Arts and Health
The Evidence

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About A Healthy Tasmania

A Healthy Tasmania is the Tasmanian Government’s direction for a fairer and healthier Tasmania.

It is a long term approach for building good health and wellbeing in collaboration with communities.

A Healthy Tasmania acknowledges that the biggest challenges facing Tasmania are complex and interact.

Many public policy issues are cross cutting in nature and do not fit neatly into government departments or portfolios.

A healthy economy, for example, requires a healthy population to sustain it - just as our health is underpinned by the economy.

Inequity underlies a number of our challenges. The burden of chronic disease and health inequity is unsustainable for the social and economic future of Tasmania.

Issues such as climate change, social inclusion, reducing health inequalities, workforce participation, homelessness and the integration of information and communications technology cannot be addressed by one part of government acting alone.

So through A Healthy Tasmania, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is seeking to tackle some of these ‘wicked’ issues that are highly resistant to resolution, but are shared by many.

To do this, the DHHS will work across government and communities in accordance with the Tasmanian Government’s Collaboration Strategy.

In pursuing collaborative governance, the focus is to better integrate and coordinate government policy and service delivery to achieve common goals and respond to an identified high priority issue or need within the community.

Collaboration is necessary to generate creative solutions to challenges and to share the work of oversight and accountability.

Arts and Health

A Healthy Tasmania identifies six streams of activity: leadership, health intelligence, supportive environments and policies, community-driven approaches, healthy messages, and vulnerable Tasmanians.

This Issues Paper considers arts and health as a part of the ‘supportive environments and policies’ stream.

Around the world, the field of arts and health has proven its place in mainstream healthcare.

Collaboration with the arts sector provides healthcare facilities with the opportunity to improve the quality of care and quality of life of people receiving their services.
Working with arts can also help health professionals to promote health and wellbeing and build social connections amongst the broader community.
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Snapshot</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is Arts and Health?</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Value of Arts and Health</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The State of Arts and Health in Tasmania</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Tasmanian Government Objectives</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Studies: Arts and Health in Action</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Health Resources</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The purpose of this issues paper is to inform understanding of arts and health and the evidence of its value. Arts are delivering real and measurable benefits to the health and wellbeing of many people in many ways. Art has a genuine place in mainstream healthcare and is not just an ‘optional extra.’ Arts and health is, and always should be, firmly acknowledged as integral to health, healthcare and the community.

There is also potentially an economic argument for greater investment into arts and health because healthy communities are less reliant on the healthcare system.

This issues paper shows that there are many examples of good practice in arts and health, both locally in Tasmania, elsewhere in Australia and overseas. There are a wealth of organisations, researchers, publications, websites and networks that are supporting arts and health. The evidence supporting the use of arts in health is profound.

The case is strong for the Department of Health and Human Services, for the Tasmanian Healthcare Organisations and the Medicare Local, as well as for all levels of Government and the community sector.

The evidence has significant implications for health and community care in that it demonstrates how arts and health can contribute to major priorities such as: improving health, healthcare, wellbeing and quality of life, and in working with all sections of the population.

There is clear and compelling evidence that arts are also 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.

This paper is intended for professionals working in arts, health and community sectors. It is hoped that artists, policy makers, service managers and health professionals may use this information to influence planning and practice, to forge new working partnerships or to make the case for funding to support arts and health activities.

Arts and health is not a ‘solution.’ It is a strategy for improving the way we think about and deal with health and wellbeing.

The Department of Health and Human Services acknowledges the assistance of the Arts and Health Foundation and Arts Tasmania in providing information contained in this paper.

"The greatest social impacts of the participation in the arts… arise from their ability to help people think critically about and question their experiences and those of others… with all the excitement, danger, magic, colour, symbolism, feeling, metaphor and creativity that the arts offer. It is in the act of creativity that empowerment lies, and through sharing creativity that understanding and social inclusiveness are promoted."

(Matarasso, F. Use of Ornament? The social impact of participation in the arts. Gloucestershire, Comedia: 1997.)
What is Arts and Health?

Definition

The field of arts and health is diverse and encompasses work through the whole spectrum of artistic practices in healthcare and community settings. While the range of activity is impressive, it presents a significant challenge to those seeking to clearly define the concept.

The Arts Council England has a global reputation for excellence in arts and health and has influenced policy and practice around the world. The Council has successfully promoted the benefits of arts in improving everyone’s wellbeing, health and healthcare and supports the use of arts in the country’s National Health Service. The Arts Council England describes arts and health as:

“arts-based activities that aim to improve individual and community health and healthcare delivery, and which enhance the healthcare environment by providing artwork or performances.”

Other parts of the world have built their own languages and approaches towards arts and health, and so it is important to note that while influential, this description is not definitive. The Society for the Arts and Healthcare, for example, is dedicated to advancing arts as integral to healthcare. The Society produces the international journal for research, policy and practice, Arts and Health and facilitates the annual international conference on arts and healthcare. The Society for the Arts and Healthcare defines ‘arts and healthcare’ as:

“a diverse, multidisciplinary field dedicated to transforming the healthcare experience by connecting people with the power of the arts at key moments in their lives.”

Australia is also considered an international leader in the field of arts and health. The Arts and Health Foundation is Australia’s peak organisation for arts and health and references the definition, “creating art and cultural experiences to improve health and wellbeing.” The Foundation also note that as the field has developed in Australia, the terms ‘arts and health,’ ‘arts in health,’ ‘arts for health’ and more recently, ‘arts, health and wellbeing’ have variously been used to describe the same concept.
Practice

A more useful way of considering the arts and health field is to look at it in practice. Arts-based activities can be used to improve health and wellbeing and reduce health inequity in many different ways; and practices can have a different purpose and impact depending on the settings in which they place. Arts and health can be:

- a therapy, rehabilitation or treatment in itself
- a tool for promoting healthy living
- a means of inclusion for socially isolated groups (e.g. people with disabilities, people with mental illness, young mothers, people who are homeless)
- a way of enhancing healthcare environments
- a way of celebrating and strengthening cultures and creating a bridge between different groups (e.g. culturally and linguistically diverse groups)
- a way of communicating sensitive health issues
- a means of individual self expression and personal development
- a way of improving attention and observation, empathy and communication skills amongst health professionals
- a form of community recovery and regeneration after trauma
- a means for a community to articulate and solve a health and wellbeing problem by inspiring new ways of thinking
- a tool for enhancing community engagement, social relationships and communication.

In addition, these practices can focus on individuals, groups, communities, populations or professional disciplines and be for the purpose of health promotion, to improve healthcare, or to improve community wellbeing:

- health promotion - to improve population health outcomes and reduce health inequities (e.g. promoting healthy lifestyles, discussing sensitive health issues, increasing health literacy)
- healthcare – to improve the quality of services and the experiences of consumers and staff (e.g. increasing staff satisfaction and communication skills, improving healthcare environments)
- community wellbeing – to develop community capacity and wellbeing (e.g. building community cohesion, dealing with cultural diversity).
Arts and health uses a number of different art forms, which include but are not limited to: 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, disability services, prisons, schools and community groups.

Arts and health practitioners themselves have grouped their activities into the following categories:

- **community art and craft** – enhances the wellbeing of community members by teaching arts skills
- **therapeutic art** – art for the purposes of individual healing
- **public art** – improves the aesthetics of public spaces and buildings, including healthcare facilities
- **community cultural development** – arts with a community development focus.

Throughout these different processes, the importance of pursuing high quality art outcomes, and employing skilled artists and/or therapists with the capacity to engage a broad range of people into arts experiences, is often emphasized.
The SMILE Study

The first major study on the impact of humour therapy in aged care has uncovered a number of positive effects on patients with dementia.

Thirty-six Australian residential care facilities participated in The SMILE Study, which found humour therapy to be as effective as widely used anti-psychotic medication in managing agitation in patients with dementia.

The University of New South Wales found that patients receiving humour therapy showed both short-term and persisting decreases in agitation, as well as higher levels of happiness and positive behaviours during the course of the program.

Agitation decreased by around 20% through humour therapy, a level comparable to antipsychotic drugs, but without the negative side effects associated with medication.

Humour therapy in The SMILE study consisted of “a playful relationship between residents and staff in aged care.”

A staff member in each facility was trained by The Humour Foundation to act as a “Laughter Boss™” and worked with an “Elder Clown™” with comedic and improvisation skills. “Clown Doctors™” are traditionally used in hospitals to aid recovery and mood in children.


The Value of Arts and Health

There is systematic evidence of the positive impact of arts on health and wellbeing. Both clinical and non-clinical findings demonstrate the value of arts to staff, patients, carers and communities.

A significant evidence-base of scientific research and anecdotal literature now exists.

Evidence across the Continuum of Care

The continuum of care is a conceptual framework used to organise all health and related services that a person may need over the course of a lifetime to deal with their health (see Figure 1).

There is evidence of the benefit of arts and health at each stage of the continuum. In other words, arts have arguably been shown to assist across the entire spectrum of health and healthcare from wellness to disease. Examples are shown below.

Effective strategies to improve population health:

- **Healthy lifestyles:** Arts settings offer great opportunities to promote healthy living messages, such as making sensible and healthy choices in relation to the SNAPPS factors (smoking, nutrition, alcohol, physical activity and psycho-social).

- **Physical activity:** The benefits of physically-based arts activities for health are obvious for all age and cultural groups. A recent survey of audience participation at dance performances suggests that physically-based arts can be used as a setting to promote physical activity to young people.

- **Sensitive health issues:** Arts can be a means for individuals and group to discuss sensitive health issues. For example using theatre in education to deliver sex and relationship education, or delivering culturally sensitive treatment options with less dependence on the spoken word.

- **Health literacy:** Arts can help people who have poor literacy or who find it hard to express thoughts and feeling verbally to communicate, including cultural and language barriers.

**Effective ways to build healthy communities:**
• **Community cohesion:** Studies of arts and their impact show improvements in relation to the social factors which effect health; for example, cultural celebrations and events can promote community cooperation, bring new skills to community members, promote awareness of community issues, develop talents in a community, reduce community isolation and promote economic development.

• **Cultural Diversity:** VicHealth’s research demonstrates that arts activity can facilitate meaningful contact for people from diverse cultural backgrounds and in doing so reduce ignorance pertaining to cultural diversity and related discriminatory belief, attitude and behaviour.

**Improved outcomes for people living with a mental illness or disability:**

• **Communication and Self-Expression:** Numerous studies show that the use of arts in mental healthcare can improve the communication skills of patients, helping their relationships with family and service providers. Arts also provide a means of self expression for people living with mental illness, stimulating creativity and self-esteem.

• **Behavioural changes:** The use of arts in residential facilities can also bring about positive behavioural changes for the people living in those facilities. For example, arts can bring about positive behavioral changes in users of mental health services that assist in the everyday management of mental health services and diminish the need for medication and restraint. Patients can become more calm, attentive and collaborative. Similarly, arts have decrease challenging behaviours amongst dementia patients in nursing homes.

• **Meaningful engagement:** Engagement in arts can promote participation and social inclusion for people living with a disability. Arts offer positive benefits like building self-confidence and self-esteem in individuals.

• **Self-determination and Empowerment:** Arts can promote increased self-determination and empowerment of people living with disability. Generally, the barriers to participation (including negative community stigma, charitable welfare models of support) perpetrates oppression amongst people living with disability. In particular, those groups with communication difficulties are able to articulate their needs, wants and desires to reach their full potential through artistic practice and art activities.

**Effective options for healthcare services:**

• **Staff satisfaction:** Art in healthcare facilities has been shown to increase staff satisfaction levels. Music has helped create non-aggressive working environments for healthcare professionals, and the use of artwork and the natural environment has helped improve staff satisfaction with the functional design of healthcare facilities.

"Choral singing has a number of health and wellbeing benefits: positive affect, focused attention, deep breathing, social support, cognitive stimulation and regular commitment."

(Clift, S. et al. *A Systematic Mapping and Review of Research on Singing and Health: Non-clinical studies*. Canterbury, Canterbury Christ Church University, 2008.)

"Relaxing music has been shown to have a beneficial effect on anxiety, heart rate, blood pressure, immune response and pain perception."

• **Healthcare environments:** Art can be used to create more peaceful environments in which people can receive care. For example, use of paintings, photography, murals, music and nature can enhance the comfort of healthcare facilities. There is even evidence that use of music in operating theatres can create less stressful environments and increase the mental task performance of surgeons.

*Effective learning for health professionals:*¹⁶

• **Observational skills:** Visual arts have been shown to have a role in developing the observational skills of medical practitioners and in increasing ability in drawing, stereo-vision and three-dimensional thinking in neurosurgeons.

• **Communication skills:** The use of arts in nursing and medical training has been shown to improve communication, empathy and understanding of patients’ needs.

*Improved outcomes for healthcare consumers:*¹⁷

• **Cancer care:** In a number of studies, visual art and music has reduced anxiety and depression amongst patients during chemotherapy, and has been used to counter the side-effects of treatment.

• **Cardiovascular care:** Music has been attributed to a significant reduction in levels of anxiety and unsafe vital signs (blood pressure, heart rate, and demand for myocardial oxygen) amongst cardiovascular inpatients.

• **Intensive care:** Music in neonatal intensive care has significantly improved clinical and behavioral states and resulted in shortened length of stay in hospital.

• **Medical procedures:** Arts interventions have shown to increase perceptions of comfort and reduced levels of hormonal stress and blood pressure during a number of high-stress medical procedures.

• **Pain management:** A number of researchers have shown music to reduce physical and psychological measures of pain and the need for pain relief medication post surgery.

• **Rehabilitation:** Art has been shown to contribute to physical rehabilitation in people with neurological conditions,¹⁸ with a recent study reporting that weekly art classes assisted outpatients to meet their individual rehabilitation goals. The classes also assisted the participants in using time, increasing enjoyment, regaining confidence and planning for engagement in future activities.

> “Painted wall murals have been shown to decrease agitation in patients with dementia.”


> “Literature is important in helping to develop empathy across gender, race, class or culture.”

It is also believed that arts can have a significant impact on the wider determinants of health such as improving living environments, increasing educational attainment and building social capital. In this way, arts can potentially help to reduce health inequity, particularly through work with disadvantaged groups. Community cultural development (arts with a community development focus) has a strong connection with the social determinants of health. Community cultural development explores issues in local communities through arts, builds social capital and empowers communities to take charge of their own futures.

The information above is just a small example of the evidence available of the benefits of arts and health. Taken as a whole, the evidence base shows that arts-based activity has the potential to contribute at all stages in the continuum of care from wellness to disease. That is, arts can contribute to primary prevention strategies that sustain the health of the well population, they can help vulnerable and at risk populations at the point of detection of disease, and they can also assist healthcare services to deal with the management of disease.

![Figure 1: Comprehensive Model of Prevention and Management of Chronic Conditions](image)

In financial terms, the return on investment into arts and health is arguably significant. The Australian Arts and Health Foundation state that there is strong evidence of potential costs savings to health system budgets and that arts and health programs often demonstrated outcomes that considerably exceed investment.
Creative Ageing: Improving the Lives of Older People

Creativity through arts enables us to communicate effectively within and between generations, celebrating our knowledge and experience of the past and presents. Creativity strengthens the connections amongst older adults, family and friends. Arts create a sense of community in which each person’s contribution is respected. “Creative ageing” is being researched and recognised around the world as a protective factor, contributing to the social inclusion of older adults, and combating ageing and fear or ageing.

Older adults can benefit from participation in arts in a number of ways:

• arts help create elder friendly communities, in which older adults are able to thrive and therefore ‘age in place’
• scientific research demonstrates that involvement in challenging, participatory arts programs has a positive effect on physical health, mental health and social functioning in older adults regardless of their ability
• arts can provide respite to caregivers
• arts contribute to communication, building a sense of identity, preserving or restoring social capital and strengthening social networks in communities – the participants, being older persons, contribute to these outcomes.

For further information about creative ageing, including evidence and practices, visit the following websites:

National Centre for Creative Ageing: www.creativeageing.org
Age Exchange: www.age-exchange.org.uk

“Older adults who participated in a structured theatrical intervention over four weeks significantly improved, compared to two control groups (a singing group and a no treatment control group) in four cognitive measures: immediate word recall, problem-solving, verbal fluency, and delayed recall.”

Research

The evidence-base for the value of arts and health is continuing to grow. Arts and health is a strong research focus for a number of universities around the world. These facilities are gaining more and more knowledge about the benefits of arts and health and the particular arts practices that have the greatest impact upon health and wellbeing.

For example, Arts for Health at Manchester Metropolitan University is the United Kingdom’s longest established arts and health organisation. With specialisation in research, advocacy and development, it is working with Arts Council England, the Department of Health and a range of other partners to better understand the impact of creativity, culture and arts on health and wellbeing.

Also in the United Kingdom, the Centre for Medical Humanities at Durham University has a strong research interest in arts and health, with ‘imagination and creativity’ being one of the centre’s five research clusters.22 Plus the Sidney De Haan Research Centre for Arts and Health at Canterbury Christ Church University is committed to researching the potential value of music, and other participative arts activities, in the promotion of wellbeing and health of individuals and communities.

The Society for Arts and Healthcare produce the international journal *Arts and Health* which showcases research, policy and best practice in arts and health from around the world. The journal is available by subscription (visit [www.tandf.co.uk/journals/rahe](http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/rahe)) or to members of the Society (visit [www.thesah.org](http://www.thesah.org)).

Closer to home, the University of Queensland has an interest in the impact of music therapy on health outcomes; and the University of Tasmania was a key player in *Regenerate*, an arts-based community recovery project that responded to the East Coast Bushfire of 2008. Australia’s two university arts and health research centres are at the University of New Castle and University of Melbourne, both held inaugural arts and health conferences in 2008.

The Arts and Health Foundation website includes a space for Australian researchers to post and share papers online in order to promote arts and health community projects. Go to [www.artshealthfoundation.org.au/researchs](http://www.artshealthfoundation.org.au/researchs).

“There is enough documentation now for us to understand that the arts have a proven and positive influence on our state of health.”

Robyn Archer AO
Artist, Singer, Writer
Artistic Director of National and International Art Festivals
The State of Arts and Health in Tasmania

Tasmania has the highest proportion of artists per capita of any state or territory in Australia. The Museum of Old and New Art (MONA), and increasingly popular cultural events like Ten Days on the Island and Junction Arts Festival have boosted local and national recognition of the longstanding arts culture in Tasmania. With this has come increasing acknowledgement of the positive influence of arts and a growing level of community participation.

There are many arts and health activities happening all over Tasmania in places like schools, community health centres, hospitals, community houses, residential aged care, prisons and community halls. Like other parts of Australia, this practice is happening in the absence of policy and is often piecemeal as a result.

Arts and health projects are frequently one-off and occur in situations where the will and funding is available. Funding opportunities that exist for arts and health in Tasmania are through the state’s peak community arts organisation Regional Arts Tasmania, Arts Tasmania and the Tasmanian Government’s Arts and Disability Program.

The Tasmanian Community Fund has also funded a range of arts and health projects, and the Australia Council’s Creative Community Partnerships Initiative is another source of funding for projects that bring arts and non-arts partners together.

In the Department of Health and Human Services, arts activities have been supported at a regional level through Health Promotion Coordinators.

Many other stakeholders have provided supported over time. Tasmanian Regional Arts have been proactive in the field and Arts Tasmania is an ongoing supporter. Local government has also played a key role in building the sector, their contribution through the provision of facilities and workers cannot be overstated.

There have been attempts to bring these various players together, and formal and informal networking opportunities play an important role in the arts and health sector.

Despite inconsistent support, a number of key, committed individuals are actively pursuing an arts and health agenda for Tasmania. These people are a mix of artists, therapists, healthcare professions and other passionate individuals who work on both a paid and voluntary basis.

There are also many small-to-medium arts-based organisations with varying capacities and resources that are helping to build well communities. These include: dance, music and theatre groups; community cultural development arts programs; choirs; film, photography and new media organisations; fine arts studios and community galleries. This broad range of activity places the State well ahead of others to put more arts-based health and wellbeing activities into practice.

At a national level, over the last 30 years a desire to seriously value and implement the practice of arts and health has grown across the whole of Australia. As the sector has matured, programs and organisations have flourished across the nation and are now too numerous to list. All states and territories have vibrant arts and health communities that have evolved in the absence of formal policy.
The United Kingdom’s Department of Health has identified the key characteristics for successful arts and health initiatives:

- senior level support and the advocacy of champions
- sustained commitment from all involved, often in the face of major difficulties
- taking a client-centred approach to develop a service
- building partnerships with all types of organisations
- having people who are appropriately trained and experienced
- having a dedicated ‘arts coordinator’ position with skills, contacts and drive
- effectively communicating the benefits
- having a clear, robust strategy.


guidance. For this reason, the Australian Health Ministers’ Conference has agreed to the development of a National Arts and Health Policy Framework in 2012. Development of the paper will be led by SA, with the support of the Arts and Health Foundation.
Arts and Tasmanian Government Objectives

The evidence of the value of arts and health shows that this sector has a great capacity to contribute to the Tasmanian health and healthcare sector, including many of the Department of Health and Human Services’ (DHHS) major strategies and programs. In fact, many DHHS staff are artists themselves and a number actively incorporate their art into their healthcare practices.

Arts and health may arguably contribute to the following DHHS priorities:

- **A Healthy Tasmania:** *A Healthy Tasmania* is the Tasmanian Government’s long term strategy to improve health outcomes and reduce health inequity. Active participation in arts can lead to health and wellbeing improvements for everyone, including hard-to-reach groups or communities who may not respond to traditional methods of health promotion.25

- **Communications and Health Literacy Action Plan:** This plan outlines the actions that will be taken over the next two years to improve communication across health and human services, and to help improve health literacy in Tasmania. Arts offer an alternative means of communication and self-expression that can assist people who have difficulty with health literacy, difficulty expressing thoughts or feelings verbally, or difficulty discussing sensitive health issues.

- **Connecting Care: Chronic Disease Action Framework for Tasmania 2009 – 2013:** *Connecting Care* charts the direction for a coordinated and strategic approach to improve the prevention, detection and management of chronic disease in Tasmania. As the evidence presented earlier in this report shows, arts-based activities have the potential to contribute to each of these stages in the continuum of care for people with chronic disease.

- **DHHS Disability Action Plan:** The *DHHS Disability Action Plan* is an approach to policy and planning, service delivery and evaluation that seeks to remove barriers and enable people with a disability to enjoy the same rights and opportunities as other Tasmanians. Both the contribution made by arts to improving social inclusion for people with a disability, and the rights of people with a disability to participate in arts, is now widely accepted.26

- **Leading the Way: Tasmania’s Health Professionals Shaping Future Care:** *Leading the Way* seeks to ensure the development of a vibrant, energized, supported and responsive healthcare workforce that values the patient experience. Training health professionals to embrace arts-based activity in their practices can potentially improve healthcare, staff satisfaction and the patient experience.

- **Strategic Directions 2009-2012:** *Strategic Directions* is the DHHS’ overarching direction statement that outlines an approach to delivering the ‘safe, effective, high quality, value-for-money services that Tasmanians expect and deserve.’ Arts can play a supporting role in relation to several of these directions, in particular: ‘promoting health and wellbeing and intervening early when needed,’ ‘creating collaborative partnerships to support the development of healthier communities’ and ‘shaping our workforce to be capable of meeting changing needs and future requirements.’
• **Tasmania’s Health Plan:** *Tasmanian’s Health Plan* is a blueprint for the reform of the State health system into the future, which encompasses both primary and clinical health services plans. While arts have the capacity to contribute to many aspects of healthcare, there is a growing body of research that suggests that creating the right physical environment is essential for effective healthcare. Well-designed healthcare environments can have a positive effect on the health and recovery time of patients and on the attitude and satisfaction of healthcare staff.

• **Working in Health Promoting Ways:** Arts-based activities can be both a means participating in and promoting healthy living. For example, the positive impact of singing on respiratory health or the use of social marketing to spread healthy messaging.

• **Your Care, Your Say - Consumer and Community Engagement Strategic Framework and Action Plan:** *Your Care, Your Say* is the Department of Health and Human Services’ commitment to engaging Tasmanians in decisions about their health and wellbeing. Arts-based activities provide an alternative mechanism for consumer and stakeholder engagement that can support this commitment.

There are also many related whole-of-government priorities in Tasmania that arts and health can work to support:

• **A Social Inclusion Strategy for Tasmania:** The Social Inclusion Commissioner’s report sets out 10 strategies to improve social inclusion in Tasmania based on the relevant research and evidence. In recognition of arts’ capacity to develop community wellbeing and community networks, the Commissioner’s report identifies the need for infrastructure to support the arts.

• **Building the Foundations for Mental Health and Wellbeing:** This is also called the *Strategic Framework and Action Plan for Implementing Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention (PPEI) Approaches in Tasmania*. The Framework aims to do just that – to promote mental health and wellbeing and intervene early. As the information presented in this paper shows, arts-based activity has great capacity to support the promotion of good mental health.

• **Community Support Levy:** Four percent of the profit from gaming machines in hotels and clubs in Tasmania is paid into the Community Support Levy. The Levy is then distributed to the Departments of Sport and Recreation and Health and Human Services to fund sport and recreation clubs, charitable organisations, research and services for problem gambling and other health services. Arts and health activity is a potential area of funding under the Community Support Levy.

• **Disability Framework for Action (currently under review and will be released late 2012):** The Framework sets out the Tasmanian Government’s vision for Tasmania as an inclusive and caring society. It seeks to remove barriers and enable people with a disability to enjoy the same rights and opportunities as all other Tasmanians. This can include access to and participation in arts. All Tasmanian Government Agencies were required to prepare a disability action plan in response to the framework.

• **Arts and Disability Program:** Arts Tasmania is hosting the Arts and Disability Program which is funded until 2014-15. The Arts and Disability program includes a grant stream and industry development component. The Arts and Disability Program is guided by the four key focus areas of the *National Arts and Disability Strategy*, which was released in December 2009 by the Cultural...
Ministers Council. The four key focus areas include: access and participation, audience development, arts and cultural practice and strategic development.

- **Our Children Our Young People Our Future:** Tasmania’s *Agenda for Children and Young People* is about making sure that Tasmanian children and young people are nurtured, educated and protected to enable them to realize their full potential in life. The positive impact of arts on children and young people’s health and wellbeing, particularly for learning and development and social excluded young people, is well recognised.\(^{28}\) In Tasmania there are significant opportunities for children and young people to participate in arts.

- **Tasmania Together:** Tasmania Together is the State’s community-driven, long-term planning process. Its 12 goals and 151 benchmarks reflect the concerns of the Tasmanian people and are used to shape government policy, service delivery and budget decisions. Tasmania Together recognises arts and culture as one of the 12 goals in its own right. Not only this, but arts contribute towards many other Tasmania Together goals and indicators, particularly around health and community.

- **Tasmanian Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention Strategic Framework:** Currently under development, this interagency collaboration will work to reduce the onset of alcohol, tobacco and other drug problems and limit the impact of their inappropriate use and harm. Again, arts and health can contribute here through their capacity to promote healthy lifestyles and to enhance healthcare delivery.

- **Tasmania’s Suicide Prevention Strategy 2010-2014:** An initiative of *Building the Foundations for Mental Health and Wellbeing*, the Strategy guides a coordinated and collaborative approach to suicide prevention across government and the community. Social connectedness, and building the capacity of community groups to identify risk, provide support and build resilience, is one of the strategies identified that arts and health can help support.

- **The Tasmanian Drug Strategy, The Tasmanian Alcohol Action Framework 2009 – 2014 and the Tasmanian Tobacco Action Plan 2011 – 2015:** These documents seek to address drugs, alcohol and tobacco issues in Tasmania respectively. Arts and health can contribute to each of these areas in many ways – for example, helping to discuss health issues, promoting healthy lifestyles, creating peaceful healthcare environments and improving the empathy of staff.
Case Studies: Arts and Health in Action

The following case studies have been compiled to provide a taste of the Tasmanian arts and health sector. The diversity of projects is a reflection of the different regions of Tasmania, the range of art forms, the different communities, different health and social issues, and the uniqueness of individual artists.

They have been divided into the categories of health, healthcare and community wellbeing to reflect the different purposes to which arts and health can be applied. The examples are a mix of one-off projects and ongoing, arts-based organisations. Many of these case studies cross all three categories.

Health Promotion

These case studies show how arts-based activities can work to improve health outcomes and reduce health inequities across the population by promoting good health and wellbeing.

**DRIVE**

Worldwide, car crashes are the biggest killer of young people aged 10-24 years. In Australia, while the Drive project was in process, Tasmania had the highest rate of road fatality of which young men in rural areas were particularly at risk. DRIVE was a film-based arts project that explored young male road fatality and the reasons behind it.

The project was made over three years with the input of 96 young men on the North West Coast of Tasmania. DRIVE explored young male care culture on the Coast through arts-based workshops. Young men were mentored by professional artists through the entire process of film production, examining car culture, positive risk taking and what it means to be a young man in an isolated, rural area.

The result was the Drive Documentary, a powerful product from a project that provided alternate ways of engaging young men, creating a platform for them to be peer educators on these issues and to represent the stories and experiences of their generation to the broader community.

The Drive Documentary aired on the ABC in January 2011. An interactive website sits behind the film with over 60 short films that explore the issues raised. The Drive Documentary was highly successful, screening and winning awards around the world.

It’s been great to realise that film making is something I could do in the future.”

Brad, 16
Drive Participant

“Hopefully my story can stop someone else from doing the same thing I’ve done. I take it a day at a time I guess and I try not to annoy anyone.”

Lincoln, 24
Drive Participant

DRIVE is an initiative of Big hART Inc, Australia’s leading art and social change company. The national organisation works with local communities to create high quality cultural activity that drives personal, community and regional development. For more information visit: www.drive.org.au. (Image: Drive website).
Party Safe

Party Safe was an initiative of the Dorset Council in partnership with the North East Cluster of Schools. The project used drama as a media for health promotion.

Twenty-four young people were taken on a camp at Bridport where they received drug and alcohol education. The group then devised a series of sketches to communicate what they learnt, which were performed at school assemblies and community forums, including one at Flinders Island, and the Tasmanian Resilience Conference in Hobart. They also planned and hosted a party that was attended by around 200 young people, incorporating the principles they had learned.

The intention of the project was to change what young people considered ‘normal behaviour’ in relation to drinking and drug taking. It also raised broad community awareness of safe partying principles. An additional benefit was the positive impact that the initiative had on the self-esteem and self-confidence of participants and on family and community relationships.


(Image: PartySafe website).
Healthcare

Arts and health is taking place in many healthcare facilities across Tasmania, including hospital, rural, mental health, aged care, palliative and outpatient facilities.

Clown Doctors

The Humour Foundation operates the Clown Doctor program in 21 hospitals around Australia. In Tasmania, Clown Doctors visit the Royal Hobart Hospital, North West Regional Hospital and Launceston General Hospital. The successful program has operated nationally since 1996 and in Tasmania since 2004.

Clown Doctors work together with health professional to divert children during painful procedures, help calm distressed children in emergency, encourage children in physiotherapy or just brighten their day. Clown Rounds are conducted through most wards for the benefit of the entire hospital community – patients, family and staff.

Oversized medical equipment, ‘red-nose- transplants, ‘cat’ scans,’ ‘humour checks’ and ‘funny bone examinations’ all help to reduce fear and anxiety and create a more relaxed working environment. There is even an element of truth in the old saying, ‘laughter is the best medicine;’ with international research showing that laughter has real physiological and psychological benefits to patients.

Tasmanian Government Art Site Scheme

The Tasmanian Government Art Site Scheme has been commissioning artworks by Tasmanian artists for integration within public places since 1979. The Scheme was the first of its type in Australia and was created in recognition of the way in which artwork can enrich peoples experience of public buildings and spaces.

The Scheme has now commissioned approximately 500 artists and created over 1500 public artworks in more than 500 locations across Tasmania. Many of these artworks are currently helping to beautify healthcare settings. They can be seen in Tasmania’s hospitals, community health centres, child and family centres and other healthcare facilities; and are helping to enliven the experience of the people who visit and work in them.

Artworks are often commissioned to respond to and meet the specific needs of the building users. For example, artists commissioned to create artworks for child and family centres are able to create works which are stimulating and engaging for children. Within this context artwork often helps to create an inviting atmosphere which can be a catalyst for storying telling and other stimulating activity, which is of particular relevance within a hospital or healthcare facility.

(Image: *Enlighten*, 2011 by Loz Abberton - currently on display at the St Helens Child and Family Centre, Arts Tasmania website).
Reflections: Arts on the J W Whittle Palliative Care Unit

Petra Meer was the Artist-in-Residence at the Whittle Unit from September to December 2005. During her time at the palliative care ward, Petra produced a large handmade journal of individual pages, collated by staff, patients, family and friends. She also produced a series of hand embroidered dry felted pillows which are now placed in the clients’ rooms. An exhibition of the art was held at the Moonah Arts Centre in March 2006.

The residency created a positive overall effect on the unit. Making pillows was reported to be very relaxing and enabled clients to concentrate on craft work that would then be enjoyed by future clients and families.

Music therapy is also available to patients of the Whittle Unit. Music therapy is an evidence-based allied health intervention which aims to enhance the quality of life of patients and their carers and family.

A music therapy session can be very similar to a counselling session except that music is used as well as talking. It creates a safe and secure environment using music to express feelings, often in place of words which at times can express very little and sometimes seem so futile.

Music therapy can:

- reduce stress and anxiety
- promote relaxation
- reduce the perception of pain
- reduce the perception of breathlessness
- reduce depression and helplessness
- reduce feelings of isolation and withdrawal and stimulate creativity
- provide a creative opportunity to express thoughts and feelings
- allow patients to assume responsibility and participation in their own treatment.

Patients do not have to be able to play music or sing to participate.
The Knitting Room

The Knitting Room is a life-size, walk-through home set in the 1950s that was created entirely from knitting, crochet and weaving.

Over 600 Tasmanians, aged from 7 to 101, including at least 200 nursing home residents, combined their talents and memories to knit, stitch, crochet and weave The Knitting Room since it began at Strathaven nursing home in 2003.

Knitting, crochet, weaving and stitching were the key skills that created and maintained everyday fabrics in the 1950s. The Knitting Room has employed these skills to renew the fabric of companionship and community connection that is often sadly diminished when people move into residential care.

The Knitting Room provided the reason for people from the wider community to visit nursing homes. By working side by side to grow their shared vision, residents and visitors developed a connection that enriched and gave purpose to their lives. The Knitting Room ignited memories and creative activity throughout Tasmania. Family, friends, volunteers, staff, nursing homes, children, community groups and individuals were caught up in the challenge and delight of sharing memories, then turning those memories into knitted or crocheted objects and contributed to major exhibitions of the work in 2005, 2006 and 2010. Within the ‘theatre set’ of The Knitting Room exhibition, the older generations had precious time to talk about their early life, the youngsters put away their mobile phones and listened, and the tiny tots looked for knitted spiders, beetles and butterflies amongst the knitted leaves.

The Knitting Room exhibition is the culmination of many hours stitching, laughing, reminiscing, friendship, challenges and personal growth. Our philosophy, “there is no such thing as a mistake,” has provided a rich palette of shapes, colours and textures from which to create the installation. Most participants joined one of the groups working together to create the work, thinking they could do little to help but still, “had a go.” Almost without exception, they were surprised and delighted by what they could achieve, and slowly their confidence grew.

From woven walls to crocheted cups and knitted cakes, The Knitting Room is one of the few creative, community projects in which the residents of nursing homes have led the way and through it, gained new respect. Through this project, old skills were revitalised as a whole new generation were encouraged to knit or crochet, just for fun, and some of the wisdom of an older generation was passed on and valued. The Knitting Room project has also inspired groups overseas to use knitting and crochet as a means of expressing thoughts and memories and strengthening communities.

(Image: Courtesy of Robyn Carney).
Community Wellbeing

These case studies show how creative processes contribute to community wellbeing by building connections between individuals and communities.

Kickstart Arts

For the past 18 years, Kickstart Arts has been working in partnership across sectors to deliver arts-based programs targeting disadvantaged Tasmanians. Between 1992 and 2011, the organisation has worked directly with 6,000 community members across Tasmania over 250 events. A further 41,000 Tasmanians participated as audience members.

Kickstart Arts projects frequently involve young people, and their current ‘Happiness Project’ is a typical example of that. The Happiness Project is using the tools of interviewing, script writing, filmmaking, collaboration, design and building to engage young people and their families in five rural Tasmanian communities in the process of considering what makes people and communities happy.

The project is a partnership between Kickstart Arts, health and education services, and local councils in five communities. The Kickstart team are mentoring participants to make a series of short films expressing their ideas. A purpose built, self-powered ‘eco-cinema’ or ‘Happiness Pod’ is being build to screen the films in and around Tasmania. The Happiness Project films will launch at Agfest in 2012 and will tour the state.

Other notable Kickstart Arts projects in recent years have included:

- Power Hip Hop - music mentoring and workshops for young people, including a co-production with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra
- Portraits of Invisible People – a multi art form installation by people with an Acquired Brain Injury that expresses the personal story of these artists
- Creative Community Radio – young people were taught and mentored in the technical and creative aspects of radio to create a serial which explored the possible impact of climate change on communities
- Home Truths On-Line – a website documenting the effects of a multi form art installation exploring the concept of home by young people traumatized by experiences such as war, domestic violence, homelessness or mental illness.

Independent professional evaluations have shown Kickstart Arts has consistently achieved positive health and wellbeing outcomes for project participants.

Mature Artists Dance Experience (MADE)

MADE has been providing highly aesthetic dance theatre experiences for mature adults since 2005. Performances focus on converting real life experiences into confronting, quirky and thought-provoking theatre. In addition to staging regular productions, MADE provides dance classes for adult members of the community.

The organisation describes dance as the ‘ultimate art form for Australia’s maturing population: keeping bodies alive with energy and fizz, memories sharp with kinaesthetic moves and spirits engaged with passion and verve … “MADE puts mature performers centre stage and reminds us that life, fun and fantasy must be celebrated whatever our age.”

MADE’s Artistic Director, Tasmanian born Glen Murray, has been a member of most of Australia’s leading dance companies in a career spanning over 17 years. During this time, Glen worked with renowned choreographers and directors, touring classical and contemporary productions, nationally and internationally. Glen is a 2011 Churchill Scholarship Fellow.

Recent local dance productions have included ‘BIRDS,’ which ran in the Peacock Theatre in Salamanca Arts Centre in July 2011 and ‘PRINCESS’ which ran at the Theatre Royal in November 2010.

MADE has performed intra and interstate and at many conferences and awards ceremonies. MADE has received support from a wide range of cultural organisations and services and has been the recipient of Local, State and Australian Government grants and corporate sponsorship since its inception.

For further information visit: www.made.org.au. (Image: supplied by MADE).
“It has become very apparent over the almost seven year history of MADE that high quality art outcomes are intrinsically linked to enhanced health and wellbeing outcomes.

I have seen the participants of MADE recognise the effort that professional artists invest in the creation of highly aesthetic performance environments for MADE, and have witnessed the pride and resultant boost to self-esteem exhibited by the participants.

International studies are time and time again proving that the engagement of professional artists with the community is a key factor in keeping those community participants engaged long-term, enabling them to experience very tangible health and wellbeing benefits.”

Glen Murray
Artistic Director, MADE


Choirs of High Hopes

**Hobart**

The Choir of High Hopes Hobart Inc. is dedicated to helping people coping with disadvantage in its many forms. Homelessness, unemployment, drug and alcohol issues, mental and physical disabilities, injustice, social isolation and poverty shape the lives of so many amongst us.

Having a place to meet up each week, to share a healthy meal, make friends and find support, is what the Choir of High Hopes offers to its members - and when we start to rehearse, our big noisy group of people from all walks of life suddenly becomes a Choir with focus and passion.

Singing together as one powerful voice united by song, uplifts our singers, inspires our audiences and enriches our community.

The Choir of High Hopes Hobart Inc. meet every Tuesday from February to December at:
GA Wood Hall, behind Scots-Memorial Uniting Church
29 Bathurst Street, Hobart

(Image: Choir of High Hopes Hobart Inc website).

**Launceston**

The Choir of High Hopes is part of City Mission’s services to provide those with an interest in music and singing an outlet to awaken and develop their gifts through social involvement and interaction in the area of music and song.

The choir meets and practises each Wednesday in the City Mission’s Chapel, Frederick St Launceston, between 10-12 pm.

Through the social interaction and peer support that the choir provides, members gain increased self-confidence and a greater ability to participate in their local community. In this way, music and singing is an outlet for social inclusion.

(Image: City Mission Launceston website).
Close Knit: Beaconsfield Community Scarf Project

Close Knit was an arts-based community recovery project that took place following the collapse at the Beaconsfield Gold Mine in 2006. Widespread media coverage of the disaster resulted in people from all around Australia and overseas knitting a scarf more than two kilometres in length.

The project was funded by the Health Promotion Unit at Temco and the DHHS and was hosted by the Beaconsfield District Health Service. Project workers included a social worker, textile artist and a local Minister.

People who were touched by the collapse were invited to participate in knitting the scarf to celebrate the rescue of two trapped minders, Tod Russell and Brant Webb.

The original aim was to receive 925 metres of scarf, representing the depth of ground where the miners were trapped. Within 10 weeks the target was researched and by 16 weeks, it had doubled. Twenty five groups and thousands of individuals contributed.

The scarf was presented to the community to mark the one-year anniversary of the event. It became a tribute to the spirit of the Beaconsfield community.

(Image: Taken at Beaconsfield Mine and Heritage Centre where the project is currently displayed).
Arts and Health Resources

Organisations

Tasmania

Arts and Disability Program:  www.arts.tas.gov.au/funding/grants/arts_and_disablity
Arts Tasmania:  www.arts.tas.gov.au
Kickstart Arts:  www.kickstart.org.au
Tasmanian Regional Arts:  www.tasregionalarts.org.au

Australia

Australia and New Zealand Art Therapy Association:  www.anzata.org
Australia Council for the Arts:  www.australiacouncil.gov.au
Australian Government Office for the Arts:  www.arts.gov.au
Arts Access Australia:  www.artsaccessaustralia.org
Arts and Health Australia:  www.artsandhealth.org
Arts and Health Foundation:  www.artshealthfoundation.org.au
Arts in Health at Flinders Medical Centre:  www.flinders.sa.gov.au/artsinhealth
Arts Health Institute:  www.artshealthinstitute.org.au
ArtsHealth Centre for Research and Practice - the University of Newcastle:  www.newcastle.edu.au/research-centre/artshealth
Disability and Disadvantage Arts Australia:  www.dadaawa.org.au
Regional Arts Australia:  www.regionalarts.com.au
The Humour Foundation:  www.clowndoctors.org.au
UNESCO Observatory: Multidisciplinary Research in the Arts – University of Melbourne:  www.abp.unimelb.edu.au/unesco

Overseas

Arts Council England:  www.artscouncil.org.uk
Arts for Health, Manchester Metropolitan University:  www.artsforhealth.org
Canadian Arts Health Network:  www.artshealthnetwork.ca
London Arts and Health Forum:  www.lahf.org.uk
Society for the Arts in Healthcare:  www.thesah.org
Journals

Australia and New Zealand Journal of Art Therapy: [www.anzata.org/anzjat](http://www.anzata.org/anzjat)


Arts and Health: An International Journal for Research, Policy and Practice (open access): [http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rahe20](http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rahe20)


Artwork Magazine: [www.artworksmagazine.com](http://www.artworksmagazine.com)

Journal of Applied Arts and Health: [http://www.intellectbooks.co.uk/journals/view-Journal,id=169](http://www.intellectbooks.co.uk/journals/view-Journal,id=169)


Reports and Reviews


Sayer-Jones, M. *Seeded: Great arts and health stories grown in regional Australia.* South Australia, Regional Arts Australia: 2011.


Policy Frameworks


“The effect of beautiful objects, of variety of objects and especially of the brilliance of colour is hardly at all appreciated… I have seen in fevers (and felt, when I was a fever patient myself) the most acute suffering produced from the patient not being able to see out of a window and the knots in the wood being the only view. I shall never forget the rapture of fever patients over a bunch of bright flowers… People say the effect is only on the mind. There is no such thing. The effect is on the body too. Little as we know about the way in which we are affected by form, by colour, and light, we know this, that they have an actual physical effect. Variety of form and brilliancy of colour in the objects presented to patients are actual means of recovery.”

Florence Nightingale, 1859
References


5. Adapted from Putland, C. *Overview of arts and health field*. Presentation developed for Arts and Health Roundtable, South Australia: 2010.


References


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