

# WEYA Strategic Plan

2022-2025

Edge of the city, centre of the conversation

WESTERN  
EDGE  
YOUTH  
ARTS



Image: Jorge de Araujo



# Acknowledgement of Country

WEYA acknowledges that we work and play on the unceded lands of the Kulin Nations.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture.

We also recognise emerging leaders, in particular the young people who keep that connection strong now and into the future.

We are committed to working with these young leaders on our collective journey towards reconciliation.

For tens of thousands of years, First Peoples have been telling stories and creating songlines that stretch across the continent.

It is a great privilege to build community and tell stories on this land, home to the longest continuous culture on earth.

*Always was, always will be Aboriginal land.*



Image: Penny Harpham



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Image: Sarah Walker



# Executive Summary

The new WEYA has arrived.

Over the past two years, since their appointment as Co-Artistic Directors and CEOs, Tariro Mavondo and Penny Harpham have modelled a lateral, relational, intersectional and decolonial approach to leading an organisation where power is shared, and every member's voice in the community is valued and heard.

Reflecting this lateral approach to sharing power and collaboration, in 2022 Mavondo will continue as Artistic Director and WEYA will welcome an additional Artistic Director into the organisation. Harpham will take on the role of Executive Director.

WEYA has proven that working in collaboration is not only effective in growing the company, it is essential in grounding the company. It allows for breath, renewal, and accountability; vital for the health and wellbeing of the organisation and all its staff members. It reflects the care and relationality that young artists bring intrinsically into WEYA rooms, where art and life are symbiotic.

WEYA is a company on the rise. Our artists and the work we do as experts in decolonising artistic practices and workplaces are in demand. As our profile continues to broaden, so too do our state, national and international opportunities for partnerships.

This plan respects the legacy of WEYA's past, continuing to deliver our transformative schools and community programs, while also claiming its rightful space in the professional arts industry. From school yards to mainstages, community hubs to major festivals, our work is always led by young artists from communities in Melbourne's inner and outer metropolitan West.

This Strategic Plan is a living document; a planning tool with a clear set of priorities for the next four 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. These challenges are especially prevalent in the wake of the unforeseeable and far-reaching impacts of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2022-2025, WEYA is committed to deepening our engagement with First Peoples artists and communities through Board and staff recruitment, partnering with First Peoples organisations as well as procurement for company infrastructure, and the development of a formal policy in consultation with First Peoples community members in Melbourne's West.

In 2022, we will become Company-in-Residence at the Substation in Newport, one of the most acclaimed experimental and contemporary arts spaces in the country. From this new home base, WEYA artists will have access to state-of-the-art rehearsal and performance spaces and networking opportunities with a range of innovative artists and organisations, allowing for cross-pollination of ideas and future collaborations.

In 2022, we will also be premiering our first cross-company professional production, *Lele, Butterfly*, which will see Lead, Support and young artists take the stage together in an all-Pacific Islander new work, presented at the Bowery Theatre as part of Footscray Community Arts Centre's Neighbourhood Festival. This marks a significant step for the company into a multigenerational professional performance model that will become a template for programming culturally specific works in 2022 and beyond.

We will continue to extend our Professional Development Program into a three-year free training program called LEVEL UP. The program will see a select ensemble of young artists who will work with WEYA's Co-Artistic Directors and Guest Artists to learn the fundamentals of performance and be grounded in the history of Australian performance, combining decolonial and western frameworks. They will spend a year in residency at a leading arts organisation and be mentored and supported by a community of POC artists as they enter the creative industries.

We will develop long-term, meaningful partnerships with value-aligned arts organisations such as Rawcus and Birmingham Repertory Theatre in the UK. These partnerships will be focused on skills exchange, building trust and safer practices, and seeding future state and international artistic collaborations.

For the first time in the company's history, the core staff have expanded to a dedicated team of six and include specialist roles to support the company's ambitious vision and emphasis on wellbeing. In particular, we will create an accessible, diverse and intersectional WEYA Wellbeing Collective of mental health professionals that reflect WEYA's Young, Lead and Support Artists and core staff. Furthermore, to ensure we are always grounded in the shifting needs and visions of the communities we work with, we will employ a paid Community Advisory Group of up to ten members from the inner and outer Metropolitan West who will meet the Artistic Directors three times a year, and engage community consultants across all our programs.

As the future remains uncertain, what we know is that we will continue to create spaces – in person and online – for young artists from Melbourne's West to connect, create and collaborate, and that employment, health and wellbeing of our Lead, Support and Guest Artists across the company will continue to be a priority.

We believe the future of Australian performance is intersectional, inclusive, diverse and safely delivered. We believe it must be led by a thriving community of next generation artistic and cultural leaders borne from Melbourne's West. We may be at the edge of the city, but we are at the centre of the conversation.

From top to bottom  
Image: Sarah Walker  
Image: Jorge de Araujo





# Defining Our Terms

Defining our terms with care and consideration is core to WEYA's community-led practice. As an arts company, one of our main purposes is to be holders of imagination and vision for the world. Language is at the heart of that. It is important to us to use affirmative and inclusive language that encompasses the breadth of people we work with.

We acknowledge that language is an important tool for claiming ownership over identity. Language is power, and we disseminate that power by always turning to our young people and asking them which terms align with their identities.

## Young artists

As a performing arts company, we consider all young people who walk through our door to be artists. Our programs offer young people an evolution of practice from our in-schools programs to professional performing arts ensembles, but we consider everyone's art practice to be equally valid.

## First Peoples

We take our lead from First Peoples artists, young people, and communities in Melbourne's West to inform the language we use when referring to First Peoples. We acknowledge the significance in the plurality of the word "Peoples", encompassing over 500 language, social and nation groups that exist in this country. We recognise the importance of putting First Peoples first, both in language and in action

## Affected by systemic challenges

Being affected by systemic challenges describes the way that social and professional structures impact the young artists and communities that we work with. It describes the different impacts on people depending on intersections of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and ability. It recognises that structural inequality is systemic and historic, and upheld by institutions as well as individuals, consciously and unconsciously.

## People of Culture

Led by the young people who we work with, we have moved away from using the contested terms 'people of colour' and 'culturally and linguistically diverse'. We are seeking a new language, in collaboration with our peers across Australia, to develop a better way of speaking about contemporary Australia. We now choose to use the term 'people of culture' which is inclusive of First Peoples. This term was suggested by the young people in our rooms. People of Culture is an affirming way to identify that centres the diversity of the communities that we work with.

## Safer

We use the terms 'safer spaces' as opposed to 'safe spaces' to recognise the complexities within the intersectionality of the young artists we work with. We aim to create safe spaces, but no space is ever perfect. In the spirit of always becoming, we strive to be safer. We are always doing the work, and always holding each other accountable without being cancelled.

## WEYA

We are transitioning from being called Western Edge Youth Arts to WEYA. This name change is led by our young people, some of whom want to move away from the negative stereotyping of 'youth' due to rhetoric around youth gangs. We also acknowledge the needs of our artists as they grow up with the organisation and reach new levels of excellence and creative achievement with us. They view 'WEYA' as having greater scope for professional achievement, rather than being limited to the youth arts sector.



Image: SIGNAL

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

Support Artist





## Vision

**A thriving community of next generation  
artistic and cultural leaders borne from  
Melbourne's West.**

## Purpose

To meet young artists on their own terms to tell their stories in their own way and with their own voice.

To provide a safer space for young people to explore creativity, learn new artistic practices, gain on-the-job employment, and develop leadership skills.

To deliver long term investment in young people's trajectories towards sustainable professional careers and claiming their own creative agency.

To reflect the diversity of contemporary Australia as a visible counterpoint to mainstream representation.

In doing so, to shift the balance of power and transform the world into one that is truly inclusive.

## Values

**Creative bravery** – Approaching everything with a courageous spirit of art making, imagination and creativity.

**Innovation** – Nurturing innovative ideas and creative practices across the whole organisation, led by our young artists.

**Community** – Our artistic work is always led by and grown out of community.

**Access and equity** - Inviting participation from all voices and identities, embracing multiplicity, and taking an intersectional approach.

**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 safer environment for our staff, young artists, peers, partners and audiences.



# 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 artists have unbridled genius and an exciting ability to speak truth to power, shift paradigms, and recentre the conversation around what matters. Our practice is informed by the many different cultural backgrounds and knowledge systems of our community of young artists.

We prioritise safety, respect, and equity. We encourage all young artists from Melbourne's inner and outer metropolitan West to lean into their age, experience, and background to drive the creative process rather than limit it. The permission to bring our full selves is at the core of our organisational structure and our embodied, ensemble-based training.

In a colonial context, young artists come from a range of historically silenced communities, and often experience the ongoing erasure of cultural identity. We embrace a plurality of voices and encourage our young artists to nurture their personal space as embodied leaders. We provide a safer space where we are all comfortable in our own sense of self, knowing that the power rests in the collective.

Within this space, WEYA prioritises First Peoples knowledge, perspectives, protocols and employment across all levels of our artistic, management and governance teams. We recognise the vital role First Peoples play in the creative landscape and are committed to amplifying First Peoples voices, visions and leadership.

Our artistic staffing model reflects our commitment to supporting a thriving community of next generation artistic and cultural leaders by providing sustainable career pathways for young people in the West.

Our Support Artists are the beating heart of WEYA. They are an ensemble of artists, aged 18-30, who come 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 training in facilitation, business, leadership, and creative skills.

Lead Artists are professional artists in the creative industries with experience working with young people. They deliver creative projects and are the caretakers of our community of Support and young artists. They facilitate workshops and share their skills in a range of performance techniques and methodologies to build ensembles, direct performances and create communities of care.

Guest Artists are cultural and artistic experts working in the creative industries. They spark our young artists' imaginations to increase their sense of creative sovereignty and autonomy.

Our process is facilitated through multidisciplinary performance techniques and training, public outcomes for communities, and group reflection and evaluation, as well as deep listening, meal-sharing and expansive conversations.

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, spiritual, mental, psychological, and social changes, they embody the very nature of becoming.

WEYA embraces the expert that exists in all young artists. We acknowledge the value of the intersectional experience that they bring. We know that leadership is not fixed; it moves as the conversation evolves.

WEYA is here to celebrate young people from Melbourne's West as they become a thriving community of next generation artistic and cultural leaders.



Image: SIGNAL

***"I love that we all come together as a family – the connection was like nothing I've ever experienced in my life."***

Young artist



# Part A: About WEYA

## History

WEYA is a not-for-profit arts organisation that works with young artists from the inner and outer western suburbs of Naarm (Melbourne). WEYA was established in 2005 as Western Edge Youth Arts, a small arts organisation with one school-based program and one community-based program. These core programs have become the foundation of our company, and allowed us to nurture strong reciprocal relationships with young people and diverse communities

From these beginnings, WEYA has grown exponentially. Since 2005, WEYA has delivered over 150 programs, from annual in-school residencies and community youth theatre projects to major creative collaborations. These include the Beagle Bay project which saw WEYA artists working with First Peoples Elders to theatricalise their oral history, and the Flemington Theatre Group where young African artists based in the housing commission flats used Forum Theatre to address social justice issues in public and community spaces.

WEYA's practice is embedded in community. We focus on developing long-term relationships with partner organisations, artists and participants, and providing sustainable career pathways into the creative industries for artists in the West.

## Growth

In 2016, we outlined an ambitious Strategic Plan, and can proudly share some of our key outcomes from 2017-2020.

The three years prior to the pandemic were some of our most successful to date. We welcomed 28% more young artists to our programs and our audiences grew by 36%. 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 independently produced our first regional tour, stimulating creative conversations in remote communities across Victoria. We shared our practice in arts spaces throughout Victoria, including Arts Centre Melbourne, Melbourne Theatre Company, Malthouse Theatre, performing arts centres across regional Victoria and more.

We diversified and strengthened income streams, increasing financial reserves by an average of 10% per annum between 2017-2020. We increased philanthropic funding by 42% between 2019-2020.

Since 2020, we have adapted to the challenging COVID-19 landscape with outstanding outcomes. We prioritised creative innovation, sector advocacy, wellbeing, and our financial sustainability.

We kept our young artists connected and engaged during heightened times of isolation by pivoting eight programs online in 2020-2021. We kept our Lead and Support Artists employed during a time where unemployment rates in the arts sector and youth demographic were high. We expanded our staff contractors to include stage managers, producers, video editors and animators.

We extended our practice by collaborating with national and international arts and cross-sector organisations via Zoom, such as the International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People (ASSITEJ), Birmingham Repertory Theatre (UK), and Australian Theatre for Young People.

We expanded our reach in advocacy through reimagining the Arts West Alliance and by WEYA representing on a range of national and international panels and programs.

We created WEYA's first Diversity and Cultural Safety workshop template and delivered it across the arts and educational sectors in 2021.

We developed a new series of short programs to be delivered by WEYA Lead and Support Artists across the arts and education sectors.

We created a pilot Employee Assistance Program to providing free POC-inclusive therapy and wellbeing support for staff, Lead, Support and young artists across the company.

We secured Australia Council for the Arts Four Year Organisational Funding, allowing us to expand our core team and increase wages for all staff and artists. We increased our core team from 3.6 FTE to 4.6 FTE, adding specialist roles in Marketing, Development and Programs.

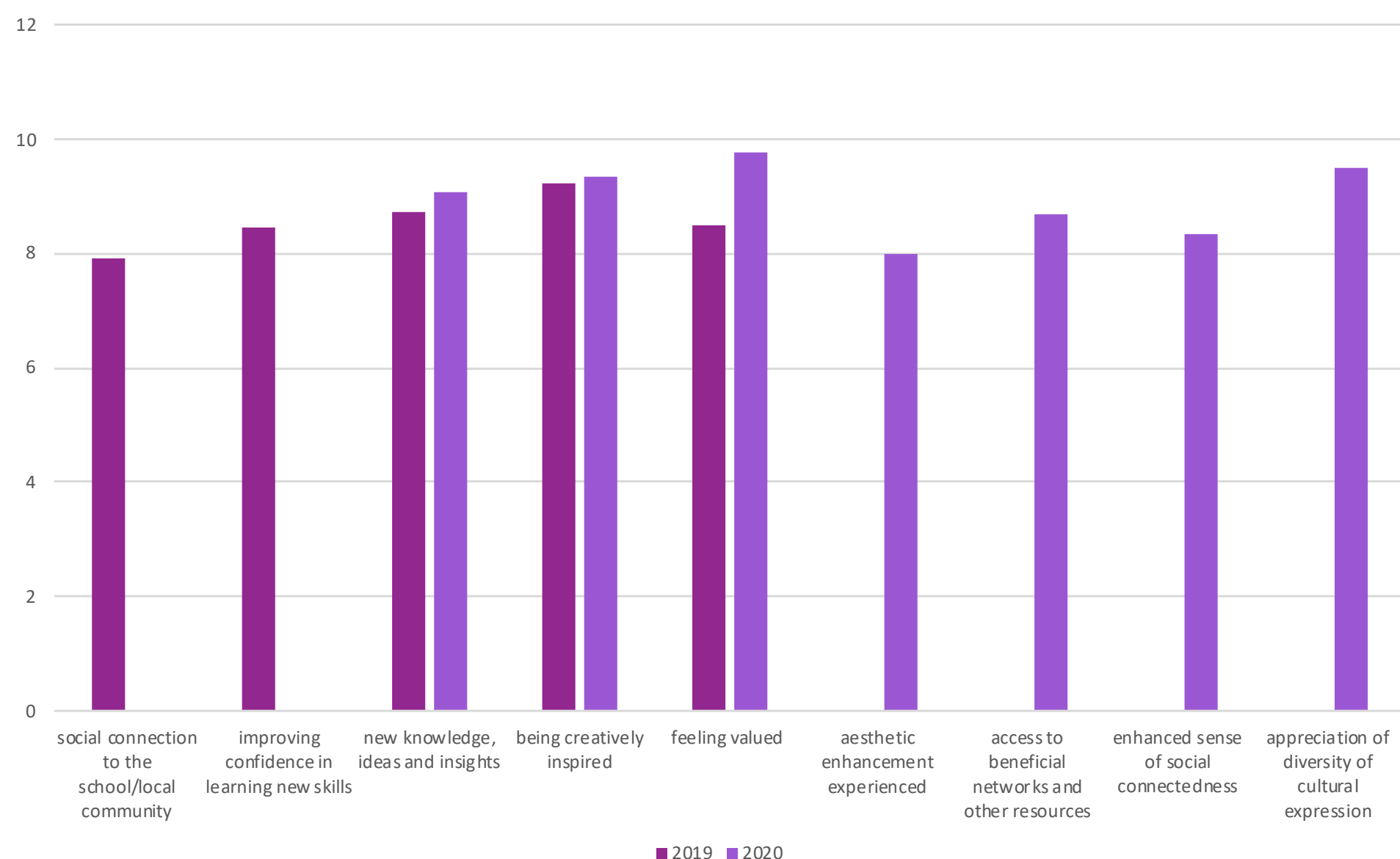


We secured multi-year funding from The Ian Potter Foundation to develop our auxiliary Professional Development Program into LEVEL UP, a new training program that has become the third pillar of our core programming.

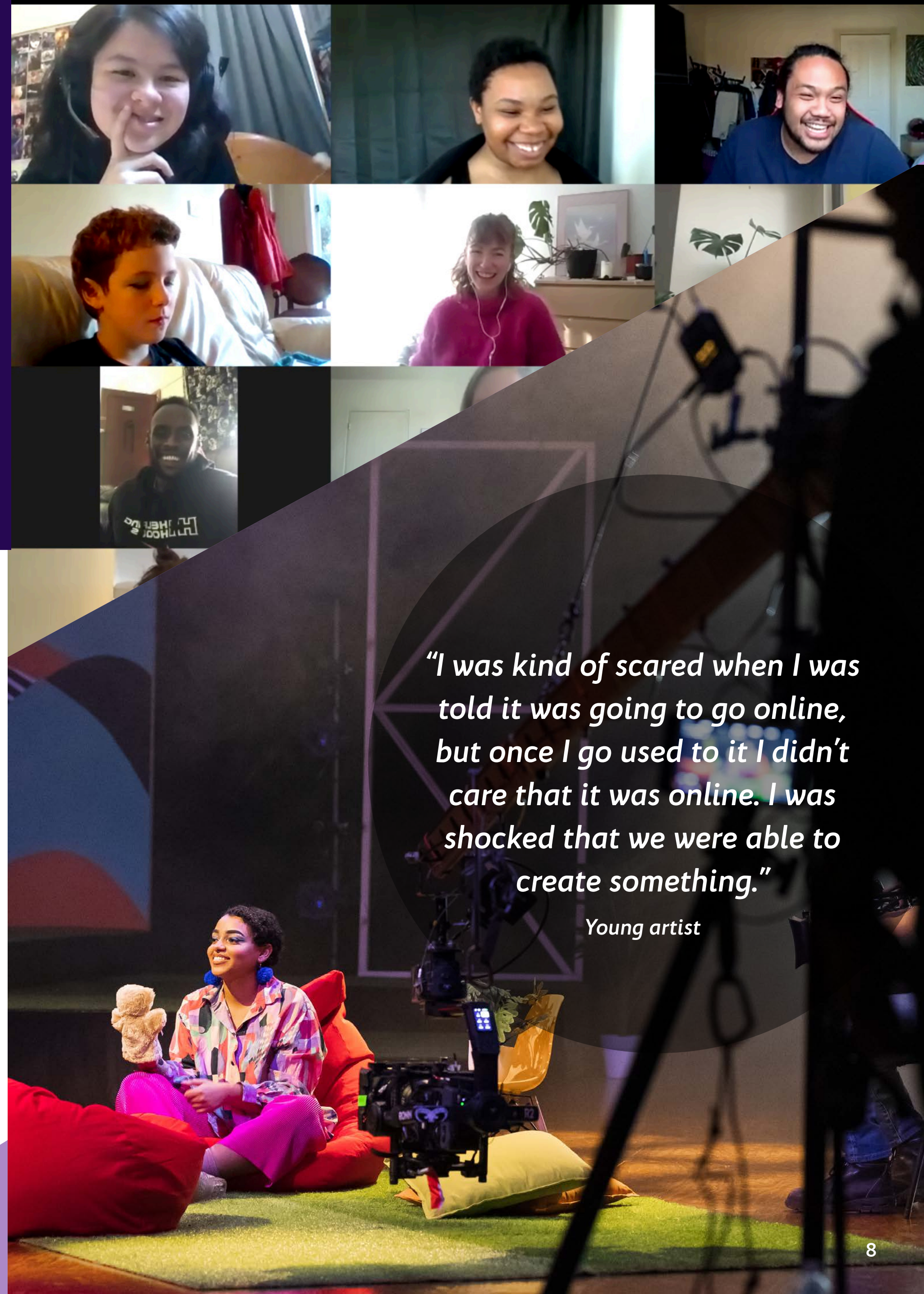
We secured funding for a creative development through Brimbank City Council and an upcoming presentation partnership through Neighbourhood Festival 2022 for an all-Pacific Islander re-imagining of our 2018 production of *Lele, Butterfly*.

We continued to carry out in-depth evaluation for all of our programs in partnership with the Cultural Development Network. We are proud to say that our evaluation demonstrates strong positive impacts for young artists in 2019 and also through the first year of the pandemic.

Participant Outcomes



From top to bottom:  
Screenshot: Out West St Albans on Zoom  
Image: Wani





# Who We Work With

## Young Artists

WEYA's young artists are aged between 13-30 years old and come from Melbourne's inner and outer West. From 2022 our new home base will be at the Substation in Newport, however our Artists run programs in local hubs, venues and schools all across Melbourne's West. We reach young artists on their home ground from Werribee to Keilor, Footscray to Glenroy, Manor Lakes to Melton. The majority of WEYA's young artists self-identify as POC, predominantly from Africa, Pacific Islands and Central Asia.

An increasing number of our young artists have intersectional lived experience as LGBTQIA+, neurodiverse and disabled people. Our programs and policies are specifically designed to create safer spaces for diversity in sexual orientation, gender identity, race, religion, and disability.



From top to bottom  
Image: Jorge de Araujo  
Image: Wani  
Image: Jorge de Araujo

## Demographic Snapshot

We welcome young people from across Melbourne's West but the primary LGAs that we work in are Brimbank, Maribyrnong and Wyndham.

	Wyndham	Maribyrnong	Brimbank
Religion	Western (Roman) Catholic 23.9% Hinduism 8.6% Islam 7.3%	Western (Roman) Catholic 20.1% Buddhism 8.3% Islam 4.3%	Western (Roman) Catholic 31% Buddhism 10.8% Islam 5.8%
Multilingual	41%	41.7%	58.3%
Highest level of education - year 12 or equivalent	58.2%	66.1%	52.3%
Population under 30	44.9%	40.8%	40.7%
Workforce and educational engagement (ages 15-25)	Partially engaged 11.2% Disengaged 10.8%	Partially engaged 11% Disengaged 7.1%	Partially engaged 10.8% Disengaged 10.3%

## Lived Experience of Young Artists

Our evaluation framework from the Cultural Development Network has enabled us to listen to the lived experience of the young people we work with and document it firsthand.

COVID-19 has been strongly affecting our young artists. They are experiencing a heightened sense of social isolation, poor mental health, increase in stress, anxiety, depression, sense of purposelessness, loss of employment and lack of motivation.

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.

They have a hunger to be in the room with professional artists and to use their time with WEYA to link into the creative industries. They are interested in connecting with other like-minded POC artists across the diasporas and within the continents of their ancestral lineages.



## Partners

Our extensive network of partners is integral to the success of our work. They provide financial and in-kind support and are often embedded in the communities we engage with. More importantly, they are responsive to the needs of our young artists. They open doors to training institutions, performance spaces, rehearsal rooms and artistic opportunities.

**Education partners:** Victorian State government schools servicing communities affected by systemic challenges. 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 dismantle the social and structural barriers that have prevented young artists from connecting with each other and the education system.

**Local government:** Brimbank, Maribyrnong and Wyndham City Councils, including Wyndham Cultural Centre, Phoenix Youth Hub, Bluestone Church Arts Space, Bowery Theatre and St Albans Community Centre. Together, we reactivate and reimagine spaces to meet the needs of young artists and provide platforms for them to share their stories with the community.

**Arts organisations:** Local, state, national and international arts organisations such as Footscray Community Arts Centre, Malthouse Theatre, ActNow Theatre, Birmingham Repertory Theatre (UK) and many more (see full list in Appendix 1). Together, we are creating new opportunities and referral pathways across organisations to ensure that young artists are connected into a robust and rich tapestry of artistic programs and networks.

**Funders:** Federal government (Australia Council for the Arts); state government (Creative Victoria, Department of Education and Training, Department of Premier and Cabinet, and Department of Health and Human Services); foundations (The Ian Potter Foundation, Sidney Myer Fund, Besen Family Foundation, Newsboys Foundation, Social Venture Partners, Kimberley Foundation and Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation). Together, we are re-investing wealth in community-focused arts to uplift and showcase a plurality of voices.

**Guest artists:** Multi-disciplinary professional artists who are innovators in their fields. Together, we are creating a lateralised approach to practice that centres reciprocity, lived experience and community knowledge, where both young artists and professional artists are learning from and sharing with each other.

**Other organisations:** Social Ventures Partners (SVP), is a registered charity that works pro bono with not for profits, investing time, professional skills and/or financial support to help them achieve their strategic goals. In 2021-2023 SVP will be working with WEYA's Executive Leadership team and Board to scaffold the future sustainability and viability of the organisation by providing resources for increasing their skills in management, risk management, governance and development strategy.

*"Establishing connections  
with industry professionals  
has been so great. It's  
enabled me to approach  
them when I need advice or  
guidance in a project."*

Support Artist

## Sector Positioning

WEYA is a leading voice within the dynamic local and national landscape of youth arts companies with a socially engaged practice. We are uniquely positioned to serve the communities and young artists of Melbourne's West and we set a benchmark for contemporary practice in this space.

Our unique strengths include a proven commitment to removing structural barriers to arts participation, community and industry leadership including geographic, economic, and cultural marginalisation. We have expertise in working with young people of culture with lived experience outside the dominant hegemonic norm. We have partnerships with Lead and Support Artists from diverse communities who are trained and deeply rooted in community practice, skilled in workshop facilitation, and embedded in culturally safe practice. We are committed to offering practical and tangible pathways to support young artists' journeys from initial exploration through to professional engagement.

WEYA embodies a youth-led and youth-centred approach which prioritises long-term connection with individuals and communities. We have expertise in community and individual resilience, relationality, care, and perseverance from different cultural vantage points. This is supported by our community and cultural development frameworks tools pedagogies and methodologies for working inter- and cross-culturally.

We also offer cultural competency and community psychology programs that unpack 'whiteness' and 'positionality' to interrogate structural inequalities and power imbalances as the means to move towards equity and ultimately into a space where equality is attainable for all.

Finally, our extensive collaborations and partnerships with peer organisations champion innovation, sustainability, and wellbeing for our sector.





# Artistic Program

Due to the challenges of the last two years, our three core programs have adapted and been reshaped into innovative artforms and outcomes that we never predicted. Looking ahead, we will continue to lean into our strengths of being highly responsive, dynamic and flexible creatives, while keeping the needs of the communities at the core of all our programming decisions.

In addition to our core programming, we will also offer a suite of fee-based programs and focus on the development of four new initiatives to strengthen our practice, community connection and financial position.

## Core Programs

WEYA currently delivers three core programs:

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

Together they represent accessible and safer entry points to arts practice for young people who are affected by systemic challenges, and practical pathways towards a professional future in the creative industries and community leadership.

### 1. In-School Residencies Program

Each year WEYA creates original, transformative experiences with Victorian state government schools. With an emphasis on social connection and safety, these 15-week residencies build educational engagement and learning outcomes. They often represent students' first experience of theatre-making, shaping their future artistic engagement. These residencies are designed to work with teachers and school staff to build an arts culture from the ground up, increasing student engagement with the school community and improving attendance figures.

### 2. Community Youth Theatre (CYT) Program

CYT is a free program open to young artists in Melbourne's West, based in Wyndham, Maribyrnong and Brimbank, and attracts young artists from surrounding suburbs across the inner and outer metropolitan. The program is delivered over 15 weeks through weekly two-hour workshops by our Lead and Support artists who identify as people of culture (POC). The programs culminate in a hybrid live and digital performance. This is an important community event that facilitates a reciprocal intergenerational and intercultural exchange as well as broadening WEYA's reach by welcoming new audiences.



Image: SIGNAL



Image: Sarah Walker



### 3. Professional Development Program (LEVEL UP)

WEYA's Professional Development Program, LEVEL UP, recognises the growing need and demand for diversity in Australia's performing arts industry, particularly in leadership. It offers a free interdisciplinary, decolonial, intergenerational, cross-cultural training pathway for young POC artists from Melbourne's West to develop their artistic agency, define their own practices, and carve sustainable pathways into artistic and leadership opportunities in the industry.

The program has three levels:

- **Employment:** WEYA employs emerging POC artists aged 18-30 as Support Artists across all In-School Residencies, CYT programs and short programs each year. In 2022-25, WEYA will offer 12-15 Support Artist positions every year.
- **Training:** Each year WEYA will offer free intensive workshops through our Up Next Masterclass Series for young artists aged 18-30. Workshops provide a comprehensive overview of the industry, delivered by the country's leading practitioners in a variety of creative, cultural and social practices.
- **Performing arts collectives:** This is a three-tiered training program designed for POC artists who have shown a commitment to a career in the creatives industries. In consultation with Lead and Support Artists, the Artistic Directors select a small ensemble from the WEYA community and mentor them over the course of the three-year program, which includes twice-weekly performance training and a residency with a leading arts organisation.

### Short Programs

In addition to our core programs, we will continue to develop and deliver a series of fee-for-service workshops in 2022, including curriculum-based workshops for schools, and culturally safe community engagement workshops for workplaces. These will target the education sector, arts sector, community and youth services sectors and government and corporate sectors and will provide an alternative revenue stream for WEYA.

*"I created a bond with the collective and I felt really honoured to know that there's a group of people who always have my back and vice versa."*

Young artist



Images: Brendan Ternus





## PART B:

# Our 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.

**Accessibility:** WEYA is committed to provide free, inclusive programs that are welcoming and culturally safer for all participants.

**Partners:** Strong network of partnerships with community and cultural service organisations in Melbourne's West, as well as major arts institutions state-wide, nationally, and internationally.

**Staff:** A growing number of dedicated staff who are highly skilled in working collaboratively with our various stakeholders.

**Governance:** We have a stable board that reflects our community and brings a range of skills and expertise to our organisation.

**Organisational structure:** Our newly approved organisational structure embodies our values as non-hierarchical and community focus.

**Evaluation:** A re-developed 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.

**On-going Professional Development:** WEYA ensures staff professional development across all levels of the organisation is a priority, to promote the long term sustainability of our staff and the organisation. We are currently partnering with pro bono organisation, Social Ventures Partners, who provide mentorship and upskilling to executive leadership and the board.

### Challenges

**Staff wellbeing:** WEYA staff and artists work within communities and with young artists who are experiencing trauma and affected by systemic challenges. This can impact staff members in complex ways. From 2022, we are investing in trauma-informed practice training for our staff and will implement findings from our 2021 Wellbeing Audit to establish an in-depth wellbeing plan specific to WEYA's needs to ensure best practice is upheld across the organisation.

**Income streams:** 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. We have hired the company's first ever Development Manager who will work closely with our Board to develop a new giving circle in 2021 and diversify our income streams.

**Gaps in accessibility:** WEYA has identified gaps within the company such as needing to develop a First Peoples Community Engagement Plan, an LGBTQIA+ Inclusion Plan and a Disability Inclusion Action Plan. It is our priority to build new partnerships with arts organisations who are experts in these areas and with the social services sector. We will also upskill our Board, core staff, Lead and Support Artist to engage in genuinely holistic safe practices within intersectional complexities. This will involve research, in-depth consultation, additional specialist staff, and the development of a shared language and methodology.

**Salaries and wages:** WEYA's wages are significantly below the national average for the youth arts sector.<sup>1</sup> This presents significant risks to staff retention and attraction of talent in the future.

*“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.”*

Young artist

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<sup>1</sup> Theatre Network Australia. (2017) Salary Survey Report 2017: Not for Profit Small to Medium Arts Organisations. Theatre Network Australia: Melbourne, VIC



# Our 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 and 150 languages represented. 52% of people speak a language other than English at home (the highest in the state)<sup>2</sup>. Despite this rapid growth, young people in Melbourne's West have limited opportunities to access the arts and WEYA fills this gap.

**Growing engagement with cultural safety in arts and education:** With a growing awareness of the impact of institutionalised white supremacy, 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. Other arts organisations, schools and community groups are now looking to invest in program development or staff training in culturally safe arts practice and youth engagement, which WEYA can provide as a leader in this space.

**Arts and wellbeing partnerships:** The devastating impact of COVID-19 has increased awareness for the need to support youth mental health. There is an opportunity to link our arts programs with intersectional and safer mental health professionals who have lived experience and a deep understanding of the specific needs of our young artists and the communities we work with.

**Alternative training:** There is a need for alternative professional pathways that circumnavigate traditional inner-city institutions which are currently inaccessible to emerging artists from geographically isolated and structurally disadvantaged areas, our LEVEL UP: Professional Development program addresses this need.

## Threats

**COVID-19:** The COVID-19 crisis has had a significant impact on our capacity to deliver programs and public outcomes. We have successfully pivoted our program delivery online, but the crisis may have a long-term impact on participant numbers and ticket revenue streams.

**Economic recession:** COVID-19 has prompted a significant economic downturn. Our philanthropic and government funding streams have been disrupted by this, though it has also presented additional opportunities such as the Creative Victoria Strategic Funding. Opportunities to generate ticketing income will be limited in 2022 and possibly beyond. In addition, increased economic strain on families may lead to a drop in our participant numbers. We are partnering with schools and community groups to advocate for financial support for young people to continue engaging in school and community programs during this time.

**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 funding.<sup>3</sup>

**Systemic challenges as a barrier to artistic engagement:** A person's safety, job opportunities, physical, and mental health is impacted by systemic challenges. The change needed to dismantle systemic challenges is slow moving.

**White supremacy:** Thanks to the recent Black Lives Matter movement, there is an increased awareness of institutionalised white supremacy that maintains oppressive structures and fuels racism, intolerance, hate, and fear. Racism and discrimination continue to be major issues for young people of culture nationally.<sup>4</sup> This is a consistent theme raised by young POC artists in WEYA's programs. Racial intolerance also presents a very real barrier to the professional pathways that WEYA is facilitating for young artists, illustrated by the fact that POC people represent 44% of Australia's population but only 16% of the leadership of Australia's performing arts sector<sup>5</sup>.

**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'<sup>6</sup>. The young people we work with are affected by systemic challenges and grapple with compounding factors such as racism, and financial stress. In July–August 2020 among young people aged 13-17 in Melbourne, 52% were worried about being isolated from friends and schoolmate and 50% were worried about their education being disrupted or held back as a result of the changes to schooling.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2017) Victoria - 2016 Census Quick Stats. Australian Bureau of Statistics: Canberra, ACT

<sup>3</sup> A New Approach think tank (2019). The Big Picture: Public Expenditure on Artistic, Cultural and Creative Activity in Australia. Australian Academy of the Humanities: Canberra, ACT.

<sup>4</sup> Wyn, J., Khan, R., Dadvand, B. (2018) Multicultural Youth Australia Census Status Report 2017/18. Youth Research Centre: Melbourne, VIC

<sup>5</sup> Diversity Arts Australia. (2019). Shifting the Balance Report: Cultural Diversity in Leadership within the Australian Arts, Screen and Creative Sectors. Diversity Arts Australia: Parramatta, NSW

<sup>6</sup> 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

<sup>7</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2021). Australia's youth: COVID-19 and the impact on young people. Sydney: NSW



## Part C:

# Future Focus

## Cultural Development Network Evaluation Framework

Reflection and evaluation have always been integral to WEYA's practice. In 2018-2019, we worked with the Cultural Development Network (CDN) to develop a new evaluation framework for the company. We undertook rigorous evaluation of all our programs, involving surveys, interviews and focus groups with current and former staff, young artists, Board members and partners. In 2020-2021, we have continued our commitment to evaluation through CDN's online Takso evaluation reporting program, which allows us to track our goals, provide evidence for theory of change, collate evaluation data from participants and document reflections. We will deepen our engagement with CDN from 2022-2025 to find accessible, creative and innovative ways to deliver evaluation with young artists and across the organisation. Creative evaluation tools include incorporating visual art, music, journaling, movement and poetry to our current evaluation modes.

Recent evaluation has shown that now more than ever, young artists in the west need safe spaces, positive role models, creative opportunities and consistent connection - particularly due to the challenges of COVID-19.

Our evaluation and assessment of current opportunities and challenges has crystallised our purpose. We have identified five new initiatives and working models that address key areas of need within the company and community.

## New Initiatives

### 1. Staffing Structure and Capacity

To harness the growing energy around the company over the next four years, we need to stabilise and strengthen our core operational staff to prevent burnout and ensure best practice is maintained across the company. Staff wellbeing and mental health is as important as our artistic output. Our courageous aim is to encourage all at WEYA be their best selves in and outside the company as we all grow together.

We have identified a number of key staffing challenges, including the need to:

- Increase the salaries of core staff to parity with industry levels to ensure staff retention and attraction of talent.
- Increase support for administrative and development functions to alleviate pressure on the co-Artistic Directors/CEOs.
- Continue to increase diversity within diversity in our organisation to ensure that the communities we work with are mirrored in our board, executive leadership, artistic and administrative teams.
- Support the health and wellbeing of our staff who work with young people effected by systemic oppression.

To address these challenges, we have developed the following strategies:

1. Increase salaries over the next four years by 2% per annum with funding from Australia Council.
2. Based on our company's 2021 wellbeing audit, we will create a best practice wellbeing policy specifically tailored to WEYA's needs. We will establish a wellbeing collective consisting of five diverse mental health professionals to offer WEYA artists and staff free and ongoing consultations and support.
3. Continue to deepen the organisation's impact by creating a Community Advisory Group with up to ten paid members who come together with the Artistic Directors three times a year to discuss important community needs and any challenges that arise working within a cross-cultural context.

### Organisational Re-structure

In September 2021, the WEYA Board approved a new organisational structure, with a further lateralised approach to the executive leadership team, consisting of two Artistic Directors each on 0.6EFT working with the Executive Director on 0.9EFT. The rationale behind splitting the positions is to offer the Artistic Directors flexibility to take up other opportunities and continue their impact and practice within the professional arts industry at a critical time when diverse voices are sought after and needed.

The new role of Executive Director will focus more specifically on the organisational business strategy, governance, and staff management to ensure that the appropriate attention required to carry out WEYA's bold vision is adhered to. With a view to the future of the organisation, the split of the three roles also ensures a diverse set of skills at the leadership level, by specifying two different types of organisational leaders who work synergistically together. With the new specialist roles of Development Manager and Marketing Manager and the ongoing roles of General Manager and Programs Manager, WEYA is poised to take up new opportunities and prepared to navigate through challenges.

### Staff Training and Professional Development

WEYA is committed to delivering a new annual training program for core staff, Lead and Support Artists that will improve skills, knowledge of best practice, and company cohesion. We have actively prioritised First Peoples organisations to facilitate this training where appropriate to ensure WEYA's community of artists and administrators are deeply listening and learning ways to unsettle and unlearn colonial harms from the expertise of First Peoples. The training will cover:

- Trauma-informed practice training facilitated by First Peoples organisation We Al-li.
- First Peoples cultural safety training.
- Lead and Support Artist skills and knowledge exchange workshops in the WEYA Way facilitated by the co-Artistic Directors.
- Embodied leadership core staff training facilitated by Groupworks Centre
- Accessibility and cultural safety skills exchange workshops between WEYA staff and Rawcus ensemble members.
- Youth mental health first aid training facilitated by Girraway Ganyi Consultancy.



## 2. In Conversation with Rawcus

This offering marks the beginning of a two-year company exchange in culture, knowledge, and capacity-building both for WEYA and Rawcus management teams and ensemble members. The purpose of this offering is to identify gaps in both WEYA and Rawcus' knowledge, expertise and skill set. We will work together to offer each other insights and solutions around accessibility and inclusive practise (Rawcus) and cross-cultural and decolonial practice (WEYA).

## 3. Cross-company Professional Production: *Lele, Butterfly*

*Lele, Butterfly* represents a new phase in WEYA's growth as a leading contemporary arts organisation. The production combines the talents and experiences of Lead, Support and young artists in one ensemble, with Lead Artists sharing the stage with young artists for the first time in WEYA's history. This is a crucial next step in WEYA's evolution into a ground-breaking contemporary community arts organisation.

*Lele, Butterfly* is a modern adaptation of Antigone, recontextualising the Greek tragedy through the voices and experiences of the Samoan-Australian diaspora. It tells the story of a family torn apart by pride, violence, and grief, and interrogates the identity crises rife within immigrant communities. *Lele, Butterfly* will serve as an example of WEYA's ability to create outstanding performances that are strongly grounded in community.

## 4. International Collaboration: Commonwealth Games


From 2022-2024, we will use the Commonwealth Games as a pilot to engage in an international collaboration with Birmingham Repertory Theatre in the UK across multiple levels of our respective organisations (artistic programs, training and executive leadership).

WEYA's focus on global partnerships is contextualised by radical shifts in the way we work as the company has moved into the digital space due to COVID-19. This pivot has opened up international opportunities to collaborate with valued aligned performing arts organisations who have a focus on working with young people from similar demographics to explore a range of priority questions creatively as global citizens.

We are using this collaboration to advocate for slower and deeper engagement with a meaningful legacy for young people and participating international companies.

## 5. Research Partnership: Victoria University

WEYA's unique approach to practice and methodology will be the focus of a research partnership with Victoria University (VU), under the supervision of Professor Christopher Sonn (Course Chair of Master of Applied Phycology and Research Leader for the Community Identity and Displaced Research Group). This process will engage a VU PhD student to document WEYA's artistic practice and capacity for transformational change. In 2024-2025, we will distribute this through a variety of publications and mediums to ensure WEYA's practice and learnings are accessible for all Victorians to read and learn from.



***“Being at WEYA has shown me that a space does exist that empowers POC voices and social issues. I have found a family within a space that felt exclusive for a long time. This has greatly motivated and inspired my creativity.”***

Young artist



# Planning and Evaluation Framework

## Goal 1. Young people feel safe and connected

WEYA is committed to:	Facilitating experiences where young artists 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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An evidenced-based co-design and outcome-focused program.</li><li>• Skilled and empathetic staff trained in cultural competency and racial literacy.</li><li>• Newly created WEYA Wellbeing Collective to deepen engagement and wellbeing practices.</li><li>• Specialist training and counselling resources for staff.</li><li>• Partnerships with Victorian State Government schools, social services, local councils, youth services, cultural organisations.</li><li>• Rigorous evaluation and reflective practice.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An integrated wellbeing approach and policy for the organisation, its programs and young artists.</li><li>• A community engagement strategy through the newly appointed Community Advisory Group to meet the needs of young people effected by systemic challenges.</li><li>• A skills exchange between WEYA young artists and Rawcus ensemble members to build trust and safer practices between the two companies to ensure WEYA is becoming increasingly accessible in its practice.</li><li>• A suite of in-syllabus short workshops for schools co-designed by WEYA Lead and Support Artists with teaching staff from Victorian state government schools.</li><li>• WEYA Studio, WEYA's new online multimedia studio for young artists to showcase their work, connect and collaborate. (See Marketing Strategy on page 21)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Open-access facilitated group workshops – In-School Residencies and CYT Program.</li><li>• Up to 4 public performances a year in school and community settings.</li><li>• WEYA and Rawcus In Conversation (2022/2023).</li><li>• A suite of in-syllabus short workshops for schools.</li><li>• WEYA Studio, WEYA's new online multimedia studio for young artists to showcase their work, connect and collaborate.</li></ul>	<p>Metric: 80% of respondents give responses of 7 or more (1-10 scale) to questions<sup>14</sup>designed to measure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Knowledge, ideas and insight generated.</li><li>• Sense of safety and security increased.</li><li>• Wellbeing improved.</li><li>• Social connectedness enhanced.</li><li>• Feel valued by community.</li></ul>



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



Lasting impact: Reduced discrimination toward young people impacted by systemic challenges.



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



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



# Marketing and Communications Strategy

## Goals

1. Provide a platform to amplify and promote the work and voices of young artists and their communities to local, national, and international audiences.
2. Elevate WEYA's profile as a leading practitioner in culturally safe, community-focused arts practice and training organisation for artists from Melbourne's West.
3. Reach and engage new young artists from Melbourne's West to participate in WEYA programs.
4. Advocate for arts and youth services policies and practice that are safe, accessible, welcoming, and culturally appropriate.
5. Grow WEYA's audience and community of supporters to aid the development of WEYA's fundraising activities.
6. Attract and convert clients for WEYA's fee-for-service programs.

## Target Audiences

### 1. Young artists

Our primary purpose is to support young artists as the next generation of arts and cultural leaders. Our young artists are people aged 13-30 who are living, studying, or working in Melbourne's West and/or have experienced structural disadvantage. We recognise this is a broad group of people with complex intersections of identity and privilege. Our communication with our artists respects that intersectionality.

### 2. Our community

Our communities are the broad network of people personally connected to our programs, such as families of participants, members of community organisations attended by our young artists such as churches, sporting clubs or youth groups, and staff at schools or councils.

### 3. Partners and funders

Arts organisations, community service organisations, corporate partners, government bodies and philanthropic organisations who support WEYA through in-kind support or funding.

### 4. Arts sector

Colleagues who work across artistic disciplines who have an interest in WEYA's artistic output or artistic practice. This includes:

- Individual artists who are interested in attending a public performance or working with WEYA in the future.
- Major arts organisations who would like to partner with WEYA on a future project or hire one of our young artists.
- Reviewers and arts journalists interested in covering WEYA's work, particularly POC whose coverage will be from a similar vantage point as our artists.

### 5. General public

Members of the public with an interest in the arts and/or community development sectors who do not have a direct connection with WEYA.

### 6. Fee-for-service clients

Corporate, community, educational and government entities interested in engaging fee-for-service arts and professional development short programs.



Image: Sarah Walker



# Strategy

## Brand Development and Website Update

As WEYA continues to evolve, we will be undertaking a brand development project to transition from Western Edge Youth Arts to WEYA. This development will include the launch of an updated website to support the elevation of the WEYA brand and profile.

## Content Marketing

We will focus on the development of a co-designed and artist-led content strategy to ideate, produce, and distribute content through WEYA's email database, social media channels and website. WEYA's new website will feature an updated multimedia page named WEYA Studio through which WEYA artists will be engaged and invited to contribute work. WEYA Studio will also be our key platform for promotional content and organisational news and play a key role in supporter acquisition.

## Social Media

Over the next four years, we will continue to focus on creating an engaged and thriving online space for our young artists and their communities. Our social media strategy will focus primarily on organic content with paid social media campaigns conducted in alignment with key fundraising activities and event promotion.

- **Instagram** - Continue to evolve our Instagram strategy to focus on artist and community engagement through high quality content and interactive Instagram Stories.
- **TikTok** - Create and nurture a WEYA TikTok channel featuring artist and organisational content.
- **Facebook** - Facebook will predominantly be used as a key distribution channel for WEYA Studio content and event promotion.
- **LinkedIn** – Use LinkedIn as a channel for promoting WEYA within the professional sector to raise our profile amongst potential corporate, philanthropy and educational key audiences.

## Cross-promotion and Community Partnerships

We will use a combination of print collateral and cross-promotional community partnerships to reach and engage our extended WEYA communities within Melbourne's West who have lower digital engagement.

## Media and Public Relations

We will initiate and nurture key media relationships with mainstream and local media outlets to reach new audiences and elevate WEYA's public profile.

## Offline Marketing

Our integrated marketing strategy will include offline promotion of key ticketed events to increase sales and attendance. Offline activities may include, but are not limited to, print advertising, street posters and guerrilla marketing.



***“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!”***

Audience member



# Financial Plan

WEYA is committed to meeting strategic financial planning objectives to

- Build staffing capacity.
- Establish and manage new and diverse income streams.
- Plan for risk and manage unforeseen financial events.
- Undertake ambitious creative projects.
- Have the capacity to support change in the future.

The 2022-2025 financial plan outlines our framework for ensuring a stable financial position at present and into the future.

## 2016-2020 Review

WEYA is a financially sustainable organisation that maintains a positive cash flow position. Since 2010, the organisation has had an annual average turnover of \$466,175. Under the new leadership of Co-Artistic Directors Tariro Mavondo and Penny Harpham, the organisation has seen an increase of 33% in turnover between the years 2019-2020, and a projected turnover increase of a further 15% for 2021.

This increase speaks to the success of WEYA's current financial strategy. The increase in staffing capacity over the previous two years has allowed WEYA to invest in diversifying income streams, establish fee-for-service models, and increase funding capacity from state, local and federal government funders, and philanthropic organisations. During the years 2017-2020, 11% of WEYA's income was earned through project delivery fees, 67% from local, state and federal grants and funding, and 27% through philanthropic trusts and foundations.

During 2017-2020, 74% of the company's annual expenditure went towards artists, creatives and arts workers' salaries and fees. 7% of expenditure was spent on project-related costs such as production; 3% on marketing and just 9% on admin and overheads. It is worth noting that in a non-COVID year, expenditure on marketing and production costs make up a larger portion of the organisation's expenditure.

## 2022-2025 Strategy

The 2022-2025 financial plan models turnover between \$1,000,000 - \$1,350,000 with a surplus of \$2,000-\$20,000 per year.

On average during 2022-2025, a projected 19% of WEYA's income will be earned through performance fees, project delivery fees, as well as donations and in-kind income. 46% of WEYA's income will come from federal, state and local grants and funding, including Australia Council for the Arts Four Year funding; and 32% from philanthropic trusts and foundations. This indicates a significant shift away from previous income composition, whereby the organisation relied on federal, state, and local grants and funding for over 60% of its income. This is a trend that we expect to continue beyond the next four years as the organisation moves to sustain itself through many different income streams. WEYA also recognises that we are at the start of establishing our donor base and fundraising strategy. We expect to see further adjustments to projected fundraising and donations as we develop this strategy further.

74% of WEYA's expenditure will be directed to artists, creatives and arts worker wages, salaries, and fees, creating more than 636 employment opportunities over the next four years.





	2022	2023	2024	2025
<b>INCOME</b>				
<b>Earned Income</b>				
Performance Income	500	1,000	500	2,000
Fees and Services	77,711	108,876	128,465	156,972
Sponsorship, Fundraising and Donations	100,000	100,000	115,000	130,000
In Kind Income	150,000	155,000	30,000	35,000
Earned Income	328,211	364,876	273,965	323,972
<b>Grant Income</b>				
Australia Council 4 Year Funding	240,000	240,000	240,000	280,000
Creative Victoria OIP	40,000			
Creative Victoria CEP	180,000	180,000	180,000	180,000
Other Federal Govt Grants	-	-	-	-
Other State Govt Grants	42,000	42,000	42,000	42,000
Other Local Govt Grants	105,000	105,000	65,000	65,000
Other Philanthropic Grants and Funding	285,000	395,000	445,000	465,000
Grant Income	892,000	962,000	972,000	1,032,000
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>1,220,211</b>	<b>1,326,876</b>	<b>1,245,965</b>	<b>1,355,972</b>

## EXPENDITURE

Salaries, Wages & Fees	784,273	877,424	884,551	1,010,496
Production Costs	156,780	168,019	186,599	177,893 **
Marketing & Promotion	49,500	51,000	56,000	57,500
Infrastructure Costs	73,160	73,160	73,160	65,160 *
In Kind Expenditure	150,000	155,000	30,000	35,000
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>1,213,713</b>	<b>1,324,603</b>	<b>1,230,310</b>	<b>1,346,049</b>
<i>Surplus/Deficit</i>	<i>6,498</i>	<i>2,273</i>	<i>15,655</i>	<i>9,923</i>

\* WEYA is currently seeking out a permanent home base office, supported by local government. In 2025, there is a projected decrease in infrastructure costs due to WEYA securing an office with rent provided in-kind.

\*\* Projected decrease in Production expenditure in 2025 is relative to in-kind support contributions.

As per the strategies outlined above, WEYA will move towards becoming a more financially self-sustaining arts organisation through diversifying income streams:

- **Fees** – Management and administrative fees have been applied to all WEYA projects, at a minimum of 10% of the overall project cost. This will ensure that as WEYA programming grows, so will organisational capacity to support it.
- **Fee-for-service model** - WEYA has also adopted a fee-for-service model to allow for delivery of WEYA programs in more lucrative markets such as the corporate sector. This will leverage our unique position as an organisation that engages in culturally safer practices with POC artists, arts workers, and young people.
- **Development income** – WEYA articulated in the 2018 Strategic Plan the need to develop a donor base and establish a fundraising model. The first step of this strategy required resourcing the organisation to hire a Development Manager. We have succeeded in filling this role in 2021, which will form the basis of our ability to enact the next steps of the development goals for the organisation.
- **Government funding** – WEYA will continue to seek out and leverage government funding opportunities across federal, state and local governments. We are seeking funding that recognises the organisation's size, capacity, and ambition.
- **Other philanthropic grants and funding** – WEYA has steadily been building funding capacity from philanthropic foundations and trusts. Between 2019-2020 WEYA was successful in increasing philanthropic funding by 42%. This growth speaks to both an increase in funding from reoccurring funders, as well as investment from new funders. This trend has continued into 2021 and we will continue to seek additional funding from philanthropic trusts and foundations into 2022 and beyond.
- **Sponsorship** – Securing sponsorship from corporate and private business is a new strategy for WEYA that further underpins our commitment to diversifying income streams.

## Reserves

Since 2010, WEYA has increased its reserves on average by 10% per annum. The company maintains a minimum reserve equivalent to five months of average operating costs. The calculation of average operating costs includes all regular and reoccurring predictable expenses such as salaries, wages, fees and related on-costs, rent, office, programs, and ongoing overheads.



# Management and Governance

WEYA has a diverse and committed board of management that meets every two months and participates in one strategic planning day per year. Board members also attend WEYA performances, assist at WEYA's Community Youth Theatre programs, and participate in industry meetings where necessary.

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

We are committed to ensuring a diverse board that is representative of the communities that WEYA engages with. WEYA is currently in the process of seeking a First Peoples representative on the Board to ensure First Peoples voices and perspectives are being prioritised across all levels of the organisation.

	Date	Experience	Role
Jock Jeffries	31/05/2016	Strategic planning, small business, finance & accounting	Chair
Irena Baric	10/04/2017	Community engagement	Deputy Chair
Mario Agostinoni	21/10/2020	Finance & accounting, governance	Treasurer
Piper Huynh	17/12/2019	Arts management, community engagement	Secretary
Vanessa O'Neill	16/04/2018	Education sector, youth engagement	
Tania Cañas	13/04/2019	Community engagement, community art practice	
Kiera Moloney	21/10/2020	Philanthropy, governance, strategic planning	
Sherry-Rose Watts	13/04/2019	Community engagement	
Vincent Shin	16/04/2018	Legal, disengaged youth	

## Role of the Board

The Board oversees:

- Review and approval of strategic plans
- Appointment and review of executive leadership
- Succession planning for Board and management
- Review and approval of budgets
- Review significant risk to business
- Ensuring compliance with relevant legislation
- Promoting WEYA's work within the arts sector and the broader community
- Engagement in donor and development strategy

The Board has three committees and working groups. These consist of:

- Finance committee
- Governance committee
- Fundraising committee

## Staff and Organisational Structure

As of 2022, WEYA will employ the equivalent of 5FTE core staff including an Executive Director (0.9FTE); two Co-Artistic Directors (1.2FTE), a General Manager (0.9FTE), Programs Manager (0.8FTE), Development Manager (0.6FTE) and Marketing Manager (0.6FTE). In 2021, casually employed program staff included 6 Lead Artists, 16 Support Artists and approximately 20 Guest Artists and other contracted creatives.

Tariro Mavondo, Artistic Director  
Penny Harpham, Executive Director  
Lucy Pitt, General Manager  
Christa Jonathan, Programs Manager  
Kim Suree Williamson, Development Manager  
Caitlin Stanway, Marketing Manager

WEYA has the below policies and documents in place to allow us to identify and mitigate risk; and to ensure we are adhering to current legislation. These documents are reviewed and updated annually with oversight and approval from the Board;

- Child Safety Policy
- COVID-Safety Policy
- Organisational Risk Matrix and Management Plan
- Governance Policy
- Finance Policy
- Workplace Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Complaints Handling Policy



# Succession Planning

## Board

The Board comprises of a maximum of 10 members for a four -year maximum term. The Board conducts an annual audit to identify skills gaps and recruit new members accordingly.

## Staff

To ensure succession planning within the organisation and diversify staff skill sets, WEYA is committed to:

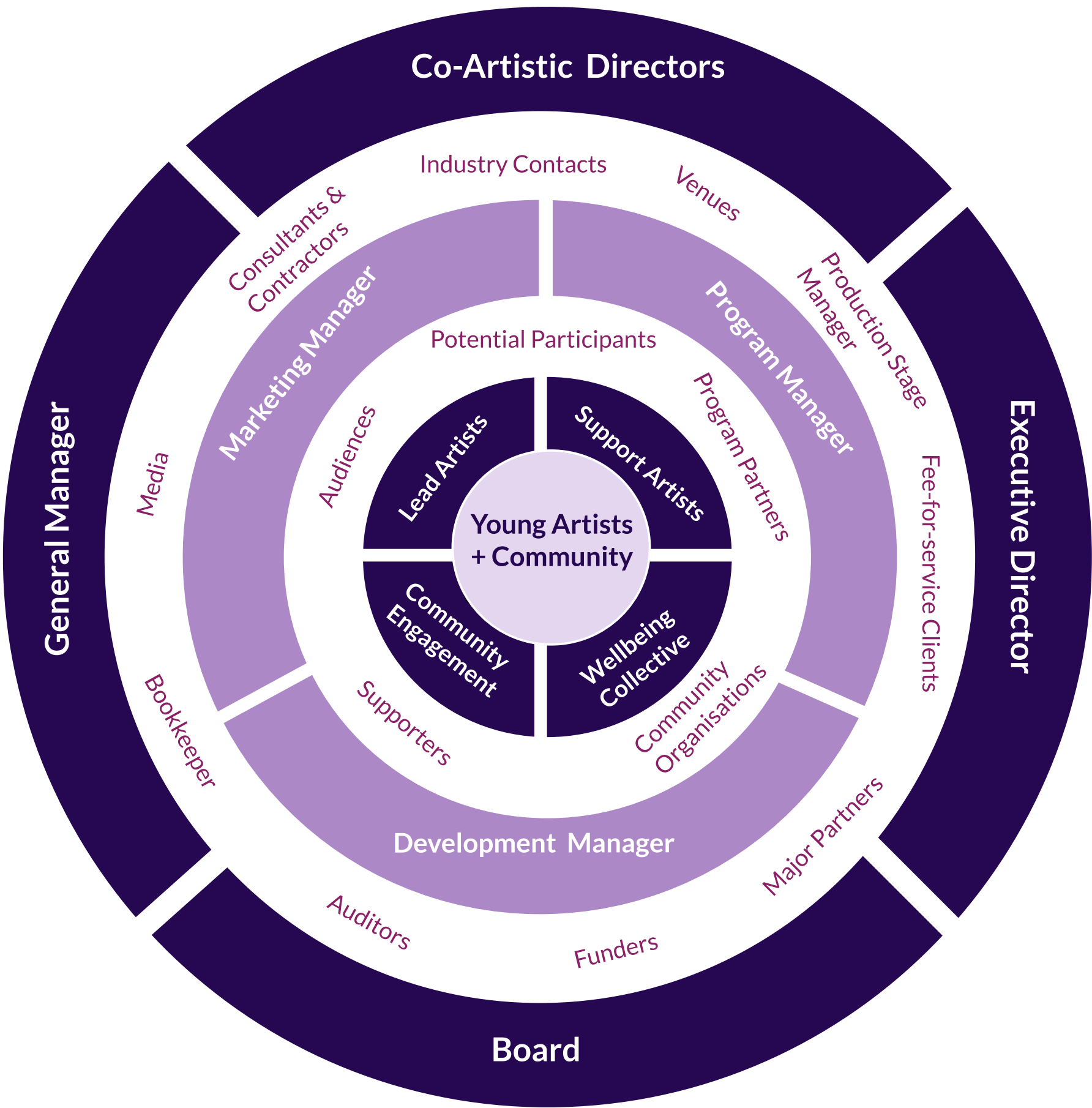
- Facilitating and resourcing professional development for all core team members and Lead and Support Artists.
- Undertaking annual performance reviews for all core staff.
- Articulating internal career progression pathways for core staff.



Image: Brendan Ternus

# Organisational Chart

WEYA's leadership team create the container in which our staff, extended team and ecosystem of stakeholders work to support and amplify the wellbeing and development of our artists and their communities.





# Appendix 1: WEYA's Partnership Growth

## Arts Organisations in the West

WEYA is a proud member of Arts West. Arts West is a unique alliance of arts organisations who together reflect the exciting, vibrant and ever-expanding arts and culture thriving in Melbourne's West. Arts West has an extensive local impact, providing cultural services to over 250,000 people annually. Arts West Alliance also represents over 90 independent artists who live or work in Melbourne's West.

WEYA benefits from venue partnerships with Footscray Community Arts Centre, The Substation, Bowery Theatre and Wyndham Cultural Centre which increases the company's capacity to deliver programs targeted at different audiences, as well producing major performance works for a broad audience. These relationships are mutually beneficial as WEYA can help facilitate engagement with young people (a key target group for most venues), while the venue's broad marketing reach can help raise community and industry awareness of WEYA's programs.



Image: Justyn Koh

*"I feel like I have a bigger community around me now."*

Young artist

## State and National Youth Arts and Youth Theatre Organisations

WEYA occupies a unique position in the youth arts ecosystem, locally and nationally. While other peer organisations such as Polyglot Theatre and St Martins Youth Arts focus on younger audiences, including babies and primary school aged children, our programs are targeted at secondary school students and young people aged 13-30. Our Professional Development Program in particular targets this older age range, providing sustainable career pathways for those interested in pursuing an artistic career, while also recognising that for young people affected by systemic challenges, career trajectories might take longer.

We acknowledge that we are part of a rich tapestry of youth organisations in the state such as Polyglot Theatre, St Martins Youth Arts, Arena Theatre Company and L2R, and nationally with Australian Theatre for Young People (ATYP), ActNow Theatre, Windmill Theatre Company, Outback Theatre for Young People, Barking Gecko, Corrugated Iron Youth Arts, Stompin, PYT Fairfield, Outloud, CuriousWorks, Urban Theatre Projects, Tantrum and Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre Youth.

## Industry Networks

WEYA is a part of the Australian ASSITEJ Advisory Group (International Association of Theatre and Young People) that brings people together so that they can share knowledge and practice within the field of theatre for children and young people in order to deepen understandings, develop practice, create new opportunities and strengthen the global sector.

WEYA is a proud member of Theatre Network Australia, the leading industry development organisation for the performing arts. A national organisation, with a dedicated Victorian program, who prioritise independent artists and small to medium companies.

WEYA is also engaged with the National Youth Theatre Network established by ATYP in 2020 to respond to funding challenges and the COVID-19 crisis.



# Appendix 2: Rationale

## Goal 1. Young people feel safe and connected

- Systemically challenged 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 who identify as First Peoples, from migrant and refugee backgrounds, LGBTQIA+ and/or disabled to participate in WEYA programs and build a strong sense of belonging.



Image: Sarah Walker

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

- Since creating WEYA's new Evaluation Framework with the Cultural Development Network (2018-2021), young artists have given 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, 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

- Since 2018, WEYA has run four series of the Up Next Masterclasses program across Melbourne's West. The Masterclasses were delivered by 50 multi-disciplinary professional artists, and approximately 80% of the 169 participating young artists identify as POC. An average response of 9.3 (out of a possible 10) on a detailed evaluation of the program provided understanding that young artists felt valued and gained significant new knowledge, ideas and insights due to their participation in this series.
- 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 equity for artists affected by systemic challenges, including the need to create a safer and inclusive environment if they are to enter and remain in the creative sector. WEYA's priority to reflect the young artists and the communities they come from across all levels – from board, to staff, to professional artists, to audiences – sets a benchmark in the industry. We do this by including facilitated mentorships that pair emerging young POC artists with established artists; supported and individually tailored pathways for POC artists; professional opportunities to link POC artists into major organisations throughout the creative industries; showcasing POC creative leaders, and encouraging and role modelling at the school and family level for creative careers.



# Appendix 3: Unpacking Defining Our Terms – People of Culture

In Australia Council for the Arts' recent report 'Towards Equity: A research overview of diversity in Australia's arts and culture sector', it states that "The term culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) is used in Australia as a measurement of diversity across many policy areas. However, there is no widely used standardised approach for defining CALD, or measuring and reporting on cultural diversity in a respectful, accurate and inclusive way. Many have identified that the term is no longer fit for purpose".

We have had many discussions on the topic with our young artists, who share a similar feeling about the term 'people of colour'. They do not want to be defined solely by the colour of their skin, particularly with the historical connotations of the term.

The term 'Black Indigenous Person of Colour' is also losing favour as it does not place First Peoples first, nor does it adequately address intersectionality and that there is diversity within diversity.

One term that our young artists have embraced is 'People of Culture', as it is inclusive, recognises First Peoples, is affirmative and values cultural diversity. Some young artists also endorse the term 'people of the global majority', because it is accurate and places them at the centre of the conversation.

Led by our young artists, WEYA has chosen to use the term People of Culture (POC) predominately throughout this document, used interchangeably with the terms diverse and multicultural.

When talking specifically about First Peoples we use the term First Peoples, however we intend for POC to be an inclusive term that acknowledges the intersection of identities and experiences of all People of Culture.

Most of the young people we work with have taken ownership of these terms, however not all, which demonstrates the importance of ongoing dialogue and conversation.

WEYA is committed to evolving the language as the conversation keeps shifting and new terms emerge from the communities that identify as People of Culture.

As we seek new language, in collaboration with our peers across Australia we are dedicated to developing a plurality of terms. This will help ensure that the young people we work with and the communities from the West feel heard, included, and empowered.



Image: Jorge de Araujo



Image: Brendan Ternus



**WESTERN  
EDGE  
YOUTH  
ARTS**

Ph +61 3 86584052

Info@westernedge.org.au

www.westernedge.org.au

Image: Pier Carthew