



HEAPS DECENT

Annual Report

19 / 20



Heaps Decent is a non-profit company limited by guarantee, holding Tax Charity Concession (TCC) and Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Janine Agzarian	<i>Chairperson</i>
Oliver Ryan	<i>Treasurer</i>
Nina Agzarian	<i>Secretary</i>
Andrew Levins	
Nerida Woods	
Leanne Townsend	

STAFF

Nerida Woods	<i>General Manager / CEO</i>
Charles O'Brien	<i>Project Leader</i>
Adam Bozzetto	<i>Project Leader</i>
Isabella Martin	<i>Administrative / Project Assistant</i>

ARTIST TUTORS

Charles O'Brien
Adam Bozzetto
Mark Egan
Michael Moebus
Elizabeth Maniscalco
Howard Matthew
Jessica Nitties
Isabella Martin
James Lesjak-Atton
Wesley Boney
Rick Bull





OUR MISSION

Heaps Decent is an Australian organisation empowering diverse young people to express their creativity through music and multi-media.

We support engagement for change, positive futures and the development of high quality content with a unique identity.

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ABOUT US


In early 2007 young Sydney DJs Nina Agzarian and Andrew Levins were volunteering for independent radio station FBi. Teaming up with visiting American DJ Diplo (Wesley Pentz) they ran workshops in the Riverina Juvenile Justice Centre in Wagga Wagga. A few months later they ran workshops at Juniperina all-girls Juvenile Justice Centre with British Indie Popstress M.I.A.

In these workshops they glimpsed how stories and music change lives - and it started by changing Levins and Nina. Determined to sustain the work they rented space in Alexandria and used equipment donated by Diplo to work weekly with girls released from the centre. From there they were introduced to Youth Off the Street's Key College and the project snowballed.

By 2008, Fuzzy, organisers of Australia's premiere music events, took notice and offered kick-start funding and assistance as a key partner/ benefactor through donations and administrative support. Heaps Decent grew exponentially.

From the start Heaps Decent successfully enlisted the support of professional guest tutors from a wide variety of musical genres - starting with Diplo there have been numerous performers, DJ's and singers who've donated time and energy, including Aloe Blacc, Lykke Li, M.I.A, Sinden, A-Trak, videoartist Ghostdad, DJ Mehdi, Spank Rock, Devlin, Lady Sovereign, Brodinski, The Cool Kids, Busy P, AC Slater, 12th Planet, Jesse Rose and many more.

A passionate beginning, and 12 years on more than 4000 young people have participated in projects. More than 2000 creative workshops have been delivered in over 40 partner communities. Heaps Decent has more than 10,000 followers of online content, a weekly profile spot on FBi and SYN radio, with select tracks achieving airplay on triple J, and a number of other community radio stations. Content has been featured on ABC Radio National, Rage, 585, and Channel V. Performances have included Parliament House, The Sydney Opera House, The Oxford Arts Factory, and many regional community festivals and events. Emerging artists have featured at VIVID events - Heaps Gay and Curveball at Carriageworks. Heaps Decent has also toured with the Groovin' The Moo regional music festival, delivering workshops in collaboration with featured artists.

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DIRECTOR'S REPORT

It's a pleasure to introduce the 2019/2020 Annual Report.

Since inception Heaps Decent has been supporting the creative development and talents of diverse youth across New South Wales and other regions of Australia. We champion those who are often off the radar, facing a number of challenges and barriers to successful engagement in education and community, or simply isolated due to location or circumstances. Through creative expression they make sense of their world, and many work through experiences incredibly disproportionate to their age and coping skills. They find connection to personal identity, and connection to others.

We are privileged to have continued work with young people in a variety of settings including Youth Justice centres, refuges, high schools and primary schools, specialised schools, community and youth centres, galleries and workshop spaces. Project work resulting from the year is honest and authentic. It has enriched our cultural landscape and brought exciting content to audiences. Through it we have accessed perspectives so often off the radar, and our eyes, hearts and minds have been opened through the exchange.

This year we renewed the Strategic Plan for 2021-2024, creating our blueprint for engagement and growth into the next decade. We envisage a future where many more young Australians have equal access to vibrant cultural activity, where they can experiment and innovate, and find new ways to connect and share experiences. As the Coronavirus took hold in March we had no choice but to suspend all face to face activities - a severe impact on the program and the successful strategies that underpin work. We responded quickly moving some workshops online, making new viewing content, and delivering creative packs elsewhere. In truth remote learning and engagement is not for everyone, including many young people who need contact to build positive and trusting relationships, or those who don't have the tech resources. The challenge moving ahead has shifted from improving on and developing what we know to finding new solutions for creative

engagement that continue to be accessible, inclusive and of continued benefit to all. It is important we prioritise mental health and well being, as the adverse effects of restrictions of COVID-19 continue to unfold.

Despite interruptions we have delivered 348 workshops, recorded 250 new songs, created many visual works including a large public installation, and engaged over 900 participants. It's an incredible achievement given the setbacks that ensued. We are immensely thankful to our principal funders, including the NSW Government through Create NSW and Multicultural NSW, and the Australia Council for the Arts. Thankyou to all other funders, donors and supporters for ensuring we can reach children and young people so often off the radar and provide terrific resources for creative expression.

Thank you to the wonderful young people who have shown great resilience with their creative work this year. Thank you to the other Board members, staff and artist facilitators who continue to power Heaps Decent with their talents and passion. Big thanks also to our project partners who continue to provide valuable skills and resources to support all activities.



Janine Agzarian, Chairperson



MAJOR PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

WHAT WE DO

Heaps Decent tutors start with the ideas that are immediately around young people - their stories, their neighbourhoods, challenges and aspirations. As workshops unfold, young people are up-skilled in music software along with more advanced ideas of how to create a song, source their own sounds, write lyrics, operate equipment and get on stage even when scared or lacking confidence. Coupled with multimedia art, video production and other visual skills it facilitates a great learning strategy - a pathway young people follow because they want to see the outcome and are ultimately inspired by their own works.

Outlined on the following pages are highlights from a year in the life of Heaps Decent.

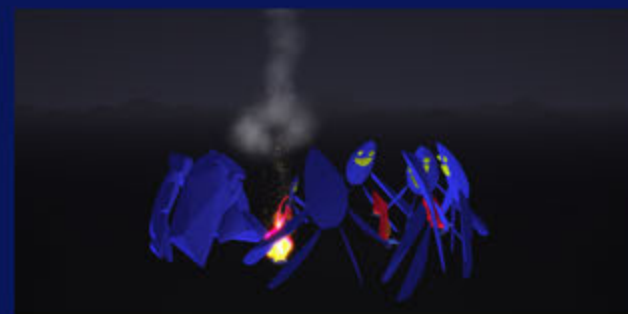
Our website archive has further project details and can be accessed at www.heapsdecent.com. We invite you to take a look around!



Busy workshops underway in Wagga Wagga. Photo: Nerida Woods



Handmade lantern houses



Virtual Reality campfire

KEY COLLEGE

Since 2008 Heaps Decent has been a weekly feature at Key College in Redfern. "Key" is an accredited independent High School (operating under the auspice of Youth Off the Streets) catering to young people at risk, without stable accommodation. At Key they can complete year 10 studies. Students work to individual project plans over the course of the year, to achieve their music goals. These plans are supported through individual tutoring and mentoring, and group work culminating in a compilation of their tracks presented at their annual presentation day.

**"Diagnosed with OCD, what does that mean?
Well gather round
That means I might take a normal thought
And think it's so profound
Do the same things
If I don't I'm overwhelmed
Pacing
They go round and round and round"**

- Kayne, Leave Me Alone



YOUTH JUSTICE PROGRAM BIG UP

Throughout the year we worked with Reiby Youth Justice Centre in Campbelltown, Cobham Youth Justice Centre at St Mary's, Bimberi Youth Justice Centre in the ACT and Riverina Youth Justice Centre in Wagga Wagga. Powerful themes continued to emerge from these music workshops: home, transformation and growth, journeys and future, family and friends, belonging, freedom and restriction. Dozens of catchy and heartfelt tunes have been created by some very talented participants in this project in collaboration with some of Sydney's most exciting producers, DJs and artists.

We continue to have young people contact Heaps Decent upon release from detention, keen to follow up, stay in contact and make more music. This is just one of the excellent outcomes of the project, which sees participants improving in areas such as literacy, and expressing themselves positively and envisaging a brighter future.

This past year has also seen some beautiful visual artworks created - from a large outdoor mural, to intricate mixed media collages constructed from paper, chalk and marbling techniques.



Mixed media collage artwork

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions our usual face-to-face program delivery was suspended. We developed a video series to keep in touch with participants, and encourage them to continue working on lyrics and song ideas. This included track breakdowns, where producer Adam Bozzetto deconstructed several Heaps Decent tracks and explained the technical processes involved in creating something from scratch. Adam also led an interview series where respected music industry professionals answered various questions and discussed their own work. Finally, some extended Youth Justice mixtapes were created to play in centres on ChangeTV for participants to hear their own music.

Heaps Decent is committed to helping to reduce the reoffending rate through supporting sustained programs that build young people's resilience, skills and engagement in education and community.

**"I feel the pain of my mum
And I feel the pain of my father
I felt the pain when I walked out
And caused all of this drama"**

- Youth Justice participant

YOUTH JUSTICE PROGRAM BIG UP

**"All my life I've been committed
So it's hard to just forgive
Came from a place of poverty
Will change the way you live"**

- Youth Justice participant



Large scale mural completed by Youth Justice participants with James Lesjak-Atton

HOME BASE

Home Base is open to all young people and operates throughout the year at Redfern Community Centre. Other drop in sessions were held at Glebe and Marrickville Youth Centres. It is designed as a drop in program to enable newcomers or young people who have interacted with previous Heaps Decent programs, such as Key College or Big Up, to continue developing their creative and technical skills. This project is now in its 9th year and continues to produce high quality content with a small group of emerging artists from across Sydney. These workshops provide the opportunity to explore new ideas with a team of producers, and develop work through to completion. Young people have access to studio facilities and are mentored in all aspects of music production, including professional industry advice.

Home Base regulars Russel Cool, Ravin & Wykirra performed their material on different live streams this past year, including the DIGI Engage conference and Downgrade. Both events were great opportunities for the emerging artists to gain performance experience despite COVID-19 restrictions.

**"You never really know what you have till it's gone
This gonna be the day a body stops breathing
All I see is red and white
And now I'm bleeding"**

- T-aytch, Sinus



Screen captures from the Downgrade livestream featuring Wykirra & Russel Cool

RIVERINA SESSIONS TIRKANDI INABURRA

We delivered two more series of workshops at Tirkandi Inaburra, an education and cultural centre for First Nations boys in Coleambally. Over the course of the visit participants were able to produce some catchy tracks, video clips, interviews and beautiful photographic portraits. At the boy's graduation they received framed portraits from their Heaps Decent visit - which are programmed with Augmented Reality technology to activate a collection of the creative content they produced with facilitators Adam, Charlie, Wesley and Mark.

**"At Tirkandi
We show you how it's done
Proud of our culture
You see it's number 1"**

- Ethan & Tristan



Photographic portraits taken by participants, mentored by Wesley Boney.

RIVERINA SESSIONS NO BORDERS IN OUR SKY

Who are we now as a community, and who could we be?

No Borders In Our Sky brings diverse young people together to express their vision for harmony and belonging, and to tackle global issues arising from prejudice and racism at a grassroots level. We launched this project in April 2019 and have since produced some amazing content.

Spread over 2 years, participants have been exploring music production and visual media, creating a number of public outcomes in the local community. We are working in partnership with the Multicultural Council of Wagga Wagga, who provide high quality programs and services to assist people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to settle into life in the local area.

In October 2019 we held a stall at the Fusion Festival, engaging members of the community in a postcard challenge with the prompt:

To make our community a more friendly, inclusive and peaceful place for everyone, I challenge you to...

We ended up leaving with a huge stack of filled in postcards, and a wide range of insightful responses. You can read some of them below!



The Heaps Decent stall set up at Wagga Wagga Fusion Festival



RIVERINA SESSIONS NO BORDERS IN OUR SKY

In June 2020 we installed a large-scale public mural featuring 28 self portraits constructed with map fragments that identify heritage and homes unique to each participant. Each portrait is a window into the imaginations, journeys and reflections of more than 50 participants who came together to connect in friendship and harmony. By using the Heaps Decent AR app, audiences can further interact with the mural by scanning each portrait to reveal more content - from music, poetry and interviews, to animations and artworks. Mural content workshops were led by Adam Bozzetto, Charlie O'Brien, Nerida Woods, Mark Egan, Howard Matthew and Isabella Martin. Wesley Boney captured wonderful drone footage of the Murrumbidgee River. Many thanks to Jackie Okott who led interviews and captured some thoughts and ideas, and to Thom Paton for co-ordinating activities.

"In my language the word for sky also means heaven"

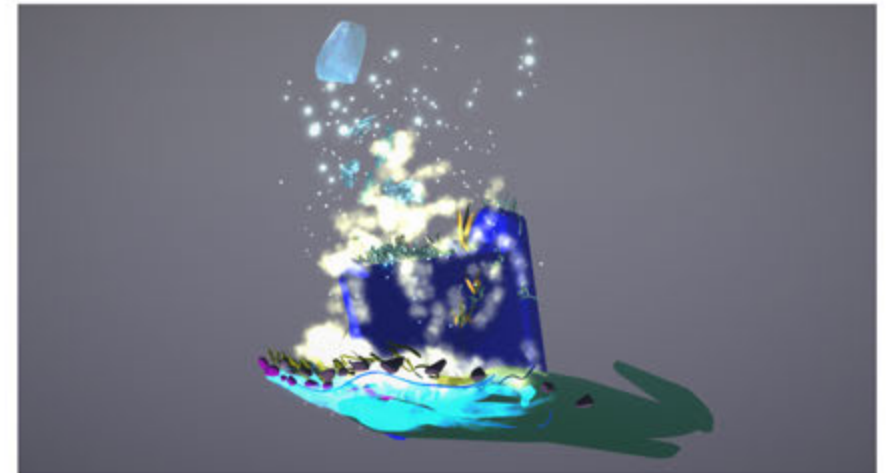
- Christabel Machiridza



Deep in the AR space



The workshop participants in front of their mural



A magical river scene by Shayan

RIVERINA SESSIONS NO BORDERS IN OUR SKY

This project is funded by the COMPACT Program, an initiative of the NSW Government. COMPACT is a program administered by Multicultural NSW and "aims to inspire young Australians from all communities to stand up and stand united against the divisive forces of fear and hate as champions for community harmony."



The mural in action. Photo: Nerida Woods



*Jackie introducing the mural for the Lost Lanes livestream.
Image: Visit Wagga Wagga livestream*



The mural in action. Photo: Howard Matthew

OUTER WEST SESSIONS

This year facilitators Charlie, Adam & Nate made a trip to Brewarrina to run music and dance workshops at the local Youth Centre. Many catchy original songs were recorded, exploring ideas of the environment, culture and tradition, friends and family. The songs created capture the unique perspectives of children growing up in far west NSW.



Focused in workshops. Photo: Charlie O'Brien

**"We're the hottest place
in New South Wales
We need the rain
So we set our sails**

**We all hang out
Almost every single day
We hit the pool
That's where we play**

**When it hits 40
it's not so bad
It makes me think
that I'm really glad"**

- MJ & Krix, My Cousins

OTHER WORKSHOPS AND HAPPENINGS

REFUGES

We continue to run a series of workshops for two inner Sydney girl's refuges, and out-of-home care facilities. The music and visual media workshops allow for positive self expression, heartfelt storytelling and a fun outlet & break from personal situations.

During restrictions in 2020, we put together some art packs with simple instructions for participants in refuges, to inspire some creativity from a distance.



Mixed media self-portrait



Stencil printmaking

AMBUSH

We ran school holiday workshops at Darling Harbour for AMBUSH, a super busy week for facilitators with hundreds of children turning up for the music production sessions.

GLAM WORKSHOP

We were really thrilled to be invited back to run further music production workshops with GLAM, a LGBTQIA+ social support group for young people from Sydney's Northern Beaches.

BEING HUMAN

We collaborated with Spyhop, a youth media organisation in Utah, and the Octopizzo Foundation in Nairobi to create a track that explores what connects us globally. Young vocalists Christabel Machiridza from Wagga Wagga and Liam Ah Cheung from Sydney added their talents to the track Free, and a video clip documenting the process is underway.

SPOKEN WORD RECORDINGS

Continuing a collaboration from last year with the arts organisation Word Travels, we held another studio recording session with a finalist from the Australian Poetry Youth Slam. These recordings provide a chance for them to experiment outside live performance and gain some studio experience, adding music and soundscapes to their works.

OTHER WORKSHOPS AND HAPPENINGS

DIGI ENGAGE

We were invited back to run another series of music production and Augmented Reality workshops as part of the DIGI Engage conference, this year streamed online. It was a great opportunity to test run some of the online technologies for creative collaboration, and we also participated in a series of online conversations. The conference is a large 2-day event for young leaders from the Australia/Pacific region to explore themes of peace and social change. 3 of our young artists performed live for the event.



*Homebase participants performing on the livestream.
Image: DIGI @ Youtube*

FBI RADIO

Since 2015, Heaps Decent Radio has been featured on FBI every Monday at 5pm. These tracks come from rural and remote communities, Youth Justice centres, and loads of other places not always on the radar. It is so important to connect these diverse voices to audiences that may not otherwise hear them. Thank you for another great year of Heaps Decent Radio. You make lots of days special with every play.

SYN MEDIA

Based in Melbourne, SYN is a media organisation run by a community of young people that provides training and broadcast opportunities for young Australians. This past year they have introduced Heaps Decent tracks to their weekly rotation on the program The Hoist. Thanks SYN!

DIPLO BRIDGE CLIMB

To celebrate 21 years of the Bridge Climb, Heaps Decent was able to give out golden tickets to 6 lucky followers to watch Diplo perform a set atop the Sydney Harbour Bridge. They were treated to an amazing Sydney sunset as well.

Thanks Heaps to our principal funders, partners and supporters!

Thank you to the Australia Council for the Arts, Create NSW, the Crown Resort and Packer Family Foundation, CCI Giving, Multicultural NSW, Creative Partnerships Australia, Adobe, Wagga Wagga Council, The Multicultural Council Wagga Wagga, City of Sydney, Redfern Community Centre, Ableton Live, FBi, SYN Media, 107 Projects, Emanate, The Lord Gladstone Hotel, The Brag Media, SONY music, APRA AMCOS and all the wonderful people who have made individual donations.

Thanks to our partner community who provide staff and space to support all aspects of the program. Thank you all so much for another great year at Heaps Decent.





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SOUNDCLOUD

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