

3. ART GALLERY SERVICES TO DISADVANTAGED GROUPS IN THE COMMUNITY

RR 9227

Officer responsible Art Gallery Manager	Author Ronnie Kelly, Manager of Public Programmes
Corporate Plan Output: Information and advice to the Council	

The purpose of this report is to advise existing arrangements and the direction for development of services at the McDougall with respect to disadvantaged groups in the community. This responds to requests made at the Committee's December seminar meeting.

EXISTING PROVISION

The McDougall Art Gallery is always open and welcoming to groups of disadvantaged people who visit the Gallery. Organised groups from IHC, Hohepa Home, Kilmarnock Centre, Hogben Centre and the Van Asch School for the Deaf are frequent visitors. Often they choose to walk around the exhibitions with their own staff but quite frequently they also use our 'group bookings' programme which means they are given a specially designed lesson prepared to meet their own special specifications by Judith Hout (Education Officer Schools), and by the Gallery Guides as part of the normal education programme in the Gallery. On average special lessons would be prepared on request for about 5 - 10 such groups each year

The Mac Club also provides a significant opportunity for disadvantaged visitors - many in wheelchairs, some without speech and normal coordination. Meeting each month as a special group the Mac Club discusses the current exhibitions and provides a social focus for disadvantaged adults who live out in the community. The club has now been running for almost 15 years. It has met every month, and over the past three years has an average attendance of 11 physically and intellectually disadvantaged adults each meeting.

With 'main streaming' in the schools we currently get an increasing number of school classes with 1 - 2 special needs pupils in the class visit.

We also offer special programmes for elderly groups in the community, taking bookings for visiting groups who are guided around their selected exhibition and served tea or coffee in the Night Entrance. Each year we have about 6 such visiting groups from old people's homes or special clubs for the elderly. We also take an Outreach programme into the homes or clubrooms. This is undertaken on request and there are approximately 6 such visits each year.

PROGRAMMING FOR DISADVANTAGED YOUTH

At present there is no special focus on this needy group. A preliminary discussion with Robyn Moore has been very fruitful in identifying the broad provision for disadvantaged youth in this city, and there is no doubt that the Gallery could make a significant contribution, particularly in conjunction with existing services and other similar institutions.

Several groups might fall into the category of ‘disadvantaged youth’, but broadly we are looking at those students who are not academic achievers and/or those who are seeking education and work experiences of a type not normally associated with the mainstream. My own experiences with such students suggest that there are 2 key elements which we might focus on:

1. Individualising the experience – that programmes might be devised for groups of students, but that we might successfully look at programmes which involve very small groups or individuals. This type of experience is one we currently offer for specialists in secondary schools who may have career or educational goals in the art or design industries.
2. Provision of services within a context – that we offer specialised experiences which may fit within a range of group or individual needs. For example, we might be able to arrange relatively lengthy experiences for some individuals with a special interest, or, on the other hand, we might be able to offer short events for larger groups of a more general nature; not necessarily looking at actual art works, but looking behind the scenes at how an Art Gallery works. This sort of experience would fit well within the context of a programme based on collaboration between similar institutions, or within the art and design industry.

It is significant that we do presently receive visits from these sorts of groups, but that they are invariably ‘ad hoc’. We do have an interest in making our services available, or in making existing resources, programmes or experiences available where they are thought suitable. We are also interested in pursuing further possibilities, and the next step will be to arrange a meeting between our schools Education Officer and key providers of services within the community.

Robyn Moore will co-ordinate a meeting with these key providers, and staff here are enthusiastic to explore these possibilities.

Chairman’s

Recommendation: That the information be received.