Disability Pride is Back!

Title: *The second Disability Pride Mural,* 2018.
Image Description: A large brick wall of a building (16m wide x 10 m high) with many images and pages of text, both black and white and colour, pasted upon it. The words Disability Pride is spelt out with large letters made up of the images of people's bodies.

The story of the *Disability Pride Mural* in Footscray (the first of its kind in Australia), of its accidental removal a week later and its reinstatement in 2018.

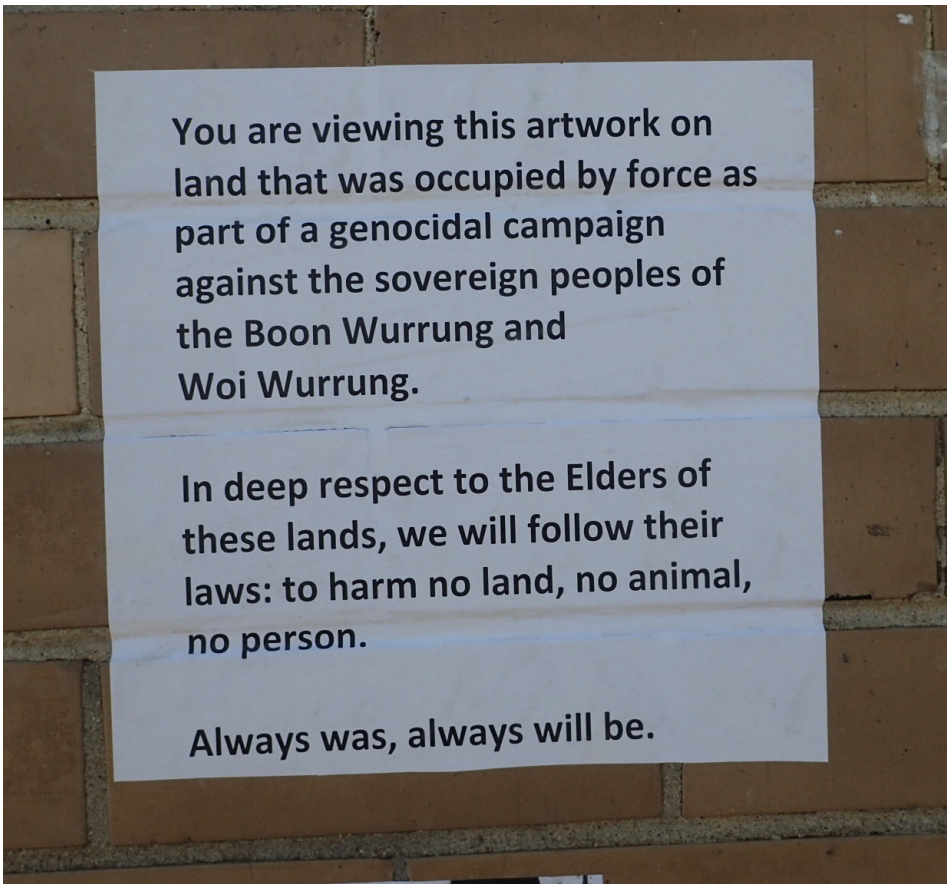
Debbie Qadri and Larissa Mac Farlane

This essay is about the *Disability Pride Mural* in Footscray (the first of its kind in Australia), of its accidental removal a week later and its re-instatement in 2018. We explore the purpose of the mural, as well as how the art creates a public space for telling others about the disability pride movement, and of diverse experiences of disability.

The *Disability Pride Mural* is a celebration of disability culture and of the power in identifying as disabled. The mural also raises issues around the social model of disability and ableism - through its visual content, but also through how its place in public space has had to be negotiated.

By being an artwork on the street, the *Disability Pride Mural* is 'an argument about *visuality,* the social and political structure of *being visible'* (Irvine 2012, p. 4). The mural participates in the politics of public space and of public art - both of which inherently invoke issues of equity, accessibility, visibility, democracy and participation. The mural is a paste-up, and its ephemeral status facilitates a more accessible place for speaking both politically and frankly. But what power does an instance of temporary public art have to effect social understanding?

Title: A section of the first *Disability Pride Mural,* 2017.
Image Description: A large yellow brick wall (approx. 8m wide x 8m high) with multiple cut out images pasted upon it. The word 'Disability' is spelt out along the top in large letters using images of walking sticks. The word 'International' in presented in the same way, along the bottom in smaller letters. Photographer - Larissa Mac Farlane.



Title: A section of the second *Disability Pride Mural,* 2018.
Image Description: A brick wall with an A4 sized paste-up with text that reads:

'You are viewing this artwork on land that was occupied by force as part of a genocidal campaign against the sovereign peoples of the Boon Wurrung and Woi Wurrung.
In deep respect to the Elders of these lands, we will follow their laws: to harm no land, no animal, no person.
Always was, always will be.'

This essay has been developed through conversations and interviews with Larissa, and a review of literature, as well as a conference presentation and ensuing discussion with the audience of that presentation.[1] Debbie is the writer, who often speaks in first person. Larissa Mac Farlane is a second author; who contributes discussion (including two interviews), reviewing and editing, and the production of the artwork which provides the substance and meaning of this writing. It has been co-produced by two women who work in the field of making art with communities. And we likewise have been co-produced by the communities we have worked with to make art. These communities, such as the artists of the *Disability Pride Mural*, contribute to our understandings and practice of what we do.

Larissa Mac Farlane is a Footscray based visual artist, working across printmaking, street art and a community art practice. Her work is inspired by the urban industrial landscapes of Melbourne's West, as well as by her experience of illness and disability, to investigate ideas of belonging, place, healing, change and ways that we can celebrate what we have here and now. Larissa is creator and facilitator of the *Disability Pride Mural*.

Debbie Qadri has an ongoing interest in public art, and participates in the field as as an artist with her own practice, a maker of public art with communities and as a researcher.
*Unless stated, all photographs are by Debbie Qadri

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1 Mac Farlane and Qadri 2018, 'The Story of the Disability Pride Mural in Footscray', Public Pedagogies Institute Conference 2018, Victoria University. We thank the audience of this presentation, and their ensuing discussion which contributed to our understanding of the mural.

Title: A section of the second *Disability Pride Mural*, 2018.
Image Description: Five diverse people are posing their bodies and pulling faces, with expressions that vary from fear to defiance to pride. One person has a prosthetic leg. There are three white people and two people of colour.

Contents

Title: Installation of the first *Disability Pride Mural*, 2017.
Image Description: A photomontage of the first mural being installed. There are ten people in front of the mural, either assisting with the installation or looking at the mural. Larissa, a white woman, is pasting onto the brick wall with a brush, with assistance from another white woman. Another woman of colour is holding a bucket. There is a table with multiple art materials.
Photographer - Colin Jones

The first *Disability Pride Mural* was made on Friday November 24th 2017, 5-9 pm.

It was produced by Larissa Mac Farlane with forty collaborators and installed on the Telstra Exchange building in Footscray as part of 'One Night in Footscray'.[2] Larissa was the producer of the mural. She contacted people individually to invite them to contribute to the mural. Some of the artwork was developed through conversations between Larissa and the participants working out collaboratively what should go on the wall, whilst others sent their images, text and artworks directly. Larissa organised for them to be printed in large sizes. She went to the printer to pick them up, she cut them out and prepared them for being pasted onto the wall, thinking about the arrangement of all the single artworks being placed together to form one whole mural. She collaborated with the artists, negotiated the processes of getting permission to use the wall as well as to stage the paste up event, obtained funding to support some of the project and prepared for the community engagement at the event.

I came across the mural on the evening it was being installed, and assisted for a while by holding the bucket of glue whilst artists pasted their work onto the wall. It was a beautiful flurry of people working together - some sitting at a table making more artwork or colouring their artworks which had been printed for them, then choosing where to put their art and pasting it up.

This mural was described as bringing together,

> 'some of Melbourne's best known disability activists for a live and collaborative paste-up to celebrate the culture of Melbourne's disabled community, challenging the narrow stereotypes of disability and making a stand that joins with the International Disability Pride Movement' (*One Night in Footscray* Guide, 2017).

From the above we gain an understanding of the mural as an event as well as an artwork. It was also a collaborative process of: putting the call out for the art and gathering the imagery to be used; the actions of pasting up the work together; the social gathering of disabled people and the conversations of the community which was generated by the mural. Hundreds of hours had been spent on a project that provided a sense of camaraderie and belonging (Charlie Park in Millar, 2017b).

[2] 'One Night in Footscray' was an event of art, projections and performances across the suburb over one night, organised by Victoria University and Maribyrnong Council.

Just over a week later, on Monday 4th December, as Larissa went to document the mural with photographs, she found a wall with no artwork. It had been erased early that morning, the day after International Day of People with Disability. Larissa was quite confused about the blank wall, and it took her three hours of looking at it, leaving it, going back to look (considering she might be hallucinating), and a conversation at the wall with a friend, before she accepted that it was gone.

The wall had been accidentally cleaned. A few days later, the Maribyrnong Council issued a media statement, that was reported as such:

> '. . . the chief executive of Maribyrnong City Council, Stephen Wall, owned up.
> "We sincerely apologise to Ms Mac Farlane and all the artists involved in the installation," he said.
> "We fully support their work and all that it represented, and are embarrassed by this unfortunate mistake.
> "Our graffiti contractors removed the installation and we will be meeting with them to review the current procedures."' (Tran, ABC news online, 2017).

[3]

Why the mural was removed is a larger unanswered question. The lack of explanation about why contract graffiti removers decided that the mural needed to be removed, only leaves room for conjecture.

The removal of the mural a week after it was installed, was devastating to Larissa and the other artists who had shared their personal artwork in the mural.

They felt;

distressed, shocked, upset, dismayed, appalled and exhausted

(Millar 2017a; Millar 2017b; Mac Farlane 2019a).

[3] This was heavy with irony, given the difficulty Larissa had encountered in getting the wall cleaned before the mural was installed. Initially there was no funding for having the wall cleaned before the paste-up event. The cost was considered prohibitive. Eventually the owners of the building (Telstra) organised for the wall to be cleaned before the mural was installed, so that the mural could go onto a mostly blank wall.

> ‘It was pretty devastating . . . it still hurts so much to think about it because it just felt like that way that our voices are continually marginalised and that I’ve experienced so many ways in which I’ve been dismissed, and it just felt like that all over again, in such a public way’ (Larissa Mac Farlane 2019a).

To Larissa, it felt like yet another way in which the voices of disabled people have been consistently erased throughout history. She said it was ‘more than losing an artwork, this really hit your identity in a big way’ (Mac Farlane 2018).

The removal provoked much anger from the general community, but in hindsight Larissa felt the anger was directed towards the Council - which is an easy thing to do. What the media coverage didn’t quite express was how it felt for the people involved and that the devastation was not only about the fact it was removed, but about **why** it was removed.

Title: Artists gather together at the site of the removed *Disability Pride Mural*, 2017.
Image Description: Seven people, a mobility scooter and a guide dog, sit or stand in front of a clean yellow brick wall. Some of the people have their fists raised to indicate their anger.
Photographer - unknown

Because **why** it was removed was not known, it couldn't be simply re-printed and glued. There had to be a process of healing and a process of re-making. A week later, Larissa organised a get together at the wall for those involved, and later a meeting with Council authorities where the artists could explain how they felt about what had happened and could hear an apology.[4]

Larissa was also faced with the dilemma of whether to go back and do the same work again. This would be a big commitment, given it had been a voluntary project, taking hundreds of hours to achieve.

This raised important questions.
What does it mean to re-make the same artwork?
And how does this change the process and the mural?
Moving forward from the erasure of the mural was going to be difficult.

I interviewed Larissa in 2018, just before she was due to re-install the mural and she said, 'I feel ill-equipped to do this', and I said, 'It's happening next week'. We imagine disability activists as confident, competent and unfatigued, but for Larissa, re-installing the wall was also a pressure and a burden that she carried because it *had* to be remade.

After much work, psychological and physical, the mural was re-instated (nine and a half months after the original mural) in September 2018[5].

After the mural was reinstalled, Larissa said:

> "This morning I woke up for the first time in nine and a half months without a feeling of dread, and that's because I knew that today we were putting back this mural" (Larissa Mac Farlane 2019a).

[4] An apology had been included in the media release, but there had been no other formal communication with the artists (Mac Farlane 2019b).

[5] This time containing contributions from 50 collaborators.

Position, labels, terms and words

I wanted to write about the mural, because I was emotionally connected to it. I witnessed the first *Disability Pride Mural* being made in 2017 and was impressed with the scale of the project and how it had included so many people in its development and at the installation. I am interested in collaborative processes, because I often make artworks with community members. I am also interested in how these artworks sit in the context of public space, their audience of 'the public' and in their role as public art[6]. Through its form of paste-up and inclusion of text, the mural is also part of the tradition, culture and politics of graffiti and street art.

This mural has an extended story: it became a larger and longer artwork because of removal and re-making. The removal and replacement of the artwork play out the ever-present politics of art in public space, propelling debate and controversy about who has the right to place their ideas in public. In Hannah Arendt's words:

> 'to shine and be seen, to sound and to be heard, to speak and to be read' (Arendt 1958, p. 168).

Very early on in the first interview I had with Larissa, I became aware of my 'outsider' stance in our discussions of the mural. I felt outside of *disability*. I wanted to be very careful about not saying the wrong thing about *disability* because I felt I lacked an understanding of the experiences and politics of that world. Larissa explained this as 'ableism', where even with the best intentions, you set yourself apart from disability when ironically most of us are very connected with disability.

Ableism can be defined as 'discrimination or bigotry against people considered disabled by mainstream society' (*Invisible Disability Project website* [7]) and Campbell (2009) says its chief feature is a 'belief that impairment or disability (irrespective of 'type') is inherently negative and should the opportunity present itself, be ameliorated, cured or indeed eliminated' (p. 5).

At the beginning of this essay we invite you to consider that disability is an integral part of life which most people are likely to experience.

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[6] I regard all art in public space as public art. I reject definitions which define public art as that which is permissioned or commissioned, as this makes distinctions between artworks depending on legal and financial aspects (See Qadri 2019, p. 117-123).

[7] 'Invisible Disability Project' is a website which hosts projects and services dedicated to disrupting the silence around what it means to live with an invisible disability, including a glossary of terms around disability (https://www.invisibledisabilityproject.org/words-matter).

> ‘Disability is part of the human condition. Almost everyone will be temporarily or permanently impaired at some point in life, and those who survive to old age will experience increasing difficulties in functioning. Most extended families have a disabled member, and many non-disabled people take responsibility for supporting and caring for their relatives and friends with disabilities’ (World Health Organisation 2011, p. 3).

People with disability make up the largest, most diverse minority within the population, representing all abilities, ages, races, ethnicities, genders, sexualities, religions and socioeconomic backgrounds. Most of us will experience some form of disability at some stage in our lives, even though we may not consciously identify with the word. I began writing feeling like an outsider to the world of disability, but when I shared my experiences of looking after my parents, Larissa pointed out that I had daily experience with disability I felt, at that moment drawn into the world of disability, welcomed in, with the realisation that I had some understanding of what it is about - advocating for my parents, conversations with the chemists and medical staff, my growing understanding of depression, memory loss and the physical consequences of illness - were all part of my daily life. I also have a medical condition which will slowly increase my experience of disability, but at this stage I do not identify as disabled.[8]

So when I speak about disability, I want you to imagine, that I am not talking about a special minority group, but instead you, yourself, have a stake in this - you will experience disability through caring for someone you love, or through experiencing it yourself - as a normal part of the human condition. We are in this together (or at least, should be).

[8] Not identifying as disabled or disclosing disability is common (Bogart 2017).

Title: Detail of the second *Disability Pride Mural*, 2018.
Image Description: The letters P and R are pasted at large scale on the brick wall. The letter R is made up of three people's bodies. One person leans against the other to make the upright and the right-side leg of the R. They are both laughing and looking at the camera. The curved part of the letter P and R is made by a side view of two different people sitting on the ground with their arms and legs pointed out towards the left.

The Social Model of Disability

There is an ongoing shift, aided by the Disability Rights Movement, away from a medical model of disability towards a social model of disability, where disability is understood as a social construction (Waldschmidt 2017) and where people are viewed as disabled by society rather than by their bodies (World Health Organisation, 2011).

> 'The medical model . . . is where if you have a disability, this is a personal problem, this is a problem with your body or your mind which needs to be fixed or managed or cured, whereas actually if you look at the Social Model of Disability . . . the person with the disability isn't the problem, it actually is the society, the structures of society, the attitudes of society which limits people' (Mac Farlane 2018).

> ‘an individual is evaluated and labelled through a process of power which then serves to separate them from mainstream society, education, work, or social interaction, because they deviate from the dominant norm and difference is not valued’ (Owens 2015, p. 3 describing the UK social model).

Cameron (2009) suggests ‘disability is a personal and social role imposed on people with impairments’ which is ‘acted out in the social contexts’ (p. 6).[9]

The Social Model of Disability has also led to changes in the way that people use language and the ways that they describe themselves. Some use person first language, such as ‘person with a disability’. Others use identity first language such as ‘disabled person’. And others are reclaiming past derogatory language, such as referring to themselves as ‘Crip’. We respect all these different ways to describe oneself. However, we don’t support the use of terms such as ‘differently abled’ or ‘diff-ability’. This language suggests that there is something wrong with using the word ‘disability’.

Working out how disability can be spoken about in more positive and useful ways, is an ongoing process for everyone. *Invisible Disability Project* points out that, ‘words have power and affect how people interpret the world’, they can make us, ‘do things, feel things, or believe things’. Their ‘improper use can have a devastating impact, even with the best intentions’ (Australian Network on Disability, Inclusive Language).

There is power in how we use language and re-use terms for our own purposes. We acknowledge that our use of words here in this essay are exploratory, open to movement and change.[10]

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[9] For further information on various models see Owens 2015, or Barnes 2012 and Shakespeare 2010 (for historical accounts of the social model).

[10] For further insight into the history and current political implications of these words see, Disabled World (https://www.disabled-world.com/definitions/disability-disabled.php) and Australian Network on Disability (http://www.aucd.org/docs/add/sa_summits/Language%20Doc.pdf)

Disability Arts

The mural is not only an artwork by people who are disabled, it is an example of disability arts practice, and part of the Disability Arts Movement.

The development of the Disability Arts Movement has varied in each country, but generally gained speed in the 1960's alongside civil rights movements. Allan Sutherland (1989) says that disability arts would not have been possible without disability politics coming first - 'it's what makes a disability artist different from an artist with a disability' (p. 2). Disability arts is political. It is:

> 'Art made by disabled people which reflects the experience of disability' (Sutherland 2018).

Per Koren Solvang explains the relationship between disability art and the politics of equality:

> 'In the disability community, disability art is perceived as a powerful means of expressing a positive identity as disabled. Oppression and discrimination are combated through identification with positive values and with the struggle for equality' (Koren Solvang 2012, par. 2).

Disability art is made by disabled people, telling their own experiences.

> 'In disability arts we are in charge, we tell our own stories, we present our own perceptions of disability and the issues around it' (Sutherland 2018).

Hambrook and Cameron (2009) suggests that a central theme of disability arts should be to describe the oppression, to identify, record and to talk about the truth of disability experience. Disability arts are not a gathering of artworks by medium, or period, or by a group of a particular type of artist. Instead, they share the same subject matter, they identify with disability and their works have a similar purpose in that they are critically and socially engaged (Cameron 2015).

It makes sense for artists to join together in collective projects. Strength, identity and an enriched sense of self can be gained by coming together (Hambrook and Cameron 2009). Larissa explains how she perceived the benefits of making the mural with a group of people:

> 'I don't really like taking a stand by myself. I know that I am strongest when I have my community with me . . . This wall isn't really altruistic, it was actually about trying to find a space for me in public to be able to be proud of who I am. So I had to bring all my friends with me. So many of my friends didn't identify as disabled. They would say I don't want to be a part of that, I know the discrimination I'll face if I identify, so that made me realise that we had to do it where ***WE*** led it and where ***WE*** created it and we had to do it in public as well, and all do it together and give each other strength' (Larissa Mac Farlane 2019a).

Title: Detail of the second *Disability Pride Mural*, 2018.
Image Description: Photographic images of the heads and shoulders of four diverse people, smiling and looking in different directions, have been pasted up on the brick wall above a grated window.

Title: Detail of the second *Disability Pride Mural*, 2018.
Image Description: The word 'Pride' spelt out in very large letters using photographs of many different human bodies.

Disability Pride

> 'Everybody feels marginalised, there's this really big experience of being marginalised and not being able to stand up and be proud of your life and your achievements' (Mac Farlane 2018).

> 'Disability Pride means owning . . . owning ourselves and owning our place here in the world, and that our place in the world is just as valid as anybody else's' (Sifis 2019).

Larissa had previously made paste-up projects before the Disability Pride mural (see Mac Farlane 2017a). The story of her handstands holds within it, her reasons for working in the medium of paste-up and the subject of Disability Pride. In 2004, Larissa decided to learn how to do handstands. She believed that this would assist in the recovery of her brain following her ABI six years previously. She would go to the park and practice, often when nobody was around. It was a difficult challenge and took many months of daily practice before she succeeded.

> 'For years she did her handstands in secret, in stairwells and alleyways and toilets' (Reich 2017).

After 7 years of her daily handstand practice, Larissa realised that she was hiding the ritual which had become so important in her life for managing her pain and trauma. Whilst she didn't (initially) understand why, she recognised that she was experiencing some shame and embarrassment about this unusual passion. And so, Larissa decided to explore, through art, ways to bring this ritual out of the closet and in doing so, discovered ways to convert shame into pride. Reich tells the story:

‘So she began taking photos of herself doing handstands, then blowing them up in black and white, and pasting them on street walls “to leave a mark - this is where I did a handstand and this is where I’ll be back”’ (Reich 2017).

Title: Larissa hand-standing with her paste-ups
Image Description: A photo of a white painted brick wall. At one end is pasted a slightly larger than life sized cut out B&W image of girl in a handstand. She wears stripy socks and several layers of clothing with a walking stick next to her. At the other end of the brick wall is a smaller image of the same girl leaning over about to do a handstand. In between these wall images is a real-life person in the process of doing a handstand on the bricked footpath in front of the wall. Her handstand position with one leg in the air and one on the ground assumes a position between the two pasted images on the wall. Photographer - unknown.

Larissa describes the 18th birthday of her brain injury as another turning point. She decided to use this milestone to present an exhibition of her artworks – *Grandstanding not Handstanding*[11] - to publicly own and celebrate her disability. Metaphorically she had come of age and it was time to grow up and embrace the concept of disability and alongside it, Disability Pride.

[11] *Grandstanding, not Handstanding* was a solo exhibition at Footscray Community Arts Centre in October - December 2017.

This exhibition included some collaborative public paste-ups. Paste-ups were used to take pride in her own story and then paste-ups with others made *their* stories visible. Paper and glue are the mediums, but so are: the wall, the wider public space surrounding it and the ongoing audience of a broader public. Paste-up is an act of showing, making things visible, and the practising of Pride.

The Disability Pride movement is now worldwide. It was inspired by the Gay Pride movement. The first Disability Pride Day was held in Boston, (USA) in 1990, and the first documented Disability Pride March was in Chicago in 2004 (Disability Pride Philadelphia website).

> 'Disability Pride is . . . learning to be more than just okay with myself and with the various diversities my body foists upon me . . . and see myself as a whole person' (Morphy Walsh 2019).

Findlay (2019) explains it is, 'about culture, and identity and community and feeling a part of something'.

In reference to *The Disability Pride Mural* Bowditch explains:

> '*Pride* encapsulates self-identifying with disability, and one of Larissa's strengths is that she gives people the confidence to take pride in their disability and 'come out' as disabled' (Bowditch 2019).

Larissa has felt a reticence from some people to be involved in Disability Pride. She believes that Disability Pride is complicated and that each person's relationship to it is different depending on whether they acquired or were born with a disability, their experiences of different impairments (and the associated stigmas) and their individual intersections with race, religion, gender and sexuality. The different levels and experiences of ableism, especially internalised ableism, also impacts the extent to which disabled people identify. The level to which people connect with Disability Pride also varies, not just over time, but also day to day, depending on the context and situation. She also understands Disability Pride as a practice; it is not something you attain one day and then have with you forever henceforth.

Whilst Disability Pride is relevant for both disabled individuals and the disability community to engage with, it is also something that the wider Australian society and culture needs to consider in terms of working towards equity (and in light of the fact that everyone is likely at some stage to experience disability themselves or through caring for someone).

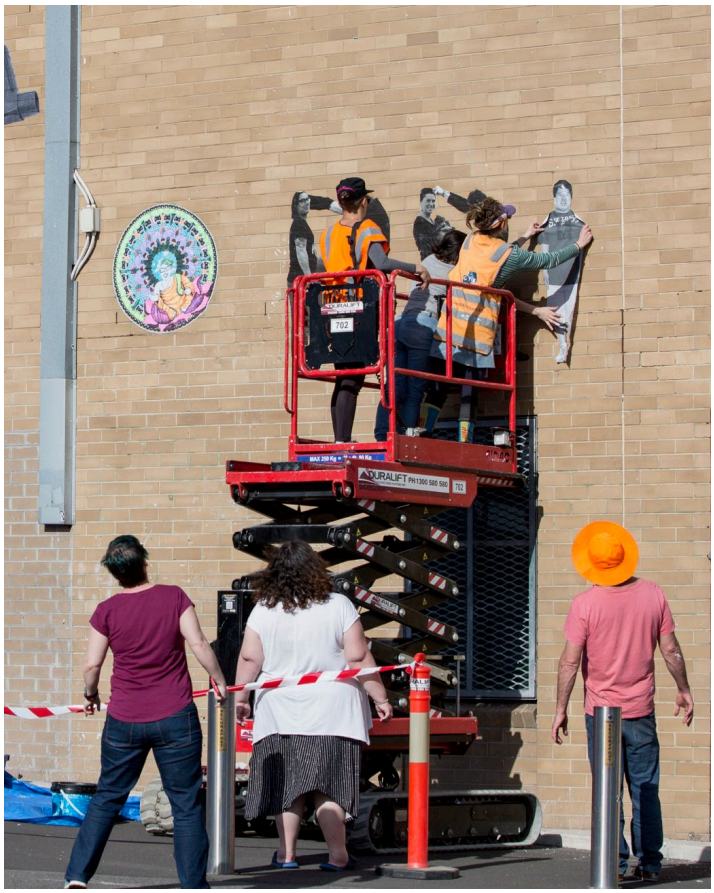
Disability Pride is Back

In September 2018, *The Disability Pride Mural* was re-made as part of the Melbourne Fringe Festival. It was described as a 'live art installation/ performance' and a 'collaborative paste up' which 'celebrates the culture of Melbourne's disabled community, challenges narrow stereotypes of disability, reclaims public space and makes a stand that joins with the International Disability Pride Movement' (Melbourne Fringe Festival Guide, 2018).

One of the important aspects of the project was that it was disability led and that it wasn't facilitated by a disability organisation (generally they are not disability led) (Mac Farlane 2018). People experiencing disability were welcome on the day to help install the mural and the event was wheelchair accessible with Auslan interpreters and audio describers.

From the description above we can find four purposes for the mural:

Celebrates, Challenges, Reclaims, Makes a stand



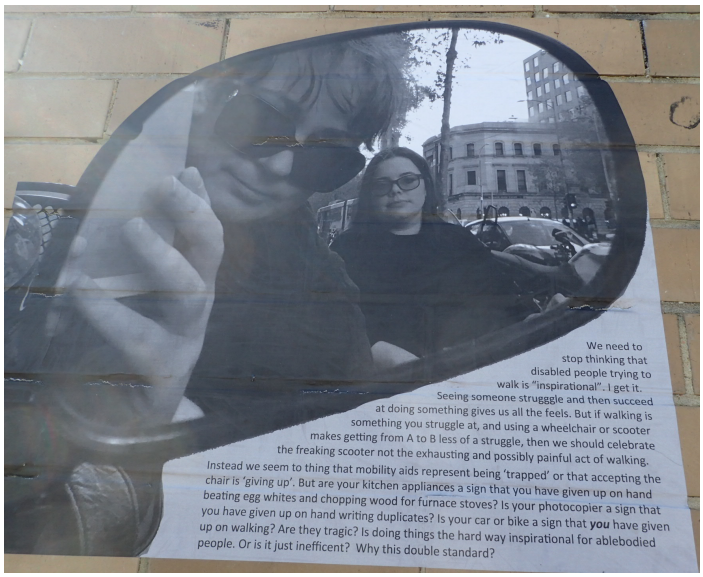
Title: Installing the second *Disability Pride Mural*, 2018. Image Description: Three women are in a scissors lift, high up on the brick wall. One is at the controls, and the other two are attaching artwork to the wall. Three people, a man and two women, stand on the ground below, looking up at them attentively. Photograph - BandAnna Photography.

Celebrates

> 'It's about celebrating disability' (Kaleb 2019, referring to the *Disability Pride Mural*)

Disability is a word which is hard to identify with, when it's seen so negatively. In the affirmative model of disability (Hambrook & Cameron 2009), **celebration** counters the personal tragedy narrative of impairment. Hambrook says this is important because very often 'disabled people find themselves under pressure to keep quiet about their impairments' (Hambrook & Cameron 2009, par. 9). Larissa explains that disability affects our lives in ways which are not measurable by the terms *better* or *worse* - we become different people through our experience of disability. Celebrating disability is important but sometimes also difficult (Mac Farlane 2018).

Some artworks in the mural demonstrate the way forward, where they show subjects which are often viewed as negative or stigmatised by society - such as the use of steroids or mobility devices - and celebrate them as positive and wonderful (Park 2019).



Title: Detail of a paste-up on the Second *Disability Pride Mural*, 2018.
Image Description: A photograph of a reflection in a mobility scooter mirror of one person sitting in the mobility scooter and another person leaning into the photo. This is accompanied by a text which reads: We need to stop thinking that disabled people trying to walk is "inspirational". I get it. Seeing someone struggle and then succeed at doing something gives us all the feels. But if walking is something you struggle at, and using a wheelchair or scooter makes getting from A to B less of a struggle, then we should celebrate the freaking scooter not the exhausting and possibly painful act of walking. Instead we seem to think that mobility aids represent being 'trapped' or that accepting the chair is 'giving up'. But are your kitchen appliances a sign that you have given up on hand beating egg whites and chopping wood for furnace stoves? Is your photocopier a sign that you have given up on hand-writing duplicates? Is your

car or bike a sign that you have given up on walking? Are they tragic? Is doing things the hard way inspirational for able-bodied people. Or is it just inefficient? Why this double standard?

Title: Detail of a paste-up on the Second *Disability Pride Mural*, 2018.
Image Description: A drawing of a person sitting cross-legged in a circle with five syringes arranged behind which extend from her back out beyond the circle like the sun's rays.In each of her outstretched hands she holds a bottle of pills, the first label reads 'steroids' and the second label reads 'for life'.

Title: Detail of a paste-up on the Second *Disability Pride Mural, 2018*.
Image Description: A cut out photograph of an electric tricycle with basket. Also on the wall to the left is a bird flying and walking canes forming the letter 'E'.

Larissa advocates that *disability* is not inherently a negative word. Acquired disability can change and alter lives, but this doesn't make it a natural tragedy. She has previously experienced pressure not to acknowledge the anniversary of her brain injury, because so many can only understand this day as creating further harm. Conversely, Larissa has used the experience of her anniversaries as a catalyst for making room for celebration.

> 'It's a day of so much grief and loss, because you've lost this person that you were before . . . but there's also . . . there could be so much space to celebrate . . . the fact that you have survived all these years . . . or that you've made a new life, you have all these new skills . . . and this new way of being you. But because our culture doesn't often acknowledge that this is possible, we don't get a space to own this change. There also needs to be space for you to celebrate who you are now' (Mac Farlane 2018).

Challenges

The wall *challenges* in many ways. When I look at the wall I experience a range of feelings - saddened by the stories told, at other times affronted and challenged about my own ideas, taken to task about my attitudes and asked to consider different ways of thinking. The wall is a host to emotions that range, sweep, reach and drop. I hear Larissa's words of 'grappling' with how to deal with her own disability. You witness this grappling and difficulty in the honesty and anger expressed by the artists through the mural, and your own emotional response as audience.

Part of this grappling with the mural, is that it challenges ideas that we have about disability and confronts us about our own *ableism*.

Ableism was one of the things that drew Larissa to make the mural. She explains:

> 'At some point, many people with disabilities, find themselves not wanting to hang out with 'those disabled people' because that might mean negative things – that's about your internalised ableism. All that shame that I previously talked about came from internalising the attitudes of society and turning them upon myself … and I don't want to do that anymore because it keeps people with disabilities at a loss. It keeps us stuck down the bottom, below the poverty line, because we can't value ourselves, because we've taken on these ableist attitudes. I don't know how to address that except for some big grand statement like Disability Pride … so that's when I went – let's have a big mural on a public wall' (Mac Farlane 2018).

Title: Detail of a paste-up on the second *Disability Pride Mural*, 2018. Image Description: A group of posters in two vertical rows.The posters contain both images and texts and refer to experiences of brain injury.

They read:

‘Getting angry at someone with an injured brain for being slow, running late, or forgetting important things, is like getting angry at someone with a broken leg for not running a marathon fast enough.’

‘“TBI is scary and it can be very lonely and frustrating when you can’t simply explain what you’re thinking and feeling” Lori, TBI Survivor’

‘Dear TBI Brain,
Please concentrate on things We can Do Now! The rest we will deal with in time, together: Love, TBI Survivor’

‘After a brain injury you may feel like you would have been better off dead in reality what you really want and need in your life is UNDERSTANDING Reach out find others you-re not alone. FB.Com/ TBINetwork'

‘It takes up to 5 times more energy for a person with a brain injury to complete even the most simple task than it does for a person without brain injury’

One poster has an image of a sign post with multiple signs on it pointing in several directions which read; lost, confused, unclear, unsure, perplexed, disorientated and bewildered.

For many people, Disability Pride is a way to challenge internalised ableism. Ableism is a set of processes and practices which are culturally produced, and create a deep way of thinking about human bodies as whole and perfect (Campbell 2013).

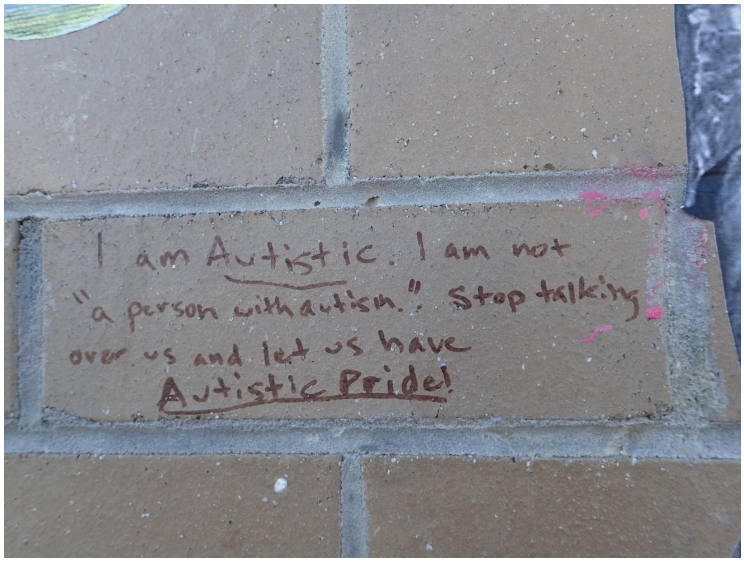
> ‘These ideas are implicated in the very foundations of social theory, therapeutic jurisprudence, advocacy, medicine and law; or in the mappings of human anatomy’ (Campbell 2013, p. 4).

> ‘For me it’s about working through the internalised ableism and shame that many of us have if we’ve grown up or acquired disabilities and getting to a place where we can feel proud of who we are and see our disability as a valued part of who we are and find connection with other people who have disabilities as well’ (Brown 2019).

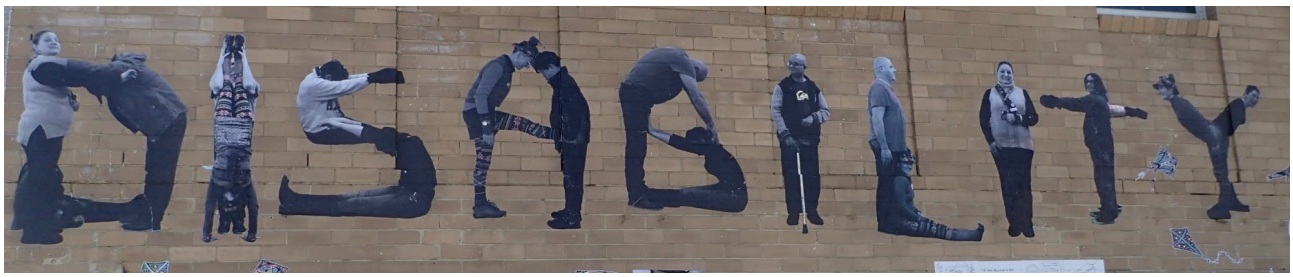
> ‘We as disabled people are regularly operating, living and surviving in a deficit model, in a world that doesn’t necessarily welcome us, or value or reward what we bring and give to the world, but sees us often as an inconvenience, an expense and as unimportant’ (Bowditch 2019).

If you feel uncomfortable reading this, it might be that your ableism is responding. Challenges to the way we think about disability are writ large on the wall and are directed at both disabled and non-disabled people.

> ‘You are sick and it’s fine. It’s a big part of you’ (*The Disability Pride Mural*, 2018).



Title: Detail of graffiti written on the second *Disability Pride Mural*, 2018.
Image Description: Text written with brown Texta onto a light yellow brown brick. The text reads: ‘I am Autistic. I am not “a person with autism”. Stop talking over us and let us have Autistic Pride!’



Title: Detail of the second *Disability Pride Mural,* 2018.
Image Description: The word 'Disability' is seen on the brick wall, spelt out in very large letters. These letters have been created using photographs of many different human bodies.

Reclaims

Larissa says that it's hard to celebrate the word disability when it is seen so negatively, but:

> 'I can't just see this as negative . . . how do we create a space and own the skills we do have? . . . then I looked at other movements like the Civil Rights Movement and the Gay and Lesbian Movement and they were all about . . . pride, it's all about reclaiming words . . . it's about reclaiming *disability* as a positive' (Mac Farlane 2018).

> 'Disability Pride attempts to dismantle this shame that we have inherited from a society that sees disability as negative' (Mac Farlane 2019c, ABI [Acquired Brain Injury] Wise App).

The *Disability Pride Mural* is an artwork which provides a space where collaborators can take control and use their own voices. It also provides an example of how this can be done visually.

> 'The disability arts and culture movement makes the representation of disabled people a political issue: it asserts that in order for disabled people to be truly liberated, we must change the way society sees us. This is the work of the artist' (Chandler et. al 2018, p. 252).

Makes a Stand

To make a stand implies some sort of opposition and difficulty. You can see it as a positive action but it is also accompanied by risk.

You stand up. You hand stand.

Making a stand is visible and uses the body to make the stand.

Perhaps demonstrated in the way that the bodies are used to form the words 'Disability Pride' in the mural.

Disability Pride is a public stance.

Title: Detail of the second *Disability Pride Mural*, 2018.
Image Description: Paste-up of a rectangular poster with a Lino cut image of a girl in a handstand with her cane beside her. The words Pride, Disability and Culture are written vertically alongside in different fancy fonts. Some parts are coloured with green and orange.

'Most disabilities are invisible and people have to choose to disclose them. To avoid discrimination, many people do not disclose their disabilities or even hide them' (Bogart 2017, p. 33).

'You can't see my disability, so must not be real?
I can't see your brain yet you claim it's there'
(*The Disability Pride Mural*, 2019).

Quinn et al. 2002, argue that the invisibility of persons experiencing disability 'has meant that the legal structures created to advance private freedom (protection against the abuse of power) and public freedom (participation in the mainstream) have either not been applied or have been applied with less rigour in the case of people with disabilities' (p. 26). Further, Quinn et al. (ibid.) suggest that this invisibility creates a lack of access to, or influence over public policy and less admission to public power.

> 'This lack of presence – or invisibility – serves to reinforce stereotypical assumptions about the incapacity of persons with disabilities. It encourages a lack of respect for people with disabilities as rights holders on an equal footing with others' (Quinn et al. 2002, p. 26).

In this light we can see that the mural has a larger role to play through contributing to the visibility of disability. Many of the artworks on the mural address issues of power. For example (a small sample of the many in the mural):

'State Trust?'[12]

(Left) Title: Words written in Texta on the day of installation of the second *Disability Pride Mural*, 2018, by one of the artists. Image Description: The words 'State Trust?', written with black texta on a yellow brown brick.

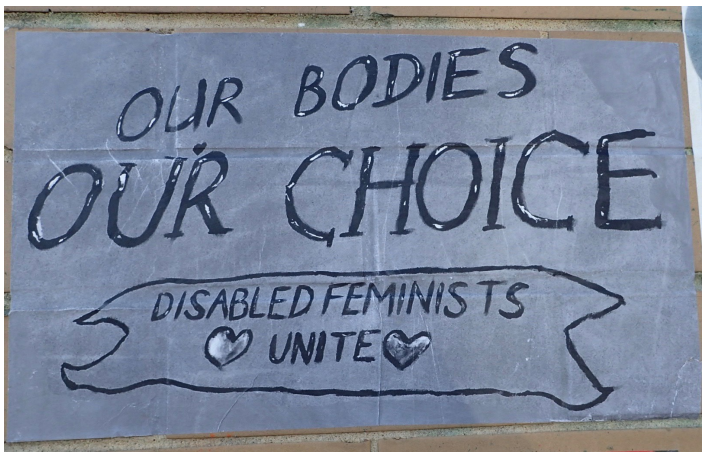
(Right) Title: View of second *Disability Pride Mural*, 2018, with the building behind it.
Image Description: A photo of the entire Telstra Exchange building with the *Disability Pride Mural*. Behind this is the top of a much newer and taller building, which is black and has a sign at the top that reads 'State Trustees'.

[12] This quote references the sign for State Trustees which can be seen above the mural.

‘The way my body defies the patriarchy, society, you (and sometimes myself)’

‘But I fight back’

‘Free the people, shut all institutions, fight back’



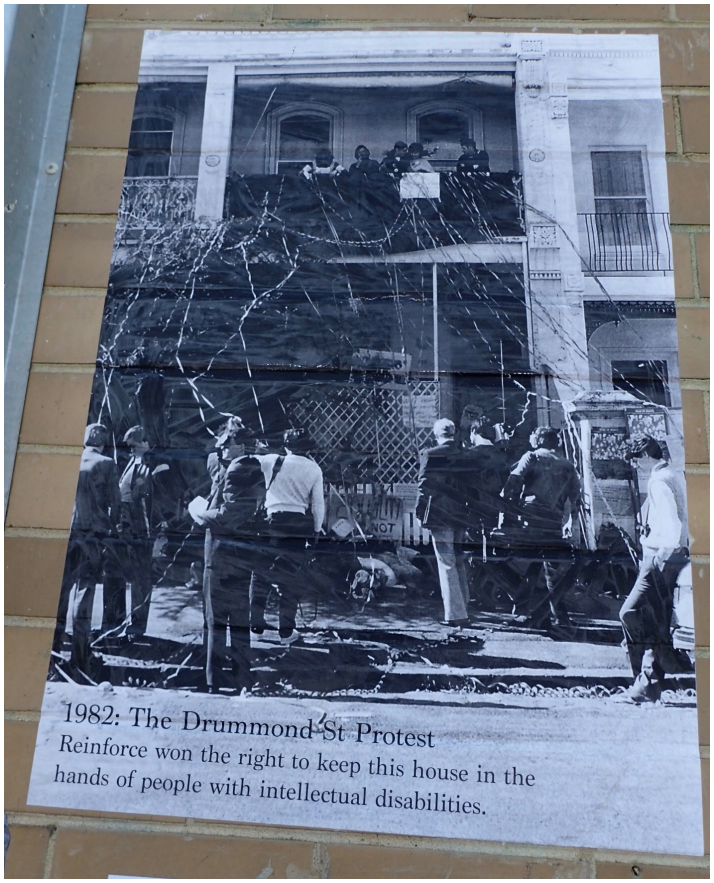
These artists utilise the power of public space to tell their stories and educate the audience about disability.

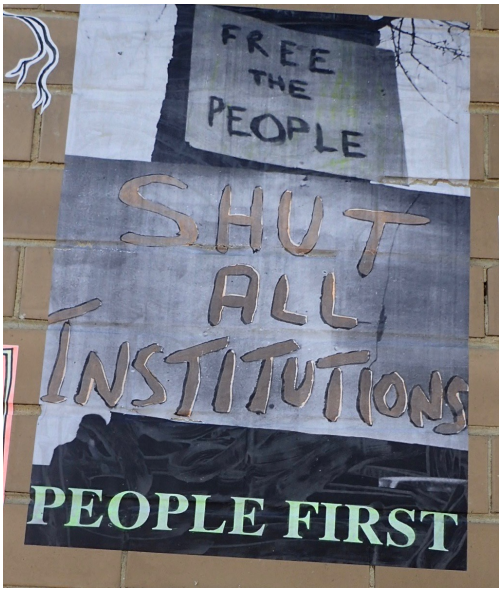
Title: Detail of the second *Disability Pride Mural, 2018. Image Description: A paste-up with some handwritten text: ‘Our Bodies Our Choice. Disabled Feminists unite.’*

Many people have put images of themselves in the mural. They can be identified by friends, family and work colleagues. ‘Making a Stand’ includes becoming known for a political agenda and ‘going out on a limb’. For many people, the act of participation in the mural, was ‘coming out’ as disabled.

In Larissa’s early paste-ups, she decided to make her private practice of doing handstands more visible and public. Public space is the powerful ingredient in these artworks which makes *Disability Pride* visible. Art placed in public space gains a larger, ongoing audience but it also enters the politics of equity in public space - who can or can’t use public space for their own purposes, who can speak, who can be visible. It also infers purposeful action.

Irvine (2012, p. 5) refers to the act and audacity of ‘getting up’. I see this as one of the powers of street art that it draws attention to the fact that a human being personally, voluntarily and purposely (using the body physically), designed and constructed the artwork on the wall. The audience are drawn to pause and question why? The artwork has two acts: the act of making the artwork’s content, and also the act of putting it up in public space (its context of being public). Mulcahy and Flessas (2015) suggest that street art is better understood as performance, than artefact (p. 2). The remaining artwork is ‘traces, signs, and records of the act’ (Irvine 2012, p. 5).





(Left) Title: Detail of paste-up on the second *Disability Pride Mural*, 2018
Image Description: A paste-up of a photo of a double storey house. Five people are on the second floor verandah holding streamers which are held at the other end by people on the footpath outside the house. Words underneath the photograph read: '1982: The Drummond Street Protest. Reinforce won the right to keep this house in the hands of people with intellectual disabilities'.

(Right) Title: Detail of paste-ups on the second *Disability Pride Mural*, 2018.
Image Description: A photograph of a protest placard with hand painted words 'Shut all Institutions' and printed words 'People First'. This placard is propped against a tree. Above and attached to this tree is another placard with handwritten words 'Free the people'.

The first *Disability Pride Mural* was the act of 'getting up'. Its removal in 2017 created a burden to replace it, which extended the artwork. The second mural contained acts of repair, re-making, re-peating and re-instating. And actions of of making a stand, standing up, being resilient and becoming visible.

Title: The making of the second *Disability Pride Mural*, 2018
Image Description: Four people are intently working together to apply glue to the back of a large artwork. Three people are kneeling or lying down on a blue tarpaulin, holding the work in place, whilst a fourth person uses a glue gun.

Words - to write, to sound, to be heard, to speak and to be read

> ‘Language shapes the way we see, and think about and experience the world. It makes possible who it is possible for us to be, and also makes it possible for us to resist what we have become’ (Cameron, 2015, par. 3).

> ‘Words can make us (and others) do things, feel things, or believe things. We also have power when we find new ways of using old words, or creating new words for old things or ideas’ (*Invisible Disability Project*).

The use of the word ‘disability’ can have both positive and negative effects on how people feel about their identity (Bogart 2017). Larissa has said that she often feels that she has label above her head that reads ‘disability’. The label is also a text, a word. Larissa tells me that the word ‘disabled’ is a good word for owning disability. Words have histories and are used politically for different reasons. The mural both examines these uses of words associated with disability and demonstrates ways to use them. The words in the mural play an important role of being words in public space - akin to graffiti.

> ‘Text moves into art as part of the urge to connect with audience, the urge to explain, to share experience and intent’ (Qadri 2019, p. 917).

Title: A paste-up in the second *Disability Pride, Mural*, 2018, that explores the need for ramps at a shopping centre
Image Description: A collage of 3 photos and some text. One photo is a close up of a woman with dark hair and eyes with a sad face. The second photo is of two young girls looking glum and standing next to a large sign with the words ‘Lifts out of order’. The last photo is of this same large sign and the front of a mobility scooter.

The text reads: #rampsforwatergardens
I am a working wife and a mother of two. My family chose Sydenham as our home because of its accessibility to the amenities that my young family needs. I have cerebral palsy and use a mobility scooter. The lifts at Watergarden are a gateway for me to access amenities that allow me to be the mother and career woman I want to be. They are the gateway to my independence, but they are chronically failing! The lifts are constantly out of order, and it takes days for them to be repaired. Because of this, I have to call a taxi just to be able to reach the train platform. Not to mention me being regularly late for work. The only way for me to go about my daily life as normal when the lifts fail is by ramps, which is why I started the petition 'Ramps for Watergardens'. I and we as the Sydenham community have endured the Watergardens lifts for too long.'

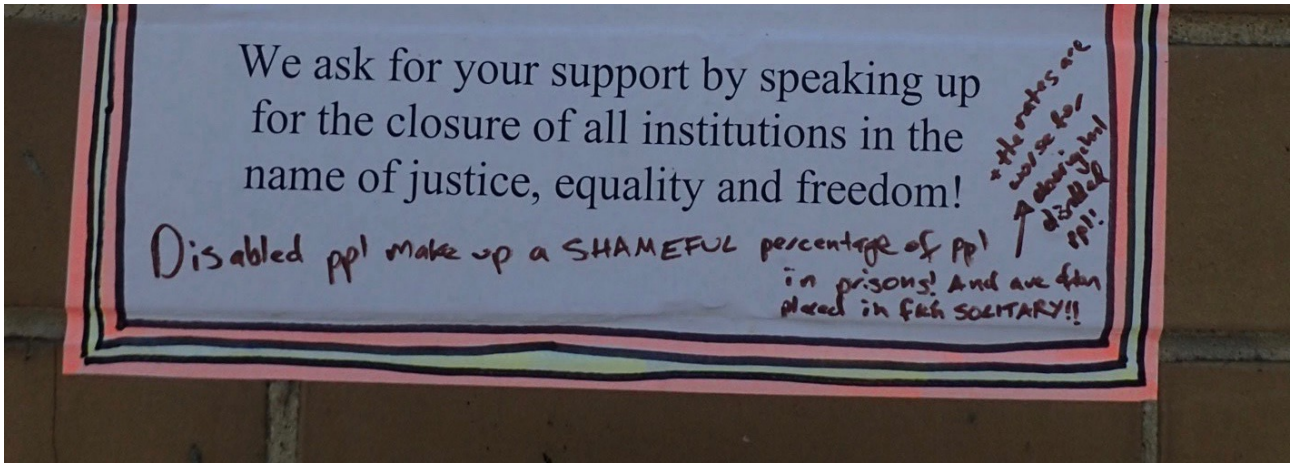
The wall is a conversation both imagined and real - the writers of text on the wall imagine a potential audience when they write, and the viewers of these texts respond with their own thoughts. The *Disability Pride Mural* utilises a long tradition of text in public place - graffiti, protest placards, ad-busting, street art - forms which use text to offer a conversation other than instruction and advertising. It is also graffiti through being words and images in public space (Iveson et al. 2014; Naguib 2016). Graffiti, evolving from a long tradition of writing in public space, comes from two words to 'write and to scratch or incise' (Naguib 2016, p. 59) - is a conversation both between writers and also with society (Christen 2010) and is a practice of contestation and political protest (Naguib 2016).

Writing in public is connected with our urge to write and to speak - 'be seen, to sound and to be heard, to speak and to be read' (Arendt 1958, p. 168).

Looking at the mural involves reading different types of texts which vary in tone and emotion. There is instructive humour such as the cartoon '*what the hell is that? Oh Just my mind*'. There are explorations of the ironies of disability and deeply personal stories of experience. Through reading the texts you begin to understand the politics, the practicalities of living with disability and the wider implications of how we deal with disability as a society. For example the paste-up entitled 'Ramps for Watergardens' explains how lifts are 'a gateway to independence' but also fail to provide access when they are out of order. The writer argues for ramps which are more reliable methods of access to the amenities needed for her family and to get to work on time. We hear a particular story which is an example of the larger widespread issue of access.

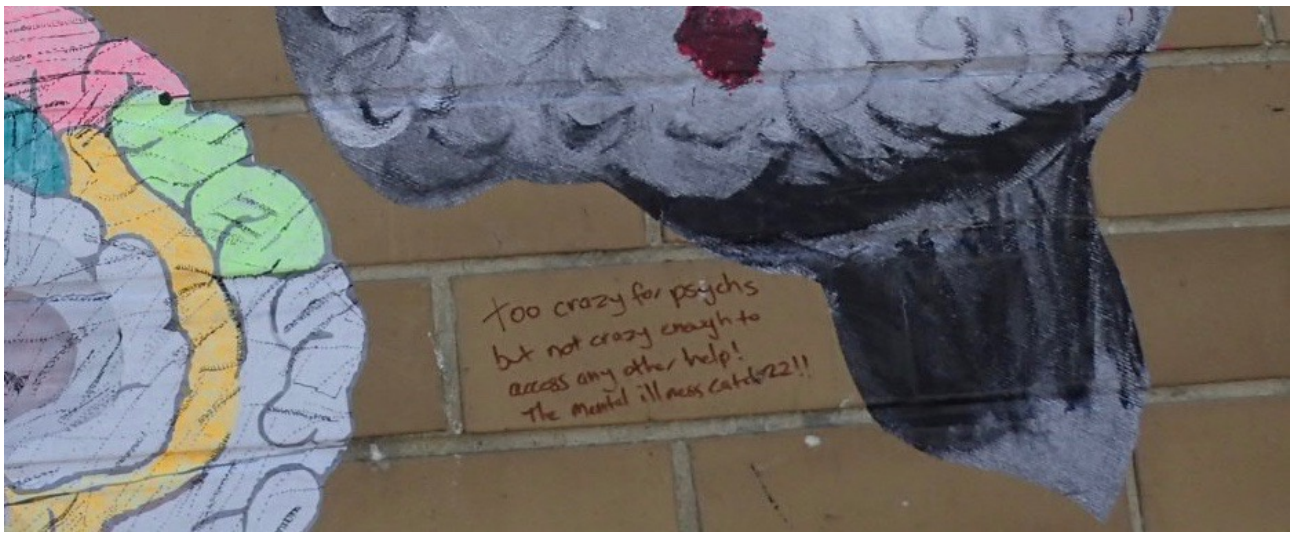
The Writer

Very soon, the mural was graffitied by someone with a permanent brown marker. Larissa and I were very pleased about The Writer's additions to the mural, because it was a contextual conversation between an audience member and the mural. The Writer commented about their experiences of disability, often in relation to nearby texts and imagery in the mural.



Title: Detail of the *second Disability Pride Mural,* 2018.
Image Description: A close up of paste-up text on the brick wall. It reads 'We ask for your support by speaking up for the closure of all institutions in the name of justice, equality and freedom. Hand-written comments have been added in brown texta along the bottom. They read:'Disabled people make up a shameful percentage of people in prisons! And are often placed in fkn solitary! And the rates are worse for aboriginal disabled people'.

I felt compelled to read each of the texts made by The Writer, which fell at intervals across the wall like interjections of commentary or a turn in conversation between the paste-ups.



Title: Detail of the *second Disability Pride Mural,* 2018.
Image Description: A close-up photo of a yellow brown brick wall with two paste-ups of brains. Comments have been added using brown Texta onto a brown brick in between by The Writer. It reads:'Too crazy for psychs but not crazy enough to access any other help! The mental illness catch 22!!'.

For example under the poster titled: 'The Social Model of Disability', which has tips about how to help a disabled person fight for equality, The Writer adds further explanation. Under 'having a Voice', the writer writes:

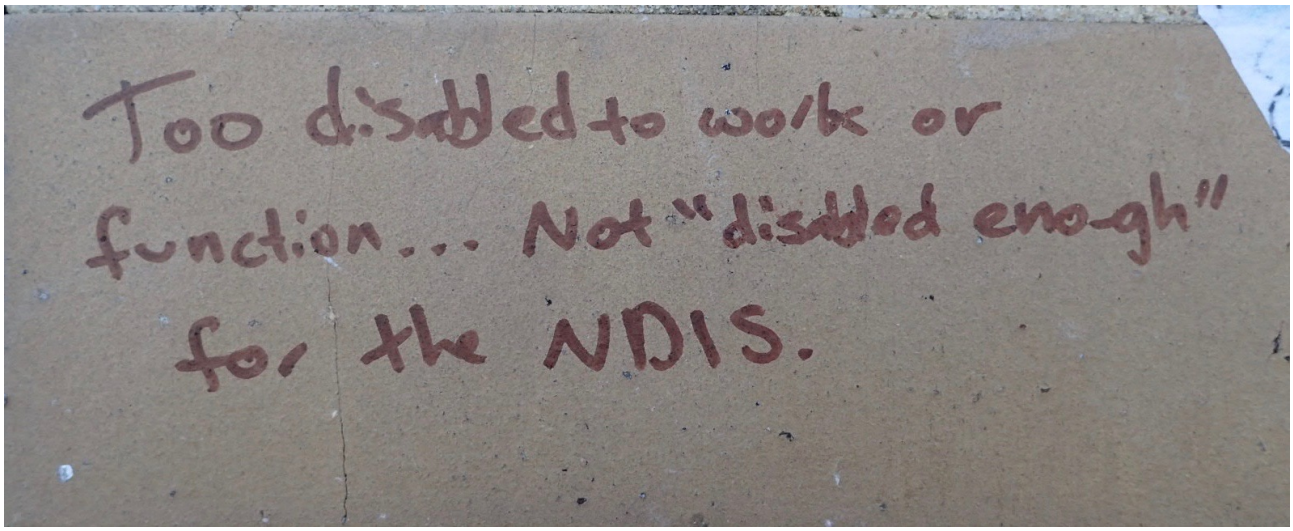
> Speaking for ourselves
> Even non-verbal ppl can communicate (w help or augmented/ alt communication methods).
> So don't speak "for" us,
> LISTEN!

There was a feeling that the mural gave permission and for this person to speak/ write. There was space (between the paste-ups) for the conversation that The Writer wanted to have. Similarly graffiti on the school desk, toilet door, or in public space attends to a conversation or towards provoking one (Halsey & Young 2002). Graffiti is often participatory in that it intentionally seeks 'communication with a larger circle of people' (Blanché 2015, p. 33).

The Writer uses text to converse with others who speak through the mural but also to the audience. I was drawn into the story of The Writer, as they spoke about their dilemma:

> 'I can't access social support systems. I can no longer envision a future in which I survive.'

‘Can’t afford the diagnosis/ies - I need in order to access support or treatment. Can’t function enough to work without support/treatment. Can’t work, so can’t afford the diagnosis …… What?!?’



Title: Detail of the *second Disability Pride Mural,* 2018.
Image Description: A close up photo of a yellow brown brick with handwritten words in brown texta. “Too disabled to work or function . . . Not “disabled enough” for the NDIS.”

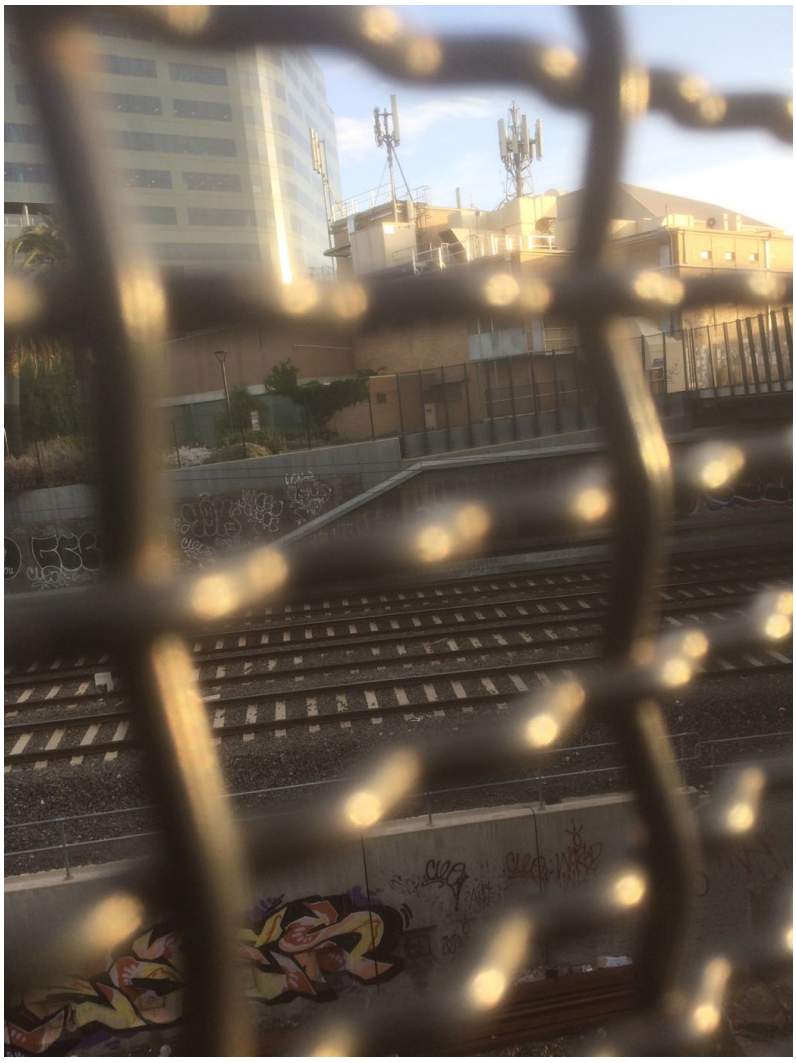
The mural has provided a place for The Writer to write, to speak, to have a voice. The mural is a group of voices which begins a conversation and provides a forum for speaking.[13]

[13] The Writer was the only person who graffitied the mural during its first year. We view these additions as contextual and contributing to the conversation of the mural. The fact that the mural remained otherwise clean was a revelation to the fact that taggers could see and understand the *Disability Pride Mural* mural as an important artwork, not to be capped or erased.

Conversations

Irvine (2012) argues, ‘each new act of making a work and inserting it into a street context is a response, a reply, an engagement with prior works and the ongoing debate about the public visual surface of a city’ (p. 7).

When you walk around Footscray, you can see the conversation. From a spot in Irving Street, I can see the graffiti down alongside the train-lines as well as the *Disability Pride Mural* and can envisage them all as voices in an ongoing conversation demonstrating the ‘desire for creative expression; and the right to freedom of speech’ (Irons 2009, p. 15).



Title: View of Footscray train-lines with the the second *Disability Pride Mural*, 2018 in background.
Image Description: A photo looking down upon multiple train lines with much graffiti along the boundary walls. Beyond this is the yellow brick building upon which some of the Disability Pride mural can be seen. Across the foreground of the photo is the blurred criss cross of the wire fence barrier.

Title. The second *Disability Pride Mural*, 2018, with adjacent graffiti, February 2020.
Image Description: the right-hand side of this photo is a number of fading paste-ups on a brick wall. The left half of the photo is another edge of the building made of yellow metal wall. It has a black aerosol tag which reads 'Wasak'.

The Disability Pride Mural has generated a large conversation. First of all you can imagine the conversation between the fifty people who put their artwork onto the wall and the audience of the mural. Then there are the conversations which are generated by those who see it from the sharing of photos and writing about the mural. A short documentary film, *The Disability Pride Wall*[14] has been made and screenings held, where more of the community of the mural have gathered and conversed. I say 'the community of the mural' to loosely describe the community of people who are joined in the act of going to see the film or to meet afterwards, and who discuss the topics of the mural. The community of the mural includes: people who are connected in some way with it; those who speak about it; those who experience the artwork, the film, the writing about it and those who tell others about it. In these ways the community of the mural expands and the ongoing conversation about its topic of Disability Pride also expands.

[14] *The Disability Pride Wall* (film) 2019, Director/Camera/Editing: Naomi Chainey, Producer: Larissa Mac Farlane, Audio: Megan Kimber, Stills: BandAnna Photography, Music: Bearbrass Asylum Orchestra. Screened at Setting Sun Film Festival 2019, The Melbourne Fringe Festival 2019, The Kiln Festival 2019 at the Arts Centre Melbourne 2019.

The mural can be considered to take on the role of a teacher in this conversation. Krieger suggests that the mural has ongoing pedagogical power because it remains in place:

> ‘People of Footscray are regularly encountering this, it is a pedagogical thing. They have repeat exposure’ (Krieger 2018).

The mural is a *conversation* about Disability Pride, and its possibilities are extended by its duration - how long it stays up for. The contributors of the imagery and text speak through the medium of the mural, and their act of speaking continues whilst the mural remains in place.

Title: The second Disability Pride mural, Feb 2020
Image Description: A man walks in front of the mural and is looking up at it.

Negotiating Visibility

> ‘Artists appropriate the public space to convey their messages and the streets become their exhibition space’ (Naguib 2016, p. 60).
>
> ‘Street art inserts itself in the material city as an argument about *visuality*, the social and political structure of *being visible’* (Irvine 2012, p. 4).
>
> ‘I am one of the #millionsmissing due to ME/CFS. CAN YOU SEE ME?’ (*The Disability Pride Mural* 2018, [15]).

Larissa had a ‘desire to give an identity to the disability community who she felt were unseen by the community’ and not visibly represented (Widiarto 2018, p. 42).

> ‘In part I’m creating a bit of a spectacle but in a way that is empowering for us, where we are the performers. Rather than the people being objectified and viewed, we are the subjects’ (Mac Farlane 2019a).

But before the mural has the power to affect its audience it had to be legally negotiated with the local government (who wield power over public art), and the building owners. These negotiations are a part of the artwork - they affect how it is made and experienced.

Larissa has made many collaborative artworks around disability identity. Many of these have been in collaboration with disability service organisations but have not always led to the artists feeling empowered. The more successful projects have been those where disabled people had more decision making power. It is worth noting that there are few role models for art projects led by disabled people. Larissa also noticed a reticence from disabled people to self-identify and get involved. This changed when she ensured that the mural was only disability led.

It was important to Larissa that the mural was made and directed by disabled people on their own terms. This independence was very difficult to negotiate because public art often involves a range of organisations, including the care-takers of public space and the owners of buildings who each bring their own

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[15] The #MillionsMissing campaign raises awareness of the millions of people who are not visible - missing from life due to myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS). It is a global campaign of advocacy organization #MEAction in collaboration with Stacy Hodges. The campaign began in 2016 and takes place every year as public demonstrations and a social media campaign on May 12.

agendas as they become involved. The mural also needed funding because of its scale. Both murals received funding from the Maribyrnong City Council. The first *Disability Pride Mural* received a small financial contribution. The second mural received more. The Council provided: the cleaning of the wall, a scissor-lift, an artist to assist with installation, permits, and funding for: audio description, Auslan interpreters, film and photo documentation, materials, equipment, printing costs, an artist fee and payments to installation assistants. The owner of the building, Telstra, provided catering, permission to use the wall and cleaned the wall (in preparation for the first mural). Larissa worked towards making the mural installation a safe cultural space for disabled people, but it involved much negotiation with people from other organisations who didn't often understand what this meant. Examples of a culturally safe space includes excluding the presence of stairs, and non-disabled people giving directions. Larissa created a *platform* for speakers, but had to ensure that it was not for non-disabled people to speak about their own 'take' on disability.

How 'to be taken seriously and be respected' (Mac Farlane 2018) and how to ensure that the artwork was not controlled by non-disabled people, and by those jumping on the bandwagon, was hard to manage. She found some of the issues too difficult to solve. My view of why these aspects were difficult, is that ways of doing things in public space are developed and then repeated, so that people then understand them as common sense and 'normal'. In actuality these ways of producing art in public space are often culturally developed by those in power over public space. A lack of knowledge about the politics and experiences of disabled people could have contributed to misunderstanding between the stakeholders (organisations or people who become involved in the project). There is always compromise in public art (Cartiere and Willis 2017; Kelley 1995; Sharp 2007). Larissa was unsure of how to achieve the required changes in this cultural setting. You could imagine, if you will, that ableism is so pervasive within the cultural structures of how public art gets done, that changing these norms is not something that could be achieved through the process of one artwork.

The process of creating both of the Disability Pride murals re-enforced Larissa's commitment to disability-led independent projects. This confirmed her understanding that doing things independently makes it easier to keep projects culturally inclusive for disabled people.

> 'Working on a disability project, we don't really know how it's going to happen because we haven't done enough of them to know how to do it in our own way, that works for us all' (Mac Farlane 2018).

Ephemerality

Debbie: ‘From an artist’s perspective, I wrestle with the concepts of permanence and ephemerality, because I make a range of types of artwork, in public space, and for private ownership in a range of materials. I am intrigued with my own concern about what happens to this artwork. Perhaps it evolves from early indoctrination about the artist as a ‘genius’ and the value of each artwork, or conversely from the emotional experience of having my first public mural unexpectedly destroyed when I was in my early twenties’.

Larissa: ‘Does the experience of disability give me more of the ability to make impermanent artwork? Maybe. My very first artwork that I made, already didn’t belong to me. My early artworks were made in disability services as part of art groups. So, they never felt private, they were already publicly owned in a sense, by my peer disabled artists, and more relevantly, the disability service. I have many issues with the way disability services seem to believe that they own these artworks, but ironically I think it might have helped with my ability to share my work in the street and give it away to impermanence’.

Debbie: ‘When I first saw the reinstalled *Disability Pride Mural* (three weeks after its installation) I could already see the edges of the paper deteriorating. The idea that all of this work (physical and emotional) beginning to fade and deteriorate affected me emotionally’.

Title: Detail of the second *Disability Pride Mural*, Feb 2020
Image Description: A close up of a brick wall with some deteriorating paste-ups, especially in the spaces between the bricks.

Street art is largely premised on the idea of ephemerality, and is part of its appeal (Eckett 2014). Iveson et. al (2014) suggest that 'an expectation of ephemerality is an inherent element of graffiti practice' (p. 5), that street art is always a 'contested practice' and 'subject to erasure' (p. 10). But, ironically although it is temporary, street art seeks to be seen and to exist across time. It begins with our bodies physically making the artwork and then the audience physically coming across the artwork, but it also exists in other mediums through its documentation - photographs, publications, online forums and websites (Irvine 2012; Young 2016). As soon as I could, I went physically to the site of *The Disability Pride Mural* and attempted to capture it with a camera. I also searched for how both the first and second mural had been captured by news articles, forums and social media.

The longevity of a public artwork is often established through social constructions of how artwork is recognised and valued as 'art'. Although permanence is not the aim of a paste-up artist, longevity might still be hoped for, because great effort and cost are involved in making the work. More so, when you have to make the artwork twice.

Because we want the artwork to last longer than a week we may become what Koren Solvang (2018) calls 'social actors', who articulate and name things as art. We link our work to the cultural entity of art, so that people can visualise and consider it in this context. This could be an issue for art of the street because its ethics may be anti-art world, yet it might need to use that language and value system in order to evade erasure.

Chantal Mouffe (2000) theorises the 'democratic paradox', as a tension between equality (between people) and liberty (of an individual), which cannot be reconciled (p. 5). She argues that current ideas of liberal democracy tend to support the 'inviolable rights of property', and the 'virtues of the market' and these are presented as 'common sense' (ibid., p.6). These tendencies are echoed in definitions of public art which centre around permission and economics, which make it difficult for ordinary citizens to place their own voices and imagery in public space. The difference between 'art' and 'vandalism' is not found in its form, materials or aesthetic - but is instead demarcated through its permission by authority. An artwork could be deemed: a serious crime, a commissioned artwork or a commodity - depending on its legal status (Bird 2009; Young 2016).

Most local councils have policies which allow expedient removal of unauthorised art (or artwork which looks unauthorised) - this may have facilitated the removal of *The Disability Pride Mural* in 2017. Iveson et. al

(2014) have found that often artworks are removed when as few as one local resident complains and refer to this practice of removal by local government as ‘repressive’ - relying on ‘negative evaluations of their impact on the urban environment’ (p. 5). Irons (2009) says because of the lack of separation between legal works and illegal works, local authorities send mixed messages about what is and is not acceptable, ‘condoning and condemning the practice simultaneously’ which ‘raises ethical issues for those designated to remove illegal graffiti’ (Irons 2009, p. 3). We get a sense that the survival of an artwork is not regulated by general consensus or opinion, but by individuals - ‘the liberty of one person’ within Mouffe’s (2000) paradox of democracy. We don’t know who makes each judgment when street art or graffiti is removed or how that person is able to judge the legality of artwork by its appearance. Does an expert decide which pieces stay and which pieces go and then communicate with the contractors? Or do graffiti removal contractors make their own decisions on the spot? Are graffiti removalists and cleaners the arbiters of public art? (Charlie Park, in Millar 2017b). How can any one person be given the responsibility to decide what is art in public space? In our culture, it has become a matter of expediency, economics and ‘common sense’.

The erasure of the first mural, compels me to consider the differences between Australia’s first Disability Pride mural (which lasted a week in public space) and other visual imagery in the area - such as the advertising on the billboard hovering above the mural, and just around the corner, a large Baby Guerrilla piece and some of Larissa’s handstand artworks, which for some reason were left untouched.

Why was this? Was it because these were recognised, and seen as art. Or were they ‘wanted art’ (Iveson et al. 2014), with ‘wanted’ and ‘unwanted’ as the criteria for removal or preservation. Even though legality is the criteria for remaining in public space, it could be argued that artworks are removed by council authority because one aesthetic is preferred to another (Widiarto 2018).

Regardless of how long it can stay up, ultimately the mural is ephemeral and it will one day be gone[16]. What remains is the writing about it, the videos and films, the conversations and the community created by the artwork (Kwon 2002). Most outcomes of the mural are unknown, but Larissa discovers some by emails she has received, through chance encounters and conversations, that it has affected and changed lives.

[16] Originally Larissa imagined making the mural annually. She also dreamed that there might be a permanent mural in that spot.

An example is Claudia Forsberg's blog post 'Bring on disability pride!', which explains how the mural affected her thinking about disability pride. She acknowledges Larissa in her post, saying:

> 'Your work means so much to people like me and it has really opened my eyes and dumped a bucket-load of inspiration into my life' (Forsberg 2018)

One of the reasons that Larissa produced the first mural, why she led its reinstallation and why she organises screenings of the film about the mural, is that she imagined what it would have been like to have seen more representations of disability pride as she grew up and came to terms with having her own disability. She recalls seeing the *Disability Culture Rap*[17] a short US film made by disabled people, and how it ''blew her mind'. She imagined what a difference it could have made, if she'd seen something similar with an Australian context, when she was younger (and earlier in her brain injury). At this moment in our interview Larissa is smiling and excited. I pause to make a note in the recording because for the most part, my interviews with Larissa are difficult for her. It feels good to retell the story in detail but it also brings up moments of sorrow, pain and anger. This significant moment of joy, excitement and a huge smile is startling. It clearly reveals why Larissa would go to all of this trouble for the mural. Its seed is the amazement she felt when she first saw the *Disability Culture Rap*, the importance of coming across something which tells of your own experience which is positive and disability-led. She speaks of the *Disability Pride Mural* in this same vein:

> 'It did make a difference . . . and meeting other people and being able to talk about what is disability identity and share those experiences makes you stronger . . . because until that point you feel like you're not a real person . . . because the media is telling you you're a problem, that you're a bludger and that you're useless, and you're not worth fixing because you're too sick and all the time those messages are saying that you're not good enough, so that when you find some people that you can talk with and feel like a real human being, it changes your life, it means that you can start doing stuff and acting and being and creating' (Mac Farlane 2019).

[17] The *Disability Culture Rap* was written (1992) and performed for film (2000) by Cheryl Marie Wade and you can find it by a simple search on Youtube. Go and have a look, its amazing! https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-KnJwUMTP8s

Title: Installation of the second *Disability Pride Mural*, using the scissor-lift, 2018.
Title: The second Disability Pride mural, Feb 2020
Image Description: A man walks in front of the mural and is looking up at it. : Three women wearing orange Hi-Vis vests are standing close together surrounded by metal railings, next to a brick wall. One woman holds a large bucket and watches the other two women as they lean across the railing to reach the brick wall and use their hands to smooth out a large photographic image. One of these women, Larissa, is looking directly at the camera and smiling. She wears a cap, sunglasses and striped coloured clothing.

Ableism, aesthetic and order - community, diversity, gallimaufry,

Halsey and Young (2002) say that removal strategies for graffiti 'are founded upon the assumptions that graffiti is a blot on the visual field and that its erasure returns the urban landscape to a pristine condition' (p. 175). Public space is a contested domain, where the desire to regulate, control and purify public space excludes those people who don't conform (Press 2009, p. 12). Malone argues that the fragmentation and segmentation of space in terms of legitimate and illegitimate user groups is based on a climate of fear, suspicion, tension and conflict between social groups (Malone 2002). When we look back to the removal of the first mural, it can be imagined as part of the larger urge to remove illegitimate artwork and to return the space to order.

In public space we are bombarded by visual imagery but does any of it make visible the experiences of disability? Jane Jacobs refers to 'the dishonest mask of pretended order, achieved by ignoring or suppressing the real order that is struggling to exist and be served' (Jacobs 1961). There is a lack of representation of disabled bodies in a range of visual forms including television, film and advertising.

Likewise, the word 'community' always sounds innately beneficial and good, focussing on what they have in common which brings them together. But community is also a word which conveniently conceals the disparity, diversity and difference that any group of people might have. Artworks made by many people produce a community, one which is brought about by the artwork (Kwon 2002) through its making process and through people feeling connected to it. A great number of artists joined in with both iterations of the *Disability Pride Mural* (40 in 2017, 50 in 2018), demonstrating that it was considered positive and useful - and perhaps evidence of the need or desire for the community which was formed. But the mural also defies this commonality, as its purpose is also to disrupt general assumptions about *disability* and to draw attention to individuals and a diversity of stories.

Collaborative art celebrates and actively includes difference in its aesthetic. It commonly has a 'gallimaufry'[18] (Qadri 2019, p. 863), bringing together many aesthetic styles and perspectives to form and inform a single artwork. The 'many people' involved with the process of making assists with the complex development of the meaning of the artwork. Each new contribution (a new idea pressed into the artwork, not necessarily sitting in harmony with the others)

[18] Gallimaufry originally describes a soup, hash or ragout made from many ingredients together, but also refers to a hodgepodge, hotchpotch, medley or jumble. I use the word to describe an aesthetic aspect of collaborative art.

adds to the collaborative whole, but also further develops the gallimaufry of difference, the true texture of many and of diversity. It is un-smooth and multi-textured (and multi text-ed) (Qadri 2019, p. 869).

Because the mural is made by many people collaboratively, there are purposes in the mural besides those of its facilitator - Larissa. Each artist was given the opportunity to choose the way in which they contributed to the wall. They were brought together with the theme of 'Disability Pride' and then were allowed to journey back outwards on their own differing path, each expressing their own perspectives and purposes.

> 'It is a mishmash and it is because disability culture is a mishmash . . . there are so many voices and so much different experience' (Mac Farlane 2018).

Title: Detail of the second *Disability Pride Mural*, 2018.
Image Description: A yellow brown brick wall with about 65 different paste-ups. Some are hand-coloured, others black and white only, some are in rectangular poster form whilst others are cut out into their shapes which include walking canes, people's bodies, birds and a mobility bike. The subject matter of the paste-ups includes many topics including, brain injury, protest, Mad Pride, medication, autism and the poem 'you get proud by practicing' by Laura Hershey.

Thus, the mural shares very diverse stories and perspectives which create a complex and deep rendering of disability. The mural **does not** represent the disability community - it is only representative of the people involved (Mac Farlane 2018). Aspects of the mural teach the audience about the diversity in disability culture and provide diverse ways of thinking about disability. For example the paste-up which celebrates Autistic Pride Day says:

> 'Neurodiversity is the idea that certain conditions, including Autism, are natural variations of the human genome, and are not defects that need to be fixed' (Autistic Hoya, quoted on *The Disability Pride Mural*[19]).

Diversity and gallimaufry, can also be considered oppositional to aesthetic (in its guises of harmony, composition, design, beauty). Campbell (2009) suggests that law is 'preoccupied with matters of ordering, disorder'(p.130) and this can be seen in how it is used to govern art in public space. Ableism aspires to order in its ideals of wholeness and perfection (Campbell 2009, p. 197).

In opposition, 'disability aesthetics prizes physical and mental difference as a significant value in itself. It does not embrace an aesthetic taste that defines harmony, bodily integrity, and health as standards of beauty' (Seibers 2002, p. 228, cited in Chandler et al. 2018). Disability arts seeks to disrupt 'thick cultural assumptions that disabled people are passive, non-agentive, and unified in our experiences' (Chandler et al. 2018, p. 253).

There is a struggle within collaborative artwork, because each person contributes difference. It has the unsettling feeling of excess or un-control - 'created by including and accommodating community desires in the artwork' (Qadri 2019, p. 871).

> 'The contributions by community members can only be curled so far towards the whole if they have choice in how they contribute towards the artwork. The final artwork retains this struggle of individualism and difference. The artist/protagonist/person in charge, restricts, curls and tweaks the artwork, to get it to work as one piece against the differences (of which it is composed). The aesthetic of the work is important because unless it is pleasing to the eye, it won't get to stay in public place and fit into a landscape which is constantly cleaned, revitalised, tidied, rebuilt, changed, altered and 'improved'. Its aesthetic may determine if it is cleaned or allowed to decompose and disintegrate. The collage, the welter, the gallimaufry . . . is evidence of 'disorder' and

[19] See 'Austistic Hoya' in Reference List for original source of quote.

> difference. It reminds us that community is not 'one'' (Qadri 2019, p. 876).

When Larissa and I spoke about the mural at a conference in 2018, the audience discussed the discomfort they felt when listening to the presentation and the discomfort viewers may feel when faced with the personal stories of being disabled by society - the anger and the sorrow that is embedded in the mural. Iffat Khatoon (2018) forwarded the idea that the mural can be imagined in the way that wounds are uncomfortable. *The Disability Pride Mural* is not about fixing, closure, or reconciliation - instead, it is about showing wounds, and having other people feel them - opening old wounds and telling the stories of wounds[20].

This relates to Chantal Mouffe's idea of public space as agonistic - in conflict, disagreement and argument. She says, 'public spaces are always plural and the agonistic confrontation takes place on a multiplicity of discursive surfaces' (2007, p. 3)[21]. You can imagine these 'talking surfaces' if you stand in front of the mural and look around. You will see signage naming places and giving instructions, advertising telling you what you should aspire to, the names of large corporations hovering large above you. There is also graffiti, which shouts out the names of individuals and messages. Chantal Mouffe (2008) situates the work of artists in public space as a crucial dimension to democracy, in that they 'disrupt the smooth image that corporate capitalism is trying to spread' (p. 13).

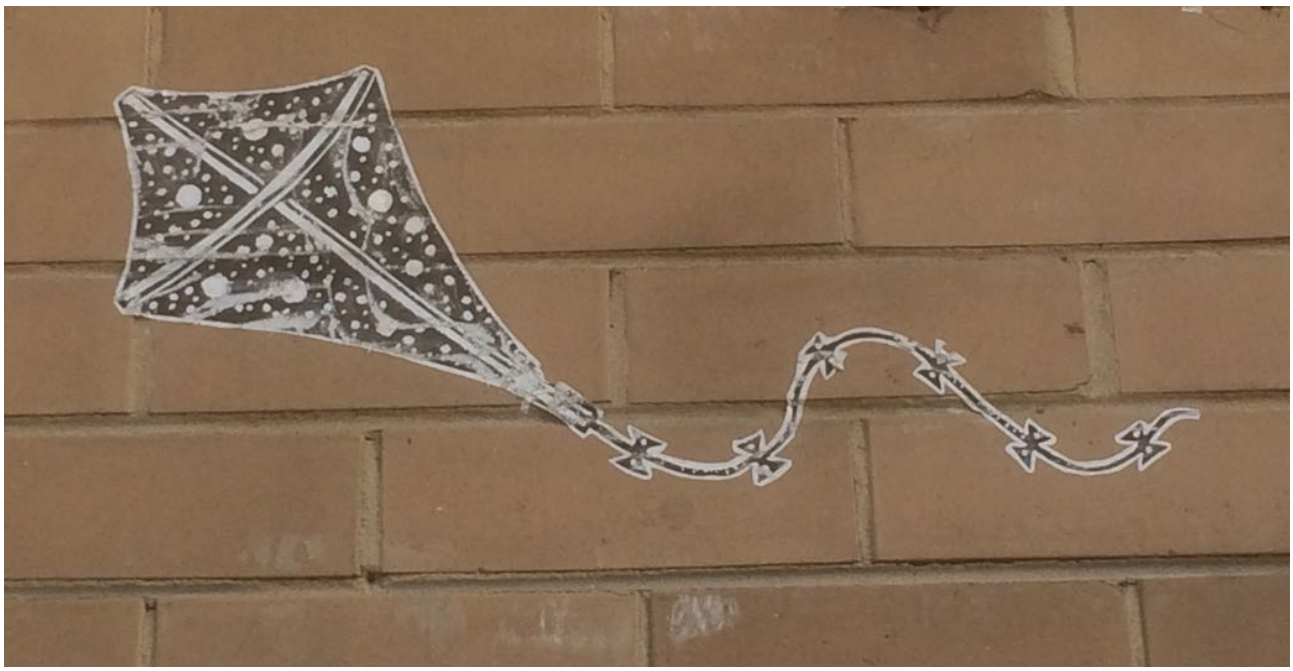
[20] These ideas were generated from the audience discussion after our presentation at the Public Pedagogies Institute Conference 2018. I was unable to reference everyone who spoke at the time, but we thank the audience for their insightful discussion.

[21] Chantal Mouffe argues that public space is agonistic. Her idea is that if democracy allows us to be free, then democratic process must also allow the possibility that conflict may appear and to provide an arena where differences can be confronted. See also: Mouffe 2000, Mouffe 2008, Castle 1998.

Title: Scene of Nicholson Street Footscray.
Image Description: A suburban road, in front of a bridge structure, which is in front of three buildings. On the first building is the DP mural. Behind is the white roof of the second building. Behind this is a very large, very dark grey, multi storied building with a billboard at the top that reads State Trustees. Street signs and advertising is in the foreground, including text on a bus and banners on lamp poles.

Title: Scene of Nicholson Street Footscray with graffiti on street sign.
Image Description: In the foreground is a close up view of the back of a street sign bearing graffiti and stickers. In the background are several buildings; the front one holds the Disability Pride mural. In between, there is a road with painted white directional lines for cars and bicycles.

If we can acknowledge our discomfort with dissension, pain, anger, disagreement, erasure and the physical work and mental work to replace murals, we perhaps can also see these same things as positive. Likewise, *disability* can be viewed as positive and celebrated. If we visualise this work (against the grain or against the wind) we can see its purpose in working towards greater democracy and equity both in public space and for those who are disabled.



Title: Detail of the second *Disability Pride Mural*, 2018.
Image Description: A paste-up of a diamond shaped kite flying towards the left with its tail of bows in a wavy line behind it.

> ‘If you look at the mural, there’s a lot of inclusion of kites everywhere . . . it’s about all those times that I was told and I’m sure you’ve been told, “Just go with the flow, you know, just stop talking so much, just go with the flow, stop fighting”. And yet I know when we have a disability in a world that isn’t accessible we have to go against the flow, we have to fight. And the thing with kites is that kites fly best and they fly their highest when they fly against the wind, not with the wind. Against the wind. And that’s often I think, what we end up doing and what we should be proud of, is that flying against the wind, because that’s when we fly highest’ (Mac Farlane 2019a).

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Title: Detail of the second *Disability Pride Mural*, 2018.
Image Description: Paste-ups including the face of a guide dog, a cane, electric tricycle, and people. There are posters about: Mad Pride, Disability Power and Pride, Stories of Survival, Labels and positive self-talk, and stories about Diesel (a Labrador retriever who assists his owner with mental illness).