The Portland House Foundation provides funds to benefit vulnerable people, especially those who are living on low incomes, suffering chronic illness or disability, or are socially isolated. Activities are supported which assist people to move out of situations of disadvantage, and to become meaningfully engaged in work, education, culture and community life.
CATALYTIC PHILANTHROPY AND PEOPLE MOVING OUT OF DISADVANTAGE THROUGH THE ARTS

Genevieve Timmons  Philanthropic Executive, Portland House Foundation  Melbourne, Australia
Also Senior Fellow 1999, Johns Hopkins International Fellows in Philanthropy, Board Member, George Hicks Foundation, (Melbourne), Deputy Chair, Inner North Community Foundation, (Melbourne), Grants Adviser, Merrin Grenet Foundation (Melbourne), Board member, Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (Melbourne), Board member, Fellowship for Indigenous Leadership (Melbourne) and Fellow of Leadership Victoria (Melbourne)

The theme of this paper is to look at how the arts can be a catalyst for people to move out of their situations of disadvantage, or at least to begin that journey of recovery, removing barriers and rebuilding their lives. A key message is also the value of remaining flexible and open to interpretation of mission and charter, in order to deliver the best results from philanthropic programs.

To explore this theme, I will reflect on the development of the charter of the Portland House Foundation when it was established in 2004, to assist people to move out of disadvantage. I will then look at a range of projects which we have since funded, involving women in prison, people with disabilities, young people from diverse cultural backgrounds, and survivors of torture and trauma.

Developing our charter

In 2004 the charter for the Foundation was agreed: to assist people who are vulnerable and at risk to move out of situations of disadvantage, people suffering from illness or disability, living on low incomes, facing isolation and barriers because of their age, race or culture. A priority was to ensure that there was a direct and tangible benefit for people, in the shortest possible time after the money left our Foundation. As granting got underway, there were inevitable challenges to choose between the different activities and organisations eligible for funding. In order to guide these discussions and decisions, I spent time developing a model which explained how the charter could best be implemented.

The task was to articulate what it is that people need in order to move on from disadvantage. Having spent quite a long time working with social change and disadvantage agendas in the past, I realised the logic for decisions can often be implicit rather than explicit, and unpacking the rationale was a valuable exercise.

So I researched what it is that people need in order to live a fulfilled and meaningful life, through various discussions with grantmaking colleagues and peers in the non-profit sector. The United Nations Development Goals and Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs provided valuable references, and from this I developed a funding approach to underpin the charter for our foundation, which is what I call the Cluster Funding Model.

At the centre of the model are the people we are there to benefit are the most disadvantaged in our society – prisoners, refugees and asylum seekers, people with physical and mental illness, young unemployed, isolated and homeless people....
This model is based on the recognition that disadvantaged people require a cluster of things to be in place at the same time, in order for them to move out of disadvantage, to have a meaningful life, and to make a valued contribution to society. The cluster of things includes basics which would all take for granted in many people’s lives, but which are likely to have been missing because of disadvantage:

**EMERGENCY RELIEF** - money to pay for food, clothing, furniture, power and other basics  
**ACCOMMODATION** - stable and affordable housing  
**HEALTH & WELL BEING** – access to health care and safety  
**EDUCATION** – relevant opportunities to learn from cradle to grave  
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**LAW & JUSTICE** – safety and protection of rights under the law  
**LIFE SKILLS** – learning about parenting, anger management, culture, grooming, gardening  
**COMMUNITY CONNECTION** – a place to belong, where their contribution is valued  
**LEADERSHIP** – recognition as leaders and able to represent their own interests

These are also categories of funding or fields of interest which became the focus for funding decisions, and part of a classification and tracking system. While it was unlikely that organisations would be funded for activities which stretch across all the essential support areas of the Cluster Funding model, it was a priority that the Foundation invests in these activities with organisations which understand the approach and share the same ultimate aim for people to move on from their disadvantage.

When this model was drawn up 8 years ago, the arts was not included because it was seen to be less urgent, a ‘nice to have’ option, or irrelevant for people in difficult circumstances. But soon after the Foundation was underway, it became clear that there were disadvantaged groups and communities which remained out of reach of the Foundation, and opportunities for philanthropic grantmakers to provide meaningful support were not apparent.

People were coming to the Foundation with proposals showing how their organisations could engage with the people and communities we couldn’t reach, through the community arts process. Not only were these activities adding significant value for everyone involved, they were also winning recognition and acclaim for the people involved, and contributing to catalytic change in their lives. At the same time, a paper by Jo Barraket1 from the *QUT - Australian Centre for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies* was useful in deepening understanding of how the arts can be a vehicle for alleviating poverty and enhancing the lives of people who are otherwise socially excluded.

Barraket’s paper defines the arts as:

> ‘a broad term which embraces many forms of creative expression. It includes visual, performing and literary forms, and ranges from the ‘high’ arts to community-based creative activities. The term ‘community arts’ refers to a specific approach to creative activity that connects artists and local communities in using the arts as a means of expression and development.” P 3

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In addition to providing a useful international literature search, the paper describes examples and makes the case for why the arts is an important vehicle to address social exclusion and alleviate poverty.

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- improved educational performance and participation
- increased employment rates
- reduced levels of crime
- better (and more equal) standards of health
- enhanced personal development
- improved social cohesion and reduced social isolation
- active citizenship

As a result of the research and input from peers in the sector, our policy on funding for the arts was reviewed by the Foundation. It was agreed that the arts can be a critical first point for people facing barriers to initially step off, to recognise their own skills, develop their own voice, connect and take a meaningful place in community and occupy a space where they become visible and confident, and get started on their way out of disadvantage.

**3 SLIDE** Revisit Cluster Funding Strategy with arts inserted

**4 SLIDE** PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE IN ARTS AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

- **Valuing the quality of artistic input**, emphasising the importance of involving established artists in engaging and motivating participants
- **Facilitating successful risk taking**, supporting participants to establish and meet artistic and social challenges
- **Fostering collaboration and group ownership**, involving participants in setting the objectives and scope of specific initiatives
- **Evaluating outcomes, as well as outputs**, noting the importance of evaluating outcomes in terms of participants’ improved opportunities for social inclusion

**FOUR CASE STUDIES**

Following is a brief outline and images of several projects funded by the Portland House Foundation which illustrate how the arts have been harnessed as a vehicle for community and personal development. The activities are with organisations aiming to give voice and recognition to people who face significant social barriers:

- Somebody’s Daughter Theatre Company (women prisoners)
- Rollercoaster Theatre (people with disabilities)
- ARAB Anti Racism Action Band
- Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture/The Boite/African Women’s Choir

These projects have been chosen because they are consistent with the Portland House Charter, and illustrate the cluster funding model. They illustrate the ways in which healing, giving voice and rebuilding of lives is possible. Significantly, they build on leadership of the people intended to benefit, and these people are actively engaged in the artistic process - they are the actors and leaders.
in their own right rather than an audience or consumers of the arts. In each case they are seeing and realising greater possibilities for themselves through the arts, somersaulting into new skills, enthusiasm and opportunities for life.

Finally, and most importantly, they are not only changing their own lives but also contributing to the lives of others who are part of performances or audiences. To experience these artistic projects is to recognise the outstanding artistic talent and heroism that has resulted in electric performances and artistic statements, with messages which cannot be delivered any other way. All of them have been recognised through awards and command performances for their unique and valuable contributions.

5 SLIDE Quote from Pessoa “I’m the size of what I see, not the size of my stature”.

Fernando Pessoa, a famous Portuguese author, wrote “The Book of Disquiet”, which is one of the great literary gifts of the last century. In this book Pessoa says “I’m the size of what I see, not the size of my stature”. This quote appeared in the last annual report of Somebody’s Daughter Theatre Company. It points to the notion that the artists in these projects are capable of great things, perhaps regardless, or possibly because of, their life experiences. They succeed and flourish because they see in the arts process something bigger or different that they want to be part of, something that allows them to become more of themselves. And in addition to this personal growth, through the arts they are powerfully able to show other people things beyond themselves, to help grow the stature of others.

In these brief snapshots it is impossible to do justice to the depth and value of the work, and the achievements of the people involved. It would be more appropriate for them to be here to represent themselves. However, I hope you are encouraged to look out for them and experience first-hand their artistic endeavours sometime in the near future.
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Working with women in prison and post release and marginalised young people, this unique company has used the arts as a driver to break intergenerational cycles of abuse, addiction and institutionalisation of the most disenfranchised in our society.

Between 2000 and 2011, Somebody's Daughter devised and performed 22 original plays, staged 356 performances to more than 60,000 people, presented at 58 conferences, guided 656 community workshops, and prepared and mounted 27 art exhibitions! The Theatre Company regularly works in collaboration with education, health and welfare agencies to establish strong community partnerships and wide, new audiences for its work.

The performances of Somebody's Daughter are located inside the women's prison at Deer Park, and for audiences attending, the experience of negotiating security warnings and clearance in the weeks before, plus the forbidding environment on the night, are powerful reminders of the challenges of prison life. At a recent performance, it was moving to not only watch the women tell their story on stage through song and script, but also to see the young children in the audience who had come with grandparents or other family, mesmerised as they watched their mothers acting and singing.
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Four years ago, with a small grant and substantial investment of volunteer time, the theatre company had a very successful debut performance of a production called “realeyes”. The performance was highly acclaimed in its first season, with repeat seasons and tours.

As reviewed during the Melbourne Fringe Festival in 2011: “realeyes is a gutsy and delicate portrayal of lives lived through the experience of 'disability.' Using sound, voice and gesture, these powerful performers seduce us into the potent beat of the city, confronting isolation and finding foot-holds in a series of intimate encounters. Radiant, raw and elegant, realeyes transcends the normality of the everyday and offers up the possibility of tangible connection. “

In 20120 – 2011, funding was provided from the Portland House Foundation for a member of the Rollercoaster ensemble, David Baker, to complete a 2 year internship with Red Stitch Theatre. In 2012, David was selected as one of only five artists to represent Australia in the UK, at Unlimited UK in August to September 2012. This is the largest Disability Festival in the world and focuses on Disability Art and the rights of people with a disability in the world of Art.
Case study 3  **Anti Racism Action Band - A.R.A.B**  Young people from diverse cultural backgrounds

http://arab-vass.com/

The Anti Racism Action Band - A.R.A.B - is a culturally and artistically eclectic community-based youth performing arts program in Melbourne’s northern suburbs. The A.R.A.B program currently works with 250 young people from 50 cultural backgrounds, fusing traditional and street dance forms with theatre, spoken word, original music and video. All A.R.A.B performances are underpinned with local stories and themes of cultural and suburban identity.

Following the events of September 11, 2001, there was a backlash towards Arabic communities across Australia, as no doubt experienced in many parts of the world. A.R.A.B emerged as a creative outlet for Arabic young people in Melbourne’s north who were experiencing racial vilification. Recognising that racism, gang culture and discrimination against and between young people in the region was also fuelled by low self-esteem and a lack of creative outlets across all cultural groupings the Victorian Arabic Social Services and the budding A.R.A.B team threw open its doors to all young people.

The results were explosive and the ensemble quickly expanded in size and form. A.R.A.B is now a large multi-disciplinary program that works actively to raise self-esteem and confidence, challenge racial tensions and promote social inclusion whilst imparting performance, event management, social and life skills and crucial employment pathways.

Young people are engaged in the program through school and community partnerships, taking part in main performances, special projects, training and employment, and a ‘Tawasal’ gigging platform.

A.R.A.B participants have performed at over 300 public and community events from the Local Youth Justice Centre to the Melbourne International Arts Festival to the Gotham Comedy Club New York. A recent collaboration between A.R.A.B. and Melbourne Youth Chamber Strings combined hip-hop and classical music in a special one-off performance, SubUrban Exchange, at the Melbourne Recital Centre, which brought the house down. The project not only provided participants with a profound educative experience, but exposed the work of each organization to the other. It also provided family and friends of the performers with an opportunity to experience and enjoy a professionally staged concert in the Melbourne Recital Centre. See Newsboys Foundation at http://newsboysfoundation.org.au/
Case study 4  **THE AFRICAN WOMEN’S CHOIR WITH THE BOITE AND THE FOUNDATION FOR THE SURVIVORS OF TORTURE**


Australia has provided refuge for thousands of people fleeing from regions torn by years of conflict and political upheaval. People come from 150 countries across the world. Most humanitarian entrants settle successfully in Australia and, like many millions of migrants before them, make a positive contribution to Australia’s social, cultural, intellectual and economic tapestry. Their capacity to do this is strongly influenced by access to the personal and material resources required to overcome the impact that torture and war related trauma has had on their lives. Not everyone can arrive and get started on the business of living, and rebuild their shattered lives.

In 1987, a small group of people – refugees, medical and legal professionals and human rights supporters - met to discuss the provision of health services to survivors of torture. A unique model of service was proposed to assist survivors to move on and rebuild their lives. The feasibility and seeding of this service was supported by two philanthropic trusts - The Myer Foundation and the Reichstein, which eventually led to government funding for one community development worker, Paris Aristotle, who commenced work in a small house in Parkville.

In the years that followed, Foundation House has grown to become a world leader in the provision of services to survivors of torture and war related trauma. Today, the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture employs more than 160 people and provides services to more than 4000 survivors each year. It also provides training, consultancy and support for service providers in the health, education and welfare sectors.

The African Women’s Choir came together at Foundation House, lead by a group of women from Sierra Leone. With support from The Boite, the Choir has become independent now gone on to their own huge success and popularity. They have produced CDs and are regular performers at arts, cultural and community events. The Choir is truly a great gift and example of what is possible through the arts when people decide to :

- Reduce isolation and build social cohesion
- Heal damage and rebuild shattered lives
- Feed the spirit and our humanity
- Give others joy, surprise and a place to learn

In these images they are singing with a choir of over 400 women at one of the top Australian venues, Federation Square in Melbourne. A special anthem was written for that night called “Love and Justice be my Name”. The performances were electric, underpinned with grace and courage, having moved through horrific experiences to a place where they share joy and talent.
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SLIDE 11 - 13
Case study 2 ‘ROLLERCOASTER THEATRE’ People with disabilities leading out through theatre
http://rollercoastertheatre.net.au/

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Australia has provided refuge for thousands of people fleeing from regions torn by years of conflict and political upheaval. People come from 150 countries across the world. Most humanitarian entrants settle successfully in Australia and, like many millions of migrants before them, make a positive contribution to Australia’s social, cultural, intellectual and economic tapestry. Their capacity to do this is strongly influenced by access to the personal and material resources required to overcome the impact that torture and war related trauma has had on their lives. Not everyone can arrive and get started on the business of living, and rebuild their shattered lives.

In 1987, a small group of people – refugees, medical and legal professionals and human rights supporters - met to discuss the provision of health services to survivors of torture. A unique model of service was proposed to assist survivors to move on and rebuild their lives. The feasibility and seeding of this service was supported by two philanthropic trusts - The Myer Foundation and the Reichstein, which eventually led to government funding for one community development worker, Paris Aristotle, who commenced work in a small house in Parkville.

In the years that followed, Foundation House has grown to become a world leader in the provision of services to survivors of torture and war related trauma. Today, the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture employs more than 160 people and provides services to more than 4000 survivors each year. It also provides training, consultancy and support for service providers in the health, education and welfare sectors.

The African Women’s Choir came together at Foundation House, lead by a group of women from Sierra Leone. With support from The Boite, the Choir has become independent now gone on to their own huge success and popularity. They have produced CDs and are regular performers at arts, cultural and community events. The Choir is truly a great gift and example of what is possible through the arts when people decide to:

- Reduce isolation and build social cohesion
- Heal damage and rebuild shattered lives
- Feed the spirit and our humanity
- Give others joy, surprise and a place to learn

In these images they are singing with a choir of over 400 women at one of the top Australian venues, Federation Square in Melbourne. A special anthem was written for that night called “Love and Justice be my Name”. The performances were electric, underpinned with grace and courage, having moved through horrific experiences to a place where they share joy and talent.