

## **Q and A: Auckland Creative Spaces Network**

Auckland Creative Spaces Network (CSN) meets four times a year. Arts Access Aotearoa attended one of its meetings in early 2010, which was attended by 14 representatives from the region's creative spaces; researcher and writer Tanya Black, Attitude TV; and IHC advocate Marguerite Vanderkolk.

### **Q 1: When and why was the Auckland CSN 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.

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

A: The network gradually went into decline and then in 2005, it was revived by some new members. It's become more about sharing ideas and issues, and less about catching up with each other and what's happening.

At first, the rejuvenated network felt it needed a paid co-ordinator and a website. It 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.

### **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. We don't have a formal vision and objectives but that may be an outcome of the Interwoven conference in September.

### **Q 4: What's Interwoven all about?**

A: It's a conference about arts for health in the community, co-hosted by the Australia New Zealand Art Therapy Association and the New Zealand Creative Therapies Association. The Auckland CSN will host a forum alongside the conference, which will discuss pathways to inclusion and what that means for creative spaces. It's open to all creative spaces and practitioners in New Zealand and will be held in Auckland over the weekend of 25 and 26 September.

### **Q 5: What do you hope Interwoven will achieve?**

A: It will bring together practitioners from New Zealand and Australia, and provide a forum for ideas, discussion and networking. We're also having an exhibition and/or a performance to showcase some of the work being done. We hope all of this will raise the sector's profile, and provide a place to discuss our common values and the principles of the Auckland CSN.

**Q 6: How many people attend the meetings?**

A: We usually get a dozen or so people and we've been really pleased to welcome Emma Fletcher, the co-ordinator of Sandz Gallery in Hamilton. At our first meeting in 2010, we had 14 members and three apologies. It was the first time we'd had a guest speaker and Marguerite Vanderkolk, an IHC advocate, provided a fresh perspective on inclusion.

There's a lot of diversity in the group, reflecting the various communities they represent, and an increasing depth of conversation.

**Q 7: 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.

**Q 8: What are some of the challenges?**

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

**Q 9: 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.

**Q 10: 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.