Executive Summary

This report evaluates the Mix It Up program 2006-2010. Over the past three years the Australia Council for the Arts Community Partnerships program and the Victorian State Government through Arts Victoria have provided funding for Mix It Up to further build engagement with communities through the program. To support the Arts Centre and Multicultural Arts Victoria (MAV) in further understanding perceptions of the program, Deakin University has undertaken focus group research on community engagement with artists, arts audiences and staff members from the Arts Centre and Multicultural Arts Victoria. The findings from this project offer the Arts Centre and Multicultural Arts Victoria insight into the mechanics of community engagement through Mix It Up.

Specifically, the results in this report provide answers to the role of the Mix it Up Program in:

- building community access, connection and engagement
- building new pathways and skills development for artists from diverse cultural backgrounds to engage with the mainstream
- enabling the development of productive and innovative partnerships with leading community and cultural agencies, presenters and touring networks
- introducing multicultural audiences to contemporary interpretations of the performing arts performed by leading local, national and international artists

A total of 38 participants in six focus groups—two with Arts Centre and MAV staff and four with artists and arts audiences—were interviewed during April-May, 2011. The data were transcribed and themes identified. Interim findings are as follows:

1. Mix It Up has been successful in representing different cultures, opening the minds of mainstream audiences to multiculturalism
2. There are more culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities who feel that they have a stronger connection with the Arts Centre and MAV
3. Members of the communities are more represented in Arts Centre audiences
4. The Arts Centre is perceived as socially inclusive through its partnership with MAV.
5. CALD community artists perceive that they are given opportunities to perform at the Arts Centre through the Mix It Up Program, which they perceived as a privilege and a form of equality
6. Mix It Up provided opportunities for local CALD artists to develop their skills (e.g. artistic skills, business skills and career paths) as well as richer experiences to develop their profile in the mainstream arts industry. Performances in the Arts Centre have also opened up new opportunities to profile their work and to be engaged in the mainstream arts world
7. Mix It Up has fostered greater collaboration through local, national and international music
8. Mix It Up has helped in changing mainstream attitudes towards other cultures and or ethnic groups and created learning opportunities for stakeholders.
In addition, the quantitative data suggest that in the financial year 2010, the “Mix It Up Program achieved total attendances of 14,800, which exceeded the target for the year by nearly 25%” (Arts Centre Annual Report 2010/2011, page 10). Between the years 2007 and 2010, Mix It Up also won four major awards as a result of its innovation:

- Victorian Arts Portfolio Leadership Award for Leadership in Public Programs
- Victorian Government award for Excellence in Multicultural Affairs (Arts)
- City of Melbourne Award for 2007 to MIUP for Contribution to Community
- NSW Ethnic Affairs Commission Award

Understandably, participants were keen to see Mix It Up continue, although the need for a review was recommended. Participants suggested that greater emphasis be placed on marketing, skills and creative development through publicity and advertising. Participants also suggested that touring in regional Victoria was an option for Mix It Up development. Participants saw these two suggestions as a means to attract a wider range of culturally diverse audiences to innovative performances in a range of venues and locations. Participants found that the creative and artistic development obtained from working with the Arts Centre and MAV in partnership benefited their careers in ways that allowed them to develop as artists, by gaining more exposure to diverse audiences in new venues and obtaining performance opportunities that they would not otherwise have had. Such initiatives would provide a multi-pronged approach to developing the careers of the multicultural artists. However, they require additional funding for sustainability, as well as further resourcing of MAV so that its staff can continue liaison and community development work.
Table of Contents

1. Overview......................................................................................................................... 1
2. Defining Multiculturalism............................................................................................... 2
3. Research Methodology .................................................................................................... 4
4. Findings............................................................................................................................ 4

4.1. Importance of Multicultural Performances in the Arts Centre .................................... 8
    4.1.1. Arts Centre and MAV Partnership: Bringing People Together ......................... 8
    4.1.2. Representation of different Cultures ..................................................................... 10
    4.1.3. High credibility of cultural performances ............................................................. 11
    4.1.4. Providing Opportunity for non-mainstream artists ................................................. 12
    4.1.5. Collaboration of local, national and international performers ............................ 12
    4.1.6. Mentoring to Help Develop Social Equality ......................................................... 13
    4.1.7. Free Performances ............................................................................................... 13

4.2. Mix It Up Programs: changing attitudes and fostering participative learning ............ 14
    4.2.1. Opening up Minds of Mainstream Audiences to Multiculturalism ................... 14
    4.2.2. Changing Attitudes and Breaking Stereotypes ...................................................... 14
    4.2.3. Learning Curve for Creative Development ......................................................... 15
    4.2.4. When the Product is Quality .............................................................................. 16

5. Recommendations for building diverse community engagement: ................................ 17
    5.1. New Pathways, New Ways for Mix It Up ............................................................... 17
    5.2. Multicultural Marketing ......................................................................................... 19
    5.3. Interactive Engagement ......................................................................................... 20
    5.4. Building Audiences ............................................................................................... 21
    5.5. Building Indigenous Links ..................................................................................... 21
    5.6. Building Careers and Artistic Pathways ................................................................. 22

6. Conclusions and Recommendations ............................................................................ 23
7. Profiles............................................................................................................................. 24
‘Art cannot change the world, but it can contribute to changing the consciousness of men and women who would change the world.’

Herbert Marcuse, Philosopher (1898-1979)

1. Overview

Over the past three years the Australia Council for the Arts Community Partnerships program and the Victorian State Government through Arts Victoria have provided funding for Mix It Up at the Arts Centre to further engage diverse artists and audiences with the community. Without these two sources of funding, Mix It Up would not have occurred.

Mix It Up was undertaken in partnership between the Arts Centre, Victoria’s premier arts centre, and MAV, the peak body for multicultural arts in Victoria. The partnership provided the opportunity for the premier Arts Centre in Victoria to engage with local multicultural artists and communities, access to whom was provided by MAV’s knowledge and expertise in this unique sector. The skill sets provided by these two organisations laid the groundwork for the success of Mix It Up.

The purpose of this report is to evaluate the effectiveness of Mix It Up program 2006-2010 in engaging culturally diverse Victorian communities. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of Mix It Up, we undertook six focus group with artists and audience members, who included a range of people such as community members, consular staff, interested supporters of multiculturalism as well as Arts Centre and MAV staff. This report is based on the reflection of their views and perceptions.

This report is presented in six sections. We start by defining multiculturalism. Then we tell the story of an individual artist whose career was advanced by the Mix It Up program, whose story provides evidence of the strength of the arts as a vehicle for social inclusion. We have used this case as it captures the main themes that have emerged out of the research. It illustrates the value of a multi-pronged approach to developing artists’ careers (as individuals and or as groups) through the support provided by the Mix It Up program conducted in partnership with the Arts Centre and MAV. The partners used a stepped approach to career development, which resonated with the artists. It also highlights the importance of holding multicultural performances in the Arts Centre, as well as how the Mix It Up program helped to change attitudes and fostered participative learning, as well as incubating new talent through MAV support. These issues will be discussed throughout this report, along with the recommendations, all of which emerged from the focus groups conducted for this evaluation. In section two, we discuss the research methodology adopted for this research. Section 4 presents the findings. This is followed by recommendations and conclusions in sections 5 and 6 respectively.
2. Defining Multiculturalism

Australia has one of the most culturally diverse populations amongst the developed countries with 20.3 percent of its population being born overseas as opposed to 18.9 percent for Canada, under 13 percent for the USA and just over 12 percent for the UK (UNESCO 2009). Unlike other policy interventions and solutions to societal tension, which include use of force or imposing values on new arrivals, multiculturalism and citizenship reported in this document takes an inclusive view of promoting social harmony within a diverse population. Taking account of various policy documents (such as Australian Social Inclusion Board 2008; Multicultural Victoria Bill 2011), this report defines multiculturalism as providing all Australians, irrespective of their cultural backgrounds, with the opportunity to feel valued and to able to participate actively in the cultural aspects of Australian society. Multiculturalism therefore means creating opportunities for new arrivals, refugees and skilled migrants through diverse performances, programs and art forms, so that they can develop as artists, expanding their career and opportunities for greater social integration. Multiculturalism in the arts through Mix It Up, therefore promotes the rights and responsibilities of citizenship as a unifying force that strengthens our diverse multicultural community, promoting community service as a principle that builds a stronger multicultural community. This definition of multiculturalism is illustrated in the case study of the artist Dereb Desalegn.
Partnership between the Arts Centre and MAV in developing artists’ careers: The Story of Dereb Desalegn.

Dereb Desalegn is an individual artist supported by Mix It Up. He is an Ethiopian musician and was discovered by Multicultural Arts Victoria. Dereb was working as a security person in a factory in Melbourne. However, he had been a pop star in Ethiopia. He had not played music professionally in Australia until MAV introduced him to Visible Mentor Nicky Bomba through the MAV visible mentoring program. Dereb was then introduced to ABC Radio National for his first Australian recording—his journey in the arts began. The journey is represented as a ladder of opportunity in the illustration below. As part of that journey, Dereb performed during the Mix It Up program, thus developing his artistic career so that he could move from a small stage performance to a larger stage performance and onto interstate and international programs.

Source: modified from MAV Making a Difference Report 2011
3. Research Methodology

We employed qualitative focus groups to carry out this evaluation. The research procedure involved focus group interviews with artists and community stakeholders and Arts Centre/MAV staff. Figure 1 details the break-up of focus groups. Based on the inclusion and exclusion framework developed by Mor Barak (2000), the evaluation sought to examine social inclusion at two levels. First, inclusion was examined at the level of the organisation (i.e., MAV and the Arts Centre) by conducting two focus groups with MAV and Arts Centre staff. Second, inclusion was examined at the level of community by conducting four focus groups with (1) artists and community stakeholders and (2) Arts Centre/MAV staff. Each focus group included eight to ten participants, on average.

![Figure 1: Focus Groups and Sample](image)

We also administered a short questionnaire, asking about participants’ ethnic community, involvement in Mix It Up, age group, gender and length of stay in Australia.

4. Findings

In this section we first report the demographic data of 37 participants in five focus groups which is followed by qualitative findings

**Demographic Data**

The following demographic data reports on participants ethnic background, nature of involvement in Mix It Up, age, gender, educational background and length of stay in Australia

**Ethnic Background**

As seen from the following Figure, the majority of the participants were from the Australian ethnic group which comprised 51.35% of the sample. The second highest number of participants was from the Asian ethnic group comprising 18.92% of the sample.
Figure 2: Ethnic representation of our sample

Nature of Involvement in Mix It Up

Figure 2 demonstrates the involvement of participants in Mix it Up. As can be seen, audience members consisted of 48.65% of the sample. Some of the participants had multiple roles in the Mix It Up program at different times. Artists constituted 35.14% of the sample while administrators and production managers represented 8.11% and 6.67% of the sample.

Figure 3: Involvement in Mix it Up
Age Group

The sample consisted of participants ranging between the age of 20 to 55 years and over. According to the percentages 16% belonged to the 20 to 25 years range, 35% belonged to the 26 to 35 years range, 16% belonged to the 36 to 45 years range, 25% belonged to the 46 to 55 years range and 8% belonged to the 55 years and over group.

![Age Group Chart]

Figure 4: age group of the sample

Gender and Education

With respect to gender, our sample represented majority of female participants with 24.32% males and 75.68% females. With respect to education, 94.59% of the participants had tertiary education.

Length of Stay in Australia

In our sample a majority 81.08% had been staying in Australia for more than 2 years.

![Resident in Australia Chart]

Figure 5: Length of Stay in Australia
Mix It Up Development and Impact

Summary data from the Arts Centre 2009/10 and the MAV 2009/10 annual reports illustrates the development of artists and the impact on individuals, groups and the community of the Mix It Up program.

The year 2010, the Arts Centre achieved a record of 2.4 million attendances at Arts Centre programs—over 1.6 million people attended performances and more than 800,000 participated in exhibitions, events and related activities. Significantly, most of this growth came in response to non-traditional programming such as Mix It Up (Arts Centre Annual Report, page 5). Over the 5 years, there has been a change in programming mix at the Arts Centre. For example, in 2004/2005, there were 28 non-English speaking background main stage performances (excluding Anglo Saxon, Canadian, USA and western classical music and opera), while in 2009/2010 there were 95 performances.

**MIX IT UP PROGRAM DATA:**
This data shows that the 2010 Mix It Up program has built on the 2006 Mix It Up program. For example in 2010, we found that

- A larger percentage of young people attended Mix It Up performances than usual at the Arts Centre, taking Mosaic as the exemplar (30% rather than 19%)

In 2006, we found that:

- MIX IT UP has attracted significant new and diverse audiences and visitors to The Arts Centre, including:
  - 62% of occasional visitors against the average of 51%
  - 53% of visitors under the age of 45 against the average of 30%
  - 24% of visitors from a non English speaking background against the average of 14%
  - A significant increase (from 16% to 31%) of attendance by young households of families without children as well as families with children (from 32% - 40%);
  - A significant increase in attendance by infrequent visitors to the Arts Centre - up from 27% to 37%;
  - Has supported and presented an extra-ordinary range of local, national and international artists (1,600 in total) from over 50 nationalities over 100 events (Rentschler 2006)

## Qualitative Findings

In our evaluation, we asked respondents about their perception of the Arts Centre and MAV. Seven key questions covered areas as diverse as the importance of Mix It Up performances; how the Arts Centre and MAV helped people of diverse backgrounds; how inclusive the Mix It Up program was for people from diverse backgrounds; participant learning from the Mix It Up program; how behaviour was changed as a result of participating in Mix It Up; and how
authentic and believable other cultures’ performances were in the Mix It Up program. At the end, participants were asked for their suggestions as to how to encourage the involvement of diverse ethnic individuals and groups through engaging with the Arts Centre or MAV.

Through thematic analysis of qualitative data, we present our findings in relation to the following two key themes: the importance of multicultural performances in the Arts Centre and Mix It Up Programs: changing attitudes and fostering participative learning.

Furthermore, we also summarise key recommendations gathered from participants as to how to further strengthen engagement with diverse communities in the future.

4.1. Importance of Multicultural Performances in the Arts Centre

To evaluate the impact of Mix It Up performances in terms of promoting other cultures and social inclusion the participants were asked about the importance of the Arts Centre presenting multicultural performances for audiences. All of the participants agreed that the multicultural performances produced by the Arts Centre were very important in terms of the Arts Centre/MAV partnership, representing other cultures, high credibility of cultural performances, Mix It Up programs being authentic, memorable and easy to understand, and mentoring to help develop social equality and free events. These sub themes are discussed below.

4.1.1. Arts Centre and MAV Partnership: Bringing People Together

We assessed the importance of the Arts Centre as a venue to present multicultural performances. It was evident that Arts Centre is perceived as a prestigious, community venue for the artists as well as the audiences. The Arts Centre brought people together. Mix It Up enabled connections to occur between the Arts Centre and various communities who otherwise do not use the Arts Centre much, if at all. MAV facilitated bringing people together. Multicultural performances are perceived as enhancing social inclusion within the Victorian community. For example, an arts audience member from Australia said:

I would say when working with communities for example, just because your clients or your project is community doesn’t mean to say it’s not professional. ... that’s very important. You can walk past the Arts Centre and see a Mix It Up poster next to an opera poster, next to a Melbourne Theatre Company poster, is incredibly important because psychologically its making people think “oh African band on along with the opera”, and it’s really important that we don’t start doing that filter thing so there’s high art and community art. It’s all art forms and they’re all as valid as each other.

In particular, arts performers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds mentioned it as a privilege to be able to perform at the Arts Centre:

just focussing on the Arts Centre as a venue, it was massively morale boosting to our group to have the opportunity to perform in such a beautiful space. We’re often performing outside or in less than ideal conditions, I won’t go into it, but yeah sort of getting changed in the open, it happens a lot, so just having the opportunity of
working with a lighting manager, or what are they called? you know proper, proper people...

Also some of the respondents expressed the view that Mix It Up programs played an important role in encouraging the general public from all walks of life to attend the shows. Their attendance presented the Arts Centre as a welcoming venue which otherwise was thought to be formal, prestigious and not open to the general public. This in turn helped celebrate the arts with the wider community, providing a connection with them. This can be seen in the following quotes:

_The Arts Centre can sometimes be seen as a place that’s very formal and unwelcoming to these groups and what Mix it Up did do was encourage people to feel welcome in a place like this._

_Welcoming audiences and trying to break down perceptions that people have about the Arts Centre, that it’s not just about opera and ballet and symphony orchestras_

Both audiences and arts performers have recognized that Arts Centre is becoming more socially inclusive through their partnership with MAV. It became evident that MAV provided expertise on multiculturalism to the Arts Centre through their community connections, which brings multicultural knowledge, skills and attitudes in relation to multicultural arts performances and their communities. The Arts Centre is perceived as a prestigious venue, reinforced by its location in the centre of Melbourne. MAV is perceived as a peak community multicultural arts organisation with expertise in managing cultural diversity. Findings suggest that the partnership between the Arts Centre and MAV has been effective in opening up cross-cultural innovations. The partnership has provided opportunities for international artists to perform to mainstream and multicultural audiences, in a mainstream venue of high prestige.

Participants expressed the view that cross-cultural fertilisations have enabled social inclusion to be fostered amongst performers and audiences, arts administrators and community leaders, international and local artists and event organisers. The following responses support this view:

_The Arts Centre first, being inclusive of people from diverse backgrounds. Well look, I think they are. And even the fact that they are reaching out to listen to what MAV think in terms of bookings or programming. I think that’s a big sign that they are trying and they’re actually putting some of their show spots, stages, making them available to these acts. So that shows me that they are being inclusive._

_Well, having the Mix It Up program does certainly answer that in a very positive way and certainly MAV are very inclusive and naturally want to work with people on their terms, recognising that we may have differences in our approaches and so on, which is incredibly valuable that such a large association that has funding is prepared to allow people scope to work in a way that is best for them which of course should go across practice really. I think that’s really important because without that if we all_
had to work to a particular framework or a particular system we’re going to dilute and lose the value of working with different people and their particular practices.

Furthermore, the growing inclusivity of the Arts Centre toward people from diverse cultures was felt by participants to be due to the partnership with MAV. For example, an Indonesian singer said:

If they weren’t being inclusive, they wouldn’t have a partnership with MAV. So, I was very excited to hear that they had a partnership, and I wondered what that meant, and now I’ve been able to see that through the actual programming. So, I perceive it as planning, and then actual programming means that they are actually saying what they said they would. So that’s from the Art Centre’s perspective. And then I can even say, like, even being somebody who walks past and sees the Art Centre billboards, and suddenly in the last two years seeing, even different coloured skinned people on their big billboards. They seem quite proud to have all different faces, all different shapes.

South American artists also stressed the particular inclusivity of MAV:

My perception of them [MAV], as I’ve seen them in the last few years, is that they’re really interested in including people of diverse backgrounds in any way they think possible. If it’s a shy group, they will target them through their food. If it’s an explosive group, they will target them through their acrobatics and their dance.

If, so depending on what culture it is. If you’re talking African culture, you’ll have their dancers jumping up and down. Their acrobats moving around. Their girls running around in all different colours. If it’s a different, say Ethiopian culture, they’ll have their coffee ceremony. So they’ll really give them a place that suits their culture. Not just “Hey, you’ve got centre stage. What are you going to do with it?” Because maybe the Iranian cultural women’s group don’t want to be centre stage for religious reasons or cultural reasons. So, I find the way that MAV have explored that in the last few years through Mix It Up is by finding a different way of performing. Whether it be through something quite modern, through something quite ancient. Through something in the proscenium arch, or in the cafe in the lounge.

4.1.2. Representation of different Cultures

‘If it’s a multicultural city then it needs to have multicultural shows’—that was the general perception of the participants. All participants strongly agreed on the importance of the Arts Centre having multicultural performances. In particular, they shared the significance of the Arts Centre’s performances as a means of reflecting the Victorian multicultural community. All of them agreed that Mix it Up performances were successful in representing other cultures in a multicultural society like Victoria. The representation of different cultures gave them the opportunity to experience different cultures, learn about them and also provided them avenues for connecting with different networks. The following quotes confirm this:
It’s very important that the Arts Centre presents multicultural performances, because after all, Australia is a country of migrants from various parts of the world at different times. And I think there needs to be a venue to show different cultural artefacts. Other than just the, you know, dominant Anglo-Saxon perspective. So, it is important.

Opportunity to experience different cultures, everybody coming together. There’s connecting me with different networks; it was different cultures with different musicians.

Opens my eyes to see more the other world, the other Australia and other cultures, how it is and it helps me to know more about other cultures, for other people’s culture and it helps me to go further professionally, to plan further to do some professional things.

So one of the things, and one of the happiest memories I’ve ever had in Australia has been within the Arts Centre. And often when I’m in Hamer Hall watching a show that I’m not involved in or that I’m not emceeing, I think “Wow, it’s amazing to be in this room.” There’s so many happy memories. So many different cultures, and a real place and a home for me, being a multicultural member of our community.

Although it was accepted that Mix It Up performances tried to represent other cultures, some of the arts administrators had different perceptions. They thought that as culture is such a broad theme there is always the risk of oversimplifying or stereotyping. One of the participant arts administrators explained:

It’s a bit of a danger when you’re representing cultures in the public programs that you can oversimplify or stereotype the representation of the culture as well.

Similarly other responses were:

And just by the nature of the limitations of what we do you’re never going to be able to do a full breadth of what the broad span of what a culture is.

4.1.3. High credibility of cultural performances

In order to evaluate Mix it Up, the participants were asked to share their views on whether or not the performances were believable, authentic, memorable, easy to understand, and had opportunities for interaction with the performers or the audiences. The participants agreed that the performances of other cultures at Mix It Up performances were perceived as authentic, believable and hence memorable for them. The reasons for authenticity of these performances were mainly attributed to: Arts Centre being a prestigious venue in which multicultural communities perform; high credibility and visibility of the cultural performance and the opportunities for interaction with the artists and audiences.

This is an interesting comment as the word “prestige” had two meanings to respondents. On the one hand it meant elitist and exclusive. On the other hand, it meant “important” and “of high value” to which multicultural individuals and groups have had access as both audiences
and performers. The two uses of this word presents us with a paradox about the nature and value of prestige in Melbourne’s premier Arts Centre.

The respondents also opined that performing in the Arts Centre gives them high credibility and visibility of their cultural performance to audiences in a mainstream venue. As these shows provided opportunities to perform with people from different cultural backgrounds and using traditional and contemporary instruments, the shows appeared authentic and real. Some representative quotes are:

"Look, I think they’ve been very authentic. We’ve seen some very raw performances of different cultural groups. And sometimes, the Arts Centre and MAV can be very thoughtful of finding different types of stages, not always just the Hamer Hall, or, you know, like spaces like foyer spaces, that have made some of those cultural groups really feel comfortable to kick off their shoes and do it the way they would. So, I would say that I have seen authentic [performances]."

Authentic because the cultural background from the performers. It’s about experiencing culture and if people are from that cultural background you, in your mind, believe that it’s authentic.

"Well the group was actually from Indonesia and they brought their instruments and everything."

4.1.4. Providing Opportunity for non-mainstream artists

Another theme that emerged from the interviews was that Mix It Up performances provided opportunity for non-mainstream artists to showcase their talents and present themselves to the wider community. Most of the participants also thought that by performing in Mix It Up in the Arts centre helped build credibility and confidence for the artists. Some common responses were:

"Open up the possibility—we hear a lot of different people which is really nice to get a sense of the people as well you know, of the culture, different cultures, how they come together and how you see something you’ve never seen before and so I think, to me, I worked for a centre to open their door to become aware of the mainstream"

"We now respect ourselves more and our contribution more, because we are now performing in the Arts Centre and it’s something special."

4.1.5. Collaboration of local, national and international performers

The participants further agreed that Mix it Up performances also helped develop collaborations between local, national and international music. This theme is reflected in the opportunities provided to multicultural artists as they moved up the career ladder from workshops to small stage to large stage, as seen in the case study example of Dereb
Desalegn. Collaboration between different types of artists at different stages of their careers was part of the perceived richness of the program:

*Gengung which has Balkan instruments mixing with Indonesian instruments and probably a few others*

*Before there is a workshop between the artist and the local artists. It’s very good because there will be direct contact between local and visiting artists*

### 4.1.6. Mentoring to Help Develop Social Equality

In relation to the importance of the Arts Centre as a venue for multicultural performances, some international artists also acknowledged an **equality** issue. Equality was an important concept that underlies the strong focus on mentoring young and emerging artists from multicultural backgrounds, to help them develop pathways to a successful artistic career. This is an aspect of artist development that MAV takes seriously:

*I’ve learnt that everyone is at different levels in their life as a performer or an artist or a community member. And that every level is equal. So whether you are a new percussionist or a professional percussionist or an international percussionist, that everyone is equal in their eyes. ...the reason why I say that is, through the Mix It Up program, they also have the mentor, mentees that come through, and, that helps certain members of the community or the artist’s community to be able to perform at these things. And also perform alongside people of international standard, or Australians, of high standard in Australia. And that it’s really not important which one was a professional, which one was the mentor or mentee, but that we are all equal and we’re all in this together, and we’re all going to go forward together and do this. And, that can be very humbling and very sharing. And I love it that the Arts Centre and Multicultural Arts Victoria allow that to happen, for mentors and mentees at a professional level. So they all come. They’ve all got their space. They all share the same stage. They share the same leader to the performance. It’s not just one gig.*

### 4.1.7. Free Performances

Participants also mentioned the importance of free or low costs for attracting bigger audiences from all walks of life. These views are not unexpected and are expressed in the following quotes:

*Free cost really opens up the possibility to the audience to engage them, so we’re not talking about an elite audience but we’re talking about a broad audience.*

*I think the public programs really help to bring that representation in another culture to the audience members. It sort of enhances the main stage show.*

*The subsidy for this program was really important, to be able to get audiences to access it. I think it’s incredibly important that we present as an Arts Centre a diverse range of work. It’s kind of core to what we do.*
4.2. Mix It Up Programs: changing attitudes and fostering participative learning

Another major theme we found was how Mix It Up programs have changed attitudes of culturally diverse individualists (i.e. artists, arts audiences and arts workers) and fostered learning through participation. The sub-themes under this major finding are opening up the minds of mainstream audiences to multiculturalism, changing attitudes and breaking stereotypes, and providing learning curve for creative development.

4.2.1. Opening up Minds of Mainstream Audiences to Multiculturalism

The participants also acknowledged that the performances played an important role in fostering mainstream audiences, that they open up their minds and enable them to learn about other cultures on a regular basis, breaking stereotypes and creating harmony. In short, to them these performances acted as a platform to educate Victorian communities about different cultures.

having performances at the Art Centre introduces these multicultural activities to a different audience that might go to just a little stall at a Mumbai event or something, to having it in the Arts Centre is going to get other people thinking about, well yeah, this is worth coming along and seeing as well.

Furthermore, Mix It Up performances were seen as breaking stereotypes as this participant mentioned:

This is very important to me. By presenting multicultural performances for audiences, the Arts Centre is able to remove barriers between different communities, by building friendships and educating diverse cultures about each other. The Arts Centre and Mix It Up demonstrated their importance as places in a very clear way, and did not assume there was only one culture for all. Instead, they developed these multicultural events and performances by local and international artists, and bought different aspects of each culture together.

Related to the above discussion some participants also thought that the Mix it up performances helped in creating harmony, a sense of community and responsibility as can be seen in the following quote:

create the sense of responsibility for the community to take part in multiculturalism in people, in the end it will create more understanding between the community.

4.2.2. Changing Attitudes and Breaking Stereotypes

All the respondents agreed that the performances helped them change their attitudes towards other cultural and or ethnic groups. Some thought that these performances were a good “ice breaker” as they provided avenues for interaction as can be seen in the following quote.
It changed my attitude towards them, because it gives me a chance to understand exactly what it is, how they feel.

If you’ve never spoken to that person or you’ve never opened a performance and being given an open public platform allows you to go up and say “I really enjoyed that”.

So, after the Mix It Up performance do you think it would change your behaviour? Yes. It made me connect to my own cultural roots, and even, for the first time, perform in my own cultural dress. I never even owned one. I had one made. All this sort of stuff. So, yes. I changed some of my behaviour.

Furthermore, Mix It Up performances were seen as breaking stereotypes, as this participant mentioned:

This is very important to me. By presenting multicultural performances for audiences, the Arts Centre is able to remove barriers between different communities, by building friendships and educating diverse cultures about each other. The Arts Centre and Mix It Up demonstrated their important places on this in a very clear way, and did not assume there was only one culture for all. Instead, they developed these multicultural events and performances by local and international artists, and brought different aspects of each culture together.

Welcoming audiences in and trying to break down perceptions that people have about the Arts Centre, that it’s not just about opera and ballet and symphony orchestras

While the above comments are generic, respondents also told us that they know more about themselves and others through participation in Mix It Up. Self-knowledge is a first step to knowledge of others and changes in behaviour and attitude come next:

Engagement with the Horn of Africa and Sudanese has given me greater understanding of where the community I live in comes from [western suburbs of Melbourne].

The importance of engaging with people was seen as a means of understanding them, which leads to changes in behaviour:

It’s only when we engage with people that we think of them as individuals. Sometimes we are only still seen as refugees. We are typecast. We feel helpless. We need to be empowered as an artist. We get respect [from interacting with other types of artists].

4.2.3. Learning Curve for Creative Development
The majority of the respondents also perceived that the performances served as a learning curve. The performances provided artists from various cultures with the experience to work with mainstream, experienced artists. This provided opportunities for cross-fertilisation of ideas, passing on of skills and creative ideas from one to another.

The intent was always to make it more than a concert and to engage with cultural diversity in Melbourne. It is not locked up to a specific cultural group. It may be an Indian group but they are talking to a Hip Hop culture.

It also provided them with the opportunity to meet people from different cultures and their different ways of doing things.

you learn an incredible amount being involved in the project and you meet a wide variety of different people and you learn how different people operate

Mix It Up programs were praised for inclusion of culturally diverse artists and audiences. However, the participative interaction during events was particularly stressed as the most important process. This was perceived as a means of creating social inclusion. Participants mentioned the value of interactive workshops, cultural food sharing, art and craft events, and outdoor activities. These were provided as concrete examples of participative interactive events inside and outside the Arts Centre. The following representative quote highlights this view:

During the Mix It Up program, free foyer activities such as workshops, exhibitions, demonstrations and food stalls invited audiences to learn more about the diverse cultures on display, and also gave attendees the unique opportunity to interact with people of different cultures. Our organisation had a display in the foyer prior to the commencement of Omar Faruk Tekbilek's concert, in which we served Traditional Turkish Coffee, Turkish Delight, Apple Tea. We also had displays and performances from many different artists. We received great feedback from attendees.

4.2.4. When the Product is Quality

The arts industry is a pluralistic domain involving divergent objectives (quality performances, social inclusion, individual artists mentoring, cost control, ticket sales and government, philanthropic sponsorship management) and multiple actors (artists, administrators, community groups and politicians) joined by flexible and changing relationships. The arts industry has become more complex recently with the development of new partnerships which changes organisational ways of working, seeking to maintain the balance between quality and social inclusion.

Such matters appeared to be an issue, particularly for arts administrative staff. Arts administrators shared that they need to maintain quality, at the same time, be inclusive of multicultural performances. As part of the role of Mix It Up was to build skills and develop connections, there can be an understandable tension between quality and cost, as learning takes place and skills are transferred. These representative quotes confirm the learning regarding quality:
I think with the Mix It Up shows that we’ve done we’ve kind of had conflicting objectives, talking about the quality of the performance because with the public program the objective is not necessarily to have excellent quality, it’s to engage local artists and community involvement so that can sometimes be a challenge or a balance.

I think there’s one which is quite interesting and it always comes down, from our perspective, to the quality of the performance and it’s also about the sort of style of music the performance is, if it’s a music performance. It’s taught us that to push the ethnicity into the background because if we want them to come back we had to actually say well we don’t need to put on another Greek show because we just had a Greek show. The hard part is, it’s a bit like trying to get a ballet audience to go to the opera, we want to be able to introduce a style of music and an atmosphere I think which is what they’re after and the atmosphere, the casual nature of some of these communities and what they expect from us, it’s not a black tie event and things like the afternoons versus the evenings, it’s how we might approach future performances not only for them or their ethnic group but for other ethnic groups as well.

The MAV staff also agreed about the dilemma of ensuring quality

to find the kind of quality in communities... that you can put in a situation like the Arts Centre. So, you have to be very selective

It’s often the culture of presentation too, rather than the quality

5. Recommendations for building diverse community engagement:

This section presents recommendations that emerged from the focus group interviews.

5.1. New Pathways, New Ways for Mix It Up

It is not surprising that all respondents unanimously agreed that the Mix It Up Program should continue. It played a role in bridging cultural differences, creating awareness about diverse cultures and exposing diverse and mainstream artists from the local, national and international stages so that they created connections and built skills. Mix It Up also provided opportunities for the creative development of new work, across cultures and across art forms. For example, Mix It Up enabled Reketeki to obtain a platform through the program to produce and showcase culturally diverse theatre. Reketeki then went on tour after participating in the program. Another example is Jali Buba Kuyateh who created a full band presenting contemporary Senegalese music with musicians from Queensland and Victoria. Artists are not often given the opportunity to create new work.

In these ways, Mix It Up provided bridges and built pathways to artists and communities that had not existed without the program. Further, Mix It Up built confidence for artists and provided exposure through workshops, small stages and on to large stages to a variety of
artists. An overwhelming majority of respondents expressed the view that Mix it Up should not be a one off event within one culture, rather should be done more frequently.

*It has a lot of potential ... because at the moment it's one off. Like, one day and its show casing or representing. But I think it has the potential to actually have time for creative development or what do you call? Like, where artists can meet and create just so... because at the moment, it's only showing but I think that it has a potential to develop over time.*

The reasons offered for extending Mix It Up were that they perceived that it has the potential to grow and also to make a real impact on the creative arts scene in Australia. Other reasons proffered were that there was the potential for residencies for international artists, where they could share knowledge and skills with local artists, master classes, the development of career pathways and the development of new work. These suggestions are picked up in various sections of this report.

Furthermore the administrative respondents stressed the importance of flexibility of the Mix It Up program, which they called trying out "new ways".

*just being flexible, I guess, because it's such a large and established organisation and they're used to professional and touring artists, they've had to work differently over time, to work with artists in new ways and be more flexible. For example, it would be nice to get artists in beforehand, or with food, for example.*

Although the administrative respondents agreed that the Mix It Up events should not be one off, they mentioned its limitations. Mix It Up was for them a double edged sword as they needed to promote all the cultures and communities, not just one. This can be seen in the following quotes:

*We had, when we did the Jamaican show the artist that came out did a tour of the Northern Territory and worked with some indigenous artists and that was three years ago. We haven't done anything like that since but it was a really valuable thing to do.*

*Well it's that double edged sword isn't it, because in one camp you're going to need to do lots of different communities and in the other you've started this relationship with the Indonesian community so should we continue it*

Support for Mix It Up continuing does not mean that it should not be reviewed. As one arts administrator stated:

*It is time that Mix It Up is reviewed. It has been going for a few years now.*

And again

*It is hard to maintain connections to execs and trustees [at the Arts Centre]. The challenge is maintaining commitment to any long-running program. There is commitment at the Ministerial level. It is time to refresh MIU.*
One MAV staff further suggested to have new Mix It Up programs such as the “youth Mix It Up”:

*And what about young people? There’s not a lot... that is traditional... Mix It Up, you know, crosses all ages, but there’s some specific work, especially in the area of hip hop and areas like that, like some of the artists that could be brought in...people like Emmanuel Jal. People that are young*

5.2. Multicultural Marketing

A key observation from participants was the need to shift the way marketing is conducted for Mix It Up events.

*The Marketing function has been the hardest one to shift... The learning is that there is no point in doing terrific programming if it is not going to draw an audience due to marketing ineffectiveness.*

A majority of the respondents argued that the marketing of Mix It Up needed to apply the learnings from multicultural marketing campaigns, for example using local media in conjunction with mainstream media. They also opined that targeted and focused marketing would develop audiences and reach out to larger communities.

*I think there is, there is obviously a marketing issue.*

*If they want to reach out to the other Melbourne communities and audiences, they need to put something... I’ve seen it, I think I’ve noticed it sometimes in the EG, or the entertainment pages of the Age.*

*So, Hamer Hall has, what? 2000 seats in it or more? Perhaps if it had have been advertised on Triple J, that, you know, the Drums of Burundi, and all these other people were performing at the Hamer Hall, then, and for free, maybe those 2000 seats would have been filled.*

And again:

*Building up audience loyalty as opposed to the brand is the test. We need the hard data.*

Some respondents emphasised the opportunity to use social media more for communication, to provide broader publicity of the programs and to build audiences. Following quote provides a representative example:

*So, perhaps Multicultural Vic Arts could have a blog – it has to be updated regularly. That’s the challenge. Someone has to actually sit there and update it. And it’s actually very easy to maintain. And it’s free. It’s mostly open source. And it’s like, on a daily basis, so what they do is, they can post about different events, along with a flier,*
along with a clip of the track that the band is going to play. Maybe a YouTube clip as well...

5.3. Interactive Engagement

Respondents suggested ways of engaging with cultural diversity through interactive events rather than performances on a stage. These suggestions were extensions of the concept of foyer activities. For example, one representative respondent recommended tactile opportunities to engage with audiences to make the performances more engaging:

Do something with audiences, rather than showcases. Touch the instrument; explain history; audiences and artists can mix it up together. Get the audience on stage. Have a workshop section... People can experience it.

Some comments from arts administrators in regard to touring were:

I think we’re big and bold enough to actually now even take this to, not use the word on tour, but there’s no reason why we can’t work with these festivals and not have to be on site here. I think we’ve got that opportunity to create a touring Mix It Up for want of a better word; a package that we take around.

And those organisations too are really great to work with more in Mix It Up because we’ve exclusively worked with MAV but we do have a relationship with Footscray and with Dandenong and that kind of sits outside Mix It Up for whatever reason, because of the way the program was set up from the start. So I think that that’s something that needs to be able to be looked at.

This respondent was referring to the performance spaces at the Drum Theatre in Dandenong of at Footscray Community Arts Centre in Footscray. They are suggesting that there is potential to extend Mix It Up to the west and outer east of Melbourne, such as at the Drum Theatre and Footscray Community Arts Centre. These organisations are located in Melbourne’s diverse suburbs. Both organisations are already linked with MAV and the Arts Centre, but have not had the benefit of MAV’s knowledge through participating in Mix It Up. Were the Mix It Up program to be expanded, this respondent suggests that it would provide further opportunity to use suburban spaces for diverse performances, filling their theatres to greater capacity than is currently the case.

Another respondent put forward the concept of touring performances. This respondent recommended taking the performance to the people, rather than having the people come to the performance. For example the respondent explained:

Now, when you have your Arts Centre and your Spiegeltent, that’s all good. But that’s a much bigger thing. ... if we could have little cafes or bars. And it doesn’t have to be a dedicated bar. MAV doesn’t need to own it. They can go into partnership with that bar, and you know, it could be a small bar that has capacity of 200 people, but it has a stage.
With a different perspective the MAV staff recommended to build personal relationship with the artists and to reach out to the community

*You need to get down on a personal level with people and build relationships, getting to know them and being more human*

*It’s about meeting... going and sharing, like, sometimes, you know, I’m going to meet the Turkish community and visiting, you know, meeting with the Consulate, but also, I went to a Turkish community lunch the other day and it’s really important to engage in different ways; that it’s not always just on the end of the phone.*

### 5.4. Building Audiences

A majority of the participants also thought that there was a need to build audiences especially from the younger generation and from the mainstream population of arts attenders as well as non-attenders. Some responses were:

*Common with a lot of Indonesian events that the Consul’s involved with, they don’t seem to be able to access the Australian community.*

*I think we need to be able to access the Australian community more to come to these events. and I really feel that that would have been much more of interest to the Australian community if they only knew about it, but it’s not being tapped in to in the mainstream, it’s just their own community.*

*I think one of the issues for Mix It Up has been engaging a large audience and one way that I think the Arts Centre could move that is to link Mix It Up more with activities that are going on in the broader community.*

*It’s vitally important that the Art Centre currently, while we have a full range of audiences coming in there’s a very particular narrow demographic who are highly over represented in users of the Arts Centre*.

Furthermore, administrators also recognized the importance of the Arts Centre to represent multicultural communities and to grow from a narrower demographic audience to a wider, more culturally diverse audience.

‘-----the way that the Arts Centre operates that does particularly attract a very narrow demographic and so there’s many groups that miss out including culturally diverse audiences and culturally diverse performances as well that are heavily under-represented and it’s obviously hey we’re funded via the taxpayer so it’s probably a really important thing that we actually do represent...

### 5.5. Building Indigenous Links
Some respondents also suggested that there needed to be more focus on Indigenous performers. This view is reflected in the following comment:

*but a greater focus on indigenous groups as well. I think it’s generally something that’s lacking a little bit in programming here.*

5.6. Building Careers and Artistic Pathways

Respondents further suggested that MAV has had a multi-pronged approach in mentoring and career development of artists. This view can be seen in the following quote:

*multi-pronged approach, certainly to bring people together and encourage people to mix across cultures but it’s also to help artists develop their careers and as I said MAV has been very active in doing that.*

As this aspect of the Mix It Up program was considered so successful, it is not surprising that the respondents found it an essential component. They seek additional support so that their careers can continue to develop. Some further thought that the Arts Centre and MAV could help in developing or promoting the careers of the artists by providing them with other forms of support. One example mentioned was a support letter, as it could go a long way in developing artists’ careers:

*But what about further industry and business connections? Which may not cost any money, but may just mean, “Here’s a support letter. We think you’re Australia’s top African artist. We would like to approach, we would like to approach EMI...”, you know, “… Sony Music. We would like to put you forward to say ‘Sony, would you consider distributing this act for six months?’”*

Support is seen a providing career advice, opportunities and recommendations as well as certificates. They were also looking for repeat performances so that they had ongoing skill and knowledge development in the Australian arts industry.

In relation to actual performance in the Arts Centre the MAV staff also recommended to have different stages- small to large- of stage performances to help minority artists get used to the Arts Centre instead of feeling intimidated as can be seen in the below quote:

*there needs to be different stages. So, there needs to be a small stage, a medium stage and a large stage, because we’ve been doing a very, very large stage, which is great, but it’s also about development and taking people on that journey, because we don’t want to put people out of their comfort zone. So, it’s choosing the right stage and creating stepping stones for our artists.*

Furthermore MAV staff recommended Arts Centre to provide rehearsal time and space to expose the artists to the theatre before hand and can be seen in the following quotes

*Well, they get the rehearsal on the day and that’s it.*
we don’t... we don’t get access to the spaces beforehand and to orientate our artists into just how huge the stage is.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

This project examined the role of Mix It Up in fostering engagement and social inclusion in the Victorian community. Findings suggest that Mix It Up is viewed as an important program by stakeholders, fostering social inclusion amongst culturally diverse artists and arts audiences locally, nationally and internationally. In this report, we see social inclusion as being broadly defined to include not only participation in the arts industry as an artist and performer but also as a means of developing skills through mentoring, career advice and provision of certification.

There are two paradoxes that were revealed by the participants in the focus groups. The first paradox is that the prestige of the Arts Centre is linked both with a longing to perform in a high-status venue and also a wariness of it as something that may be out of their reach. The second paradox is in relation to pricing. On the one hand, participants sought free or low cost performances. This is to be expected. Many respondents were not earning high incomes. They had little disposable income. They are price sensitive. On the other hand, free entry or low cost pricing is a long-standing debate in the arts that has not been resolved. To add an additional layer of complexity, Mix It Up audiences were prepared to pay high prices (such as $100 per ticket) if the performance and the “star attraction” from their culture resonated with them. Attitudes to free entry and ticket prices differ from country to country, from performance to performance, depending on tradition and artist’s reputation and resonance with the community concerned.

However, it is arguable that prestige and price sensitivity are two issues that are psychologically linked in the minds of respondents. How these matters can be disentangled by those seeking to present multicultural performances is something that requires further investigation, greater depth analysis and discussion by a range of stakeholders, such as marketers, administrators, artists and government. Multicultural marketing was identified as a pressure point in need of further development. These are big ideas. They require consideration, reflection and funding. They will not be easy to implement in the short term, as they relate also to the diverse and conflicting objectives so often evident in arts organisations. Given the changing composition of the Victorian community, they will have political and practical implications also.

The Arts Centre and MAV partnership has been recognised as a strategic opportunity for celebrating Victorian multiculturalism between local, national and international artists. It fostered learning opportunities for both mainstream and non-mainstream artists. Finally, the partnership enabled multicultural artists to perform to diverse audiences in new ways, developing careers of those mentored. It has opened the minds of the stakeholders to the possibilities of learning about cultural differences, using the arts as the vehicle. Not surprisingly, participants want Mix It Up to continue.
7. Profiles

**Ruth Rentschler** has a long history of interest in the performing arts and success in managing projects. She completed her PhD (Monash, 1999) on arts leadership. Ruth focuses publications on arts marketing, including in the *Cultural and Entertainment Industries Handbook*, *Shaping Culture, Innovative Arts Marketing* and *The Entrepreneurial Arts Leader*. Her book *Shaping Culture* was published in Chinese.

Ruth has managed a range of consulting and other projects in her time at Deakin University. For example, writing board briefing papers for a major visual arts organisation; analysing museum web sites to assess their audience focus; and analysing arts audiences by segmenting them and identifying benefits to the organisation of understanding their audiences. In 1997-98, she conducted a project which resulted in the publication of *Innovative Arts Marketing* (Allen and Unwin 1999). This was the result of a competitive research grant for Australia-wide research. Ruth conceived and managed the project. This project shows her capacity to lead others in research as team leader of an Australia-wide project of seven researchers and a research assistant.

Ruth has held various board, community and funding panel positions, such as Arts Management Advisory Group, Arts Marketing Task Force and Arts Victoria Professional Development Panel, Deputy Chair of the board of Multicultural Arts Victoria and board member of the Ballarat Art Gallery.

**Yuka Fujimoto** an expert in Human Resource Management (HRM), frequently networks by inviting HR leaders as guest speakers to her postgraduate (MBA) and undergraduate classes as well as to contribute to her Human Resource Management books. Through her research, she has also developed a distinctive business network covering Japanese enterprises such as Toyota Motors, Mitsubishi Motors and Honda and other international enterprises, examining the diversity of their policies and practices. Yuka has been recognised with a number of awards for her work on diversity. She received three scholarships and awards for outstanding academic achievement at the Undergraduate and Honours level. In April 2008, she was invited by Australian Human Resource Institute (AHRI) to speak on Cultural Intelligence (CI) at PricewaterhouseCoopers, followed by invitation from SBS World View Radio to speak on CI. Her co-authored Human Resource Management textbook has been widely used by major Australian Universities, including the University of Melbourne, the University of Queensland, and Monash University. With her extensive networking with HR leaders in business sectors and her expertise in community-oriented diversity inclusion and human resource management processes for the most marginalised (e.g. people with disabilities), she is confident that she can provide a fresh approach to current and future projects through greater business engagement and beyond.

**Fara Azmat** is a Lecturer, in the School of Management and Marketing in the Faculty of Business and Law, Deakin University. Fara’s PhD and professional work has focused on issues of social responsibility, within the framework of sustainability. She has published her work in peer-reviewed journals and presented at international conferences.
Fara's expertise in Corporate Social Responsibility and her work experience and networks across ethnic and marginalised groups in Australia and overseas, further strengthens the case for business engagement. She has considerable research experience, practical knowledge and understanding of sustainability issues and her publications cover the areas of customer loyalty, retention and social responsibilities. Fara's career to date provides a complementary juxtaposition between academic teaching, research and public sector work, with a varied portfolio, in the Bangladeshi public sector for eight years. Her varied work experience has provided her with strong organisational and administrative capabilities and has also developed her ability to work effectively and interact with the disadvantaged—poor, homeless, ethnic minority—in society. Fara is engaged in a wide range of professional network affiliations, refereeing for business and social responsibility journals and conferences. She has both quantitative and qualitative research skills and has successfully conducted questionnaires, surveys and interviews as part of data collection for other projects. Fara has received a number of awards, including scholarships from Monash University to conduct her Masters and PhD degrees in Management.