

Ausdance NSW Dance Space Report 2005

Prepared for NSW Ministry for the Arts
Level 9, St James Centre
111 Elizabeth Street
Sydney, NSW 2000

Prepared by Ausdance NSW
Pier 4, The Wharf
Hickson Road
Walsh Bay, NSW 2000
Tel: 02 9256 4800
Email: administration@dance.net.au

CONTENTS

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
2. POLICY FRAMEWORK
 - 2A. NSW MINISTRY FOR THE ARTS
 - 2B. AUSDANCE NSW
3. BACKGROUND
4. DEFINITION
5. SURVEYS
6. CASE STUDIES
7. AUDIT
 - 7A. AUDIT FINDINGS
 - 7B. COUNCIL OWNED AND/OR OPERATED VENUES THAT HAVE THE CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE A RANGE OF ACTIVITIES INCLUDING DANCE
 - 7C. CONSIDERATIONS
8. CONCLUSION
9. ACTION
10. RECOMMENDATION
11. ATTACHMENTS
 - 11A SURVEY
 - 11B. CASE STUDY – CALISTA SINCLAIR
 - 11C. CASE STUDY – WESTERN SYDNEY DANCE ACTION

Please note the Space Audit is available in soft copy only

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides the basis of an acquittal of funding in relation to grant monies provided to Ausdance NSW by the NSW Ministry for the Arts to investigate the level of provision and status of dance rehearsal space for the independent dance sector in Sydney.

2. POLICY FRAMEWORK

2A. NSW MINISTRY FOR THE ARTS

The NSW Ministry for the Arts in its Strategic Plan 2004-2007 outlines four key strategic priorities for arts development in NSW, including strengthening the arts and cultural environment.

The provision of cultural facilities and infrastructure for the arts is crucial for developing and strengthening practice and presentation in art forms such as dance.

2B. AUDANCE NSW

In its 2006-2008 Business Plan Ausdance NSW states that the availability of appropriately appointed, affordable dance space for rehearsal and dance development is vital for the survival of independent dance.¹ The availability of space for dancers to use for creating and rehearsing work has direct implications on wider issues in the sector, including the generation of opportunities for training and professional development, the development of initiatives that raise the profile of dance in the state and the establishment of a culture of partnership development within the dance sector. Ausdance NSW has based its strategic vision on addressing these issues to ultimately ensure that the dance sector in NSW can be positioned to have a sustainable future for dance to be a dynamic and innovative force in the cultural life of NSW.

3. BACKGROUND

In 2001 Ausdance NSW hosted a meeting of 100 representatives from the NSW dance community to undertake consultation with the sector and to identify the needs and issues facing independent dance in NSW.

The majority of the meeting's attendees were choreographers and practitioners who were working independently of mainstream dance companies. The meeting identified the critical issues that were facing the state's independent dance practitioners at the time. In addition, the meeting explored a number of more general issues relating to current and future opportunities for dance development across NSW. Due to the level of attendance and strong representation at the meeting, Ausdance NSW undertook further consultation with the dance sector to prioritise the issues.

As a result of the initial meeting and the information gained from the consultations, Ausdance NSW identified two core issues that had critical implications for independent dance practitioners and thus the long term development of contemporary dance in NSW.

The core issues were identified as:

- the lack of space to devise new work, and
- the lack of appropriate space to rehearse work.

¹ See page 4, Ausdance NSW Business Plan 2006-2008.

The lack of space for devising new work and the lack of appropriate space to rehearse work were considered to be the critical issues that were creating significant levels of inconsistencies in the quantity and quality of contemporary dance production in NSW, compared to Victoria, where the independent dance sector was thriving.

In order to address the two core issues, Ausdance NSW established a partnership with the City of Sydney to identify and establish a network of suitable spaces for use by Sydney based professional dancers and choreographers. Negotiations between Ausdance NSW and the City of Sydney resulted in the identification of the Bulwara Road facility in Ultimo. The City indicated that it would provide the facility rent free and investigate the conversion of the site in order to create an appropriate dance facility. In 2002 Ausdance NSW secured \$10,000 funding from the NSW State Government to support the development of the Bulwara Road facility as the first step in the establishment of the dance space network.

Also in 2002, Woollahra City Council was embarking upon the development of The Drill hall in Rushcutters Bay as a site for choreographic development. Supported by the State Government Ausdance NSW, in response to the opportunity provided by Woollahra City Council, developed Critical Path, an organisation that services the needs of the state's choreographers. Critical Path was established initially under the auspice of Ausdance NSW and become an incorporated association in 2004. Critical Path manages The Drill program. For nine months a year, choreographers work at The Drill to explore ideas for the creation of new work. The Drill and Critical Path have emerged to be significant forces in the contemporary dance sector and in the cultural life of NSW. The Drill is considered to be an industry benchmark for the provision of dance space for choreographic development.

In 2003 Ausdance NSW indicated to the NSW Ministry for the Arts that the dance space network and Bulwara Road facility project was delayed due to a change in personnel and priorities at the City of Sydney. In 2002 and 2003 Ausdance NSW had managed the establishment of Critical Path. This was a major achievement for the organisation. As a result of the establishment of The Drill and Critical Path, which provides space for choreographers to research and develop new work, there was a need to make a reassessment of the two core issues that were initially identified by the dance community and Ausdance NSW in 2001. Given that the first issue; the provision of space to research and develop new work, had been addressed through the establishment of The Drill and Critical Path, Ausdance NSW was in a position to address the second issue; the provision of appropriate space to rehearse work.

To this end, Ausdance NSW was successful in its application to the Ministry, that the \$10,000 funding received for the dance space network and Bulwara Road facility be redirected into addressing the need for independent dance practitioners to have appropriate space to rehearse work.

Ausdance NSW embarked upon a methodology for investigating the levels in the provision and status of dance rehearsal space. Ausdance NSW auditing the current levels of appropriate dance rehearsal space in metropolitan Sydney and Western

Sydney ². Once this data was collated and analysed, Ausdance NSW was able to identify the gaps that exist in the current level of facility provision. This form of research was applied in order to function on two levels:

- To develop a comprehensive listing of dance rehearsal space and publish this as a resource for dance practitioners to access when seeking to secure an appropriate facility
- To form the basis for making recommendations into further investigations for securing dedicated dance rehearsal space that is accessible to the independent dance sector.

In addition to undertaking the space audit, Ausdance NSW undertook further consultation with the sector through the implementation of surveys and the development of industry case studies. This provided a qualitative assessment that the impact of the low level of provision of facilities was having upon dancers, dance companies and dance producers.

4. DEFINITION

The first step in undertaking an analysis of the audit and assessing the gaps in the levels of dance space provision was to establish a definition for what constituted 'appropriate dance rehearsal space'. A definition was established that was informed by the needs of the dance community. An appropriate dance rehearsal space is required to have the following qualities:

Adequate size (12m x 18m), sprung wooden flooring to prevent injury, five metre high ceilings, natural light, good ventilation and temperature control, change & shower facilities, disability access, affordable and be available for block bookings. Tarketts and mirrors would be an ideal requirement but are not essential. In addition, the space should be located close to public transport. The space could be publicly or privately owned.

5. SURVEYS

In order to gauge a wider understanding of the spaces being used by independent dance practitioners, a survey was developed and distributed to Ausdance NSW members. The survey and the collated data are provided as an attachment. (Attachment 1).

6. CASE STUDIES

Dance artist, Calista Sinclair, and Director of Western Sydney Dance Action, Kathy Baykitch, were selected to participate in completing case studies to gain a cross-sectional perspective on the impact that the lack of dance rehearsal space was having upon the opportunities for and development of the independent dance sector. (Attachment 2).

7. AUDIT

A comprehensive audit of dance space was developed by Ausdance NSW to identify the types of facilities currently available for use by independent dance practitioners. The collation of the audit data is provided as a spreadsheet that lists the venues, facilities costs and restrictions. (Attachment 3)

² The Parramatta Local Government Area was prioritised as the focus point for Western Sydney due to its central geographical location and the level of dance activity that has developed since the establishment in 2000 of Western Sydney Dance Action at Parramatta Riverside Theatres.

7A. AUDIT FINDINGS

Analysis of the audit data identified two distinct types of spaces currently available.

These are:

- Dedicated dance space; designed for dance activity
- Council owned and/or operated venues that have the capacity to accommodate a range of activities including dance (including town halls, community and activity centre)

Both types of spaces are currently available in the City of Sydney and Parramatta. The spaces and key considerations for their usage are summarised below:

Parramatta	Issues
The Lennox Theatre (Riverside Theatres)	Working theatre not a rehearsal space
Jane Scali Performing Arts	Block Bookings not available

Sydney	Issues
The Drill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restricted in access to a curated program of events run & selected by Critical Path • Restricted to 'emerged' choreographers (NSW based artists who have produced one work in a professional context) • Restricted to research and development
Company Dance Space – Sydney Dance Company, Bangarra, Legs on the Wall, NIDA, NAISDA etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unaffordable for the independent dance sector, prices on average range from \$30-\$45 per hour with the exception of Newtown Theatre \$15 per hour and The Seymour Centre \$20 per hour³) • Availability limited. Hire is restricted to when the companies are not in rehearsal
Independent Dance Studios	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OMEO – Future uncertain, the building that houses OMEO is currently for sale • Brent Street Studios - \$40 per hour • Queen Street Studios - \$14 per hour (floor is currently not suitable for working in bare feet)

³ This facility is located underground and has conditions that are not suitable for use by dancers.

7B. COUNCIL OWNED AND/OR OPERATED VENUES THAT HAVE THE CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE A RANGE OF ACTIVITIES INCLUDING DANCE

Out of 97 council spaces audited the following eight have been identified as potentially suitable for dance.

While the spaces are considered to be affordable, a number of additional considerations mean that the venues are less suitable than suggested at 'face value'.

Council Venues	Issues
<p>Parramatta Parramatta Town Hall - \$41 - \$47 per hour Granville Town Hall (\$58 per hour)</p> <p>Sydney Peter Forsyth Auditorium (\$40 per hour \$20 per hour community rate further reduced rates available on application) Redfern Community Centre \$25 per hour JNC \$30 per hour Glebe Town hall (neg \$15 - \$50) Redfern Town Hall (neg \$15 - \$50) Abraham Mott Hall (neg \$15 - \$30)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Block bookings difficult as space is hired by community groups throughout the week • Council are reluctant to provide ongoing block bookings for arts groups as past experiences have shown that once arts groups are allocated space they become entrenched in the facility. • The floor in most cases is not suitable for dance not being sprung. • Health & Safety issues arise for dancers in a shared space, it is not uncommon to find glass, cigarette butts and other items that could cause harm to dancers in bare feet.

7C. CONSIDERATIONS

The Peter Forsyth Auditorium in Glebe (City of Sydney) operates essentially as a community basket ball venue. Ausdance NSW secured use of the Auditorium in 2005 with support from the City of Sydney to deliver a contemporary dance training program. This space has been initially secured on a three monthly basis until December 2005. Ausdance NSW developed the contemporary dance training program in order to provide professional training opportunities for dancers and create an arena specifically for independent dancers to meet and exchange skills and ideas. This has been a highly successful initiative that has demonstrated that the provision of appropriate and dedicated dance space has enabled key outcomes to be achieved for the sector at a number of levels. These include:

- The establishment of two contemporary dance classes per week facilitated by leading independent dance practitioners
- Participation in the classes by professional and pre-professional dancers
- Connections established between dancers and established choreographers
- Enhanced the relationship between Ausdance NSW and the City of Sydney
- The establishment of the Dirty Feet Collective

Dirty Feet is a Sydney dance collective that has emerged through the development of contemporary classes at the Peter Forsyth Auditorium. The collective provides a core group of dancers that facilitate and collaborate to access space, develop ideas, develop creative partnerships with choreographers and provide links to support graduate dancers in the transition from tertiary training into a career as a professional dance practitioner.

The development of Dirty Feet creates a highly collaborative and support based atmosphere that is conducive to sustainable growth, community spirit and healthy artistic momentum for dance in NSW.

The Old Kings Boarding School at Parramatta, while identified as a potential site for the future development of a dance centre, is by no means suitable in its current condition for use by dancers.⁴ Through the work of Western Sydney Dance Action, dance production has grown significantly in the Parramatta and Western Sydney region. However, while the Parramatta Riverside Theatres provides a presentation venue for dance performance, there is still a critical shortage of appropriate space for dance rehearsal.

The research, audit findings and analysis identify that at present there is one dedicated dance centre (the Drill for 'emerged' choreographers) and no dedicated dance performance or dance rehearsal space venue in NSW.

This shortfall in the provision of dance rehearsal and performance space has constricted the development of independent dance practice in NSW.⁵ To illustrate this, it is useful to make a comparison with Dance House in Victoria, which is a focal point for dance practice, and Western Australia and South Australia, which both have dedicated studio/rehearsal space that is operated by the state Ausdance offices. The provision of dedicated dance space in these states has enabled the independent dance sectors to create, produce and present work at a level that is not easily achievable in NSW. For example, much of the funding support directed towards dance creation in NSW is absorbed by the costs associated with rehearsal venue rental.⁶ This is a direct consequence of Sydney property values and leasing costs. The impact of property values is experienced by dance practitioners as they seek to hire facilities for creating and rehearsing work. This is something that does not impact upon independent dance in other states to the degree that it impacts upon dance in NSW. The difficulty in accessing affordable space for dance has severely restricted the development of independent dance in NSW. This situation will continue until long term sustainable solutions are sought.

To further reflect on the status of dance space and independent dance in NSW, it is of interest to undertake a comparative analysis with visual arts in NSW. Since the

⁴ The Old Kings School is owned by the NSW State Government and has until recently been used as a residential facility for disabled people. It is located within walking distance to Parramatta Riverside Theatres. The site has been vacant since March 2004 and has been classified as excess property by the State Government. Western Sydney Dance Action is currently in the process of writing to the relevant Minister to register an interest in the site. If the site is to be earmarked for dance, it is essential that the development of the property occur within a joint strategic vision that involves arts organisations and local government in creating a multi-arts hub.

⁵ Research undertaken in similar environment over seas has indicated that the provision of dedicated dance space is instrumental in developing the art form across all levels of provision. See *Dance Northern Ireland; Dance Space Development* (2004), p 11.

⁶ The average cost of rehearsal space in Sydney is \$500 per week ex GST.

establishment of the regional galleries and the move to redevelop galleries in Western Sydney, the visual arts has experienced a high level of growth across all levels of practice; community, education and professional. This investment has been largely supported by local and state government. If similar levels of investment were to be made in dance in NSW, there would be an opportunity to actively drive forward dance development initiatives that can ultimately secure the long term growth of dance in the state.

It is to be acknowledged that there has been recent investment by state and local government in securing dance space for the independent sector through the establishment of The Drill and Critical Path. While Critical Path and The Drill provide opportunities for choreographers to develop work, the facilities and opportunities for then taking new work to its next phase, i.e. the involvement of dancers and the rehearsing of work, is severely limited due to the lack of appropriate dance rehearsal space.

8. CONCLUSION

The need for increased provisions of dance space for training and rehearsal has been identified as a key issue by the independent dance sector. Unless increased levels of dance space provision are secured, the independent dance sector will not have the facilities and infrastructure to grow and sustain the art form into the future.

The dance space audit completed by Ausdance NSW clearly highlights the shortfall in the availability, affordability and accessibility of appropriate dance space across Sydney and Western Sydney. The findings of the surveys and case studies that were undertaken with representatives of the independent dance sector highlight the significance of the impact that the lack of dance space has for the sector as a whole. This has serious implications for dance in NSW, as artists who are considering embarking upon a career, as well as artists who are currently working to sustain their career, have to assess whether it is viable to be a professional independent dance practitioner in NSW.

The longer term consequences for dance in NSW are of concern. For example the current status of tertiary dance training in NSW is both consequential and reflective of the limitation of opportunities that are at present, available to emerging dance artists and established artists. The critical lack of dance facilities and infrastructure experienced by the profession directly impacts upon the securing of a critical mass of dance professional required to position this art form as a dynamic and innovative cultural force in NSW.

Whilst Ausdance NSW has actively developed and delivered activities that have supported the growth of dance, it is increasingly difficult to initiate and deliver strategies that create, support and promote further opportunities for dance in NSW. This is due to the fact that the space currently used for these initiatives is secured for short term periods only. This situation is not sustainable.

The impact upon the independent dance sector, and for Ausdance NSW as the key service agency for the sector, makes it increasingly challenging to establish long term partnership development, training and professional development opportunities for dance artists.

It is essential that the critical issue of dance rehearsal space and infrastructure provision in NSW be addressed.

9. ACTION

Actively investigate and advocate for securing dance rehearsal space in City of Sydney and Parramatta. These include the following models:

- The establishment of a dance agency hub which provides the facilities for dance practice for training and for professional development.
- The inclusion, under local government Section 94 plans, of dance space facilities and/or infrastructure.
- The inclusion of dance space and/or infrastructure in the redevelopment plans for state government property.
- The inclusion of dance space and/or infrastructure in the redevelopment plans of local government property.
- The establishment of partnerships with dance, cultural and education institutions for securing permanent facilities for the delivery of contemporary dance programs.

10. RECOMMENDATION

- **That Ausdance NSW, as the peak professional service body for dance in NSW, be supported to lead the implementation of the Actions.**

11A ATTACHMENT

Survey

In April of this year self completion questionnaires were sent to the 29 identified independent choreographers operating in NSW. The low 21 % return rate while not conclusive is an indication of the space issues facing the independent dance practitioners.

Type of premises currently used

Type	%
Own Studio	16%
Landlord Owned Premises	0%
Leased Studio	0%
Arts Centre (please specify)	0%
Local Dance Studio OMEO	50%
Community Centre (please specify)	0%
School (Please specify)	0%
Church Hall (please specify)	0%
Community / Council Hall – The Drill Hall	16%
Leisure / Fitness Centre (please specify)	0%
Sports Club (please specify)	0%
Nightclub (please specify)	0%
University	33%

Questionnaire Results

The majority of respondents use Omeo Dance Studios 50% while University facilities came a close second 33%. When asked if they felt that their facility was suitable to their needs, there was a 50/50 split, the university facilities provided free of charge with good facilities swayed the poll, however it is worth noting that the usage of university facilities is severely limited to a select number of individuals and is not open to the general population under such favourable conditions. All respondents 100% stated that the cost of rehearsal space was the major issue with 66% pointing to lack of availability. Size, noise restrictions, flooring and cleanliness were also mentioned. 70% of respondents paid on average \$15- \$20 per hour for rehearsal space.

11B. ATTACHMENT

CASE STUDY - Emerging Independent Choreographer/Dancer Calista Sinclair

I am aware that, unlike many other art forms, dance performance 'products' require for their development a relatively large space with a safe sprung floor to commence.

Whilst a play may commence in a writer's study, a musician may commence writing in their bedroom, a dance work will not commence until the dancer is in a space big enough to move without breaking something. So how do dancers in Sydney commence work, where do they go to develop a product?

Sydney has some amazing dance facilities which are completely unaffordable and inaccessible to independent practitioners; including the Sydney Dance Company Studios, the Red Box, University of Sydney (Education department and Seymour Centre). The companies that manage these venues rely on renting their space as a source of income, and are disinterested in making these spaces more accessible to the struggling independent dance community, as it is unlikely to result in profit.

The irony is that much of the time, these spaces are in fact empty, and the dance community is unemployed, and more sadly, unproductive.

Currently for an independent dancer/choreographer in Sydney to commence work it is necessary to obtain and 'spend' money from outside sources (including private/government/corporate funds) on renting a studio. These sources are usually one-off sums that do not address the continuing need of the practitioner to access work space, and contribute to the discontinuity of work conditions. Usually, to obtain funding, evidence of the work must already exist, and it is inevitable that the dancer must make money through another job (including teaching, waitressing etc) and spend this money on a studio space simply to commence a work.

It is one thing to not make any money from contemporary dance, it is another to be continually losing money on the practice. For example, last year I instigated as an independent choreographer a creative development project called CROSSing Sydney with 10 dancers and an orchestra of 8 (all unpaid). One large incumbrance I came against was the necessity of spending \$1400 on public liability insurance (AON cover for one year for just one venue, The Drill), before I could even begin to pay for a workspace. Then, I rented the following spaces;

Omeo Dance Studios (2 x 2hrs)	\$66
Bondi Pavilion (community rate 4x 2hrs)	\$144
UNSW Figtree Theatre (2 x 3hrs)	\$66
Drill Hall (3 weeks upstairs) (2 days on tarket)	\$684 \$228

I received an income from the Australia Council for the Arts of \$1000 for a workspace grant and spent \$1588 of my own savings on the rent of a studio alone!

It was not an easy task finding these spaces. It became clear to me that Sydney does not have a venue that is directly catering to the independent dance community; with affordable rates, appropriate floor and size, and running as a not-for-profit organisation.

Of all the spaces we used, Omeo is the only one of these spaces which is designed for dance, but it was more expensive full time than a non-dance space (such as upstairs at the Drill Hall), so I was forced to take the cheaper option. Omeo is now being sold this year, and is soon to be excluded as an option for Sydney dancers. The purpose built spaces like Sydney Dance Company Studios and the Red Box would have cost around \$45 per hour, and were completely out of the question. It was difficult to find a space available full time, due to the lack of available spaces, most of the research was done through local councils rather than through support of the dance community.

Having a place to begin to work is the first step. To create; one first has to create the space in which to create.

A venue devoted to independent contemporary dance is all the more important in the advent of the collapsed dance performance program in NSW, at UWS. If the independent dance community is to survive this loss, the fragmented practice needs a venue which will act as constant, visible, accessible presence in Sydney. A common workplace will resuscitate the community; enabling practitioners to network, collaborate, and stimulate one another's work, contributing to a more palpable, powerful force in independent dance.

It is clear that independent dance has an important role to play in the development of the art form, provoking the mainstream companies and actively contributing to the existing conversation in dance. Access to affordable, appropriate dance spaces is essential and a necessity for practitioners to develop products and commence creating work that is born of the contemporary Sydney dance environment. Currently, independent dancers in Sydney are displaced and rather homeless!

If the current situation continues (which is, for many reasons, an impossibility) independent work will simply not commence, or it will faintly make attempts for life at a pace that cannot hope for healthy momentum. At the risk of sounding histrionic, the lagging independent dance scene will contribute to the slowing progress of dance in Sydney compared to cities such as Melbourne.

CALISTA SINCLAIR -

Calista managed to escape a fate in the legal profession by running away to join the circus in Paris; where she danced in Cirque Bouglione at the beautiful Cirque D' Hiver, famous for being the birthplace of Trapeze. She danced and choreographed in various ventures in Australia and Europe, before training in Paris at Ecole Jacques Lecoq in theatre and the Laboratory of Movement (LEM) in scenography. Back in Sydney, she was a 2003 recipient of an Australia Council grant which enabled her to get her Foot in the Door with Legs on the Wall, who she worked with for eight months, including performing in *Eora Crossing* for the Festival Sydney 2004. She directed *SOS theatre*, who danced their boat like sculptures at the Edge in Newtown and the Australian National Maritime Museum. She has been seen in Urban Theatre Projects *Short n Sharp series 2004*, oddly enough, wrestling jelly. At the end of 2004, she used an Australia

Council project workspace grant to direct and choreograph the first stage development of *CROSSing SYDNEY* at the Drill Hall. Most recently she created *Moving Monuments* for 2005 Sydney Esquisse, produced by Ausdance NSW, and is currently working as a dancer on a creative development with Carol Dilley.

11C. ATTACHMENT

CASE STUDY – Western Sydney Dance Action – Kathy Baykitch

INTRODUCTION

Western Sydney Dance Action is a dance development organisation that encourages opportunities for artists and communities to engage with dance to enhance participation, presentation and production of the art form in the Western Sydney region and beyond. WSDA has been based at Riverside Theatre since August 2000. The program was initiated by Ausdance NSW in partnership with Riverside Theatres. During the initial stages of the program WSDA was able to access space for projects and initiatives at Riverside. However, as the venue increased its profile through the annual subscription season and as a venue for hire it has become increasingly difficult to gain access space for extended periods. The theatre does not have a rehearsal studio within the complex.

As WSDA developed its program it became evident that due to its location it could provide opportunities for artists to present new work in professional surroundings with good marketing and technical support. In 2002 and 2003 WSDA produced dance programs for Carnivale. In 2003 it launched Dance Bites, an annual season of contemporary dance works by independent artists produced for the Lennox Theatre at Riverside.

Currently the lack of suitable rehearsal facilities within close proximity to Riverside prevents the organisation from implementing income generating programs such as adult evening dance classes. It inhibits the implementation of an effective artist support program. A number of short term measures are currently being developed such as securing access to Council facilities. WSDA has negotiated a partnership with Jane Scali Performing Arts in Parramatta to have access to studio space during business hours when the studios are not used by students. While these measures address some immediate needs it can be difficult to gain access for extended periods as the Council sites and Jane Scali Performing Arts are venues/studios for hire.

Over the next triennium WSDA will work together with Riverside Theatres, Parramatta City Council and other key stakeholders to locate and secure access to rehearsal facilities within a multi arts centre with dance being the driving art form.

DANCE BITES SEASON

In 2003 WSDA launched Dance Bites, an annual season of contemporary dance works by independent artists. In the first year the program included a work by Elizabeth Lea that was created at the Choreographic Centre. *RaRa Avis* by Kay Armstrong was co-produced in association with One Extra. As the work was a co-production Ms Armstrong was able to utilise resources available through One Extra to develop the work.

In programming the season it is difficult to provide artists with required resources such as rehearsal facilities to produce new work. The third work included in the 2003 season *Training* by Paul Cordeiro was produced by WSDA. During the final stage development rehearsals took place in the city at the Accessible Arts Training Room. This space however, is not conducive for rehearsing dance works. Paul Tibbles at the time was employed at Carnivale and provided in-kind production management to support the final phase development.

During the production of this new work a number of issues developed in relation to creative personnel. The set and costume designer was based in the workshop at Riverside Theatres. It was difficult for the choreographer and designer to communicate on a regular basis regarding design concepts. The set was an important part of the work and the dancers only gained access to work with the set in the final week of rehearsal as there was space available at Riverside for rehearsals. These types of issues ultimately have the potential to jeopardise the artistic integrity of the artists involved in a production and WSDA's reputation as a dance presenter. The development of this work highlighted the need to secure a rehearsal site.

The season has continued to develop and where possible WSDA has tried to program artists who have been provided with resources to develop a new work. In 2004 Dance Bites included *Kali Yuga* a new work by Rakini Devi, who received a grant to support the development. As part of this work Ms Devi incorporated an ensemble of third year dance students from the University of Western Sydney's dance degree program. The student's involvement was part of an assessable module and Ms Devi was able to utilise the studio resources available at the university.

The New Bites program also included students from UWS as four emerging choreographers were given access to final year dance students to develop new short works. WSDA yet again was able to utilise resources at the university as a result of student participation.

The final season by Liz Lea included two existing works as well as a new group work for emerging Western Sydney based dance artists. WSDA was able to gain access to space for 3 days a week at St Patrick's Cathedral Hall in Blacktown in-kind. Lea secured space for the additional two days at the dance studio where she began her training, Manly Dance Arts Centre. Conducting the final development in two different localities at times caused the artists to become tired and stressed and could have potentially resulted in injury. The hall at Blacktown was a large space with good amenities such as free parking but it did not have a sprung floor or mirrors.

To ensure the ongoing development of Dance Bites WSDA needs to secure access to a suitable site for artists to develop work. It is vital that this space be in close proximity to the theatre to make certain that WSDA's Director is able to provide support to artists and to manage any potential human resources or production management issues that arise during the development process.

UWS RESIDENCY PROGRAM

In 2002 The NSW Ministry for the Arts began to investigate the possibility of acquiring a residential property close to UWS Werrington campus that could house artists undertaking residencies at the School of Contemporary Arts. In 2002 the NSW Ministry for the Arts funded two dance residency programs. The objectives of the residency program are to support the ongoing development of contemporary dance as well as promote professional dance development in Western Sydney.

The residency program provided links and interaction between tertiary dance training at UWS and dance practitioners. In 2002 the program included a residency by Akram Khan and Company. The company was in residence at the University for a week. The company worked with dance students across all three years and Khan created a new section of *Rush* for the third year students. The residency culminated with a showing in the Lennox Theatre at Riverside and students were included in the performance of *Rush*. Some of the students from this third year have gone on to participate in initiatives in the wider sector after completing their studies. Marnie Palomares and Lisa Davis auditioned and participated in the first Space for Ideas project.

The residency program has provided WSDA with an opportunity to fund creative development projects for artists programmed as part of Dance Bites. Due to recent changes in University management and administration the School of Contemporary Arts is no longer able to manage studio bookings. As a result it has become increasingly difficult to implement residency programs. Should the program continue it is essential that an organisation be appointed to manage the relationship with the university and the artists facilitating programs as the Ministry is in the process of securing the lease on Margaret Farm, a property in St Mary's.

WSDA ARTISTS SUPPORT PROGRAM

The artist support program provides employment and training opportunities for artists and tertiary dance students. A key focus is on establishing mentorship initiatives for emerging artists to access and learn from established artists. Programs such as the Sounding Dance program enabled artists to work with Pam Woods from the United Kingdom to develop skills in voice and site specific work. This program resulted in two performances in Parramatta Mall as part of youth Week 2004. In 2003 WSDA provided training in community cultural development practice through the Urban Street Rural Beat program in association with NORPA Dance Action.

While it is possible to locate programs in alternate venues such as youth centres or council halls WSDA would benefit from gaining access to a permanent space. This would provide the organisation with an opportunity to develop a program of professional classes and choreographic workshops for artists and graduates living in the region. The emerging artists in the region are often economically disadvantaged and unable to access resources available in the inner city area of Sydney. They also have to travel great distances to participate in professional development opportunities.

POSSIBLE SITES IN AND AROUND PARRAMATTA

Old Kings School Boarding Dormitories
Norma Parker Centre
Cumberland Hospital
Jeffrey Hospital

Of the above mentioned locations the most suitable site is the Old Kings Boarding School. It is in walking distance to Riverside Theatres and there is ample space available for a multi arts complex. The complex was recently used as a residential facility for disabled people. The site has been vacant since March 2004 and has been classified as excess property and marked for disposal by the State government. WSDA is currently in the process of writing to the relevant Minister John Della Bosca registering an interest in the site. It is essential that a strategy be developed with other key arts organisations to secure access and develop this site as it would create a cultural hub within Parramatta's Arts precinct.