

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **A host of new arts projects set to celebrate cultural diversity in Victoria**

Seven Victorian arts and cultural organisations have been funded by VicHealth to deliver a thought-provoking collection of projects designed to inspire the community to embrace cultural diversity and raise awareness of the harm caused by race-based discrimination.

Building on the energy and the powerful community response to the first round of *Arts About Us* projects, which have run for the past 36 months, VicHealth has bolstered its investment for a second round of *Arts About Us* performances and art installations until June 2015.

This work complements VicHealth's larger program of anti-discrimination research and pilot projects.

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter said the \$930,000 investment would provide an opportunity for even more Victorians to recognise the harm discrimination and racism can cause and to celebrate our multicultural state.

"Cultural programs such as theatre, film, music, technology and comedy provide great opportunities to celebrate the state's diversity and expand our understanding of other cultures," Ms Rechter said.

"VicHealth's research shows that one in three Victorians believe there are groups that do not fit in Australia. There is much more work to be done to change these attitudes.

"We need to reduce discriminatory behaviour in our schools, workplaces, sporting organisations and even retail outlets. By challenging attitudes and behaviour on cultural diversity through the arts, we want to prevent racism in the long term."

Research shows race-based discrimination has direct links to anxiety and depression and may also have links to unhealthy lifestyles that contribute to physical conditions including obesity, high blood pressure and diabetes.

The new round of VicHealth's *Arts About Us* projects run for three years, starting in July 2012.

For more information, see [www.artsaboutus.com.au](http://www.artsaboutus.com.au)

### **VicHealth's Arts About Us Phase II Projects**

#### Federation Square, *Square of Light – people step in!*

Focused within the *Light in Winter* program, this project will create a series of live and on-screen interactions, improvised physical performances, interviews and choreographed events in the public arena at Federation Square, which will be taped and screened throughout the year. The three-year transmedia program will link to the message of democracy being dissolved into common humanity.

#### Playbox Theatre trading as Malthouse Theatre, *BLAK CABARET*

The project is an Indigenous Australian cabaret held annually as a key feature of Malthouse Theatre's Limited Editions season and rolled out as a roadshow to regional and outer suburban venues. *Blak Cabaret* gives audiences access to light-hearted, positive and personal anecdotes from Aboriginal Victorians, highlighting the common threads of all Victorian lives through comedy, music and dance.

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Museum Victoria, *Talking Difference Stage 2*

Building on the success of the community portable studio in *Arts About Us Stage 1*, this project will partner with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and selected schools to tour a purpose-built studio to schools in Brimbank, Casey, Hume and Melton. This will be supported by an annual fellowship for a media artist. The studio will provide an opportunity for students to understand and reflect on different perspectives of identity and diversity and to build teacher capacity in intercultural understanding both in the classroom, school environment and local community.

Kids Thrive (Cha Cha Sam), *Postcards from Nana*

This project is a multiple award winning story-concert featuring funky folk/pop songs for children aged three to 10 years, as well as grown-ups, about valuing differences, respecting cultural diversity and reconciliation. Working in over 50 regional and metropolitan libraries, the show will also be performed in art centres and at festivals.

Swan Hill Aboriginal Services, *Marruk*

This project will engage with Aboriginal and emerging refugee communities around Swan Hill. The project uses theatre, dance, music and puppetry to convey stories of the local area. A team of professional theatre artists will work with a local artist team of musicians, dancers and elder story tellers. Performances will be presented in Swan Hill, Robinvale and Kerang, and in the final year will form part of the Melbourne Indigenous Arts Festival tour.

CuriousWorks, *Meet+Eat*

This project is a broadcast quality short form documentary series set in the City of Hume. Each episode uses the act of sharing a meal as a way of getting people from different walks of life to sit down and have a yarn. The exchange of stories of two people who would otherwise never share a conversation is the core of project.

Western Region Health Centre (Barkley Arts Centre), *Sisters and Brothers*

This project uses the age-old power of music and mass singing to build empathy towards those who experience discrimination. Based in primary schools in Melbourne's west, a team of experienced artists and young artists from MASSIVE Hip Hop Choir will work with children aged 8-12 years to explore storytelling, collaborative song writing, musical rhythms from diverse cultural traditions and role play. This collaborative process will produce an annual large-scale musical performance featuring original songs, performed stories and a mass chorus. This performance will be taken to local and outer metropolitan festivals each year.