

# Centre for Disability Research and Policy

## End-of-year update 2023

Dear Members of our CDRP community,

WOW! It has been a very stimulating end of the year here at CDRP, with many events and as many opportunities to bring our beautiful community together!

In September, we celebrated the **University's Disability Inclusion week**, by launching our very first Amateur Art Competition "[Dreams and Debuts](#)", in collaboration with the Disability At Work Network, DAWN. This competition aimed at showcasing lived experience of disability through artistic expression. We invited amateur artists with lived experience of disability to show through their art, their dreams, hopes, and achievements in whichever ways feel best for them.

Over 50 entries were registered in the competition, with artists coming from all over Australia, including QLD and SA, remote and regional communities, and a wide range a media, including videos, poems, paintings, drawings, 3D artworks and installations. We were overwhelmed by the artistic quality and the philosophical depth of the artworks we received. We are so grateful for all the artists who shared with us some of the most intimate parts of their truth, things unsaid, and thoughts unravelled delivering an insightful message about their own lived experience.

You can browse all the of competition entries in our virtual gallery:

<https://artspaces.kunstmatrix.com/en/exhibition/12472699/dreams-and-debuts-art-exhibition>

Our jury had the very delicate task (some of them even said "ridiculous") to select only 18 finalist artists who were invited to display their artworks in the inaugural "Dreams and Debuts" exhibition, in Susan Wakil Health Building from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> December. Thank you to our jury for not shying away from this task and brilliantly selecting finalist and winners to represent all of the participants:

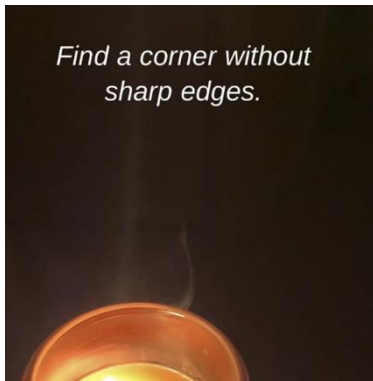
- [M. Sunflower](#), a culturally diverse Australian artist who identifies as living with disabilities, who has won many prizes herself
- [Michelle Villeneuve](#), associate professor and deputy director of our centre.
- [John Gilroy](#) leading the indigeneity and disability theme in our centre. John translates his research findings and experiences into traditional aboriginal wood burn art.
- [Shane Clifton](#), lived-experience associate professor with the Sydney School of Health Sciences and former Policy director at Australia's Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.

The opening night, on the 4<sup>th</sup> December, was attended by several members of CDRP, staff and students from the University, members from our lovely and supportive community and most of the artists. It was fantastic to see new connections arising around art and lived experience.

The Jury prize winners were announced on the opening night.

### **Congratulations to our Jury Prize Winners:**

- **First Prize: "[Exhale](#)" by Tayla Richardson**



- **Joint Second Prizes:**

### **"Bricolinie (Ostralage)" by Jane Banbury**



### **"Bed Installation" by Melissa Pym**



We also awarded three **Young Talent Awards**, to artists who were selected as finalists and were less than 15 years old:

- **Haya Dagher**
- **Sophie Weaver**
- **Stella Mascord**

The public of the exhibition had the opportunity to vote for their favourite artwork, for the People's choice award. We are very pleased to announce the winner of our **"Dreams and Debuts" People's choice award: "Dreaming" by artist Wendy Riley.**



To learn more about our prize and award recipients, please visit our [Dreams and Debuts competition webpage](#), and consulting the attached booklet.

This event was such an enriching experience for artists and audience, that we decided we will be holding another art competition next year.

Among our other events, highlights were:

In October, we held the second edition of our **Disability Research HDR Symposium**, offered to all HDR students with an interest in disability and rehabilitation research, from all universities. This year's event was attended by 50 students, many from different faculties at the University of Sydney. This event had widespread interest from students from other universities, with students in attendance from Macquarie University, Western Sydney University, and the University of Wollongong. This year's theme was "Pathway from Research to Policy", with the aim to provide an understanding of how disability research informs policy.



*Image description:  
From left to right:  
Panellist Gordon  
Duff, Prof. Jen Smith-  
Merry, A/Prof.  
Michelle Villeneuve  
and A/Prof. Roxanna  
Pebdani, sitting next  
to each other in  
front of the  
audience. On a  
screen behind them  
appear panellist  
Emily Forrest and  
A/Prof. Shane  
Clifton.*

Thank you to our keynote speakers and panellists for their time:

- **Janice Biggs (Branch Manager, Research and Evaluation, National Disability Insurance Agency):** Janice spoke about the disability research landscape, the role of the NDIA Research and Evaluation Branch, and research collaboration with the NDIA
- **Emily Forrest (Director of Policy and Advocacy, National Disability Services):** Emily presented about her experiences working in policy and advocacy, and collaborative work between the NDS and researchers from the CDRP.

In November, we supported the organisation of the first Ageing and Dual Sensory Impairment (DSI), A multi-disciplinary conference on dual sensory impairment in older Australians convened by the co-leads of the Dual Sensory Impairment Project at the University of Sydney: Drs Moira Dunsmore, Julie Schneider and Annmaree Watharow. This event brought together practitioners, professionals and consumers/carers for an educational event informed by lived experience, with sessions including informative talks about the complexity of DSI symptoms and onset, the difficulties to navigate the health systems for people with DSI, assistive technology, and hands on workshop to learn more efficient ways to communicate with and for people with DSI.

At the end of November, we had the absolute pleasure to launch the art show of Prof. John Gilroy. John Gilroy is an aboriginal scholar who translate into traditional aboriginal wood burn art, his 14 years research experience and research findings gathered from indigenous and non-indigenous people living with disability in rural and remote area and their experience with NDIS. The exhibition of his artwork is semi-permanent and is opened to the public all year long on level 4 of the Susan Wakil Health Building, Western Ave, Camperdown 2050, at the University of Sydney. You can have a preview of the artwork on our webpage [here](#).





*Image description: From left to right, Professor Paul Rhodes, collaborating artist on the art show, Prof. John Gilroy with his daughter in his arms, Jessica Gilroy, collaborating artist on the art show. They are surrounded by the wood-burn artworks they have created together*

Following the exhibition launch, Prof. John Gilroy led the first international Indigenous disability research symposium, aiming to offer an international platform to create a global collaborative research community in indigenous disability research. Speakers from all over the world presented their work on disability research with first nations people of their country, including the USA, Canada and Sweden. Creating a safe cultural space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander scholars to share not only their research but also their frustrations and aspirations for a brighter future for indigenous community supporting people with disability.

Thank you to Prof. Jackie Troy, Director for Indigenous Research, The University of Sydney and Prof. Michelle Dikson, Director of the Poche Centre for Indigenous Health, The University of Sydney for co-leading the organisation of this event and sharing with us their insights.



*Image description: Prof. Michelle Dikson, Prof. Jackie Troy and Prof. John Gilroy seating next to each other engaging in a panel discussion.*

The highlights of the events were captured by our live scribe, Ben Crothers from Bright Pilots to offer us all a visual souvenir of two days of intense sharing and look back to the creation of a truly inclusive research community.



image description: Ben Crother capturing the essential message of our first day of International Indigenous disability research symposium, on a large piece of paper fixed on a wall.



After such a rich end of the year, rich in emotions, connections and reflections, we would like of course end this latest update by wishing you all a joyful and meaningful holiday season and a bright start to 2024!

See you all in 2024 for some new adventures!

Best Wishes,  
Virginie on Behalf of the whole CDRP leadership team

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