

Expressions – Arts and Mental Health
Project – Promoting well-being and social
inclusion within a rural community

Lee Martinez, May Walker-Jeffreys and Mellissa L. Kruger
University of SA Department of Rural Health, Division of Health Sciences

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Setting the scene



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Overview

- Engagement process
- Delivery of program
- Social Inclusion Scale – Pre and Post
- Public opinion

Phase one: Community Development

- Engagement of partners
- Funding
- Recruitment of participants





Delivery of Program

- Eight week semi structured program
- Support Workers in attendance
- Health promotion messages



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Research question?

What are the wellbeing and social experiences of mental health consumers participating in an arts program within a rural community?



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Method

Mix methods approach:

- **Pre and post social inclusion scale (adapted from Secker)**
- **Program evaluation**
- **Public opinion/awareness survey from exhibition attendees**
- **Key informant interviews**
- **Follow up participant interviews (2 months post program)**



Preliminary findings

Social inclusion scale demonstrated a positive shift in 11 domains:

Question	Pre	Post
Isolated from family	1.90	1.37
Friends I see or talk to every week	2.54	2.75
Social life mainly related to MHS or people who use MHS	2.45	2.25
Felt accepted by neighbours	2.36	2.75
Felt that people look down on me because of my MH needs	2.40	2.12
I have felt what I do is valued by others	2.09	2.25
Felt it was unsafe to walk alone in my neighbourhood in day light	1.90	2.12
Have done a sport, game or physical activity	2.0	2.14
Helped out at a charity or local group	1.45	2.25
Have felt clear about my rights	2.27	3.25
Felt free to express my beliefs	2.18	3.0



Program Evaluation: What participants enjoyed most

'It was a chance to get involved in a group of people doing something I love to do. I feel I gained some valuable knowledge and skills about painting'

'Having a set time to go somewhere and paint and be creative'

'The act of painting itself was relaxing, I also enjoyed the social aspects'



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Because of the Expressions project:

The majority of participants (6/8) are:

- now motivated to join other programs
- have developed their painting skills
- are motivated to paint more

All but one indicated that they had made some new friends in the program

50% eat more fruit as result of having fresh fruit provided for morning teas

Motivation



'I signed up so I had a responsibility to complete it'

'It's something I enjoy doing. Wanted to learn more so I can express myself through painting'

'I like drawing, I always wanted to do more painting'



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Expressions – Arts Exhibition

Expressions – Arts and Mental Health

Date: Friday 22 August 2014 at 7pm

Venue: Middleback Theatre, Nicolson Avenue, Whyalla

The Expressions – Arts and Mental Health Program provides an opportunity for people to come together and participate in an activity with purpose, that builds the participants wellness, their ability to connect, express and participate in society. This exhibition concludes this program and gives the participants an opportunity to display their artworks.

This exhibition is a part of the 2014 SALA festival and as such is open to all members of the public.



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Participants were fully involved in the exhibition installation process

'Didn't realise what goes into setting up for an art exhibition. It's a lot of time and work involved. It was an eye opener.'

Over 60 people attended the opening night of the exhibition

'To be mentally unwell, have that health issue imploding on daily life, but to consciously CHOOSE to engage and try out the media of arts from a 'standing start' is a triumph of the human spirit'



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Post program interviews

I felt really important, I feel like I was someone and the painting that I did , I felt like wow, did I do that? I thought wow, I feel even really more important because I have other eyes looking at my painting and having their comments about it.

At the time it was good to get out and it made me find something that I didn't realise I could do. Never tried painting and then it's like oh I could actually do it!





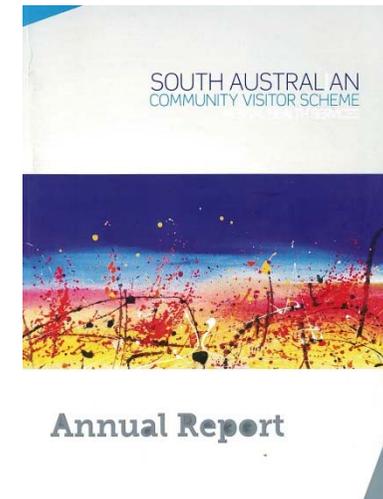
Outcomes

- **Five participants are now members of the local art group**
- **Three participants meet regularly at a drop in centre to paint**
- **One participant has created a FB group for local artists**



Outcomes continued:

- **Another NGO has enquired as to how they can duplicate the program**
- **An outside organisation has requested permission to use artworks within their Annual Report**
- **Exhibited works again during Mental Health week**
- **Enhanced relationship between partners involved**



Sustainability



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Take home messages:

- **Art plays a meaningful role in social connections for consumers of mental health services**
- **‘Bringing it all together ‘ - Guidelines for Arts and Mental Health Projects can assist in the best practice in engagement process**
- **Local community partnerships is a key factor**
- **Communities can increase their mental health awareness through arts projects being exhibited and consumers journey being shared**



Recommendation

Build on the principle that art is an experiential experience and provides a vehicle for consumers to express their story and explore their feelings in a safe and supportive space by including a framework of “come and try” hands on art experiences in the form of art hubs for consumers and people with mental illness to;

- increase the opportunities for people to work alongside artists skilled in working with people with mental illness
- provide a pathway for personal development and learning life skills
- connecting people back to the community
- increasing employment opportunities for rural mental health consumers

References

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Questions??



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