEYA's co-Artistic Directors, Lead and Support Artists are casual employees. Significantly, in the last two years WEYA has engaged lighting, sound, set and costume designers across all performance outcomes. Creatives and guest artists are contracted, and receive superannuation contributions.

Income Sources



Financial Forecasting Explained

In 2020, WEYA's turnover is currently forecast at \$498,896. Less than 30% of this figure is unconfirmed funding that we have already applied for. We will know the outcome of those applications by February 2020. This is a familiar situation for WEYA in November. Based on past performance, WEYA is confident it will reach this target. However, maintaining and increasing existing government and philanthropic funding and a bolder move into fundraising and income diversification activities will be integral to WEYA's capacity to deliver on its strategic vision beyond 2020. In 2021, income includes payment of \$124,000 from Malthouse Theatre for a collaboration involving WEYA's Edge Ensemble in the stage adaption of Maxine Beneba Clarke's *The Hate Race*. This contribution includes the payment of ensemble members, a support worker (6 weeks), stage manager and WEYA management fees. An additional \$240,000 in income is included for the second stage application to Australia Council Four Year Funding. Pending a successful outcome, Australia Council funds will be allocated to increasing WEYA salaries and wages to market parity, additional programming costs and employment of the additional staff outlined in this plan, which are essential to the delivery of new initiatives and the achievement of our goals.

Key Financial Challenge

WEYA is committed to remaining free for young collaborators, and so our income is currently derived primarily from local, state and federal Government, and trusts and foundations. Core staff are dedicating an increasing amount of time to grant writing to maintain current income levels from year to year. Reliance on government funding could be offset by focusing efforts towards philanthropic gifts, sponsorships, and fundraising. However, this requires additional staffing.

Key Strategies identified for the next four years include:

1. Maintaining multi-year operational and project funding with;
 - Department of Education and Training (recurrent since 2009)
 - Department of Premier and Cabinet
 - Maribyrnong City Council (recurrent since 2012)
 - Creative Victoria (recurrent since 2014)
2. Establishing two new multi-year funding partnerships: WEYA is currently in discussions with Gandel Philanthropy regarding a multi-year grant.
3. Creating a Development role in the company to manage donations from individuals through an annual appeal and giving circle.
4. Diversifying income streams by offering a suite of tailored, one-off workshops for schools.
5. Establishing new partnerships with organisations to offset the cost of service delivery.
6. Continuing to build reserves through strong financial management oversight and developing a Use of Reserves Policy.



Organisational Capacity

Board

WEYA's Board requires a Chair, Deputy Chair, and Treasurer, as well six ordinary non-executive members, representing a broad range of professional experience (including accounting and legal expertise). The co-Artistic Directors act as Secretary to the Board as non-voting members. With careful consideration to maintaining corporate continuity and ensuring a comprehensive matrix of governance skills, WEYA's Board has been strategically aligned with the organisation's diversity goals, and is now representative of the diverse communities we serve.

WEYA's governance structure and framework is set out in WEYA's Charter of the Board of Directors and Rules of Association. WEYA's Governance Policy and Procedures Manual includes the rules, relationships, systems, and processes within and by which WEYA's Board and management undertake effective accountability and control.

Recent initiatives undertaken by WEYA's Board demonstrates effective management:

- Development of a Children and Young People Protection Policy, Workplace Bullying and Harassment Policy, as well as organisational Policy and Procedures Manuals for Governance and Finance.
- Monitoring of financial strategy ensuring the organisation is cash positive and consistently managing operational reserves.
- Succession planning for Board and staff positions including the appointment of an Associate Director in 2018 and implementation of a succession plan for leadership, enabling the appointment of two new co-Artistic Directors in 2019.
- Undertaking a cultural audit through an external company in 2018, which informed improved staffing structures and workplace culture.
- Investment in the development of improved evaluation and reporting frameworks (Cultural Development Network consultancy), with training for staff and Board.

Refer to Appendix C: WEYA's Board (p.24).

Staff

The company currently employs the equivalent of 2.6 EFT core staff including a General Manager (0.6 EFT), two Co-Artistic Directors (1.6 EFT), and Communications Coordinator (0.4EFT). In 2019, casually employed program staff included seven Lead Artists, 14 Support Artists, six Edge Ensemble members, and approximately 35 contract guest artists and creatives.



Tariro Mavondo, co-Artistic Director

Tariro studied at VCA, where she was awarded the Irene Mitchell Award for Outstanding Actor. For Bell Shakespeare she has performed in *Titus Andronicus*, and was a member of The Players in 2018. Her other theatre credits include *Jumpy* for Melbourne Theatre Company; *Baulkham Hills' African Women's Troupe* for Belvoir/Riverside; *In the Next Room* for Black Swan State Theatre Company; *Three Sisters* for Metanoia Theatre Company. Her film and television credits include 'Winners & Losers', 'Home', 'Arrivals'. Tariro is also the co- Founder of Poetics and Justice and Stillwaters African Storytelling Collective. She is an award-winning spoken word poet and performance poet and is a writer in the recent anthology *Growing Up African in Australia* edited by Maxine Beneba Clarke. Tariro also founded Africa's Got Talent Australia.



Penny Harpham, co-Artistic Director

Penny, previously WEYA's Associate Director, has worked extensively as a director, teaching artist and workshop facilitator. She is graduate of the Victorian College of the Arts (Directing) where she was awarded the Barbara Manning Scholarship for Excellence and the Global Atelier Scholarship for Overseas Travel. She won a Green Room Award for Outstanding Audience Engagement for *The Stream/ The Boat/ The Shore/ The Bridge* (2012) and was nominated for Best Independent Performance for *HART* (2016). She is the co-founder and co-Artistic Director of She Said Theatre, and has worked for leading theatre companies nationally, including Melbourne Theatre Company, Malthouse Theatre, Bell Shakespeare, Griffin Theatre, La Boite Theatre Company, St Martins Youth Arts, Footscray Community Arts Centre, Theatreworks, and SIGNAL Arts.

Key Staffing Challenges

WEYA has identified the following key staffing challenges, including the need to:

- Increase the salaries of staff to parity with industry levels to ensure staff retention and attraction of talent.
- Increase support for administration and development functions to alleviate the General Manager from excess daily administration and the co-Artistic Directors from administration and grant writing.
- Increase diversity of our organisation to ensure that the communities we work with are reflected not just in the rehearsal room but in our leadership, artistic and administrative teams.
- Support the health and wellbeing of our staff who work with structurally disadvantaged young people.

Strategies for Improved Staffing Capacity and Wellbeing

Strategies identified for supporting staffing over the next five years include:

1. Increase salaries and wages by 10% in 2021.
2. Support the organisation's needs with additional staff with specialist skill sets – Development Manager, Administrator, Community Engagement Coordinator, Wellbeing and Resilience Coordinator, and three Lead Artists to facilitate In-School and CYT programs.
3. The introduction of an Affirmative Action Policy for recruitment and employment of staff.
4. Investment in ongoing training and professional development.
5. Developing a Wellbeing Policy for the organisation that encompasses the desired culture, practice and procedures; ensuring staff and young collaborators are always safely supported.

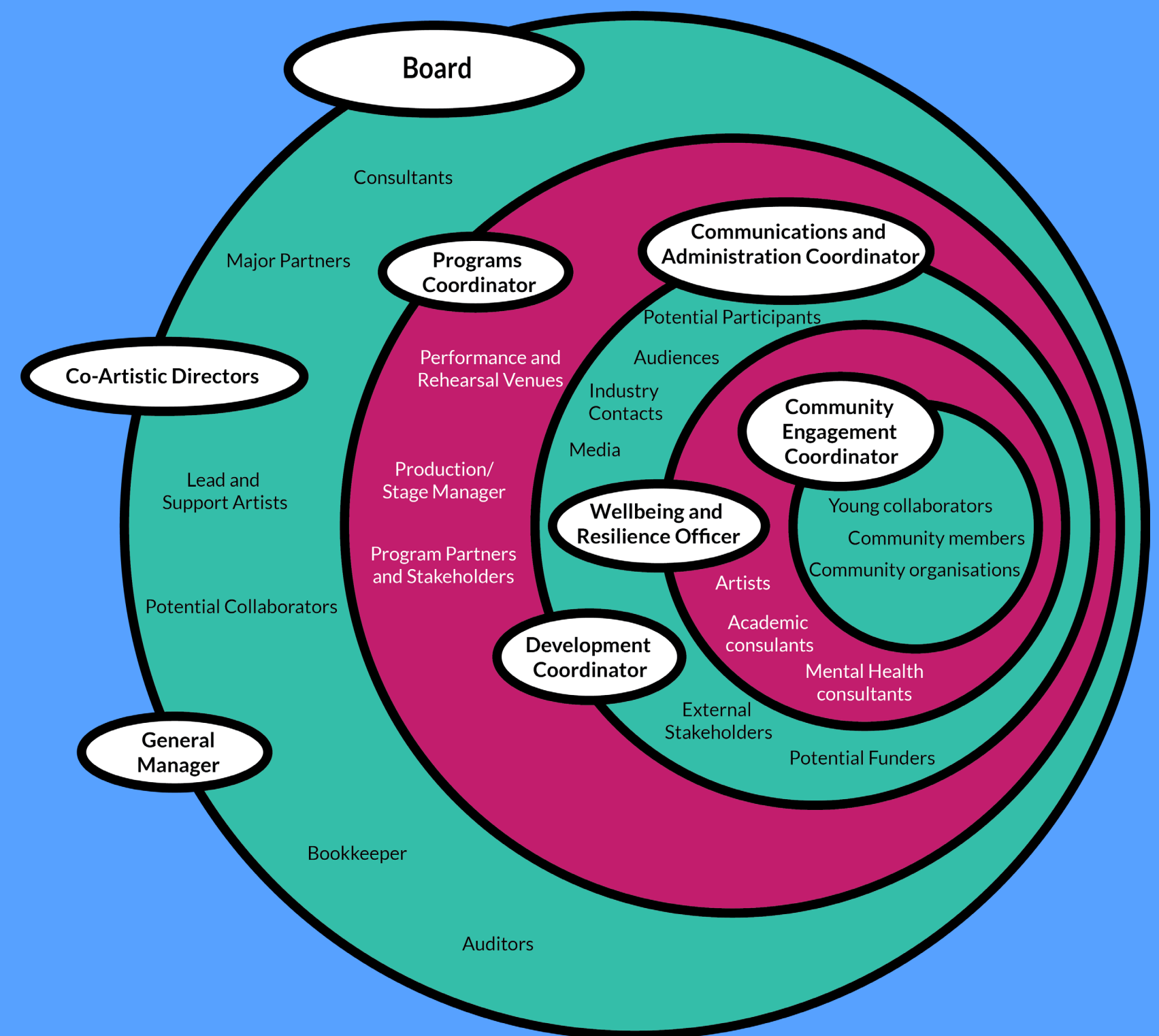
Succession Planning

In July 2019 WEYA appointed two co-Artistic Directors (1.6 EFT), replacing a previous model of Artistic Director (1.0 EFT) and Associate Director (.6) in 2018. This lateral structure provides a more collaborative approach in an important transition period offering the flexibility for staff to take up other opportunities to continue their connections with the professional theatre industry.

Proposed 2020/2021 Staffing Restructure

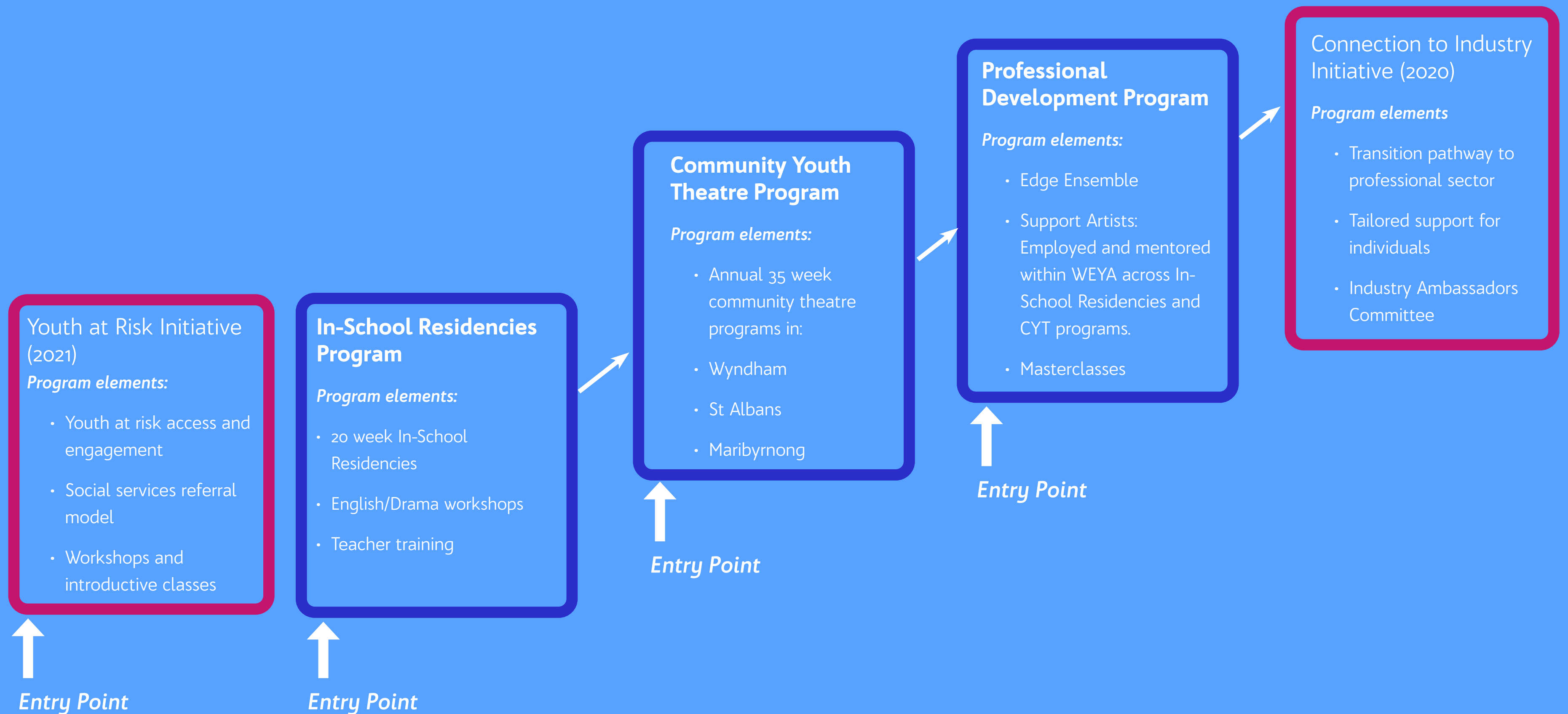
This new staffing structure is designed to reassign vital administrative, community-building and wellbeing tasks from Co-Artistic Directors and General Manager to specialised core staff. This will encourage a decentralised, collaborative workflow that empowers staff to lead projects and tasks without relying on daily top-down direction.

With overworking and staff burnout a major issue in this company, this structure should ease pressure on existing staff and allow them to focus their energy and attention on high-level tasks such as business development, partnership development and creating artistic output.



Appendix A: WEYA's Integrated Program Pathway

Vision: A thriving next generation of influential artistic and cultural leaders who represent an ever-evolving Australia.



Appendix B: Evidence

What we know about how to address these goals and reach these outcomes:



Goal 1. Young people feel safe and connected

- Structurally disadvantaged young people gain enhanced self-esteem and wellbeing from participating in arts programs in safe spaces where they feel valued.
- Linking arts programs with health and social services improves the uptake of other services required to improve health and wellbeing outcomes.
- Building trust through arts activities enables young people to work through challenges without fear of stigma.
- Supporting and creating opportunities for young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds to participate in community can build a strong sense of belonging.

Goal 2. Young people are inspired to express themselves and their ideas creatively

- WEYA's 2017 evaluation of the Community Youth Program with 17 young collaborators gave us valuable insights into how creativity is stimulated and enhanced; through creative challenges in non-judgmental spaces, freedom to try new things, encouragement for self-expression.
- Evaluation of WEYA's programs raise awareness of urgent social issues such as racism and discrimination in their context and transform young people's lives through performances that explore the complexity of life in multicultural Australia.
- Prioritising lived experience to identify and understand the issues young people face ensures that they have bought-in to solutions and outcomes. A co-design approach ensures young people are equal partners.

Goal 3. Young people are skilled and influential creative and cultural leaders

- WEYA ran 13 three-hour Up Next Masterclasses in Footscray in 2018, delivered by 13 professional theatre makers. 59% of the 39 young collaborators were from migrant and refugee backgrounds. A detailed evaluation of the program provided understanding about young collaborators' new knowledge, ideas and insights and whether they felt valued because of their experiences. 11 young collaborators responded in detail; the average response was 9.3 out of a possible 10 indicating significant amounts of new knowledge, ideas and insights gained and the same response for feeling valued.
- Mentoring has beneficial effects for organisations and mentees. Benefits for organisations: staff become more confident and motivated; communication and critical dialogue is improved; a flow-on effect of attracting artists, arts workers and retaining them. Benefits for mentees: access to an established artist or arts worker; increased confidence in abilities; public and peer recognition of work; networking opportunities; increased knowledge of the business/arts sector.
- There are calls for affirmative action for artists in the CALD community, including the need to create a more enabling environment if they are to enter and remain in the creative sector. Suggestions for positive action include facilitated mentorships that pair emerging CALD artists with established artists; targeted pathways for CALD artists; major organisations to link with CALD practitioners. Suggestions for actions to encourage CALD Australians to enter the creative professions includes showcasing CALD creative leaders, and encouragement and role models at the school and family level for creative careers. Diversity Arts Australia's Voice, Agency and Integrity Report (2018).

Appendix C: WEYA's Board



Jock Jeffries, Chair

Jock Jeffries was appointed treasurer in December 2016. Jock is an experienced Managing Director, CEO, CFO and CIO, who has for over 40 years managed growth and transformation in privately held small to medium sized enterprises. He is a member of CPA Australia, holds an MBA from Deakin University and has a passion for text-based theatre.



Alex Cousner, Treasurer

Originally from Queensland, Alex Cousner has worked most of his life in the trade union movement and in industrial relations. Alex is the Principal of Ethical Workplaces a firm dedicated to supporting and defending workers' rights and developing good industrial relations policy.



Tania Cañas

Tania Cañas is an arts professional based on unceded Kulin Nation Territory with experience in performance, cultural development, events, communications and research. She is the Co-Coordinator at Cohealth Arts Generator, lecturer in Art and Community Practice at the VCA as well as a community theatre practitioner. She currently sits on the editorial board at the International Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed Academic Journal/ PTO Inc. Tania has published widely including through Currency Press Australia, Intellect Books, Melbourne University Publishing, Arts Hub and e-flux as well as various academic journals and magazines.



Vanessa O'Neill

Vanessa is a performer, playwright and arts educator. Vanessa trained as an actor at the Ecole Philippe Gaulier and at the Drama Centre in London. Last year she received a Career Development Grant from the Australia Council to train at Lincoln Center Education in New York and meet with Education Managers from five New York theatre companies. Vanessa has worked as the Youth and Education Manager for Malthouse Theatre and as Manager of Schools Engagement at Arts Centre Melbourne.



Irena Baric, Deputy Chair

Irena arrived in Australia as a teenager, as a result of the civil war in former Yugoslavia. She spent all her youth living in Melbourne's western suburbs. With over 10 years' experience in the non-for-profit sector, Irena's area of expertise is delivering government funded humanitarian programs that have positive impact for emerging communities. She also has experience in case management, property management and the housing sector to meet clientele basic human needs.



Sherry-Rose Bih Watts

Sherry-Rose is a young African Australian of Cameroonian descent currently studying International Relations at La Trobe University. Sherry-Rose is the youth associate at the Parliament of Victoria and an associate at the Foundation for Young Australians, YLab. She is also the founder of the social enterprise WomanGirl, an organisation that seeks to empower young women by creating greater access to opportunities for personal and professional development.



Piper Huynh

Piper Huynh is a Melbourne-based theatre-maker. She has worked with Western Edge Youth Arts for over 10 years, devising ground-breaking projects such as *Chronicles: Searching for Songlines*, *Beagle Bay Chronicles*, *Iago* and *Caliban*. She brings a breadth of experience in community engagement, accessibility and inclusive practices, facilitation and stage/production management. Piper currently works with Melbourne International Comedy Festival. She is a graduate of the Footscray Community Arts' Emerging Cultural Leaders Program and the Vietnamese Community of Australia's Dual Identity Leadership Program.



Vincent Shin

Vincent was born in Seoul, South Korea and has lived in Melbourne most of his life. He worked as a carer in residential care homes for young people removed by child protection for many years and is now a practicing lawyer, having been admitted as an Australian Lawyer in 2014. He is currently employed by Westjustice Community Legal Centre but based at The Grange P-12 College as a school lawyer providing students with legal advice in an Australian first.