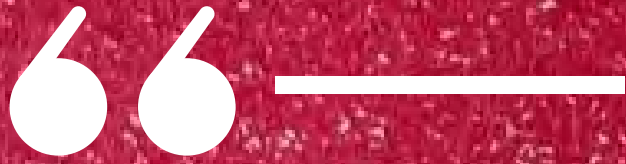


The cover features a vibrant, hand-drawn floral border. At the top left, there are blue and purple flowers. Along the top edge, a row of purple tulips is visible. The right side is adorned with yellow and orange flowers. The bottom left corner shows pink tulips, while the bottom center and right feature more yellow and blue flowers. Scattered throughout the white background are small, colorful dots in shades of yellow, orange, blue, and purple.

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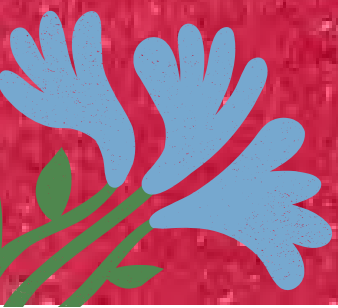
Art & Wellbeing

Performance & Impact Report



As someone that's never done art therapy before, I was initially apprehensive because I am not very good at art, but today I learnt that that's not what it's about... as soon as I started painting something, I wasn't thinking about other external stressors anymore and I was just focusing on the moment, and my mind felt peaceful.

— Art & Wellbeing participant



ABOUT PROJECT RESPECT

Project Respect is specialised support service and peer community for women and gender diverse people with experience in the sex industry, and for women and gender diverse people with experiences of trafficking for sexual exploitation. We provide trauma informed, person centred case coordination services, deliver community engagement activities, provide capacity building training for broad sector workforces, engage in research, and strive to amplify the diverse lived experience voices of our community. We are an intersectional feminist, non-faith based not-for-profit organisation.



Why Art Therapy?

In 2022, a community survey undertaken by Project Respect identified that 60% of respondents wanted to engage in activities which focused on overcoming trauma, stress and anxiety. 40% of respondents specified that they were interested in art-related activities. To our knowledge, there were no current opportunities of this nature available in Victoria for members of our community.

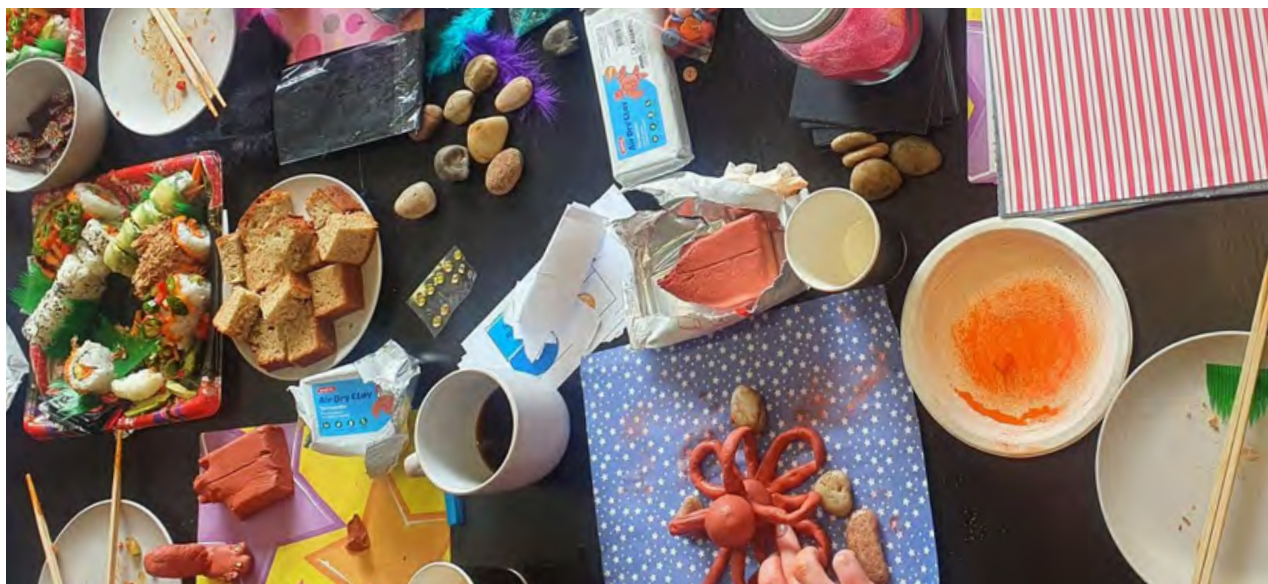
Through our community partnership with Creative Art Therapies Australia (CATA), we knew that creative art therapies can improve physical, mental and emotional health and offer alternate interventions to conventional verbal approaches to address trauma (CATA, 2023).

What were we trying to achieve?

Our aim was to deliver art therapy sessions to our community of women and gender diverse people with experiences in the sex industry, or experiences of trafficking for sexual exploitation. While the lived experiences of our community are diverse, many of the people we support report experiences of trauma related to family, domestic and sexual violence and exploitation, and face a range of additional barriers.



The program aimed to create a supportive, inclusive, trauma-informed, peer space for our community to engage in a therapeutic, healing activity that they may not otherwise have access to. We sought to offer an alternative to conventional therapies that was inclusive of all our community, including those who do not speak English as their first language. We strived to create a space where participants could connect within their community, engage in creative art activities and process their thoughts, feelings and trauma in a guided, safe and non-judgmental environment.



Working with clay - Art & Wellbeing 2023

ART & WELLBEING

Project Respect has been delighted to hold 12 Art and Wellbeing sessions over the 2022-23 financial year. Sessions were generally held in the afternoons on the third Tuesday of the month, and one additional Wednesday evening session was held.

Each session included a free, catered lunch for participants, and was held at our warm and inclusive community space, which also has a community garden. We contracted qualified Art Therapists to deliver the sessions from registered not-for-profit organisation, Creative Arts Therapy Australia (CATA). CATA works to provide mental and emotional health and wellbeing services to the community through person-centered, practice-based creative arts therapies. A Project Respect Community Connector participated in sessions for additional specialised peer support.

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“
Having guidance and activities already planned for me is so helpful to turn my brain off and let my body relax or get out what it needs. It's become something I really look forward to.
”

Art & Wellbeing participant



PROMOTION

A range of methods were employed to promote the program. We utilised our social media accounts to promote sessions through Facebook and Instagram and promoted sessions on our website. We sent two monthly SMS reminders to our community subscriber list, and shared links to our newsletter which contained further information regarding the program. Our case coordinators promoted the sessions within our current network of service users, and we promoted the program through our outreach activities, which included delivering small art packs to brothels across Melbourne and providing promotional flyers to brothel managers and community services to display and promote in their workplaces.

Project Respect representatives were also pleased to attend Bank of Australia's AGM in November 2022 to showcase the program made possible by this grant, and we shared this update on our LinkedIn.



SESSIONS

CATA's Art Therapists ran diverse sessions which explored a variety of art mediums. Each session began with a group check-in, with participants invited to pick a colour that represented how they were feeling and use it to create coloured sand to pour into a shared jar. Participants were also invited to privately rate how they were feeling on a scale of 1-5 both prior to and following the session.



Working with clay, using our hands rather than tools, to create a whole sculptural piece



Creating mandalas to explore mindful practice and calmness

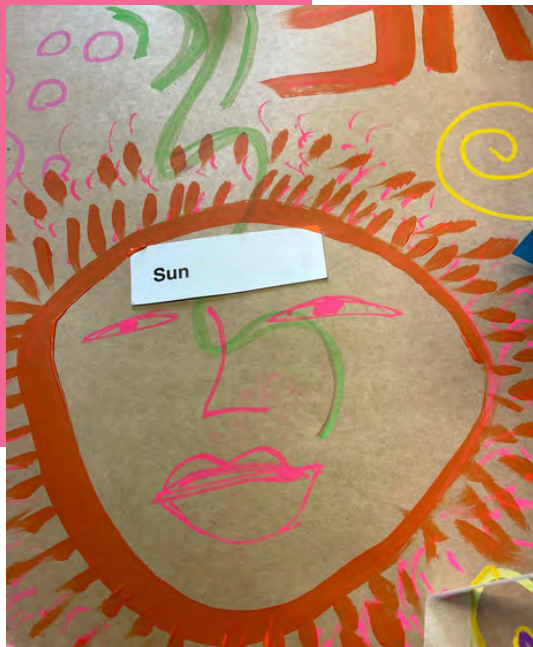


Gelli-printing, using paints, gel plates, natural and other textured materials to create prints



Painting canvases with an open theme to encourage free expression and creativity



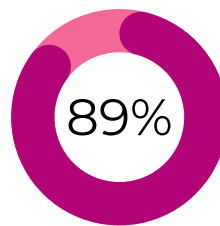


OUTCOMES

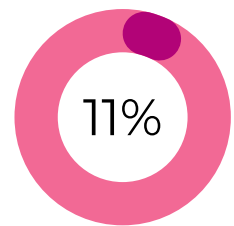
Before-and-after session ratings completed by each participant indicated that across all sessions, 89% of participants rated their mood as higher at the completion of the session than at the commencement, while 11% of participants rated their mood the same. On average, participants rated their mood at the initiation of each session as 2.6 out of 5, and at the completion, an average of 4.2 out of 5.

PARTICIPATION

Over 12 sessions, we had a total of 46 attendances including 17 individual participants. Hosting these sessions allowed us to develop relationships with members of our community, by both strengthening those existing, and creating news ones with people who had not previously engaged with our organisation. Our Case Coordinators also utilised the opportunity to introduce themselves, engage with participants and have a presence at events, which contributed to us receiving referrals into our case coordination services.



Higher Mood



Around the Same



"It's nice to dedicate some time to be creative, to let go and have fun where I can just focus on the process of being present and how things feel."

Art & Wellbeing participant

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FEEDBACK

Non-directive qualitative feedback provided by participants was overwhelmingly positive, with three key themes emerging:



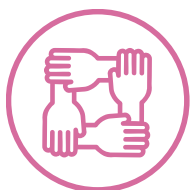
01. Wellbeing impacts - feeling calm, mindful and forgetting about broader stressors.

- “It is so soothing, I got lost in the moment”
- “It feels so nice to just disconnect and get creative.”
- “The process is very relaxing... For someone who’s mind doesn’t stop, it was amazing.”



02. Feeling freedom to explore, create and learn new skills with support and guidance, and without pressure or expectations.

- “It’s like using your voice, but you don’t have to speak”.
- “Having guidance and activities already planned for me is so helpful to turn my brain off and let my body relax or get out what it needs.”
- “It felt really nice to just focus on something without any expectations of what the final product will be”
- “It felt so nice to just disconnect and feel creative without any expectations about what the artwork is supposed to look like”
- “Even though I am a very creative person, I never knew how to do this type of art before. I loved learning something new and I am going to share this new skill with grandchildren so we can do some art together.”



03. The opportunity to connect with community in an environment where participants felt accepted and free from judgement.

- “I really enjoyed taking this time each month to connect with myself and my peers in a relaxed, safe and judgement free environment.”
- “These sessions make me feel connected to my community without the pressure of having to talk or put on a mask.”
- “I had a great time with everyone here and I feel fantastic”
- “This has become something I really look forward to.”



CHALLENGES & LEARNINGS

We engaged in continuous reflection throughout the delivery of the program, informed by feedback from participants, facilitators and Project Respect staff. These learnings indicated improvements or adjustments to increase program accessibility, or enhance participants' experience.

Transport

Transport was identified as a barrier to attending events for some participants. Issues such as not having access to a vehicle, living too far away to make public transport feasible, being unable to use public transport due to health ailments, and not being able to afford travel costs were all cited as barriers to attending. In response, we offered support through paying participants' Myki fares or in some instances, booking transport through the all-women rideshare organisation, Sheeba.

Attendance

We found that momentum in attendance can take some time to establish. Building the courage and confidence to try something new can be a challenge, particularly for those who experience mental health concerns, such as anxiety and depression. It can also take time to settle into a group and become comfortable with one another. Time was required to build group cohesion and nurture a collaborative, safe space. Based on participant feedback, the program was re-named to "Art and Wellbeing" to reduce the emphasis on the word "therapy".

Peer Support

After the initial two sessions, we introduced a Project Respect peer worker alongside the experienced Creative Art Therapists, to support the sessions and further enhance the comfort levels of participants. We found this resulted in positive outcomes, with participants often opting to seek out conversation with our peer worker. Our peer worker, as well as Creative Art Therapists, facilitated referrals into our case coordination service for further specialised support.

Sustained Benefits

Participants indicated a desire to continue practicing learnings beyond the sessions. We sourced art cases for participants to take home, along with visual arts diaries and canvases, so that participants could continue creating art at home and engage in self-sustaining practices. These packs were very well received by participants, and some shared with us ways they have used them in their personal time.



Broader Community Support

We were pleased to be able to garner broader community support in ways we did not expect. When organising catering for events, we contacted Fruit2Work to arrange delivery of fresh fruit. After hearing about our organisation and the program, Fruit2Work generously offered to provide this fruit at no cost. We now get fresh fruit delivered fortnightly in support of our community programs.

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The packs were such a lovely gift, I have never owned anything like that before and its meant I can continue to paint and create art from home when I might be feeling down and services are closed and there isnt anyone around to talk to, I can practice the skills I learnt on my own as a strategy for my self care.

Art & Wellbeing participant

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WHAT'S NEXT?

We are delighted to continue into the 2023-24 financial year with renewed funding from Bank Australia for Art and Wellbeing Sessions. With the momentum we have gained in 2022-23, and the learnings we have incorporated into planning for the upcoming 12 months, we are excited to see how the program grows.



**Thank you to Bank Australia for funding this
valuable initiative!**



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