

'We're a dancing nation': Canberrans gather for a week of movement



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Updated May 3 2024 - 3:16pm, first published May 2 2024 - 3:43pm

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Canberra is hosting the largest Dance Week festivities in the nation with a week of colourful performances.

This year Australian Dance Week celebrated its 42nd birthday in the ACT.

Director of Ausdance ACT, Dr Cathy Adamek, said the week's longevity is thanks to the growing appetite and engagement for dance in the territory.

"It's the biggest program in Australia, and it grew particularly well here in the ACT because there is such a strong dance studio and community dance practice," she said.

"It's been able to promote the kind of engagement that goes on in the territory all over Australia, in terms of dance participation.

"There's something like half a million people who participate in dance in Australia. So if you take out walking, dance is the third most popular recreational activity.

"We're a dancing nation."

The week ties in with International Dance Day, which is a UNESCO partnered event. [Many of the events are also supported by government funding and Arts ACT.](#)

The week also focuses on putting the spotlight on people who may not be conventionally thought of as dancers, according to Dr Adamek.



📷 Cellist Alex Voorhoeve and Australian Dance Party's Alison Plevey performing Co_Lab:24 as part of Dance Week in Canberra. Picture by Keegan Carroll

"This year we've had Down Syndrome ACT putting on an inclusive class, which has been fantastic. We have a long track record of being able to support inclusive dance," she said.

"It's for all ages as well too, Canberra Dance Theater have a lot of classes for people over 50 who might be coming back to dance after a long break.

"We also zest dance, that's for people who have mobility issues, so older people or people with chronic illness. It's a seated dance class so you can still sit and participate in movement, which is so important for our well being."

Australian Dance Week also plays a role in encouraging men and boys to get their dancing shoes out.

Dr Adamek said that while [perceptions have shifted since dance was included in school curriculums](#), there's still a way to go.



📷 An interpretive dance piece is part of this week's events. Picture by Keegan Carroll

"In Australia there are barriers around masculinity, particularly around dance," she said.

"The fact that we now have a generation of boys who are dancing in school because they have to, I think has really changed young people's perception of movement as just being for girls.

"And I think particularly with dance week, it's the chance to engage in genres like hip hop afro dance where there aren't these divides between genders in terms of dance participation."

This weekend will see a fan veil dancing workshop, where Canberrans can come and try colorful silk veils for free at Gorman Arts Centre.

The festival is also running free dance classes for toddlers, where they get to participate in music, drama and dance. The hour-long "Blueberry" sessions are being held over the weekend in Woden and Belconnen.

The full program is available on the [Ausdance ACT website](#).