In order to connect cultural performers in the Greater Western region of Sydney with industry professionals, four convenors – Western Sydney Dance Action, Fairfield City Council and Community First Step and UWS Engagement came up with a concept to fill that void by establishing the Cultural Performing Arts Network (CPAN).

The aim of the network is to connect performers (dancers, musicians, singers) who use culturally specific or folkloric elements in their work, with industry professionals and each other. The idea evolved after some local performance groups approached Fairfield City Council with concerns about sustaining their groups and their art. In response, the council held an open forum where sustainability issues were addressed and CPAN was born.

CPAN is in its second year of operation and the vision for the future is to strengthen and support individuals and groups to promote culturally specific and folkloric performing arts in the Greater Western Sydney region. The main goal for this year is to meaningfully engage with as many culturally specific performing arts groups and to connect them with information and Industry Professionals to develop CPAN as a sustainable entity.

As a UWS Engagement intern Anna Krijatian, a third year Communications Arts undergraduate, fills the position of part time Project Officer based at the Riverside Theatre in Parramatta. As part of this role she is responsible for maintaining the relationships with the cultural performers and industry professionals. She is also involved in promotion, marketing, public relations, writing media releases, and maintaining databases.

The vision is to grow CPAN so that the initiative has cultural specific and folkloric performers from all over Sydney’s West actively involved. In order to make that possible, Anna is currently working on a Business Plan that outlines important elements of the program, its market, vision, mission and action plan.

So far the CPAN membership includes performers from African, Armenian, Jordanian, Polish, South American, Columbian, Cambodian, Spanish, Vietnamese, German and Assyrian cultures, just to name a few. In the first event held last year over 100 members had the chance to meet with industry leaders who are responsible for staging some of Sydney’s prominent events like the Sydney Festival, Sydney Fringe and Musica Viva.

Membership is free for all those who join and when they do they receive several documents; a database of events and festivals that they can apply for, opportunities for grant applications, invitations to events organised by CPAN, information nights, networking functions and interactive learning workshops. To contact CPAN or for further information go to www.wsda.org.au or email admin@wsda.org.au.