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CuriousWorks
ANNUAL REPORT 2014

CuriousWorks is a community arts and media organisation that identifies, nurtures and builds a new generation of storytellers. Using film, theatre, digital technology and education programs, we enable individuals and communities in the margins of Australian society to tell their stories powerfully and sustainably and ensure these stories occupy a central space in the digital cultural distribution channels of the future.

We seek to increase social, cultural and economic capital for individuals, communities and society by building skills, storytelling and leadership capacity. Our ultimate goal is to become redundant, but currently the need has never been stronger to tell the stories of multicultural Australia that are too often ignored or misrepresented.

CuriousWorks produces world-leading cross-media art with, by and for communities. We facilitate and create grassroots and professional artistic work that can be accessed online on our computers, mobile phones and a plethora of new and emerging devices.

We also create live, interdisciplinary arts experiences for national and international arts festivals and key production houses. These major artistic works extend the narrative of the online digital works and are heightened moments of truth, celebration, recognition and belonging for the communities involved.

We Value:

- Diversity
- Courage
- Celebration
- Recognition
- Belonging

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CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

In 2014, CuriousWorks has cemented its place as a unique community arts organisation. CuriousWorks has demonstrated its ability to empower marginalised communities to tell their stories and to transform these stories into accessible but sophisticated pieces of artwork which are told from various platforms; the stage, online and on film.

Furthermore, the past year has not only seen CuriousWorks continue to embed the power and pride of storytelling in local Australian communities but to begin a global journey which will see these stories shared far and wide.

In stark contrast to the growth in artistic opportunities that are constantly being presented to CuriousWorks, the company has also recognised the importance of consolidation and building strong platforms, both operational and financial, to support strategy. We are immensely grateful to our new funding partner, the Nelson Meers Foundation, who share a passion and understanding for the creation of quality art and the importance of bringing community members along the production journey. This ensures the authentic telling of their story as well as providing exceptional opportunities to build capacity and skills locally.

We also appreciated the opportunities to present at both The Funding Network and 10x10. Both of these events were successful in terms of fundraising but what was really exciting was the sharing of CuriousWorks mission with new people, whose encouragement and endorsement was hugely rewarding for the all of is who attended.

On behalf of the Management Committee I would like to pass on my heartfelt thanks to Anthea Fawcett, our very committed Chairperson and Chris Greiner, a Committee member of immense experience, both of whom resigned at the last AGM. The value in the knowledge they shared with us was of immeasurable value and we appreciate the time and passion they brought to the committee and wish them all the best with their future endeavours. Meanwhile, we are pleased to welcome our new member Melody Ng whose skills continue to diversify and deepen the experience within the Management Committee.

I congratulate Shakthi and the team on their commitment to bringing to life the real stories of our community. This commitment has resulted in the generation of quality artistic productions and authentic connections between people allowing for massive learning and understanding. I look forward to the coming year with a reinvigorated Management Committee and a hugely talented team of artists and community leaders who are sure to ignite further creative opportunities across the communities they work within.

Rachel Kerry
Acting Chairperson
CuriousWorks Committee of Management

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

CuriousWorks operates within an award-winning model focused on building social, economic and cultural capital in communities that exist in the margins of Australian society. We do this by building storytelling and leadership capacity in individuals and communities. We do not document or represent them. We give them the tools, training and opportunities to speak for themselves.

We respectfully collaborate with communities to create innovative, acclaimed artistic product that celebrates their culture. Step by step, we're growing a new generation of storytellers by building cutting-edge arts and media capacity in some of the most under-resourced places in the country. Our process empowers – rather than exploits – those communities and brings long term, positive change to lives of our storytellers.

Our ultimate goal is redundancy.

The three main strands of our program are interconnected and interdependent reflecting the characteristics of the communities we work with. They are proudly intercultural, interdisciplinary and challenge the status quo. They are:

Artistic: These are our highest profile projects. CuriousWorks brings Australia's multicultural communities into collaboration with professional artists and arts organisations to create innovative, acclaimed artistic products that celebrate culture and diversity. This may be artistic content for the internet; site specific arts events; films, theatre or live, interdisciplinary arts experiences for national and international arts festivals and key production houses for, by and with communities.

Community: Using an award-winning model of CuriousWorks 'cultural leaders' establishing long-term relationships with multi-cultural communities, we develop the technical and artistic skills that enables powerful cultural storytelling through digital media.

Social Enterprise: Training and production services in filmmaking, creative online media and site-specific art events for councils, communities, schools, non-profits and corporations.

ARTISTIC PROGRAM

Foreword by S. Shakthidharan

On the surface, the highlight of 2014 was a string of successful CuriousWorks screenings and shows to Western Sydney audiences and around the world. *Meet+Eat, A Counting and Cracking of Heads, Mamu, The Other Journey* and *Rizzy's 18th Birthday Party* all took untold stories of Australia and showcased them to physical audiences in Sydney and Melbourne as well as national and international audiences on TV and online, all with great success.

But below the surface, the highlight of 2014 for me was nurturing particular relationships with some of the most exciting local and global arts institutions. These relationships are about a shared vision: that organisations can work respectfully with communities that feel a deep sense of marginalisation to create art that has a genuine, lasting social impact - but is also eloquent, powerful and entertaining for wider audiences. Achieving both goals properly is no easy task, but that is what CuriousWorks does and it's what is unique about us.

The past year was particularly exciting in this regard, because we started building relationships with contemporary art institutions (Carriageworks, New York's Streaming Museum), performing arts institutions (Belvoir, Melbourne Theatre Company), media institutions (The Guardian) and key film industry bodies (Felix Media, Sydney Film Festival, SBS/NITV) with these twin goals in mind. It shows that community arts practice is starting to be appreciated in the wider industry on a deeper level, and this promises enormous potential for both CuriousWorks and the communities it serves over the next few years.

HIGHLIGHTS:

***Rizzy's 18th Birthday Party* @ Carriageworks**

In 2014 CuriousWorks embarked on its first feature film, taking a major step forward in our mission to share the largely untold stories of Australia's multicultural communities with a wider audience. The script was co-written by Guido Gonzalez, one of our key cultural leaders, and artistic director S. Shakthidharan. It was inspired by real life events from Guido's past.

Production took place over May and June, and followed CuriousWorks' unique model of community collaboration, pairing industry professionals with a cast and crew largely made up of young people from Western Sydney. Through his role as Associate Artist at Carriageworks, Shakthi and long-time CuriousWorks collaborator Aimee Falzon crafted an original soundtrack for the film.

In October, *Rizzy's 18th Birthday Party* debuted at Carriageworks as part of its 2014 Artistic Program. The show was a joint cinematic and concert experience - multiple video projections surrounded the audience to broadcast the work, as two musicians (Aimée Falzon and S. Shakthidharan) performed the soundtrack live each night. The company had a brilliant four night season, with near sell out audiences and a four star review from Sydney Scoop.

In 2015, the project will be adapted from a live audiovisual show into a traditional feature film format, and very exciting partnerships are in place for its slated cinema release.

The development of *Riz* has been proudly supported by Carriageworks and Australia Council for the Arts.

A Counting & Cracking of Heads – Development with Melbourne Theatre Company and Belvoir

A Counting and Cracking of Heads is a theatre work about four generations of a Sri Lankan Australian family, journeying from Sri Lanka in the 1950s to the Western Sydney of today. Following a successful creative development at Carriageworks in 2013, *A Counting and Cracking of Heads* picked up the interest of both Melbourne Theatre Company and Belvoir, two of the most important theatre companies in the country.

A reading of the work was presented on the 13 & 15 February 2014 at Melbourne Theatre Company, and further script development took place over the course of 2014 with Belvoir. Belvoir have now come on board as co-producers of the work, with a view to a premiere season in early 2017. This has, in turn led to deeper conversations between the two companies about future collaborations.

A Counting and Cracking of Heads is a large scale, landmark theatre work that has been in development since 2010. 2014 was a pivotal year for it in terms of partnerships and industry awareness. It heralds new horizons for CuriousWorks, as the company explores the potential of collaboration with Australia's major performing arts institutions, to create work that has both genuine social impact and outstanding artistic excellence.

Meet+Eat Series One Launch & Series Two Production

Meet+Eat celebrates the extraordinary and culturally rich lives of diverse Australians through a stunning collection of beautifully crafted and intimate films. The intercultural *Meet+Eat* documentary series encourages a deep and personal conversation about diversity in our communities. 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.

In 2014 CuriousWorks launched the first series into the online arena at *www.meeteat.com.au.* A targeted social media campaign was rolled out to support the distribution of these compelling stories to a much larger audience. In 2014, *Meet+Eat* Series 1 reached an estimated 37,646 people, with over 7,000 YouTube views, 2000 Facebook Likes and 6000 engaged users actively commenting & sharing the series. Additional stories and footage provided our audiences with a wonderful opportunity to dig deeper and continue the *Meet+Eat* journey.

To share a couple of our favourite blog comments:
"The value of intercultural musical collaboration is undeniable when you hear the beautiful music David Osborne and Yousif Aziz have created for their film." Matt

"The quality of production coupled with the richness of content, will see this as an exciting tool to break down barriers and start conversations. Thanks to you and the team for your hard work." Sophie

In 2014 we were also deep in production on the second series of the project, unearthing another six tasty stories of food and friendship made with the communities of south-western Sydney and Hume in northern Melbourne. Series 2 launched on Harmony Day (21 March) 2015.

Meet+Eat has gone from strength to strength, engaging large numbers of people in the films production, telling stories, exchanging food recipes, public gatherings and online broadcasts. The films have been shown at Swan Hill Harmony Day 2014, Geelong's Food of the World Festival, Spectres of Evaluation Conference, Regional Arts Victoria Conference, Melbourne's Federation Square, Hume's Interfaith Network Conference and the Robinvale Food & Healthy Living Festival, to name a few.

The Victorian *Meet+Eat* team were invited to share the *Meet+Eat* experience with communities in Robinvale, Victoria with a five-day residency that culminated in a huge community event to celebrate diversity, music, food and film. Share in this experience @ThisLink. CuriousWorks also invested in the skills development of Cultural Leaders of Hume in 2014 with a hands-on filmmaking training program provided supported by EastWeb Community grants.

Meet+Eat is an initiative of CuriousWorks, with the generous support of VicHealth, Scanlon Foundation, Arts NSW, Australia Council for the Arts and Hume City Council's Community Grants Program.

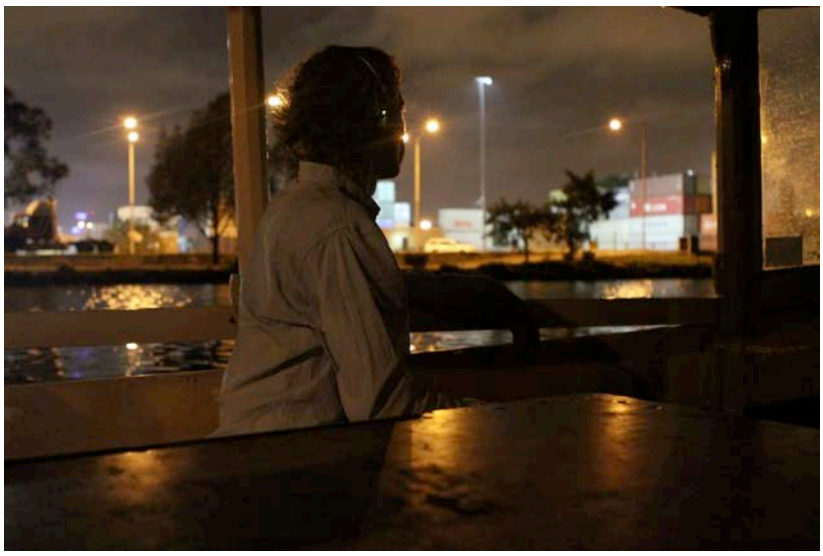
***The Other Journey* @ Spectres of Evaluation Conference**
Footscray Community Arts Centre, Melbourne

CuriousWorks presented *The Other Journey* as part of the Spectres of Evaluation Conference by the Centre for Cultural Partnerships, at Footscray Community Arts Centre in February 2014.

Following its premiere season at Parramasala in Western Sydney in 2011, and a tour to Tasmania's *Ten Days on the Island* in 2013, the company was thrilled to bring the live art work to Melbourne audiences in 2014.

The show had its usual effect on audiences, engendering a quiet and deeply reflective experience amongst its attendees. Many marked the show as the highlight of their conference.

Alongside the show, CuriousWorks also presented some of its *Meet+Eat* films and presented on a number of panels throughout the conference. The conference was the final point in a multi-year relationship between CuriousWorks and the Spectres of Evaluation research project – a partnership which was integral to the process of CuriousWorks formalising its nine year model of collaborating with communities.



***Mamu* @ imagineNATIVE Film and Media Arts Festival & Broadcast on NITV (SBS)**

Curtis Taylor's brilliantly spooky short film *Mamu* is making waves across Australia & the world. *Mamu* tells the story of a young man who disregards ancient customs, and must face the terrifying consequences. The film was produced by CuriousWorks as part of *The Stories Project*: http://thestoriesproject.com.au/

In October 2014, Curtis was invited to the *imagineNATIVE Film and Media Arts Festival* in Canada where *Mamu* was screened as part of the festival's official selection. SBS has now licensed the film and it is aired periodically on NITV & SBS.

See excerpts from the film and learn more about Curtis's vision through this candid behind-the-scenes video @ThisLink

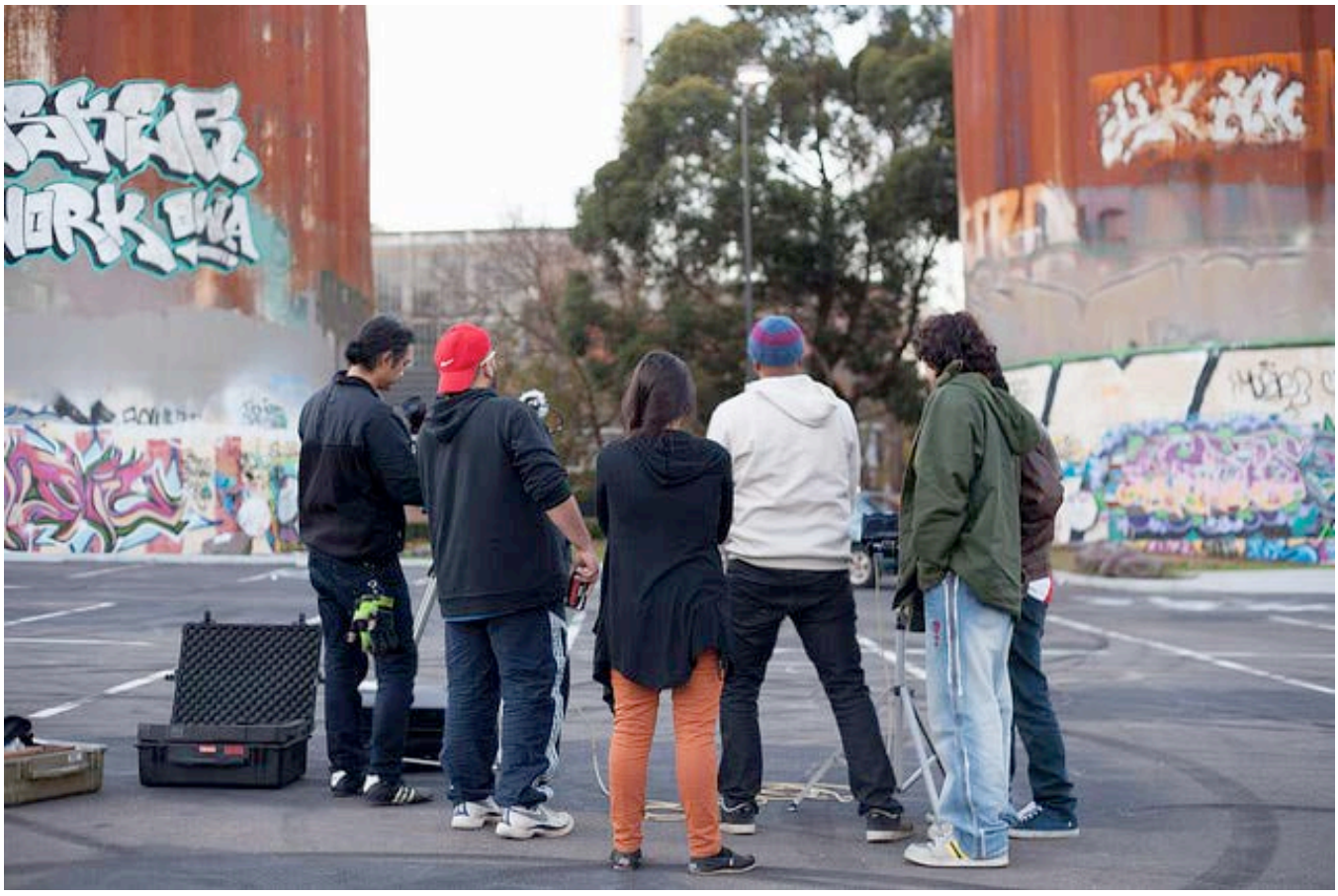
COMMUNITY PROGRAM

In 2014, CuriousWorks' grassroots community program brings together a broad section of cross-sector partners that work cooperatively to slowly relieve some of the most entrenched disadvantage in our focus regions.

We collaborated with Settlement Services International to run a series of digital storytelling workshops with newly arrived refugees.

We have further rooted ourselves as a company in Western Sydney through our Curious Creators program, a grassroots program responsible for identifying, training and unleashing a new generation of Western Sydney storytellers.

The Curious Creators are the most engaged participants from across our grassroots projects and in 2014 they have been guided and mentored by Guido Gonzalez, who himself entered our grassroots program in 2010 and joined the first group of CuriousWorks cultural leaders. As our work in this community continues to flourish, we are very proud to note that all levels of our community model are working!



HIGHLIGHTS:

Curious Creators

Curious Creators are a growing group of young cultural leaders who are digitally savvy, committed to their community's development and capable of telling their own stories, in their own ways, to significant audiences here and overseas.

The Curious Creators program is primarily focused on capacity building. Members go through intensive training and develop their own small projects. Over several years, they build professional level creative, technical, leadership and business development skills. Starting from a group of about six young people in 2013, the program has grown to more than 20 members in 2014. The Curious Creators were intimately involved in the production of our first feature film, *Riz*, fulfilling important roles such as first assistant director, second camera operator and assistant producer.

Digital Storytelling @ Settlement Services International

Over six weeks, CuriousWorks collaborated with an extraordinary group of nine asylum seekers on a digital storytelling project in partnership with Settlement Services International. The participants were a group of men in their 20s and 30s, who for various reasons were forced to leave their home countries and seek refuge in Australia.

Eight powerful short films were created, covering the spectrum of the refugee experience - from life under oppressive and dangerous regimes, to uncertain journeys, to finding joy in a country where they feel safe. The films were showcased at the Granville Youth and Community Recreation Centre in November and one of the films, *"The Suffering of Asylum Seekers",* can be viewed @ThisLink.

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE:

CuriousWorks provides training and production services in filmmaking and creative online media for local council, schools, non-profit organisations and corporations. We develop individuals' and organisations' skill and capacity in storytelling and change agency.

HIGHLIGHTS

Aboriginal Legal Services – Talking FactSheet Program

CuriousWorks teamed up with ALS Field Officers in remote communities across NSW to create a series of short films featuring 'Yarn Ups' around legal issues in Aboriginal communities. Travelling to Wagga Wagga, Bourke and Taree for four-day filmmaking workshops with young people resulted in a powerful series of films that aim to increase awareness of, and access to legal rights information. The films can be viewed @ThisLink

Child Abuse Prevention Services – School Holiday Digital Storytelling Program

CuriousWorks spent five action-packed days with 23 young people between the ages of 8 – 14, making five short films based on various themes around 'safety'. Developed, scripted and shot, all by the kids themselves, these films are now shared on their own YouTube channel.

"CuriousWorks - you were wonderful. Thanks for your energy, your ideas, your patience and for making it all work"- The CAPS team.

Way Out West Festival for Children

An annual favourite for CuriousWorks is training up the official festival reporters for the *Way Out West Festival for Children* at Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre. In 2014, these young reporters were in the capable hands of Cultural Leader, Guido Gonzalez, who taught them all the tools of the trade necessary to document and interview the artists, organisers and visitors to this awesome kids' festival.

OPERATIONS

Australia Council for the Arts – Community Partnerships Key Producer Organisation
In 2014, CuriousWorks had its first year as one of the country's Key Producer organisations supported by Australia Council for the Arts. Ongoing core funding has had a huge impact on CuriousWorks. Alongside lifting our quality of community development and artistic creation, it's enabled us to dedicate time to proper partnership development, idea creation, documentation and evaluation. Financial security has also enabled us to craft long-term relationships with community and arts institutions, lifting the impact of our work to another level. We will be working hard in 2015 to hopefully secure core funding again from 2016-2021 under the new Australia Council for the Arts funding model.

Human Resources
In 2014 Katherine McLean joined the CuriousWorks team as CEO. She applied her formidable leadership skills to partnership development, systems and operations, communications and strategic thinking. Katherine worked with our General Manager, Vanessa Hyde, to significantly improve our internal systems and processes. She worked with our Artistic Director, S. Shakthidharan, to further distill the CuriousWorks vision, changing staffing structure and deepening relationships with our core partners.

A key achievement was securing the support of the Nelson Meers Foundation for our Community Program over 2015 and 2016, and her strategic and systems work with us will have long-term beneficial effects for the company, for which we are truly grateful. Katherine has returned to her home town of Newcastle and further study in 2015, and Shakthi returns to the position of Executive Director. A Community Director and Communications Director will be hired in 2015, entrenching the new vision and structure for the company moving forward.

Committee of Management
In 2014, CuriousWorks farewelled two longstanding and dedicated members of the Committee of Management, Chairperson Anthea Fawcett and Public Officer Chris Greiner. Their leadership and knowledge has had a huge impact on CuriousWorks' development over the years and their valued contribution will be dearly missed. Rachel Kerry stepped up as our new Chairperson in May.

Melody Ng joined the team in February 2014. She has been a Legal Counsel at Telstra for more than five years and an Arts Law volunteer. Melody is interested in an Arts Board environment, having an input in the legal context.

Fundraising
2014 was a successful year with philanthropic support and fundraising. We are immensely grateful to our new funding partner, the Nelson Meers Foundation, who has supported the position of a new Community Director for CuriousWorks, commencing in 2015. In July, we presented a pitch at *The Funding Network* and successfully raised $25,000 for our Cultural Leaders Program. In November, we presented at the unique *10x10* event in Sydney and received more than $10,000 from young professionals and creatives in support of the Curious Creators Program. We would like to thank *The Funding Network, 10x10* and all individual donors for their generous support in 2014.

2014 Staff:
Artistic Director – S.Shakthidharan
CEO – Katherine McLean
General Manager – Vanessa Hyde
Creative Producer – Mark Taylor
Creative Producer – Emma Macey-Storch
Cultural Leader & Artist – Guido Gonzalez
Lead Artist (Riz) – Aimée Falzon

2014 Committee Members:
Chairperson – Rachel Kerry
Chairperson (resigned May) – Anthea Fawcett
Treasurer – Darren O'Beirne
Public Officer – Melody Ng
Public Officer (resigned June) – Chris Greiner
Secretary – Vanessa Hyde
General Member – Marc Brandon
General Member – S.Shakthidharan

CuriousWorks is proudly supported by:
The Federal Government through the Australian Council for the Arts – Community Partnerships
The NSW Government through Arts NSW
Scanlon Foundation
Nelson Meers Foundation
VicHealth
Hume City Council
Liverpool City Council
Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre

2014 in NUMBERS

Participants in CuriousWorks programs	505
Cultural Leaders mentored	16
Emerging artists employed	25
New works created	8
Number of performances, screening & public events	48
Audience Numbers (physical)	3,484
Audience Numbers (online)	68,000