Analysis: The wrecking of the Warrnibald

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Artlink rises from the ashes of Artlink

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Broken link prompts a fresh start

Warrnambool artist Jenny Altmann was the last person standing at the former Artlink program and has since left to start her own art classes.

By Carol Altmann

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;"] W [/dropcap]hen the wheels fell off the Artlink program earlier this year, Warrnambool artist **Jenny Altmann** found herself to be the last woman standing.

Artlink, a unique art program for people with disabilities, was effectively gutted when the owner of the program, **Western District Employment Options** (WDEA), decided to relocate it from the heart of Warrnambool's CBD to the industrial estate because of concerns about rising costs.

Most of the professional artists attached to the program had already tendered their resignations before the move, but Jenny decided to "hang in there" and see if the rump of Artlink that remained was where she wanted to be.

She stayed only a few weeks before making the decision to strike out on her own.

And then there were none. All of the artists in this photo taken at Artlink last December – Daneel Robinson, Jenny Altmann, Amanda Lines and Gayle Clark – are no longer involved with the program, while Deon Cameron has a new position with WDEA.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;"] J [/dropcap]enny is now in the process of setting up classes at the former Fletcher Jones factory in Warrnambool, as an extension of those already on offer by well-known Warrnambool artists **Glenn Morgan**, **Barry "Po" Tate** and **Chris Small**.

"I see this as something different for me, creatively," Jenny said.

"I want to offer classes not only for people with disabilities, and not as an art therapist, which involves a whole different form of training, but as what I call a creativity coach," she said.

The classes will, therefore, be open to anyone interested in using art to work through any form of blockage in their life, be it emotional, professional or personal.

“It might be a writer who has writer’s block, or a musician…it is about trying to get back on your feet creatively,” Jenny explained.

Jenny knows from her years with Artlink that art has the potential to unlock parts of a person that may otherwise have never been discovered. It also has the power to heal, to reinvigorate and to connect likeminded souls.

“I have a number of tricks up my sleeve that have worked for me over the years and I know, from my own experience, that it has always been art that has pulled me through,” she said.

Making a few adjustments…the studio space at the former Fletcher Jones factory had been used by a church group but will soon be used for creative coaching.

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[/dropcap]ronically, the decision to run her own art classes has taken Jenny full circle. Before Artlink existed, Jenny was involved with a smaller program called Art Options that was run by WDEA out of the Fletcher Jones building.

Now she is back to a blank slate: an empty, but pleasant, light-filled room, that was previously used by a church group.

“At this point I am just putting it out to the community that I am setting this up and getting what we need in place,” Jenny said.

Anyone interested in donating tables, chairs, easels or other materials that could be used to help set up the studio space can contact Jenny on 0447 627 901. People can also register their interest in the classes.

[box] Last week, WDEA was awarded a five-star rating by Disability Employment Services for its disability management services. It also announced its expansion into Shepparton and Echuca, taking its total number of offices to 12. [/box]

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