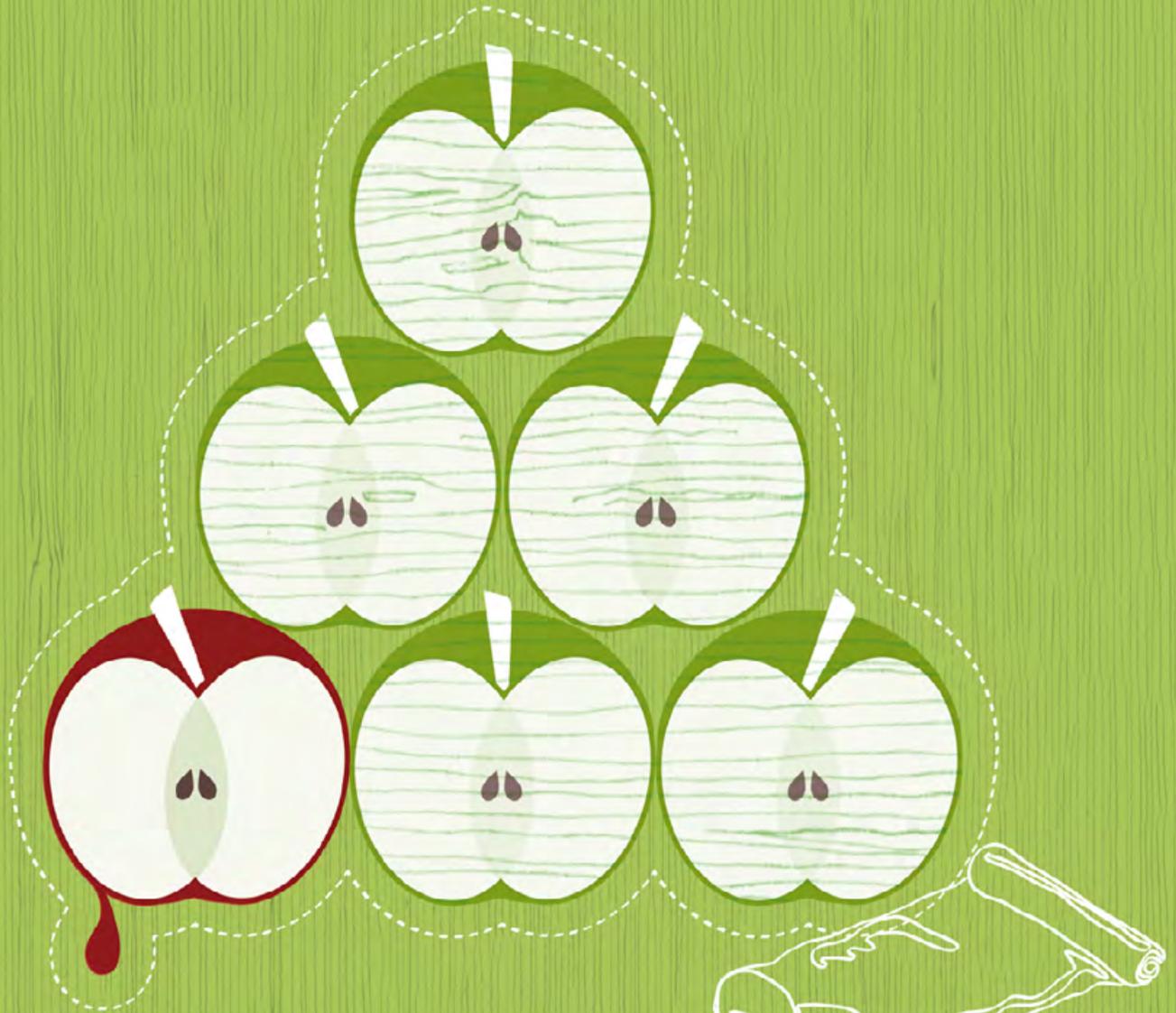




Government of Western Australia
Department of Culture and the Arts



Healthy arts

How the **arts** is
making a difference to
community cohesion,
social wellbeing and
rural revitalisation in
Western Australia.

If you would like further information about any of these stories, please contact the Department of Culture and the Arts. Contact details are listed on the back cover of this book.

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Healthy Arts is a collection of stories that have been drawn from across the vast State of **Western Australia**: an area that is home to 2.4 million people spread across 2,529,875km²



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**Message
from the
Director
General**

The Department of Culture and the Arts is committed to ensuring that all Western Australians have access to unique and transforming arts and cultural experiences. This commitment is reinforced by the growing body of evidence that demonstrates the multitude of community benefits that are gained from participating in artistic and cultural pursuits.

Healthy Arts is a collection of stories that have been drawn from across the vast State of Western Australia: an area that is home to 2.4 million people spread across 2,529,875km², spanning five different climate zones and with a coastline of more than 20,000km. This booklet highlights the different approaches required to deliver health outcomes in settings as diverse as the arid and remote desert regions, city hospitals and coastal tropical towns.

The Department's 2012 Arts and Culture Monitor Report supports the outcomes described in these stories with 73 per cent of people surveyed stating that the arts made them feel good and 61 per cent believing that the arts help them connect with, and feel part of, their community.

The World Health Organization defines "health as a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." Healthy Arts explores social and community wellbeing within Western Australia's Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities and highlights the role the arts can play in helping to build inclusive and cohesive groups, addressing specific health or social concerns and contributing to the revitalisation of urban and rural spaces.

I would like to thank all the individuals, groups and organisations involved in designing and delivering these innovative arts and health programs. Without the dedication of all the project partners across different government portfolios, diverse community groups and a wide range of professional arts practitioners, the link between health, arts and social wellbeing outcomes would continue to be undervalued.

Allanah Lucas

Director General
Department of Culture and the Arts

About the Department of Culture and the Arts

The Department of Culture and the Arts creates and delivers Government policy for culture and the arts. Our vision is for a Western Australian community that is enriched by unique and transforming culture and arts experiences.

In the 2011-2012 financial year, we supported 49 non-government organisations through recurrent funding, and provided hundreds of grants to individuals, groups and organisations through our grants programs.

The Department, (which includes the State Records Office), along with the following organisations, form the Culture and Arts Portfolio:

- Art Gallery of Western Australia (a statutory authority)
- Perth Theatre Trust (a statutory authority)
- ScreenWest (an incorporated association)
- State Library of Western Australia (a statutory authority)
- Western Australian Museum (a statutory authority).



Top: Art Gallery of Western Australia.

Centre: State Theatre Centre of Western Australia.
Photo by Eva Fernandez.

Bottom: Western Australian Museum – Perth.
Copyright Western Australian Museum.

All photos of The Jub Jub Tree
by Jarrad Seng.

Metropolitan
Perth

Sensorium Theatre

An artist in residence project at a Perth school helped establish Australia's first theatre company dedicated to sensory theatre for young audiences with disability.

Background

Established in 2011, Sensorium Theatre is a small collective of WA artists that has delivered an innovative, multi-sensory theatre project for children with special needs in several schools in the Perth metropolitan area.

The vision of Sensorium Theatre is to create a unique and totally immersive world of intimate performance and highly interactive storytelling. It provides a magical theatre of the senses for children with special needs in a way that truly engages and inspires them.

The project began at Barking Gecko Theatre Company in May 2010, when sensory theatre practitioner Amber Onat Gregory, from the United Kingdom, shared her skills with a team of multi-skilled local theatre artists. Their collaboration resulted in a performance to an extremely receptive trial audience of special needs children. Barking Gecko then secured funds to further develop this work, with more performances presented in late 2010.

This partnership received funding from the Department of Culture and the Arts and the Department of Education through the WA Artist-In-Residence Grants Program (AIR) for a 12 week residency at Carson Street School in 2011.

Carson Street School caters for children that have special needs, including therapy and educational services, that can't presently be integrated into the regular school system.

The AIR project aimed to develop a uniquely experimental sensory theatre production, The Jub Jub Tree, which was adapted from Egyptian folktale The Well of Truth. A focus was to create a program of embedding activities to build children's understanding and engagement with The Jub Jub Tree performance, by creating a series of experiential workshops exploring the set and characters.

Following the AIR project, the Department of Culture and the Arts supported two Sensorium Theatre artists to travel to the United Kingdom for further professional development in sensory theatre. In 2012, The Jub Jub Tree residency and performance program toured to Kalamunda Education Support Centre, Kenwick School, Malibu School and Sir David Brand School.

Approach

The Jub Jub Tree tells the story of a donkey, rooster and a goat who plant a garden. It incorporates lessons which address telling the truth, sharing, responsibility and fairness told through dance, drama, music and puppetry. The sensory theatre project was based around a forest installation that 'grows' as arts workers and children collaboratively create a touch and sound-rich forest at their school. Arts workers facilitated a series of workshops to create the project – individual animals and other elements of the story were broken down and individually explored.

Leading up to the residency, teachers read The Jub Jub Tree illustrated storybook and played a CD of songs from the show to children. During the AIR residency at Carson Street School, students would meet a new puppet character each day, learning that character's

theme song, participating in hands-on visual arts associated with that character, and engaging in imaginary drama play in the forest environment using masks, puppets and costumes they had made. A variety of sensory activities targeted skills development in areas such as motor control, communication, musical and tactile skills and expression of emotion.

The AIR project was a crucial stage in developing The Jub Jub Tree project. It gave arts workers the opportunity to work through and embed the project by breaking down the story into different components, and looking closely at how best to adapt it for children with complex disabilities.

Classroom observation and the collaborative process enabled the transfer of skills between artists and teachers. Observations and opinions from teachers were actively sought by arts workers and integrated into the program design.

The AIR project was also crucial in developing the arts workers' understanding of children with complex disability and in generating the most effective overall



“

I have worked in this school bringing arts to the students for 20 years now and nothing has been anywhere near as good as this in bringing multi-sensory musical stimulation to our children. They obviously connected with the songs, the crafts and the performance. You and your performers weave a special magic.

**Art specialist,
Sir David Brand School**

”

“

The children responded to the performance with intense interest and delight. My son was so excited with all the preparation done in the workshops. He would come home every day with stories of how the animals were made and what the animals were doing and how naughty the donkey is.

Parent, Sir David Brand School

”



presentation for the play. As a result, an aided-language display to accommodate different learning styles and a pre-recorded CD that facilitates the engagement of children with disability were developed.

Outcomes

Curtin University undertook an evaluation of the Carson Street School AIR project which informed the development of the 2012 residency tour. The action-based approach allowed artists to experiment with different ways of engaging students in tandem with the evaluation process, providing information to support the full development of The Jub Jub Tree.

Results indicate the program was an outstanding success. Teachers at Carson Street School reported that they had been inspired by the artists to try similar improvisation techniques with students and to stage an ambitious Christmas concert for the first time. Following the AIR project, Carson Street School has fully embraced the medium of sensory theatre and is maintaining an active arts program.

Reactions of the children and the level of engagement throughout the AIR residency indicated that extreme immersion is effective for this group of participants, with children willing to interact with the rich experiential offerings for much longer periods than with other activities.

Many family members attended the performances and were struck by the obvious engagement of their children with the performance, the delight on their faces, and spoke of their own enjoyment in seeing this.

The project has also led to more sustainable career outcomes for the artists, with the creation of Sensorium Theatre, Australia's first theatre company dedicated to sensory theatre for children with disabilities.

In a nutshell

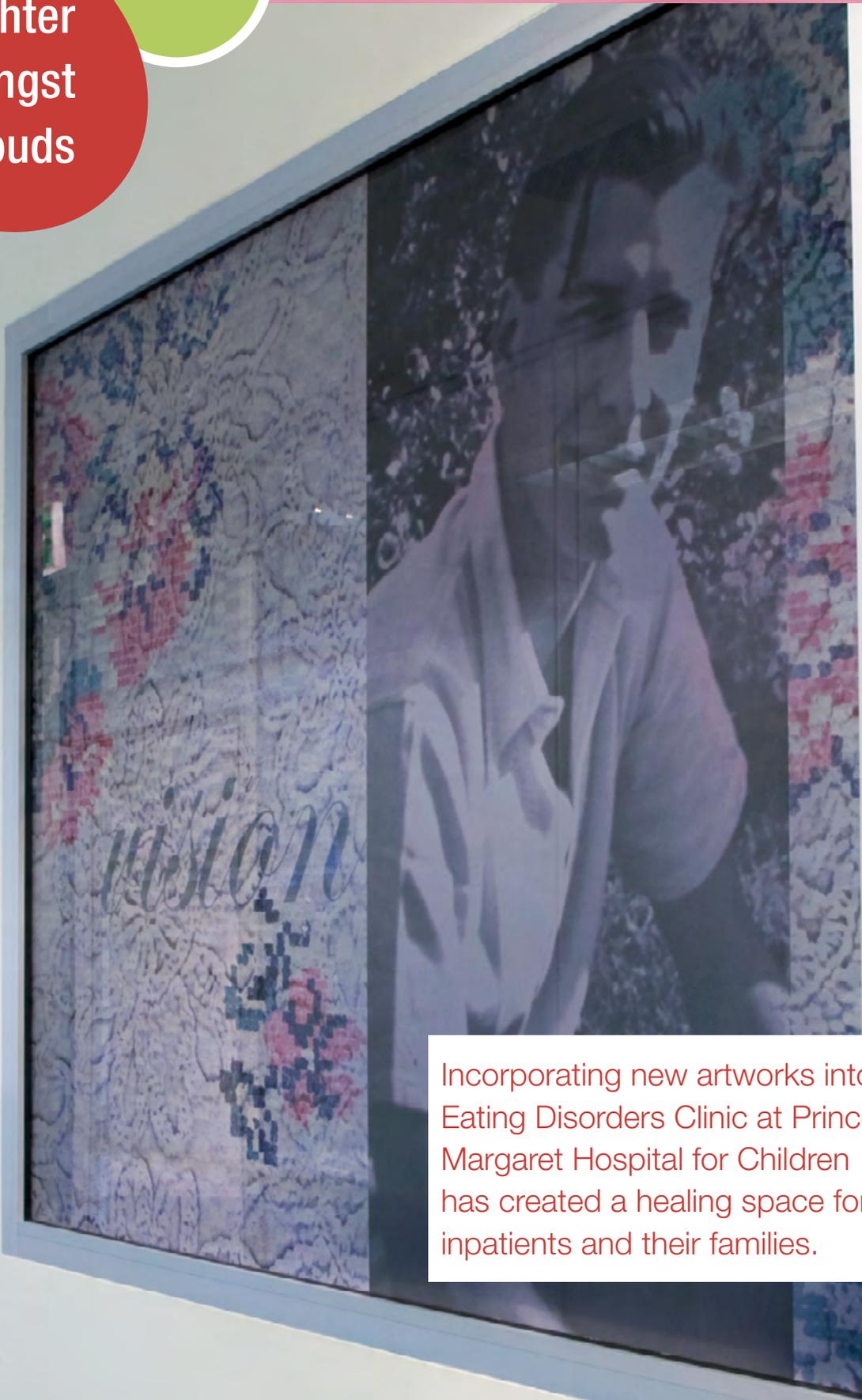
Date of project:	2010-2012
Health focus:	children with complex disability
Art focus:	performing arts
Setting:	schools in the Perth metropolitan area
State Government funding:	Department of Culture and the Arts, Department of Education, Healthway
Federal Government funding:	Australia Council for the Arts
Project leader:	Sensorium Theatre
Project partners:	Barking Gecko Theatre Company, Performing Lines WA, Carson Street Independent Public School, Spinifex Foundation

Information from 'Something in the AIR, Year 2, 2010-2011: Case studies of Western Australia's Artist-In-Residence (AIR) Grants Program' has informed this story.

Laughter amongst Clouds

Metropolitan Perth

Below: Laughter amongst Clouds by Olga Cironis. Photo by Eva Fernandez.



Incorporating new artworks into the Eating Disorders Clinic at Princess Margaret Hospital for Children has created a healing space for inpatients and their families.

“

Four large digi-glass panels welcome clients and staff with images of historical photographs from the hospital's archives, subtle colours and text suggested by patients and staff during interactions with the artist.

Olga Cironis, artist

”



Background

The Eating Disorders Program – based at Princess Margaret Hospital for Children (PMH) – is a specialised multi-disciplinary initiative for the assessment and treatment of children and adolescents with eating disorders. It is part of the Psychological Medicine Clinical Care Unit at the hospital, and provides a comprehensive continuum of care, including inpatient, day treatment and outpatient services.

Created in 2012, Laughter amongst Clouds is a series of related artworks installed in the hospital's newly built Eating Disorders Ward. Funded by the WA Government's Percent for Art Scheme¹, the work aims to enhance the space where young patients come together for treatment and time out. Laughter amongst Clouds celebrates identity and gives a sense of ownership to those who use the area.

Approach

Artist Olga Cironis was commissioned to create an artwork that would be engaging, informative and fun for young people, as well as beneficial to staff. She explains her conceptual framework in the following way:

“The objective is for the artwork not to be invasive, but to be a tranquil and inspiring addition to the natural and often schematic movements within hospital environments. Colour is integral to creating a mood and feeling for the space and is a special component for this project.

Cool colours such as blues and greens as well as pastel shades are calming and induce feelings of wellbeing. I have also included some ‘cosy’ colours such as yellows through to reds, as they give a sense of warmth and togetherness.

The images aim to represent the psychological journey from a place of innocence to maturity, illness to wellness, fear to joy and confusion to clarity. They highlight the subtleties of human experience through abstract patterning from patients' drawings, and focus on the beauty and importance of being human through the representational line drawings of the human form that overlap the colourful background.

My preference as a starting point was for line drawings from books on etchings from the 1800s, where imagery is clean, formal and highly descriptive.

Below and top insert: Laughter amongst Clouds by Olga Cironis. Photo by Eva Fernandez.



These represent history and link us to a place where memory can be perhaps romantically linked to more innocent times.”

To develop the work, Olga undertook consultation to select appropriate themes and media. She began by facilitating a series of workshops with patients and hospital staff, which resulted in artworks that were incorporated into the glass panels as background images.

Olga worked with architects to ensure there was optimal interaction between the artwork and the built form, and that the artwork responded to the architectural palette.

Outcomes

The finished artwork consists of two parts. Four large digi-glass panels, located in the reception area of the clinic, welcome clients and staff with images selected from historical photographs from the hospital’s archives. Subtle colours and text, which were suggested by patients and staff during the workshops, are incorporated.

The digi-glass panels contain line-etched drawings from late Victorian children’s book illustrations, which are layered over the paintings that resulted from the patient and staff workshops. Several further layers of text have been printed onto these panels, including the words such as ‘diversity’, ‘vision’, ‘adventure’ and ‘bridge’.

Adjacent to the digi-glass panels is an installation of more than 70 steel-framed artworks. These works include fragments of artworks from patients and staff created at the former clinic, photographs from hospital archives,

mixed media, and collected objects (textiles and linoleum) from the site, clinic and surrounds. The works, therefore, embody an historical documentation of the clinic and PMH. Themes of play, joy, identity, familiarity, history, beauty and wellness are woven into the artwork.

The tranquil and inspiring artwork offers a calming and welcoming space for those who encounter it, helping to make the Eating Disorders Clinic a place of healing for patients and their families.

In a nutshell

Date of project:	2010–present
Health focus:	eating disorders
Art focus:	public art
Setting:	metropolitan children’s hospital
State Government funding:	WA Government through the Percent for Art Scheme
Project partners:	Department of Health, Princess Margaret Hospital for Children
Percent for Art partners:	Department of Culture and the Arts, Department of Finance

“ Images aim to represent the psychological journey from a place of innocence to maturity, illness to wellness, fear to joy and confusion to clarity.

Olga Cironis, artist ”

The Three Daves

Three artists come together in a unique project that nurtures individual talent and challenges how audiences view the contribution that people living with disability or mental illness make to their communities.

Background

This unique project brings together three talented artists – Dave Guhl, David Giles and Dave Mitchell – to challenge audiences to consider how the disadvantages experienced by people with intellectual disability or mental illness are created, and to reconsider the contribution that artists with disability can make to their communities.

Dave Guhl is an accomplished multi award-winning artist whose work is colourful, bright and vibrant, and his paintings immediately engaging. Dave's first solo exhibition, Truly Madly Delightful, was a sell-out show and he was subsequently commissioned to complete a number of new paintings. Dave also works with dance artists Sete Tele and Rachel Ogle, and with members of arts and disability organisation Disability in the Arts, Disadvantage in the Arts WA (DADAA). As a young artist with Down Syndrome, he is providing leadership and creating pathways for other artists with disability wanting to develop their artistic career.

David Giles is renowned for his deeply mystical and meditative paintings, with hallmark subtly and beautifully blended blues and purples. Now 52, he has been dealing with depression since he was a teenager. He began painting 16 years ago and has become an award-winning artist who also advocates for artists with disability. David has been

acknowledged as a Western Australian leader for his achievements, leadership and contribution to the community.

Dave Mitchell studied visual art at the TAFE School of Arts and Design and at Edith Cowan University. He held his first solo exhibition at the Bickley Valley Gallery in 1995. His paintings reflect his interest in socially oriented themes, including the nature of family and community responsibility. His current work is an exploration of how we manage our time, and his current paintings are illustrations of an alternative calendar system. Dave also works in disability support, where he is able to provide opportunities for artistic expression to individuals in his care.

Approach

During this year-long project, the three participants worked together to share artistic practice, knowledge and life experiences with one another. The project used the production of work as a means by which the three Daves explored new territory, both artistically and socially. Creative activity during the year led up to an exhibition of works in Perth.

To achieve their goals, the three artists shared a studio space that was set up to minimise inhibitions and reservations. In this comfortable and familiar environment, they were open to discussion and the sharing of creative ideas, processes and experiences.

The artists created individual works in a collaborative period, during which time they explored creative processes, techniques and styles and engaged actively with one another to work through artistic challenges.

Outcomes

The project resulted in the development of new works and the presentation of a unique collaborative exhibition. The launch of the exhibition at the Perth Town Hall – curated by David Giles – was attended by more than 180 people and almost one-third of the works were sold at the opening. Dave Guhl’s work, Kevin Rudd and the Team, had several buyers seeking to purchase it on the night.

The works are featured in a book produced for the event, which includes an essay about the artists and their practice. In addition, the entire project has been filmed and a DVD produced. The book and DVD were distributed throughout the disability sector to more than 100 agencies and arts groups, with the purpose of sharing the experience, inspiring other artists and encouraging groups and organisations to provide places and spaces for artists with disability.

In the longer term, the project has helped to lift the professional profile of each artist and they have all been recognised as Ambassadors for the Disability Services Commission’s Count Me In strategy. Dave Guhl was selected to participate in the DOWNrightART exhibition in New York.

Funded by the Department of Culture and the Arts and the Disability Services Commission, The Three Daves project has strengthened cross-sector partnerships. It has also effectively

demonstrated the connection between meaningful creative activity and the social inclusion of people living with a disability or mental illness in WA.

In a nutshell

Date of project:	2009–2010
Health focus:	disability and mental health
Art focus:	visual arts
Setting:	art studios and exhibition space in metropolitan Perth
State Government funding:	Department of Culture and the Arts, Disability Services Commission
Project leaders:	Dave Guhl, David Giles and Dave Mitchell
Project partners:	Challenger TAFE Centre for Adult Education, City of Perth

In March 2012, Dave Guhl received funding from the Department of Culture and the Arts to take up an invitation to travel to New York for the annual DOWNrightART exhibition, an international initiative aimed at highlighting the artistic contribution of artists with Down Syndrome. Dave also participated in a three-day program of artistic activities and represented Australia at the United Nations World Down Syndrome Day celebrations. A DVD capturing the impact of Dave’s journey, titled ‘Dave in New York’, was launched in October 2012.

The Arts and Social Wellbeing in Rural Communities: A Qualitative and Quantitative Assessment in the **Mid West Region** of Western Australia

Regional
Western
Australia

Data was analysed from Carnamah, Chapman Valley, Coorow, Cue, Geraldton, Greenough, Irwin, Meekatharra, Mingenew, Morawa, Mount Magnet, Mullewa, Murchison, Northampton, Perenjori, Sandstone, Three Springs, Wiluna and Yalgoo.

Mount Magnet

Northampton
Geraldton



Above: Drovers Rest in Mingenew.
Photo by Julie Anwar McHenry.



Above: Airing of the Quilts in Northampton.
Photo by Julie Anwar McHenry.

Doctoral research clarifying the influence of the arts on the social wellbeing of Australian rural communities has helped to quantify the benefits of regional arts engagement.

Background

There is growing interest in the social conditions of Australian rural communities and the importance of social factors in enabling community resilience to change from economic and socio-political restructuring. There is wide recognition that social and civic participation can build community capacity, as well as a body of evidence supporting the use of arts in rural revitalisation, economic stimulation, and capacity building. Research on the benefits of the arts for communities, however, is rarely quantitative, and some studies have been criticised for the use of ambiguous terminology and ill-defined concepts.

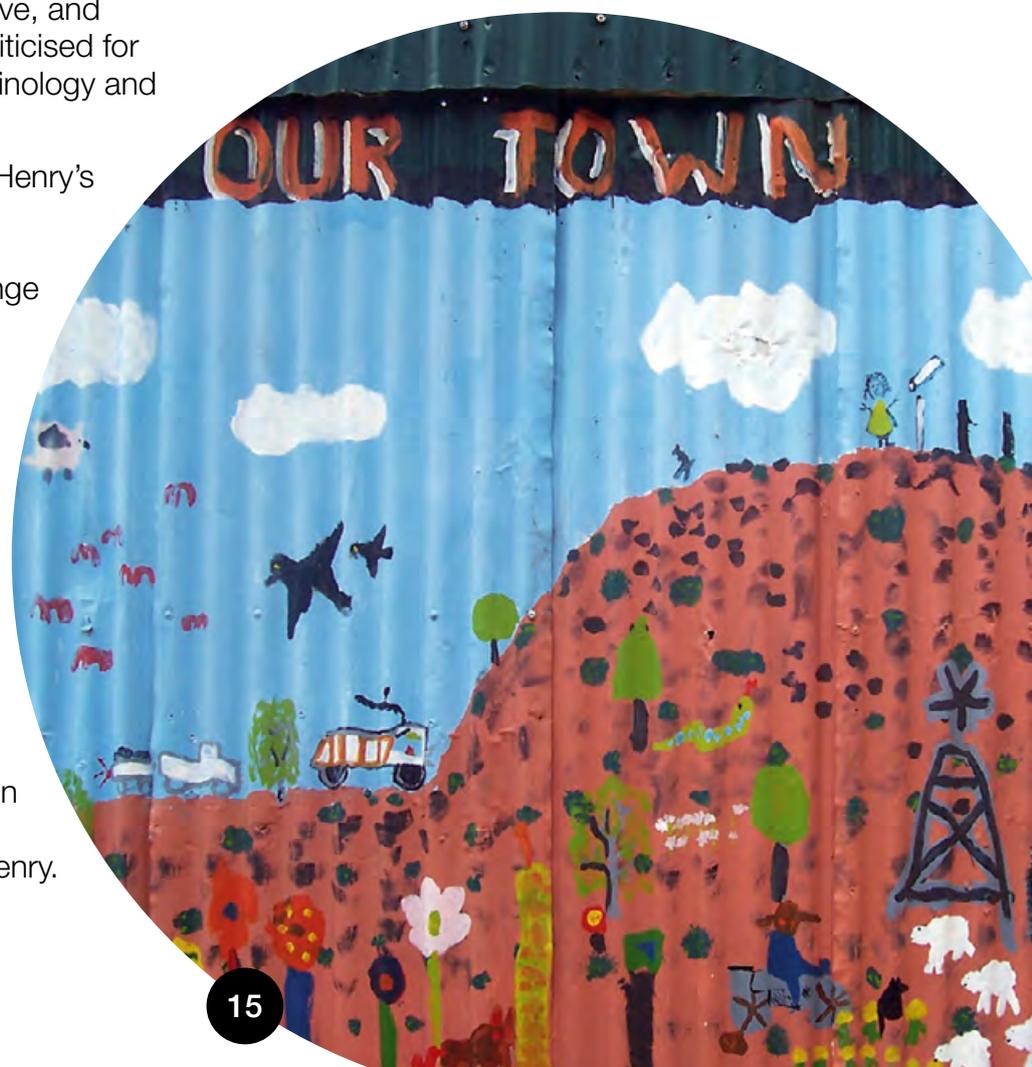
The aim of Julia Anwar McHenry's doctoral research was to determine why some communities adapt to change better than others, through clarifying the influence of the arts on the social wellbeing of Australian rural communities.

Right: Mural painted by local primary school children in Mount Magnet. Photo by Julie Anwar McHenry.

Approach

A mixed-method approach which included both qualitative and quantitative data was used in the case study area: the Mid West region of WA. The methodological approach enabled a deeper understanding of the context in which engagement with the arts occurs, along with a statistical analysis to show how the variables under scrutiny (that some commentators deemed as immeasurable) could be quantified using quality of life, life satisfaction, and social capital indicators.

The Mid West is a dynamic region in population and geography. It consists of 18 local government areas over an area of approximately 466,766km², including offshore islands. The Mid West was considered an ideal location due to its diversity (coastal, agricultural, and mining/pastoral communities) that might impact on the arts and social wellbeing.



“

We've done so much public art in town that it's given the locals community icons that they're proud of. It's helped reinstate that sense of place for the residents here.

Artist and school teacher,
Mid West coastal town, WA²

”

Outcomes

Despite broader regional trends reflecting a vulnerability of rural Australia to macroeconomic forces, this research revealed considerable social variability within the case study region. There was a significant difference in the wellbeing profile across gender, age, sub-region of residence and number of years in the resident shire.

This study showed that people chose to engage in the arts for social and entertainment opportunities, to support the organisers of arts events, and for individual wellbeing. It further supports the notion that the arts can be used for economic stimulation, to address social concerns, and to strengthening or communicating identity and a sense of place. Anecdotal evidence suggests that regional audiences travel greater distances to attend events and, therefore, are committed patrons of the arts when presented with the opportunity to engage in them.

When controlling for the covariate effects of length of residence, age, gender and region of residence, performing arts attendees had higher average wellbeing than those who did not attend.

Those who actively engaged in the arts had a higher average wellbeing than those who did not actively engage in the arts. Positive outcomes from arts engagement were attributed to the processes and context in which that engagement took place, in addition to the benefits from arts engagement in its own right.

This research creates a theoretical 'bridge' for the integration of quantitative and qualitative data on the more intrinsic aspects of the arts and social wellbeing in rural areas. The work takes a significant step in effectively developing and identifying 'intrinsic' values as 'indicators' and 'outcomes' that define wellbeing. These indicators can be further measured using quantitative modeling techniques. In doing so, this research provides theoretical tools to build a stronger case for more effective policy in the arts and regional development.

A number of issues that have emerged from the research have been identified as worthy of ongoing investigation. To date, the findings have been published in four refereed journal articles and one peer-reviewed book chapter. In addition, the Department of Culture and the Arts acknowledges that the findings contribute to broader research on the public value of the arts.

This study was supported by an Australian Research Council Linkage Grant in partnership with Country Arts WA and the Department of Culture and the Arts, and was supervised by Professor Matthew Tonts from The University of Western Australia and Professor Roy Jones from Curtin University.

In a nutshell

Date of project:	2007–2011
Health focus:	social wellbeing
Art focus:	all art forms
Setting:	rural communities in the Mid West region of WA
State Government funding:	Department of Culture and the Arts
Australian Government funding:	Australian Research Council
Project partners:	Country Arts WA, The University of Western Australia, Curtin University



Left: Both images by Julie Anwar McHenry.

“

It was almost like a metaphor for something else. It wasn't about what people were doing. It was about the effect of having them doing that on community spirit and cooperation and all those other kinds of things. Because you cooperate on an arts project you've got the relationship where you can cooperate on other stuff as well.

Senior Local Government employee,
Mid West agricultural town, WA³

”

Yarns of the Heart



As part of a community development program responding to youth suicide and social fragmentation in the Aboriginal community of Narrogin, a doll making project has enabled women to come together and share their stories. Relationships and culture have been strengthened as a result.

Above: Doll making workshop in Narrogin. Photo by Nicola Davison.

Background

In 2009, Community Arts Network Western Australia (CAN WA) was approached by a Narrogin organisation to undertake community engagement initiatives with local Aboriginal people. This was in response to multiple youth suicides and increasing family feuding among the Noongar community. Based upon direct consultation with the communities, a series of arts projects was developed over the following two years under CAN WA's Strong Culture, Strong Community program. The aim was to affirm a sense of community, identity and belonging, and reinforce the importance of retaining one's culture.

Yarns of the Heart is one project within this program. The project created a space for the Narrogin Noongar community to come together to learn doll making skills in a series of workshops run by renowned textile artists Nalda Searles and Cecile Williams.

The program developed in response to requests from the community to reignite a 1994 CAN WA doll making project. Many of the women requesting the workshops had fond memories of their grandmothers and aunts creating dolls during the first project, and wanted to reconnect with this tradition.

Approach

The participants fully embraced the project, organising their own weekly workshops at the Narrogin Best Start Centre with continuing support from CAN WA staff. The women were taught skills in doll and figure making, along with storytelling through textiles. They used recycled clothes, materials, donated jewellery, buttons, stuffing, and grass.

As the doll making workshops developed, stories of family, community and culture were revealed as the women talked about their dolls and why they made them. Storytelling mixed with doll making acted as a form of mnemonics, improving and bringing to a more public forum the participants' memories of life as a Noongar from the Narrogin area. It enabled the doll makers to cope with emotions, trauma and difficult situations in a safe and non-threatening way. At times, it also allowed them to grapple with some of the difficulties associated with family conflict, community violence and profound challenges such as suicide.

The success of the workshops can be attributed in part to the healing nature of doll making, alongside the emotional support provided through weekly connections and yarning. Each doll created held a story and a kinship to its maker – whether it represented a child, lost family member, or a manifestation of their own identity.

Through this sense of storytelling, a connection to family, community and culture became central to the project. Whether paying respect to an older family member – as in Leanne Kickett's Mavoda doll, which represented the strength of her grandmothers – or embodying a dream – as in Sonia Kickett's tropical holiday Getaway doll – the project showed how the simple act of creating a doll can work towards healing through expression and strengthening connection to family and culture.

Social psychologists have established that strength in one's own cultural identity helps protect against and treat negative health behaviours. For many Noongar people, particularly young teenagers, mental health issues can stem from a loss of culture, identity and community connection. As the workshops progressed, more and more young people – including young teenage men – took part alongside their mothers and aunts. The doll making evolved into a form of cultural transmission, encouraging strength of identity and pride, as shown through Geri Hayden's Charnock Woman doll, based on a traditional Noongar story.

“

There are many challenges faced by the Noongar community of Narrogin; therefore, I see the value in the workshops being therapeutic in nature. I hear lots of yarning and laughter from the women and their children during the workshops. There is a strong feeling of personal accomplishment, a sense of belonging and a better understanding of one's own community.

Sharyn Egan, Exhibition Curator

”

“

The doll making was like a campfire inside. We sat around together, gave each other warmth and told each other stories. The dolls lighted up some of the stories about the old people. That was because we were making dolls of our old grandfathers and grandmothers. We made them come back to us in the dolls.

Doll maker



”

Outcomes

As the dolls came to life, so too did the relationships among the women, their families and others in the community. The dolls animated their own lives and stories, encouraging a safe space to talk about the past, the present and their vision of their own and their community's future. It provided an avenue to share important information about the health and wellness of individuals and families. This, in turn, created a sense of wellbeing amongst the community, decreasing mental and social issues by encouraging communication and expression.

A film documentary was produced on the history and story of the doll making project – supported by ScreenWest and the Film and Television Institute's Indigenous Community Stories initiative. The documentary showcases stories of healing through doll making.

Top: Bush Boy doll by Cherie Abednego and Bush Girl doll by Telisha Kickett. Photo by Bo Wong.

Right: Charnock Woman doll by Geri Hayden. Photo by Bo Wong.

Lesley Riley – a young girl during the first workshops in 1994 – told of how the dolls were a symbol of a happy time of her life sitting with her Nan when she couldn't sleep. Shortly after her Nan passed away, Lesley turned to drugs. Her story reveals how the dolls were a positive part of her life, and helped her through a difficult time:

“In the past I was making dolls. But then I got turned to the drugs for a little while. It was terrible on the drugs, but I got myself clean. And I find that making dolls keeps me positive. Just sitting back with the ladies, enjoying making dolls.”

Holding a local exhibition in Narrogin, the women were able to showcase their creations to friends and family members. A partnership between CAN WA and the Western Australian Museum – Perth resulted in a four-month exhibition of the dolls from September 2011 to January 2012. The opening night in Perth was attended by most of the doll makers from Narrogin and Pingelly. The exhibition also reunited some of the original doll makers with their pieces created in 1994, which had been purchased by the National Gallery of Australia following a tour to Beijing, China. Over 80,000 people viewed the Yarns of the Heart exhibition at the Museum, spreading the stories of Noongar communities in the Southern Wheatbelt to local, national and international visitors.



Since the exhibition, the women continue to meet and create new stories, dolls and relationships. There has been great interest in the project, with invitations for the doll makers from Narrogin to run workshops during National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) Week and at local schools, libraries, festivals, prisons and Aboriginal health forums. They were recently invited to teach doll making at a national textiles conference in Canberra.

After seeing the CAN WA doll making project, the Geraldton Regional Community Education Centre has been running the project with young Aboriginal mums, to teach parenting and health skills. Doll making inspired by Yarns of the Heart has also begun with Aboriginal women in Kununurra.



Above: Nalda Searles and Cecile Williams looking at the dolls created during the doll making workshops. Photo by Bo Wong.

In a nutshell

Date of project:	2010–present
Health focus:	Aboriginal health and wellbeing
Art focus:	textile art, design and storytelling
Setting:	regional Aboriginal communities in the Southern Wheatbelt
State Government funding:	Lotterywest, Department of Culture and the Arts
Australian Government funding:	Department of Families and Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport, Office for the Arts, Australia Council for the Arts
Project leader:	Community Arts Network Western Australia
Project partners:	Wheatbelt Development Commission (also a funder), Town of Narrogin, Western Australian Museum – Perth

In October 2012 CAN WA received the Mental Health Commission's John Da Silva Award for improved outcomes in Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing in communities particularly with the Noongar people of the Wheatbelt.

View the Yarns of the Heart documentary at vimeo.com/32187744

Regional
Western
Australia

The Western Desert Kidney Health Project

Below: Shenice Harris participating in a Western Desert Kidney Health Project residency in Leonora. Photo by Poppy van Oorde-Grainger.

Blending artistic engagement, health promotion and clinical intervention, this initiative aims to address the pressing kidney health problems facing many Indigenous communities.

Background

The Western Desert Kidney Health Project uses art to deliver a health education campaign around Kidney health in 10 remote Indigenous communities in WA. The overall aim of the project is to reduce diabetes and kidney disease by 20 per cent in the participating communities.

This three year project was launched in October 2010 in Kalgoorlie. It aims to touch the lives of people whose expected life span is 17 years less than that of non-Aboriginal people. Type 2

diabetes in the Australian Indigenous community is four times more common than in the non-Indigenous population. This is the fourth highest rate of type 2 diabetes in the world.

Three groups of communities are participating in the project: on the Salt Lake run - Norseman, Coolgardie and Kurrawang; the Claypan run - Menzies/Morapoi, Leonora, Laverton, Mt Margaret and Mulga Queen; and the Spinifex run - Coonana and Tjuntjuntjara.

The Western Desert Kidney Health Project is a partnership between these communities, The Rural Clinical School of WA, Bega Garnbirringu Health Service, Goldfields-Midwest Medicare Local and Wongutha Birni Aboriginal Corporation. The project's chief investigators are respected senior Wongutha women Annette Stokes and Associate Professor Christine Jeffries Stokes.

Approach

At the end of three years, clinical and community teams aim to be better placed to continue clinical care, health promotion and early intervention. They also aim to be able to target services to those most in need and commence treatment at an earlier stage of the disease process to reduce progression and complications. The approach to achieving this is multi-layered, bringing together health testing, health promotion, research, art, story telling and community development.

The multi-disciplinary team of Indigenous health workers, medical professionals, community development workers and arts workers collaborate with the community to deliver the project from two six-tonne 'healthy lifestyle' and clinical trucks. While one truck provides a mobile clinic for early detection, management and prevention of chronic disease, the other transports artists and healthy lifestyle workers who engage with communities to create educational stories about kidney-related health using culturally appropriate language, imagery and messages.

From the mobile clinic, participants are assessed to identify risk factors for diabetes and end stage renal disease. Artists work alongside the clinical team during each community residency, facilitating the creation of artwork that delivers key health messages. At the end of each visit, a small community event is held to showcase the health stories created.

Once testing is over, project leaders look at the clinical and artistic results, and hold a meeting to discuss the information with the community. At the meeting, health

workers engage with local people to identify issues that are affecting their health. Community development officers look at ways the project can support the community to address these issues. The project team uses referral networks it has established to manage participants found to be at risk.

The project plays a role in promoting awareness of the issues affecting a community. This is achieved through advocacy to community and government agencies, publication of research findings, and media coverage of the project's work in all 10 communities.

Outcomes

The Western Desert Kidney Health Project is an action research project. More than 1,000 health assessments have been completed to date and all participants have been educated about their health status.

Alfie The Tooth Fairy receives national recognition

In May 2011, Coolgardie-based Aboriginal health worker Alison Dimer and artist Catherine Howard travelled to Brisbane to receive the Dr Ross Ingram Memorial Prize. The award ceremony was held as part of the proceedings of the 2011 Australian Medical Association National Conference. The award recognises artistic excellence in health on a national platform, and was awarded to the Western Desert Kidney Health Project collaboration for the creation of the sand animation, Alfie The Tooth Fairy. The animation was created with the communities of Kurrawang and Coolgardie to effectively communicate key health messages.

To view the animation, visit
[www.artshealthfoundation.org.au/
westerndesertkidney/coolgardie-2/](http://www.artshealthfoundation.org.au/westerndesertkidney/coolgardie-2/)

About 40 per cent of participants have been referred for further investigation and treatment. Preliminary composite data has been fed back to communities, enabling them to plan activities that support individual and broader changes for improved health.

During the first year, the ancient sand-drawing techniques of Milbindi – a focus of the workshops – were combined with digital projections to deliver health messages to the community. Animations of these drawings are also published online.

A suite of 10 sand animations was created (view examples at www.artshealthfoundation.org.au/westerndesertkidney/about/). Animations were screened on the side of the trucks at the end of each residency. Artists also worked with the community to create culturally appropriate logos for the project.

During 2012, the project's second year, sculpture, music and film making were used by the team to create a series of installations, which are brought together to form a promenade event that prompts community participants to ask questions about healthy lifestyles and choices they can make around kidney health. To date, the visual arts has been the focus of artistic engagement.

There are additional flow-on effects of the program. Coonana and Norseman schools are currently working on improving nutrition through school kitchen gardens. Menzies now has fruit trees in public gardens. Laverton community is actively advocating for better food supply to the town, and Mulga Queen community is proud of its native food harvest. In addition, Leonora's Ranger program is working on ways to enhance access to bush foods and improve the health of young men in the community.



In a nutshell

Date of project:	2010–present
Health focus:	renal health in Indigenous communities
Art focus:	visual arts
Setting:	Indigenous communities in regional and remote WA
State Government funding:	Department of Culture and the Arts, Lotterywest, Healthway, Royalties for Regions, Goldfields-Esperance Development Commission
Australian Government funding:	Australia Council for the Arts, Department of Health and Ageing
Project Leader:	The Rural Clinical School of Western Australia
Project partners:	The University of Western Australia, The University of Notre Dame, Bega Garnbirringu Health Services, Goldfields Esperance GP Network, Wongutha Birni Aboriginal Corporation

Above: Shenice Harris participating in a Western Desert Kidney Health Project residency in Leonora. Photo by Poppy van Oorde-Grainger.

Regional
Western
Australia

Sand Tracks

Below: Iwantja Band performing in Warburton 2010. Photo by Matt McHugh.



This exciting project recognises the importance of music in the wellbeing of Aboriginal communities. It supports the nurturing of young talent and builds community capacity to create opportunities for musical expression and enjoyment.

Background

Now in its fourth year, Sand Tracks is a remote Aboriginal contemporary music touring initiative run by Country Arts WA that aims to profile and develop Aboriginal contemporary musicians. It builds audiences in remote areas and develops remote communities' skills and experience in presenting professional performing arts.

Specific goals of the project include: to improve the exposure of Aboriginal contemporary music; to improve the business skills in the Aboriginal music sector; to strengthen existing networks and organisations; to maximise opportunities for young and emerging Aboriginal musicians; and to strengthen links between culture, language and Aboriginal contemporary music.

Overtly, Sand Tracks is a touring and skills development project. Underlying it is an attempt to address aspects of social wellbeing in remote communities. It provides young Aboriginal musicians with the chance to meet, learn from and be inspired by musicians they respect, offering culturally relevant opportunities to be involved in the arts as a way of generating meaningful pathways to expand musical skills and interests. It offers the communities – active partners in the preparation of the events –

“

People are proud. Lots of people been talking about it. They just really happy to see an Anangu band, you know, who started off nothing and is now doing something. That's an important role model for other bands who want to get serious and go out of the Lands, out of the desert area.

Jeremy Whiskey, Iwantja Band

”



opportunities to use their significant organising capabilities and networks to create an evening of excitement and inspiration.

Country Arts WA drives the significant and necessary partnerships that include media, health and music organisations in local communities. Each of these partnerships play a role in facilitating Sand Tracks projects and raising awareness of music and its benefits for the community.

Approach

At the onset of the project, Country Arts WA undertook consultation processes with Aboriginal organisations and people in remote areas, and a pilot tour was delivered to the Goldfields and Ngaanyatjarra Lands in 2009. In 2010, Sand Tracks ventured across State borders to South Australia and the Northern Territory. Each year, it visits five to six communities.

The model involves touring a high profile Aboriginal band or artist – selected by communities from a group of options included in the Sand Tracks Menu – accompanied by an emerging band or artist from the Central Desert Region selected from the previous year's Bush Bands Bash intake in Alice Springs. Although the key event is a concert by both bands, it is the extensive activity around this event that brings meaningful social outcomes.

The headline band provides extensive on-the-road mentoring of the emerging band in areas such as musical skills development, touring requirements and performance skills. In communities, a long lead time is given to prepare for and promote the arrival of the two bands, as well as to organise the concert event and celebratory activities such as fireworks. Local bands are invited to perform as warm-up acts.

While the two bands are visiting a community, workshops are held focusing on music and presentation. These are particularly aimed at the young adult population. Storytelling workshops are held, exploring how participants came to be musicians. The approach is experiential and observational, catering for all members of a community.

In 2012, Sand Tracks saw the addition of a 'train the trainer' style workshop facilitator who works with a local community member to develop local workshop facilitation skills so that communities can initiate their own workshop programs. Workshops are targeted specifically for each community's needs with the aim of developing new talent that can be showcased in future Sand Tracks tours.

Above: Nabarlek performing in Warburton 2011. Photo by Matt McHugh.

Outcomes

During 2011, Sand Tracks travelled more than 6,525km, engaging audiences of more than 4,165 people across the Central Desert in remote WA, South Australia and the Northern Territory. To date, Sand Tracks has travelled 21,361km, delivered 60 workshops to 890 participants and performing to an estimated audience of 18,368 people. Overall, indicators demonstrate an overwhelmingly positive response from the communities hosting the Sand Tracks tour. Each year, new communities have expressed their interest in hosting a performance, and communities who have hosted before continue to request that the tour visit their area.

Sand Tracks continues to be the launch pad for emerging Indigenous contemporary musicians with well-loved musicians Nabarlek, Manuel Ngulupani Dhurrkay and Yabu Band mentoring the up-and-coming Sunshine Reggae Band, Iwantja Band and Moana Dreaming. The emerging bands have built on this experience to achieve success with recordings, festivals and presentations at industry showcases like the Australasian World Music Expo in Melbourne.

The tours have clearly had significant outcomes in terms of skills development for participants and in utilising music as a tool for inspiration and community development. Community capacity has been enhanced with skill building around media, event management and technical support. Physical infrastructure has also been upgraded in most communities, with three-phase power reconnected and old stages repaired.

In acknowledgement of the outcomes achieved to date, the Mental Health Commission has contributed funds for a two year project to evaluate and further develop Sand Tracks. This will help to ensure the program's long term success.



In a nutshell

Date of project:	2009–present
Health focus:	Aboriginal wellbeing
Art focus:	contemporary Aboriginal music
Setting:	Aboriginal communities in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands and Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara lands
State Government funding:	Department of Culture and the Arts, Mental Health Commission, Healthway
Federal Government funding:	Australia Council for the Arts, Office of the Arts
Project leader:	Country Arts WA
Project partners:	Abmusic, Alice Desert Festival, Amata Community, Artback NT, Blackstone Community, Bush Bands Bash, Bush Bands Business, Carclew Youth Arts, Central Australia Aboriginal Music Association, Kiwirkurra Community, Music NT, Ngaanyatjarra Media, PAW Media, PY Media, RedHOT Arts, Shire of Ngaanyatjaaraku, Skinnyfish Music, Waninjjikari Arts, Western Australian Music Industry Association, Wilurarra Creative

Above: NG Music Festival in Wanarn 2011. Photo by Matt McHugh.

The Emergence Project



Addressing disability and mental health issues and supporting WA's Suicide Prevention Strategy, the Esperance-based Emergence Project has completed a successful first year.

Background

The newly established Emergence Project in the Shire of Esperance has been created to address significant mental health issues – including the high rates of suicide – in the local community. The six-year project will use artistic interventions, including visual arts workshops, exhibitions and storytelling, in a whole-of-community approach. By

developing inclusive cultural programs over many years, the project will generate much-needed opportunities for people with mental illness and disability. The initiative follows participatory arts principles, using cultural engagement as a means of promoting social inclusion that can enhance health and wellbeing outcomes.

The Emergence Project directly addresses key State Government health priorities – including the Western Australian Suicide Prevention Strategy 2009–2013 – and is a multi-layered, cross-sector partnership. In addition to partnerships with local and regional arts groups, the initiative provides strong links to the Goldfields-Esperance Strategic Development Plan and will assist the social and cultural aspirations of the region by promoting community

Above: Jo Young participating in a sculpture workshop with artist Phil Shelton. Photo by Phil Shelton.

enrichment and supporting the regional health and welfare strategy. An important goal of the project is to augment the capacities and resources of local arts, health and disability organisations and arts workers. Audience development is also central to the project's whole-of-community approach.

Approach

Project leader Disability in the Arts, Disadvantage in the Arts WA (DADAA) undertook extensive community consultation to complete a needs analysis, both to determine current levels of support around community cultural participation and to explore the types of programs that would be most effective. DADAA also established a framework for the project's evaluation. They completed this stage of the project collaboratively with all partners, including State and Local Government, in 2011. Community organisations – including the Bay of Islands Community Outreach and Esperance Community Arts – along with justice and social worker representatives, were also engaged in initial discussions.

Local media were approached to develop widespread awareness of the project and to explore ways in which storytelling can be integrated into the cultural inclusion and self-expression aspects of the project.

In early 2012, Emergence's first year, programs were implemented at The Cannery Arts Centre and at private studios. A wide range of arts workshops are now on offer, including photography, printmaking, glass and sculpture. Workshops are facilitated

Right: Selina Rolton participating in a printmaking workshop with artist Clare Bairstow.
Photo by Lyndel Taylor.

by local arts workers, who have ties to the community and knowledge of local needs and networks. Support workers have also been recruited, along with a project coordinator.

During 2013, the second year of the project, a series of cultural events, exhibitions and site-specific works will be generated to create meaningful cultural connections and links between mental health, disability and the broader Esperance communities. A partnership with arts organisation IASKA has also been established to further develop the creative skills of participants, as well as to strengthen the capacity of local artists and support workers to respond to the complex needs of people with a disability or mental illness who want to engage in arts and cultural development.

The latter part of the project, from its third to sixth year, will entail gradual transition of socially inclusive arts programs further into the community. Efforts will aim to build the capacity of Esperance residents and organisations to sustain and localise their own inclusive artistic and cultural development practices.



The Emergence Project directly addresses key state government health priorities – including the 2009–2013 Western Australian Suicide Prevention Strategy – and is a multi-layered, cross-sector partnership.

Outcomes

A small-scale in-house exhibition has been held, showcasing participants' artworks. Larger exhibitions are being planned for 2013, with a major exhibition scheduled for the end of next year. This will involve the collaboration of all artistic streams, and will allow the broader community to gain an insight into the Emergence Project and the unique cultural product offered by people with mental illness or disability.

The Emergence Project will also capture a range of long-term outcomes for participants, organisations and the larger community. Undertaken by the DADAA-based Disseminate project, evaluation will follow a health promotion and social empowerment model, and will use mixed-methods approaches.

For participants, their involvement in participatory arts will be evaluated to determine the impact on their wellbeing. This includes key constructs of self-motivation, self-expression, empowerment, social connection and community identity.

With regard to participating organisations, evaluation will measure the extent to which organisations have achieved their strategic goals as well as the extent to which cultural and community arts can become embedded in their community programming. Outcomes for the community of Esperance will focus on how the project has influenced both artistic vibrancy in the community as well as attitudes towards, and inclusion of, people living with mental illness or disability.



In a nutshell

Date of project:	2011–present
Health focus:	mental health, suicide prevention
Art focus:	visual arts
Setting:	Community of Esperance and the Goldfields-Esperance region
State Government funding:	Department of Culture and the Arts, Disability Services Commission, Mental Health Commission, Healthway
Project leader:	Disability in the Arts, Disadvantage in the Arts
Project partners:	Bay of Islands Community Outreach, Goldfields Individual and Family Support Association - Esperance, One Life Project, Esperance Community Arts, Shire of Esperance, Country Arts WA, Australia Council for the Arts

Above: Madeleine Cooper at a sculpture workshop with Phil Shelton on Twilight Beach. Photo by Lyndel Taylor.

Regional
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Australia

Water and Wetlands

from the river,
to the desert,
to the sea



Patients and visitors to the newly built Mental Health and Paediatrics units at Broome Hospital can experience artworks that have meaning and relevance and ensure a welcoming space for Indigenous residents of the North West.

Above: From the River, to the Desert, to the Sea by Jo Darbyshire in the Paediatric Wing Courtyard, Broome Hospital. Photo by Nat Darbyshire.

Background

As part of the WA Government's Percent for Art Scheme⁴, artists were commissioned to create artworks for a new paediatrics wing and mental health unit at Broome Hospital. The project was realised with combined State and Federal capital works resources. The Art Coordinator appointed to the project worked with a hospital steering committee of architects, designers, doctors, psychiatrists, specialists and community health workers in a comprehensive consultation process.

Prior to the establishment of the two new units, no acute mental health facility existed in either the Kimberley or the Pilbara, and a new paediatrics wing was required, which could also

The artworks created have been designed to foster a sense of wellbeing and to create visual links with the 'home environments' of the patients.



accommodate overflow capacity from the Obstetrics Department. The development of the new health facilities provide a unique opportunity for art to directly contribute to wellbeing through a nourishing and healing environment. The inclusion of artworks designed specifically by Indigenous artists was seen as a vital dimension of the overall design. Local partnerships have been critical in ensuring consultation and collaboration with Indigenous cultural centres and artists, and in achieving outcomes that are effective.

Approach

Locations for artworks included the courtyard of the Paediatrics wing, the two Mental Health unit courtyards, shared entry points, consultation areas and the nursing station. Exterior locations are considered vital and are spaces for many Kimberley and remote area patients and their families.

Above: From the River, to the Desert, to the Sea by Jo Darbyshire in the Mental Health Courtyard, Broome Hospital. Photo by Nat Darbyshire.

Expressions of interest were invited from artists across WA. Some artworks were commissioned via a curatorial process to ensure Indigenous artist engagement, resulting in the involvement of artists Judy Mengil and Peter Newry. Small-scale artworks from the Pilbara were also acquired to enliven the corridors.

The commissioned artworks have been designed to foster a sense of wellbeing and to create visual links with the 'home environments' of the patients. Artist Jo Darbyshire designed a suite of artworks in the form of patterned metal screens for the courtyards. These resonate with residents of the North West through their use of references to salt and fresh water environments, desert and coastal zones, and the native flora and fauna.

Bright primary Kimberley colours – shimmering cobalt blue, tropical green and earthy orange – are utilised in the children's courtyard. Imagery includes a kangaroo, a goanna, a crab, tufts of spinifex, and a boab. Artworks in the mental health areas are softer and a more subtle silver. The courtyard artworks commission was particularly challenging due to the many public health and safety considerations requiring intensive design development and ongoing dialogue between artist, architects, clinicians and safety regulators.

Judy Mengil's water hole, interpreted in a vinyl floor pattern, employs a subtle palette of blues, beiges and dusty ochres. Peter Newry's story of flowing creeks in his traditional country repeats the water metaphor as a source of life and rejuvenation in glass screening. Each artwork expresses aspects of the unique and diverse environments of the north west.

Outcomes

These public art commissions have brought a new quality and aesthetic sensibility to the architecture and design of the hospital. People of all ages and backgrounds are able to connect with them. The artworks contribute to a nurturing and healing environment and counter the alienation felt by patients in an institution that is often far from home.

Judy Mengil and Peter Newry are very pleased to know that their artworks and 'stories of country' have not only been incorporated into the design and fabric of the building but are contributing to a 'healing environment' in the Kimberley.

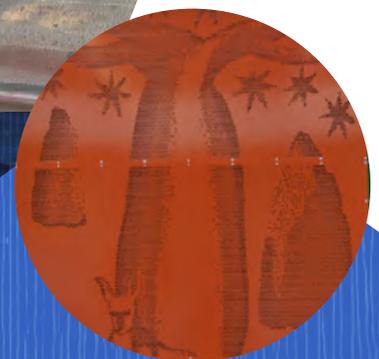
In a nutshell

Date of project:	2011
Health focus:	Indigenous paediatrics and mental health
Art focus:	public art
Setting:	regional hospital
State Government funding:	WA State Government through the Percent for Art Scheme
Project partners:	Department of Health, Broome Hospital, local Indigenous cultural centres
Percent for Art Partners:	Department of Culture and the Arts, Department of Finance



Above: From the River, to the Desert, to the Sea by Jo Darbyshire at the Mental Health Courtyard, Broome Hospital. Photo by Nat Darbyshire.

Insert: Detail of one of the panels from artwork From the River, to the Desert, to the Sea by Jo Darbyshire at the Paediatric Wing Courtyard, Broome Hospital. Photo by Nat Darbyshire.



Bright primary Kimberley colours – shimmering cobalt blue, tropical green and earthy orange – are utilised in the children's courtyard. Artworks in the mental health areas are softer and a more subtle silver.

Regional
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The Saltwater People

Below: The Sandbars – The Story of the Saltwater People by Shane Pickett. Photo by Con Macarlin.



The land, waterways and seasonal practices of the Noongar people form the basis of an artwork that aims to help build the relationship between the local Indigenous community and the government-supported Nidjalla Waangan Mia Health and Wellbeing Centre, part of the Mandurah Community Health Centre.

Background

Funded by the State Government's Percent for Art Scheme⁵, the Saltwater People project involved the creation of a sculptural and painted artwork for the Aboriginal Health Centre at the Mandurah Community Health Centre. The artwork was created by nationally acclaimed Noongar artist, the late Shane Pickett. The aims of the project were to create a sense of belonging and meaning for Aboriginal people using the health facility, and to build a relationship between the Aboriginal community and the Health Centre.

Mandurah serves the Indigenous communities of the Peel region and in creating this art commission, the Community Health Centre recognised that the artworks could play a role in engagement and identity, enhancing the goal of health education and intervention, most particularly preventive health care.

Approach

Shane Pickett was an important cultural leader of the Noongar people, well known by many in the community. As an artist, painter, mentor and leader, he embraced what he considered to be an opportunity to create a three-dimensional work and sculpture in a community setting. Shane's vision was to create artworks honouring Noongar traditions and culture, incorporating the values of his father's Jadewat people, his mother's Balladong people and those of the wider Noongar community.

The artwork emerged out of discussions and ideas shared between Noongar elders and representatives of the Mandurah, Pinjarra and Peel communities, including the Winjan Aboriginal Community Centre in Coodanup in 2009. Suggestions generated at these meetings were shared with Shane, the art and design consultant and the Mandurah Community Health Centre staff.

Shane's artwork reflects his deep Noongar knowledge of land, waterways and seasonal practices. He used the term 'solid as a rock' for the themes, the stories and the seasons, which have remained a strong part of the Noongar pattern of life during their long history.

Shane's vision was to create artworks honouring Noongar traditions and culture, incorporating the values of his father's Jadewat people, his mother's Balladong people and those of the wider Noongar community.

Shane describes his approach to the work as follows:

“The Saltwater people used their knowledge of the seasonal changes to collect fish within certain sandbars. The colours represent the depths at which fish could be caught, their spawning and breeding grounds, whilst the metal bars represent both the seasons and the sandbars of the fishing sites.”

The work is the first three-dimensional artwork that Shane created in a public setting. Shane passed away in 2011 after completing the base artwork. There were plans for artist Brian McKay to share his expertise in working on metal surfaces with Shane. He was also engaged in a collaboration on a shade structure for a park in Armadale with artist and sculptor Stuart Green. The shade structure has been completed by Stuart Green with the Pickett family nominating one of Shane’s sons as cultural adviser so this could be completed.

Outcomes

The artwork is mounted on the wall of the waiting room at Nidjalla Waangan Mia Health and Wellbeing Centre. Its presence is an acknowledgment of Noongar culture and identity and of Noongar environmental knowledge.

Mark Burrows, Manager of the Mandurah Community Health Centre, says: “Anecdotally, I hear people talking about the artwork when they are in the space. It’s a conversation piece.”

As working in three dimensions was a new direction for Shane, who was primarily a painter, this work is now a very significant piece in his body of work.

In a nutshell

Date of project:	2009
Health focus:	Indigenous health
Art focus:	public art
Setting:	Aboriginal health facility in a regional centre
State Government funding:	WA State Government through the Percent for Art Scheme
Project partners:	Department of Health, Mandurah Community Health Centre
Percent for Art partners:	Department of Culture and the Arts, Department of Finance

The Saltwater people used their knowledge of the seasonal changes to collect fish within certain sandbars. The colours represent the depths at which fish could be caught, their spawning and breeding grounds, whilst the metal bars represent both the seasons and the sandbars of the fishing sites.

Footnotes

- 1, 4, 5 The State Government Percent for Art Scheme was established to improve the quality of the built environment through the allocation of up to one percent of the cost of each State capital works project, valued at \$2 million and over, to a commissioned WA artwork.
- 2, 3 Anwar McHenry, J. 2011. Rural empowerment through the arts: the role of the arts in civic and social participation in the Mid West region of Western Australia. 'Journal of Rural Studies', 27(3), 245-253.

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