

artwork

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C O M M U N I T Y A R T S N E T W O R K S A I N C



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CAN is a non-profit, membership based organisation that promotes cultural development by supporting community arts.

- CAN**
- works towards a society in which cultural diversity, artistic expression and human dignity are valued and supported
 - promotes and supports excellent processes and practices in community arts
 - advocates for community cultural development and community arts
 - supports artists, artworkers and communities in work which supports these aims.

COMMUNITY ARTS

Arts practice and creative expression are at the heart of a community's vitality. People have always come together to sing, tell stories, enact rituals, to celebrate, to mourn and to mark significant events in their lives. Besides being able to see great art, people need to actively participate in these activities. This is what is meant by the term community arts, it might be a new name but it is not a new idea.

LOCAL CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

It is through the things we do together as groups and communities that we gain a sense of collective identity, a sense of place and a sense of belonging. When we value these things a positive concern for our social well being follows and we begin to take charge of our present and shape the future to meet our aspirations.

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water like art matters

water works

a state-wide initiative

CATH CANTLON & ALEX REID

A complex and artistically ambitious undertaking linking communities throughout South Australia through their response to the state's scarcest resource is a unique community arts initiative. Cath Cantlon and Alex Reid examines the evolution of *waterworks*, South Australia's first state-wide regional arts project.

Have you ever deliberately hung out a whole clothes line full of washing, silently watched it dry and then been too scared to bring it down again in case you scared the rain away? Or washed the car as the clouds thicken overhead in the hope that a bit of reverse psychology might encourage the heavens to open?

I have, because where I live, water, or to be more accurate, the exact amount of it, dictates how easily life ticks along. I know it often seems that those in the country are never satisfied and somehow keep changing the rules - too much, too little, wrong time, wrong place, however the truth of the matter is that our livelihoods depend on it.

In every conceivable corner of South Australia water does matter, and to quote Hannie Rayson at the Regional Arts Australia¹ conference of October 1998, 'art matters' too so it was a dynamic conjunction that the two would come together to form South Australia's first state-wide regional arts project.



The water feature 'Circlework' in Soldiers' Memorial Park, Keith.
Photo: Jacqui Triggs

keith

A stone and steel public water feature that identifies the regions proximity to underground water (less than a metre) and highlights issues around the management of water resources and specifically salinity.

Artist:

James Darling is a Keith based artist. He has vast knowledge of the local water table and salinity issues as a former in the district. James has pursued writing and sculpture throughout his life and has exhibited in major art shows. He is a respected artist from regional South Australia.

Partners:

- SA Water
- The Keith War Memorial Community Committee
- Upper South East Dry Land Salinity Catchment Program
- Tatiara District Council
- Reidpat Pty Ltd
- Greenaway Art Gallery
- Keith Floral Art and Garden Club
- Rymill Wines
- Numerous individuals and businesses from the local community

In 1997 the South Australian Country Arts Trust² identified a need to extend the opportunities for regional communities to participate in significant and conceptually challenging community cultural development. The possibility of a developmental project that crossed regional boundaries began to be discussed. Through consultation with communities across the state facilitated by artist and community cultural development practitioner, Cath Cantlon, *waterworks* broke.

waterworks is a complex initiative with a number of different methods operating simultaneously. I will describe the project and its component parts and attempt to draw some initial conclusions about outcomes and future opportunities. A more detailed analysis and documentation of the project, researched and written by Catherine Murphy will be launched at the inaugural South Australian Regional Arts Conference in Port Augusta on October 16, 1999. Copies of the publication will be available from the South Australian Country Arts Trust following the launch.

Significant projects rarely begin simply and more often than not are the culmination of a range of opinions, ideas and opportunities. *waterworks* is no exception and it is worth briefly exploring the project's genesis.

Creating spaces to invoke responses

Before *waterworks* took shape a number of concepts for a cross border project were discussed. All of the ideas sought to create a space and a structure for the development of challenging community based art in regional South Australia. Community cultural development practice was always the preferred tool.

Dee Martin recently commented on community cultural development as a practice. She said, 'It involves working with communities to create spaces (a shift or suspension of the ordinary which allows something else to happen) using skills and forms which invoke responses. The responses might be that something in the community changes,

or that something which might have changed, remains the same, or that something within the community is negotiated, perhaps mourned, perhaps celebrated.'³

The state-wide initiative sought out such a space and 'water' was identified early on as a starting point for future debate and discussion. It was imposed to begin a dialogue about what form *waterworks* might take. As the Trust's own Progress Report of February 1999 states, 'Water affects many aspects of the lives of the country South Australians from its practical use and

Water affects many aspects of the lives of the country South Australians from its practical use and need to sustain existence and grow food, to symbolic and spiritual meaning, in language as well as elementally and aesthetically.

need to sustain existence and grow food, to symbolic and spiritual meaning, in language as well as elementally and aesthetically. All of these aspects of our human relationship to water profoundly affect our constantly developing community culture in a somewhat invisible and sometimes intangible way. The water theme has provided a common focus across regions through either variances in climate, farming practices, relationships to the environment, history and/or experience...'⁴

As I look back I'm reminded that *waterworks* could have been a performance or a film or a series of workshops that culminated in a

publication. The form that the project ultimately took was arrived at following Cath's discussion with over a hundred communities and individuals. In addition to this the structure was informed by the objectives outlined by the South Australian Country Arts Trust as the initiating partner. These were:

- the state-wide theme and project processes should provide a medium for significant advancement of arts practice in the community through community cultural development principles;
- the project should develop new working relationships, social and financial commitments to the arts by industry, government and communities; and
- the project should demonstrate the value of artists and the arts generally to regional development and cultural tourism.

The structure that finally surfaced saw communities selected to work with the Trust to produce permanent or impermanent public art on the theme of water. Following the initial consultation the project was advertised in all regional media and those who responded received a project brief and were invited to submit an expression of interest. From the outset *waterworks* was identified as developmental, thereby creating an opportunity for concepts to evolve with input from the coordinator Cath Cantlon. From the 25 expressions of interest that were received seven were selected for development with five finally moving to completion.

Selection process

The projects were selected on the basis of identified community support, artistic innovation, conceptual exploration of the water theme, geographic spread, diversity of water usage and the opportunity for the development of new partnerships. Not all selected projects contained these ingredients in equal measure. The projects that reached completion were diverse in their proposed artistic outcomes, responded to their specific

environments with energy and passion and used a range of developmental methods all within a framework of community cultural development. The projects provided an opportunity to create the kind of space in their communities where those shifts referred to earlier might occur.

A variety of methods of practice were employed and ranged from the purely artist-driven, where the artist came from outside the community - the Gawler Ranges and Maree - to the Penneshaw site, which has been entirely managed by a community committee who have a responsibility for the site and direct interest in its development. Some regions such as the Riverland, employed a range of methods given the diversity of their approach and the community that participated in it. Some of the projects included practical skills development while others worked with participants through interviews and public forums and personal contact. In some instances such as Maree, the community worked alongside the artist to build the art while other communities were involved in design development and research but not physical creation.

The choice of artist was also varied and the way in which these decisions were made were negotiated with communities and formed part of their initial expression of interest. The two artist-driven projects, Gawler Ranges and Marree, were submitted by artists who had a very personal relationship to the communities in which they hoped to work. They had lived in the region and retained a strong connection to the communities of the area. Other projects were presented with no specific artist and the coordinator worked with the committee to secure the appropriate person. Keith chose a local artist after a process of advertisement and interview while others opted for city based artists with local trainees. The choice of artist was but one of the many negotiations that took place within such a diversity of methods.

While the projects were independent of each other, they are bound together in their responses to the theme and linked through the development of



A temporary work at Middle Tank near Kimba, found objects. Photo: Lisa Philip-Harbutt

gawler ranges

A series of temporary installations at Dew Tanks along a route running from Iron Knob, north of Streaky Bay, through the Gawler Ranges and on to Kingoonya. The tanks are one of the earliest examples of the constructed collection of water and as such invite questions about the Government of the days need to be expansive and in control of the arid north.

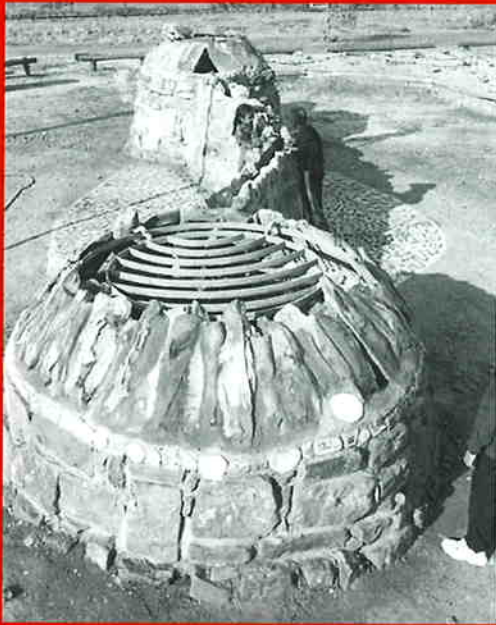
Artists:

Jo Crawford is a ceramic artist with a reputation for innovation and excellence. She has also worked on several major public art commissions in Adelaide and regional South Australia.

Lisa Philip-Harbutt was raised in the Gawler Ranges and surrounding districts. She is now based in Adelaide. She is highly regarded for her work in community theatre and as a photographer.

Partners:

- SA Water
- Eyre Tourism
- Le Hunte District Council
- Kimba and Gawler Ranges Historical Society
- Gawler Ranges Wilderness Safaris



Solar powered sculptural irrigation piece in the centre of the desert town, Marree. Photo: Catherine Murphy

marree

A ceramic and stone reticulated solar powered sculptural irrigation work that supports a landscaped garden in the centre of the Marree township. The artwork explores the Indigenous and non Indigenous relationship to the Great Artesian Basin.

Artists:

Malcolm McKinnon has a history of working innovatively with communities as well as creating his own work. In particular, he has established a working relationship with the Arabunna people and has an intimate knowledge of local issues.

Cameron Robbins is well known for his incorporation of high tech machinery in his work, and creating high tech tools for art making.

Partners:

- SA Water
- Western Mining Corporation
- Marree Aboriginal School
- Arabunna Mound Springs Protection Group
- Marree Progress Association

partnerships and communication strategies across the entire state. The artists' collaboration with one project coordinator strengthened their connections and cross-referenced the individual sites. While each component part stands alone, they are stronger when seen together as a collective response to the theme of water.

Such a plethora of approaches to the one theme invites a debate about the language we use to describe our practice. As the project progressed the notion of fixed, immovable models was replaced by the term methods to signal a flexibility, an approach thick with negotiations and the possibility, indeed the encouragement of change.

How does one begin to critically analyse such an extraordinary collection of artworks and processes and methods? The answer, I believe, is to be clear about what is not to be evaluated and then have a go at the rest with a spirit of generosity and an honesty about how partial any evaluation overview is likely to be. I am certainly not going to attempt to review the artworks themselves. I would however like to return to the space that Dee Martin talked of and discuss the outcomes in relationship to things negotiated, celebrated and mourned.

Things negotiated

Negotiation is a political act and implies a movement from one position to another. Simple negotiations are surely part of all good practice and certainly they were in evidence throughout *waterworks*. Cath's experience and skill along with the commitment of the artists ensured that this would be the case. The more interesting shifts however occurred at a community and organisational level. Communities such as the 'Friends of the Rock' in Penneshaw who lobbied local government for a complete site plan for Frenchman's Rock and ended up with a commissioned heritage landscape survey or the complex dialogue that occurred in Maree over access to the site and ownership over the cultural knowledge of the region. *waterworks* created a space where these debates could be aired and this is surely its greatest success.

Over 94 partners provided support to *waterworks*. These ranged from individuals and families through to government departments and large corporations. The support included cash, a bed for the night, a car for a long drive or the expertise of a government department to highlight just a few areas. SA Water, as major sponsor, contributed many things; cash, sites, expertise, information, labour, materials, factual and historical data. An analysis of the financial support for *waterworks* suggests an enormous commitment from diverse partners such as SA Water, the South Australian Country Arts Trust, the Australia Council and local government. The project achieved a total cash commitment of \$222,230 from its partners in addition to the Trust's own contribution of \$130,000. The in-kind figure amounted to well in excess of \$100,000.

A communication strategy throughout the state and the development of a forum to discuss and debate community, culture and art is one outcome which deserves special mention.

While dollars do not necessarily translate into successful community cultural development outcomes it needs to be acknowledged that a substantial shift in position is taking place in relation to regional cultural development. Through an initiative such as *waterworks* industry and Local Government are negotiating a position within cultural development that can have benefits for all partners. Negotiations with corporate partners require significant tact and a clear understanding of the opportunities available to all. *waterworks* was able,

over time, to clearly articulate those opportunities and therefore capitalise on potential partnerships as they arose.

As the initiating partner, the South Australian Country Arts Trust took an enormous risk in proposing such a state-wide initiative and should be justifiably proud of its many significant outcomes. From an organisational perspective negotiations about who we are, who we serve and what we do, continue to evolve, but it must be acknowledged that *waterworks* has shifted the Trust's position in relationship to community cultural development and has asked as many questions as it has answered. It would be fair to say that the Trust is in a new position in regard to its understanding of community cultural development practice and indeed the breadth of communities it serves following *waterworks*.

Things mourned

The things that were mourned during the course of *waterworks* were many and varied. Lost opportunities, some difficult working relationships and two projects that didn't reach completion are a reasonable beginning! The projects themselves identified much to mourn over environmentally and politically, and in connection to specific community relationships.

Each highlighted to a greater or lesser degree the environmental consequences of white settlement in Australia on one of our most fundamental resources. From salinity, to pollution to the outright destruction of millennial old landscapes, *waterworks* provided an opportunity to research, debate and agitate about such issues. Partnerships with organisations such as the River Murray Catchment Water Management Board, Heritage SA and the National Dryland Salinity Group were an important part of this process of education and understanding.

While seven projects were selected for further development only five reached completion. It is important to identify the reasons for this and the lessons to be learnt. Yalata Community Inc was selected for a mixed media installation

that explored the complex scientific and spiritual water system that connect the Nullabor and the Head of the Bight. Artists Bronwyn Platten and Alison Main were to work alongside Anangu artists to document the system and its cultural significance. Yalata withdrew from *waterworks* because of local community issues. The Clare Riesling Trail hoped to develop a series of installations with artist Marcus Possingham that identified the prevailing water usage and its connection to industry and tourism. Unfortunately the project failed to attract adequate support from local government or other financial partners and the project was reluctantly withdrawn by the Trust.

While the reasons for their demise are very different, there are similar lessons to be learnt. Initiatives such as *waterworks* are layered with expectations. Managing these expectations and at the same time spreading enthusiasm takes an enormous amount of negotiation and requires a skilled facilitator and a sympathetic organisation. Working with culturally different communities requires an open commitment and the courage to maintain a dialogue through often confusing and always complex negotiations. While I don't believe that these two projects could have been managed any differently, the experience reinforces the need for open discussions backed up with clear, succinct documentation of the processes to be undertaken. As always, the danger is in the detail, which is unpredictable in an organic development process.

The fact that only artists with track records attract Federal funding is due cause for mourning. Few artists living in a regional context qualify for Australia Council funding, particularly in the area of community cultural development. Out of a total of fifteen artists employed on *waterworks*, nine were regionally based artists. All of the projects employed local contractors and artisans in hands on jobs. None of the projects employing regional artists in a primary capacity attracted federal funds. While it is clear that organisations such as the South Australian Country Arts Trust have a role to play



One of five permanent ground work mosaics creating places of contemplation overlooking the Riverland.
Photo: Italo Vardaro

Five permanent ground mosaic sitting places in local stone and timber depicting life ancient forms in the Murray. A series of temporary art installations in silk and cardboard. A series of traditional Ngarrendgerri weaving workshops. A series of photographs based on the temporary silk works.

Artists:

Elena Galegos takes imaginative leaps in extending weaving as an artform and takes the communities she works with on a journey of discovery. She is adventurous and innovative with her medium and has succeeded in weaving materials such as optic fibres.

Jonathan Novick is a noted South Australian artist who works with communities as well as his own work. He is skilled in a variety of mediums, has completed several commissions and was also awarded the prestigious Whyalla Art Prize.

Partners:

- SA Water
- Heritage South Australia
- Sunraysia TAFE
- River Murray Water Catchment Management Board
- Winmarte Cultural Centre
- Big River Tourism

the riverland



The Frenchman's Rock site at Penneshaw, Kangaroo Island.
Photo: Cath Cantlon

A bronze and stone landscape incorporating four art pieces and reticulated water and drinking water which comments on the significance of water to this historic site.

Artists:

Peter Walker is an artist who has been based on Kangaroo Island for the last fifteen years. He works in glass and pastels and is also a skilled and creative landscape designer. Peter is currently president of the Penneshaw Arts Council.

Catherine Truman is a prominent and respected South Australian artist. She has won both national and international recognition for her work. Her most recent commission is the Art Gallery of South Australia's new courtyard gates and pathway.

Partners:

- SA Water
- Sealink
- Heritage South Australia
- Commonwealth Department of Environmental and Heritage
- Kangaroo Island Council

in supporting regional artists to achieve the required track record, the current approach warrants at least a few tears.

Things celebrated

It is probably no surprise that I see much to be celebrated. Some simple facts to begin with. The project involved a diversity of cultures including a range of Aboriginal groups, Lebanese, Italian, Anglo, Afghan, Greek, Chilean, Croatia, German, children, pastoralists, islanders, schools, service clubs and corporations. Many artforms, techniques and crafts were used, including bronze casting, sand casting for bronze, wax carving, stone work, engraving, ceramics, stone mosaic, stone cutting, metal work, timber work, fabric dyeing, sewing, basket weaving, painting, silk painting, drawing, solar energy, tiling, landscaping, photography, writing, plumbing, engineering and electrical work. Fifteen artists, including nine regional artists were employed for an average of three weeks. Conceptually challenging work was explored as a requirement of the project and this was readily accepted and developed. Ninety-four partners were attracted to the project and provided essential support, both cash and in kind. Significant local, state and national media exposure was achieved through print, TV and radio and a substantial grant from the Community Cultural Development Fund of the Australia Council will ensure the production of high quality, detailed documentation.

Less tangible outcomes include fabulous public art, the successes in regard to difficult partnerships, the creation of new partnerships with local government and industry and the distinctive, local celebrations of place which occurred throughout the entire project. A communication strategy throughout the state and the development of a forum to discuss and debate community, culture and art is one outcome which deserves special mention.

As I write this I am aware that for some communities *waterworks* has concluded while others are still

finalising signage and installation. Like all public art, the pieces will continue to evolve as they settle into their environments and become part of the regional landscape. Already the next South Australian state-wide regional initiative is being discussed and the lessons of *waterworks* will inform whatever develops. Other proposals from the initial expressions of interest in *waterworks* have been developed aside from the primary project and communities continue to demand the right to direct their own cultural development.

waterworks was a challenge, a risk and an enormous opportunity at the same time. It's gains and losses continue to be assessed, however at the very least it succeeded in creating that all-important space where exciting things happen. Keeping it open is our next challenge ■

Cath Cantlon is an Adelaide based artist and a well respected community cultural development practitioner and project designer. Cath has considerable experience in the arts through time spent with State Opera, State Theatre Company, Vitalstatistix, the Adelaide Festival Trust and the Australian Ballet. In 1993, Cath was awarded an Australia Council Fellowship in recognition of her community cultural development practice.

Alex Reid is Arts Development Manager for the Western Region of the South Australian Country Arts Trust and has an extensive background in regional arts and communities, having lived in Whyalla for the first eighteen years of her life.

FOOTNOTES

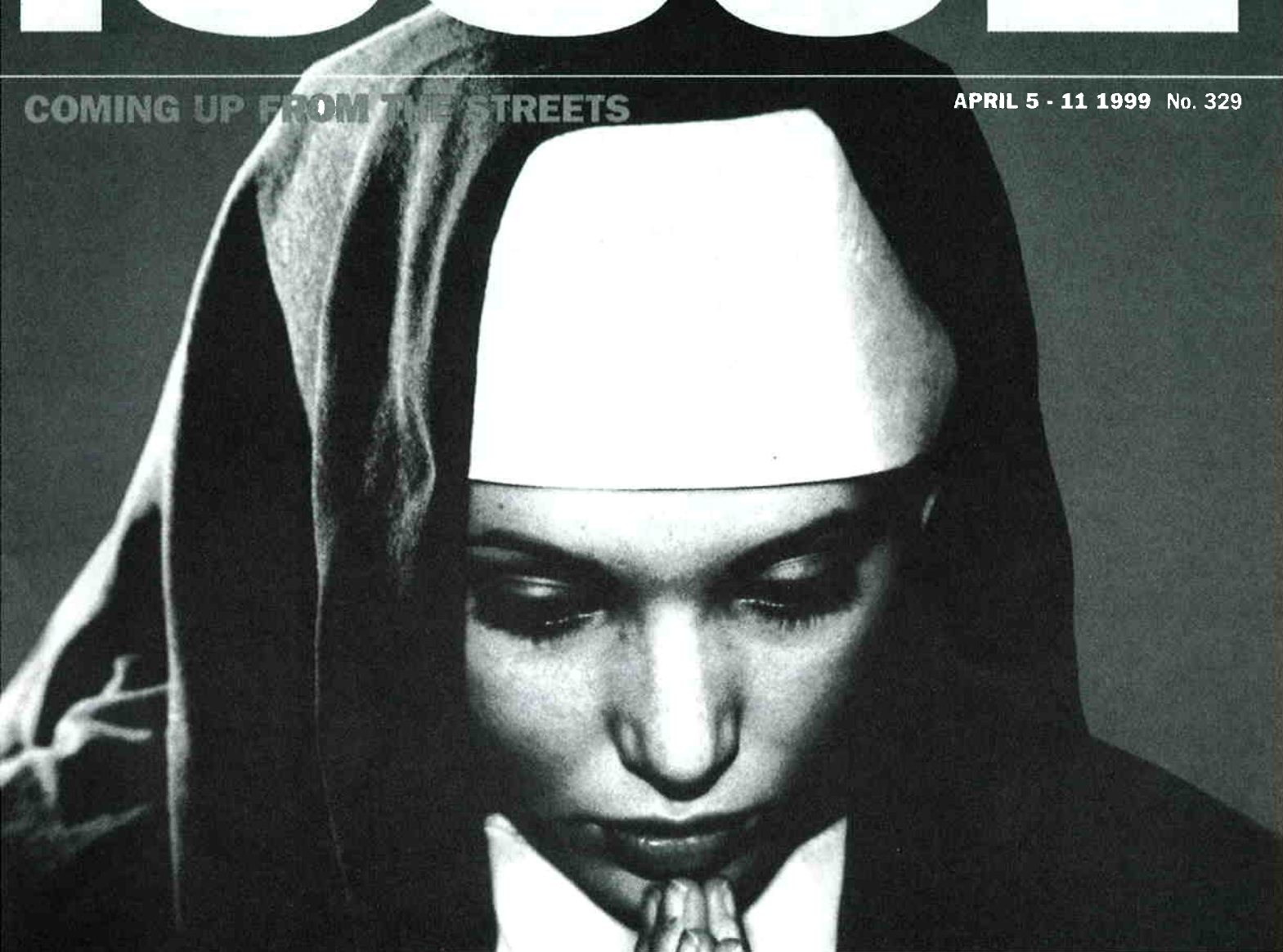
1. Hannie Rayson, 'Art Does Matter', keynote address, Regional Arts Australia Conference Mount Gambier October 15 and 16 1998. Reprinted in *Artwork Magazine*, Issue 42, March 1999.
2. The South Australian Country Arts Trust was established in 1993 and has wide ranging responsibilities for the development of the arts in country South Australia and is the principal provider of arts programs to country South Australians. The Trust operates four country divisions, Central, Western, South East and the Riverland/Mallee.
3. Dee Martin, Some Definitions, *Artwork Magazine* Issue 42 - March 1999.
4. *waterworks* progress report February 1999

THE BIG ISSUE

SOUTH WEST

COMING UP FROM THE STREETS

APRIL 5 - 11 1999 No. 329



PATRICIA WALTON

A publishing concept that has given a voice, dignity and cold hard cash to many of Britain's homeless - and now to Australia's - is a style of activism that has much impressed Patricia Walton in Bristol.



The Big Issue (TBI) is a street mag with attitude. It has been introducing big social issues to office workers, shoppers, the homed and the homeless in Britain for nine years and has grown from a few sheets of stapled A4 paper to a sophisticated 56 page magazine. For a street magazine to have a positive and growing effect on social development it must be special. I certainly thought it was when I first came across my local version, The Big Issue South West (TBISW).

When I first moved to Bristol, mid winter 1999, I was shocked by the numbers of people there were begging in the streets. I have since learnt that Bristol is no different from much of the rest of the country. Obviously poverty and homelessness is a real issue for pretty well most of post-Thatcher Britain. There has since been an increase in housing provision by local authorities and a shift in attitude by politicians about the desperate need for more housing. However there is more to being homeless than not having somewhere to live and this is the crux of the ethos underlying TBISW's approach and goals. So just what is this alternative magazine trying to do and how does it go about it?

Independence and self-esteem

TBISW is more than an interesting and informative weekly. The original concept (TBI) was to set up a not-for-profit organisation 'to produce a magazine that people wanted to read and sell it though an untapped workforce – the homeless' (*Lease of Life*, p4). Its editorial approach is the key to its sales success but what about the people it is meant to be working for and with – the homeless and vulnerably housed?

TBISW does not dole out charity. All profits are directed back into initiatives that address homelessness, with a commitment to the qualities of development and self-help. It provides the opportunity for financial independence for homeless people by offering the chance to set up as an independent street trader. At the South West regional distribution offices homeless people who want to become vendors receive an induction to the code

of practice for selling, and purchase their magazines at 45 pence a copy. The street price is £1, giving the vendor 55p from each sale.

Of course selling anything on the street is no piece of cake. Vendors all experience hostility and abuse at various times. There is a lot of prejudice among the general population about homelessness and drug taking, which is why many do not give money when asked by someone on the street. However vendors also meet generosity and support. The daily contact with the staff and volunteers at the distribution office is essential to the developing self esteem and sense of being in control of their lives for many people who have spent months, often years, on the street and without adequate accommodation.

Voicing concerns of the marginalised

Initial funding came in 1991 from The Body Shop, and co-founders Gordon Roddick and John Bird were convinced that the right approach was to mix social comment with lighter but relevant local news. The idea was effective, copies sold and the magazine grew. In 1993 the first edition, edited exclusively for the South West appeared on the streets of Bath. Present TBISW Editor, Jeff Mitchell, says the magazine 'aims to be an attractive product for homeless and ex-homeless people to sell, to generate revenue through advertising and sales, to influence public opinion and to set a social agenda that includes marginalised people's concerns.' (*Lease of Life*, p8). A tall order by anyone's standards, so do they get it right?

The magazine challenges preconceptions about homelessness, but it also informs and educates about environmental and other social issues. For example, this week's issue has a picture of The Chemical Brothers, the dance music duo. Inside there is an article on a radical new scheme which places people who are in psychological distress in strangers' homes rather than institutions, another on how bullying, racism, sexism and combat stress in the forces are driving hundreds of service men and women AWOL, and yet another on how TBI's asylum campaign united readers, celebrities and refugee experts to demand an end to the

inhumane food voucher system for asylum-seekers in Britain.

A recent photography competition held by TBISW for homeless people provided a pertinent statement on economic and social values: a photograph of a department store window with a bedroom interior complete with luxurious duvet folded back on the bed in a welcoming way. This is an image often seen in home decorating ads and store windows, only the caption reads 'Someone could be sleeping here'. Hence the reader sees the whole world of happy home making, interior decorating, style and design, and the assumptions that world carries, in a totally different light. Perhaps this is a point that need not be made to many of us - yet how many of us read *Artwork Magazine* at the kitchen table or curled up on the sofa?

The 'Missing' section has four new profiles of missing people each week, a moving reminder of the reality of life on the streets, and of equal importance in my mind is the 'Streetlights' section which offers writing by homeless people. Regional Distribution Manager Alex Porter told me that many of the homeless people he knows write, and in some of the other regional offices writing workshops or programs have been run successfully for some time. The key is finding the right person to lead the group. Street vendors are also invited to contribute to the 'Vendor View' section and all creative contributors are paid for their work.

Social commentary and challenging or thought-provoking journalism is mixed with sections such as the extensive weekly 'Flashpoint' which offers listings and reviews of music, clubs, film, books, theatre, art, television and multimedia. Profiles and interviews of performers, artists and activists often feature.

The Big Issue Foundation

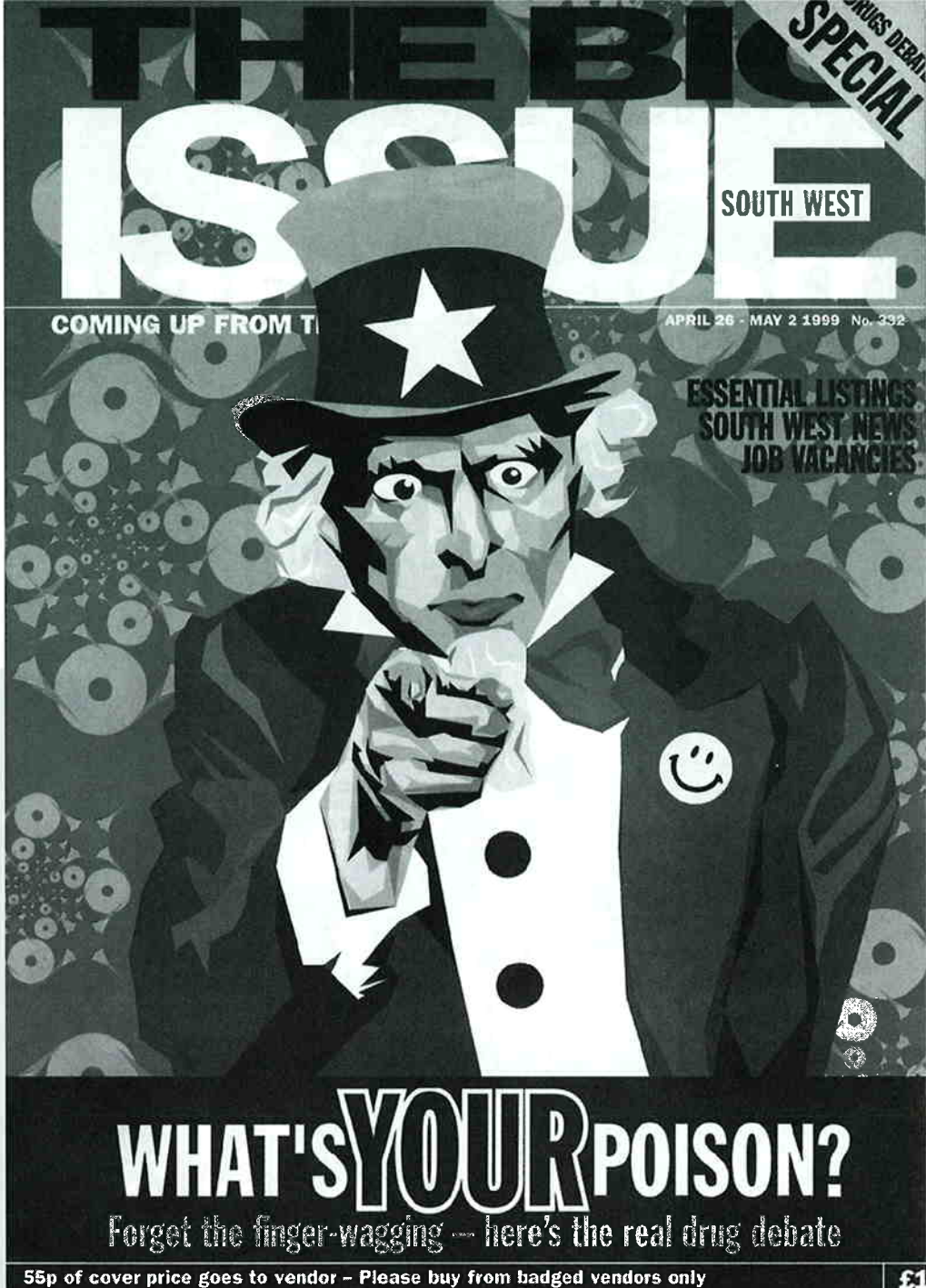
It goes without saying that homelessness is a complex issue and publishing a weekly magazine to bring the nature of the issue to people's consciousness goes towards social change to some extent. In 1995 The Big Issue Foundation was established to provide support services in areas that for one reason or another were

not being addressed adequately by existing services. The Foundation runs on funds raised through the usual promotional programs such as selling advertising space and £250 annual subscriptions to larger companies and organisations. Any profit from the regional magazines is channeled back into it. In the South West region the Foundation provides support for drug and alcohol problems, and legal and debt advice. A partnership has been established with the University of the West of England for a vendor training program involving short and long term planning and goal setting. This training focuses on the establishment of practical life and work skills and can go towards a vocational award.

A precarious and crucial balance

Each regional version of the magazine walks the fine line between being a business and a charity. It is a charity through its financial support for the Foundation. It is a business in the manner in which many of the managerial and editorial decisions are made. Not always a comfortable mix and although at first glance it may appear that compromises are inevitable it is worth remembering that its aim is to create a magazine that will sell in order to achieve its other goals. Many needy people's otherwise precarious incomes rely on the editorial team's decisions. And the income is only part of the beneficial outcomes of successful magazine sales. For the vendors there is self-esteem, sense of purpose and achievement and also the sense of security and well being that comes from having some routine and structure in each day, particularly when it involves regular contact with supportive and understanding colleagues. It is this vital mix of trust, emotional support and responsibility within a professional relationship based on respect that goes a long way towards helping homeless people break the cycle.

According to the Art Editor of TBISW, Tony Sigley, one of the biggest challenges each week in creating a magazine that sells is what is on the cover. To satisfy regulars and occasional buyers, and hopefully interest first-timers, the cover must be eye-catching, challenging, but not too confrontational - a tall order.



55p of cover price goes to vendor - Please buy from badged vendors only

£1

...an intelligent uncompromising publication. Its activist approach leaves no room for do-gooding and charity in conventional terms. Its existence and its ethos are both grounded in the creation of a structure within which the needs of the homeless are the parameters and the purpose.

THE BIG ISSUE

SOUTH WEST

COMING UP FROM THE STREETS

FEBRUARY 8 - 14 1999 No. 321

VALENTINE'S
TALES:
LOVE ON THE
STREETS

SOUTH WEST NEWS
JOB VACANCIES
FILM LISTINGS

LAURYN HILL

CAN POP CHANGE THE WORLD?
THIS WOMAN THINKS SO

55p of cover price goes to vendor - Please buy from badged vendors only

£1

The magazine challenges preconceptions about homelessness, but it also informs and educates about environmental and other social issues.

Street vendor Sy agrees, 'A good cover will bring good sales. Celebrities are best'. What is crucial is to discourage what Mitchell refers to as 'the pity purchase' which is counter to the whole developmental approach of the magazine and the Foundation. It is hoped that a vendor will be off the streets within 18 months of beginning to sell TBISW, although many still continue to sell for as long as they require the support and structure of the program. Merely having accommodation may not mean someone is no longer at risk.

Projects or programs?

Are we talking community arts here? Or even community cultural development - for those of us who have not as yet jettisoned the term as clumsy and incomprehensible? Not if we insist on using the traditional model of artist + community + creative energy = artistic product + community development, or social change. However, if we take this formula a step further and use a more sophisticated criteria - one that includes long term programs as opposed to short term projects - and if we applaud the vision of employing a creative medium that works at a number of different levels, then I think we see a more developed understanding of how effective we can be. Don't get me wrong. I'm not for a minute suggesting that an artist as part of a group of people can't be effective. And I'm not saying that there isn't value in the sheer exuberance and 'feel good' of a one off project such as the 'The Big Feast' described by Megan Evans in *Artwork Magazine* (Issue 39, July 1998). In both of these cases there is a common need to express creatively and the parameters of the expression lie in working together towards a common goal. But if we look at programs such as the Kimberly Aboriginal Medical Services Council's HEATworks (*Artwork Magazine*, Issue 36, October 1997) we find the real need for the program lies in adjusting the balance for the disenfranchised.

Communities with members who are locked into a cycle of exclusion from those things that make life comfortable and safe for the rest of us (effective health care, education, housing, employment) have a basic need that creativity can address. Not only in an immediate sense but also through providing a gateway to self-respect and achievement on each individual's own terms. For Sy, selling the magazine has provided the chance to make the changes to his life that *he* wanted. Some extra cash to help him get by, new friends (Alex helped him shift house on the day I met them), the stability needed to be able to live how he wants and, just as importantly, to plan and dream for his future.

Since its birth in 1991 in London, TBI has developed other sister organisations in Scotland, Manchester and Wales. More recently its influence has spread off shore and now Los Angeles, South Africa and Australia have their own versions. Each of them has its own peculiarly local flavor with content and news items reflecting the local scene. The Big Issue Australia also allows vendors to be unemployed which is their way of acknowledging the vulnerability of those newly off the streets, and as well as creative writing classes they run numeracy and literacy classes.

In the UK, South West circulation of TBISW has risen to 20,000 from the early days when all 200 copies sold on the streets of Bath. In addition TBISW is distributed from offices in Bournemouth, Exeter, Plymouth and Taunton. *The Big Issue Australia's* sales have grown to about 20,000 a fortnight across three states and it has assisted about 800 people in the three years since it established

(with funding and support from Body Shop Australia). Currently they have approximately 300 active vendors on their books. People do still sleep rough but if it were me out there on the street I'd rather it were now than 10 years ago before the birth of TBI and its offspring.

TBISW is an intelligent uncompromising publication. Its activist approach leaves no room for do-gooding and charity in conventional terms. Its existence and its ethos are both grounded in the creation of a structure within which the needs of the homeless are the parameters and the purpose. No one gets it right all the time and TBISW is no exception as Alex Porter and others on the staff pointed out. But when it does get it right it can make the world of difference as it did for Sy who now has a job, a better flat and plans for his future.

And for those who write about their lives on and off the street, there is now a vehicle for their words. They need no longer remain silent or ignored ■

Patricia Walton has worked as a volunteer, administrator, educator and editor in community based arts projects and organisations since the mid-eighties.

Thanks to Rich Cookson, Tony Sigley and particularly Alex Porter and Sy at TBISW. Also Polly Caldwell at The Big Issue Australia. All poems are reprinted with permission from the writers.

REFERENCES
Lease of Life: The Big Issue South West, 1998
The Big Issue South West, No. 340, June 21-27 1999

A selection of poems published in
The Big Issue South West,
 'Streetlights' section.

Beyond
 Wet grass
 On a spring day
 Butterflies
 Silent
 As moonlight

A rockpool
 With the icy taste
 Of mountain peaks
 A blue sky
 Bikini clouds

Drifting down
 Into the city
 Eyes opening
 To plumes of smoke
 And cursed rain.
 G CAMPBELL

Not all Bad News

Junior doctors working 65 hours a week
 Never mind, they don't need sleep
 we bombed the embassy by mistake
 seems the map was out of date.

Schools are failing in their role
 kids going straight from class to dole
 It's not all bad, good news is found
 The Blairs can now swim all year round
 Permanent heating for the outdoor pool
 And you are paying, who's the fool?
 SAM

Care Free
 The crowds screamed for them
 Yelling like it's their last breath

Bellowing like there's no tomorrow
 Yearning a glimpse of
 the sylph-like Gods

The exhilarating dreams
 of the free-spirited

So fragile and frail
 in this sober society.
 KATE



Techa Noble and Emma Price in *Sexing the Gap*, Photo: Ben Wilde, Photo courtesy PACT Youth Theatre

mardi gras

having the time of our lives

CELIA MOON

On the twenty-first anniversary of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Celia Moon takes time out from the party to examine exactly what this highly publicised and successful event has achieved artistically and politically and where it might be headed in the future.

February 1999 and the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras has come of age. The Festival program - boasting some 20 performing arts events, a music program, 21 exhibitions, a 10 day film festival, picnics, bushwalks, sports events, bushdances, parties, debates and play readings - opens with messages of support from major Federal and State political leaders from across the political spectrum, with the notable exception of our Prime Minister.

The Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras is the absolute epitome of cultural tourism success in Australia. Nationally and internationally,