



Rebus Theatre Inc.
ANNUAL REPORT FY 2023 – 2024

Supported by



ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

Rebus Theatre acknowledges the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people as the traditional owners of the land where we live, learn, work and play. We pay our respects to their elders past, present and future and acknowledge the art, storytelling, culture and community-building that Australia's first people have practised on this land for over 60,000 years. We recognise that the Canberra region was a meeting place that held significance for many First Nations peoples.

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EXECUTIVE AND PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Prepared by Robin Davidson (Artistic Director), Ben Drysdale (Creative Producer) and Daniel Savage (Vice President) of the Rebus Theatre Inc.

2023-24 saw the culmination of three of the largest projects that Rebus has undertaken: Flair, Re-Emergence, and Project Alchemy.

We produced our third and final Flair play, *The Art of Disruption*, a comic tale of an uncaring bureaucracy jeopardising the work of a small theatre company.

Re-Emergence, our most ambitious foray into film-making, combined a fictional story based on the experiences of disasters from disabled actors from regional NSW, with a documentary about the actors and the making of the film. We held 'red carpet' screenings in Goulburn, Bega and Queanbeyan, with cast members speaking about how much making the film meant to them.

Project Alchemy, our bushfire recovery project, saw a feast of original and enticing community projects served across five local government areas.

We continued to develop our links across our region and farther afield. As well as the film screenings for Re-Emergence and Project Alchemy offerings, we took Forum Theatre performances to Melbourne and Brisbane, and taught the Kindred Kollektive school holiday program in Narooma.

Our profile continued to grow, evidenced by approaches and commissions from outside organisations. We were commissioned to perform Playback Theatre for the ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences, and the SpringOUT Festival. We were asked to lead a school holiday program in Narooma for The Family Place, as part of their Kindred Kollektive program. We were commissioned by Life Without Barriers to create an original Forum Theatre performance for their Board and senior executives, on subtle manifestations of ableism in the workplace, that we performed in Melbourne. We remain in discussion with Life Without Barriers about whether this will be an ongoing partnership. We were approached by Outloud, a youth arts organisation in Bankstown to partner on a project about young people and police. Unfortunately we have not yet secured funding for this project, but we hope it will go ahead in 2025.

Staffing has been fairly stable in 2023-24, with the only changes being Jen Seyderhelm leaving the position of Project manager of Alchemy to take up a full-time position elsewhere, and being replaced by Helen Gibson who saw the project through to its conclusion and then moved on.

With our major funded projects all coming to an end, we were fortunate to receive a major grant for a new project, *Stages of Empathy*, just before the end of the 2023-24 financial year. *Stages of Empathy* is an ambitious Forum Theatre project that looks at the barriers that autistic people, people with mental health challenges and people with intellectual disability face in joining community activities. *Stages of Empathy* will tour from Melbourne to Sydney, and many regional centres in between across 2025, and take on new staff to run the project.

We also secured funding from the ACT Office for LGBTQIA+ affairs Capital of Equality Grant program to appoint an LGBTQIA+ Officer to support our existing Acting Out: On Screen program, build relationships in the sector and begin theatre program for LGBTQIA+ adults, elders and allies.

OUR BOARD

Rebus would like to thank our volunteer Board for their tireless efforts in guiding and supporting us through this period of change and development. The members of our Board bring with them a wealth of artistic, business, and lived experience and are passionate about helping us achieve our mission and vision. For more details go to the [website](#).

**Simone Penkethman
President**



Simone has been a fan of Rebus since attending their first performance in 2013. She joined the Rebus board as Vice President in 2016 and served as President from 2017 – 2019. Simone is a musician, theatre maker and writer with decades of experience in Canberra arts. She has long-standing, collaborative relationships with the Rebus Executive team.

Since the 1990s she has produced many arts projects with groups of young people, people with mental ill health and disability, mothers and babies and the general public. She has a passion for bringing art and performance to neglected urban spaces.

She is a member of Canberra Critics Circle and has previously served on the boards of Capital Arts Patron Organisation (CAPO) and Community Radio 2XX.

In 2023 she was research assistant for a University of Canberra led evaluation of Rebus’ Alchemy project. She loved using her research and analytical skills to show the value and power of Rebus’ work.

Simone feels honoured to return to the role of Rebus President. Her unique perspective, keen business sense, and knowledge of governance systems and protocol are invaluable to the company. The Rebus management team thank Simone for her stalwart leadership and sage advice and are thrilled to welcome her back.



**Daniel Savage
Vice-President**



Daniel Savage joined the Rebus Board in June 2019. Daniel has been a practicing visual artist based in Canberra for over a decade, exhibiting nationally and has developed a reputation for creating dynamic, engaging, and conceptually rigorous work. His practice is often self-referential, employing his individual experience of disability as a point of difference to engage audiences in exploring and reassessing established ideas and preconceptions that exist within society.

Daniel is an active advocate for disability access, inclusion, and representation in the arts, having worked alongside major arts festivals, organisations and institutions to increase awareness and engagement.

He brings to the Board his extensive knowledge of art and disability, his broad connections within both the contemporary art and

	<p>disability community, and his passion for developing the skills, reputation and critical discourse of artists with disability.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Louise Bannister General Board Member</p> 	<p>Lou Bannister joined the Board in October 2023. Lou moved to Canberra in 1991. She has been advocating for herself and other people with disabilities most of her life, and has been working in the ACT disability community sector for 25 years.</p> <p>Lou is passionate about the right for individual choice and control, and creating a fully inclusive community through mentoring, education, advocacy, leadership, and innovative design and solutions. She was awarded the ACT Chief Minister’s Award for Inclusion by an Individual in 2012.</p> <p>Lou has served on number of Boards and Ministerial Advisory Councils. Lou works closely with ACT Health and ACT Ministers to improve the disability community’s access to health, housing, education, arts and services. Lou is a Professional Associate to the College of Adjuncts at University of Canberra.</p> <p>Lou loves music and the arts. She uses music and performances to help manage her anxiety and depression.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Harmony Davey General Board Member</p> 	<p>Harmony Davey joined the Board in February 2024. Harmony was born and grew up in Canberra, and couldn’t see herself living anywhere else! She has a deep respect and understanding for anyone who has tried to navigate the health system for a diagnosis with a disability and come out the other side.</p> <p>Harmony also works as a Senior Policy Officer at the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) and is supporting the Department’s work purpose to build a more innovative, future ready energy system, by thinking on the role of gas to support Australia’s energy transformation to net zero.</p> <p>She has a background in the Australian Public Service, including supporting work on the 2023-24 Budget for social policy measures (including Medicare and Public Health), management of the National Broadband Network, and supporting the incoming Government in the 2022 Federal Election.</p> <p>She is currently studying a Bachelor of Economics and Law at the University of New England and is passionate about advocating for every Australian, and ensuring they have a chance to thrive in our economy.</p>

Dr Evelyne Meier
Vice President - Outgoing



Dr Evelyne Meier joined the Board unofficially in November 2018 and as an official director in February 2019. Evelyne loves art as a communication medium, be this design, dance or theatre.

She was keen to engage with people who are promoting social change, advocate for people with disability and are inclusive.

Evelyne has served on several boards, including Expression Dance Company in Brisbane and was the Chair of the Burnett Mary Regional Group. Her background spans nursing, international banking, government, education and the not-for-profit sector. She has strong expertise in corporate governance, grants and policy background and applies these skills for Rebus.

Penny Zhao
Treasurer - Outgoing



Penny Zhao joined the Rebus Board in October 2021 as Treasurer. A young professional and Certified Practicing Accountant by trade, she brings to the position contemporary financial acumen, Masters qualifications in professional accounting and financial management, as well as previous experience as a finance officer within the disability support sector.

Originally a migrant to Australia, Penny fondly recalls her first time using Australian public transport where she was helped by other passengers to reach her destination. From that moment on, she firmly embraced the Australian spirit of a 'fair go' for all and has since been engaged in a number of activities promoting diversity and cultural exchange, including Chinese language teaching and mixed-team dragon boat racing.

Hanna Cormick
General Board Member - Outgoing



Hanna Cormick joined the Rebus Board in May 2020. She brings with her a history as an international theatre-creator and performer, as well as her lived-experience as a disabled artist with atypical access needs.

Hanna is a performance artist and curator, with a background in physical theatre, dance, circus and interdisciplinary art. She is a graduate of École Internationale de Théâtre Jacques Lecoq and Charles Sturt University's Acting degree. Hanna's practice has spanned many genres and continents over twenty years, including as a founding member of Australian interdisciplinary art-science group *Last Man To Die*, one half of Parisian cirque-cabaret duo *Les Douleurs Exquises*, and as a mask artist in France and Indonesia. Her current practice is a reclamation of body through radical visibility.

Michael White
Acting Secretary – Out-going



Michael White joined the Rebus Board in May 2021. Michael has been involved in the arts as a theatre practitioner and advocate for over 40 years.

He has a BA (Hons) in Drama (Performance) and has worked as an actor with the Jigsaw Theatre in Education Company and Canberra Youth Theatre, worked in theatre-in-education projects in Wales (UK), and worked as a freelance Assistant Director with Crawford Television.

He worked on the ACT Arts Council and as a Community Arts Officer before becoming an Industrial Officer for the Actors Equity Section of the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA) the trade union that covers performers and all those who work in the media and entertainment industries where he became ACT Branch Secretary in 2000. He also served on the ACT Cultural Council, the ACT Government's arts advisory body. He is currently the Co-ordinator for The Childers Group, an independent ACT based arts advocacy group.

Paul Marshall
General Board Member – Out-going



Paul Marshall joined the Rebus Board in October 2021. Paul is a group and experiential coach with a particular interest in coaching and training solutions for neurodiverse teams. Paul's specialties include team capability development with a focus on trust, accountability, ethics, values and behaviours, culture and mood. Paul has been involved in community theatre for over 30 years - as an actor, director, stage manager, lighting operator and more recently as President of a Queensland theatre that recently celebrated 50 years of continuous operation.

Paul is a Chartered Professional Engineer, has been admitted as a Barrister in the State of Queensland and holds Doctorates from the faculties of Chemical Engineering and Law. Paul has also worked in the areas of risk and compliance with some of Australia's largest energy companies.

Our Work

A woman on a Disability Support Pension, frustrated with an endless series of requests for further interviews and evidence from Centrelink, tells the cast of a show she is working on about her struggles. Her frustration becomes a comic scene that an audience will erupt into laughter over.

In a board room towering over Brisbane CBD, a room full of lawyers debate how best to support a client who is likely experiencing domestic violence, spurred by a fictional character's distress.

In a function room at Melbourne's Crown casino, a woman becomes teary as she expresses to the Board and management of the organisation she works for just how exhausting it is for her to justify any adjustments she needs for her disability, in response to an interactive play.

A woman who is rarely verbal, breaks into an improvised Bollywood style dance routine in a circle of her peers, then breaks into a wide grin as she finishes expressing herself.

People from the bushfire communities come together to learn about emotions and the brain through pictures and stories. They are now able to share the load of understanding trauma in traumatic times.

A small band of people walk in wonder, inspired at the resilience and regrowth of the Eucalypts after the fires. Trees that breathe around them, welcoming home the fauna to their hollows.

This is some of the work that Rebus does.

Our Name

A Rebus is a puzzle where pictures are used to represent words - pictures of an eye, a can of soup and the ocean could mean 'I can see'. Rebus Theatre offers puzzles made of images and stories surrounding the challenges faced by marginalised members of society, inviting audiences to take part in the conversation and help find solutions together.

Our History

We began in 2013 as participants in a community project to develop theatre-based workplace training to promote disability awareness, while providing paid performance opportunities for actors with disability. This program was led by the disability information and referral service NICAN (now de-funded) and funded by an ACT Government Innovations Grant.

In July 2014 after initial success, the members of the group decided to continue working together and formed Rebus Theatre. We incorporated as a not-for-profit association in early 2015 and have since expanded in both our mission and operations to develop and deliver a wide range of exciting projects including theatre-based education programs, experiential accessibility and inclusion workplace training, and creative performances addressing various social issues in our community.

Our Mission

Rebus Theatre is an inclusive company using theatre and other arts to stimulate healing and provoke social and environmental change. We work with people who have experienced marginalisation to create innovative, powerful performance in diverse contexts.

Our Vision

A sustainable and ethical society that is inclusive, creative, compassionate and accessible to everyone.

Our Values

The Rebus Theatre team prides itself on strong ethical values of inclusion, accessibility, and sustainability. In keeping with this, we have developed an ethical partnership policy to ensure every organisation we partner with, or receive funding from, holds compatible values.

EXECUTIVE TEAM

<p style="text-align: center;">Robin Davidson Artistic Director/Co-CEO</p> 	<p>Robin Davidson is an actor, clown, director, teacher and writer. He is a graduate of Charles Sturt University in Theatre/Media, with First Class Honours. He devises theatre with communities and was co-awarded the 2005 Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance ACT Green Room Award for services to community theatre.</p> <p>He has taught in East Timor, Indonesia, Thailand and Sri Lanka.</p> <p>He also performs, directs and teaches clown and Commedia dell’Arte, including having performed in Nara Japan and at the Sydney Olympic and Paralympic Games.</p> <p>He has extensive experience in project management, Robin is the founding director of Rebus Theatre. He co-leads the company with Ben Drysdale. As well as teaching and directing projects, his primary responsibilities are strategic planning and grant writing.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Ben Drysdale Creative Producer/Co-CEO</p> 	<p>Ben Drysdale is an actor, director, drama tutor, musician, events coordinator, with 18 years’ experience in community arts. Ben completed a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre and English at ANU in 2005 including a 2-year Acting, Voice and Movement program at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Canada. Since returning to Australia he has worked in a range of artistic roles, both independently and in conjunction with community organisations.</p> <p>Ben was the Founding Director of arts promotion company Cardboard Charlie for 8 years putting on music showcases, theatre shows and art exhibitions in collaboration with various venues and festivals and curated the Belconnen Community Gallery for 10 years. During this he directed three seasons of short plays by Melbourne playwright Daniel Keene entitled <i>Seasons of Keene</i>.</p> <p>His acting highlights include <i>The Give and Take</i> (2007 – Street Theatre), <i>Out of Our Minds</i> (2010 – Belconnen Community Theatre), <i>One Flew Over The Cuckoos Nest</i> (2014 – Canberra Theatre Centre) <i>Heart Of A Dog</i> (2014) and <i>Under Sedation</i> (2017 – Street Theatre).</p> <p>Since Rebus began in 2013, Ben has performed in the creative development <i>Fractured</i> (2016), <i>Keep Calm and Panic</i> (2016) and <i>At The End Of Our Street</i> (2022) and worked as producer and director on <i>All In</i> (2016), <i>Open Doors Open Minds</i> (2018), <i>Moving Climates</i> (2018), <i>Access All Areas: Justice</i> (2019) and <i>Utopiate</i> (2022).</p>

ADMINISTRATIVE & PROJECT TEAM

Amy Frost
Payroll Officer



Amy took on the role of Finance and Administration Officer in January 2020. She is a valuable addition to the organisation with her problem-solving skills, can-do attitude, cheeky wit, and propensity to bring fancy chocolates into the office.

Amy has worked in administration roles in the past and is enjoying the opportunity to develop her skills in the financial management area. While Amy is new to working in the theatre industry she has grown up enjoying ballet, theatre, comedy and music, as well as various crafty hobbies. Her involvement in the 'Messengers' program was pivotal in keeping her attending high school. Amy identifies as a person with disability and is delighted to have found a job that allows her to do something she is familiar with (admin) whilst helping to promote a cause she cares deeply about.

Ariana Odermatt
Administration Officer






Ariana Odermatt joined Rebus Theatre as their Administration Officer in early 2022. Ariana has worked in arts administration roles for 15 years, from national arts funding bodies to community music organisations and venues. Ariana is a keyboard teacher and enjoys performing with local ensembles. She is looking forward to growing skills to support Rebus Theatre and its family.

Ceilidh Dalton
Finance Manager



Ceilidh is a visual artist who loves numbers and delights in bank reconciliations and acquittals that balance out. They have a background in Science, Accounting and Visual Art and a passion for inclusive design as a curator, teacher and toolmaker and believes that art should and can be accessible to everyone in some form. Ceilidh identifies as a person with disabilities and they designed their first solo art exhibition, Interlinked, to be accessible for everyone and was a finalist for the Chief Ministers Inclusion Awards for Innovative Design. They feel that working at Rebus is a privilege, to support an organisation that is at the forefront of making inclusion and accessibility the norm for Arts in Canberra.

<p>Melissa Gryglewski Program Manager <i>iDrama</i>/Support Worker</p> 	<p>Melissa’s perspectives on the transformative and community-building potential of the performing arts were forged as a young student of Hidden Corners Theatre and Canberra Youth Theatre.</p> <p>They studied Anthropology, Political Science, and Human Geography at ANU, and completed a Diploma of Counselling. Melissa’s other achievements include teaching at Canberra Youth Theatre and Canberra Dance Theatre; working as a presenter in museums; as a social worker with Capital Region Community Services;having undertaken facilitator training with Danceability International; and performing physical theatre locally and interstate on stages, streets, and in museums, with a combination of epic costumes, gadgets and large props.Melissa works for Rebus as an iDrama facilitator / Manager, Wellbeing Officer (outgoing), LGBTQIA+ Project Officer, and Performer / Conductor in Training with Rebus’ Playback Theatre Ensemble.</p> <p>Melissa recently co-Directed Rebus’ 2024 main stage production <i>The Art of Disruption</i>.</p>
<p>Jen Seyderhelm Project Manager for <i>Project Alchemy</i></p> 	<p>Jen Seyderhelm worked in radio for more than 20 years as an announcer, producer, journalist, news reader and sports commentator. Alongside her Rebus role she teaches Podcasting, Radio, Voiceover and Writing for an Audio Audience.</p> <p>With a Bachelor of Arts from Macquarie University, Certificate IV in Music Industry Skills, Counselling Diploma and Training and Assessment Certificate IV, Jen created in 2021 an Australian first Certificate II in Podcasting Foundations taught nationally through the Academy of Interactive Entertainment.</p> <p>Jen loves storytelling and gathering, supporting the arts, people, dogs, cricket and music trivia.</p>
<p>Helen Ferguson Project Manager for <i>Project Alchemy</i></p> 	<p>Helen Ferguson grew up in Queanbeyan and after 4 years of travelling and living in Europe she moved to Sydney and finally returned to her hometown with a young family in 2008. She trained as a graphic designer at the University of Canberra and has had a long and successful career with a wide-ranging portfolio of design experience from publishing to advertising to fashion and government work.</p> <p>Her passion has been working in the area of public gallery, museum exhibitions and on educational programs. In September 2014 Helen purchased a run-down heritage cottage with a dream to create something special in Queanbeyan for the locals to enjoy, use and</p>

appreciate. This ambitious project has been evolving and is called The Queanbeyan Hive.

Helen is also the founder of the local not-for-profit group called Create Collaborate Collective Inc whose mission is to support and nurture the community arts scene through events that include music, art and markets.

Sammy Moynihan
Project Manager for *Re-Emergence*



Sammy Moynihan is a theatre-maker, producer and arts worker with a particular interest in working with diverse communities. He is passionate about using drama techniques to foster social change, and has facilitated theatre workshops in schools, detention centres, remote Indigenous communities, and other contexts. In 2018, he toured France with Palestinian organisation, The Freedom Theatre before interning at their headquarters in Jenin Refugee Camp in Palestine.

He completed his Master of Fine Arts (Cultural Leadership) at NIDA and was the recipient of NIDA’s Lynne Williams Award for Outstanding Achievement in Cultural Leadership. He trained as a facilitator at The Centre for Theatre of the Oppressed in Brazil and delivered performance workshops with homeless communities in Rio De Janeiro. Sammy also worked as a Live Programs Officer at Belco Arts (formerly Belconnen Arts Centre) before joining Rebus as a Project Manager for *Re-Emergence*. He also directs and produces his own work with his independent company Shwa Shwa.

Sammy has worked with Rebus both as an actor in workplace training programs, and as a tutor/director a number of our programs including *Bridges or Barricades*, *Speaking Role*, *Acting Out: On Screen*, *Expressive Pathways* and *Flair* and took on the role of *Re-Emergence* Project Manager in early 2023.

Chipz Jin
Assistant Director for *Project Alchemy*
and *Re-Emergence*



For as long as they can remember, Chipz has been driven to theatre with an incredible passion for storytelling. Since 2014, they’ve devised, developed, improvised, prepared, written, produced, directed, and facilitated experiences in the performance arts. Their intersectional experience and intense love for the work has opened the curtains to a wonderful range of opportunities. In their day to day, you might find them facilitating drama workshops with intellectually disabled adults, working with LGBTQIA+ adults to regain their performance confidence or spending school holidays with young migrants, devising and performing with lots of fun!

Most recently, Chipz has been on stage for the second instalment of *Rockspeare: Henry IV Part 2* (2024), *Boo!* (2024) and performs regularly with Lightbulb Improv and the Rebus Playback Theatre Ensemble.

As a trans, queer, BIPOC, differently abled human, Chips is no stranger to discrimination - especially in various theatre spaces. At Rebus, Chips has finally found themselves in a space that is as passionate about creating and driving change as they are: A space to be who they are, however they come.

Chips works for Rebus as a seasonal project manager, iDrama facilitator and manages the Rebus' Playback Theatre Ensemble. If you watch carefully, you may just get to see them on an insta takeover!

PROJECT ALCHEMY ARTISTS

As part of *Project Alchemy*, Rebus selected 15 practising artists from regions directly impacted by the Black Summer Bushfires to come together in two artist retreats to share skills and rebuild their practice before returning to their home towns to lead community projects employing the arts to help repair, reconnect and celebrate their community.




The project supported artists across the ACT, Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council, Eurobodalla Shire, Bega Valley Shire and East Gippsland.

Head to our [Project Alchemy artist page on the website](#) for full biographies.




ACT:

<p>Hangama Obaidullah: Painter/Photographer/ Writer (Canberra)</p>	<p>Sammy Hawker: Photographer/ Documentary filmmaker (Canberra)</p>	<p>Michele Grimston: Visual Artist (Textiles) (Canberra)</p>
		




Queanbeyan-Parelang Regional Council:

<p>Helen Ferguson: Designer/Founder Create Collaborate Collective (Queanbeyan)</p>	<p>Kelly Sturgis: Musician/Visual Artist (Majors Creek)</p>	<p>Cecile Galiazzo: Artist/Curator/Educator and Facilitator (Braidwood)</p>
		


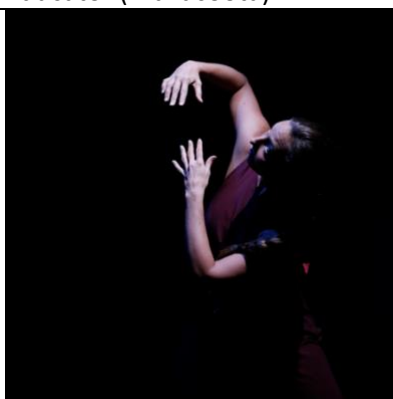

Eurobodalla Shire:

<p>Val Moogz: Singer/Songwriter/Guitarist (Narooma)</p>	<p>Elise May: Dancer/Choreographer/Video Artist (South Durras)</p>	<p>Deb Cleland: Activist/Artist/Academic (South Durras)</p>
		

Bega Valley Shire:

<p>Sue Norman: Artist/Writer/Radio Producer (Kiah)</p>	<p>Mica Mahani: Artist/Dancer/Theatre Practitioner (Bega)</p>	<p>Robyn Williams: Mixed Media Artist/Art Therapist (Yuin)</p>
		

East Gippsland:

<p>Lee Nickless: Digital Artist/Muralist/Art Educator (Nyerimilang)</p>	<p>Susannah Keebler: Dancer/Choreographer/ Educator (Mallacoota)</p>	<p>Padma Newsome: Musician/Composer/ Arranger (Mallacoota)</p>
		

PROGRAMS

Acting Out: On Screen

Rebus successfully conducted our fourth *Acting Out: On Screen* school holiday program for LGBTQIA+ youth in October 2023. This year, the program was entirely funded through a combination of fundraising efforts and in-kind support from Libraries ACT, Capital Region Community Services. Our team is extremely proud to have secured this support to extend the program beyond its initial grant funding, ensuring it remained free and accessible to all who needed it.

There were 15 LGBTQIA+ youth having a ball and working hard to create an amazing bunch of short films with their peers. They collaborated in groups to create a series of short video clips, using "open scene" text and exploring a range of camera angles they had learned about. They then worked together to craft a scripted film as a collective project, which consisted of a number of shorter films that were created by smaller groups. At the end of the program, participants shared their films and spoke about their experiences and the valuable lessons they had gained with an audience of friends and family.

Here's a quote from one of the Parents:

"Some queer kids don't get to meet anyone else like them at school or other activities. For one week a year they're surrounded by loving peers and leaders, make new friends, and learn really sophisticated new skills."

In the same financial year, Rebus managed to secure the necessary funds to run the program again in future due to the generous support from SpringOUT Festival, Meridian ACT, Capital Region Community Services, and all our donors who contributed to our *Give OUT Day* and *Hands Up4Canberra Giving Day* appeals.

15 participants

12 employees

4 local artists employed

2 casual staff

6 part time Rebus staff

Expressive Pathways

The *Expressive Pathways* program leverages the playful and therapeutic nature of theatre to teach essential workplace skills, guiding participants through a one-year journey of personal and professional development. Led by a Rebus Theatre director and a registered Trainer and Assessor, the program culminates in industry placements at The Canberra Theatre, with placements scheduled for 2025.

Rebus Theatre receiving funding from the Adult and Community Educations Grant scheme, planning got underway in beginning of 2024. This program marks a significant step forward in our mission to create social change through applied theatre. A particularly pragmatic project, we have developed this innovative, work-ready program tailored for young adults with neurodivergence or intellectual disabilities. Delivered in partnership with Skills Canberra, participants will be assessed against established Australian Curricula, ensuring the program aligns with educational standards.

Once planning was complete, participants were able to express an interest in participating in the program, starting in Term 3, 2024, and intake meetings were held in May/June 2024. 11 applicants were selected for the first cohort, exceeding our target of 10.

The program's strength lies in its hands-on, immersive approach. Participants will learn to refine their communication skills through role-playing exercises that simulate job interviews and workplace scenarios, equipping them to tackle real-world challenges. These skills will then be further enhanced through practical work placements in front-of-house roles at The Canberra Theatre, providing invaluable on-the-job experience.

This project receives funding support from the ACT Government through the ACT Adult Community Education Grants program and will be delivered to one group of young people in 2024 and one in 2025.

11 participants
3 staff members employed
2 part-time Rebus Staff
1 casual staff member

Flair

This financial year Rebus devised and performed the final show in our *Flair* program using theatre-making to enhance leadership skills and foster social connections among individuals with disabilities.

A new ensemble of people with disabilities and those with lived experience of mental health challenges collaborated under the guidance of Directors Melissa Grygleswki and Sammy Moynihan between October 2023 and May 2024 to conceive, rehearse, and present our third original theatre production for the *Flair* program, titled *The Art of Disruption* (see Performances section for more).

This production followed on from *The Beauty Thief* at The Belconnen Community Theatre in 2021 and *Utopiate* at The Belconnen Arts Centre in 2022.

Flair was funded through the Information, Linkages, and Capacity Building Program, originally administered by the National Disability Insurance Agency, and later transferred to the Department of Social Services.

Across the whole program of three shows *Flair* engaged:

3 shows
9 performances
782 Audience members
36 participants
29 cast members
12 employees
4 local artists employed
2 casual staff
6 part time Rebus staff

iDrama

iDrama is a drama program for adults living with intellectual disability, in which participants are guided through the process of devising, rehearsing, and performing a play over the course of a 10-week term. Ensemble members choose the themes they want to explore and develop character and story ideas that are put together into a performance by the facilitators.

iDrama end of term offerings have gone from strength to strength as ensemble members new and old bring a wide portfolio of talents, sensibilities and accomplishments from music to poetry into the rehearsal room.

The program was managed Melissa Gryglewski leading a team of tutors, which included core tutor Chipz Jin. The team welcomed the addition of two new performing artists of considerable accomplishment and talent this year, Marlene Radice, Mirjana Ristevski. All three have made valuable contributions to *iDrama* processes.

Of particular note:

- With increasing venue costs and lower enrolment numbers than previous years a new venue which was made available through in kind support through Libraries ACT was trialled in 2023/2024. However, due significant issues ending with the venue's closure and an inability to find a suitable replacement, the class was cancelled, and students were offered spots in the remaining Monday and Wednesday classes instead.
- Whilst the changing of classes and venues created a variety of challenges, not only have many students blossomed in the larger classes, there has been a significant improvement to the *iDrama* budget as well.
- This year, ensemble member Josh Rose and Lucy Rafaelle, successfully auditioned for, co-created, and starred in the *Flair* project - Rebus' main stage production for 2024 - The Art of Disruption.
- *iDrama* ensemble member Lucy Rafaelle worked with Melissa to deliver a presentation about *Flair* and *iDrama* at the Canberra Disability Expo in 2023
- Of particular note, senior staff member Chipz impressed the team and participants with a variety of innovative teaching methods they have been developing, which greatly enhanced students skill, confidence and autonomy. This culminated in a short film festival in 2023. Through ongoing dedication to honing their craft, commitment to students, and their generosity in sharing this skill, they continue to be a significant resource for Rebus staff members and students alike.

24 participants

7 employees

3 casuals

4 part time Rebus staff

Kindred Collective

Through contacts we had made through Project Alchemy, Rebus was contacted by the Family Place in Narooma to teach a three-day performing arts school holiday program in April 2024. The program was led by Robin Davidson and two artists who were also employed on Project Alchemy, Deb Cleland and Hannah Matysek. A small but enthusiastic group of young people were led through a series of drama games,

improvisation exercises, drumming, singing, songwriting, stage combat and mask-work, that they turned into a short performance for family and friends.

1 performance
30 audience members
9 participants
3 employees
2 local artists employed
1 part time Rebus staff

Project Alchemy

This financial year we concluded the most ambitious project Rebus has ever embarked on, *Project Alchemy*, spanning five Local Government Areas (LGAs) across three States and Territories including the ACT, Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council, Bega Valley Shire, Eurobodalla Shire and East Gippsland. *Project Alchemy* consisted of a series of innovative, inclusive and cross-disciplinary arts programs, building community connection and wellbeing across regions of south-east Australia affected by the Black Summer Bushfires.

The project consists of three phases, the third of which was completed in this Financial Year.

Phase 3: Community Projects

Each artist received funding and a project budget for the development and delivery of community arts projects in their bushfire affected hometown regions. Many artists decided to collaborate across regions with their colleagues. The artists reported great benefit from the resources and structured support from Rebus and *Project Alchemy* in assisting them to create community art programs, events and performances.

As they delivered their programs, the artists built networks and developed new partnerships to attract future funding and ongoing investment by community stakeholders beyond the life of the project.

Project Alchemy artists facilitated 125 workshops offering art-making experiences to 1196 participants. These occurred in many different formats and in many different environments. Some were held in nature that was re-generating from the fires, others in church halls or arts spaces.

As a result of these art-making process activities there were 7 exhibitions created which included 98 participants and were visited by approximately 682 people. The workshops involved many different arts disciplines including music, costume and lantern making, printmaking, painting, embroidery, dance and movement. Three artists provided music workshops engaging children and adults. 'The Val Moogz School of Joy' ran 18 Beginner Music Workshops' in Batemans Bay for adults for kids and teens.

Project Alchemy artists also held 12 performances with a total of 11,997 audience members across the 5 LGAs. Performances included poetry, community theatre, cosplay dance tree planting events, a light lantern festival, roaming entertainment and a community collaboration with the Melbourne Chamber Orchestra.

You can [check out info on all the different events here](#).

Project Alchemy wrapped up with a final residency and exhibition showcasing work from all the projects in Canberra and Queanbeyan in March 2024.

Project Alchemy was made possible thanks to the Australian Government through Black Summer Bushfire Grant Program.

15 artists employed
63 local subcontractors
125 workshops
12 performances
7 Exhibitions
1196 workshop participants
682 Exhibition attendees
11997 audience members
15 Rebus employees
9 part time Rebus staff
6 casual staff

Re-Emergence

Re-Emergence was a film project illuminating the extraordinary experiences of individuals with disabilities in regional towns. Against the backdrop of droughts, fires, and a global pandemic, *Re-Emergence* has transformed into a cinematic narrative, seamlessly weaving real-life stories with the art of film.

In the face of challenges posed by COVID-19, the Rebus team immersed themselves in the communities of Goulburn, Queanbeyan, Braidwood, and Bega. Through meaningful consultations and collaborative drama workshops, connections were forged, breathing life into the heart of *Re-Emergence*. Over the course of the project, the team ventured into the cinematic realm, using these locations as film sets for storytelling.

Early in 2024, *Re-Emergence* shared these narratives with the communities in a series of public film screenings. Participants, the heroes of their own stories, witnessed their journeys unfold on the silver screen, a testament to the strength of the human spirit. Each screening was a “red carpet gala”, allowing participants to “frock up” and celebrate their achievement with family, friends and the public. The finished film is a beautiful meditation on the challenges and opportunities that come with emerging from disruption. It is made stronger by the extraordinary cast of people with disabilities, all of whom are already experts on navigating disruption and uncertainty in their daily lives.

Rebus extends heartfelt gratitude to the invaluable *Re-Emergence* stakeholders: Leider Theatre, Right to Work in Goulburn, and the staff from The Disability Trust in Bega, NSW. We also appreciate our venue partners, The Queanbeyan Hive, Twyford Hall in Merrimbula and the Hume Conservatorium in Goulburn, for providing spaces that nurtured our creative process.

Re-Emergence is funded through the Information, Linkages, and Capacity Building Program administered the Department of Social Services.

3 public screenings across Regional NSW and a month long online streaming season
130 audience members
30 participants
7 carers/ family
16 Rebus employees
8 part time Rebus staff
8 casual Staff

PERFORMANCES

Rebus Playback Theatre Ensemble

Playback Theatre is a form of improvised theatre in which members of the audience tell moments and stories from their own lives and a team of actors and musicians improvise them back on the spot. It is employed around the world in a wide range of contexts.

The Rebus Playback Theatre Ensemble has continued training throughout the 2023-24 year and has done four performances. These performances were two commissions, one for the Australian National University College of Arts and Social Sciences, and one for the SpringOUT Festival. Additionally, we held a performance as part of our tenth birthday celebrations, and an open public performance in June 2024.

4 performances
110 audience members
18 ensemble members
8 employees
4 local artists employed
4 part time Rebus staff

Systems and Sanity Online Streaming Seasons

Systems and Sanity was a devised theatre exploration that developed from nearly two years of discussion, workshoping, writing, and rehearsal by people with mental health challenges. It travelled through lands of trauma and distress, navigated social systems that can be rigid and disempowering, and arrived in the powerful resilience of survivors and the unique bonds between them. It was a journey travelled with pathos, poetry, music and laughter.

After a sold-out season at Gorman Arts Centre in June 2023 we held two online streaming seasons this financial year, one in July and another for Mental Health Month in October.

Systems and Sanity was supported by the ACT Health Promotion Grants Program

7 cast members
71 online audience
5 employees
2 permanent Rebus staff
3 local artists employed

The Art of Disruption

Rebus Theatre's devised new work *The Art of Disruption* was performed by a cast of disabled actors, and actors with lived experience of mental ill health over three shows at the ACT Hub, Kingston from May 30 – June 1.

Art imitated life in our final *Flair* program production as audiences stepped behind the curtain into a story where a troupe of activist actors grappled with unexpected obstacles and the spectre of corporate interference, testing their leadership and resolve.

The show was supported by ACT and Libraries ACT. *Flair* was funded through the Information, Linkages, and Capacity Building Program, originally administered by the National Disability Insurance Agency, and later transferred to the Department of Social Services.

3 performances

155

11 participants

7 cast members

8 employees

2 local artists employed

6 part time Rebus staff

ASSOCIATE ARTISTS

We'd like to thank all of our other associate artists who worked with us this year:

Sean O'Gorman

Louise Stockton

Jolene Mifsud

Leanne Thompson

Rachel Robertson

Fi Peel

Craig Alexander

Merryn Byrne

Ali Clinch

Chris Stanilewicz

Paul Wong

Joel Swadling

Louise Ellery

Marlene Radice

Leanne Shutt

Stefanie Lekas

Lee Frances

Mirjana Ristevsk

Jen Wright

Rhiley Whinnet

Niki Shepherd

Zebedee Parkes

Declan Hastings

Jo Argæt

WORKPLACE TRAINING

As we rethink our approaches to Forum Theatre based workplace training, we are shifting focus on developing more programs using a similar model to our *Just Hearing* project. This financial year we developed a custom pilot training program for disability service Life Without Barriers. From 2025 we will also be offering Playback Theatre as a workplace activity.

Just Hearing

Just Hearing, was commissioned by Canberra Community Law in partnership with Legal Aid ACT, and forms the educative arm of the Mental Health Justice Clinic, led by Farzana Choudhury (Disability Law Supervising Solicitor). *Just Hearing* is a three-year project with short performance seasons in October and March each year, until March 2025.

The 2024 season consisted of performances for 5 private law firms in the ACT, one performance at the conference in Brisbane, and one performance for community legal centres in Queensland.

Directed by Robin, written by Fi Peel, the 2024 season was performed by actors Joel Swadling and Ali Clich, and 'jokered' (facilitated) by Sammy Moynihan. *Just Hearing* is funded by the Australian Government through the National Legal Assistance Partnership.

141 audience members
5 employees
3 local artists employed
2 permanent Rebus staff

Disability Immersion

Disability Immersion was a Forum Theatre play commissioned by Life Without Barriers (LWB), to look at subtle manifestations of able-ism in senior management. Rebus Theatre was approached by LWB to create a performance for a national get-together of their board and senior management in Melbourne. The play was written by Fi Peel and performed by Fi Peel, Chips Jin, Melissa Gryglewski, and directed and jokered by Robin Davidson. The performance was a pilot, and we hope to develop the project further with LWB in late 2025.

1 performances
40 audience members
4 employees
1 local artists employed
3 part time Rebus staff

ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING

The Rebus team has engaged in a range of organisational capacity building activities to increase our income, improve visibility and awareness of our organisation, and provide professional development opportunities for our staff.

Fundraising

Rebus fundraised a net \$17,684.23 in the 23-24 Financial year through a combination of direct fundraising, taking part in matched funding campaigns, and some large donations from individuals and organisations. Of these funds:

- \$12,513 was raised specifically for our 'Acting Out – On Screen' program through a number of fundraising events and matched funding campaigns including *GiveOUT Day* and *Hands Up 4 Canberra Giving Day Appeal*;
- We also raised \$5651.23 in general donations to the ongoing operation of the company.

This financial year we also secured significant in-kind support for programs in the following financial year through Libraries ACT, Meridian ACT and Capital Region Community Services.

Rebus would like to thank SpringOUT Festival for donating an extra \$1500 in matched funding for our Hands Up 4 Canberra Giving Day Appeal and all our donors who contributed to our *GiveOUT Day* and *Hands Up 4 Canberra Giving Day* appeals.

If you would like to join us in supporting our mission to promote diversity, inclusivity, and accessibility through the power of theatre and other arts please visit our website at <https://rebustheatre.com/donate/> to make a tax deductible one off or regular donation today!

We continue to ensure that individuals or organisations we receive major donations or sponsorship from, comply with the requirements of our [Ethical Partnership Policy](#).

Staff Wellbeing Program

Rebus Theatre Staff Wellbeing program is currently funded through the Canberra Foundations Collective. The grant provides \$17,736 per year for two years to fund:

- Five staff hours p/w for a Staff Wellbeing Officer to:
 - develop new policies and procedures focussed on staff wellbeing;
 - provide mental health first aid, initial support and referral for casual and part time staff experiencing stress, burnout or other mental health challenges that may arise through the work (ie vicarious trauma, re-traumatisation);
- Professional development and supervision for Staff Wellbeing Officer:
- Additional hours for our existing Employee Assistance Program which allows casual and part time staff up to five counselling sessions anonymously if experiencing work related stress. This includes funds for spending on mental health practitioners of staff choice;
- Funding for 'Flexible Health & Wellbeing Allowance' for core staff members to spend on activities that assist in relaxing, getting heart rate up, being active or learning a new activity related to wellbeing. This fund has benefited nine core staff members to date.

Professional Development

- All our tutors and management staff completed First Aid training and refresher CPR training.
- 4 staff members completed 2-day Mental Health First Aid training
- 1 staff member attended Theatre Network Australia's Australian Performing Arts Forum
- 4 staff members completed *Core Cultural Learning: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia*
- 1 staff member attended the Racial Justice Conference
- 1 staff member completed a Consent for Dance and Physical Theatre workshop with Australian Dance Party

TREASURER'S REPORT

On behalf of the Board and the Rebus team I would like to report that in 2024 we recorded an Income of \$972,648, compared to \$918,907 in FY 2022. This money was expensed mainly on Employees and artists at \$756,980 with total expenses of \$1,011,927. The 2023 24 financial year recording a loss of \$39,279. The two main contributing factors of this were an increase in Employee leave liabilities of \$42,356 during the financial year and that during the period from 1st April to 30th June Rebus had minimal income while keeping all the staff employed to prepare for Stages of Empathy starting on 1st July 2024.

The bank balance was \$259.902 at 30 June 2023 and of that, \$115.914 worth of grants are being carried forward to be spent on projects in FY 2024.

FY2024 was a challenging financial year for Rebus with the wrap up of Project Alchemy in March 24 and Re-Emergence but this was offset by the securing of funding for our largest project to date, Stages of Empathy starting in the 2025 financial year.

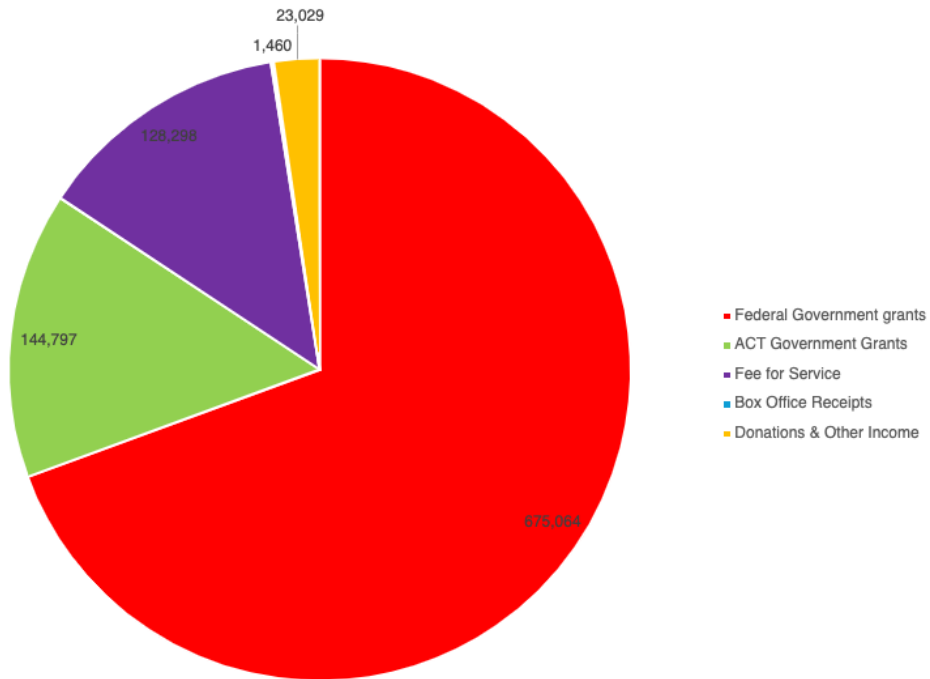
The Board worked closely with the Rebus team during FY 2024 to develop comprehensive strategic and operational planning documents, including budgets and risk assessments. Rebus continued to develop its 'accrual' accounting and reporting processes and has prepared a complete set of audited accrual financial statements for FY 2024. The Rebus Board is particularly pleased that the Rebus team has won a number of new funding grants in FY 2024 for future years that will ensure Rebus' ongoing financial viability.

The Rebus Board will continue to work closely with the Rebus team on strengthening their governance, internal controls, financial management and financial reporting, and in FY 2025 will focus on reducing the leave liability and seeking sponsorship and donors to support this fabulous organisation that benefits so many in our community.

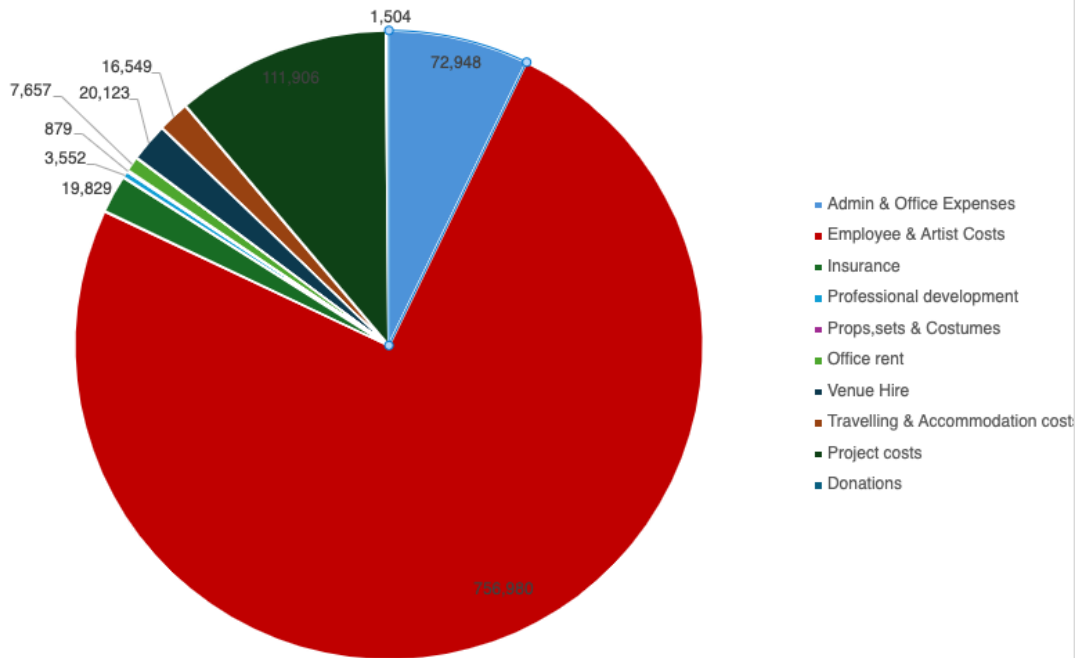
The accompanying graphs provide a snapshot of Rebus' income and expenses in FY 2024, highlighting that the majority of Rebus' income is from Commonwealth and ACT Government grants.

[Rebus' audited financial reports for FY 2024 can be found here.](#)

Rebus Theatre Income Sources 2023-24 FY



Rebus Theatre Expenses 2023-24 FY



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS & THANK YOU

Grants and funding

- *Rebus Playback Ensemble* supported by the ACT Government under artsACT Arts Organisation Investment Funding.
- *Acting Out: On Screen* supported by Hands Across Canberra, GiveOUT Day, SpringOUT Festival and Individual Donors.
- *Flair* funded by the National Disability Insurance Agency, now administered by the Department of Social Services.
- *Disability Immersion* was commissioned by Life Without Barriers (LWB).
- *Expressive Pathways* is funded through the Adult and Community Educations Grant scheme
- *Inclusive Drama* funded by participant NDIS packages.
- *Just Hearing* is funded by the Australian Government through the National Legal Assistance Partnership.
- *Project Alchemy* supported by the Australian Government Black Summer Bushfires Grant Program.
- *Re-Emergence* and *Flair* funded by the National Disability Insurance Agency, now administered by the Department of Social Services.
- *Staff Wellbeing Program* is funded through the Canberra Foundations Collective.
- *Systems of Sanity* supported by the ACT Government under the ACT Health Promotion Grants Program in partnership with Mental Health Foundation ACT

Partnerships & Supporting organisations

- Ainslie + Gorman
- Brett Olzen
- Chris Manchester
- Canberra Community Law
- Hands Across Canberra
- Kate Diggle – The Workplace Therapist
- Liz Lea
- Legal Aid ACT
- Libraries ACT
- Leider Theatre in Goulburn, NSW
- Maddocks
- Meridian ACT
- Right to Work in Goulburn, NSW
- Rollercoaster Digital
- SpringOUT Festival
- The Hume Conservatorium in Goulburn, NSW
- The Disability Trust in Bega, NSW
- The Queanbeyan Hive, NSW
- Twyford Hall, NSW
- University of Canberra – Centre for Creative and Cultural Research
- Questacon

Donors

Rebus would like to thank all of our donors for their generosity in aiding us to achieve our mission and vision. We would particularly like to thank SpringOUT Festival for their significant contribution to 'Acting Out – On Screen'.

Rebus Theatre Inc is a member of the following organisations:

Theatre Network Australia (TNA)

International Playback Theatre Network (IPTN)

ACT Council of Social Services (ACTCOSS)

Thank you

Special thanks to our volunteer Board for donating their time to assist us in strategic planning, policy development, Human Resources advice, and updating our accounting systems over the past year.