

## **Auckland Creative Access Network**

Auckland Creative Access Network (CAN) meets at least four times a year.

The aim of this profile is to encourage other regions in New Zealand to form an informal network where they can share resources and knowledge, discuss challenges and support each other's work.

### **Q 1: When and why was the Auckland CAN set up?**

**A:** We've been going for a long time. We were set up in the 1990s as an informal networking space and Arts Access Aotearoa provided some funding for a co-ordinator. For the first ten or more years we were called the Auckland Creative Spaces Network but we changed our name in 2010 to Auckland Creative Access Network (CAN) to better represent the nature of our work – we're more about access and the individual than actual spaces.

### **Q 2: How has the Auckland CAN developed over time?**

**A:** Our initial conversations were about survival – finding shared spaces and how to source funding for our organisations. We also updated each other on the work we had been doing. More recently, the network has been about work practice, sharing ideas and issues, and working to improve the overall profile of the sector.

For a long time, we felt we needed a paid co-ordinator and a website – and in an ideal world, that would be really valuable. We received funding for a co-ordinator for 2006 and 2007 from the Auckland City Council Community Group Assistance Fund. When that funding came to an end, the tasks were divided up and shared among the members. Toi Ora Live Art Trust maintains the mailing list and distributes network emails. The other members take turns writing the minutes and hosting the meetings.

Despite the lack of funding and administrative demands, CAN is in good heart. We are a committed group with a real sense of community and determination to raise our profile and work for the sector.

### **Q 3: What are the network's aims?**

**A:** We're an informal structure with a common purpose to support access to the arts for everyone.

### **Q 4: How many people attend the meetings?**

**A:** We usually get a dozen or so people, with a core group of six. There's a lot of diversity in the group, reflecting the various communities that are represented. There's also an increasing depth of conversation.

### **Q 5: What are some key achievements?**

**A:** It's fantastic that the network still exists and has matured. It's also great that Arts Access Aotearoa is aligned with what we're doing.

The Interwoven forum, held in September 2010, was a huge achievement for the network. CAN hosted the forum, which ran alongside a conference about arts for health in the community. This conference was co-hosted by the Australia New Zealand Art Therapy Association and the New Zealand Creative Therapies Association.

The forum discussed pathways to inclusion and what that means for creative spaces. It also provided a forum for ideas, discussion and networking. We also had an exhibition to showcase some of the work being done.

It was great to have a project to work on together. All of this raised the sector's profile, and provided a place to discuss our common values and the principles of CAN. It affirmed the value of the network, provided a focus for us to decide who we were and what our name was, and develop our logo. Our involvement in Interwoven strengthened our commitment to the network, and gave us inspiration and direction to continue.

In October this year, we worked with Arts Access Aotearoa to present a forum at the InterAct Disability Arts Festival in Auckland. The forum used the Pecha Kucha format, with creative spaces giving six-minute audio visual presentations about themselves, and their latest activities and achievements.

We've become a very supportive group of people where there's a lot of trust. We attend each other's events and know that when we ask for help or advice, we'll get a positive response from network members.

**Q 6: What are some of the challenges?**

**A:** A key challenge is dealing with the changing political environment and what it means for our organisations – and presenting a unified, collective voice so that we have some clout.

Another challenge is to find ongoing funding to keep CAN running smoothly – particularly administrative tasks such as maintaining the database and sending out reminders.

**Q 7: What are the benefits of a regional creative spaces network?**

**A:** It's the support that a network provides – talking face to face; sharing resources and information about funding and arts policies; discussing challenges; attending each other's events; and seeing each other's facilities as we rotate the meetings.

It's also about having some fun, getting away from your daily routine, and being energised by what you see and hear.

With all of these things, we have developed an ease in working together.

**Q 8: What are some key things to think about when you're setting up a regional network?**

**A:** Set up good systems to make the administration easy and then share out the administrative tasks. Other tips:

- Have a shared purpose and an agenda for each meeting.
- Take the necessary time to establish trust and ways of working together. In the end, your patience will pay off.
- Respect everyone's input because they all have something to offer.
- Having a guest speaker from time to time adds a new dimension.