To develop the Little (BIG) World project three distinct divisions of UTAS shared knowledge and perspectives to create a concept that aimed to build community awareness and tolerance of cultural diversity in northern Tasmania. I wish to thank the project partners who not only made this first school’s exhibition possible, but also an informative and rewarding experience – Tasmanian Coordinator Dr Marion Myhill and Dr Megan Short of the Global Education unit, NEW Gallery Director, Dr Malcom Bywaters and exhibition curator Ms Melanie Kershaw.

Events that focus on, and celebrate, cultural diversity provide important vehicles for building local awareness of the needs, backgrounds and ways of newcomers to the region. In an enlightened and inclusive society, newcomers – be they students, staff, visitors or residents – will feel more engaged, welcome and safe.

Little (BIG) World complemented UTAS 2013 Harmony Clay activities in Launceston. Other ‘diversity’ and ‘harmony’ focussed activities, facilitated by the Launceston Engagement and Development office included the World Vision One Just World public and secondary school forums and an interactive program of cultural awareness activities for over 100 primary school children.

Exhibition partners also thank the art teachers and students from Cressy, Exeter, Riverside, St Helens and Scottsdale High Schools and Scotch Oakburn College for taking up the challenge and submitting work that explored the important topic of cultural diversity. Passionate teachers, Belinda Schaeffer (St Helens), Brooke Atkins (Scottsdale), Kathryn Whatley (Riverside), Carmel Cliger and Ben Miller (Scotch Oakburn College) and Linda Breadon (Cressy) worked with students over six weeks to discuss and explore, via a range of media, the important topic of cultural diversity. It is an important conversation in which to engage young Tasmanians.

Jo Archer, UTAS Launceston Engagement and Development Manager

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The idea that while we may live in small local communities that often seem to be remote from the large global issues, we are still all connected and engaged as citizens of the global community.

Anyone viewing this exhibition cannot help but be deeply impressed and moved by the work of these local year 9 and 10 students. Their positive commitment to social justice is evidenced in their thoughtful and creative responses to the many aspects of cultural diversity, often from a very personal perspective, their embracing of the global education approach and their recognition of the importance of upholding the principles of social justice for all. It is also engaging and uplifting to see the positive value placed on cultural diversity in its many forms and the clear rejection of prejudice and racism.

The exhibition was expertly curated by Melanie Kershaw. It also reflects the excellent collaborative work of Melanie and Dr Megan Short from the Global Education unit in the Faculty of Education who provided the art teachers, students and schools with the support to realise both the artistic and global education goals of this project.

I invite you to view these arts works closely and enjoy their creativity and optimism. I hope that they inspire you to consider these ideas and attitudes towards cultural diversity and social justice that the students have expressed so positively, thoughtfully and personally, as well as the remarkable art that these young people have created. The students and their teachers have well and truly risen to the challenge that was set and these works and their creators will no doubt inspire confidence for and in the future.

Dr Marion Myhill
Global Education Project Tasmania Coordinator, Faculty of Education