

**Submission to Joint Select Committee
Preventative Health Care Inquiry**

*Strengthening the contribution that
creativity makes to the health and
wellbeing of Tasmanians
An opportunity not to be missed!*



Closeknit'
Beaconsfield Scarf Project.
Beaconsfield District Health Service.

**Time to be creative network
March 2013**

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Introduction- Time to be creative Network

The TTBCN is please to have the opportunity to make a submission to this important inquiry.

In considering the terms of reference the network has chosen to address the questions in this written submission but also requests of the committee the opportunity to “Let the Arts speak for themselves” in the form of a presentation.

It is envisaged that the presentation will comprise of visual images of a variety of arts programs that has a positive impact on health and wellbeing and particularly include people who are adversely affected by the social determinants of health. This would of course be time limited and based on negotiation with the committee.

The purpose of this submission is to encourage debate and consideration of the inclusion of recommendations that acknowledge and support the integration of Arts activities as part of an integrated and collaborative preventative health care model.

The considerable experience and growing body of evidence overseas, nationally and locally demonstrates that health partnerships with artists and arts organisation can be very beneficial in improving health and social outcomes, and improves retention and effectiveness of health staff. This is of special significance given the concern about long term sustainability of the health system.

Whilst there may be a view that the provision of arts services are less of a priority, significant developments and activity in this area at both a national and Tasmanian level, are gathering momentum and represent an opportunity not to be missed.

About the Time to be Creative Network

The Time to be Creative Network (TtbCN) is a development of the Healthy Ageing Network South (HANS) which has been operating since 1999. Members of HANS who have been committed to improving the health and wellbeing of older persons began to realise that there was a significant body of evidence about the importance of creativity for healthy positive ageing and this evidence confirmed their experience.

In March 2012 a meeting of over 30 non government organisations and individuals formed the Time to be Creative Network. Members at the meeting came from a variety of sectors, including arts organisations, artists, disability, youth and aged services, local government, CALD communities, Health Promotion and University. Membership is open to all Tasmanians and is free of charge. There are currently over 200 members from a broad range of sectors.

Purpose of the network

This informal network came together to promote the value of creativity to the lives of individuals and communities in Tasmania, in particular the benefits of creativity to our health and wellbeing.

Aims

The Time to be Creative Network will promote and support creative experiences

- that celebrate our capacity for creativity as a whole of life experience which has the power to transform our lives and communities
- that are based on consultative process which are community generated and offer a variety of ways of engaging in creativity e.g. as makers of arts, audiences and teachers
- that are inclusive and non-elitist
- that build cross cultural awareness, cross generational understanding and celebration of differences
- that enable older people to be creative

Actions of the network

The first major event carried out by network members was Can Creativity Save the Day. A conference and network launch held in Brighton in November 2012. The program gives a snapshot of the diversity of arts and health practice and some of the organisations involved in the network (see Attachment 1)

Key note speaker for the event was Jerrill Recter CEO of VicHealth

<http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/> the Health Promotion Foundation for Victoria who spoke about leadership for the arts and Health area and congratulated the network for its formation.(see Attachment 2)

The conference was opened by Jami Bladel Director of Kickstart Arts and Member of the Health and Wellbeing Advisory Council.

How Arts can Benefit our Health

To assist in our appreciation of the potential for this partnership, an understanding of the scope of the sector is important. Arts and health covers a very wide variety of practice including a variety of arts forms, such as craft; literature, creative writing and poetry; mixed-disciplines; music, singing and dancing; theatre and drama; visual arts, film and new media. These activities take place in many different settings, for example, community houses, hospitals, aged care facilities, prisons, schools and community groups. Their practice may be described in the following way:

Helping communities in times of crisis

Artists work with communities that have experienced trauma, to deal with grief and loss and to celebrate solidarity and support for each other. Projects of this type have been generated in response to natural disasters, acts of violence and significant Social Determinants of Health such as high unemployment, low educational attainment, suicide rates and depression.

Building community

Artist working with community and health workers can facilitate activities which: promote health at the local level; reduce risk factors; build community capacity; promote resilience; and, support and encourage community engagement in local issues, for example the provision of safe drinking water, promotion of racial harmony, engagement in increased physical activity and improvement of intergenerational understanding to name a few.

Contributing to the healing process

There are artists and certified expressive-arts therapists working in all kinds of community and healthcare settings — hospitals, community health centres, rehabilitation centres, mental-health facilities, prisons and hospices — helping people do ‘soul work’ through media such as music, dance, movement, words, paint and clay. The expressive therapist is part of the medical team, provides an holistic view of the patient and assists the team’s understanding of the opportunities for arts to make a contribution in the healing process. By participating in arts activities, people living with chronic conditions or going through rehabilitation can reduce their feelings of anxiety, improve skills, gain confidence and develop motivation.

Creating a healing environment through the arts

The visual, literary and performing arts and crafts are already enriching the healing process by bringing restoration and relief to many patients, visitors and staff of hospitals, community health centres, hospices and other health settings. Examples of the means used to achieve these outcomes include: healing gardens; paintings in patient rooms; live music in lobbies and on patient units; and, art that helps people find their way through large and confusing buildings.

Caring for caregivers/health professionals

For healthcare givers who see illness and death daily and who live constantly in a high level of stress, making art can be rejuvenating. Sharing their paintings or poems, singing in a group for patients or each other, moving expressively and rhythmically together can also bring a greater sense of cohesiveness to the work environment ¹.

Supporting access to the arts for people living with disabilities

Working in outreach programs, day programs and community arts programs, or one on one, creative-arts therapists, artists and educators provide arts opportunities for people with disabilities to facilitate creative expression, personal growth, community inclusion and access to arts experiences.

Enriching the medical curriculum

Using the arts to help students cope with many illness experiences, death and dying. These programs are designed to help medical students and doctors who are seeking balance between the clinical aspects of medical care and the needs of patients, themselves and their families for tenderness and empathy.

Effective Health Education/illness prevention

Artist using a variety of mediums can be very effective in engaging with health and community members to develop health education and harm minimisation programs around a variety of issues, such as sexual health, drug and alcohol use, AIDS, depression and physical activity.

Engaging with disadvantaged groups/sensitive health issues

Many groups in the community who are socially, economically, geographically or in other ways disadvantaged can be engaged using arts. Young people, migrants, refugees, people with mental illness, gambling and/or alcohol problems for example, who are often not engaged by the health system, can

be very effectively supported to develop and/or participate in health education programs by working with artists.

Tasmanian experience

For many years Arts Health activities have been part of the Tasmanian Health scene. Tasmania is very fortunate to have a wealth of artistic talent and innovative, creative health workers have worked with these artists and art organisations to address a wide range of health and wellbeing issues

Activities have been held in a variety of settings and in partnership with numerous community organisations, departmental units. A few such examples include Community Health Centres, Palliative care, Rehabilitation services, Women's Health, Royal Hobart and Launceston General Hospitals, Mental Health, Youth Health and Sexual Health services. Most have been short term projects managed locally and there has been very limited capacity for ongoing support in the area, although there are a small number of Arts workers employed in the Health Department in the area of Rehabilitation services, Mental Health, Youth Health, and more recently, Youth Justice.

In 2012 The Government appointed Health and Wellbeing Advisory Council has endorsed publication of *Arts and Health the Evidence* by the Dept of Health and Human Services. This evidence paper provides examples of their work and identifies that there is clear and compelling evidence that arts are useful for reducing stress, pain and anxiety amongst consumers and staff; as well as enabling individuals to take greater control, self-care and self-management of their own health and wellbeing. Arts have great protective value in mental health and suicide prevention. Importantly, arts can help everyone to increase their understanding of what health and wellbeing is. (See Attachment 3)

http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/about_the_department/our_plans_and_strategies/a_health_y_tasmania/issues_papers

Research and evaluation

Evaluation of health outcomes has been identified internationally and nationally as needing further developed. In Tasmania some great evaluations have been externally funded and delivered for some of the more professionally developed organisations such as BigHart, Kickstart Arts and Creature Tales. There could be more recognition of the evaluation undertaken, and the possibility of more research that that is participative with people and communities themselves. There is nothing like this currently in Tasmania but there would be some capacity to undertake appropriate participative action research if it was funded.

Partnerships with the private sector

The Australian Arts and Health Foundation awards are now available in Tasmania and the last two awards have been won by arts organisations working in partnerships with a disability organisation and early childhood services.

Partnerships with other levels of government

Opportunities for significant partnerships with local government are strong and there are numerous examples of arts projects focused on community

building and health education where Local Government has been a significant stakeholder. They have dealt with issues such as positive life choices for young people, promoting healthy eating and physical activity, community safety, water reuse on the east coast, harmony etc.

National and overseas developments

Nationally there have been considerable developments over the last few years which have increased the recognition of the value of arts in contributing to the health and wellbeing of Australians and more importantly begun to set a framework for action to further develop the partnerships between Arts and Health.

National Framework on arts and health

One of the most significant recent policy developments happening across Australia which impact on any future direction to be taken by the Tasmanian government is the development of the National Framework for Arts and Health.

The **Arts and Health Foundation (AHFA)** <http://www.artshealthfoundation.org.au/> has an important role in supporting an initiative of Health and Cultural Ministers for a National Framework on arts and health. This initiative is due to be considered by the Australian Government's Standing Council on Health (members include the Federal Minister for Health and all State and Territory Health Ministers) in April 2013 and shortly afterwards by a meeting of Cultural Ministers (members of this meeting include the Federal Minister for the Arts and all State and Territory Arts Ministers). "Arts and Health a Guide to the Evidence" was produced for the foundation as a resource and quick guide to the current evidence for Arts and Health. (see Attachment 3)

Overseas experience

Overseas there are organisations such as the National Network for Arts in Health in the UK which has held regular conferences highlighting the contribution that Arts and culture makes to the challenge of improving health and reducing inequalities. This organisation is undergoing a restructure.

There are also vibrant Art in Prisons programs in the UK, USA and Europe which have proven to reduce recidivism.

The Arts Council England has sponsored research into Arts and Health. The review shows that in clinical settings encouraging patients to engage with the arts can help them manage pain and the side effects of some treatments, to alleviate stress and come to terms with what can be major and distressing episodes in their lives ¹ This research has made a significant contribution to strengthening the evidence base and to improve understanding of the impact of arts on health and has formed the basis for the development of national Arts Health Strategy.

Arts and a Preventative Health Care System

Prevention and early intervention models are designed to enhance the health, overall quality of life and well being of individuals by focusing on their strengths, and increasing their health-related knowledge (health literacy) and access to community resources. This approach endeavours to build confidence, build self-esteem and facilitate the development of social supports.

There is an overwhelming body of evidence that Arts does play a significant role in health promotion, illness and injury prevention all of which are integral components of a sustainable Preventative Health Care system. Partnering with the arts sector could contribute to this health system so that it can better cope with the challenges ahead.

The opportunities are numerous including

- Many communities are in crisis and arts can play a great role assisting healing, building healthier and sustainable communities and therefore reducing demand on the formal professional Primary Health system
- Because of the ability of the arts to speak to and engage with disadvantaged and socially excluded individuals and communities it can assist in removing barriers to access community and health services.
- arts offers opportunities to work with the acute care system and aged care providers to enable older persons to be better supported in their long term care settings.
- For those in experiencing ill-health, art enables self expression. The art-making process allows one to address emotional conflicts, face and accept physical symptoms, and realize a sense of hope or transcendence beyond the illness. Arts has shown to reduce hospital stays by reducing pain and stress and lowering blood pressure
- The experiences of people who have lived with a social determinant of health are very powerful and need to be heard. Gaining skills in arts is very empowering and can enable people to feel more able to put themselves forward for committees or advisory groups.
- The *Your Care Your Say* consumer and community engagement framework currently being promoted by DPAC is about involving the communities of Tasmania more actively in decision making about things that impact them. The arts are an excellent tool for this, enabling voices to be heard.
- Jami Bladel is on the Health and Wellbeing Advisory Council that has a commitment to provide recommendations to Government on collaboration with people and communities to improve the health and wellbeing of all Tasmanians. Membership of that committee has expertise in some part, but it doesn't at this stage have the access to the voices of local people and communities themselves – the citizens. If they are to be genuinely engaged and recognised for their expertise in their own lived experience – then the Health and Wellbeing council, or other mechanisms of Advisory and Boards of Government need to do more than pay lip service to this.

Other benefits include

- Participation in the arts has widely been shown to improve skill development across the age range and has been proven to increase educational attainment of young participants. Through the use of art, participants gain the opportunity to look at their life experiences in terms of their resilience and creative solutions, instead of focusing on the negative issues impacting them
- Art promotes positive mental health by changing the way society views mental illness and providing service users with a voice. Since mental health is clearly improved by agency in the wider culture, those with an experience of mental health recovery should be given the opportunity to take their art into the public space, and educate the communities that surround them.
- Improved perception of community safety because of increased self esteem and confidence and reduced stress, leading to increased levels of physical activity
- Improved levels of civic engagement
- Improved social networks leading to an increased range of people for individuals to turn to for support in times of need

Issues for consideration

While the evidence of benefits is clear, internationally some governments have been cautious in adopting arts strategies to meet health outcomes and the cost benefits analysis is not always clearly demonstrated.

Some groups in the community do not always consider this as a priority for health expenditure and there is some uncertainty over which strategies are most appropriate. These issues would be addressed as part of the recommendations contained in this submission.

Recommendations

- Arts and health are, and should be firmly recognised as being, integral to illness prevention, health promotion, healthcare provision and healthcare environments. Government should make a clear statement to this effect, and should consider how arts and health can be included more regularly in it's policies, and whether systems and incentives should be adapted to reflect the contribution of arts to our health and wellbeing.
- That the a funded resource be made available across DHHS and the Tasmanian Health Organisations for a 3-year seeding period to develop appropriate support structures and links with state-wide and regional arts organisations
- That Government in partnership with the Time to be creative network convene roundtable forum/s, which would bring together the significant stakeholders in this sector. The purpose of these forums would be to

1. consider the capacity of arts to impact positively on the social determinants of health in Tasmania
2. identify the most effective ways that this may be achieved and promote them as examples of best practice
3. identify the infrastructure (facilities, staff and resources) necessary to create a sustainable sector and reduce its dependence on small one off grants

Significant stakeholders to be invited could include:

Arts organisations, individual artists and creative arts therapists, Arts Tasmania, Social Inclusion Unit, Local Government, Community organisations already carrying out arts activities, Organisations with an interest and expertise in the social determinants of health, Tas Uni Arts School, School of Education, Department of Rural Health, Departments of Health & Human Services, Education, Justice, Sport and Recreation, Private sector organisations involved in the sponsorship of arts, Others to be identified

- The Department of Health and Human Services should give more recognition of the evaluation undertaken in Tasmania and support further appropriate participative action research to build the evidence base for Arts Health and Wellbeing .
- The Department of Health and Human services should recognise the contribution arts and health plays in supporting and enriching the lives of staff as well as patients, including its costs saving impact on retention and recruitment, and should value those members of staff for whom bringing the arts and health together is making a valuable contribution within a public health organisation and between it and the wider community.
- It should work with partners to consider issues around training to support the increased involvement of artist and community groups in the work of the Department of Health and Human services

Letters of Support (see Attachment 5)

The following organisations have provided letters of support and in some instances have offered to speak about their involvement and experience in the area of Arts and health to assist in further understanding the significance of this opportunity.

Youth Network of Tasmania, CEO Joanna Siejka

Tasmanian Regional Arts, Executive Director Paul Jenkins

Creature Tales, Director, Chris Mead

Council on the Ageing, CEO, Sue Leich

Mission Australia Team leader the Uturn Program, Philip McKay

Migrant Resource Centre, CEO, Cedric Manen

Aged and Community Services Tasmania, CEO, Daren Mathewson.

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References

The author of this paper would like to acknowledge

¹ Staricoff RL (2006) Arts in Health A review of the medical literature, Arts Council England Research Report 36