

PROJECT FACTS

Arts Leadership for Young Asylum Seekers

Asylum Seekers are often excluded from welfare benefits and the right to work. Such exclusion can lead to Asylum Seekers feeling pushed onto the fringes of society. In order to prevent the mental health risks associated with a feeling of social isolation, participation in the arts offers an opportunity to build supportive relationships and greater community capacity by up skilling those involved.

The arts can also help to build a more aware, informed and tolerant community which in turn will help to bridge the divide between those communities pushed to the fringe and the main stream.

VicHealth have said that 'The arts have a well-recognised potential to promote health and wellbeing. One of the arts' most powerful contributions to health is that they reflect and create an inclusive sense of community. There is now considerable evidence that the more strongly people feel this sense of belonging, the healthier they are.'

VicHealth notes the following key benefits of promoting health through participation in Community Arts:

- Participants learn transferable skills such as communication, problem-solving, negotiation, cooperation.
- The arts can provide a powerful tool for advocacy by creating and enlarging understanding of unfamiliar people and issues.
- Arts projects transcend language and cultural barriers.
- A community is created among those working on the project, bolstering individual connections to the community.
- Events allow the general public to gain an appreciation of the talents of people that they may otherwise never encounter and may hold fears and prejudices about.
- Groups are linked to relevant support services.
- Inter-agency links are created, increasing communication and improving services.

EastWeb has supported Multicultural Arts Victoria to run their Arts Leadership for Young Asylum Seekers project. This project will work with a group of 6-10 young Asylum Seekers interested in arts and events management who will actively learn about the arts world by helping to organise the Do the Right Thing! and the Emerge Concert. Each Asylum Seeker will buddy with a mentor who has skills in an area of their interest. The mentoring aspect of this program builds mutually beneficial, meaningful relationships.

Held on Human Rights Day, Do the Right Thing! promotes awareness and acceptance, bringing together young people from different faiths and backgrounds to celebrate cultural diversity and harmony. The Emerge festival is a celebration of Victoria's many refugee and emerging cultures in a series of exciting events during Refugee week.

The EastWeb Fund

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