

# The Together Research: Exploring Substantive Equality in Disability–Led Performing Arts Research in Western Australia

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## Introducing the Together Research

The key point is that it is clear how the decisions—to make a work, to make a specific style of work, to promote it in a specific way—stay in the hands of artists with disability, and it is clear how the allied artists without disability support that, whatever role they play in the project. (Little and Hadley 2023, 4)

Writing this paper involved discussion between the authors as well as pieces of independent analysis and reflection that were passed back and forth, reflective of the relationship between My Studio artists living with disability and My Studio/My Place allies. We have woven these ways of writing and reflecting, trying to keep the tone of the original exchanges and capture some learning from the Movement Together workshop. The questions that drive this research rise from ongoing structural inequality in the arts industry for artists with disability, and ambiguity regarding what substantive equality<sup>1</sup> looks like in arts practice. While representation may be gaining traction, the artists of Together Research are not satisfied with simply accessing and being seen in art and culture. Julia Hales brings it back, again and again, to agency, telling

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<sup>1</sup> Footnote: Per the Australian Human Rights Commission (2024) on substantive equality, “To achieve equality of outcomes and opportunities, policies or laws need to take into account the particular circumstances of disadvantage which need to be addressed.”

her story, making her voice heard along with the voices of her collaborators. Through this paper, we aim to contribute to the dialogue that is defining what terms like *disability-led* actually mean.<sup>2</sup>

**Julia:** I've always wanted to work with people with disabilities, and anyone else to help, to bring the voice of disabled people, up and out. I, and many other disabled artists in the community, also want to be more involved in other people's projects. So, this workshop was about that. Coming together.

**Sam:** Movement Together was about exploring being connected. Being in an ensemble, working as a collective, and with Julia stepping into a leadership role. I have worked as an arts mentor with My Studio artists (and now the Together Research group) since 2019—and with Julia since 2002 and Patrick Carter since 2011. Through the My Studio program, artists have increasingly led their own projects as directors/writers/lead devisors, and I'm now working much less as a mentor and more as an allied peer; part of artists' production crews or performance making teams.

**Renee:** I am a bystander, sometimes a witness, hopefully an ally, and we are all co-authors of this paper, led by Hales. Reading this paper, you should imagine a collective "we" unless we indicate a particular voice. Writing—the act of writing, the written word itself, and academia at large—is frequently unfamiliar and, let's face it, a frequently hostile mode of communication for many individuals. Please keep this in mind when reading what is a deliberate attempt at plain English, navigating perspective/persona/voice and when writing about a largely embodied, kinaesthetic experience of dance/movement, often resistant to the clunkiness of, and indeed the innate privilege afforded to, the written word.

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<sup>2</sup> Footnote: The artists and researchers of The Together Research and the My Place, My Studio program are based upon the land of the Whadjuk People of the Noongar Nation. We pay respect to the culture of Noongar People and to Elders past, present and future. Always was, always will be Whadjuk Noongar Boodja. This acknowledgement is especially important to the authors, in recognition of the intersectional disadvantages that exist for Aboriginal people living with disability, and the important work of many artists and allies working toward authentic and meaningful agency, in this space.

## A Type of Glossary: What is . . .

*What is . . .* **My Place WA Ltd.** is a not-for-profit provider of individualized and flexible supports to people with disability and their families in Western Australia.

*What is . . .* **My Studio** is an ongoing creative initiative offered by My Place. The initiative supports independent artists with disability to pursue artistic projects, collaborations, training, and the like, making and taking their place in the mainstream arts ecology.

*What is . . .* **The Together Research** is an ongoing attempt to understand the impact of My Studio and is interested in both the individual artistic experience and the collective experience when artists come together, to advocate for artist-led, disability-led, programs and initiatives. This paper is partly informed by a report commissioned by Creative Australia on The Together Research and My Studio, My Place. The contributors to that report included Hales and Fox, as well as Simone Flavelle, Ella Hetherington, Laura Boynes, Patrick Carter, Tina Fielding, Hugo Flavelle, Lauren Marchbank, Sam Ren, Ella Peeters, Sarah Pollard, and Bernadette Lewis. There will likely be other projects and activities in the future that will continue the work of The Together Research, and be led by artists living with disability, to represent and advocate for disability and the arts.

*What is . . .* **The Movement Together workshop** was led by My Studio artists in partnership with STRUT Dance, the National Choreographic Centre of Western Australia, from January 29 to February 2, 2024. The workshop facilitated peer-to-peer exchange, accessible co-creation, and dance improvisation involving twelve nondisabled dance artists from STRUT Dance and eight artists living with disabilities from the My Studio Collective. My Studio participants identify as having disability in very different ways. Participants variously identify with being visually impaired, hard of hearing, living with Down Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, and neurodiversity. It is the preference of the authors to respect the individual right to self-name/self-identify and so instead, declare that the My Studio participants involved with

the Movement Together workshop, live with disability. Co-facilitated by artists Hales and Fox, the workshop served as a platform for interrogating the values, ethics, and methods of the Together Research project.<sup>3</sup>

*What is . . .* **STRUT Dance**, the National Choreographic Centre of Western Australia (STRUT Dance), is an organization for dance, dancers, and choreographers based in Western Australia that reaches out at a national and global level. It offers classes, workshops, industry panels, and performance opportunities. It is committed to welcoming and supporting artists and audiences of diverse cultural heritage and all genders and abilities. For the project written about in this paper, STRUT Dance hosted the Movement Together workshops by providing space for the workshops, facilitating a panel presentation, and providing financial assistance to some of the participants.

This research is contextualized by a moment in time in which long-standing arts and disability practices are being questioned by disabled artists, ally artists and arts workers, and the sector. The National Association for Visual Arts revised the Code of Practice for Visual Arts, Craft and Design in 2023 (Reid 2023), and the Australian Federal Government emphasized the need for greater representation and accessibility in the arts through the Revive Arts Policy in the same year. Sometimes understood as access dramaturgy, process is foregrounded, as is the agreement for disability-led decision making in the entire creative process. We enjoy the reference to access dramaturgy as providing an “alternative to approaching access from a place of compliance and logistics . . . and instead orients us toward a horizon where access and disability are central to meaning-making” (Kopit et al. 2024). However, despite the calls for a radical disruption of hierarchical art-making legacies, many of the My Studio artists find that regular, authentic experiences of inclusive practice in the performing arts in Australia are few and far between. This inaccessible context is a major motivator for these artists to initiate change themselves, leading to research such as the Movement Together workshop. We will spend some time discussing the

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<sup>3</sup> Footnote: The Movement Together workshop was part of the Perth Moves program of STRUT Dance featured in the 2024 Perth Festival and sponsored by Kimberley Asparagus. The Together Research has received support from Creative Australia. The project was approved by the Edith Cowan University Human Research Ethics committee.

context of My Studio (and the Together Research that has come from My Studio) before moving on to explore the Movement Together workshop specifically.

## Context

Ayse Collins, Ruth Rentschler, Karen Williams, and Fara Azmat write in 2022 that “while 20% of Australians live with a disability, only 2.3% of the Australia Council’s budget is allocated to this sector” (313).<sup>4</sup> With such little assistance for dedicated inclusive arts funding, it is no surprise that in the history of the Australian arts the disability sector has been limited. Further, the practice of specialized programs for people with disability has long been dominant in ways that reflect the broader institutional approach to education, housing, and employment opportunities, where disabled people are segregated from the “mainstream.” In the arts, these are programs where disabled people might participate in art-, music-, or performance-making classes and develop works under the guidance of arts mentors. For decades, these programs have provided pathways for artists to learn and participate in the arts. However, we should question whether these specialized programs, largely separate from, and significantly smaller in scope than what is experienced in the greater arts community, are suitable vehicles to achieve access, inclusion, equity, and creative agency within the “mainstream” arts ecology.

Inclusion and disability theatre are terms that are inherently deviations from the social, cultural and political normative. The term inclusion is thrown around a lot these days but most theatre companies aren’t quite sure what it is and some just do not care. Academics, and even funders and corporations, often do not understand it as well and must be educated. (Barton-Farcas 2017, 11–12)

Stephanie Barton-Farcas is above speaking to the pertinent reality of inclusive practice—what it is in theory and what it is in practice, when it is well intended and when it is authentically enabled. When contextualized by the history of disabled people being continually segregated in Australian

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<sup>4</sup> Footnote: The Australia Council was rebranded Creative Australia in 2022. It is the peak Federal funding organization for creative arts. My Studio has been supported by Creative Australia.

society—within group homes, schools, healthcare settings, and specialized workplaces—it becomes apparent that specialized art programs developed *for* (rather than *by*) artists with disability neither deviate from nor challenge the systemic social and cultural isolation of disabled people. Linking this back to statement by Madeleine Little and Bree Handley that we quoted at the beginning of this article (2023, 4), inclusive art making is most effective and empowering when the decision making is in the hands of the disabled artist.

Barriers to inclusion include “access, participation, representation and empowerment” (Collins et al. 2022, 324). Inclusion for individuals with disability in arts practices has tended toward therapeutic measures or frameworks; however,

if representation of disabled people within the arts is limited to the restoration of disabled people with the aim of creating a person who participates within a normative structure, or something that must be accommodated in order to be politically correct, it restricts how disabled people are perceived and perceive themselves. (Collins et al. 2022, 323)

The range of alternatives to the specialized art program span

- models of inclusion for disabled artists within “mainstream” arts organizations;
- ally-led ensembles and companies engaging artists with disability;
- co-led ensembles and companies;
- individualized projects and programs driven by artists with disability (often supported via NDIS funding);
- disability-led creative spaces/programs;
- and hybrid models involving a combination of these structures.

When writing about inclusive practice in the arts in the United States, Barton-Farcas argues that “inclusion implies a level of equal ownership within the project or endeavour. Inclusion is investment. Inclusion is ownership by the artist” (2017, 12). Likewise, representation needs to be understood as the full breadth of who is speaking; when they are speaking (or rather what context are they speaking from), how are they doing so, and for what purpose; how they might gain from this act; and how, in exchange, they are spoken of. Despite the breadth of practices noted above, opportunities for inclusion,

agency, and creative leadership for disabled artists are incredibly limited within the Australian arts ecology. Furthermore, what characterizes accessible, disability-led practice and genuine creative agency for disabled artists remains largely unclear.

We are interested in creating a space for creativity and arts making that has a collaborative and choice-driven process dramaturgy. My Studio artists talk about agency as a key finding of the Together Research. Empowered creative practice for artists with disability must feature a constant “return to choice.” This is done through routines and ways of working where, after a choice has been made and acted upon, decision making circles *back* to the artist(s) with disability. This means that a consultation phase about an idea or project is never enough. If a creative project is going to be disability-led, the artists with disability must have decision-making power at *all* stages of a work’s process of development. The Together Research seeks to capture dramaturgical principles for what “return to choice” and supported decision making looks like in a creative process and what it requires from allied artists.

The artists at the heart of the Together Research project all live in Western Australia and work within a network of practitioners with lived experience of disability who have been creating their own works with the support of a range of local initiatives: the *Seven Collective* (My Place, 2020–21), *Kolyang Lab* (Performing Lines, 2022) and My Place’s My Studio program (2020 onward). The allied artists and researchers all work within this practice too: as peer collaborators, mentors, supporters, and producers. My Studio collaborators work with allies such as Fox, whose role requires them to support artists like Julia Hales and the other My Studio collaborators to lead their own practice.<sup>5</sup> The Together Research artists identifying as living with disability have been involved with My Studio in various capacities, as a collective or as individual artists pursuing their own projects (sometimes in collaboration with major arts organizations, as was the case with Hale’s landmark 2018 theatre work about love and people with Down syndrome, *You Know We Belong Together*). The artists of the Together Research are all leading their own individualized professional practices across a range of art forms, working with peer allied artists whom they have chosen as mentors or collaborators. The Together

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<sup>5</sup> Footnote: Other allies involved were Laura Boynes, Ella Hetherington and Bernadette Lewis, and My Studio producer Simone Flavelle.

Research responds to practice developments and ongoing challenges for artists with disability regarding access, equity, and creative agency in the arts. In particular, the research asks artists with lived experience of disability what genuine equity with peers looks like, what creative control means, and how nondisabled allied artists can collaborate on disability-led projects.

Together artists work in a peer-to-peer way with allied artists, exploring approaches to leading and directing the creative process. Roles switch regularly. Initial experiments lead to new, unplanned ones. Different types of creative language are shared; in the developing access dramaturgy of directing, words like *offering* and *responding* are favoured by the ensemble instead of ways of leading that involve being “the boss.” To be inclusive when supporting or co-leading, ally artists lean into the facilitating approach of dramaturgs. This leaves room for sharing agency with and adjusting the work to the needs of other artists. Improvisation and live, adaptable structures for experimentation also support accessibility. A range of aesthetic materials and lo-fi technologies are in the creative space, ready to be used or not. The reflections of the Together artists affirm that there is no uniform way of approaching an accessible, empowered process. The opposite is true: accessibility and agency are provided through a wide range of entry points and many, adaptable ways of doing and expressing.

No individual creative process of this exploration is particularly groundbreaking—although the Together artists themselves have broken a lot of ground. It’s the continuous process of supported decision making and long-term peer-to-peer exchange that sets this practice apart. The Together group features artists with lived experience of disability who have established individual practices of national and international significance. Each artist has an impressive body of work behind them. The purpose behind this practice-led research phase is to establish a base of shared experience and language around creative leadership, points of connection that can be further explored in group discussions and individual interviews. Most people in the arts learn the methods and language of leading projects during postsecondary education (university or academy), but this hasn’t been available to most of the group. Only one of the artists identifying as living with a disability has attended a bachelor-level course, and only one other has attended any kind of university-based performance training. Though each artist has

successfully carved their own artistic path, the opportunity to develop skills as directors of group or collaborative projects have been very limited, and this was a key factor in the design of the Movement Together workshop.

Some of the Together artists prefer visual art, music, video, digital stories, and movement to express themselves rather than words, and all of this is incorporated into the Movement Together workshop, even though this piece of research is driven by an interest in dance practice. Actively exploring a range of practice experiences is one way of making this research accessible and open. Allowing nonverbal expressions and creative responses is especially important for artists who have a lived experience of intellectual disability to be able to contribute to the findings. Group discussions and creative reflections (drawings, mapmaking, writings) focus upon what it felt like to be the director, to be directed, and to flow between roles. People give feedback about the kind of collective experiences they'd like to be a part of in the arts industry. Opportunities to work closely with a large group of peers and to feel part of a broad creative community are rare for the makers of this network, as they are for virtually all independent artists. Issues of mainstream arts organizations come up. Some of the Together artists have made works with mainstream companies and film studios, but for most, regular opportunities in the broader arts community are not available.

Analyzing the reflections about the occasions when artists have stepped into mainstream arts spaces, a straightforward finding becomes clear: Most mainstream organizations—even some that specialize in programs for disabled artists—are still stuck in the phase of attempting to provide access and opportunity. But simply being invited in is not enough. Access and opportunity do not equal agency. Instead, this needs to extend to choice, building trust, nurturing relationships, and being listened to.

This leads to important questions that are at the heart of our work:

- How do artists with disability lead their own practice?
- How do artists express and define what it means to have “creative control,” or for a project to be “disability-led”?
- And how do artists with an intellectual disability, or artists who don't express themselves through traditional forms of discussion, express responses to these ideas?

In many instances, these artists have been working with ally artists/mentors in long-standing processes (more than five years, and in some cases upward of twenty). Such relationships often began as mentor-mentee in art programs. Over time and as the practice framework has shifted, these relationships have become more collaborative and peer-to-peer. In the last five years, many of the artists have begun to work side-by-side with their former mentors in projects produced by mainstream arts organizations.

A range of questions arise from this shift in relationships and practice:

- How do artists with disability lead projects in collaboration with ally artists?
- In shared process or co-creation, how do artists with disability maintain their creative agency, and how do ally artists support this right to cultural equity?

A final tension is the specific challenge for organizations, stakeholders, and the sector. The narratives that emerge from this research foreground how individualized art programs are instrumental for artists to have genuine creative control and to develop their own cultural expressions. At the same time, artists consistently speak to the desire and need to work in collective/collaborative settings. For some artists, this desire is to access traditional mainstream arts settings as individuals. However, for most My Studio artists, there is a want to work within “mixed ability” or “integrated” creative communities where disabled artists are strongly represented alongside nondisabled peers. This final point is part of why the Movement Together workshop was initiated with STRUT Dance as part of Perth Festival in 2024.

## **Movement Together: A Collective Research Experience**

Co-facilitated by Hale and Fox, the Movement Together workshop served as a platform for interrogating the values, ethics, and methods of the Together Research project. We had conversations with STRUT Dance three to four months before the workshop. An expression of interest to work with My Studio collaborators was circulated with the assumption that professional dancers, dance artists, and movement-based practitioners would be interested in applying. Artists involved in My Studio were encouraged to

participate, especially if they had an interest in movement. We asked, What can we do together, how can we move together? If someone was interested in dance, we brought them in. There was interest from all over Australia, and especially interest from First Nations dancers. We asked the following questions:

- What does being together do or mean, as in “existing together”?
- What does it mean for everyone to be together in one space?
- How can we use this to learn how to direct each other?

We had a flexible schedule, an overall daily schedule that allowed for change. We began with a check-in circle, introducing ourselves and speaking about how we were feeling. Then we went into movement-like warmups. We took a break between movement tasks and exercises. Because the time is quite long and is felt differently by everyone, break times were important social time that we deliberately made space for as part of the workshop. Looking forward, we adapted the day-to-day schedule based on the experience of the previous day.

Discussion was tricky because many of the My Studio performers do not express themselves in words. We did try to limit our chats. We had regular reflection opportunities after we would do something, but we also tried to keep things moving. We attempted to avoid being too verbal to support the artists with disability. That was a challenge for some of the professional dancers who joined the workshop, especially with their expectations around wanting to verbalize their experiences a great deal. It was a challenge to work in a different way, to let that mode of communication go. Not everything is expressed through words. The Movement Together workshop, and more broadly speaking the My Studio initiative, understands that privilege is afforded to those in the community who are vocal and literate, inside a societal system, which the arts is part of, traditionally rooted in literacy and vocalicity/language, particularly the performing arts. We support artists who struggle to work in this way. However, it can be a struggle to unlearn vocalicity, to learn to listen and to learn to communicate differently, for individuals where this is afforded to them so easily.

We learned language preference by sharing offers and stories and foregrounding that communication works differently for everyone. How does it work if movement direction was given via emoji, through phone and text message? How is this understood, developed, documented on film, sent back and forth; a call and response? Movement, and dance, immediately affords a different relationship to language, forging its own thing, outside of spoken word or text.

Genuine accessibility in a movement setting is possible. It is certainly also an interesting experimentation ground to learn how people want to engage in movement, mobility, and dance. Of course, the space was accessible in that there was lift access. It was not as accessible as it could have been with a faulty extractor air conditioner that made a consistent sound that impacted the experience for some of the participants. But what was accessible was the ways in which the movement was explored and the changing perceptions around dance and movement that took place.

Traditional formalized/codified dance relies heavily on copying. Ballet with the mirrored repetition of repertoire and technique. Contemporary dance with the repetition and copying of phrasing. However, the Movement Together workshop instead used a range of nonmimetic structures. One was an improvisation process we called “I move, you move.” In this structure, pairs work together sharing attention. When one person moves, the other watches, and when they stop, the other person begins. When you play with rhythm and duration, this practice can become really detailed, and it’s completely accessible in terms of choice of how someone moves. In Movement Together, this structure progressed to “we move, they move, we all move.” When we did this in groups, one group moved and then stopped, this triggered the other group to move. That simple structure became interesting the more and more layered it got, as patterns emerged, as material was developed, as we got to know people.

We also used sound and materials to explore dance together. We worked in two groups and used materials to “set the space” for each other, then switched and made work in response to these offers in material and space. People were very generous in exploring the possibilities of contact. Sam Ren

led a contact workshop he had devised with ally artist Bernadette Lewis. This workshop allowed people to explore new physical exchanges safely and confidently.

There were some My Studio artists who were apprehensive about movement and dance. But perceptions changed over time, perceptions about what dance was or could be changed. We explored how, with a broader idea of movement, we dance all the time. Another challenge was when a participant was not able to attend. That will always happen, in any working setting, so flexibility was key. Another challenge was handling different feelings and moments of exhaustion. We just gave each other, ourselves, time to feel, take a break, and return when ready. To return to the notion of communication, a major challenge was to move away from a culture of talking to a culture of simply being together, sharing as people in space and time.

However, there was also time made for the Together artists to talk to the group. One of the great successes of the workshop was the panel. This was initiated by Hales and run without allied artist support. The Together artists spoke about what was important to them in their art making. There was a lot of care and sharing of space in the room, especially when one of the artists who often doesn't use spoken language to express themselves got emotional. The group made space for these emotions and supported the artist to take the time to say what they wanted to say.

A key moment in Movement Together was when we asked the allied STRUT Dance dancers if they would be willing to be directed by the Together artists. They were all very supportive of this idea. Each Together artist had time and space to direct a group of dancers. Some groups worked with materials in the space, others with sound and movement. Pat Carter (Noongar man, multidisciplinary artist and performer) led a physical Acknowledgement of Country.<sup>6</sup> Hales directed a group using a translucent sheet, and Sarah Pollard performed beneath its billowing shapes. Sam Ren directed a contact

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<sup>6</sup> Footnote. An Acknowledgement of Country is an important ritual undertaken at the beginning of a meeting, performance, or other public event. It can be performed by an Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal person and is an offer in understanding the significance of the oldest continuing culture in the world. It is different from a Welcome to Country, which can only be conducted by a custodian of that location's culture, language, and song lines, someone who has been gifted the right to share Culture.

improvisation from the inside, taking time to watch and then performing as part of it. Hugo Flavelle directed a vocal and sound experiment that he conducted live. These works and more then became the material that workshop participants, alongside artists from another Perth Moves workshop, shared in a public presentation.

Sharing is interesting. Learning to share generated material with a wider audience, and the panel brings another kind of visibility, but something that the My Studio artists were in control of and that Hales was leading. Again, this is somewhat about language being in question. It is often assumed that oral language, that talking about things, is the preferred mode or method of communication, or of sharing. It might not be. Having ways of sharing that aren't verbal or using standard forms of communication is something that the Together artists have become used to in our processes, and it is something that many of the dancers with STRUT Dance seemed to pick up on very quickly due to their work in a nonverbal art form, although the impulse to revert to complex verbal discussion was something that people had to keep being aware of. A principle of sharing that Movement Together affirmed was that there needs to be multiple ways of exchange to occur for agency and choice to be available to everyone.

At times, a challenge around comprehension and codification became apparent. This was often about dancers learning to be comfortable with a way of performing not defined through rigid rules or conventional practices, where the "score" or "offer" might be shifted spontaneously (an example was someone beginning to sing in the middle of a dance improvisation). Dancers who have been trained in improvisation were sometimes challenged by the unconscious "code" that they usually operate within and that the Together artists didn't conform to. In other instances, there was some misunderstanding over what people were trying to do or say, and the My Studio allies helped clarify or support the communication. Many of the My Studio allies are also trained dancers but have worked with the My Studio artists for varying lengths of time and are adept at bridging these spaces and worlds.

The pressure of speed and time in a weeklong workshop is always a challenge. It's easy to slip into shorthand but not necessarily take the time to realize much, but in Movement Together there was a lot of creation that

occurred. In the end, it is good to remember that everyone was in the same situation, playing, trying, making, watching, learning, sharing. This is about becoming something in the process. Becoming rather than being prepared, or being ready, or producing. It is about stepping back from all that and simply moving as a group, being on a creative journey, an exploration.

The My Studio artists all reported that the experience was greatly valuable to them. Interacting with independent artists as peers was a major milestone of inclusion *and* creative agency, especially because the workshop offered so many opportunities for artists with disability to take the lead and facilitate in a wide variety of ways. Both the artists with My Studio and the dancers with STRUT Dance reported very positively on the genuine openness and collaborative culture of the workshop series. The project fostered a belonging and substantive equality, allowing everyone to participate equally and express themselves however they needed to, which included by leaving or not talking, if that was necessary, or by finding other ways to communicate and listen to others.

The process explored in Movement Together is a continuation of the Together Research. It is quite simply another moment, perhaps milestone, of My Studio as a collective of artists developing and sharing the dramaturgy of their artistic processes, the things that do or do not work for them. Hales eventually wants to have a company of Together Artists focus exclusively on agency, collaboration, and continuous research through artistic practice. This may involve allied artists. It may not. It would depend on the project. The aim would be to provide a platform for My Studio artists to form a collective where everyone could contribute artistically in individual, co-led, or whole company-led processes, depending on the project. Everyone would be adequately and equitably compensated, and this company would foster a generative and genuinely supportive environment for art making.

**Julia:** When I'm collaborating with someone that I trust, I tell them everything—from my voice—so they will understand the way I like to work. Trust is built by getting to know them and see what kind of work they do. Everyone is different in different ways. It's good to have some time for everyone, to spend time with everyone you are working with. If I see something that is not right or feels wrong, I stand up for myself and talk to my team about that. Power is inside of me, it's inside everyone.

## Conclusion

The work of the Together Research continues. It is a practice of shifting roles and adapting approaches, as we make choices together about the dramaturgy of how we work. In the studio, the Together artists are continuing to explore what it means to work as a collective of lead artists with a wide range of individual practices. We continue to partner with arts platforms and organizations to “do” the research. We keep having discussions and we capture these in art and writing. One of these outcomes is a video commission from Creative Australia that has involved the Together Researchers coming up with four principles of disability-led practice to share with artists around the country. In December 2024, we met and the Together artists spoke to camera about these principles, expanding upon what these statements mean for them as individuals. The principles are “let me in,” “listen to me,” “let me lead,” and “support my decisions.” Speaking after the shoot, we reflected on how these principles apply to a lot of communities fighting to be represented in Australia’s art industry and cultural ecology. Like accessibility without agency, representation without voice isn’t representation at all. We acknowledge the breadth of work being done at the grass roots in parallel with our own. We are part of a great movement, together.

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